



College Teachers: Occupational Stress and Coping Strategies

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Abstract: *Occupational stress, also known as job stress, has been defined as the experience of negative emotional state such as frustration, worry, anxiety and depression attributed to work related factors. It is important to understand that positive stress is necessary and negative stress become harmful. The present study was undertaken to fulfill the objectives of identifying factors causing stress, and identifying the occupational health stress management strategies. Survey was conducted to achieve the objectives. Random sampling technique was used to identify and select the sample of thirty university teachers. The results revealed that cent percent of respondents were sometimes irritated during the teaching hours due to the work pressure (66.66 %) at work place which indirectly spoilt the relations with colleagues thereby leading to psychological exhaustion. Another stress causing factor sometimes was extra burden given by authorities (71.42 %). Majority of respondents strongly agreed that one could manage stress by creating a good balance between work and family (36.66 %) and that also friends and coworkers support network (43.33 %) can relieve the individuals stress. The University teachers are suggested to stop worrying unnecessarily, learn and practice anger management and also spend some of free time in leisure activities to free their engaged mind which also helps in managing stress*

Keywords: *occupational health, physical exhaustion, stress management, work place, work pressure*

Introduction

Today's life is full of challenges. In everyday life we come across many situations. The work of a teacher is a physically and mentally challenging. A teacher needs to use a lot of energy in his daily chores in the classroom coupled with his personal and family commitments. This trend which is a routine for a teacher forwards a lot of stress to the teacher. More than ever before work is not seen as the root of infinite satisfaction and fulfillment, but rather a source of stress, discontentment and humiliation. Occupational stress

often stems from unexpected responsibilities and pressures that do not align with a person's knowledge, skills, or expectations, inhibiting one's ability to cope. Occupational stress can increase when workers do not feel supported by supervisors or colleagues, or feel as if they have little control over work processes. Stress is an excess of demand made upon the adaptive capabilities of the mind and body" and is seen in the form of a physical demand and mental demand or both (Kyriacou, 2001). There is no doubt that teaching has become more demanding and intense job. Teaching has been identified as one of



the professions associated with high to very high levels of occupational stress (Acirrt, 2002). Occupational stress which poses a threat to the individual, either excessive demands or insufficient supplies to meet his needs (Borg and Riding, 1991). Teacher job satisfaction has also been the subject of considerable literature (Dinham & Scott, 2000)

Stress in our society is not something that is invisible. Good Stress and Bad Stress Stress is a word that everyone avoids but it cannot be. Everyone has some stress with verifying degree. Individuals whether a child, adult, men, women, employed, unemployed everyone is facing stress in his/her own way. Today's life is full of challenges. occupational stress, also known as job stress, has been defined as the experience of negative emotional states such as frustration, worry, anxiety and depression attributed to work related factors Occupational stress is an individual experience, depending on the traits of individuals and that not all people react to events the same way.

Occupation plays a pivotal role in an individual's life, it gives sense of identification, a chance to explore and actualize his or her potentials. On the contrary every profession has its own complexities and in today's challenging professional life stress is inevitable. Highest levels of occupational stress are experienced by teachers when compared with the people in other professions (Sager, 1994). However, highly reputable and professionally managed organizations are trying to provide stress free environment but they cannot completely secure their employees from the increasing occupational stress. Occupational stress which is synonymous with job stress or work related stress

explored as the outcome of some negative feelings or experiences, like worries, depression, anxiety, negative emotional states resulted in response to factors which are related to occupation or work. On the other hand stress can cause fatal illness. Stress has also consigned rather large number of people to mental institutions, psychiatrists couch, prisons and hospitals. Keeping this in mind the study focuses on the following objectives:

- To identified factors causing occupational stress.
- To study occupational health stress management strategies.

Review of Literature

Pestonjee and Azeem (2001) conducted a study on "A Study of Organisational Role Stress in relation to Job Burnout among University Teachers". Their study consisted of (N=300) university teachers, which has been classified into three groups of 100 each. The results of the study indicate that organizational role stress is highly correlated with job burnout among all the three groups of teachers (Lecturers, Readers and Professors). Lecturers have higher level of role stress as compared to other two counterparts. Professors are found to have least amount of the level of stress and burnout as compared to Readers and Lecturers. Thus, a deep analysis helped the researchers conclude that different set of teachers have different predictors of job burnout and stress levels vary with experience and demographics.

Brewer and Landers (2003) in their research found out the "Relationship between Job stress and Job Satisfaction among Industrial and Technical Teacher Educators". They took a random sample of 133 industrial and



technical teacher educators. The research revealed a strong correlational analysis. They found an inverse relationship between the constructs, with stressors related to lack of organizational support being more strongly associated with job satisfaction than stressors related to the job itself were. Hence we can conclude that stress is a major factor that affects not only job satisfaction level, but also job performance. These results have implications for addressing job stress and job satisfaction in higher education.

Stoeber, J., & Rennert, D. (2008) in their study found out that teachers suffer from stress and burnout in

numbers greater than those in similar professions. Although teaching is said to be a relatively easy job, teachers are said to be more prone to stress.

Methodology

The present study was carried out at CSK Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishvavidyaaya, Palampur. A sample of 30 university teachers was selected randomly. An interview schedule was prepared for collection of the relevant data as per the objectives of the study. The subjects of the study comprised from four constituted colleges of CSKHPKV Palampur University that is:

College	Number of Respondents	Percentage
College of Home Science	16	53.33
College of Basic Science	9	30.00
College of Agriculture	3	10.00
College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences	2	6.66
Gender		
Females	18	(60.00)
Males	12	(40.00)
Education		
M.Sc	9	(30.00)
Ph.D	21	(70.00)

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Factors causing occupational stress

Symptoms	Yes		No		If yes					
					Always		Sometimes		Rarely	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Work pressure at work place	18	60.00	12	40.00			12	66.66	6	33.33
Trouble dealing with colleagues	3	10.00	27	90.00			2	66.66	1	33.33
Irritating during teaching hours	4	13.33	26	86.66			4	100		
Noise and disturbance in the premises of	6	20.00	24	80.00			2	33.33	4	66.66



working hours										
Physical exhaustion due to extra work	8	26.66	22	73.33	5	62.5	3	37.5		
Psychological exhaustion due to extra work	6	20.00	24	80.00			4	66.66	2	33.33
Burden by authorities	7	23.33	23	76.66			5	71.42	2	28.57
Anxiety due to fear of being laid	3	10.00	27	90.00			3	100		
Chi square					11.5864	The P-value is .000664	78.652	The P-value is < .00001	37.8822.	The P-value is < .00001
The result is significant at $p < 0.05$										

Data presented in table 1 shows that 60.00 per cent of teachers agreed that work pressure at work place is sometimes (66.66%) one of the factors causing stress followed by 26.66 per cent who felt that they were always (62.5 %) exhausted physically due to extra work. Twenty three per cent respondents stated that additional burden put by authority sometimes (71.42 %) was another factor causing stress followed by 20.00 per cent of respondents who marked that extra

work sometimes (66.66 %) lead to psychological exhaustion in them.

Cent percent of respondents were sometimes irritated during the teaching hours due to the work pressure at work place which indirectly spoil the relations with colleagues thereby leading to psychological exhaustion. Another stress causing factor sometimes (71.42 %) was extra burden given by authorities. Chi square test was applied which shows significant results.

Table 2: Occupational stress management strategies

Managing Stress	Strongly Agree (SA)		Agree (A)		Disagree (DA)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Create balance between work and family	11	36.66	7	23.33	12	40.00
Create support network of friends and coworkers	6	20.00	13	43.33	11	36.66
Medical check	9	30.00	8	26.66	13	43.33
Balanced diet	11	36.66	6	20.00	13	43.33
Relaxation and meditation	10	33.33	6	20.00	14	46.66

Data in table 2 shows that 36.66 per cent of teachers strongly agreed that a balance between work and family and a balanced diet is very important to reduce the stress as compared to 43.33 per cent

respondents who agreed that a friends and coworkers support network should be created to relieve oneself from the occupational stress. The Relaxation and meditation were disagreed upon as stress



management strategies by 46.66 percent respondents where as 43.33 percent respondents each disagreed with medical checkup and balanced diet as stress management strategies. According to them a diet and medical checkup had no role in relieving the person from stress.

Remedial Measures for handling stress - When a person decides to adopt the teaching profession, he or she during the training phase must realize the demands of this profession in terms of effort involved and in terms of time investment. The workload on a teacher will always be great and everything will always be bracketed by a very tight time schedule. A teacher has to be punctual and able to meet the deadline without fail. A teacher will have to always face the criticism of parents of the weak students and face the school board with a different set of problems. A sensible teacher must know where to draw a line to prevent his social and personal life from being absorbed by his professional life. Though it is very difficult to leave the stresses of the school in the office and not let it affect their personal life, but there are methods which can help a teacher to reduce these effects.

Some elements of stress are intrinsic while others are situational in the profession of teaching. The teacher has to understand how to cope with those which are intrinsic, while the situational ones can be managed with experience and common sense. Surinder Kaur (2011) suggests some measures for handling stress vis-à-vis adopt a Hobby (Music, gardening, hiking and painting); adopting Healthy Habits (healthy lifestyle, cutting back on bad habits like drinking and smoking); set realistic goals in life and then pursue them; visit the guidance counselor (as it can help one to identify

any underlying psychological or behavior problem related to workplace stress); stop worrying unnecessarily and lastly learn and practice anger management (helps in managing stress)

Conclusion

- The most important stress causing factor was work pressure at work place.
- Mixed response was noticed regarding the stress management strategies with almost 50% having of the positive attitude and more than 50% having negative attitude that the stress management strategies will and will not be helpful in reducing the stress.
- Another stress causing factor sometimes was extra burden given by authorities (71.42 %).
- It is very important for any individual to adopt any remedial measure in handling the stress.

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