

Received : 29.07.2022 | Accepted : 01.11.2022 | Online published : 15.12.2022

https://doi.org/10.54986/irjee/2022/dec_spl/55-58I
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ESOCIETY OF
EXTENSION
EDUCATION

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Factors Influencing Job Stress of Agricultural Officers in Kerala : A Psycho–Personal Analysis**Reshma A .Victor¹, A. Anilkumar² and Smitha K.P³**

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation has been done on the basis of collected qualitative and quantitative data from primary sources and explored the factors influencing job stress of agricultural officers of Kerala State Department of Agriculture. The study was undertaken in the three zones of Kerala viz., Kasaragod from North Kerala, Thrissur from Central Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram from South Kerala. A sample of 180 Agricultural Officers was selected by using simple random sampling. A pre-tested structured interview schedule was prepared for data collection. Frequency, percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, simple correlation and factor analysis were employed in the analysis and interpretation. The study found that, majority (60%) of the respondents were having medium job stress. There was significant difference in job stress among the three districts. Using factor analysis, it was observed that out of the 12 components role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, under participation, powerlessness and strenuous working conditions were the major factors leading to the job stress. The results revealed that job experience, attitude towards profession, self-confidence, leadership quality and organizational climate were the main factors that influenced job stress.

Key words: factors influencing job stress; job stress; job experience; self-confidence; agricultural officers

Job stress is a growing problem around the world that affects not only the health and well-being of employees, but also the productivity of organisations. Job stress arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope. *Selye (1936)* defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". According to *Robbins (1999)* stress as "a dynamic condition in which an individual resist with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he / she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important." *Shukla and Garg (2013)* stated that stress was inevitable part of the employees were the systems, procedures and techniques are getting complicated with the use of new technology. *Rohit et al.* revealed that stress is felt by individual differently as it is dependent on the individual assessment of the situation and the resources in hand to face the stressful situation. *Ramanujam*

and Rani (2018) pointed out that the service sectors had undergone rapid and striking changes like policy changes due to globalization and liberalization, increased competition due to the entry of more private and foreign players, downsizing, introduction of new technologies etc. Due to these changes, the employees in the service sectors are experiencing high levels of stress.

Stress is one of the essential features of mental health of the ever changing and dynamic world. Stress has been viewed as a complex and dynamic transaction between individuals and their environments. It is a situation which will force a person to deviate from normal functioning due to the change (i.e., disrupt or enhance) in his or her psychological and/or physiological condition (*Ramanujam and Rani, 2018*). It is also a factor which potentially hinders organizational effectiveness by contributing to lower employee performance and to employee withdrawal

behaviour such as absenteeism and turnover. Stress has great impact on organization members' performance and activities.

Responsibilities are always related with some sort of stress. Positive stress is always required for one to carry out their responsibilities better, but many times the balance is lost and people react in unacceptable manner, which is not suitable for a professional who is supposed to carry out various functions and implement umpteen numbers of decisions. Development of our nation is in relation with development of farmers. It is through Agricultural Officers, the government executes various extension services, development policies and Transfer of Technology (TOT) for the development of farmers and agriculture itself. The effectiveness of all these programs solely depends on the job performance and efficiency of Agricultural Officers who acts as the key extension personnel at panchayath level. It is highly significant for the management, to study the job stress and psychology of these officers, since this affects their interaction with farmers and various other decision-making processes. Therefore, a study to analyze the factors influencing job stress of agricultural officers of Kerala State Department of is of high relevance and importance.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in three zones of Kerala viz., Kasaragod from North Kerala, Thrissur from Central Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram from South Kerala. The Agricultural Officers working in the Department of Agricultural Development & Farmers Welfare in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Kasaragod were selected for the study. Altogether, 180 Agricultural Officers of which 60 from Thiruvananthapuram, 60 from Thrissur, 60 from Kasaragod district were selected using simple random sampling procedure from each district. Out of the sixty respondents it was ensured that 30 were female and 30 were male respondents. A well-structured open-ended interview schedule was used for data collection from the Agricultural Officers. The data collected from the respondents were scored, tabulated and analysed using appropriate parametric and non- parametric statistical methods.

Job stress was measured by using the scale developed by *Shrivastav and Singh (1981)*. This scale measures the amount of stress which employees perceive from various constituents and conditions of their work.

The scale consists of 46 statements, each to be rated on five-point continuum namely strongly disagree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with scores of 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively for positive statements and reversed for negative statements. Out of 46 statements 28 were positive and 18 were negative statements. Role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and non- profitability are the sub-components of job stress and these are related to all relevant components of work life which cause stress in one or another way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Job stress of agricultural officers : Job stress is defined as the destructive physical, mental, and emotional reaction when there exists a mismatch between job demand and competencies.

Job stress had twelve sub-components and the score of all sub-components were added to obtain the total score of job stress. The total score of job stress varied from 46-230 with an average of 142.26. The range of the job stress was grouped into low (<125), medium (125-159), high (>159) by taking equal call interval for group.

The findings in Table 1 revealed that comparatively more number (60 %) of respondents were in medium job stress category, while 20 per cent had low and 20 per cent experienced high job stress.

The district wise comparison on the job stress of Agricultural Officers revealed that job stress was highest for the respondents from Thrissur district

Table 1. Distribution of Agricultural Officers based on the level of job stress.

Category	Th.Puram (n=60)		Thrissur (n=60)		Kasaragod (n=60)		Total (N=180)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low (<125)	14	23.33	8	13.33	14	23.33	36	20
Medium (125-159)	40	66.67	30	50.00	38	63.33	108	60
High (>159)	6	10.00	22	36.67	8	13.33	36	20

Min = 46, Max = 230, Mean = 142.26, SD = 16.75,
Th.Puram=Thiruvananthapuram

(36.67%). However, in general, majority of the respondents belongs to medium category of job stress irrespective of the districts they work, especially by the AO's of Thrissur district. The work load, the pressure in dealing with farmers, handling two or three offices at a time, burdened with office work and hence getting little time to be in farmers field thereby being in the unhappy list of farmers, outlay sourcing and distribution problems were the practical reasons that could have affected the minds of Agricultural Officers who opined that they face stress during work.

Distribution of respondents based on factor loadings of subcomponents of job stress : Factor analysis was performed to understand the contribution of each dimension to job stress and the results are presented Table 2. Factor 1 explained 47 per cent of total variation present in job stress of Agricultural Officers followed by factor 2 (36.7%). The first two factors together accounted for 83.82 per cent of the total variation and the influence of subcomponents was identified on the basis of loadings of component on factors and communality.

The table shows that role overload (0.60), role ambiguity (0.70), role conflict (0.71), group and political pressure (0.72) and strenuous working conditions (0.67) had high loadings on factor 1. While under participation (0.76) and powerlessness (0.79) had high loadings on factor 2. In order all these components had high communality ranged from 0.56 to 0.66. Above 50 per cent of respondents indicated that high percentage of variation explained by each component. Role overload (0.62), role ambiguity

(0.66), role conflict (0.67), group and political pressure (0.56), under participation (0.62) and powerlessness (0.66) and strenuous working conditions (0.59) were the major components that contributed more to job stress faced by the Agricultural Officers.

Factors influencing job stress of agricultural officers : The results in the Table 3. reveals that out of the thirteen factors selected five factors viz., job experience, attitude towards profession, self-confidence, leadership quality and organizational climate were significantly correlated with job stress. Job experience had significant and negative correlation at 5 per cent level of significance, whereas, attitude towards profession, self-confidence, leadership quality and organizational climate were found negatively significant with the job stress at 1 per cent level of significance.

Job stress is related to years of job experience, this might be due the fact that if the experience increases the officers were totally aware about their work so, they can handle emergency situations quickly. The more favourable attitude towards profession helps in building up sufficient technical competency and communication ability and self-confidence. Self-confidence helps the Agricultural Officer for implementing different schemes, policies, solving farmer's problems and solving the conflicts. Leadership quality gives more self-confidence to do work and the leader can manage their organization very well. Organizational climate is the enduring quality of the internal environment experienced by its members and, which influence their behaviour. Organizational climate describes

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on Factor loadings of subcomponents of job stress.

Components	Factor1	Factor2	Communality
Role overload	0.60	-0.009	0.62
Role ambiguity	0.70	0.24	0.66
Role conflict	0.71	0.23	0.67
Group and political pressure	0.72	0.01	0.56
Responsibility for persons	0.19	-0.41	0.41
Under participation	0.14	0.76	0.62
Powerlessness	0.3	0.79	0.66
Poor peer relations	0.03	0.40	0.33
Intrinsic impoverishment	0.26	0.41	0.43
Low status	0.07	0.41	0.49
Strenuous working conditions	0.67	0.04	0.59
Non profitability	0.30	-0.05	0.35
Variance explained (%)	47	36.70	
Cumulative variance (%)	47	83.82	

Table 3. Correlation of job stress with profile characteristics

Factors	'r' value
Age	-0.078
Marital status	0.026
Educational status	0.001
Family size	0.039
Job experience	-0.219*
Promotional opportunities	-0.033
Attitude towards profession	-0.326**
Self confidence	-0.336**
Perception of work load	0.057
Political orientation	-0.122
Leadership quality	-0.282**
Organizational climate	-0.350**
Distance from work place	-0.117
*Significant at 5 % level **Significant at 1 % level	

the personality of the organization and influences the motivation and behaviour of the members of the organization (Anshida Beevi et al., 2017).

The study also depicted that marital status, educational status, family size and perception of work load were found to have no significant effect on job stress of Agricultural officers of Kerala State Department of Agriculture. Age, promotional opportunities, political orientation and distance from workplace were found to have negative correlation with job stress.

CONCLUSION

Job stress is a growing problem around the world that affects not only the health and well-being of employees, but also the productivity of organisations. Job stress arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope. The study found that, majority (60%) of the respondents were having medium job stress. There was significant difference in job stress among the three districts. Using factor analysis, it was observed that out of the 12 components role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, under participation, powerlessness and strenuous working conditions were the major contributors to the job stress. The main factors which influenced the job stress of Agricultural officers of Kerala State Department of Agriculture were job experience, attitude towards profession, self-confidence, leadership quality and organizational climate. Job stress is related to years of job experience, this might be due the fact that if the experience increases the officers were totally aware about their work so, they can handle emergency situations quickly. The more favorable attitude towards profession helps in building up sufficient technical

competency and communication ability and self-confidence. Self-confidence helps the Agricultural Officer for implementing different schemes, policies, solving farmer's problems and solving the conflicts. Leadership quality gives more self-confidence to do work and the leader can manage their organization very well. Organizational climate is the enduring quality of the internal environment experienced by its members and, which influence their behavior.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors have no conflict of interest.

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