

Research Note

Journal of Extension Education

Vol. 31 No. 1, 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26725/JEE.2019.1.31.6230-6233>

Job Stress of Agricultural Officers of Kerala State Department of Agriculture: A Psycho–Personal Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken in three zones of Kerala viz., Kasaragod from North Kerala, Thrissur from Central Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram from South Kerala. A sample of 90 Agricultural Officers was selected by using simple random sampling and information was gathered and analyzed. Job stress was the dependent variable of the study. A well - structured interview schedule was used for data collection from the respondents. The results revealed that majority of the Agricultural Officers were in medium job stress category.

Keywords: Job stress; Agricultural Officers; Krishi Bhavan; Kerala

Job stress is an important psychological factor which defines the performance effectiveness of a person on the job. This is equally true in the case of Agricultural Officers (AOs) of the state department of agriculture. Selye (1956) defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it”. Responsibilities are always related with some sort of stress. An acute stress is always required for one to carry out their responsibilities better, but many times this balance is lost and people react in unacceptable manner, which is not suitable for a professional who is supposed to carry out various functions and implement umpteen numbers of decisions.

Development of our nation is in relation with development of farmers. It is through Agricultural Officers that the

government executes various extension services, development polices and technology transfer for the development of farmers and agriculture itself. The effectiveness of all these programmes solely depends on the job performance and efficiency of Agricultural Officers who act as key extension personnel at *panchayat* level. It is highly significant for the management, to study the job stress and psychology of these officers, since this affects their interaction with farmers and various other decision making processes.

Therefore a study to analyze the job stress of Agricultural Officers of ‘Kerala State Department of Agriculture’ is of high relevance and importance. This study can further streamline the duties and responsibilities of Agricultural Officers, working throughout the country.

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METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in three zones of Kerala viz., Kasaragod from North Kerala, Thrissur from Central Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram from South Kerala. The Agricultural Officers working in the Kerala State Department of Agriculture in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Kasaragod were randomly selected for the study. Altogether, 90 Agricultural Officers of which 30 from Thiruvananthapuram, 30 from Thrissur and 30 from Kasaragod district were selected using simple random sampling procedure of the 30 respondents from each district. It was ensured that 15 were female and 15 were male respondents. A well structured open ended interview schedule was used for data collection from the Agricultural Officers. The results were analyzed with the help of Kruskal - Wallis test.

Job stress was measured by using the scale developed by Shrivastav and Singh (1981). This scale measures the amount of stress which employees perceive from various constituents and conditions of their work. Role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability are the sub-components of job stress and these are related to all relevant components of work life which cause stress in one or another way.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A comparative analysis of job stress

score and its subcomponents of Agricultural Officers across the district was done by using Kruskal-Wallis test and the results are presented Table in 1. It shows the overall job stress scores and job stress dimension scores of Agricultural Officers under three districts. Kruskal - Wallis test was done to find whether overall job stress and job stress dimensions of Agricultural Officers vary among the three districts.

It could be observed from the table that overall (8.737) there was significant difference in job stress of Agricultural Officers in three districts. The subcomponents role overload (10.52), role ambiguity (16.24), intrinsic impoverishment (13.33) and unprofitability (7.79) were also found to be significant in three districts. These dimensions vary with regards to region. Role overload, role ambiguity, intrinsic impoverishment were significant at one per cent level of significance and unprofitability was significant at five per cent level of significance.

Hence, it was observed that job stress was varying with region. This might be due to the fact that the area cultivated and crops differ from region to region. In Kasaragod district, each respondent has to handle two to three *Krishi Bhavans* (Panchayat level office for technology - transfer) unlike Agricultural Officers in other districts. Cross curation to regional standards could be another issue for job stress. It is possible that the Agricultural Officers could belong to a different district and culture but have to frequently interact with unique style of culture prevailing in their district of posting with varying socio

Table 1.
Dimensions of Job Stress of Agricultural Officers

n = 90

Sl. No.	Components	Thiruvananthapuram (n=30)	Thrissur (n=30)	Kasaragod (n=30)	KW	Total (N=90)
		MS	MS	MS		
1.	Role overload	22.33	22.57	24.7	10.512**	23.2
2.	Role ambiguity	10.6	11.97	13.57	16.241**	12.04
3.	Role conflict	15.4	16.3	14.63	5.556	15.44
4.	Group and political pressure	13.34	13.7	12.6	3.192	13.24
5.	Responsibility for persons	10.47	11.17	11.3	4.202	10.98
6.	Under - participation	11.17	12.23	10.47	5.721	11.29
7.	Powerlessness	8.57	8.97	8.17	2.564	8.57
8.	Poor peer relations	10.67	10.7	10.07	1.48	10.48
9.	Intrinsic impoverishment	12.2	11.8	9.6	13.33**	11.20
10.	Low status	7.3	7.5	7.53	0.403	7.44
11.	Strenuous working conditions	13.33	13.27	12.6	2.395	12.73
12.	Unprofitability	5.03	6.1	5.77	7.790**	5.63
	Total	139.5	146.28	141.01	8.737*	142.26
X ² -5% (0.05) - 5.99		X ² - 1%(0.01) - 9.21				
* Significant at 5 % level		** Significant at 1 % level				
KW- Kruskal - Wallis, MS- Mean sum						

– economic, political, technological and environmental situations.

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