



OCCUPATIONAL STRESS FACTORS AND THEIR COPING STRATEGIES AMONG FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS OF A WOMEN COLLEGE

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Abstract: *Stress in general and occupational stress in particular is a universal and frequently perceived human phenomenon. Historically, working in a higher education institution has generally been considered relatively stress-free and highly satisfying. However, fast changing work environment is leading to increase work stress among teaching staff of higher education.*

Today, women have contributed significantly in almost every field. Working in higher education is just one single area of our concern for women. On one hand, working life has changed a lot during the last few decades causing increased occupational stress and work-life imbalance for female faculties at educational institutes.

The main purpose of the present paper is to understand the phenomenon of occupational stress factors, coping strategies and stress effects among female faculty members from a women college. The data are analyzed using various statistical tools and methods. The results of the study reveal that there exists a moderate-level of occupational stress amid female faculties working in women only college.

Keywords: *Occupational stress, Academic stress, Stressors, Coping strategies, Stress Management*

INTRODUCTION

The global education industry has become more complex due to global competition, open market, privatization of higher education and technological advancement. The fast changing work environment forces universities and institutes of higher education to become internationally competitive which leads many challenges to faculty members. These challenges are leading to increase work stress among teaching staff of higher education.



Women have shown their significant presence everywhere. From sports to aeronautics, from politics to engineering, from medical professions to academics, women have contributed significantly in almost every field. Working in educational institutes has been a very demanding profession among women. Working in higher educational institutes as faculty proves out to be a life sustaining income for women, but it also exerts its own pressures on them. Teaching profession was earlier viewed as a 'low stressful occupation'. However, recent work environment has changed significantly, which also holds true for higher education institutions. The increasing change in all areas of life (not only economic, technological but also of the social relations, lifestyle, mentalities, values, and ideals) in recent decades has created unavoidable pressure on individuals. These pressures and fast changing work environment are leading to increase work stress among teaching staff of higher education.

In India, very few studies address the issue of academic stress. The available literature in the field of academic work stress covers entire teaching fraternity working in co-education colleges. They are very rarely focused only on female faculties and not even studied the phenomena of work stress among women colleges. Keeping this in mind, the present research focuses on investigating occupational stress among female faculty members working in Women College. A college situated in Madhya Pradesh, India has been taken as a case study. This college is unique because this is purely women oriented college. All the staff members are female only and only girls students are studying.

The main objective of the present study was to study occupational stress in female faculty members of a women college in Madhya Pradesh and its stressors, coping strategies and stress effects.

BACKGROUND

Globalization, technological advancement and complex nature of work have brought new challenges as well as new stressors to employees. The occupational stress is also increasing among teaching faculties of higher education. Therefore, the growing level of stress has become a popular topic among academicians throughout the world for their research studies.

Stress:

Stress can be defined in general term as people feel pressures in their own life. Stress is the response of people to the unreasonable/excessive pressure or demands placed on them.



Stress is an outcome of mismatch between the individual capabilities and organizational demands and the mismatch between the expectations of both individual and organisation. Stress not only affects the physical, psychological and financial balances of an employee but also affects the organizations directly or indirectly.

Occupational Stress:

According to the current World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, occupational or work-related stress "is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope". National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) wrote in 1999, "Work stress as being the harmful and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker".

Academic Stress:

Teaching related stress commonly termed 'teacher stress' is defined as a teacher's experience of "unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher. Like other forms of occupational stress, it can have serious implications for the healthy functioning of the individual as well as for the organisation in which the individual serves (Suganthi and Lakshmi, 2013). Academic stress has been reported all over the world. According to Ravichandran and Rajendran (2007), Stress has become a major dilemma amongst teachers due to quick changes in education system during 1980-1990.

Stress Coping Strategies:

The concepts of stress and coping are neutral. They are closely related to each other even if a deliberate and conscious strategy is not adopted to deal with stress, some strategy is adopted inherently. Although people commonly see stress as negative and coping as positive, the relationship is not that simple. Stress can be psychologically positive or negative, and the means of coping can be effective or ineffective in meeting the challenge presented by the stressful situation. Coping is defined as the cognitive and behavioural efforts used to manage specific external order and/or internal demands appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the individual (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988).

In broader sense, coping is defined as efforts or behaviours by people to solve their problems, deal with demands or pressures, or establish a sense of mastery over their



environment. Generally, coping is presumed to be a set of actions that assist individuals to adapt to their environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is remarkable lack of related studies in India on stress management particularly related to female academic faculties in Indian context. This section discusses the available literature on similar type of work:

Singh Tripti et al. (2007) compared the relationship of stressors at 'work', 'family domains', and 'the work family interface' on the job satisfaction of male and female members of dual career teacher couples. The sample comprises of 254 dual career teacher couples from universities of the north eastern states of India, with at least one member from the couple teaching at the tertiary level of education. The results indicate that female members face more stress than the male members. Both genders with high work-family conflict and work-role stress have lower levels of job satisfaction than those facing lower family conflict and work-role stress. Females facing high 'family roles stress' experience higher job satisfaction than those facing low 'family role stress'.

Bakshi Poonam and Kochhar Veeran (2012) conducted a study on a random sample of 200 (100 each of male and female) faculty members of professional institutions of Haryana. Questionnaire for Demographic characteristic and Coping Strategies was used along with Employment Organization Sources of Stressors scale. Majority of the faculty members revealed that stress was basically due to their laziness and also they were happy with fewer responsibilities. The overall results of stress level revealed that, higher percentage of faculty members were in low stress category.

Vijayadurai and Venkatesh (2012) conducted a study to know the various factors to stimulate stress level among women teachers in college level of Tamilnadu state. A sample size of 50 is taken for the survey with help of questionnaire. Percentage analysis, Chi-square test and ANOVA were applied for data analysis. It was found majority of respondents always have heavy work load within the organization and they have much pressure to take up the result. Factors such as job insecurity, long hours, continuous change and unrealistic deadlines can cause serious problem for them.

Suganthi G. and Lakshmi M. (2013) performed a study to examine the physiological, psychological and behavioural causes of the work stress among female faculty members in



colleges in Villupuram district. Random samples of 110 have taken from faculty members of various departments. Chi- square test and Anova test are used for the analysis of the data. The survey of female faculty regarding their work stress revealed that less staff, shift work, lack of co-operation, lack of facilities, amenities, lack of advanced technology are the major (psychological, physiological and behavioral) causes of stress. On the whole the maximum effect of stress is on the psychological aspect, physiological is the next and the behavioural aspect is the last.

Vijaya Lakshmi et al. (2013) have studied and find the issues and problems of women faculty working in educational institutions. The study was based on secondary data and it was found that women faculty members underwent severe stress in the process of attaining Work Life Balance. Continued work pressure resulted in poor performance. The result revealed that many female teachers have neglected their health in the process of improving the life of their family members and their students. Sharma Bhawana and Nair Manju (2015) conducted a study to investigate the faculty's viewpoint towards stress at workplace through structured questionnaire from the women faculty working with different educational institutions in district of Jaipur in Rajasthan and to analyze how to deal with stress between professional and personal life. The research analysis was done by percentage evaluation method. Coping strategies were also review to know, how they deal with stress. Sample size was confirmed to 110 based on the respondent's response for the structured questionnaire. The finding of study states that stress among working women occurs due to long working hours, various family and official responsibilities, job security and so on. Such type of stress creates various problems such as prolonged headaches, frustration and anxiety. Yoga, counseling, meditation, social relations, and physical work out were found to reduce the stress.

Zaheer Asma et al. (2016) investigated the degree of and the relationship between occupational stress and work-life balance amid female faculties in central universities of Delhi, India. The study is based on primary data collected from 120 female faculties from two central universities (60 each) in Delhi, India. The data are analyzed using various statistical techniques and methods such as descriptive statistics and correlation. The results of the study reveal that there exists a moderate-level of occupational stress and moderate-level of work-life balance amid female faculties in central universities of Delhi, India. The



results of the study further reveal that there is a strong negative relationship between Occupational Stress and Work-Life Balance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The basic aim of this research is to study the factors of occupational stress and their coping strategies of female teaching faculties of a women's college in Madhya Pradesh.

The following are the main objectives:

- To identify the various causes for occupational stress that affects the women teachers in the college atmosphere
- To assess the perception of the individual towards their Job Stress.
- To know the consequences of stress among women faculties of the college.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study falls under descriptive research and hence descriptive research design was followed. The Cronbach's Alpha for reliability test of the data was used. Descriptive statistics on Likert scale and the weighted means and standard deviation for each of the subscale questions will be presented. Percentage analysis, Agreeability index, and Chi-square test were applied for data analysis.

Methods of Data Collection:

The present study is based on primary data. Questionnaire was the main tool for collecting the primary data. The questionnaire was designed in a systematic way of covering adequate and relevant almost all aspects of the study. The data collected from the primary sources were arranged sequentially and tabulated in a systematic manner.

The Sample of the Study:

The sample for the study includes the academic staff of a women college in Madhya Pradesh. A sample size of 50 is taken for the survey with help of questionnaire. Out of 50 only 33 responded that means the response rate was 66%.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study:

Ho1: There is no job stress among female faculty members working in a women's college.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in job stress experienced by different female faculty members working in a women's college having different job profiles.



Ho2a: There is no significant difference in job stress experienced by different female faculty members working in Science and Social science faculties in a women's college.

Ho2b: There is no significant difference in job stress experienced by different female faculty members working in a women's college having different job experiences.

Ho2c: There is no significant difference in job stress experienced by different female faculty members working in a women's college having different educational qualifications.

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability Analysis:

The data were subjected to Alpha tests of reliability and the test has got acceptable (0.91) Cronbach's Alpha value which indicates a good level of internal consistency for the scale with the specific sample used for the study.

Profile of the Respondents:

Out of total 33 respondents, they are classified in to various groups according to their job profile characteristics. The following table shows the frequencies and percentage of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' job profile

Job profile variables of Respondents		Frequency	Percentage %
Faculty	Science	17	52
	Social science	16	48
Experience	1-7 years	08	24.24
	8-15 years	14	42.42
	More than 15	11	33.33
Qualification	Post Graduate	11	33.33
	Ph. D.	22	66.66

RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Overall perception of stress:

Part I of the questionnaire consists of 03 questions regarding how a faculty find her job stressful; how they characterise their level of stress and how much they experience levels of stress that is unacceptable to them. The following table 2 shows the respondents data. The overall percentage and agreeability index analysis is presented in this section. The weighted mean and standard deviation are also calculated and presented. Answers to the questions 1 and 2 have been rated on a three point scale. The scores allotted to the answers range from



one to three. Thus, the minimum score for a question 33 and the maximum score is 99. Score obtained is divided by 99 and multiplied by 100 to convert it into an index. This index is called 'Agreeability Index'. Thus the formula for calculating the Agreeability Index (AI) is

$$A.I. = \text{Total Score} / \text{maximum score} * 100.$$

The same has been applied for the third question where answers were only "Yes" or "No". The scores allotted to this answer range from one to two. Thus, the minimum score for a question 33 and the maximum score is 66. Score obtained is divided by 66 and multiplied by 100 to convert it into Agreeability index.

Table 2: Overall perception of stress

PART I	I find my job stressful			How would you characterise your level of stress			Do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Mild	Moderate	Severe	NO	Yes	
No of responses	3	14	16	6	22	5	28	5	
% of responses	9.09	42.42	48.48	18.2	66.66	15.15	84.84	15.15	
Scores	3	28	48	6	44	15	28	10	
	Mean	S. D.	A. I.	Mean	S. D.	A. I.	Mean	S. D.	A. I.
	2.39	2.07	79.79	1.97	1.35	65.65	1.15	1.04	57.57

Factors of stress:

The stressors are answered in part II of the questionnaire. The following table 3 shows the respondents data. The overall percentage and agreeability index analysis is presented in this section. The weighted mean and standard deviation are also calculated and presented. Answers to the questions have been rated on a three point scale. The scores allotted to the answers range from one to three. The responses were: Disagree (value=1), No response (value=2) and Agree (value=3). Thus, the minimum score for a question 33 and the maximum score is 99. The agreeability index is calculated as per above formula.

Table 3: Stressors

S. N.	Stress Factors	N	Mean	S.D.	A.I.
1	Job Insecurity	33	2.55	2.4	84.84
2	Lack of promotion opportunities	33	2.82	1.33	93.93
3	Lack of Research & Personal Growth Opportunities	33	2.15	1.27	71.71
4	Lack of resources to undertake research, including problems in obtaining funding	33	2.3	2.4	76.76
5	Unreasonable expectations from Higher	33	2.76	1.51	91.91



	authority				
6	Negative Attitude of Colleagues / Politics	33	1.36	1.78	45.45
7	Excessive Teaching load	33	2.33	2.48	77.77
8	Additional responsibilities	33	2.85	1.02	94.94
9	Involvement in non-teaching work	33	2.85	1.02	94.94
10	Lack of Motivation	33	2.42	2.22	80.80
11	Work-home conflicts	33	2.24	3.46	74.74
12	Poor students behaviour and their negative attitude towards Study	33	1.58	2.76	52.52
13	Lack of choice in the courses you teach	33	2.3	3.57	76.76
14	Teaching large classes	33	2	3.44	66.66
15	Heavy use of Information technology in various activities	33	2.27	2.38	75.75

Table 4: Impact of Stress

S. N.	Stress Impact factors	N	Mean	S.D.	A.I.
1	Mood disturbance	33	2.7	1.85	89.89
2	Psychological distress	33	2.21	3.64	73.73
3	Negative about career	33	1.55	2.37	51.51
4	Anxiety	33	1.79	3.15	59.59
5	Depression	33	2.03	3.56	67.67
6	Fatigue	33	2	3.2	66.66
7	Heart disease	33	2.3	3.33	76.76
8	Diabetes	33	1.82	3.81	60.60
9	Lowered efficiency	33	1.88	3.39	62.62
10	Lowered morale	33	2.36	2.94	78.78

Table 5: Stress Managing Techniques

S. No.	Coping Strategies	N	Mean	S.D.	A.I.
1	Yoga and exercise	33	2.67	1.92	88.88
2	Meditation	33	2.67	1.70	89.89
3	Playing with children	33	2.94	0.47	97.97
4	Interaction with positive Colleagues	33	2.97	0.23	98.98
5	Reading Motivational Books	33	2.82	1.14	93.93
6	Rest	33	2.61	1.92	86.86
7	Entertainment	33	2.76	1.39	91.91
8	Positive Attitude	33	2.85	0.93	94.94
9	Cooking	33	2.64	1.98	87.87
10	Internet (facebook, whatsapp etc.)	33	2.42	2.56	80.80

Job Profile Variables and Stress:

Another hypothesis for finding the significant difference in job stress experienced by different female faculty members working in a women's college having different job profiles



was tested using chi-square test. The following table 6 finds out the significant differences among three job profile variables with stress. The chi-square test was done. The results of the analysis are shown in the table.

Table 6: Job Profile Variables and Stress

Job profile variables of Respondents		I find my job stressful			Chi-square value
N=33		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Significant at 0.05 level
Faculty	Science	04	12	01	0.49
	Social science	04	09	03	
Experience	1-7 years	02	05	01	0.13
	8-15 years	01	05	08	
	More than 15	00	04	07	
Qualification	Post Graduate	03	06	02	0.007
	Ph. D.	00	08	14	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 indicates the overall perception of stress from respondents. About 49% of respondents were agreed on the question “I find my job stressful”. The weighted mean and standard deviation are 2.39 and 2.07 respectively. The value of agreeability index is 80. The value of weighted mean is more than 2 (neutral=2) and towards the high value (agree=3). Based on the agreeability index, the responses are divided into low (from 33 to 50), moderate (from 51 to 66) and high (more than 66) level of agreeability. Here the agreeability index is 80 which is quite higher level of agreeability. All these measurements clearly show that the female faculties experience occupational stress even working in women college where there is no any male teaching staff.

Hence, the hypothesis Ho1, “There is no job stress among female faculty members working in a women’s college” is rejected. Alternatively, it is accepted that there is job stress on female faculty members working in a women’s college.

On answering the question, “how would you characterise your level of stress? 66% responded that they have moderate level of stress. The weighted mean and standard deviation are 1.97 and 1.35 respectively. The value of agreeability index is 65. Based on the agreeability index, the responses are divided into low (from 33 to 50), moderate (from 51 to 66) and high (more than 66) level of agreeability. The agreeability index also confirms that there is moderate level of job stress among female faculty. However, 85% say that they do



not experience levels of stress that is unacceptable. That means the level of stress is moderate.

Among all of the statements presented in Table 3 for the stressors, the statement “Additional responsibilities and involvement in non-teaching work” was rated highest, with a mean score of 2.85 and A.I. 94.95, which implies that women faculties felt most pressured and have high level of agreeability for this factor. Other factors in which faculty feels more pressure was “Lack of promotion opportunities” with the mean score 2.82 and A.I. 93.94 and “Unreasonable expectations from higher authority” with the mean score 2.76 and A.I. 91.92. Another factor “Job insecurity” with the mean score 2.55 was also a significant with the value of A.I. 84.85. Negative Attitude of Colleagues / Politics and Poor students behaviour and their negative attitude towards Study with mean score 1.36 and 1.58 respectively and their A.I. 45.45 and 52.52 are the factors of low stress.

It is indicated in table 4 that stress has major impact on mood disturbance with mean 2.7 and A.I. 89.89 followed by lowered morale with mean score 2.36 and A.I. 78.78 these impacts are psychological. Heart disease and Depression with mean score 2.3 and 2.03 and A.I. 76.76 and 67.67 has physiological impacts and there score is high. Other impacts are low and moderate.

It is found from table 5 that the most helpful strategy for coping strategies preferred by the faculty members are “Interaction with positive Colleagues” with the highest mean, followed by Playing with children, Positive Attitude, Entertainment, Yoga and exercise, Meditation, Cooking, Rest and Internet (facebook, whatsapp etc.).

The table 6 shows the differences among three job profile variables with stress using their chi-square values. The results of the hypothesis H2, which is “There is no significant difference in job stress experienced by different female faculty members working in a women’s college having different job profiles”, are described as follows:

H2a: There is not enough evidence to reject the hypothesis, which means there is no significance difference between experience of faculties and level of stress as the chi-square statistic is 5.3358. The p -value is .254544. The result is *not* significant at $p < .05$.

H2b: There is not enough evidence to reject the hypothesis, which means there is no significance difference between faculties of different academic faculty and level of stress as the chi-square statistic is 1.3996. The p -value is 0.496696. the result is not significant at $p < .05$



H2c: This hypothesis is rejected which means there is significance difference between qualification of faculties and level of stress as the chi-square statistic is 9.6964. The p -value is .007842. The result is significant at $p < .05$.

CONCLUSION

Occupational stress is a major challenge for working women educators and their employing institution. As numbers of working women are increasing in education sector they have to deal with challenges like long working hour, Job insecurity, Poor relationship with colleagues, Workload, Additional responsibilities and involvement in non-teaching work, Lack of opportunity for growth and advancement and Negative Attitude of students towards study. In addition, it is not only important to identify reasons of stress and to deal with them but to encourage healthy work environment and reduced destructive aspects of work. Other findings of the study show that stress has negative impact on faculties. Therefore, effective stress coping strategies are needed to apply by the female faculties.

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