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## Towards Identification of Stress among Teacher Educators

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**Abstract:** *The present study was undertaken to examine the nature of role stress among teacher educators. 55 teacher educators teaching psychology in the teacher education institutes in the eastern and north-eastern states of India served as sample for the study. Inter-role distance (IRD) and role erosion (RE) were dominant whereas role ambiguity (RA) and personal inadequacy (PI) were remote contributors of role stress. Implications of results of the present study have been discussed.*

**Keywords:** *Stress, Role Stress, Teacher Educators*

### Introduction

Stress is a necessary positive force leading to effective work and maintenance of good health. Insufficient stress might lead to rust out. Selye (1956), the father of modern stress research, defined stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it and proposed the General Adaptation Syndrome which stated that when an organism is confronted with a threat, the general psychological response occurs in three stages, viz., the alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion. According to Cooper and Marshall (1978), stress is essentially individually defined and so must be understood with reference to characteristics of both the individual and his/her environment.

Kahn et al. (1964) were the earliest to draw attention to organisational stress in general and role stress in particular. Role stress has been defined as the degree of incompatibility of expectations communicated to a focal person by his/her role sender. It is through the role that the individual interacts with, and gets integrated with the system. Katz and Khan (1966) have defined an organisation as a system of roles. Pareek's (1976) definition of "role" indicates that there are inherent problems in the performance of a role, therefore, stress is inevitable. The very nature of role has built-in potential for stress.

From the point of view of an individual, two role systems are important: role space and role set (Pareek, 1983). Role space can be defined as “the dynamic interrelationship both between the self and the various roles an individual occupies and amongst these roles”. On the other hand, the individual’s role in the organisation is defined by the expectations of other significant roles and those of the individual himself/herself. Role set is “the pattern of relationship between the role being considered and other roles in the organisational context”.

Pareek (1983) pioneered work on role stresses by identifying as many as ten different types of organisational role stresses. These are:

*1. Inter-role Distance (IRD)*

An individual occupies more than one role at a time. His/her organisational role may often come into conflict with his/her family role or with roles in other organisations or groups. The distance or conflict among these various roles represents inter-role distance.

*2. Role Stagnation (RS)*

This kind of stress is the result of gap between demand to outgrow his/her previous role and to occupy new role effectively. Such a type of stress results into perception that there is no opportunity for one’s career progression.

This perception may be more intense when the role occupant holds a role for longer period and enters in new role in which he/she feels less secure.

*3. Role Expectation Conflict (REC)*

The type of stress is generated by different expectations by different significant persons about the same role. It is possible that the significant persons differ in their expectation about the same role; and the role occupant is ambivalent as to whom to please.

*4. Role Erosion (RE)*

This type of role stress is the function of the role occupant’s feeling that some functions which should properly be belonging to his/her role are transferred to/or performed by some other role. This can also happen when the functions are performed by the role occupant but the credit for them had gone to someone else.

*5. Role Overload (RO)*

When the role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from the significant roles in his/her role set, he/she experiences role overload. There are two aspects of this stress, quantitative and qualitative. The former refers to having ‘too much to do’ while the latter refers to ‘too difficult’.

*6. Role Isolation (RI)*

This type of role stress refers to psychological distance between the occupant’s role and other roles in the same role set. It is also defined as role distance which is different than inter-role distance in sense that IRD refers to the distance among various roles occupied by some individual. The frequency and ease of interaction among the roles is a measure of strength of the linkage among the roles.

*7. Personal Inadequate (PI)*

This type of stress arises when the role occupant feels that he/she does not have the necessary skills and training for effectively performing the functions expected from his/her role. This is found to happen when the organisation does not impart periodic training to enable the employees to cope with the fast changes both within and outside the organisation.

#### *8. Self-role Distance (SRD)*

When the role person occupies goes against his/her self-concept, then he/she feels self-role distance type of stress. This is essentially a conflict arising out of mismatch between the person and his/her job.

#### *9. Role Ambiguity (RA)*

It refers to the lack of clarity about the expectations of role which may arise out of lack of information or understanding. It may exist in relation to activities, responsibilities, personal styles and norms; and may operate at three stages:

- a) When the role sender holds his/her expectations about the role;
- b) When he/she sends it; and
- c) When the occupant receives those expectations.

#### *10. Resource Inadequacy (RIn)*

This type of stress is evident when the role occupant feels that he/she is not provided with adequate resources for performing the functions expected from his/her role.

A large number of studies have been conducted to study the level of different types of role stress in different types of organisations (Sen, 1981; Khanna, 1985; Sharma, 1987; Singh, 1987; Nath, 1988; Pestonjee, 1995; Sultana, 1995; Mukherjee, 1997; Srivastava, 1997; Mishra, 1996). The main findings of these studies have been summarised by Pestonjee (1999), and Talib and Rashid (2013).

However, very few studies have been undertaken on the college teachers in India whose job has been found to be highly stressful in many studies conducted abroad (Broiles, 1982; Brown & Ralph, 1992; Laughlin, 1984; Borg, 1990; Fontana & Abouserie, 1993; Wearing, 1989; Dewe, 1986; Salami, 2011; Hassan, 2013; Sahukar & Sharma, 2014). Therefore, a need was felt to understand the main role stresses experienced by the teacher educators in India.

### **Methodology**

#### *Sample*

The sample of the present study consisted of 55 teacher educators teaching psychology in teacher education institutes. All of them were participants of the two training programmes organised by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) at Guwahati and Bhubaneswar. All the teachers included in the present study were aged between 27 and 55 years.

#### *Instrument*

The following psychometric measure was employed in the present study:

*Organisational Role Stress Scale* : The ORS Scale has been developed and standardised by Pareek (1983) to measure the various role-based stresses relevant to organisational life under ten dimensions referred to earlier (i.e., IRD, RS, etc.) The scale consists of 50 items, each of which is rated on a five-point scale with assigned scores of zero to four for each item.

#### *Procedure*

A good rapport was established with the subjects before administering the measure. Subjects were assured that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. After the data collection

was over, the standard procedure for scoring, as given in the manual, was followed for the measure, i.e. ORS Scale.

### **Results and Discussion**

The analysis was geared to examine the main role stresses experienced by the teacher educators. Table 1 presents dimension-wise scores of the teacher educators on role stress. As shown in Table 1, means for teachers educators are moderately low.

**Table 1: Means Role Stress Scores of Teacher Educators**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>
IRD	6.29
RS	2.48
REC	3.10
RE	5.57
RO	3.11
RI	3.75
PI	2.35
SRD	4.51
RA	1.53
RIn	4.48
ORS (Total)	36.79

Inter-role distance (IRD) and role erosion (RE) were found to be dominant whereas role ambiguity (RA) and personal inadequacy (PI) were the least dominant contributors of role stress in the case of teacher educators.

Dimension-wise analysis of role stress factors is presented below:

#### *1. Inter-role Distance*

Teacher educators scored high on this factor (6.29). This proves that they face greater conflicts among the various roles they occupy as a teacher educator and as a family person. The demands of the role are high and they find it difficult to form a correct balance between the different roles they occupy which creates stress and tension. They are unable to decide their priorities.

#### *2. Role Stagnation*

The mean score of teacher educators on role stagnation was 2.48, which was relatively low. This could be analysed as meaning that teacher educators get enough opportunities for progression. They are provided with opportunity to grow which in turn contributes to job satisfaction. Since role stagnation score is low, it also goes to show that their good performance is appreciated and rewarded accordingly. Another point worth mentioning is that low RS score shows that the teacher educators moves from one role to another with ease. He/she does not feel insecure in the new role he/she has to adapt, rather he/she may be accepting it as a challenge or as a reward for his/her skills, attitude and abilities.

#### *3. Role Expectation Conflict*

The mean score of teacher educators on role expectation conflict was 3.10. Role expectation arises when different expectations are generated by different significant persons about the same role. Thus, for example, a teacher educator's role in a particular area may be defined differently by his/her immediate supervisor but seen differently by a senior at the state level

and this causes conflict because the individual is not sure whom to please and what he/she is really expected to do. This conflict causes stress and tension which may affect the individual's performance.

#### *4. Role Erosion*

It was found that the score of teacher educators officer on Role Erosion was 5.57. This relatively high score points to the fact that the teacher educators often develop the feeling that the function which actually they should be performing is being performed by someone else. He/she might feel he/she is being deprived of a chance to grow, or prove himself/herself solely on the grounds of favouritism or the whims of his/her supervisor etc.

In some cases, it could also mean that the credit for performing some function is given to somebody else who may have had nothing to do with it. Both these situations are highly dissatisfying.

#### *5. Role Overload*

The score of teacher educators on this factor was found to be 3.11. Role overload is generally observed in two situations, one when the individual has "too much to do" (quantitative overloading) and secondly when the task to be done are "too difficult" (qualitative overloading). This role overloading is not so apparent amongst teacher educators which means that there are not too many expectations from them. Since there are not too many expectations, the individual is not faced with the fear of having to prove his/her worth. Thus, he/she does not develop the feeling of insecurity and is able to perform in a relaxed atmosphere.

#### *6. Role Isolation*

3.75 was the mean score of teacher educators on the factor of Role Isolation. Role isolation is also referred to as role distance and relates to the psychological distance between the occupant's role and other roles in the same role set. It refers to how closely one is able to relate his/her role with that of his/her colleagues. If the individual finds it difficult to interact with ease with others it means that the linkage among the roles is weak. This would imply that factors like cooperation, and smooth working of different roles as a unit is not possible. This could also lead to personal rivalries hampering the progress of the individual as well as the organisation.

#### *7. Personal Inadequacy*

This is not very important among the teacher educators, the mean score is 2.35. In case of teacher educators, personal inadequacy is rarely seen probably because they are selected on the basis of their skills, attitude, intelligence etc. and an attempt is made to fit them to the right job. Thus, when he/she works in his/her role he/she does not feel inadequate. Secondly, they are also given regular training courses to keep them abreast with the latest developments in his/her areas of interest.

They work with a feeling of self-confidence and are able to cope with the expectations others have from their roles. The very fact that they have been selected on the basis of their merit gives him/his the required confidence.

#### *8. Self-role Distance*

When the role person occupies goes against his/her self-concept, then he/she feels self-role distance type of stress.

The teacher educators scored high on this trait also, their score was 4.51. This situation would generally arise when there is a mismatch between the job and the person.

For example, amongst the teacher educators also there could be few who expected to get into the civil services or other jobs of their choice but were put into the teacher educators' job. They may not be able to adjust to this new role, their entire concept of the job they wanted to do they undergo a change and hence they may not be able to do complete justice to their job. Their self-concept and self-actualization needs are not satisfied which creates job dissatisfaction.

#### *9. Role Ambiguity*

The role ambiguity score is the lowest 1.53 which goes to prove that the teacher educators are very clear about the expectations of their roles. They are given adequate information and understand their role in the particular organisation. Their responsibilities and activities are clearly demarcated by their supervisors so that there is no ambiguity and also no overlapping or encroachment into another's role territory.

#### *10. Resource Inadequacy*

The score on this factor was 4.48 for the teacher educators. An individual is generally satisfied with his/her job when he/she feels that the outcome or reward he/she gets is fair according to his/her input but for performing well he/she needs adequate resources. Resource inadequacy is evident when the role occupant feels that he/she is not provided with adequate resources for performing the functions expected from his/her role. This relatively high mean score points to the fact that teacher educators are not fully satisfied with the resources they get. They may be comparing themselves with others who offer the same input as them but are getting a better result mainly because they have the required resources and equipments to perform their roles. Pareek argued that in case of resource inadequacy, a person may turn hostile towards management for their failure to provide adequate resources in order to meet the job challenge effectively. Resource inadequacy may be accompanied with lower morale and job dissatisfaction.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The results of the present study have far-reaching implications for the optimisation of the skills of the teacher educators. The most dominated factors inducing stress were found to be inter-role distance (IRD) and role erosion (RE).

In view of these findings, the following actions need to be taken for improving in general the quality of life and also working life of the teacher educators:

- i. There is a need for vigorous efforts to integrate the teacher educators into organisational life. This suggestion can be made in the light of the fact that some role stresses were dominant in the teacher educators which developed a sense of alienation among them. Therefore, efforts should be made to minimise the impact of various role stresses.
- ii. Appropriate training interventions are also required to overcome various role stresses.
- iii. There is also a need for better performance appraisal systems. Appropriate reward linkages are almost unknown in this sector and initiatives/innovations are curtailed.

- iv. There is also a need to assess the developmental and growth needs and formulate training programmes accordingly. These growth needs can be in relation to the person as well as his/her functions.
- v. The State institutes which cater to most of the training for the teacher educators may include a module on stress management where organisational stresses may be discussed and analysed in depth.

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