



OCCUPATIONAL STRESS EXPERIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION PERSONNEL IN REGION 2: AN ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT: *Stress is the body's response to a normal occurrence. Its effect though may either be positive or negative top the person. Not properly addressed, stress could lead to consequences that organization to include higher education institutions may find hard or almost impossible to reverse. This study was conducted to determine the occupational stressors as experienced by the personnel of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Region Two (02), namely Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus (CSU-Andrews), St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP) in Tuguegarao City and Quirino State University- Cabaruguis Campus in (QSU-Cabaruguis), Cabaruguis, Quirino. 72 HEI personnel holding various positions to include supervisory, faculty members and staff, coming from the three institutions were taken as respondents of the study. A survey questionnaire was crafted, floated, tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency count, percentage mean and weighted mean. Results of the study revealed that the personnel of higher education institutions in Region 2 are highly affected by occupational stress with factors pertaining to physical environment having the highest effect.*

KEYWORDS: *Stress, Occupational Stress, HEI, Physical Environment, Individual Stress, Group Related Stress, Organizational Stress, Productivity*

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a natural reaction of the body to any change that would require it to make an adjustment or response. A typical person is capable of employing various responses to be able to deal with stress. These reactions vary and maybe physical, emotional or mental in form. It must however be noted that stress is a normal part of life. The effects of stress to the body can be positive such that it enables the person to be motivated and alert in avoiding daily danger. Stress can also become negative when a person becomes continuously challenged such that he becomes restless between stressors. This results to the person becoming overworked and overly-tensed.



Stress that is continuous without relief is referred to as distress which is a negative reaction. Negative stress or distress usually results to the disturbance of the body's equilibrium and is exhibited by symptoms such as headaches, elevated blood pressures, upsetting of stomach, chest pains, sleeping problems and even problems related to sexual functions. Uncontrolled distress may also lead to panic attacks or other forms of anxiety or worse depression. There were also researches proving that stress can contribute or lead to death causing ailments like heart diseases, cancer, lung ailments and liver cirrhosis.

Colligan, T. Et al, 2008 defines occupational stress or workplace stress as the change in one's physical or mental state in response to workplace that pose an appraised challenge to a particular employee. Several factors were identified to be contributory to workplace stress to include a toxic work environment, negative work assignment or loading, the types of scheduling being given, role ambiguity, style of management to include lack of autonomy of the worker to make his own decisions in the performance of required tasks, challenging relationship with supervisors and/or co-workers, bullying by management in the workplace, organizational climate and harassment also.

Gmelch, W.H. Et al (1984) cited in their research entitled "Sources of Stress in the Academe: A National Perspective" that there is a growing body of evidence that occupational stress adversely affects the productivity, performance, job satisfaction and health of professionals and that those professionals who are drastically affected by this include the professors. It was also found out in the research that 60% of the total stress in the life of the adults emanates from work or related to occupation.

The effect of stress overreaches the personal level as it significantly impacts the organizational level also. Stress can have profound impact particularly to the levels of productivity and motivation of the employees.

Levels of productivity are affected due to the health constrains experienced by stressed workers or employees. A side from the physical aspect, poor emotional health also significantly affects the immune system, making the employee more prone to infection. These issues generally result to absenteeism, spike in the usage of health insurance and also the occurrence of work related accidents. Stress is a huge contributory factor to poor performance as a stressed employee can hardly focus on his job and cannot utilize his memory. Stress also leads to the feeling of negativity such as a feeling of poor management



support which leads to lack of enthusiasm and ultimately apathy. Companies filled with stressed employees frequently experience high turnover rates. This is generally not favorable as the said company would have to incur additional cost of training newly hired employees to hone them into such a level that would enable them to perform at desired levels.

The American Psychological Association (APA) acknowledges that work-related stress doesn't just disappear when you head home for the day. Stress management mechanisms must be adopted by the employee to be able to adopt with work-related stress and stressors. Such mechanisms are useful to enable the employee to maintain an acceptable level of work-life balance and enable him to perform at the maximum levels at work and live a full life.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to determine the assess the occupational stress experienced by higher educational institution personnel in Region 2 namely, Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus, St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP), Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus and Quirino State University.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents according to;
 - 1.1 Gender
 - 1.2 Civil Status
 - 1.3 Age
 - 1.4 Nature of Work
2. What are the existing occupational stressors encountered by the respondents and how it affects them in the workplace, i.e.:
 - 2.1 Physical Environment Stressors
 - 2.1.1 Noise Pollution
 - 2.1.2 Poorly Ventilated Workplace
 - 2.1.3 Polluted Workplace
 - 2.2 Individual Stressors
 - 2.2.1 Role Conflict
 - 2.2.2 Role Ambiguity



2.2.3 Work Overload

2.2.4 Work Responsibility

2.3 Group Related Stressors

2.3.1 Poor Relationship With Peers

2.3.2 Poor Relationship with Subordinates

2.3.3 Poor Relationship with Supervisors

2.4 Organizational Stressors

2.4.1 Weak Organizational Structure

2.4.2 Organizational Politics

2.4.3 Unclear Organizational Policies

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the descriptive research method where a structured survey questionnaire was used as an instrument to gather data from the respondents. The respondents were randomly selected from three (3) Universities in Region 2, namely, St. Paul University Philippines, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus, Tuguegarao City and Quirino State University, Cabarroguis, Quirino. The respondents of the study are designated as administrators, faculty members and staffs.

The gathered data were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using the descriptive statistics, like frequency counts, rank, percentage and weighted mean. To measure the respondents' perception on the identified occupational stressors, the 5 point Likert Scale was used, where the following adjectival rating was used to analyzed and interpret the data gathered from the accomplished questionnaires:

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Very High (VH) | 4.20 – 5.00; |
| High (H) | 3.40 – 4.19; |
| Moderate (M) | 2.60 – 3.39; |
| Low (L) | 1.80 – 2.59; |
| Moderate (M) | 1.00 – 1.79; |



Moreover graphical representation was employed to compare the different occupational stressors affecting the HEI personnel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution Respondents' Gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Male | 33 | 46% |
| Female | 39 | 54% |
| TOTAL | 72 | 100% |

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of respondents. As presented, there are more female at 54% and male at 46% with a difference of 8% more female than male.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents' Civil Status

| Civil Status | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Single | 23 | 32% |
| Married | 49 | 68% |
| TOTAL | 72 | 100% |

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to civil status. Sixty eight percent (68%) are married and 32% are single.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Age

| Age Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 21-30 | 28 | 39% |
| 31-40 | 38 | 53% |
| 41-50 | 3 | 4% |
| 60 and above | 3 | 4% |
| TOTAL | 72 | 100% |

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents according to age. As shown, majority are within the age-range of 31-40 at 53%. There are 39% who fall within the age-range of 21-30 and only 4% each for ranges 41-50 and 60 and above. The results presented on the table indicate that generally the respondents are falling within the Millennial or generation Y that is ages ranging from 21-34 years old.



Table 4: Distribution on the Nature of Work of the Respondents

| Nature of Work | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Administrator | 8 | 11% |
| Faculty Member | 50 | 69% |
| Administrative Staff | 14 | 19% |
| TOTAL | 72 | 100% |

Table 4 presents the distribution of the respondents' nature of work. Majority are faculty members or teaching staff at 69%, while administrators or supervisory presents only 11% and the rest at 19% are doing administrative or support staff.

Table 5: Respondents Assessment on the Presence of Stress in the Physical Environment

| Type of Stressor | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Noise Pollution | 4.1 | High |
| Poor Ventilation | 4.19 | High |
| Polluted Workplace | 4.0 | High |
| Overall Rating | 4.1 | High |

Table 5 presents the list of stressors in the physical environment as encountered by the respondents. As shown, the following stressors are identified like noise pollution, poor ventilation and polluted workplace with a weighted mean of 4.1, 4.19, and 4.0, respectively. The over-all rating of the three (3) stressors is 4.1 that is rated to have high occurrence. Results of the study imply that the respondents are exposed to poor ventilation as well as pollution in the workplace. This can be attributed to the geographical factors as the universities where the respondents are working are located in the middle of the Tuguegarao City, which is considered to be among the hottest city in the Philippines. Also, being in the center of the city, motor vehicles are plentiful which highly contribute to the levels of noise experienced by the respondents.

Table 6: Assessment on the Individual Stress as Experience by the Respondents

| Type of Stressor | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Role Conflict | 3.5 | High |
| Role Ambiguity | 3.6 | High |
| Work Overload | 3.7 | High |
| Work Responsibility | 3.3 | Moderate |
| Overall Rating | 3.5 | High |



Table 6 shows the summary of ratings on the individual stress as experienced by the respondents. As presented the highest rating was on “work overload” with a weighted mean of 3.7, followed by “role ambiguity” at 3.6. The lowest rating is given to “work responsibility” at 3.3. The over-all rating for individual stress is 3.5 which is considered to be high.

Results in the table agrees with the result of a field study conducted by Osipowe, S. H, Et al (1986) which is published in the Journal of Vocational Behavior. Utilizing the Osipow and Spokane (1983) scales which is used to test the relationship of coping resources as moderators to strain-stress relationship, the study revealed role overload to be the most significant contributor of strain to the individual but that coping resources contributed to the alleviation of the situation or relationship.

Table 7: Respondents’ Assessment on Group Related Stress

| Type of Stressor | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Poor Relationship with Peers | 3.3 | Moderate |
| Poor Relationship with Subordinates | 3.2 | Moderate |
| Poor Relationship with Supervisors | 3.2 | Moderate |
| Overall Rating | 3.2 | Moderate |

Table 7 presents the distribution of the respondents’ assessment on group related stress they encountered in the workplace. As shown all stressors were rated almost of the same weighted mean except for “poor relationship with peer” which is a little bit higher of 0.1, thereby making this variable at an overall rating at 3.2 that is considered to be moderately experienced. Table 7 implies that the respondents consider their co-workers to include their peers, subordinates or those that are under them as well as those their supervisors as sources of moderate levels of stress.



Table 8: Respondents' Assessment on Organizational Stress

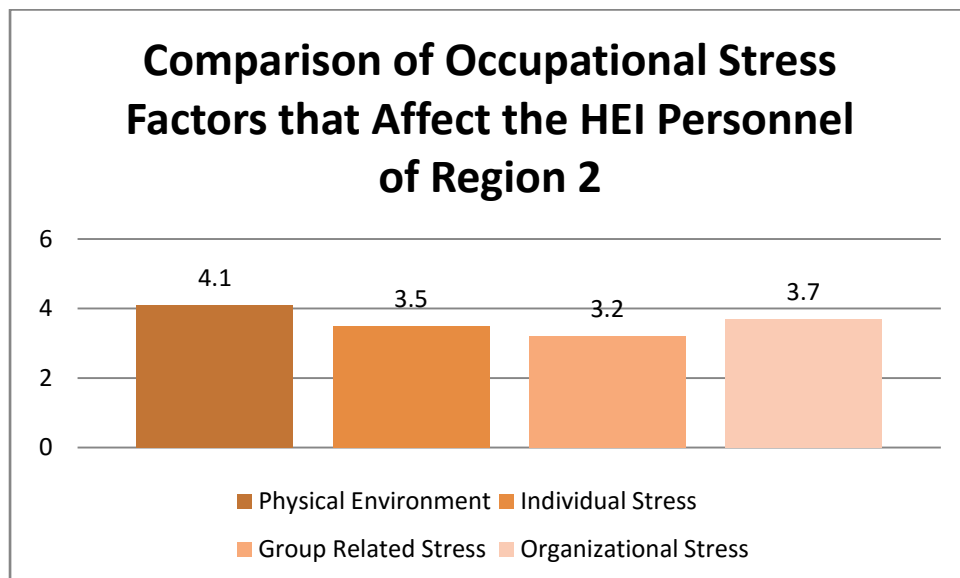
| Type of Stressor | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Weak Organizational Structure | 3.6 | High |
| Organizational Politics | 3.7 | High |
| Unclear Organizational Policies | 3.8 | High |
| Overall Rating | 3.7 | High |

Table 8 presents the distribution of respondents' assessment on the occurrence of organizational stress in the workplace. "Unclear organizational policies" was rated to be the highest at a weighted mean of 3.8, followed by "Organizational Politics at 3.7 while "Weak Organizational Structure" was the lowest at 3.6. The overall rating for the assessment of organizational stress is 3.7 falling under a "high" adjectival range.

Table 8 implies a poor organizational policies implemented and structure of HEIs in Region 2 resulting to the respondents experiencing high levels of organization related occupation stress.

Figure 1

Comparison of Occupational Stress Factors that Affect the HEI Personnel of Region 2



The graph summarizes the different occupational stress factors that affect the HEI personnel of Region 2. As seen from the graph, the highest category mean of 4.1 pertain to physical environment and this implies that the personnel of HEI in Region Two consider the physical set-up of their workplace to be biggest



contributor of occupational stress. This is followed by organizational related factors having a category mean of 3.7. Individual stress ranked third with a category mean of 3.5 while group related stress factors was assessed by the respondents to be the occupational stress to have the least effect on them having a generated a category mean of 3.2. All types of occupational stress got an adjectival rating of high except for group related stress which got an adjectival rating of moderate.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents in terms of the following variables:
 - 1.1 Gender - Females outnumber the males with a frequency of 39 or 54% and 33 or 46% respectively;
 - 1.2 Civil Status – Most of the respondents are married having a frequency of 49 or 68% while the remaining 23 or 32% are single.
 - 1.3 Age – Majority of the respondents are within the range of 31-40 having a frequency of 38 equal to 53%. 39% or 28 respondents fall within the age range of 21-30 while there are 3 respondents whose age range from 41-50. They compose 4% of the total number of respondents. The same number of respondents were taken from the oldest respondents or those whose ages ranges from 60 and above. According to age, it can be perceived that most of the respondents are classified as millennial or under the Generation Y.
 - 1.4 Nature of Work - A great majority of the respondents are designated as faculty members having a frequency of 50 or 69% of the total number of respondents. 14 or 19% of the respondents work as administrative staff while the remaining 8 are working as administrators of HEIs. They comprised 11% of the total number of respondents.
2. Occupational Stressors Encountered by the Respondents and how it affects them:
 - 2.1 Physical Stress – The category mean is 4.1 or High and is considered to be the highest among the occupational stressors that affects the HEI personnel of Region 2.
 - 2.2 Individual Stress – The category mean is 3.5 or High ranks third among the occupational stressors cited by the HEI personnel in Region 2.



2.3 Group Related Stress – The category mean is 3.2 or Moderate which is the lowest among the occupational stressors cited by the HEI personnel in Region 2.

2.4 Organization Stress- The category mean is 3.7 or High is second highest among the occupational stress affecting the HEI personnel of Region 2.

CONCLUSION

Occupational stress or work-related stress maybe described as an ever-continuing and non-stop stress an employee or worker experiences due to the duties and responsibilities in the workplace. Simply out, it may be perceived as the peoples' response when faced with work demand or pressures that may not be matched with their knowledge or capabilities or when group with other people that do not share the same ideologies with them.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher acknowledges the hard reality that occupational stressors specifically physical environment, individual stress, group related stress and organization related stress have a huge effect to the personnel of higher education institutions in Region 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

1. Consider reducing the number of class size from 50 to 40 so that classrooms will not be jampacked. This will improve air circulation and will help in improving the ventilation as well as make it easier for the faculty member to control the class.
2. Regularly perform work audit to determine overloaded and under loaded personnel. The audit would also provide a sound basis in the distribution of assignments to prevent work overloading.
3. Regular orientation regarding university policies to include designations and its basis should be undertaken so that role conflict and ambiguity is reduced.
4. Conduct regular team-building activity or workshop to strengthen relationship with and among workers, build trust and confidence among each other and reduce group related stress.
5. Keep clear goals and policies for the organization and the personnel and keep lines of communications open to reduce organizational stress.



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