

IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS ON LEARNED HELPLESSNESS IN NGOS IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Hardik Shah*
Sanjyot Pethe**

In order to be competitive, organizations are finding ways to become more efficient and effective. Gaining competitive advantage is most crucial and therefore, companies are trying to develop various strategies in order to gain edge over competitors. Competitiveness also increases the stress on employees. As the dimensions of organization role stress (ORS) increase, the confidence of the employee diminishes. What are the effects of such pressure (ORS) and what are the implications on the organization? Does the employee feel helpless due to ORS? In order to find out this we conducted this study that how ORS and LH are related? With the view of understanding this relationship, we chose learned helplessness (LH) as an effect of ORS and tried to find out the relationship between these two variables and what role can human resource management plays in moderating this relationship. This study was conducted on NGOs, with a sample size of 84 employees. Based on our study, we suggest some HR strategies for coping up with ORS and LH situations. The results imply that there exists a strong and positive relationship between ORS and LH. The relationship is found significantly correlated. Results suggest that in NGOs helplessness has strong correlation with four factors of ORS namely Role expectation Conflict, Self-Role Distance, Role Ambiguity, and Resource Inadequacy.

Keywords: Organisational Role Stress, Human Resource Management, Role Expectation Conflict, Self-Role Distance, Role Ambiguity, NGOs.

Introduction

HR is taken as most crucial and complex resource in organizations and it is empirically well-established fact that in today's competitive world that it is a crucial resource which adds competitive advantage to the organization. Human resource is also a valuable resource in NGOs, which is a fully people driven organization. The roles people play in NGO, the stresses they face while performing their role and the implication it has towards their attitudes and well being, are important considerations in management of these human resources. There is a need to study the role stress and its implications for these organizations. Role stress can lead to people giving up efforts, getting frustrated and as a result, learn to be helpless. Learned Helplessness (LH) is one of the effect/cause of the stress. It is defined as individual's feeling that desired outcomes are improbable or are uncertain so that whatever efforts he or she makes he/she can't be able to achieve them (Abramson et.al.1978).

The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of Stress. The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Hans Selye in 1936. Stress may be defined as under load or overload of matter, energy or information inputs. Orpen (1991) argues that the main source of stress is occupation and he defines ORS 'as the subjective experience of various dimensions associated

* Research Scholar, Institute of Management, Nirma University, Ahmedabad, India.

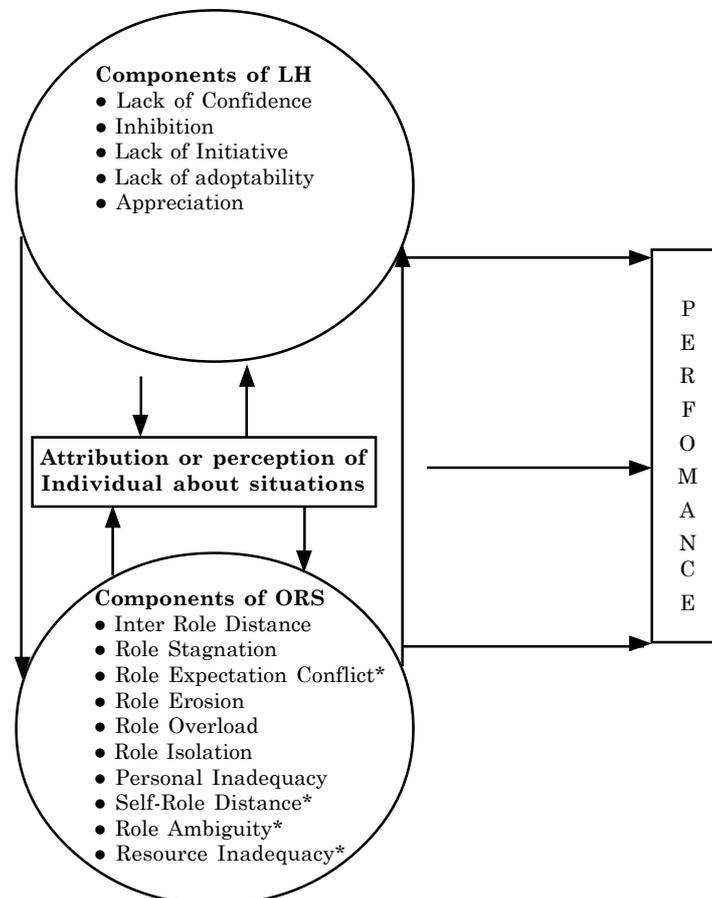
** Asstt. Professor, Institute of Management, Nirma University, Ahmedabad, India.

Our aim in the present study is to find out the relationship of ORS with LH and which factors of ORS and LH are related. It can be derived from the literature that LH and ORS may be correlated. There is no past research, which had directly proved the relationship; so there existed the research gap, which we tried to explore in our paper. In this paper we tried to prove that both variables are correlated.

We have also tried to find out the extend of relationship and also the direction of the relationship which might be useful in future research. In this study we intend to propose a model showing the relationship between ORS and LH and also tried to make focus on which are the aspects of ORS which leads to LH and thereby hinder the growth of individual as well as of the organization by affecting the performance.

Model of LH

Various models have been developed to illustrate the concept of LH (Abramson, et al., 1978, Miller and Norman 1979; Zuroff 1980.) None of these models contributes a unique perspective to the understanding of LH and its relationship with ORS and job performance. In our research we are proposing the model, which describes that ORS and LH are correlated with each other and in turn affects the performance of individuals and organizations. Our model based is developed with past researches like it was proved that LH and performance are negatively related (Roth and Kubal, 1975). It is also well-established fact that ORS and organizational effectiveness are negatively correlated. Our model also gives the researcher future direction of research in this area by study of LH and ORS by taking in to consideration either individual perceptions/ attributions or personality types of individuals and also by relating it with performance standards.



From the above discussion it is very clear that there exist an immense potential for the research in this sector and it is very much of evidence that this sector growth can be fully utilized by adding more professionalism to this sector and removing problems faced by the HR in NGOs.

Methodology

Survey was conducted in 5 NGOs, and data was collected through a Questionnaire. For measuring LH scale used was of -LH Scale (Dhar et.al, 1987), which is constituted of 15 items. The reliability and validity of the scale as determined on working population are 0.74 and 0.88 respectively. Each item has three choices scored on three-point scale. For ORS scale give by –Pareek (1997) was used, which is constituted of 50 items.

We have used convenience-sampling design. We have collected list of NGOs working in the different fields in Ahmedabad and approached them for filling of questionnaire. We distributed around 125 questionnaires from which 84 are selected for the final data analysis. We collected questionnaires from five NGOs namely, Center for Environmental Education (CEE), Sanchetana, Counterpart, Saath, and Indian Society for Community Education (ISCE).

Data Analysis

We have used suitable descriptive and inferential statistics such as Correlation Analysis, Regression Analysis, and Z-test for this study in order to prove the hypothesis of the study.

Results and Discussions

The data were tabulated and correlations were calculated between the LH and ORS. The results are presented in the Table 1.

In our study we have found that here exist significant and positive correlation between LH and ORS which means that change in level of ORS leads to change in LH. In this study it was found that four components of ORS are significantly related with LH.

1. Role Ambiguity (.330*)
2. Role Expectation Conflict (.241*)
3. Role Isolation (.274*)
4. Self-Role distance (.215*)

Note: *means significantly correlated with LH.

It is found that people with high LH score have more ORS and vice-versa. The result is supported by the regression analysis and Z-test.

In the regression analysis we have found that ORS (all ten components) as independent variable and LH as dependent variable have significant relationship as $R=0.270$ which means that ORS is contributing towards LH by 27%. It was also found that ORS (four components) as independent variable and LH as dependent variable have significant relationship as $R=0.392$ which means that ORS (4 components only) is contributing towards LH by 39.2%. It was also found that LH as independent variable and ORS as dependent variable have significant relationship as $R=0.270$ which means that LH is contributing towards ORS by 27%. The results of regression showed that ORS and LH as significantly correlated as the $r=0.456$.

It is also supported by using median differentiation as proved by Z-test ($Z=12.2919, df=62$) that ORS and LH are significantly related. Thus, our Hypothesis is accepted meaning that there exists significant

relationship between ORS and LH. It was also found that there is above average level of LH in the NGOs as average LH level is 33.89 out of score of 45. For ORS it was found that the average stress level is 88.37 and there are 23.33% people are above average level of stress showing more LH. It thus, proves that ORS and LH are positively related.

In our study we found that, as an individual is not clear about the various expectations that people have from his role and he faces role ambiguity. Reasons for Role ambiguity in NGOs are Unclear structure, no Job Analysis, improper placement and lack of competency mapping which in turn leads to inhibition, lack of initiative and appreciation dependence as un clear expectations leads to affects the task he is doing.

It is found in our study that Role expectation conflict as the most crucial and significant reason for creating LH showing highest median score. It is described as situation wherein there are conflicting expectations or demands by different role senders to the role occupant and he experiences this type of stress. It is said that improper command by different superiors leads to ruining of the confidence level and creating lack of adaptability for the individual. Reasons for Role Expectation Conflict in NGOs are unclear structure, inadequate communication, and overlapping role expectations, which lead to lack of confidence, Inhibition, lack of adaptability as there exist significant co relationship between stability and postpartum depression (Whiffen, 1988).

In our study we have found that in a role set, the role occupant may feel that certain roles are psychologically, closer to individual, while others are at a much greater distance. The main criterion of such role distance is the frequency and ease of interaction. Tenen, et al., (1982) proved that there existed a significant co relationship between perceive control, task difficulty and performance of task. Reasons for Role Isolation in NGOs are unclear role definitions, lack of team effort, and no linkages between roles, which lead to lack of confidence and appreciation dependence as individual feels some amount of discomfort and lack of reorganization from the organization side.

In his study Pareek (1997) stated that Self Role Distance arises out of the dynamic relationship between the self-concept and the expectations from the role, as perceived by the role occupant. If the role that the individual is given find to be conflicting with the self-concept then he feels stressed. It has been found that there is no clear role assigned to HR department except in CEE and Agakhan. It have been founded that locus and instability affects the future expectations as well as creates depression (Forsyth and Mcmillan, 1981). It has been found that in NGOs there are no job mapping, unscientific selection and placement, No clear job specification and description, and High role expectations; Which in turn lead to Inhibition, lack of initiative lack of confidence and appreciation dependence as the individuals feel that the work is appropriate for themselves and they expected much more from the organizations.

From the above discussion it is clear that NGOs has to take some crucial steps in order to reduce the stress and LH among the employees.

Implementation of change management may include changing various aspects of the organizations which may lead towards professionalism of the organization, which in turn results in to effective utilization of resources, less stress level, less LH and high morale and motivation among the employees. The following changes may help NGOs to achieve its objectives effectively.

- ❖ A more conscious managerial approach like proactive planning, strategic alliance with vision and mission, clearly defined structure (missing in most of the NGOs studied).
- ❖ Introduction and Adjustment to new systems and processes like use of job analysis for developing KPAs, improving communication system and make it more accurate and specific, training for professionalism and innovate new HRD oriented culture.

- Maier, S.F. and Seligman, M.E.P. (1976), "Learned Helplessness: Theory and Evidence", *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 105, pp.3-46.
- Mckean, K.J.(1994), "Using Multiple Risk Factors to Assess the Behavioral", Cognitive and Affective Effects of Learned Helplessness, *The Journal of Psychology*, 128(2), pp.177-183.
- Miller, I.W. and Norman, W.H. (1979), "Learned Helplessness in Humans: A Review and Attributional Theory Model", *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, pp.93-119.
- Mittal (1992), "Coping Styles as Related to Role Stress, Locus of Control and Personality Type", Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
- NGORC (2005), <http://www.ngo.bg> and <http://www.ngorc.net>
- Orpen, C. (1991), "Occupational Stress and Personal Strain: A Conceptual Model", *Management and Labour Studies*, 16(1), pp.11-21.
- Peterson, C. (1993), "Helpless Behaviour", *Behavioral Research and Therapy*, 31(3), pp.289-295.
- Palnitkar, A. (1987), "Occupational Stress as a Function of Field Independence-dependence, Locus of Control, Job Level and Length of Service", Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Ravi shankar Shukla University, Raipur.
- Peterson, C., Maier, S.F. and Seligman, M.E.P. (1993), "Learned Helplessness: A Theory for the Age of Personal Control", New York, Oxford University Press.
- Rao and Nammalvar (1976), "Life Changes and Depressive Disease", *Indian Journal of Human Resource Development*.
- Rehm (1990), "Cognitive and Behavioral Theories", In B.B. Wolman and G.Striiker (Eds), *Depressive Disorders: Facts, Theories and Treatment Methods*, New York, Willey, pp.64-91.
- Roth, S. and Kubal, L. (1975), "Effects of non-contingent Reinforcement on Tasks of Differing Importance: Facilitation and Learned Helplessness", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, pp.680-691.
- Stipek, D.J. (1993), "Motivation to Learnm", Massachusetts, Allyn and Bacon.
- Srivatava, et al., (1996), "Stress and Health Outcomes: The Role of Type-a Behavior Pattern", Manuscript Submitted for Publication.
- Tennen, et al., (1982), "LH and the Detection of Contingency: A Direct Test", *Journal of Personality*, 50, pp.409-425.
- Pareek, Udai (1997), "Training Instruments for Human Resource Management", Tata McGraw-Hill, p.105.
- Whiffen (1988), "Vulnerability to Postpartum Depression, A Prospective Multivariate Study", *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 97, pp.467-474.
- Zuroff, (1980), "LH in Humans: An Analysis of Learning Process and the Role of Individuals and Situational Differences", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39, pp.120-146.