

Empirical Study on Working Pressure of Civil Servants under New Normal Condition

Based on the Investigation of D City of Guangdong Province

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Abstract—In order to study the current working pressure of civil servants under new normal condition, an investigation is conducted in D City of Guangdong Province, taking young civil servants with different working nature as study object through random sampling, with the Working Pressure Questionnaire being granted. Of which the results show that civil servants under new normal background feel above-average working pressure, and the career development pressure is their biggest source of pressure. In addition to gender, such demographic variables as education level, age and position have no significant impact on civil servants' overall working pressure. Government departments carry out pressure management from the aspects of controlling pressure source and taking rational coping mechanism, while the civil servants themselves shall perfect their own characteristics and learn to manage their own working pressure.

Keywords—working pressure; pressure management; civil servant

I. DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

Working pressure refers to the working requirements that the workers feel they need to give more efforts and various mental state and mental response as generated from adapting to the requirements [1]. Its role is of duality: moderate working pressure may make the workers to concentrate their minds with quick thinking response and strong vigor; while excessive working pressure will harm people's physical and mental health. Enormous wisdom and power are hidden inside human body. Generally, only a small part of the brain will come into play, and the other majority capability will be stored. When people are encountered with pressure, the stored capability will be released intensively, exceeding the ordinary task. Working pressure is a kind of state. The body and mental will be unbalanced in such a state. In order to restore balance, we will renew huge motivation. Therefore, under moderate working pressure, we will perform excellently; even the matter that cannot be done at ordinary timely can be dealt with, and such

working pressure is called positive working pressure. Although positive working pressure will do us good in short time, if we stay in the positive working pressure for a long time or the working pressure is too high, exceeding the scope that our body and brain can regulate, our body will not be able to restore balance. At this time, positive working pressure will convert to negative working pressure, causing problems in our mental and health. Finally, it will make us burn out, and unable to enjoy the pleasure brought by working, losing the passion of pursuing success. The negative influence of negative working pressure will be reflected in terms of emotion, physiology and behavior. The study on working pressure shows that excessive pressure will cause huge damage to workers' health. About 50-80% of diseases are mental body diseases or the diseases related to pressure [2]. In addition to the body damage, excessive working pressure's influence on organization is also negative. For instance, it will lead to such problems as the workers' dissatisfaction, negativity, high demission rate and absence. As working pressure has the influence on individual and organization that cannot be ignored, since the 1950s, the study on working pressure has been one of the hot spots of western management and psychology. Foreign scholars have conducted large quantity of theoretical and empirical research in this aspect. Various schools have proposed their own theoretical framework according to their different research method and results as well as process [3]. In recent years, working pressure has almost become the significant issue faced by each organization member. Therefore, the pressure condition of individual in the organization and how to conduct effective pressure management, to get a normal performance or better than normal under moderate working pressure and obtain high performance has been the issue that many researchers are interested in [4-6]. The empirical investigation is proposed to be used in this study, to research civil servants' current working pressure and influencing factors, and to raise rational pressure management strategy thereby.

II. STUDY OBJECT AND QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Overview of This Study's Samples

Random sampling is adopted for this study, 140 civil servants with different working nature are selected from D

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City of Guangdong Province, and there are 134 effective questionnaires. Among which, there are 76 females and 58 males ranging from 20 years old to 59 years old.

B. Overview of This Study’s Questionnaire

The working pressure questionnaire is formulated by taking Greenberg working pressure mode as theoretical basis, referring to other related pressure questionnaires and forms, in combination with actual condition of civil servants, which is divided into six dimensions: (1) working load; (2) position in the organization; (3) career development; (4) interpersonal relationship; (5) structure and atmosphere of the organization; (6) factors beyond the organization. The last one is a question about performance criterion. The questionnaire’s reliability coefficient is 0.67, which closely related to the relevant coefficient of performance table of 0.62, $p < 0.01$.

III. SURVEY RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Current Condition of Civil Servant’s Working Pressure

It can be known from this survey that civil servants’ general working pressure score is 3.10 ± 0.41 , yet the highest score is 5. The score of 3.10 is higher than theoretical value, therefore, civil servants’ working pressure is above average. The six factors can be arranged as per their scores from high to low as: career development pressure, working load, structure and atmosphere of the organization, factors beyond the organization, interpersonal relationship and position in the organization.

The career development pressure in working pressure mainly refers to professional career development pressure. Professional career development is the process that an individual strive to realize his or her professional career goal gradually, as well as to formulate and perform new target constantly. The concept of professional career was first proposed by Shyne, an American personnel management

expert, in 1960s, and studied systematically. He holds the opinion that professional career is “the general term of an individual’s working experience in his or her whole life, especially includes his or her position changes, duty changes as well as the development process that the individual strive to achieve his or her goals and wishes, reflecting this individual’s behavior orientation attitude and outlook on value in different stages of the life” [9]. In modern society, staffs are paying more and more attention to their own professional career development, yet in professional career management study field, the academic circles have paid quite little attention to civil servants [10]. Meanwhile, there is strict regulation about civil servants’ promotion by law. Generally, they will be promoted step by step, which made the excellent civil servants have difficulty to stand out. Although multiple channels for civil servants’ promotion have been specified in Civil Servant Law, actually, their professional career development is related to their position, especially the leading position; therefore, the phenomenon that position promotion is the true promotion is formed. As we all know, the promotion of leading position is the classic pyramid structure. As a result, the people who can be promoted are quite limited. Therefore, the civil servants’ pressure in terms of career development is quite high. In order to make the civil servants have a clear goal and hope for their own future, and to make the staffs and organization play their role better, it is necessary to pay attention to career development planning.

B. Influence on Working Pressure Perception by Different Demographic Variables

1) *Gender difference:* It can be seen from “Table I” that with respect to overall working pressure as well as the structure and atmosphere in the organization, the pressure of male is higher than that of female, and the difference is of statistical significance.

TABLE I. WORKING PRESSURE IN DIFFERENT GENDERS

	Female	Male	t	p
Working Load	3.05 ±0.64	3.32 ±0.86	1.910	0.060
Position in Organization	2.87 ±0.78	2.88 ±0.82	0.093	0.926
Career Development	3.23 ±0.70	3.32 ±0.68	0.759	0.449
Interpersonal Relationship	2.88 ±0.76	3.01 ±0.85	1.010	0.314
Organization Structure and Atmosphere	3.05 ±0.69	3.32 ±0.73	2.171*	0.032
Factors Beyond Organization	3.03 ±0.48	3.05 ±0.52	0.208	0.836
Overall Pressure	3.02 ±0.33	3.18 ±0.46	2.333*	0.021

^a. Note: * indicates $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, the same as below.

It is widely believed by the studies that the pressure faced by male civil servants is high than that of female civil servants [11], which conform to Chinese traditional concept and actual condition. The public have excessive expectations on males. Males are often expected and required to perform excellently at work, with no failure is allowed. The increasing rapid living pace and the competitive working environment are the sources of males’ pressure. In traditional concept, only when a man has a successful career, can he be acknowledged by others. If there are problems at work, or temporary frustration appears, the males’ pressure will be very high. In addition, when the males are stressed, they are unwilling to pour out to others or make

expression in a proper way, leading the pressure greater. With respect to the profession of civil servant, females may enjoy more of the stability brought by this job than males. However, this job cannot satisfy males for their own expectations of material pursuit and realization of individual value, so their pressure perception is obviously higher than that of females.

2) *Educational level difference:* It can be seen from “Table II” that, education level has no significant influence on the overall working pressure, but there is great difference in career development as well as organization structure and atmosphere of the civil servants with different education

levels. Through multiple comparisons (LSD), we may see that the civil servants only educated by primary school have the greatest pressure in the two factors of career development as well as organization structure and atmosphere, which are higher than the civil servants with other education levels. The

modern society is a knowledge-based society; the civil servants only educated by primary school have no the impressive education background nor the perfect knowledge, so they bear the largest pressure in career development as well as organization structure and atmosphere without doubt.

TABLE II. INFLUENCE ON WORKING PRESSURE BY EDUCATION LEVEL

	Overall Pressure	Working Load	Position in Organization	Career Development	Interpersonal Relationship	Organization Structure and Atmosphere	Factors Beyond Organization
Primary School	3.46±0.33	3.73±0.76	3.20±0.27	4.00±0.41	2.67±0.41	4.33±0.24	2.67±0.24
Junior High School	3.08±0.72	2.92±0.83	2.63±0.95	2.92±0.32	3.08±0.83	3.25±0.69	3.42±0.17
Senior High School	3.02±0.45	3.10±0.79	2.79±0.90	3.07±0.80	2.86±0.87	3.29±0.69	2.94±0.46
Junior College	3.16±0.34	3.14±0.77	2.87±0.78	3.60±0.49	3.13±0.82	3.08±0.64	3.10±0.45
Regular College	3.01±0.37	3.07±0.68	2.88±0.78	3.17±0.65	2.89±0.81	3.01±0.67	3.02±0.53
Master	3.13±0.41	3.36±0.70	2.93±0.82	3.20±0.83	2.82±0.70	3.13±0.79	3.16±0.53
F	1.801	1.144	0.314	3.544*	0.578	3.907**	1.491
P	0.1117	0.340	0.904	0.005	0.716	0.002	0.197

3) *Marital status difference:* From “Table III” we can know that in addition to interpersonal relationship, the

overall working pressure and its factors of unmarried and married one have no significant differences.

TABLE III. INFLUENCE ON WORKING PRESSURE BY MARITAL STATUS

	Unmarried	Married	Other	F	P
Working Load	3.11±0.68	3.14±0.75	3.39±0.93	0.396	0.673
Position in Organization	2.86±0.77	2.85±0.81	3.33±0.68	1.058	0.350
Career Development	3.25±0.72	3.27±0.67	3.11±0.72	0.146	0.864
Interpersonal Relationship	2.80±0.67	2.96±0.85	3.61±1.02	3.221*	0.043
Organization Structure and Atmosphere	3.18±0.65	3.11±0.75	3.06±0.85	0.214	0.808
Factors Beyond Organization	3.10±0.48	2.98±0.51	3.17±0.46	1.176	0.312
Overall Pressure	3.06±0.31	3.07±0.43	3.28±0.47	0.915	0.403

4) *Position difference:* It can be seen from “Table IV” that, there is no significant difference in overall working pressure, working load and career development of civil servants with different positions, but the pressure perceived by civil servants with different positions in the aspects of position in organization, interpersonal relationship, organization structure and atmosphere and factors beyond organization is greatly different. Through multiple comparisons (LSD) we may see that with respect to position in organization, interpersonal relationship and factors beyond organization, the pressure perceived by senior technicians is significantly higher than the personnel with other positions. As the technical backbone in the unit, senior technicians are undertaking important yet key works, and they have certain right of speech to some extent. But they are not leaders, having no right and position in terms of administration. Therefore, they need to deal with their position in organization and interpersonal relationship with more caution.

TABLE IV. INFLUENCE ON WORKING PRESSURE BY DIFFERENT POSITIONS

	Overall Pressure	Working Load	Position in Organization	Career Development	Interpersonal Relationship	Organization Structure and Atmosphere	Factors Beyond Organization
Leader	2.85±0.38	3.60±0.60	2.40±0.61	2.87±0.71	2.47±0.63	2.47±0.57	2.90±0.82
Senior Tech	3.24±0.31	3.24±0.70	3.42±0.77	3.16±0.49	3.44±0.78	2.88±0.78	3.39±0.54
Tech	3.03±0.28	3.13±0.57	3.17±0.68	3.13±0.52	3.06±0.73	2.78±0.60	3.05±0.30
Pro.Tech	3.08±0.48	3.08±0.84	2.85±0.80	3.22±0.81	2.98±0.89	3.27±0.63	3.08±0.54
Admin	2.97±0.35	3.10±0.58	2.58±0.73	3.17±0.75	2.75±0.82	3.15±0.60	2.95±0.44
W & A	3.24±0.28	3.38±0.97	2.86±0.75	3.29±0.52	2.86±0.66	3.76±0.81	3.05±0.49
Temporary	3.02±0.32	2.94±0.74	2.54±0.71	3.62±0.63	2.59±0.60	3.44±0.47	2.86±0.36
Other	3.21±0.58	3.10±0.71	3.36±0.56	3.33±1.02	3.24±0.57	3.38±0.97	3.00±0.27
F	1.895	1.118	4.833***	1.817	3.406**	5.119***	2.595*
P	0.075	0.355	0.000	0.089	0.002	0.000	0.015

^b Note: "Leader" refers to leaders and executives; "Senior Tech" refers to senior technicians; "Tech" refers to technicians; "Pro. Tech" refers to professional technicians; "Admin" refers to administrative staffs; "W & A" refers to workers and assistants; "Temporary" refers to temporary staffs; "Other" refers to other personnel not covered by the aforementioned positions.

IV. WORKING PRESSURE MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS

From the above surveyed data we may learn that career development pressure is civil servants' highest working pressure. Hence, the planning and guiding in terms of civil servants' professional career shall be intensified. Except gender has great influence on overall working pressure, the influence of other demographic variables is not significant.

A. Form Moderate Working Pressure through Perfection of Organizational System to Guide Their Career Development

Individual's potential will be given play to the best with moderate pressure, and their performance will be improved. Therefore, when conducting working pressure management, the pressure shall not be eliminated universally. Governmental departments may form appropriate working pressure for civil servants through explicating position responsibilities, perfecting institutional framework, establishing organization units rationally, improving personnel selection and job placement process, setting a practical and feasible goal, intensifying civil servants' level of involvement, keeping good organization communication, creating harmonious organization atmosphere, and establish scientific promotion mechanism.

B. Relieve and Ease Excessive Pressure by Rational Coping Mechanism

The government departments introduce EPA (Employee Assisting Plan) service to help civil servants manage working pressure. International Association of Employee Assisting Plan believes that employee assisting is the resource available for the enterprise, which prevent, identify and settle individual and productivity problems through core technology, enhancing the effectiveness of employees and working place [12]. Introduce EAP service to government departments to provide relevant services for civil servants.

Help civil servants to achieve organizational goal and personal goal through professional career planning. Professional career management refers to the behavioural process carried out and provided by the organization to help and promote the employees who are engaging in some

professional activities in the organization to realize their professional development [13]. The professional career planning of civil servants refers to the process of working staff of government authority to define civil servants' position development through analysis and measuring of the subjective and objective factors that determine their individual professional development, and to make reasonable planning of their professional career development stages. Therefore, the contents of civil servants' professional career planning include such two aspects of the civil servant' individual professional career planning and the department's professional career planning. As for the civil servants, professional career planning is the development goal made around their own work, and to achieve the goal through effective methods and means gradually. As for government organization, it is the joint point helping the civil servants to find their individual goal and organization developing chance. The nature of professional career design is the personal realization based on organization value.

C. Individual to Form the Realistic Expectations, Change Unreasonable Belief, and Learn the Strategy of Pressure Management

The realistic expectations shall be formed. Pines (1982) study proves that the individuals who perceive high working pressure often have unrealistic expectations on the professional work. And for such reason, the feelings of disillusionment of ideals and fatigue are easily to appear. The civil servants themselves shall formulate a realistic and feasible working goal, and make a reasonable expectation for themselves. It is every civil servant's normal mentality to pursue improvement, desire promotion and expect success. But it is also unavoidable of improvement failure, hopeless promotion and work failure. What we can do is to design a realistic and feasible life goal for ourselves, and make a reasonable expectation on our ideal and undertaking, to avoid the feeling of pressure brought by failure.

Change the unreasonable belief and cognitive style. The pressure source itself cannot determine whether or not to generate pressure and its degree. The generation of pressure is taking the cognition of pressure source by individual as medium. First of all, we shall know that working pressure is the normal phenomenon that every one will have; second, treat

the pressure with appropriate attitude, and individual shall learn various strategies to manage pressure.

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