

Occupational Stress and Health Among College Teachers

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Abstract

The present study aims at finding out the level of occupational stress and its relationship to health among the college teachers in relation to their gender and nature of job. Occupational Stress Index was used to collect data from a random sample of 206 college teacher from district Jalandhar of Punjab. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, t test and coefficient of correlation were employed for the analysis of data. The results revealed that college teachers experienced moderate level of occupational stress. Significant differences were found regarding occupational stress among college teachers in relation to gender and nature of job. The correlation analysis also showed that occupational stress does have significant and positive impact upon the health of college teacher.

Keywords: Occupational stress, Health, College teachers, Gender, Marital status.

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is a competitive world full of unlimited challenges in every field. On the one hand, the advancements in the field of science and technology have not only provided innumerable comforts to human life but also has strained human body and mind with a plethora of demands termed as stress. Stress has become part of our daily life activities including family, education, social activity, economic activity, organization or work becoming a major threat factor to human life. Occupational or work stress occurs when there is discrepancy between the demands of workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete those demands. Teaching as a profession also comes under the gamut of stress making it more demanding and changing everyday (Hepburn & Brown, 2001; Johnson et al., 2005).

In this competitive world, every educational institution is setting new goals to compete not only at the local level but also at the global level. Teacher being at the core of an education system, overbears the responsibility to prepare the young generations to tackle the challenges and build a strong and healthy nation. Teachers working at the college levels too experiences the stress as they are dealing with more advanced level of students and resources. To prepare effective, competent and committed future generations the role of college teachers becomes even more prominent in achieving the desired goal. Therefore, the level of stress experienced by teachers increases manifold than others. Excessive workload and long teaching hours, role ambiguity, poor working environment, overcrowded classes, uncongenial working conditions, scarcity of resources, contradicting peer relations, frequently changing curriculum, assessment and evaluation strategies, accountability, lack of job security, lack of public esteem, poor salaries, indifferent student's and parents behaviour, professional development, fatigue, frustration, stagnation, boredom, and loss of motivation or enthusiasm and uncooperative parents, etc. contributed towards teacher stress (Whitehead & Ryba, 1995; Travers & Cooper, 1996; Pithers & Sodon, 1998;

Griffith et al., 1999; Kyriacou, 2001; Butt et al. 2005; Johnson et al., 2005; Meng & Liu, 2008; Shernoff et al, 2011; Abhirami, 2012; Singh & Rani, 2015; Sukumar & Kanagarathinam, 2016; Chandravathi, 2022; Mathew, 2023).

Studies conducted on teachers have suggested that stress has distressing negative effects on their psychological, physical and behavioural responses (Sutton, 1984; Beard, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1991; Travers & Cooper, 1993; Boyd & Wylie, 1994; Ferreira, 1994; Whitehead & Ryba, 1995; Brown & Ralph, 1998; Chalmers, 1998; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Travers & Cooper, 1998; Hinton & Rotheiler, 1998; Kinman, 2001; Kyriacou, 2001; Seldman & Zager; 2001; Hogan, et al., 2002; Kovess-Masfe'ty et al., 2007; Sun et al, 2011; Suleman et al., 2018). These negative effects are manifested in the form of irritability, anger, fatigue, anxiety, depression, headaches, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, musculoskeletal problems, blood pressure, heart disease, persistent negative thoughts, low concentration, gastrointestinal problems, stroke, cancer, suicide, etc. to highlight a few from the exhaustive list. Stress among teachers not only affects their own health but also negatively affects the students too (Calabrese, 1987; Forlin et al., 1996) and also the functional aspect of an organisation (Hayward, 1993). Even continuous exposure to stressful conditions develops in teachers a sense of self apathy, low self esteem, deprives of motivation and will to teach, loss of confidence, unwillingness to cooperate, frequent irrational conflicts at the place of work, withdrawal from supportive relationships, inappropriate cynical humor, dealing ineffectively with students thus, ultimately lowering their overall performance level.

We cannot eliminate stress but can try to manage or cope with it to an optimal level. A stress free and healthy teacher can teach effectively and can deliver better quality of environment to make schools a challenging and interesting centre for the students. If the teacher is stressful s/he no doubt will directly or indirectly transfer that stress to the students also which can further hinder their present life and as well as even after placement in an occupation. Therefore, there is a dire need to identify the level of stress the teachers are experiencing at the college level and whether it is having any detrimental health effects upon them so that they can be made aware of effective stress management and coping strategies that can also be amalgamated in their training programmes as well as in day to day routines. The above cited related literatures highlight that although numerous studies had been conducted to identify the stress levels of teachers teaching at various levels (primary, secondary or tertiary levels) but studies related to college teacher stress and health are very rare. Thus, the investigator selected the present problem.

HYPOTHESES

- The purpose of the study is to analyse the occupational stress and its effects on the health of college teachers of Jalandhar District of Punjab (India) in relation to gender (male\ female), and nature of job (permanent/adhoc). Based on this objective, following hypotheses has been formulated for testing:
- There will be optimum level of occupational stress among college teachers.
- There will be no significant difference in occupational stress among college teachers in relation to gender.
- There will be no significant difference in occupational stress among college teachers in relation to nature of job.
- There will be no significant relationship between occupational stress and health of college teachers.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Population

The population of the study consisted of college teachers of various degree colleges of Jalandhar District. A random sample of about 300 teachers was selected from the list prepared. However, at the time of tabulation of data it was found that few of the questionnaires were incomplete in one or the other aspect, and were also found to be incomplete and few were returned unfilled so they were discarded leaving behind a total of 206 questionnaires which were finally analysed.

Tools

Occupational stress level was measured by using Occupational Stress Index developed by A.K. Srivastava and A.P. Singh. This standardized tool consisted of 46 items rated on five-point scale. Out of these 28 are true keyed and 18 are false keyed. The scoring of the true keyed items is done as 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (undecided), 2 (disagree) and 1 (strongly disagree). The scoring for false keyed items is reversed. The split half and Cronbach’s alpha co-efficient reliability was noted to be 0.93 and 0.90 respectively, which is found to be quite high.

Health problems of the college teachers were assessed using a self-constructed health problems scale. The scale consisted of 30 items covering various types of minor and major health problems generally related to stress. A score of 5 was assigned to the health problem occurring always, 4 to often, 3 to sometimes, 2 to rarely and 1 to never. The test-retest reliability was noted to be 0.89 and the scale was content validated.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected through the tools was statistically analysed and results were drawn out. The mean and standard deviation of the total sample and relevant sub samples based on gender and nature of job were computed, group comparisons were done by applying t tests and coefficient of correlation was applied to find the correlation between occupational stress and health of teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The level of occupational stress of the total sample as well as the sub samples along with their percentage are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Teachers on The Basis of Occupational Stress Levels

Groups	High(156-230)		Moderate (123-155)		Low(46-122)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total sample	9	4.4	194	94.2	3	1.4
Male	3	3.5	82	94.2	2	2.3
Female	4	3.4	113	94.9	2	1.7
Married	4	3.7	98	94.2	2	1.9
Unmarried	4	4.0	96	94.1	2	2.0

The scores of the sampled data were allocated into various levels to assess respondents with high occupational stress (156-230), moderate stress (123-155) and low occupational stress (46-122). The overall view of the Table 1 depicts that very few teachers fall in low or high occupational stress level category while majority of the college teachers fall in the category of moderate stress level.

Table 2. Comparisons of Total sample and Variables for Occupational Stress

Sub- Samples	Total (N)	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (σ)	t- value
Total Sample	206	139.55	9.63	
Male	87	136.88	8.90	3.52**
Female	119	141.45	9.67	
Adhoc	104	141.32	8.68	2.06*
Permanent	102	138.72	9.97	

****Significant at 0.01 level.* Significant at 0.05 level**

Table 2 shows that the mean calculated for the whole sample is 139.55 and standard deviation is 9.63. The mean calculated for the whole sample falls in the moderate level category. This indicates that teachers of the degree colleges of Jalandhar district had moderate/optimum level of occupational stress. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Moderate or optimum level of stress is considered productive instead of high stress level which hampers the physical as well as mental health of the person. In fact, one actually needs moderate levels of stress to help stay alert and perform well. Moderate levels of stress may motivate an individual or improve performance, efforts for work, diligence and stimulate creativity (Steers, 1981; Schermerhorn et al., 2000; Little et al., 2007). Teachers of the sample experienced moderate level of stress may be due to the reason that they might be well aware of stress and its implications and whenever they faced stressful situations they tried to manage or cope with it accordingly. It is also possible that the participants did not accept themselves as stressed as they get satisfaction from their job (Atkinson, 1994). Results of Chan & Hui, 1995; Abouserie (1996); Dhanalakshmi (2008); Eres & Atanasoska (2011); Johannsen (2011); and Taher (2018) and are in line with the present study depicting that participants experienced moderate level of stress.

The result of t-test of significance of the means (Table 2) applied to each group indicated that male and female teachers differ significantly in their occupational stress scores as the values are found to be significant at both the levels (0.05 and 0.01). The t- test results of adhoc and permanent teachers also differ significantly in their occupational stress scores as the values of t-test applied are found to be significant at 0.05 level.

On comparing the mean scores of male & female teachers (Table 2), it is also found that occupational stress score of female teachers of college is higher than those of male teachers. It confirms that there is a significant difference in occupational stress of male and female teachers with female teachers scoring higher in comparison to their counterparts. Thus, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

The high occupational stress score of female college teachers can be due to the fact female teachers have to compete with their male counterparts to prove their capability as it is a male dominated society. They have to exert more to prove their efficiency and sometimes have to sacrifice their professional ambition

in favour of the family. Even they have to share their time fulfilling their responsibilities both at work place and with the duties and responsibilities towards their family also. Thus, stressful situations arise both at home and office front. Studies conducted by Payne & Furnham, (1987); Wilkinson, (1988); Santiago et.al, (2008) too confirmed that females were more stressed than males. Findings of studies conducted by Singh & Sehgal, (1995); Aminabhavi & Triveni (2000); Van Dick & Wagner (2001); Kyriacou & Chien, (2004); Johannsen, (2011); Kumari & Bai (2015); Vyas (2019) and Kumar & Kiran (2022) are not in line with the present findings. These studies highlighted that no significant difference existed between the stress levels of female and male teachers.

The mean score of adhoc teachers is higher than permanent teachers and the difference of means is also significant (Table 2). This suggests that adhoc teacher experience greater occupational stress in comparison to permanent teachers. Thus, hypothesis 3 is rejected.

The probable reason best suits can be that permanent teachers are working under secure working conditions. They have job security and job stability, provisions of promotions, leave facilities (maternity leave, medical, study, extraordinary), provident fund facility, etc. in comparison to adhoc teachers who every year have to compete to get the job and prove their mettle. They have to prove their worth while working in the college with the fear that they may not be recruited next time if not worked hard. On the other hand, permanent teachers may not experience such type of fear or stress. Studies by Pabla (2012); Nagra (2013); Nagra & Kaur (2014); Bhuin (2017) also concluded that adhoc teachers are more stressed than permanent teachers.

Table 3. Coefficient of Correlation between Occupational Stress and Health for the Total Sample and Sub Samples

Sample group	N	Correlation (r)
Total sample	206	0.56
Male	87	0.58
Female	119	0.61
Adhoc	104	0.63
Permanent	102	0.57

As evident from Table 3, the coefficient of correlation (r) between occupational stress and health of college teachers for the total sample (N=206) as well as the sub samples studied were positive and significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the two variables are functionally related i.e., the variables exhibit a relationship thereby indicating that any increase in occupational stress will be attended by a corresponding increase in health and vice versa. This indicates that occupational stress do have impact on the health (physical, psychological and behavioural) of college teachers belonging to Jalandhar district. Hence, hypothesis 4 is rejected. Studies by Holahan & Moos, 1986; Travers & Cooper, 1993; Wiley, 2000; Chen et al., (2009); Zhong, et al., (2009); Taleghani et al., 2012; also confirms that stress do have health implications.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study draw following major conclusions:

1. College teachers experience moderate level of occupational stress.

2. Gender differences does exist with respect to occupational stress of teachers, female teachers are more stressed in comparison to male teachers.
3. Adhoc and permanent teachers showed significant variations in occupational stress indicating that significant differences do exist in occupational stress levels based on the nature of the job. Adhoc teachers are more stressed as compared to their counterparts.
4. There existed positive and significant correlation between occupational stress and health of the total sample of college teachers as well as based on gender and nature of job.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Technological advancements had brought so many revolutions all over the sphere including the education system. These revolutions had posed numerous challenges for the teaching community thus, generating lot of stress for the teachers. Teacher stress has to be seriously dealt otherwise it can have detrimental emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioural impact on their health, work, and personal lives further accelerating a gamut of problems in the education system. In order to prevent the teacher of adverse consequences the policy makers, stake holders, educationists, administrators, managements must find ways to lessen their stress levels such as providing congenial working environments, less work load, job securities, maximum provision of facilities, etc. They must also be familiarized with the various coping strategies to be followed whenever they experience stress like, exercise, meditation, walking, listening to music, yoga, social networking, etc.

The study can be replicated on a larger sample and on teachers of other institutions as well as other districts and states. Comparisons can be drawn with the teachers studying in universities also taking into account other demographic variables such as, socio-economic status, age, teaching experience, residential backgrounds, education level, etc. to quote a few.

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