



OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND HEALTH AMONG TEACHER EDUCATORS

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Abstract: *The present study aims at finding out the level of occupational stress and its relationship to health among the teacher educators in relation to their gender and marital status. Occupational Stress Index was used to collect data from a random sample of 206 teacher educators. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, t test and coefficient of correlation were employed for the analysis of data. The results revealed that teacher educators experienced moderate level of occupational stress. Significant differences were indicated regarding occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to gender and marital status. The correlation analysis revealed that occupational stress does have significant and positive impact upon the health of teacher educators.*

Keywords: *Occupational stress, Health, Teacher educators, Gender, Marital status.*

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INTRODUCTION

Modern living has not only provided innumerable comforts to human life but also has taxed human body and mind with a plethora of demands termed as stress. The phenomenon of stress is not new rather man has been experiencing stress since the origin of structured societies. The difference lies with the severity and frequency which has increased now days to such an extent that it has become a major threat to human life. It has become part of our daily life activities whether it is related to family, education, social activity, economic activity, organization or work. 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 challenging everyday (Hepburn & Brown, 2001; Johnson et al., 2005).

In this competitive era, every educational institution is setting new goals to compete not only at the local level but also at the global level. As a result teacher, at the crux of an education system, has to bear the responsibility to prepare the young generations to build a nation with purpose and tackle the challenges of tomorrow. To prepare effective, competent and committed teachers the role of teacher educators becomes prominent in achieving the desired goal. These teacher educators prepare and train good and effective teachers who further prepare and train good students. Therefore, the level of stress experienced by teacher educators increases manifold than other teachers. Excessive workload and teaching hours, role ambiguity, poor working conditions, overcrowded classes, uncongenial working environment, scarcity of resources, conflicting peer relations, frequently changing curriculum, assessment and evaluation strategies, accountability, lack of job security, lack of public esteem, meager salaries, indifferent student's and parents behaviour, professional development, fatigue, frustration, stagnation, boredom, and loss of motivation or enthusiasm and unsupportive parents, etc. contribute towards teacher stress (Blase, 1986; Manthei & Solman, 1988; 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).

Studies among teachers have indicated that stress has alarming 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; Hinton & Rotheiler, 1998; Kinman, 2001; Kyriacou, 2001; Seldman & Zager; 2001; Hogan, et al., 2002; Kovess-Masfe'ty et al., 2007; Sun et al, 2011). 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 his own health but also negatively affects the students (Calabrese, 1987; Forlin et al., 1996) and even the organisation (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.

We cannot eliminate stress but can try to manage or cope with it to an optimal level. To keep the teacher at bay from stress it becomes pertinent to scan out ways to minimize the stress levels. A stress free teacher can teach effectively in the class room and can provide better quality of environment to make schools a challenging and interesting centre for the students. A teacher teaching in a teacher training institute has to prepare future teachers and if the teacher educator is stressful s/he no doubt will directly or indirectly transduce that stress to the student teachers also which can further hamper the future students who come in their contact, after placement. There is a dire need to know the level of stress the teacher educators are experiencing 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 incorporated in their training programmes as well as day to day routines. Even after reviewing the related literature it was felt 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 teacher educator's stress and health are very rare. Thus, the investigators selected the present problem.



HYPOTHESES

The purpose of the study is to analyse the occupational stress and its effects on the health of teacher educators of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur District of Punjab (India) in relation to gender (male\ female), and marital status (married/unmarried). Based on this objective, following hypotheses has been formulated for testing:

- There will be optimum level of occupational stress among teacher educators.
- There will be no significant difference in occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to gender.
- There will be no significant difference in occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to marital status.
- There will be no significant relationship between occupational stress and health of teacher educators.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Population

The population of the study consisted of all the 216 teacher educators of educational colleges of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur District. However, at the time of tabulation of data it was found that few of the questionnaires were incomplete in one or the other aspect 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 Srivastava and Singh (1981). This standardized tool consisted of 46 items each to be rated on five point scale. Out of these 28 were true keyed and 18 were false keyed. The scoring of the true keyed items was done as 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for undecided, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. The scoring for false keyed items was reversed. The split half and Cronbach's alpha co-efficient reliability was noted to be 0.93 and 0.90 respectively.

Health problems of the teacher educators were measured by using a self constructed health problems scale. The scale consisted of 30 items covering various types of minor to major health problems generally related to stress. A score of 5 was assigned for the health



problem occurring always, 4 for often, 3 for sometimes, 2 for rarely and 1 for never. The test-retest reliability was noted to be 0.88 and the scale was content validated.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected through the tools was subjected to statistical analysis and results were drawn out. The mean and standard deviation of the total sample and relevant sub samples based on gender and marital status 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.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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

Table 1. Classification of Teacher Educators 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 | 3.8 | 98 | 94.2 | 2 | 1.9 |
| Unmarried | 4 | 3.9 | 96 | 94.1 | 2 | 2.0 |

The scores of the total sample were distributed 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 teacher educators fall in low or high occupational stress level category while majority of the teacher educator's 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 | |
| Female | 119 | 141.45 | 9.67 | 3.52** |
| Married | 104 | 141.32 | 8.68 | |
| Unmarried | 102 | 138.72 | 9.97 | 2.06* |

**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 teacher educators of educational colleges of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur district had moderate/optimum level of occupational stress. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Moderate or optimum level of stress is considered desirable or 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). Teacher educators 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); Dhanalakhsmi, (2008) and Eres & Atanasoska, (2011), Johannsen, (2011) 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 indicate that male and female teacher educators 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 married and unmarried teacher educators 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 teacher educators (Table 2), it is also found that occupational stress score of female teacher educators is higher than those of male teacher educators. It confirms that there is a significant difference in occupational stress of male and female teacher educators with female teacher educators scoring higher in comparison to their counterparts. Thus, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

The high occupational stress score of female teacher educators 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); and Johannsen, (2011) 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 married teacher educators is higher than unmarried teacher educators and the difference of means is also significant (Table 2). This suggests that married teacher educators experience greater occupational stress in comparison to unmarried teacher educators. Thus, hypothesis 3 is rejected.

The probable reason best suits can be that after marriage, irrespective of gender, teacher educators have to shoulder the dual responsibilities of job and family and have to devote extra time and efforts to look after their family issues including spouse, children, in-laws, family gatherings, domestic routines, etc. along with their institutional work. As a result these teachers develop poor peer relations and conflicts both at job and home and feel stressed. Bing (1998) and Nagina (2009) explained that married working women's experience greater stress than unmarried ones. Osmany & Khan (2003) do confirm that married ones are more stressed due to dual roles. While the results of Barling (1990) are contradictory as they suggest that marital status is not a stress causing factor as it is noted that even married spouses tend to get social as well as family support and this makes them both happiest and successful in their professional as well as personal life. Results of Abirami (2012) also confirm that marital status has no significant impact on occupational stress.

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 |
| Married | 104 | 0.63 |
| Unmarried | 102 | 0.57 |



As evident from Table 3, the coefficient of correlation (r) between occupational stress and health of teacher educators 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 does have impact on the health (physical, psychological and behavioural) of teacher educators belonging to Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts. 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:

- Teachers educators experience moderate level of occupational stress.
- Gender difference does exist with respect to occupational stress of teacher educators, female teacher educators are more stressed in comparison to male teacher educators.
- Married and unmarried teacher educators showed significant variations in occupational stress indicating that differences do exist in occupational stress levels based on marital status. Married teacher educators are more stressed as compared to their counterparts.
- There existed positive and significant correlation between occupational stress and health of the total sample of teacher educators as well as based on gender and marital status.

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 teacher educators 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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