ABSTRACT

Career stage is one of the most dynamic areas of research today. Hall (1976) observed that people in different career stages have different needs, expectations, attitude, perception and behavior. The current study is based on the premise that the nature of role stress experienced at each career stage also differs. The study attempts to understand this difference.

An attempt is also made to study if the nature of moderating effect of variables such as motivation, locus of control and self-efficacy on the stress-commitment and stress-satisfaction relationship also differs across career stages. The findings of the study would help the administration to design specific stress intervention programs for different career stages.

For the current study the respondents comprised of officers of the Indian Administrative Services, belonging to the Tamil Nadu Cadre. They are divided into three groups corresponding to early, mid and late career stages (Rabinowitz and Hall 1981).

The primary data for the analysis is elicited by administering a questionnaire. The present study established the reliability and the validity of the measures used. Statistical tools like Pearson’s product moment correlation, Confirmatory factor analysis, Moderator multiple regression, ANOVA and Duncan tests are used for analysis and discussion.
Analysis of variance confirms that there is significant difference in the level of role stress experienced by the respondents in different career stages. The correlation results further prove that for early and mid career respondents, commitment, in comparison to job satisfaction is adversely affected due to the role stressors. The results of moderator multiple regression analysis further confirms that the commitment and job satisfaction of the respondents in their early career are affected adversely. Personal inadequacy and role ambiguity as independent predictors seem to impact commitment adversely in the early career stage. Role ambiguity continues as a strong predictor of both commitment and job satisfaction for early and mid career stages. For late career respondents, role overload adversely impacts commitment and self-role distance impacts job satisfaction. The job satisfaction of respondents across the three career stage is adversely affected by role stagnation.

Motivation and locus of control, as an additional predictor of commitment performs well in mid and late career stages. Self-efficacy acts as an additional predictor of commitment and job satisfaction only for the early career stage. As an additional predictor of job satisfaction, motivation proves to be significant for all the stages.

The nature of moderating effect also differs across career stages. As a moderator, motivation reduces the negative impact of role stress on commitment for the early career stage. On the contrary, for the mid career stage, motivation proves as a negative buffer of role stress-commitment relationship. For the late career, motivation does not contribute as a moderator
in reducing the negative impact of role stress on satisfaction. This clearly proves that the respondent’s expectations get incongruent with the constraints experienced as they keep progressing up the career stage. This often results in stress. Here, the effect of motivation in stress reduction is less pronounced. Consequently, job satisfaction and commitment is reduced.

Locus of control as a moderator seems to be helping the late career respondents in reducing the impact of role stress on commitment and satisfaction when compared to early and mid career respondents. The internal locus of the respondents in the late career stage facilitates better coping with both inter and intra organizational pressures. For the early and mid career respondent’s role ambiguity and role- expectation conflict have been identified as prominent stressors. A high internal locus fails to weaken the negative impact of these stressors on commitment.

Self-efficacy proves as a positive moderator only for the early career executives. It helps in reducing the negative impact of role ambiguity on satisfaction. Respondents belonging to early career stage are able to make use of their self-efficacy in maintaining an acceptable level of job satisfaction despite presence of job-related stressors. Moreover the need for taking up new role becomes crucial only at a later career stage. The results provide some support for the positive moderating effects of self-efficacy only at the early career stage. It may also be possible that the respondents in their mid career stage and late career stage are of the feeling that their contribution are not properly acknowledged and awarded. Therefore self efficacy, as a moderator does not play a major role in mid and late career stage.
The above findings confirm that there are differences across the three career stages. The role stressors experienced is different. Hence the moderating effect of variables on stress-outcome relationship also is found to differ. This implies that specific intervention programs designed for each career stage would help respondents cope better with role stress.