



A STUDY OF THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG TEACHERS IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

Occupational stress among teachers working in different schools of Thanjavur District is taken as the research problem of the present research work. As the stress is one of the important factors, generally prevailing in all types of the work places, it affects the working potentiality of the Teachers. It makes many disturbances in the mind of the Teachers so that it ultimately reduces the productivity of the Teachers. The teachers are not exceptions to this general condition. Many times, it will affect the relationship of the teacher with the students also. So, the problem of stress takes an integral part in the working life of the teachers.

Keywords: Stress, occupation, types, origin.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress in our society is not something that is invisible. Person whether a child, adult, men, women, employed, unemployed everyone is facing stress in his/her own way Today's life is full of challenges. In everyday life we come across many situations. Some of them act as a source of inspiration for us and some causes challenges. It is the human nature to face the challenges boldly or to escape from it. All this varies from person to person. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stress. Hans Selye first introduced the concept of stress in to the life science in 1936. He defined stress as "The force, pressure, or strain exerted upon a material object or person which resist these forces and attempt to maintain its original state." Stress is ubiquitous in our society. It has become an integral part of everyday living.

Every person has his own definition of stress. But according to Van Wyk (in Olivier & Venter, 2003), stress is derived from the Latin word "strictus" that translates into taut, meaning stiffly strung. Oliver and Venter (2003) rely on the definition of Dr. Hans Selye, who defined stress in physiological terms, as a nonspecific or generalized bodily response.

Stress is an unavoidable consequence of modern living. With the growth of industries, pressure in the urban areas, quantitative growth in population and various problems in day to day life are some of the reasons for increase in stress. Stress is a condition of strain that has a direct bearing on emotions, thought process and physical conditions of a person.

The coping of a situation or extent of a reaction depends on every individual. A situation that is harmful to one may not be the same for the other so the stress is a very complex phenomenon. Whenever there is threat to our wellbeing our body responds that is known as stress response. We can say that stress is an emotional state that is experienced by an individual. Most of the stressful situations don't in themselves cause harm to us .It is the reaction to them. The reaction may be dangerous if it approaches the elastic limits. A certain level of stress is essential for effective functioning.

1.2 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Occupational stress can be defined as the physical and emotional response/s that occur when worker perceive an imbalance between their work demands and their capability and/or resources to meet these demands or In simple words it is the harmful physical and emotional response that can happen when there is conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. In general, occupational stress arises from the working conditions/environment of a system. Researchers on stress make it clear that, to enter in to the complex area of stress, especially in to the area of occupational stress, is very difficult.

Steers (1981) indicate that, "Occupational stress has become an important topic for study of organizational behaviour for several reasons."

1. Stress has harmful psychological and physiological effects on employees.
2. Stress is a major cause of employee turnover and absenteeism.
3. Stress experienced by one employee can affect the safety of other employees.
4. By controlling dysfunctional stress, individual and organization can be managed more effectively.

Beehr and Newman (1978) define occupational stress as "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."



School Teachers face high amounts of stress during teaching and handling students. Classrooms in developing countries remain overcrowded and the teachers face intensive verbal communication, prolonged standing, high volume of workload. The environment of a working place has great impact on the level of stress. In India the schools are being run by government as well as by some individuals or trusts. The schools can be classified as under:

Private Schools: Private schools are the schools managed by a trust or an agency. The funds required, are generated by the schools itself. These schools follow the instructions as laid down by the state govt. /board concerned but no financial aid is provided to them.

Government Schools: The schools are run by the State government. All the rules and regulations of the State government are followed. The funds are provided by the concerned state government. The recruitment of staff that includes academic as well as administrative is the sole responsibility of the concerned department of the state government.

1.3 TYPES OF STRESS

The different kinds of stress that affect the life are as under:

Reactive stress: This occurs when a person perceives that they do not have the capacity to cope with the demands placed on them.

Cumulative stress: A condition brought about by a number of stressful factors.

Critical incident stress: A reaction to sudden, anticipated demands of specific incidents.

Post traumatic stress: A condition caused by an inability to satisfactorily accommodate memories of a traumatic episode.

1.4 ORIGINS OF STRESS

There are unquestionably a number of causal factors in teacher stress. Although stress always involves a transaction between the individual and their environment (Cox, 1978), for heuristic purposes we can divide causal factors in teacher stress into three broad areas; factors intrinsic to teaching, cognitive factors affecting the individual vulnerability of teachers and systemic factors operating at the institutional and political level. A few sources of stress are listed below:

General factors: Working with national curriculum, teacher appraisal, lack of authority and sanctions for disciplining students, threats of school closure, media portrayal of teachers and inability to reconcile different roles i.e. of teacher, guide, counselor and social worker, conflict at home and work, attack on pride by rude pupils, financial pressures, and declining status in the community.

The role of management: Feeling of being used or manipulated, being seen as willing workhorse, lack of flexibility in times of need, too much emphasis on paperwork, lack of support from management, sexual discrimination and not knowing if you are doing a good job, lack of good pay and promotional aspects etc.

School policy and ethos: Lack of consultation, fear of speaking one's mind, no clear boundaries of responsibility, adapting to change after change, fear of abuse from parents, Break, lunch and after school duties, covering for absent colleagues, fear of losing your job etc.

Working conditions: Large classes, crowded staff areas, poorly lit rooms, lack of resources, working on school matter during vacations, rewards do not match efforts.

The pupils: Lack of cooperation from pupils, racial problems, pupils using bad language, pupil answering back, verbal abuse from pupils toward staff and attitude of pupils towards authority, attack on pride by discourteous students.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teacher stress is a real phenomenon and is associated with problems of recruitment, health and retention of teachers. Research has shown that teacher stress is reliably associated with a number of variables, including those intrinsic to the job, individual cognitive vulnerability and systemic factors. There are however important gaps in our understanding of teacher stress, most notably regarding effective interventions.



The study of occupational stress among teachers is of great significance. One's abilities are reflected through the performance and that performance is directly related to the mental state and physique. The school is a place where future nation is shaped. A school under stress is an expensive organization to run, both in cost to teachers' well-being and in financial terms.

A general tendency exists in the literature according to which females experience higher levels of occupational stress regarding gender, specific stressors and have different ways of interpreting and dealing with problems related to their work environment (Offerman and Armitage, 1993 in Antoniou et al., 2006). From the review of literature, it is clear that the environment also affects the working of a system. No doubt that the stress originates at work, at home but self as a source of stress cannot be omitted. Only after knowing the causes and affects of stress it will be possible to suggest remedies. Therefore, in the present study, the attempts to highlight the level of occupational stress among teachers will be made taking into consideration their gender differences along with age and experiences. The comparative study of teachers of private and government school teachers will also help us to know the difference in level of occupational stress if exists.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The proposed study has been designed to attain following objectives:

- To study the occupational stress among teachers working in government and private schools.
- To rendered the suggestions to the Government and private school authorities.

1.7 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The proposed study will be survey type only. The data for the study will be collected from the teachers of various schools by using Occupational Role questionnaire, a part of Occupational Stress Inventory by Osipow S.H. and Spokane, A.R. (1987).The data will be collected from the teachers who will be willing to provide information on volunteer basis.

1.8 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

In accordance with the various objective of the study and to test the hypothesis based on the objectives following techniques will be used:

- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Percentages
- t-test

1.9 LIMITATIONS

- The study was conducted within a limited time period.
- The sample size is limited to 150 from the population of 300.
- The data provided by the respondents may be false at times.
- The researcher was asked to interview the workers in Tamil language.
- Researcher is conducting the project for the first time.

1.10 FINDINGS

The finding of the present revealed the following.

- ↻ Most of the respondent fall under low stress category.
- ↻ There is in significance relationship between stress & demography factors i.e. age, experience & designation.
- ↻ The following dimensions of personal policies & practices of the organization have contributed to stress among Teachers.
- ↻ Respondents who fall under the E2A & E5 grade are more stressed in comparison with the other grade.
- ↻ The organization falls a very tall structure of stress among hierarchy & this is one of the reasons for Teachers being stressed.
- ↻ There is no significant difference of stress among Teachers working in plant & other departments.
- ↻ The Teachers working in the plant gave a positive response in answering the questionnaire
- ↻ As the table value is less than the calculated value there is significant relationship between the gender of the teachers and their perception towards environment problem in the work place.
- ↻ As the table value is less than the calculated value, there is significant relationship between the gender of the teachers and their belief that the meditation/prayer reduces the stress.
- ↻ As the table value is greater than the calculated value, no significant relationship between the gender of the teachers and their belief that the improvement of working conditions reduces the stress.



1.11 SUGGESTIONS

A Small percentage of the Teachers did have high stress. Person facing stress at the organizational level of lot of psychological problems in the form of decreased motivation, absenteeism low productivity targets not being achieving etc. as a reedy for the above said Teachers facing stress are advised to attend stress management courses which will help them to build coping strategies and cause out their stress. The stress management cause comprise of a package program consisting of:

- ✦ Relaxation
- ✦ Positive outlook towards works / responsibilities
- ✦ Self analysis through personality type testes
- ✦ Inter personal skill development
- ✦ Protection yoga cum meditation
- ✦ Time management
- ✦ Since T & D job related factors, performance appraisal & job satisfaction were perceived stressful by the Teachers, the Teachers should be counseled regarded the matter
- ✦ At the individual level the Teachers could practice a relaxing holiday (where in quality time is spent with the family) every fortnight or month
- ✦ Realize excessive use of tea / coffee cigarette is not answer to stress

1.12 CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to Teachers in Thanjavur. The aim was to find the stress levels, personality type of the Teachers. This was done using a detailed questionnaire. The study reveled that fall under low stress category only a small percentage is highly stressed & needed prevailing in the organization to some extent. At the end of the study, we can conclude that through there are signs of stress among the Teachers & such stress is affecting their behaviors, it can be controlled & reduced effectively. This can be done by giving counseling & incorporating the suggestions given here in at individual & organization level.

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