

Empirical Investigation of ORS Among Library and Information Science Professionals in India

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ABSTRACT: Since times immemorial, work related stress is widely recognized as a major challenge to employees' health and hindrance to their work motivation and performance. This is because employees who are stressed turn to be unhealthy, unhappy, less satisfied, less motivated, less involved and less productive at work. Such work stress or what we call as Organizational Role Stress (ORS) may have positive effects to some extent making the work life more challenging and charming; but beyond a certain level, it generates adverse effects, leading to a state of unhappiness. This holds true even for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals – ideally one of the strongest pillars of any premier academic setup, but ironically the much ignored cadre of professionals, especially in the digital era. Given the multitude of roles being played by these LIS professionals and considering the ever increasing importance of multifaceted evaluation of quantitative and qualitative aspects of library in institutional ranking at the national and international level, the institutions of higher education will have to create congenial work culture for the LIS professionals. In this context, taking care of the stress level of the LIS professionals has emerged as the central concern. The present study examines the ORS among the LIS professionals and the impact of demographic variables on it. Primary data was collected from 100 LIS professionals of various Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the vibrant state of Gujarat by using the standardized ORS scale developed by Udai Pareek. The analysis revealed that ORS is at an alarming level of burnout limits among the LIS professionals; and Inter-Role Distance (IRD), Role Overload (RO), Resource Inadequacy (RIn) and Personal Inadequacy (PIn) are found to be the prominent role stressors. The demographic variables of experience and age are found to be closely associated with the ORS.

Keywords: Digital Era, Digital Library, Institutional Ranking, Library and Information Science (LIS) Professionals, Motivation, Organizational Role Stress (ORS).

INTRODUCTION

It is a widely accepted phenomenon that people are the real assets that can make or mar an organization. In today's ever-competitive scenario, every organization needs to make sure that employees have homely feeling, clear role expectations and low level of stress. Managing stress of employees has become extremely important for modern organizations to safeguard human wellbeing (Srivastav, 1995). Since times immemorial, work related stress is widely recognized as a major challenge to employees' health and hindrance to their work motivation and performance. This is because employees who are stressed turn to be unhealthy, unhappy, less satisfied, less motivated, less involved and less productive at work. Further, in case of stress, we can't use the age old proverb – "prevention is better than cure"; as it can't be eliminated completely. As organization become more complex, the potential for stress increases and there being no escape from stress in

modern life, we need to find ways of managing it (Pareek, 2002). Stress is unavoidable in modern life (Pestonjee, 1999). However, stress is a dynamic condition; it is created when an individual confronts an opportunity, constraint, or demand for which the outcome is perceived to be both important and uncertain (Robbins and Sanghi 2006). The phenomenon of increasing occupational stress was formally identified in 1989, when the Commonwealth Commission for the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation of Commonwealth Employees initiated several research projects. Stress in the modern day organizational life is nothing new, not anything unknown. Stress has been experienced by employees since time immemorial, but its toll is higher than ever before (Ramaniah and Subrahmanian 2008).

The same is true even for the HEIs and Universities. When we talk about the strongest pillars of any academic setup, we usually consider the teachers. No

doubt, teachers are the ‘most active’, ‘most important’ and ‘irreplaceable’ component of the education system. Even the research output of the University, Industry-Academia Interface, Capacity Building, the Quantity and Quality of Student Enrolment, so on and so forth get due weightage as valid yardsticks to measure the quality of the University. But, the employees who are serving in the Library of any academic setup are mostly sidelined or their contributions are not given its due share of credit, as if it’s a ‘necessary evil’. These employees namely the Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals are made to feel like ‘neglected children’, despite their centrality for a University. On the contrary, the significance of having competent (able), motivated (happy and willing – happily willing), dedicated (involved) and committed (with organizational loyalty) LIS professionals has multiplied in the present era of digitalization. In the present digital era, these LIS professionals are serving as the ‘Knowledge Managers’ by successfully managing the knowledge centres – the library of any academic institution and satisfying the hunger of the true knowledge seekers on one hand and as the ‘Valued Strategic Partner’ by coordinating the development plan on the other. Given the multitude of roles being played by these LIS professionals and considering the ever increasing importance of multifaceted evaluation of quantitative and qualitative aspects of library in institutional ranking at the national and international level, the institutions of higher education like Universities will have to create congenial work culture for the LIS professionals. This will ultimately pave way for transforming the institute/university into a world class institute/university. In this context, taking care of the stress level of the LIS professionals has emerged as the central concern; and the present Empirical Paper, utilizing the published theoretical literature and Communication Approach of the Descriptive Cross-sectional research design, examines the relation between the Organization Role Stress and demographics among the LIS professionals of various Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the vibrant state of Gujarat in India – the nation with the highest population and the world’s 2nd largest education system (Soni *et al.*, 2014).

CHANGING ROLE DYNAMICS OF LIS PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ERA

Changing Face of Libraries and Librarians: Today, in the nail biting competitive post globalized landscape, we are living in the age of discontinuity. Hence, the scenario across the world is undergoing a sea change. The trend of modernization of industries/institutions/organizations across all spheres has set in, the market horizons have stretched across the globe and the bases of competition have also changed. Heavily dominated by technological advancements, scientific innovations and information and communication (ICT) tools, the modern day organizations all over the world have experienced complete transformation. The new face of the

organizations has come up with profound changes in the nature and working of all cadres of professionals. The academic sector can’t be an exception to this. The roles and responsibilities of any employee working in academic setup has also undergone a paradigm shift; be it the teacher, researcher, extension educationist, administrative staff, other non-teaching staff or even LIS professionals. Further, if we closely look at the working of libraries in contemporary era, one must acknowledge the fact that the library environment has changed drastically over the past few decades. With the advent and application of ICT tools, the library environment has shifted from the traditional library to computerized library, then automated library and now the digital library. With such rapid changes, the structure and nature of working of LIS professionals has undergone a sharp shift (Shah, 2015). The rapid adoption of information and communication technologies and their extensive use in learning institutions and system administration has introduced new library and information services. Introduction of different learning modes and expansion of academic programmes have also resulted in the librarian, facing more challenges as compared to his/her predecessors (Vij, 2017).

University libraries or libraries of HEIs are usually among the most advanced in terms of developing electronic based services. Many have large collections of electronic journals, as well as sophisticated searching tools catering to the needs of various stakeholders.

Special Library Association in 2008 identified the roles of librarians to include development and maintenance of a portfolio of cost effective, client valued information services that are aligned with the strategic directions of the organization and client groups. Building a dynamic collection of information resources based on a deep understanding of clients’ information needs. Gathering evidence to support decisions about the development of information services and products and maintaining current awareness of emerging technologies. Other responsibilities include assessing and communicating the value of the information organization including information services, products and policies to senior management, key stakeholders and client groups contributing effectively to senior management strategies and decisions regarding information applications, tools and technologies, and policies for the organization.

In nutshell, gone are those days when the LIS professionals were found seating idle in their chairs and cabins. The modern day LIS professionals are not merely serving as the general administrators looking after the ‘Depository and Supply Centres’; but they have been playing multitude of roles, especially as a Knowledge Manager and more importantly as a Strategic Partner for fulfilling the mission and vision of any Higher Education Institute (HEI) in general, and of an institute of higher education and learning like a University. These LIS professionals are serving as the “Knowledge Managers” by successfully managing the knowledge centres – the library of any academic institution and satisfying the hunger of the true knowledge seekers on one hand and as the “Strategic

Partner” by coordinating the development plan on the other.

Off late what has made the libraries and the LIS professionals even more central components in a University; is the growing concern of transforming Indian Universities into World Class Universities with institutional ranking at the national and state level in India. In line with our honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s aspiration and vision of creating world class institutions of great eminence and excellence, all these rankings at the national level and at the respective state level have given considerable points/marks/weightage to the multifaceted evaluation of quantitative and qualitative aspects of library of the institute/university.

As far as HEIs or Universities in Gujarat is concerned, three such ranking frameworks are worth mentioning. The first is the pioneering initiative of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in India on 29th September, 2015. This framework outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country. The methodology draws from the overall recommendations broad understanding arrived at by a Core Committee set up by MHRD, to identify the broad parameters for ranking various universities and institutions. The parameters broadly cover “Teaching, Learning and Resources,” “Research and Professional Practices,” “Graduation Outcomes,” “Outreach and Inclusivity,” and “Perception” (<https://www.nirfindis.org/about>). Second is the Gujarat State Institutional Rating Framework (GSIRF) launched under the esteemed banner of the Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat (KCG), Dept. of Education, Govt. of Gujarat in partnership with the Indian Centre for Academic Rankings & Excellence (ICARE) – India’s most trusted Institution Ranking & Rating Authority. GSIRF is a pioneering attempt towards creating world class institutions in Gujarat by using a highly credible & transparent framework wholly based on objective data. ICARE has been tasked with the responsibility to Audit, Assess & Rate Institutions with a clear focus on outcome of the institutions so as to help academic leaders identify areas of improvements, bridge the gaps and achieve excellence Regionally, Nationally and Globally (<https://kcg.gujarat.gov.in/gsirfgujarat-state-institutional-rating-framework>).

For the four State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) of Gujarat viz., Anand Agricultural University at Anand, Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University at Dantiwada, Junagadh Agricultural University at Junagadh and Navsari Agricultural University at Navsari and the recently developed Kamdhenu University at Gandhinagar; the third ranking framework – Ranking of Agricultural Universities instituted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi matters more. Every year, this is issued by the Agricultural Education Division (EQR Section) of ICAR, New Delhi (<https://www.icar.org.in/content/ranking-status-agricultural-universities-year-2018>).

Significance of Primary Work Attitudes of LIS Professionals:

Given the multitude of roles being played by these LIS professionals in the digital era, taking care of the stress level of the LIS professionals has emerged as the central concern. The toll of stress among the LIS professionals has become the top most concern, as these cadre of professionals need to maintain cool and calm composure all the time with courtesy, alertness, promptness, professionalism and above all empathetic outlook to continue to excel in their noble profession. Ironically, the LIS professionals – ideally one of the strongest pillars of any premier academic setup, but the much ignored cadre of professionals, are facing a lot of organizational role stressors; which in turn adversely affects their motivation, job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment and performance.

LIS professionals’ job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment – the three primary work attitudes are extremely important. These three primary work attitudes, with their impact on most of the work related outcomes like absenteeism, employee turnover, productivity, wastages, rejection rate, complaints, grievances, indiscipline or divergent behaviour with stakeholders, workplace negativity, etc.; need to be taken care of for creating not only successful libraries, but also pleasing, satisfying, live and vibrant knowledge centre sort of libraries. And, for achieving higher levels of these three work attitudes, the HEIs/Universities needs to make the LIS professionals feel that they really care for them. They should be provided with all the things that they expect to have; and not the things that the authorities feel they ought to have or what they can afford. In a sense, the academic institutions must emphasize on the qualitative aspects of the work life of the LIS professionals for ensuring their happiness. In this regard, taking care of the stress level of the LIS professionals is increasing emerging as the central concern and the need of the hour.

STRESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS:

Stress: The word Stress has been derived from the Latin word, “Stringere” which means to draw tight. The term is used to refer to hardship, strain, adversity or affliction and have been used as synonymous of anxiety, frustration, pressure and so on. Arnold (1960) defined that “*Stress is any condition that disturbs normal functioning*”.

Acc. to Harrison (1976), stress is experienced when there is lack of fitness between a person and his/her environment, in case there is inability to cope with the constraints or demands encountered. Acc. to Beeher and Newman (1978), “*Stress is a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning*”.

Role Stress and Organizational Role Stress: Role Stress refers to the conflict and tension due to the roles being enacted by a person at any given point of time. Enacted in the context of organizations, such role stresses are called organizational role stress. In a sense,

stress due to occupation of an organizational role is called 'Organizational Role Stress' (ORS) (Pareek, 2004).

Here, role is defined as a set of functions, which an individual performs in response to the expectations of significant members of a social system, and his own expectations about the position that he occupies. The concept of role and the two role systems – role space and role set have a built-in potential for conflict and stress.

(A) Role Space Conflicts/Stress

It refers to the dynamic relationship between the various roles an individual occupies and his self. It has three main variables: self, the role under question, and the other roles he occupies. Any conflict among these is referred to as role space conflict or stress. It has the following types of ORS.

(1) **Self-Role Distance (SRD)** refers to the stress due to conflict between the self-concept and the expectations of the role, as perceived by the role occupant.

(2) **Inter-Role Distance (IRD)** refers to the stress that arises out of conflict between the organizational role and other roles.

(3) **Role Stagnation (RS)** refers to the stress from the feeling of the individual that there are very few opportunities for learning and growth in the role.

(A) Role Set Conflicts/Stress

It refers to the stress arising out of the conflicts as a result of incompatibility among the expectations of the significant others (and by the individual himself/herself). It may take the following forms of ORS.

(4) **Role Isolation (RI)** emanates due to lack of linkages between one's role with other roles in the organization.

(5) **Role Ambiguity (RA)** stress arises when an individual is not clear about the various expectations that people have from his/her role.

(6) **Role Expectation Conflict (REC)** means conflicting demands made on the role by different persons in the organization.

(7) **Role Overload (RO)** is the result of large variations between the expected output and the actual output.

(8) **Role Erosion (RE)** is feeling that some important functions a role occupant would like to perform are being performed by some other person.

(9) **Resource Inadequacy (RI_n)** stress is experienced due to non-availability of resources needed for effective role performance.

(10) **Personal Inadequacy (PI_n)** stress is experienced when a role occupant feels that he/she is not prepared to undertake the role effectively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Srivastav (2008) examined the role stress in public sector industry in India and found that Role Erosion was the most prominent role stressor across qualification levels; but role stress across qualification levels is non-uniform.

Ramaniah and Subrahmanian (2008) examined the relation between ORS and demographics of 300 IT professionals and found that there was high stress level; and marital status and ORS are related. It was also found that the stress among females is due to role isolation, inter-role distance and role overload.

Bhattacharya and Basu (2007) found that women experienced greater wellness and older personnel experienced more distress.

Aziz (2004) reported that resource inadequacy was the most potent role stressor, followed by role overload and personal inadequacy bothering the women professionals in the IT sector. The level of education was not found to be a significant differentiator of stressors.

A brief account of major findings of studies focusing on ORS felt by teachers/faculty members of HEIs is given below:

Naveen (2016) reported that male and female college teacher experience different level of ORS. Nazneen and Bhalla (2014) reported that the dominant stressors among the teachers of private and public universities were found to be role erosion, inter role distance, role isolation, self role distance, personal inadequacy. Akber and Akhter (2011) found that the management teachers of Pakistan University felt high level of pressure; with women faculty members facing it higher than male. Singh (2007) studied the effect of stress on job satisfaction and work values among female teachers of secondary education and found that stressed and displeased teachers had less attachment and less dedication to their profession. Langford (1987) examined the relationship between stress and job satisfaction among boarding academy teachers and found that stress was a significant determinant of teacher's job satisfaction. Pestonjee and Mishra (1999) examined role pressure and work satisfaction among low-ranking and senior doctors involved in teaching and found that job satisfaction variables correlated negatively with all the dimensions of role stress.

Likewise, many researchers have studied the concept of Stress and Organizational Role Stress among employees in different industries/sectors and reported valuable findings. The snapshot of studies conducted on LIS professionals is summarized below:

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) does not offer a specific library related definition of stress based on identification of specific causes arising from library and information work on its official site (<https://www.cilip.org.uk/>). Bunge (1987, 1989) also reported contradicting findings as one hand he found library work very stressful and the patrons being a cause of stress, while on the other, they are also categorized as a "bringers of joy and fulfillment".

Gill (2017) reported that the LIS professionals in Digital Library Environment are left with two choices, either to manage or control the situation that impact their work and produce stress, or to allow stress to manage, as their modern day profiles is quite stressful.

Vij (2017) in his pioneering study highlighted that many factors are responsible to create stress for library professionals like staff problem, inadequate budget

allocation and management support, too much responsibility with secondary duties & heavy workload, working with changing technology, changing users' demands, etc. He even noted that due to the emergence of the digital library environment, sitting in front of computers for long hours, working in air-conditioned environment, etc. have also resulted in the physical pressures and stress related illness among the LIS professionals.

Shah (2015) found that the major stressors among LIS professionals in India include lack of job satisfaction, health issues, technological changes, personality and behavioural changes, changing library environment, changes in documentation types and procedures, changes in physical facilities, user demands and reduced staff strength.

Popoola, Olalude and Francis (2013) observed that the adoption of ICT by the universities has adversely affected the LIS professionals and created the problem of techno stress.

Somvir and Kaushik (2013) investigated various aspects of occupational stress among library professionals and reported that stress negatively affected the performance of these employees.

Ajala (2011) studied work related stress among LIS professionals in a Nigerian University and found that there were inadequate working tools and resources, librarians don't have enough and adequate working tools in their own unit, which leads to work overload for them, the ergonomic problem affects their physical health; poor job incentives or rewards; interaction with other staff, so on and so forth. Home problems were also found to be a cause of stress.

McClellan, (2011) noted that the library profession is subjected to rapid changes and one of the prominent technological stressor among the librarians include cataloguing electronic resources.

Routray and Satpathy (2007) reported that majorly three types stress are faced by the LIS professionals namely Technological Stress, Job Security Stress and Physical Stress.

Pantry (2007) reported that library employees are subjected to constantly changing technology, shrinking budgets, outsourcing, excessive workload, leading to stress. In his opinion, libraries and their employees are also vulnerable to stress from external sources as a result of their accessibility to the general public.

Study of Elisa (2007) revealed that the library workers are under stress and emphasized on the need to provide training in how to deal with this issue.

Pors and Johannsen (2003) noted that library directors are under cross pressure between new public management and value-based management; and highlighted various stressors for LIS professionals. Poole and Denny (2001) noted that with inorganic increase in storage space facilities, LIS professionals face techno stress in the digital library environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives:

- To assess Organizational Role Stress (ORS) level among the LIS professionals.

- To identify the prominent organizational role stressors among these the LIS professionals.
- To find out the association between demographic variables and level of ORS among the LIS professionals.

- To suggest measures to reduce/overcome the ORS among the LIS professionals.

Research Design: Descriptive-Cross Sectional Research Design was used in this study, as it describes the level of ORS and the relationship between demographic variables and the felt ORS among the LIS professionals (Descriptive) at a particular point of time (Cross Sectional). Initial exploration stage focused on careful review of relevant literature and in-depth interviews and discussions with key informants – the Librarians, Assistant/Deputy Librarians serving in various HEIs. The focus of these interactions was mainly on understanding the working of LIS professionals and the role and responsibilities of the LIS professionals in this digital era. This exploration helped the researchers in fine tuning the contents of the ORS scale.

Data Collection:(i) Primary Data: Required primary data were collected from the LIS professionals through the standardized ORS scale developed by Udai Pareek (1983; 2002). This scale was administered to 88 respondents through e-mail and personally to 12 respondents.

(ii) Secondary Data: Necessary secondary data were collected from books, journals, periodicals, and electronic databases relevant to the topic of the study.

Sampling Method and Sample Size: 100 LIS professionals of various HEIs, located in the Gujarat State of India were selected by using convenience sampling method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ranking of ORS Variables and Dominant Organizational Role Stressors:

The collected data were analyzed by employing appropriate statistical tests/tools; to derive meaningful conclusions from the data, and draw inferences about the Organizational Role Stress (ORS) among the LIS professionals of HEIs of Gujarat State of India. Table 1 presents the Ranking of various ORS Variables and the Dominant Organizational Role Stressors based on the Frequency Analysis.

Table 1: Ranking of ORS Variables.

ORS Variable	Finding	
	Mean	Rank
SRD	11.87	6
IRD	15.98	1
RS	10.50	9
RI	9.88	10
RA	10.78	8
REC	11.24	7
RO	14.24	2
RE	12.66	5
RIn	13.22	3
PIn	13.02	4
Total - TORS	123.39	

(1) Inter-Role Distance (IRD) has emerged as the most dominant role stressor among the respondents. This means the LIS professionals are feeling stressed due to conflict between the organizational role and other roles. This may be due to the dominance of young workforce among those surveyed (the new entrants, especially the Asst./Dy. Librarians) who may be finding it difficult to adjust with the multitude of demands from roles inside the organization (Formal/Organizational) and roles outside the organization (Informal/Personal/Social).

(2) Role Overload (RO) is found to be the Second major ORS variable. This means that the LIS professionals are experiencing stress due to large variations between the expected output and the actual output owing to multiple responsibilities with shortage of staff.

(3) Resource Inadequacy (RIn) is found to be the Third major ORS variable highlighting the need for providing the required working aids and amenities to the LIS professionals.

(4) Personal Inadequacy (PIn) is the Fourth bothering variable in the ORS category. So, the LIS professionals own perception regarding their own preparedness/skill sets is not so promising. Many of them felt urgent need of updating/sharpening their skill sets and equip to successfully perform in the digital era.

Impact of Demographic Variables on ORS: *Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Test performed at 0.05 Significance Level* revealed the following findings:

(1) Experience has significant relationship with ORS. LIS professionals with more experience are feeling less ORS than those who have relatively less experience.

(2) The Age of respondents and the ORS are found to be related in the sense of higher the age, more is the ORS experienced by the respondents.

(3) The Education and Gender of the respondents were not found to be the major differentiator in terms of the ORS experienced by the LIS professionals. Male and Female respondents both perceive the same level of ORS.

SUGGESTIONS

— As the IRD is the most dominant ORS variable, the authorities need to analyze their work schedules and work distributions minutely to find out flows (if any) leading to IRD. On the other hand, the young library workforce must be trained and counseled by the experienced ones about effectively meeting the demands of various roles. This will not only help to reduce IRD, but it will also help to build harmonious superior-subordinate relationships at work. The experienced librarian can take this as a counselling/coaching/mentoring challenge.

— To take care of Role Overload (RO), the authorities need to work out some strategies to ensure less workload to make the job less burdensome for the LIS professionals. Minor jobs of library can be assigned to other non-teaching staff. Open non-confronting discussion and frequent meetings for reviewing workload in library is highly desirable.

— Resource Inadequacy (RIn) has to be treated with top most urgent matter, as this indicates lack of aids/resources to carry out the assigned responsibilities. This is frustrating for the LIS professionals and resource inadequacy in terms of lack of information, people, material, finance or facilities and so on need to be dealt promptly.

— To overcome the feeling of Personal Inadequacy (PIn) among the LIS professionals, they should be given permissions with enough sponsorship for participating in capacity building programmes; and thereby update/sharpen their skill sets. They should be encouraged to visit other libraries and witness the working of good libraries; and should be empowered to implement the good practices of these libraries. They may be given financial support even for becoming a member of professional associations to improve professional networking and thereby get the benefit of peer learning. Training programmes for Soft Skill Development, Motivation, Work-Life Balance and such other issues can also be organized in-house or in collaboration with other libraries in the vicinity.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to assess the Organizational Role Stress among the LIS professionals working in HEIs of Gujarat State of India and suggest measures to overcome/reduce the same. This study found that the overall ORS in terms of Total ORS score is 123.39, which is at an alarming level of burnout limits. Hence, the prevalence of ORS among the LIS professionals needs to be taken seriously to ensure their happiness at the workplace and consequently quality service to all the stakeholders. Hence, steps must be initiated for helping the LIS professionals to overcome the four prominent role stressors namely the Inter-Role Distance (IRD), Role Overload (RO), Resource Inadequacy (RIn) and Personal Inadequacy (PIn).

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