ABSTRACT

The theme of this study was to delineate the stressors faced by academic managers of higher educational institutions at their work – situation. The study also aimed at identifying the effect of personality factors, behavioural patterns and coping strategies on organisational role stress experienced by them and the mental and physical disease symptoms manifested by academic managers.

It was assumed that the intrinsic stressors at the institutions, socio-demographic profile, life-style, personality factors, conflict management styles, motivational needs, mental and physical health status, and the coping strategies adopted would have its effect on the organisational role stress experienced by academic managers of higher educational institutions. It was also anticipated that the mental as well as physical health status of AMHE would differ with different coping strategy used by them.

A sample of forty-eight principals and heads of university departments was used for the study. The participants of the study were invited to answer the 'stress-profile' questionnaire. In addition, four Physiological Stress-Tests were conducted at Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College, Sion, Mumbai.
The results indicated that the academic managers experienced high levels of role stress in the areas of Role Overload (m : 11.29), Resource Inadequacy (m : 10.65), Inter - Role Distance (m : 9.88), Role Isolation (m : 9.40), Role Erosion (m : 8.90), Personal Inadequacy (m : 8.48), Role Expectation Conflict (m : 8.23) and Role Stagnation (m : 8.10). The Self Role Distance (m : 8.50) and Role Ambiguity (m : 7.08) showed lower levels of mean score.

While delineating the intrinsic stressors at the institution it was found that maximum number of principals (61.3 %) were experiencing high stress due to the ‘Government Functioning’ and the ‘General Administration’. Whereas 58.8 % of the heads of the university departments found ineffective University Functioning itself as their major stressor at work. It was concluded that stress due to University Functioning increased the IRD, RS, RE, RO, RI, PI, SRD, RA and RIn dimensions of role stress.

Stress due to Management of Staff increased IRD, REC, RI, PI and SRD dimensions of role stress. Whereas stress due to the general administration AMHE showed increased levels in RO, REC, SRD and RIn dimensions. The Student - Activities lowered the role stress levels in RS, SRD and RE dimensions in case of the AMHE.
While studying the personality factors, it was found that the 'Thinking' factor of personality helped in reduction of RA and PI whereas 'Judgement' helped in reducing RE amongst AMHE. The 'Sensation' factor increased IRD, the 'Feeling' factor increased PI. Whereas, with 'Intuition' factor of the personality, an increase was observed in levels of RE.

The Competing Style of conflict management helped in reduction of RA and the Compromise Style increased RA among academic managers. It was found that IRD, RS, REC and RA levels of role stress decreased with a high Achievement need. With need for Control, PI decreased amongst AMHEs. Whereas, REC, RE and RI levels of role stress decreased with Dependency need. The Influence Motivation was found to increase levels of PI dimension.

'Active Coping' and 'Planning' were found to be most useful coping styles and with increase in 'Planning' behaviour neurotic symptoms reduced in number.

The study has established a correlation between the ORS scores and the mental and physical disease symptoms amongst the academic managers. Two cases of academic managers were studied in order to get an insight into 'person – environment' interaction.
It was concluded that various factors contribute towards the experience of stress. The stress responses were multidimensional, involving different kinds of responses in different systems, different individuals and different situations. Hence, it is immensely important to study individual as a whole in a specific situation at a specific period of time. Stress amongst the academic managers can be tackled by viewing 'person – environment fit', i.e. the whole system instead of parts. In conclusion, it was suggested that a deep insight and awareness of the higher educational system, personality and behavioural patterns would lead to stress management amongst the academic managers.