

A STUDY OF DISTRESS, WELLNESS AND ORGANISATIONAL ROLE STRESS AMONG MBA PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to study Distress, Wellness and Organisational role stress of MBA professionals in the area of various companies and industries of Haryana. The effect of sex and age on the above variables were examined. Total 101 professionals (60 men and 41 women) were administered for the study. General Health Questionnaire-28 by Goldberg and Hiller, PGI- Well being Scale by Verma, Dubey and Gupta, Organisational Role Stress Scale (ORS- Scale) by Pareek were the tools used. Results of the study reveal that women experienced greater wellness and older personnel experienced more stress among MBA professionals in Haryana.

Keywords: Distress, Wellness, Organisational Role Stress, Professional.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and technological innovations are bringing about new challenges to the study of mental health and stress management. History has demonstrated that with each new technological innovations there have been profound changes in the quality of life of human beings, social changes follow suit the scientific changes. Followers of the pioneering economists Joseph Schumpeter's fifty year model assert that the first wave of change in modern history (1780-1840s) brought steam power that initiated the Industrial Revolution; next came the railroads (1840-1890s) followed by electric power (1890-1930s) and then cheap oil and the automobile (1930-1980s). Now the fifth wave is being driven by MBA & IT Professionals.

The present study is concerned with how the managerial qualities and the consequent change in job culture affect mental health and quality of life of MBA professionals. This is particularly relevant because jobs of MBA professionals in various companies and industries is the most coveted one in modern India, and the most brilliant section of youth are going for it. While each job has its own stress, MBA jobs are somewhat different from our traditional and typical concept of secured employment. MBA jobs are mostly contractual with less job security but high pay, and entail strong competitiveness along with a globalized life style. There are few evidences that MBA jobs are offering an elevated standard of life, but taking tolls on the mental

health and relationship aspects of the professionals. Specific studies on organizational role stress with special emphasis on MBA professional are rare. Present study takes a holistic view of personhood and consider job stress as one imposed upon and interacting with other stressors. Therefore, the study focuses on psychological distress, sense of wellness and organizational role stress of MBA professionals as associated with stressful life events. Very few studies have been obtained in this area. In India, there is a virtual gap in study of this sector.

Psychological distress in the present context has been defined as the overall feeling of anxiety, depression, and stress related somatisation. It is the feeling of ill-being associated with various types and phases of mental illness. Wellness has been defined as subjective feeling of being in a positive state of existence. Recent literature on mental health repeatedly emphasizes that absence of illness and presence of wellness are not synonymous; these have been found to be slightly and negatively correlated (Heady, Holmst and Wearing, 1985). The World Health Organisation has consistently highlighted the significance of wellness on defining mental health. SWB as a multidimensional construct involving factors like happiness, positive affect, social sensitivity etc (Larsen & Diener, 1985; Diener & Lucas, 2000). Diener, Suh and Oishi (1997) enumerated the three primary components of SWB: satisfaction, pleasant affect, and low level of unpleasant affect, each of which can in turn be broken

into subdivision. Global satisfaction can be divided into satisfaction with the various domains of life such as recreation, love, marriage, friendship, and so on. Pleasant affect can be split into specific emotions such as joy, affection, and pride. Finally, pleasant or unpleasant affect can be separated into specific emotions and moods such as shame, guilt, sadness, anger and anxiety. Thus, it is a measure of quality of life (Schwartz, 1999).

Role stress refers to the conflict and tension due to the roles being enacted by a person at any given point of time. (Pareek, 2003). Enacted in the context of organizations, such role stresses are called organizational role stress. Any organization may be perceived as a system of roles. These roles are different from positions or offices in the organization. According to Katz and Kahn (1966), office is a relational or power related concept. Office is concerned with the hierarchical positions and privileges, whereas role refers to the obligations attached to that office. Thus, office defines the power of the holder Mintzberg, (1983). Role determines the obligation of the person holding that office. Pestonjee and Pareek (1997) explains role as the totality of formal tasks, informal tasks and acts as organized by an individual. Each individual is a member of social systems and the expectation as well as demand of one may put pressure on the other. There are 2 role systems; Role Space and Role Set . Both have a built in potential for conflict and stress (Pareek, 2003).

Dohrenwend (2000) asserted that three lines of research provide strong evidence that environmental adversity is important in the occurrence of not only of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but also of other types of psychopathology, including major depression, alcoholism, substance use disorders, antisocial personality disorder and non specific disorder stress. Dohrenwend developed a basic proposition that the likeliness of onset of the above types of disorder increases with two factors (i) the proportion of the individual's usual activities in which uncontrollable negative changes takes place following a major negative event: and (ii) how central the uncontrollable negative changes are to the individual's important goals and values. Robinson (2000) studied how daily life events influence the affective and

cognitive components of well being (WB). Results from cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of undergraduates showed that life events are closely related to mood states, mood states are closely related to cognitive wellness. And mood states appear to serve as the nexus through which changing life circumstances affect cognitive wellness. These results are consistent with mood-mediation model, which assumes that mood states serves as a reactive index, and proves a hedonic summary of recent life experiences. The role of available internal and environmental resources has also been considered. However, specific studies on organizational role stress with special emphasis on MBA professionals are rare.

It may be expected that organizational role stress will operate in interaction with the general ill-being and well-being. There is an expected high relationship of organizational role stress with these two. Thus it was hypothesized that:

- There would be significant positive relationship of subjectively experienced Distress and Organisational role stress and significant negative relationship of Wellness with Distress and Organisational role stress among MBA professionals.
- The subjectively experienced Distress, Wellness and Organisational Role stress among MBA professionals would differ significantly between the male and females.
- The subjectively experienced Distress, Wellness and Organisational Role stress among MBA professionals would differ significantly between the high and low age groups.

Methodology of the Study

Sample

Data were collected from six companies and industries of Haryana where MBA professionals are working. Purposive sampling technique was used to locate MBA professionals after fixing certain parameters in terms of the age range, the socio economic background and the educational qualifications. A total of 101 respondents, 60 were male and 41 female. The mean age was 29.13 years with a mean work experience of 4.29 years. The mean per

capita income was Rs. 9331.00. Among the respondents 67% were unmarried and 33% married.

Measures

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) Goldberg and Hiller (1979)

The General Health questionnaire was designed to be a self-administered screening test aimed at detecting psychiatric disorders among respondents. There are different versions of GHQ available depending upon the number and nature of items. GHQ-28, containing 28 items, is derived from factor analyses of GHQ-60 and consists of 4 subscales of somatic symptoms, depression, anxiety and severe depression. Each item has four response alternatives. Its Split-half reliability is .97. Its sensitivity and specificity are .8 and .88 respectively.

PGI- Well-Being Scale: It was developed by Verma, Dubey and Gupta 1983

The PGI Well-Being Scale is a 20 items scale constructed with a low difficulty level to suit Indian conditions. The scale is self-administered and the instructions are provided in the beginnings of the questionnaire. The participants are asked how they had been feeling these days (past one month). Its Kuder –Richardson reliability is .98, while the Test-Retest reliability is .91.

Organisational Role Stress Scale (ORS-Scale) by Pareek (2003)

It consists of 50 items which include 10 different domains, namely, Self-Role Distance, Inter-Role Distance, Role stagnation, Role Isolation, Role ambiguity, Role Expectation Conflict, Role Overload, Role Erosion, Resource Inadequacy and Personal Inadequacy.

Results

The Pearson's product Moment correlations coefficient values were calculated to test Hypothesis 1. Results indicated that for the total sample, Distress was significantly and positively associated with Organizational Role Stress ($r = 0.35, p < 0.01$) and negatively and significantly associated with wellness ($r = -0.44, p < 0.01$). Wellness was significantly and negatively associated with organizational stress ($r = -0.25, p < 0.01$). Therefore Hypothesis 1 was accepted. Subsequently, the means

and standard deviations of Distress, Organizational role stress and Wellness for women and men separately as well as for the total sample were calculated. For testing the Hypothesis 2, t-tests were calculated to determine whether there existed significant sex difference in the above variables. The results are presented in Table 1.

The results indicate that both men and women experience equal level of general distress, While General wellness is higher among women. Organizational role stress is higher among men although the t-value falls just below statistical significance (p being 0.054). Therefore hypothesis 2b only was accepted and hypotheses 2a and 2c were rejected. Subsequently, the means and standard deviations of Distress, Organizational role stress and wellness were calculated for subjects of high and low age group. For testing Hypothesis 3, t-tests were conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 reveals that persons below or equal to 30 years of age report lesser Distress than persons above 30 years of age. But no significant age difference was found in Organizational role stress and mental health indices of MBA professionals in terms of Wellness. Therefore hypothesis 3a only was accepted and hypotheses 3b and 3c were rejected).

Discussion

Dimension	Total Sample (N=101)		Males (N=60)		Females (N=41)		t - Values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Distress	1.99	3.07	1.95	2.90	2.05	3.34	-0.16
Wellness	13.81	4.92	13.00	4.86	15.00	4.81	- 2.04*
Organizational role stress	73.58	24.05	77.38	26.86	68.02	8.13	1.95

* $p < 0.05$

Table 1. Mean, SD and t values for Distress, Wellness and ORS of MBA Professionals (Male and Female Subjects).

Dimensions	Older Subjects (above 30 Years) N=38		Younger Subjects (below 30 Years) N=63		t-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Distress	2.76	3.48	1.52	2.72	1.994*
Wellness	13.00	4.37	14.30	5.19	- 1.293
Organizational role stress	78.53	28.43	70.60	20.65	1.617

* $p < 0.05$

Table 2. Mean, SD and t values for Distress, Wellness and ORS of MBA Professionals (older and younger age groups).

Relationship between Distress, Wellness and Organizational role stress among MBA Professionals

Organizational Role Stress and distress are positively related and distress and wellness are negatively related. It is quite obvious that if an individual is suffering from work place stress it is more likely to affect his/her personal life. Study by Wheeler and Lyon (1992) suggests that stress can lead to social and domestic problems. If a person is stressed his general well-being will automatically decline. Smith, Johnson and Sarason (1978) found that discomfort scores were unrelated to positive and total change scores, but were significantly related to amount of negative change occurring over the previous year. Other researchers have reported similar findings (Nazi & Ronan, 1988) with regard to the dimensions of controllability; the low GHQ scorer's perceived events as within control whereas high scorers saw them as beyond control. Several researchers have reported similar findings. (Baumgardner, Heppner & Arkin, 1986). Present finding confirmed these studies.

Gender difference in wellness among MBA Professionals

The present findings reveal that women and men in MBA Profession were comparable in terms of distress, male had higher but not statically significant organization role stress than women and women had greater subjective sense of wellness. A number of earlier studies have also emphasized that working women in general face higher stress levels and possibly adverse health effects, presumably because they bear a greater and more diffuse workload than men. These asymmetries are manifested not only in terms of differential susceptibility and exposure to risks – for example vulnerability to sexual violence, but also fundamentally, in the power of men and women to manage their own lives, to cope with such risks, protect their lives and influence the direction of the health development process. This balance of power has generally favoured men and related women to a subordinate; disadvantaged position (Pan American Health Organization, 1997).

But in case of the present study it was seen that the women are in better position in terms of wellness. The World Health

Report (WHO, 1998) states categorically that women's health is inextricably linked to their status in society. So this increased wellness of female employees might be a result of higher social status associated with the MBA Profession.

On the basis of such evidence it may be said that so far as MBA profession in India is concerned, the status of the profession itself coupled with the higher social strata of most employees, and women are better off than men.

Effects of age on distress of MBA professionals

The results also indicated that the older age groups (above 30 years) of MBA professionals face greater distress than the younger generation. As people age, the ability to achieve relaxation response after a stressful event becomes more difficult. Aging may simply wear out the system in the brain that respond to stress. So, aged persons may find it difficult to cope with the great demands of their lives. Moreover, the MBA discipline is subjected to continuous and fast-paced changes that require continuous upgrading of knowledge on the part of the professionals. This also plays a significant part in contributing to stressful situation. A study by Holmes and Rahe (1967) indicated that changing to different lines of work are more stressful to elderly people than younger ones.)

Limitations of the Study

Keeping in view the time, money, resources, the present study has been limited to following points.

- A sample of 101 M.B.A Professionals including 60 men and 41 women were taken.
- Only M.B.A Professionals belonging to the areas of various industries and companies of Haryana were taken.
- Only three variables Distress, Wellness and ORS (Organisational Role Stress) were studied on MBA Professionals of Haryana.

Recommendations

A few recommendations of the present study are as follows

- The various factors like Distress, Wellness and ORS

(Organisational Role Stress) effects the managerial qualities of MBA Professionals of Haryana.

- The factor Distress was positively associated with Organizational Stress and negatively associated with Wellness. Wellness was negatively associated with Organisational Stress. So, Distress and Organisational Stress can be reduced to bring Wellness for keeping MBA Professionals in good general Mental Health.
- The research indicates that General Wellness is higher among women so preference may be given to females in this profession on gender basis.
- The research also indicates that the younger MBA Professionals below the age of 30 years have lesser distress than older MBA Professionals above the age of 30 years due to overload of job work and family responsibilities. Due to this reason, the younger MBA Professionals are better placed than older MBA Professionals.
- Similar studies can be made on other professionals taking other area of sample with the same factors or changed factors.

Conclusions

The present study reveals that among MBA professionals particularly of Haryana distress and wellness are closely associated with Organizational role stress. In other words, personal and professional stressors exert cumulative effect on the individuals. Women professionals have a greater feeling of wellness and less organizational stress than men professionals. The older age group is more distressed than the younger age group. Wellness and Organizational role stress can be predicted from the number of stressful life events. On the whole contrary to some findings, MBA profession in Haryana is not unusually stressful for its incumbents and follows the usual stress-diathesis model applicable in all other professions.

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