CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of this study demonstrate varying moderating effects in the three career stages. It facilitates an understanding and awareness about the role stress variables impacting commitment and job satisfaction at each career stage. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations and directions for future research are suggested.

5.2 SALIENT FINDINGS

The study has thrown up some interesting findings. They are:

The confirmatory factor analysis proves the goodness of fit for the role stress factor model comprising of ten factors. A higher fit statistics for inter role distance, role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy is observed.

There is evidence to show that the magnitude of stress experienced in the three stages of the career is different. The mid career respondents experience more role stress as compared to the early and late career respondents.
Analysis of variance exhibits a significant difference between the three career stage in terms of overall role stress, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, self-role distance and role ambiguity. Further the results of the Duncan’s test show that the respondents in the mid career stage experience more overall role stress, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, role erosion and self role distance as compared to early career respondents. Comparative analyses between the mid and late career respondents show that former experience more overall role stress; inter role distance, role overload, and role ambiguity. Comparison between the early and late career respondents show that the latter experience more self-role distance. Analysis of variance confirms that there is significant difference in the level of stress experienced by the respondents in different career stages.

Role stress is significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction for early and mid career respondents. However, for late career the relationship is not significant. An insignificant negative relationship exists between role stress and commitment for early and mid career stage. A weak positive relationship between role stress and commitment for the late career stage is noticed. This shows that compared to commitment, the job satisfaction of respondents belonging to early and mid career stage is adversely affected due to the role stressors. Similar association as in role stress-commitment relationship, is noticed for role stress-motivation relationship too.

In all the three career stages, role stress is observed to have a significant adverse effect on self-efficacy. In the early and mid career stages, role stress is observed to adversely affect locus of control. However, no such effect is observed in the late career stage.

Locus of control shows a significant positive association with job satisfaction with regard to early career and mid career stages. For late career
the relationship is found negative. With regard to commitment, locus of control displays a positive relationship for the three career stages. However, the relationship is significant only for mid career stage. In the case of motivation too, positive association is noticed for the three career stages. Similar associations between locus of control and self-efficacy are noticed for early and mid career stage. However, for the late career stage, negative association between locus of control and self-efficacy is noted. Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that locus of control, as a variable does not have a very strong impact on other variables like role stress, commitment, job satisfaction, motivation and self efficacy, especially for the late career respondents.

Self-efficacy displays a weak positive relationship with job satisfaction except for the mid career stage where the association is found significant. Considering commitment, a significant negative association with self efficacy is observed for the early career stage, negative association for the late career stage and a weak positive relationship is noticed for the mid career stage. A significant positive association is noticed with motivation for the mid and late career stages.

Personal inadequacy and role ambiguity as independent predictors seem to impact commitment adversely in the early career stage. Similar effect is observed for role isolation, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy in the mid career stage. So too is the case with inter role distance and role overload in the late career stage.

Except for personal inadequacy and role erosion, all other dimensions of role stress have an adverse impact on job satisfaction for the early career stage. Only three dimensions of role stress (role stagnation, role isolation and role ambiguity) have an adverse impact on job satisfaction for
the mid career stage. For the late career stage, role stagnation and self-role distance adversely impact job satisfaction. Overall role stress as a predictor adversely affects job satisfaction at the early and mid career stages.

Motivation, as an additional predictor of commitment performs poorly for the early career stage, whereas, it performs well in the mid and late career stages. Locus of control as an additional predictor of commitment seems to perform modestly in the mid and late career stages. However, it does not predict commitment at the early career stage. Self-efficacy acts as an additional predictor of commitment for the early career stage.

As an additional predictor of job satisfaction, motivation proves to be significant for all the stages. Locus of control as an additional predictor of job satisfaction performs significantly at the early and mid-career stage. However, it is a poor predictor at the late career stage. Self-efficacy proves to be a significant additional predictor of job satisfaction for early career stage. No such effect is noticed in either mid or late career stages.

Motivation is a positive moderator of role stress-commitment relationship in the early career stage. It reduces the negative impact of overall role stress, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, personal inadequacy, self-role distance, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy on commitment. It performs as a significant negative moderator of stress at the mid career stage for overall role stress, inter-role distance, role expectation conflict, role overload and resource inadequacy. No interaction effect is observed for the late career stage.

Motivation is a significant negative moderator of job satisfaction at the late career stage. It strengthens the negative relationship between role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, resource inadequacy and job
satisfaction. No interaction effect of motivation on satisfaction is observed for the early and mid-career stages.

Locus of control as a moderator of commitment shows negative interaction effect with role overload and role ambiguity at the early career stage. Only one negative interaction effect with role expectation conflict and one positive interaction with role erosion are observed at the mid-career stage. For the late career one positive interaction is observed with inter-role distance.

Locus of control as a moderator of satisfaction shows a positive and significant effect with overall role stress, inter-role distance and personal inadequacy for the late career only. For early and mid career stages no interaction effect is observed.

Self-efficacy as a moderator of commitment positively and significantly impacts role stagnation at the early career stage. As a moderator of job satisfaction, self-efficacy impacts role isolation, self-role distance and role ambiguity positively and significantly at the early career stage. No other interaction effect is significant at the mid and late career stages.

5.3 OTHER OBSERVATIONS

This section reports general observations of the officers. Only 17% of the sample provided data for the analysis.

The respondents are of the opinion that the job of an Indian Administrative Service officer is very challenging and interesting. There are lots of opportunities and possibilities in the existing framework to do good work for the depressed and marginalized section of the society. This is a job
where one can see a tremendous change for the betterment of the society provided one takes good decisions. It commands the respect of the society. The amount of experience one gains and the variety of duties and functions one is assigned with in this job can rarely be matched by any other job. The IAS facilitates individual initiative, dynamism and forward-looking proactive endeavors in any assignment that the officer takes up.

This job gives immense job satisfaction. The general understanding is that job satisfaction is directly related to the post the officer holds. Moreover, the level of job satisfaction goes up and down depending on the assignment. Some assignments may carry importance due to the type of assignment itself. In this case, the feeling of accomplishment is directly related to the amount of hard work the officer puts in the job.

However, officers are of the opinion that there is a considerable amount of stress in their job. They have provided some subjective observations about stress and its causes. This section analyses the factors responsible for stress highlighted by them. It also reports suggestions given by them to address stress.

Officers expressed that the pay, benefits and work conditions of the service are less attractive than the private sector. A decade ago, these were much better off than the private sector. This causes considerable stress to officers.

A common feeling is that the stress level depends on the post occupied by the officer. In some posts the officer, has to work long hours. Therefore, the officer may not be able to spend adequate time with family. This affects the work life balance and can be very stressful at times.
Respondents also opined that the public image of the IAS has deteriorated gradually over the years. This is because of too much of political interference. Corruption is yet another reason. In Tamil Nadu, the political scenario plays a major role in creating stress. Invariably, ‘right man for the right job’ policy is not adopted. There is possibility of good officers being allotted useless jobs while incompetent officers are given important posts. Sometimes an officer may hold many such charges at a time. This only compounds the problem. Postings, which are politically, influenced results in role erosion. This to a large extent affects the morale and satisfaction of IAS officers.

Political interference takes several other forms too. It includes preventing the officer from discharging the legitimate duties, effecting transfers without valid reason, giving directions to favor and award contracts irrespective of the merits also causes stress.

Further, there is a considerable level of groupism among IAS officers. This creates a scope for building animosity among officers. This is another stressor that demoralizes the officers.

Career planning and management are not given due importance in the existing system. The performance appraisal of officers is often subjective and not objective. Officers opined that they face discrimination in postings. Proximity to politicians and being a part of a preferred group are common criteria for discrimination.

Conferred officers expressed the feeling that they are seldom treated on par with direct recruits. Often the gap between the two groups is wide. Such feelings cause conflict between them. This adds on to the feeling of stress.
Officers expressed misgivings at the lack of support in the service. Sometimes, work done in good faith is later found to be against the rules. This can cause a lot of embarrassment. Without a support mechanism, the officer feels lost and consequently stressed.

Conflict between rational choices and actual choices in public organization in decision making slackens morale and motivation. This may cause stress as well. Officers felt that more of their time is spent on addressing problems of government servants. Whereas, ideally, they must spend it on addressing issues related to the public. This is especially so because these officers are expected to serve the public.

Officers felt that much depends on factors outside their control. In some situations, they felt that they could hardly influence the outcomes. Others in fact control the outcome. This creates a feeling of anxiety and fear. Officers expressed discontent that their actions are sometimes oriented towards meeting selfish ends of vested interests. In fact this is against the tenets of the service.

These observations are similar to those reported in the empirical analysis. Together, they point to the fact that the IAS officers do experience role stress; however the nature and magnitude differ across the career stages.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS

A variety of implications emerge from the results of the present study. They point to the need for stress management initiatives and appropriate training intervention at different levels. They are discussed below.
5.4.1 Stress Management Initiatives

Based on the findings of the research and the suggestions from the officers about their experience in dealing with stress, three important initiatives are suggested. They include initiatives at the level of the individual officer, the administrative system and the support group. These are discussed here.

5.4.1.1 Initiatives by the Officer

The nature of the job and the personality of the individual are the major two factors that influence stress. Stress management initiatives must address both. Some jobs are inherently stressful, others are not. When posted to a stressful job, the incumbent has no choice but to face it. Role stress largely is a result of one’s internal makeup. Hence, the officer’s personality is important. For, it can either enable the officer to cope with stress or make it worse such that the officer is unable to respond positively to the demands of the job. Developing an objective and optimistic approach is ultimately useful in coping with stress.

Officers felt that it is quite necessary to maintain balance amidst various aspects of life. They observed that the ability to detach oneself from the consequences of the job is perhaps a good guarantee against job stress. Advance planning, efficient time management, developing good interpersonal relationship and above all systematic life style (including the food, exercise, physical activities, meditation etc.) complement each other. Together, they are useful in keeping the officers composed and levelheaded if not always, at least most of the time.
There is belief amongst officers that high productivity is achieved by smart work rather than hard work. A good work life balance helps. Officers with a supportive family find it easier to work well and are often more productive.

It is desirable for officers to have an inspiring personality. Officers need to have a good public image. Officers must watch out not to consciously do wrong things. Officers who are honest, hardworking and patient find that it pays off in the long term. Individuals with a service mind are alone suited to join this service. This will ensure a sound personality - job fit.

5.4.1.2 Initiatives by the administrative system

Certain initiatives to reduce stress should also be taken by the government, which plays a dominant role in administration of the nation. The politicians who are the elected representatives of the people govern the nation. Typically, the administrative officers, take directions from the politicians. They are the interface between the government and the people. Politicians often strongly influence the bureaucracy. They influence the functioning of the officers in the administrative service. Often, there are chances for the politicians and the officers to take confronting positions rather than complementary positions (Radin 2007). This is detrimental to the interests of the nation. It can also lead to stress. In order to prevent such situations, the idea of value-based work ethics should be ingrained into politicians and officers.

Provision of serene, clean and a pleasant office ambience are also desirable. Office infrastructure development must get sufficient priority. This will go a long way in making the work place comfortable.
To attract the best talent in India, salary and other perks must be made attractive and at least commensurate with other competing job opportunities. Posting the right man in the right place at the right time is to be followed as a principle from top to the bottom. The posting should be merit based and definitely not based on other considerations. The roles and responsibilities of the officer should be well defined. Clarity on the authority and corresponding responsibilities is very essential to avoid role stress. Moreover, the government can do a lot with decentralization and delegation of powers at various levels. Promotions must be merit based. A uniform policy of transfer and a minimum tenure in key positions are other requirements for improving the morale of officers.

5.4.1 Initiatives by the Support Group

For the administrative officers the support group consists of not only the, peers and the family but also the political bosses. Each of these subgroups must be sensitized to support the officers whenever there is a need to. Politicians must be willing to back the good efforts of the officers. Peers must develop strong interpersonal relations, which can provide the comfort when the officer is in distress. The family must play a positive role in ensuring work life balance. This is possible through emphasizing the need to spend quality time with the family. A more important yet poorly recognized subgroup is the public. This subgroup must recognize and acknowledge good work of the officers. Public support and acclaim will not only negate the ill effects of stress but also motivate the officers.

5.4.2 Training Intervention

The Indian Administrative Service was envisaged on a number of assumptions. Basically, it was designed as a way of developing a national
outlook. Second, it was meant to recruit the best and the brightest in the country. And third, it was meant to create a sense of independence and impartiality. Despite these assumptions, several weaknesses in posting patterns and training experiences were reported by Radin (2007). The training of the IAS is unable to facilitate an overall growth of both the officers and the system (Bragg 2004).

A critical analysis of the course manual of the foundation course conducted at the national academy of administration in Mussoorie suggest that there has been very little attention to issues such as dealing with politicians, serving as a bridge between people and politicians, managing other forms of intergovernmental relationships, understanding the differences between jurisdictions and issue related to multiple accountability expectations including issues of corruption. The two years of training at the beginning of a career may not prepare an individual for all experiences within the Indian Administrative Service. (Radin 2007). It can be stated that such issues become a source of stress for officers subsequently during their career. A differentiated training intervention with regard to coping with stressors is definitely required for all officers at particular points in their career. A case for such training is discussed herein.

Training intervention may be primary, secondary and tertiary (Sutherland and Cooper 2000). Primary intervention aims to eliminate, reduce or control stressors. Secondary intervention aims to develop coping strategies through education and training. Tertiary intervention aims to cure stressed individuals. Stress intervention usually focuses on these three types. However, in this research, secondary intervention in the form of training is alone examined. A modest attempt to identify training specific to each career stage is also attempted.
Stress is a misfit between the demands of the environment and the individual’s abilities. This imbalance may be corrected, according to the current requirements. It may be done, by adjusting demands of the environment to fit the individual’s personality or by strengthening the individual’s ability to cope, or both.

Furthermore, it may also help to explore officer’s perceptions towards their roles. The job personality fit must be assessed before postings are made. Sufficient help must be extended to them to develop coping strategies to tide over mismatches. This will help reduce role related stress. The absence of effective coping strategies may lead to physical and mental exhaustion. Ultimately, this may affect the functioning, and effectiveness of the individual officer and the system.

An officer must take efforts for reducing stress. Individual efforts may include adopting time management techniques, increasing physical exercise, relaxation, meditation etc. These have been found to be fairly effective. However, besides emphasizing on individual efforts at managing role stress, emphasis must also be made on need for social and organizational supports. Moreover, better resources and opportunity to extend collaboration among officers is suggested.

The analyses show that IAS officers no doubt experience role stress. The nature of role stress is different at different stages of the career. The early career officers are more stressed as compared to the mid and late career officers. Therefore, intervention must be stage specific.

The findings of the study suggest that there is a need for collective pro-active efforts to tackle stress experienced by the IAS officers. It is desirable that emphasis is on prevention of stress rather than on the treatment
of its effects. It may not be possible to eliminate stress entirely. However, it is possible to reduce its impact through appropriate coping strategies. Such coping strategies should be taught through training programs held periodically. As the role stress is different at the different career stages, it is essential that stress reduction training programs must address issues related to the relevant career stage of the participants of the program. A universal stress-training program across all stages may have little use.

Training programs that are specifically designed to reduce anxiety of officers would be worthwhile. Such training programs will be especially useful to counter stress of officers reporting low personal inadequacy. This stress is due to the officer’s belief that he lacks in knowledge, skill and training required for the role. Another stressor that has been identified is self-role distance. The stress is due to a conflict between the self-concept and the expectation from the role. Inter role distance, role isolation, role stagnation, role conflict and role ambiguity, role overload are other stressors affecting officers in the early career stage. Inter role distance is felt by the officers when they are not able to balance work and family demands. The officers experience role isolation when there is no linkage between their roles and other roles. Role stagnation arises due to lack of learning and growth opportunities. An officer experiencing role conflict has two or more expectations placed on him. Conflicts arise as meeting one makes it difficult to meet the other. Role ambiguity arises because of insufficient and ambiguous information about role expectations. Role overload is another stressor, which refers to the number of different roles a person has to fulfill. It occurs when the demands of the role are too great that the officer experiences difficulty in performing the roles.

According to the career theory (Super, 1990) during the early career stage, an individual's greatest need is professional developmental support as
the individual seeks to identify and build competencies. The eight role stressors merit attention. Training programs must focus attention on sensitizing officers on each of these stressors. Emphasis must be made not only on recognizing the stressor early enough but also understanding the techniques of managing the stressors. Perhaps, it would be helpful to identify training programs that facilitate socialization, goal setting and self-management of new officers. Mid career stage training must essentially focus on managing role ambiguity, role stagnation and role isolation. The individual at the later career stage, are likely to cope with stressors in their own way (Keenan and Newton 1986; McEnrue 1989). However, two key stressors of this stage are inter-role distance and role overload. Consequently, officers tend to experience more work-life imbalance. Training must therefore focus on this dimension.

5.5 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The stress and coping styles of candidates preparing for the civil services examination could be initiated. This would give an idea of the nature of stress faced by these candidates. This may further provide some fresh insights into exploratory stage stress. Future research could examine the level of stress experienced by regular and conferred (promotee) officers. This would help to narrow down differences if any between these two groups of officers. The effects of transition stress may also be attempted. This will perhaps throw light on useful coping strategies.