

Gender Differences on Occupational Stress Level among Government College Teachers in the State of Sikkim

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Abstract:

Aim: The aim of the present study was to investigate the gender differences on occupational stress level among college teachers in Sikkim.

Background: Stress in the workplace can have many origins or come from one single event. It can impact on both employees and employers alike. In Sikkim, occupational stress is not being given the attention or concerns and no research has been done till date.

Method: Purposive sampling method was used for this study. Thirty male and thirty female college teachers from Sikkim Government College, Gangtok were selected. Occupational Stress Index (OSI) was used to assess the occupational stress of employees. The index assesses the perceived stress of the employees arising from twelve dimensions of their job life. Participants' scores were evaluated and analyzed after using statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation and t-test.

Results: Data was analyzed and it was found that there is no significant difference among both male and female teachers on occupational stress. However, there is high level of occupational stress amongst teachers of Sikkim Government College ($P < 0.05$). This is due to many factors such as college environment, peer group pressures, socio-economic status, teacher's qualifications, lack of audit of work and home environment.

Conclusion: It is important to reduce occupational stress among college teachers and to strengthen their coping resources to prevent burnout. This could be achieved with job redesign, appointment of more teachers, equal distribution of work load and by offering occupational health education.

Key words: Occupational Stress, peer group pressures, socio-economic status, peer relations, role conflict

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INTRODUCTION

Since the advancement and progress in the science and technology, there have been tremendous changes in the lifestyle. Thus, the life of an average urban person has become a constant struggle with pressures, conflicts and limitations. The stresses are continuously evoked and it is almost impossible to escape from it. These developments have made stress a central phenomenon of interest to the students of many disciplines namely medicine, psychology, sociology and anthropology (Ramalingaswami, 1990). While the contexts and sources of stress

have been studied by different disciplines at various levels, its analysis remains the major concern of the psychologists.

Stress at work can be a real problem to the organization as well as for its workers. Good management and good work organization are the best forms of stress prevention. Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues and where they can cope with its demands and pressures (Vijayadurai & Venkatesh, 2012).

The profession of teaching also comes in this broad spectrum of stress. Teachers are expected not only to work as pedagogues but they also need to perform duties of an administrator, resource person, innovator, counselor, facilitator and manager of knowledge which leads to high level of stress. The events and situations that produce stress are called stressors. Stressors that interfere with teacher efforts can be student apathy, student disruption or indiscipline, poor student attendance, low achievement, large number of students in a class, heavy paper work, indifferent attitude of colleagues, obtrusive administrator, ineffective leadership of principals, denial of opportunities for professional development, low salary, unsatisfactory relationships with students, non-involvement in decision making, accountability of student progress, fatigue, frustration, helplessness, stagnation, boredom, and loss of motivation or enthusiasm and unsupportive parents, etc. (Blasé, 1986; Travers & Cooper, 1996; Butt et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2005; Meng & Liu, 2008; Shernoff et al., 2011).

Teachers are perennially exposed to high level of stress cutting across all cultures (Cooper & Kelly, 1993; Reglin & Reitzammer, 1997; Chan, 1998; Mokdad, 2005). The combination of long working hours, insufficient pay, role ambiguity, poor teaching facilities, lack of social recognition, poor organizational climate, strained relationship with colleagues make up a stressful recipe. As Kyriacou (1987) points out, it is the insidious day to day sources of stress with their cumulative effect, and not the less frequent but occasionally intent sources of stress, which teachers are concerned with. The personality variables that have been linked to stress include locus of control, self-esteem, Type- A behaviour pattern, hardiness and negative affectivity (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991b; Murphy, 1995). Demographic variables that are proven to relate to someone's job

stressor/health relationships include gender, age, marital status, job tenure, job title and hierarchical level (Dua, 1994; Murphy, 1995), among which gender, age and hierarchical level were found to be the most significant, as further explanations reveal.

The negative effects include irritability, anger, fatigue, anxiety, depression, headaches, loss of concentration, sleep disturbances, persistent negative thoughts, low appetite, gastrointestinal problems, musculoskeletal problems, blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer, suicide, etc. to highlight a few from the exhaustive list. Teacher stress not only affects the teacher but also the students (Calabrese, 1987; Forlin, Douglas & Hattie, 1996) and even the organization (Hayward, 1993). Continuous exposure to stress situations develops in teachers a sense of self apathy, low self-esteem, deprives of motivation and will to teach, loss of confidence, irritability with colleagues, 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 the overall performance level. Ultimately, the teacher is left with no other alternative than leaving the profession thus, creating shortage of qualified and talented teachers (Nagra, 2003).

Significance of the Study

It is clear from the above discussions that teachers especially working at university and college level in India are under a great deal of stress related to various occupational stressors. Nowadays, when India is progressing by leaps and bounds and is on the verge of becoming a developed nation, we cannot afford to neglect talents of our teachers because the teacher is one of the pillars of the society and the country. Without good teachers, no country can



progress. The importance of teachers in the life of a nation cannot be overlooked. The teacher influences the immature minds of the youth. He treats and moulds the young mind into various forms. Occupational stressors contribute to organizational inefficiency, high staff turnover, absenteeism due to sickness, decreased quality, and quantity of practice, increased costs of health care, and decreased job satisfaction. When there is a prolonged experience of occupational stress, it leads to professional burnout. The present study at this juncture aims to compare the gender differences on occupational stress level of government college teachers in the state of Sikkim.

Objectives

1. To study the occupational stress level amongst Government College teachers.
2. To investigate whether occupational stress is gender biased.
3. To propose some viable recommendations to alleviate the occupational stress levels of teachers of government colleges.

Hypotheses

Based upon the above objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be high level of occupational stress amongst government college teachers.
2. There will be significant differences among male and female government college teachers on occupational stress.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample

In the present study, data has been collected from sixty government teachers from different faculties of Sikkim Government College, Gangtok (Sikkim) which has two campuses. The main campus is located at Tadong and another newly built campus is located few kilometers away from Gangtok

called Burtuk. The sample was further divided into 50% male teachers and 50% female teachers (that is, 30 male and 30 female teachers) for data collection. Teachers having the experience varying from 2 years to 15 years were taken for the study. The cadre structure of the teachers included Associate Professors and Assistant Professors. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to collect data from the sample. The sample were in the age group of 25–58 years, with the mean of 34.0 years.

Tools used

1. **Socio-demographic data sheet:** The socio-demographic data sheet includes age, gender, nature of services, etc. To maintain the confidentiality of individual teachers, the name and department of the teachers were not recorded.
2. **Occupational Stress Index (OSI):** Occupational Stress Index is a structured questionnaire having high level of reliability and validity was developed and standardized by Dr. A.K. Srivastava and Dr. A. P. Singh in 1984. This questionnaire is useful tool to assess the occupational stress of employees. The index assesses the perceived stress of the employees arising from twelve dimensions of their job life. The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five-point scale. Out of 46 items, 28 are 'true-keyed items' and rest 18 are 'false-keyed'. The items related to almost all relevant components of job life which cause stress in some way or the other, such as role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. The reliability index ascertained by split half (odd-even) method and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the scale as a whole were

found to be .935 and .90 respectively. The validity of the instrument was determined by computing coefficient of correlation between the scale on the OSI and various measures of job attitudes and job behaviour. The levels of occupational stress were categorized on the basis of percentile values as Low (P-25 and below with the scores between 46 -127), Moderate (P-26 to P-75 with the scores between 128 -150) and High (P-76 and above) with the score of 151 to 230.

PROCEDURE

Formal approval was granted from the principal (head) of the college in order to visit the teachers for the purpose of collecting data. Thereafter, rapport was established successfully with the teachers with less inconvenience. The main purpose of the study and details were explained individually to each and every participant. Structured questionnaire was

objectives of the research problem, different types of statistical techniques are available which can be sorted out for statistical treatment. For the present study, statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation and t-test were used. Statistically significant levels were reported for *P* values less than or equal to 0.05. Highly significant levels were *P* values less than 0.001.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the major objectives of the present study is to find out the level of occupational stress of teachers working in the government college of Sikkim. To identify the level of occupational stress of teachers working in the government college of Sikkim, mean, SD and t- value for overall occupational stress have been calculated for the whole sample of teachers working in the government college of Sikkim.

Table 1: Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation and t Value of Government College Teachers on Overall Occupational Stress (N= 60):

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SED</i>	<i>t-Value</i>	<i>P</i>
Male	30	124.37	16.81	4.14	0.77	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Female	30	121.17	15.19			

distributed along with personal data sheet and administered to every participant. In order to obtain adequate responses, it was assured them that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and would be used only for the research purpose. Thus, after taking their responses the data were collected carefully.

Statistical Analysis

Once the data is collected from the respondents, it requires certain kind of statistical treatment to reduce long wide-ranging scores into intelligible and interpretable form in order to understand the results very easily and conveniently. Keeping in view the nature and

The result from Table-1 depicts that there does not exist any significant difference among male and female government college teachers on occupational stress level. However, as it can be observed from the table that the overall mean scores of occupational stress of both male and female teachers is low to moderate. Further, the mean value of occupational stress level of male teachers is comparatively more than female college teachers. From the results of the study it is clear that the teachers as a whole are found to be moderately stressed which partially supports hypothesis 1. This finding supports the past

research that the teaching profession has become one of the most stressful profession (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

Table 2: Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation and t- value of Male and Female Government College Teachers on Various Sub-scales (N = 60)

S. No.	Sub-Scales	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	P
1	Role Overload	Male	30	17.97	3.62	0.28	Not Significant
		Female	30	17.97	4.51		
2	Role Ambiguity	Male	30	10.23	2.49	2.77	Significant at 0.01 level
		Female	30	8.73	1.62		
3	Role Conflict	Male	30	12.83	3.09	-0.26	Not Significant
		Female	30	13.03	2.81		
4	Unreasonable Group and Political Pressures	Male	30	10.47	2.76	0.71	Not Significant
		Female	30	10.00	2.27		
5	Responsibility for Persons	Male	30	10.10	2.31	0.69	Not Significant
		Female	30	9.73	1.79		
6	Under participation	Male	30	11.30	2.56	0.43	Not Significant
		Female	30	11.00	2.79		
7	Powerlessness	Male	30	8.37	2.28	0.12	Not Significant
		Female	30	8.30	2.15		
8	Poor Peer Relations	Male	30	8.90	2.02	-2.43	Significant at 0.01 level
		Female	30	10.23	2.22		
9	Intrinsic Impoverishment	Male	30	11.00	2.49	0.32	Not Significant
		Female	30	10.80	2.34		
10	Low Status	Male	30	7.03	1.16	0.00	Not Significant
		Female	30	7.03	1.43		
11	Strenuous Working Conditions	Male	30	10.20	2.22	1.91	Significant at 0.05 level
		Female	30	9.23	1.65		
12	Unprofitability	Male	30	5.97	1.75	1.29	Not Significant
		Female	30	5.40	1.63		

Table 2 shows that out of twelve different subscales of occupational stress, there exist a significant difference between male and female government college teachers on Role ambiguity ($P < 0.01$), Poor peer relations ($P < 0.01$) and Strenuous working conditions ($P < 0.05$) in the occupational stress sub-scale. However, there does not exist any significant difference between male and female government college teachers on nine different sub-scales of occupational stress index. This result is also supported by earlier studies. Mondal et al. (2011) found in their study that there is not many studies or researches which had any significant result to support a gender difference in their studies regarding level of stress and gender. However, the mean occupational stress level score among male and female participants is high on role overload, role conflict and under participation. In other subscales, the occupational stress level is moderate.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above results and discussion, the following conclusion can be drawn:

1. There is moderate level of occupational stress amongst teachers of *Sikkim Government College*.
2. There is no significant difference among male and female teachers on majority of the sub-scales of occupational stress. There exist a significant difference between male and female government college teachers on role ambiguity ($P < 0.01$), poor peer relations ($P < 0.01$) and strenuous working conditions ($P < 0.05$) in the occupational stress sub-scale.

It is statistically proved that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers of the government college with respect to their occupational stress levels though there exist moderate level of stress among both male and female government college teachers. This is due to many factors such as college environment, peer group pressures, socio-economic status, teacher's qualifications, lack of audit of work and home environment.

This indicates the need for interventions in strengthening and reinforcing teacher's self-confidence and positive attitude, and weakening the stress creating factors. The first step towards tackling stress is to acknowledge its existence. Recognizing the manifestation of stress among teachers and identifying the major stressors could go a long way in ameliorating the menace of occupational stress while designing suitable stress coping mechanism for teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Sikkim Government College has a working population which is youthful and therefore could be very competitive in the provision of quality tertiary education by adopting a well-designed, organized and managed work helps to maintain and promote individual well-being.
2. Since the job related stress from lack of support from higher authorities in tough times and workload conflict was high among teachers, the college administration should pay attention to solve these issues.
3. Lack of resources such as inadequate staff and lack of equipment must be advocated by the heads of the department or sections for the benefit of the staff.

4. Performance is hindered by stress because the individual faces signals of stress which affects their productivity. Therefore, increasing formal institutional communication with teachers reduces stress by lessening the role ambiguity.
5. Open communication has an advantage of resolving conflicts between authorities and academicians.
6. Lack of effective communication could cause unresolved conflicts that increase stress level.
7. Extension of career ladder and enhance competencies of teachers.
8. Re-designing jobs with more meaningful contents.
9. Equal distribution of workloads and recognition of good performance at the right time.
10. Creating conducive ambience in the college.
11. Bringing work life balance amongst women by prioritizing and organizing well schedule of events.
12. Channels of communication should be clearly understood in friendly environment.
13. Policy makers at state level should ensure the participation of college teachers in policy making process; should take decisions in line with the input given by faculty of college.
14. College authorities should provide abundant research funds; should facilitate supportive and collaborative culture; should launch training for stress and time management; should launch specific training to manage the behaviors of disruptive people; should provide leisure facilities to the faculty; and should encourage involvement of faculty in decision-making.
15. Specific facilities for female and special teachers should be provided.

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