

A Comparative Study of Occupational Stress Faced by Teaching Professionals in Public and Private Institutes of Higher Education in India in Era of Rapid Development

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Abstract

Stress has become the way of life. It has entered into all types of professions and teaching is no exception to it. Teaching in the era of rapid technological development has become a very stressful profession. The objective of the present study is to find how occupational stress in teaching profession varies in public and private institutions of higher education in India. This will help to identify the key factors which contribute to stress and thus efforts can be put in to eradicate them so that the teachers can be at mental peace and thus can perform their task of shaping the minds of future of India in a better way.

Key words: *Occupational Stress; Teaching Professionals; India*

Introduction

Indian Education Commission (1966) has very aptly observed, 'The future of the nation is shaped in her classrooms'. Sharma (2001) in his well-known book 'Technological Foundation of Education' lists out fifteen components of an effective teacher. These significant components are: buoyancy, considerateness, cooperativeness, emotional stability, ethicalness, forcefulness, intelligence, judgment, objectivity, personal charm, physical energy, resourcefulness and Scholastic proficiency. Being a teacher is a very challenging task and being a teacher is no longer easy. (Memeon, 2008) .Teaching has become a stressful activity and they are now facing work related stress. As a result of it the performance at work is also decreasing. The most commonly accepted definition of stress (mainly attributed to Richard S Lazarus) is that stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” (Alam, 2009) The important predictors of job stress are workload pressure, role ambiguity and performance pressure. (Konukman, Agbuga, and Erdogan, 2010) Teaching stress is also related to role conflict. (Poloski, 2007) Occupational stress across demographic variables also varies. There is no difference in stress perceived by men and women. After marriage balancing work and home, increases the level of stress; as the number of dependents increases, stress also increases. When a person precedes up the higher job position the amount of stress also increases. (Allison , 2007) The student's behavior also effects the teacher stress level. When the students come to class unprepared and not put in effort then teacher gets stressed. (Troman, 2000) Unsatisfactory social relationships with colleagues, principals, parent etc. appear to be a source of teachers stress. (Brember and Marie, 2002) There have been contradictory findings in the past researches related to demographic variables, where male are found to be more stressed than females. The reaction to stress depends upon the support

mechanism of friends, family and partner. The National Policy on Education throughout the world admits that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Thus, if teachers are so important, then it is quite mandatory to make this occupation of theirs comfortable and stress free, so that they can contribute their maximum for enlightening the future of tomorrow. (Wanda Maulding, Amy Townsend, Edward Leonard et al, 2010) The quality of teachers affects the students' academic success. So it is extremely important that the teachers be stress free. The present study would try to find out how occupational stress of teaching professionals varies across public and private institutions of higher education in the era of rapid development.

Review of Literature

Occupational Stress

Adolescence is an age of stress and strain and full of ups and downs. Guiding those amateur minds is a challenge for teachers. Teachers as such are loaded with their work and family pressure and turbulent mindsets of the students adds to the level of stress of the teachers. Stress level increases as they have to manage time, handle administrative and interpersonal relationships (Galloway, Kathleen and Kathy 1986). Around 20% teachers experience psychological distress whereas 9% suffer from severe psychological stress. The stress level manifolds with adverse relationship with colleagues and unaccepted students behavior (Louden 1987). Negative student teacher relationship paramount's the teachers stress level (Yoon 2002). Female teachers tend to have a tendency to be more stressed as compared to the male colleagues as they have to balance work and family (Brember and Marie 2002). Cultural diversity of the teachers also adds to the amount of stress experienced by a teacher (Miller and Travers 2005). Victimization of the teachers emotionally and physically is also being experienced by the teaching community adding to the stress level (Dworkin and Haney 2006). There is also a significant difference between teachers of government and private teachers on the level of stress (Memeon 2008). The performance expectation level of the teachers is also increasing and this performance pressure and role ambiguity builds up stress among teachers (Alam 2009). Thus undoubtedly it can be concluded that teaching has become a very demanding and challenging profession where in stress level is increasing day by day and some immediate action needs to be taken to control it. This study would suggest how higher emotional intelligence of teachers can help to do so.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was conducted with the following objective:

- a) To study the factors contribution to occupational stress in teaching profession.
- b) To compare occupational stress in public and private institutions in India.
- c) To give suggestions to handle occupational stress in public and private institutions in India.

Methodology

Survey method of research was used to conduct the study. Random sampling was used to collect the data. The sample consisted of 500 teachers of public and private sector higher education institutes of North India. Occupational Stress is being measured by a scale which took

statements from a scale developed by Udai Pareek. It consisted of 50 statements in the pilot study and after try out 26 statements was retained in the final. The construct of occupational stress was studied amongst the 10 dimensions of: inter role distance, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, role erosions, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, self role distance, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy. Respondents were required to rate the extent they agree or disagree with each statement on a five point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). Demographic information was also collected using a questionnaire developed by the authors for this purpose. Independent t test were used to analyze the data to compare the occupational stress experienced by teaching professionals in public and private institutions of higher education in India. Analysis was performed using SPSS version 16.

The internal consistency method (using Cronbach coefficient alpha) was used to examine the reliability of the scale. For the purpose of basic research, a Cronbach alpha of 0.60 or higher is sufficient (Nunnally, 1978). Most of the scales exceeded the reliability threshold.

Respondent Profile

TABLE 1 : Sample Characteristics		
	all(n=500)	
	n	%
Age		
<25	30	6.0
25-34	244	48.8
35-44	158	31.6
>45years	68	13.6
Gender		
Male	172	34.4
Female	328	65.6
Education Qualification		
Post Graduate	332	66.4
Doctorate	168	33.6
Designation		
Assistant Professor	384	76.8
Associate Professor	91	18.2
Professor	25	5.0
Marital Status		
Married	361	72.2
Single	139	27.8
Teaching Experience		
Below 2 years	79	15.8
2-5 years	108	21.6
5-10 years	124	24.8
10-15 years	76	15.2
Above 15 years	113	22.6
Nature of the College		
Private	282	56.4
Government	218	43.6
Total	500	100

Table 1. Present a comprehensive profile of the teachers who had participated in this research study. A total of 560 questionnaires were sent out. After editing all returned questionnaires, a total of 500 questionnaires were usable for analysis. The sample consists of 34.4% male teaching faculties and 65.6% female faculties out of total number of respondents. Majority of the respondents falls in the age group of 25-35 years. 48.8% of the respondents fall in the said range of age group whereas 31.6% respondents were of the age range of 35-50 years. 66.4% respondents had done their post graduation and 33.6% respondents had doctorate degree to their credit. 24.8% respondents had 5-10 years of teaching experience and 22.6% respondents had above 15 years of experience. 384 (76.8%) out of 500 were holding the position of Assistant professor, 91 (18.2%) held the position of associate professor and 25 (5%) were the ones who were professors. 72.2% respondents were married and 27.8% were single. Thus, majority of the respondents were married who were included for the research. As far as the nature of college is concerned 282 respondents were from private colleges whereas 218 (43.6%) were from government colleges.

Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Occupational Stress

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation for various items of occupational stress construct. The mean scores of different items of occupational stress revealed that the respondents agreed that they felt stressed for the item of role erosion dimension. The respondents feel stress when they have to perform the job where they are not able to utilize their capacity (mean=3.37). Respondents feel stress when they are not able to work freely and independently (mean=3.33). The respondents further agreed that the reason for stress was felt by them when other interests of their remained neglected due to paucity of time (Inter role distance). Respondents felt that occupational stress is also because of the fact that friends and family complain that they do not spend time with them due to heavy demands of work (Inter role Distance).

Table 2 :Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Occupational Stress				
Statements	Dimension	Mean	S.D.	Reliability
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS SCALE				
My family and friends complain that I do not spend time with them due to the heavy demands of my work role.	Inter Role Distance	2.70	1.229	0.728
I have various other interests (social, religious etc.) which remain neglected as I do not get time to attend these.	Inter Role Distance	2.97	1.175	
My organisational responsibilities interfere with my extra organisational roles.	Inter Role distance	2.52	1.041	
I wish I had more skills to handle the responsibilities of my role	Personal inadequacy	3.02	1.240	0.733
I wish I had prepared myself well for my role.	Personal inadequacy	2.87	1.285	
I do not have adequate knowledge to handle the responsibilities in my role.	Personal inadequacy	1.79	0.915	
My role has recently been reduced in importance.	Role erosion	2.08	0.972	0.705
Many functions that should be a part of my role have been assigned to some other role.	Role erosion	2.35	1.093	
I can do much more than what I have been assigned.	Role erosion	3.37	1.205	
I do not have enough people to work with me in my role.	Resource Inadequacy	2.57	1.197	0.798
I do not get the information needed to carry out responsibilities assigned to me.	Resource Inadequacy	2.23	1.018	
I do not get enough resource to be effective in my role.	Resource inadequacy	2.59	1.149	
There is very little scope for personal growth in my role.	Role Stagnation	2.30	1.168	0.823
I am afraid I am not learning enough in my present role for taking up higher responsibility.	Role stagnation	2.35	1.074	
Several aspects of my role are vague and unclear.	Role Ambiguity	2.23	1.097	0.736
I am not clear what the priorities are in my role.	Role Ambiguity	2.07	0.973	
I am not clear on the scope and responsibilities of my role (job).	Role Ambiguity	1.94	0.948	
I feel overburdened in my role.	Role overload	2.60	1.169	0.800
The amount of work I have to do interfere with the quality I have to maintain.	Role Overload	2.71	1.105	
The work I do in the organization is not related to my interests.	Self- role distance	2.20	1.066	0.823
If I had full freedom to define my role, I would be doing some things differently from the way I do them now.	Self- role distance	3.33	1.233	
I am not able to satisfy the conflicting demands of	Role expectation	2.63	1.151	0.756

A Comparison of Teacher's Perception for Occupational Stress Among Private and Public Institutions

Independent T-test was used to analyze the teacher's perception for occupational stress among Private and Public institutions. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis. The statistical significant difference was found in the items related to factors, namely, Personal inadequacy, Role erosion, Role ambiguity, Resource Inadequacy, Role Stagnation, Role Overload, Self- role distance, Role isolation and Role stagnation of occupational stress scale.. The differences were statistically significant at the 95% level. The mean score was found to be higher for cconstruct of occupational stress corresponding to teachers of private sector.

Table 3 : Results of Independent t-test						
Statements	Dimension	Private Sector Institutions	Public Sector Institutions	Mean difference	t	p-value
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS SCALE						
My family and friends complain that I do not spend time with them due to the heavy demands of my work role.	Inter Role Distance	2.73	2.66	.069	.622	.534
I have various other interests (social, religious etc.) which remain neglected as I do not get time to attend these.	Inter Role Distance	3.00	2.93	.072	.682	.497
I wish I had more skills to handle the responsibilities of my role	Personal inadequacy	3.17	2.82	.353	3.181	.002*
I wish I had prepared myself well for my role.	Personal inadequacy	3.01	2.70	.310	2.691	.007*
I do not have adequate knowledge to handle the responsibilities in my role.	Personal inadequacy	1.75	1.85	-.097	-1.174	.241
My role has recently been reduced in importance.	Role erosion	2.14	2.00	.134	1.531	.126
Many functions that should be a part of my role have been assigned to some other role.	Role erosion	2.49	2.18	.310	3.178	.002*
Several aspects of my role are vague and unclear.	Role ambiguity	2.36	2.06	.378	.000	.002*
I do not have enough people to work with me in my role.	Resource Inadequacy	2.71	2.39	.315	2.939	.003*
There is very little scope for personal growth in my role.	Role Stagnation	2.39	2.19	.198	1.888	.060*
I can do much more than what I have been assigned.	Role erosion	3.54	3.16	.307	3.521	3.128
I feel overburdened in my role.	Role overload	2.66	2.52	.140	1.331	.184
I am not clear what the priorities are in my role.	Role Ambiguity	2.10	2.04	.059	.672	.502
I am not clear on the scope and responsibilities of my role (job).	Role Ambiguity	1.96	1.92	.047	.551	.582
I do not get the information needed to carry out responsibilities assigned to me.	Resource Inadequacy	2.30	2.12	.181	1.978	.048*
The amount of work I have to do interfere with the quality I have to maintain.	Role Overload	2.82	2.56	.258	2.610	.009*
The work I do in the organization is not related to my interests.	Self- role distance	2.19	2.21	-.023	-.240	.811
If I had full freedom to define my role, I would be doing some things differently from the way I do them now.	Self- role distance	3.47	3.16	.312	2.826	.005*
I am not able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people above me.	Role expectation conflict	2.66	2.59	.069	.663	.508
Other role occupants do not give enough attention and time to my role.	Role isolation	2.57	2.38	.190	2.112	.035*
I am not able to satisfy the demands of students and	Role	2.15	2.06	.090	.967	.334

Implications for the Management

How stress is handled effects as to how efficiently and effectively an employee would perform on job. But before a stressful situation is to be handled, it is very important that the root cause of the problem be identified. So that through repeated effort the impact and the effect of the problem can be nullified and its future occurrence be avoided. For this at workplace the management and the staff needs to collaborate and unanimously discuss and find out the sources of the stress and develop tactics to handle and manage them.

Conclusions

The findings of the study were:

Out of the ten dimensions of occupational stress studied it was found that **ROLE AMBIGUITY** dimension plays the most significant role in increasing occupational stress. As in the current scenario of rapid development teachers prime task is not just to teach but they are over occupied with administrative and clerical tasks, because of which clarity of role reduces. **INTER ROLE DISTANCE** is also a major contributing factor. The teachers are occupied with their job leaving them with no time for home. They carry their work home because of which their work family balance is disturbed. Thus their Occupational Stress increases. **ROLE ISOLATION** also contributes to increasing Occupational Stress as teachers feel that their role is not well linked with other roles and they do not get good response from other role occupants.

ROLE EROSION comes next to influence increasing Occupational Stress, as teachers feel that they are occupied with other tasks than teaching leaving them unfulfilled and dissatisfied in performing teaching duties. **ROLE STAGNATION** also increases Occupational Stress level as college teachers are not having much promotion prospective. They are not being paid according to latest pay scales. Even when they are paid in universities they do not have scope for personal growth after being a professor. So they feel stagnated on job adding on to their Occupational Stress level. Thus efforts should be made to provide incentives to teachers to improve Job Satisfaction level and reduce Occupational Stress.

A Comparison of Teacher's Perception for Occupational Stress Among Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education

1. In public institutions because of job security occupational stress is low, they have promotional options, salaries are good. Most are associate professor whose age is more and they are well settled in the institution resulting is lesser occupational stress.
2. In private institutions more of young brigade is involved in teaching Occupational Stress is high as they are overburdened with work, getting less salary and given extra work.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Facing stress is something which has become a way of life. It has become an indispensable feature of one's being. None of the profession in the current scenario is away from it. All the work life is haunted by the feature of stress in its entire domain. The 10 dimensions of occupational stress have been studied in the present research. Teaching community is being exposed to occupational stress. This occupational stress badly affects the working of the organization and the health and well being of the employee.

Following are some of the strategies that could help to overcome occupational stress of teaching professionals:

1. Research found out that out of the above 10 dimensions of occupational stress, following 5 dimensions affect occupational stress resulting in reducing job satisfaction i.e. role ambiguity, distance between roles, isolation of role, erosion of role and stagnation of role. To combat occupational stress because of these dimensions a proper teacher orientation of the organization should be done. They should be given sufficient training and be encouraged to go in for faculty development programs. A proper promotional strategy should be in functional in an organization. This would encourage the employees to improve their merit and further enhance their knowledge.
2. In order to combat stress certain action based strategies can be used in an organizational set up where in the teachers working in institutes of higher education can go in for **Job Analysis**. The faculty can be trained to focus on thing that are more important by prioritizing and spending less time on low priority tasks. It is a detailed study of those tools which are significant to perform a particular job. This will help in reducing Role Ambiguity.
 - a) In carrying on the process on job analysis one has to firstly, go in for a review of formal job documentation, check the job description, check the pattern of periodic review process, find what training would be required by the faculty so that they can equip themselves well for the job.
 - b) Secondly, the teaching staff should try to find out and understand the organizations strategy and culture. This will reduce Inter Role Distance and Role Isolation.
 - c) Thirdly, efforts should be put to find out the top achievers in the organization and developing an understanding as to how they were successful. This will reduce the affect of Role Erosion.
 - d) Fourthly, equip yourself with sufficient people and resources to do the job.
 - e) Fifthly, confirm the priorities with the management.
 - f) Sixthly, take requisite action required to streamline the entire set up on job. This will reduce the problem of Role Stagnation.
3. **Physical relaxation techniques** can be adopted like to go in for **deep breathing**; taking a **good night's rest**, relaxing all can contribute to lessen the stress on job.

Delimitations of the Study

The study is purely based on the respondents' opinion. The researcher felt that the respondents might express biased opinions which limit the validity of the study. Individuals' stress susceptibility varies over time. The environment can also vary in its conditions. Since stress is a

complex and dynamic process presented in different areas of life, this research focuses only on the stress at work place due to occupational stress. In this study an attempt to identify basic stress management strategies is applied to teachers working in colleges. However, this approach restricts the findings to a specific kind of experience in the given work environment. Respondents' opinion may change from time to time and the responses are also subject to variations depending upon the situation and attitude of the respondents at the time of the survey. In this study, occupational stress experienced by the employees, is alone considered and the perceived stress (arising from outside the working place) is not taken into account.

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