

A Study on Impacts of Stress Among Private School Women Teachers Working in Salem District

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ABSTRACT

Coordinating and harmonising personal and professional lives has been challenging for women workers in every job profile. Managing the daily home activities, looking after the family members, mainly children are considered as the major factors which cause distress among the working women. Teachers are the most resourceful persons for schools and college institutions. They are the key factor in moulding the students and shaping them into a good citizen. The paper examines the level & impacts of stress and coping strategies for stress among women school teachers from different schools in Salem district, Tamil Nadu. A sample of 50 respondents was taken for the study using the snowball sampling method. The paper revealed the fact that stress levels are high and most women's teachers have a great impact on their stress in the way of suffering from headaches, tension, depression, poor relationships, etc. The methods and ways to reduce the level of stress were also suggested in the paper.

Keywords: Job Stress of Working Women, Workload of School Teachers, Impacts of Stress, Coping Strategies etc.

INTRODUCTION

The modern world is a world of stress, right from the time of birth till death an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. The environment and nature of work are changing with daily changes in life. In the case of human beings, stress is often used to describe the body's responses to demands placed upon it, whether these demands are favourable or unfavourable. In precise to women, previously they chose to work only in particular fields like nursing, teaching, clerical, etc. But today, they stand in almost every field, even the most critical jobs like shipping, piloting, etc. Women are found in a large number in the field of teaching and it is therefore considered important to find their stress and bring out a solution for them so that it would be beneficial to the individual, management and the students.

In women professionals, the majority of women (40%) were under moderately low levels of stress. It was also indicated that women professionals have to perform the dual role of a maid and a manager, so they feel rushed but are under moderate levels of stress and that social support can further reduce their stress levels. [1].

The study discusses the sources and consequences of stress. The researcher stated that if job stress is

measured as an individual problem and not as a management problem, then the organisation have to face loss due to absenteeism, quitting of jobs, the total cost of work-related accidents and low-quality work. The study concludes that workplace stress has negative relations with organizational productivity and that stress can be managed despite the hazards caused by it. [2].

An overview of the challenges and opportunities faced by professional women in India. Glass ceiling, 24X7 work pressure, prolonged working shifts, work-life balance, gender biases, social constraints and security problems were given as the factors responsible for women's stress. The paper also highlights the coping strategies that can be selected to further continue the corporate journey to gender inclusion and the advancement of women in organizations. [3].

Definition of Stress

Greenberg and Baron (2000) define stress as “a complex pattern of emotional states, physiological reactions and related thoughts in response to external demands”. They refer to the demands emanating from the environment as stressors. Examples of stressors are: the demands of work assignments, interpersonal relations between co-workers, one's relations with one's spouse and children, and social obligations [4]. The third term, strain connected to stress and stressors, according to these authors, refers to the accumulated effects of stress expressed as deviations from normal patterns of behaviour or activity and thus constituting a consequence of exposure to stressful events [5]. In medical terms, stress is described as, “a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to illness.”

Job Stress of Working Women

Women nowadays are working in a greater proportion than before almost in every field. Working women have to perform a dual role in their life, i.e. looking after the family (personal) and as well as the job (professional). It is quite difficult for them to manage and handle both professional and personal lives, especially for a women worker [6]. Women prefer to work these days, due to the predominant fact that it is very difficult to run the family with a single person's income [7]. And so, they come out to manage their family expenses, with the support of their family members too. But it should be taken care that they work in a stress-free environment, which is also equally important for women to work with a peaceful mind so that stress does not conquer them [8].

The family members try to adjust their roles within the family and a change is being felt in their attitudes also. Due to better working conditions, better transportation facilities and improved technology, the stress on women professionals is reduced and their efficiency has increased. They have the support of their family and friends and can cope better with stress. Women are becoming more and more career-conscious [9].

Impacts of Stress

Stress experienced by women teachers in their jobs has negative effects and impacts on their health, behaviour towards family and others, job satisfaction, and job performance in the school. The following causes of stress have been given as factors creating stress for teachers:

- Working environment
- Completion of the academic syllabus on time,
- Handling a greater number of periods per day,
- Non-cooperative colleagues and management,
- Technological revolutions

- Problematic students & low performance of the students
- Inflexible rules and regulations of the school management
- Personal problems

These causes of stress have an impact on teachers in several ways. It affects them in the physical aspects, mental aspects, and behavioural aspects [10].

Physical aspect

The stress of teachers affects them physically in many ways which include headache, blood pressure, body pain, back pain, eye problems, fatigue (tiredness), and obesity.

Mental aspect

Stress produces many psychological or mental problems. Researchers have found that stress is related to tension, anger, nervousness, irritability, job dissatisfaction, job insecurity, depression, lack of concentration, helplessness, hopelessness, and negativity are the result of psychological stress [11].

Behavioural aspect

Stress also attacks the behaviour of the individuals. There is general agreement that a high degree of stress drives people to adopt certain easily visible behavioural symptoms such as sleeplessness, excessive drinking and smoking when it comes to males, poor relations with colleagues, family and others, and absenteeism. Some of the less visible behavioural symptoms are bad decision-making, negative internal politics, reduced creativity, apathy and so on [12].

COPING STRATEGIES OF STRESS

Stress needs to be managed effectively to set off these harmful consequences. All possible ways of coping strategies for stress should be analysed thoroughly so that a better coping strategy can be adopted and followed. Some of the coping strategies recommended by the researcher in the paper are:

On the part of the management:

- The management must pay more attention to the individual well-being of the teachers
- They should understand the importance of primary and secondary interventions to reduce stress
- The management should involve every staff in decision-making and should give importance to their opinions also
- The management should analyse the situation and develop an active plan to diminish the level of stress
- It should take responsibility for improving the physical and mental well-being of its staff
- There should be proper communication between the management and the teachers [13]

On the part of the individual:

- The Individuals should approach their problems with optimism and with hope
- The individuals should make their family in such a way that they understand them in case of any misunderstandings
- They should prioritize their work and go ahead to achieve their targets
- They should have proper communication with their family members to avoid problems
- The family should give space for the women workers to express their views [14]

The following are the objectives for the study

1. To find out the level of stress.
2. To find out the impact of stress among private school teachers.
3. To find out the coping strategies and effective ways to manage the level of stress among private school teachers.

The methodology used to conduct this research study are as follows:

Primary data has been collected from the women teachers belonging to various schools in Salem district, Tamil Nadu. The teachers from whom the data are collected handle secondary and higher secondary classes. Properly framed questionnaires were distributed to them and it is made sure that the data was filled in fairly [15]. Books, journals, and websites were used as secondary data. The questionnaire had three main parts namely level of stress undergone in their job, the impacts of stress and the methods of coping strategies to come out from stress. The snowball sampling method has been used for the study [16]. A sample of 50 respondents was taken for the study. Despite the care taken, out of the 50 questionnaires, 48 questionnaires were duly and properly filled and the remaining two have been rejected due to the improper response given by the respondents. Hence, the response rate is 96 percentage [17].

MAJOR FINDINGS

Major findings which were found from the research conducted are:

Level of Stress

It is found that almost eighty-four per cent of the respondents have high levels of stress in their jobs. The age category of the respondents who opted for high levels of stress is mostly under the category of 25-35 years. This is because, the teachers face stress in the initial stages of their job since they have less experience, and later, they get adapted to the work situations after experiencing it, as they know how to deal with it. And teachers handling higher secondary classes have more stress [18].

Major causes of stress creators

It is found from the research that handling more periods in a day (4 to 5 periods) leads to more stress at 21%, followed by completion of academic syllabus at 20%, working environment at 18%, personal problems at 15%, problematic students and low performance of the students with 12%, non-cooperative colleagues and management with 8%, technological revolution with 4%, inflexible rules and regulations of management with 2% [19].

Impacts of stress

The research study found that most of the teachers suffer from the problem of headaches followed by tiredness. This is because, continuous hours of working, and time pressures make them feel stressed and exhausted, leading them to have such physical pains. It is also found that the teachers experience mental harm mostly tension, depression, non-concentration in the work, and irritability [20]. This is very dangerous for the teachers since their stress will affect the students and the school in getting good results. These were found as major impact of stress that the teachers feel as mental impacts of stress. When it comes to behaviour impacts of stress, it was found that the majority of the staff have poor relations with their colleagues, family and others when they are under stress [21].

Stress coping strategy

The majority of the respondents opted for yoga as the best stress-coping strategy with fifty-one per cent.

And sixty-four per cent agree that the provision of incentives and increments would help them to come out of their stress level [22].

SUGGESTIONS

The school management should notify that it is their responsibility to take care of its staff and it should try to make the teachers work in a stress-free environment. It is suggested to the management to conduct regular health check-ups for its staff, which would be of great help to the staff to know about their physical condition. Personally, this makes them aware of what should be done by them and what steps can be taken further to safeguard themselves in case of any physical complications. The management should also have an open talk with its staff to know their problems since it reflects the school management and the students directly. So, they should give counselling to the staff at the correct point of time. The academic syllabus must be framed accordingly so that every teacher can complete it on time. The involvement of staff in decision-making is to be considered by the management. The school must provide proper encouraging facts like incentives, to make their staffs work with enthusiasm.

CONCLUSION

The impacts of stress on staff and management can be avoided to a certain extent by implementing certain appropriate stress management strategies. Both the staff and the management's performance can be improved when the impacts of stress are eliminated or at least reduced to a certain level. While the impacts of stress are eradicated, it directly reflects on higher performance of the teachers. More burden should be avoided; hence it prevents the staffs from getting stressed. The staff should know how to tackle both work and personal life. The staff should not show their stress on their students and school activities, but it is not always a possibility. To sum up, stress is good to a certain extent, as it acts as a motivator. But when it exceeds a level, it affects the health of a person.

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