

STRESS MANAGEMENT BY COLLEGE TEACHERS

Ms. Santhi M*

Mr. Naveen P Y*

Abstract:

The dynamic environment has been causing tension to many occupations and teaching is not an exception. Research in different nations has shown that teaching is a stressful job. The factors causing stress can be from the system, colleagues, or students. The stress may adversely affect the psychological or physiological systems of teachers. In this paper, an attempt is made to identify the factors of stress related to occupation of teachers in post graduate colleges and find the impact of stress on their work and health. About 121 teachers engaged in teaching MBA and MCA courses took part in the study and reported moderate stress levels and minor health disorders. Their coping methods are simple like walking, exercises, entertainment and yoga.

* Associate Professor, Dr. AER College of Management Studies & Research, C. Ramapuram, Tirupathi-517501, A.P.

Introduction

It is widely recognized that people across the world are functioning in the “age of anxiety and stress” (Coleman, 1976). The occurrence of stress in various professions is recognized and addressed by doctors, psychologists and academician. As stress has become part of life to everyone, it has become a focal point for study among behavioral scientists researchers, and policy makers. The role of teachers in recent years has become more varied and challenging. Some schools and employer organizations are making claims of offering training in emotional intelligence and yoga to develop an all-round personality of students and teachers. The present study examines the sources of stress of teachers and their coping strategies.

Concept

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Selye Hans in 1936. It was derived from the Latin word ‘Stringere’; it meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. It was defined as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed up on it”.

Baron & Byrne (1997) defined stress as the response to physical or psychological events perceived by the individual as potential causing harm or emotional distress.

Stephen Robbins (1999) observed it as “a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he/she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important”. According to Northern Territory Government report (2003) workplace stress is the result of the interaction between a person

and their work environment and the awareness of an individual of not being able to cope with the demands of their work environment. In a similar way, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2007) opined that work-related stress is a pattern of reactions that occurs when workers are presented with work demands that are not matched to their knowledge and skills and challenges their coping ability.

Stress defined by Quick et al. (1986), is the generalized, patterned unconscious mobilization of internal energy resources that occur when a person confronted with a stressor, or that condition that causes stress. Beehr and Newman (1978) had defined stress as a situation which will force a person to deviate from normal functioning due to the change (i.e. disrupt or enhance) in his/her psychological and/or physiological condition.

The above definitions bring out the following elements of the definition of stress.

1. The source of stress is dynamic, person –environment interface.
2. It arises when environment demands are more than coping ability of an individual.
3. It causes a change in condition – psychological and physiological –causing release of unconscious extra energy.
4. It causes a deviated behaviour.
5. The outcome of the response is uncertain.
6. It results in strain – both physical and mental.

Stress among teachers

The literature on occupational stress has shown that all professions experience one form of stress or another (Onah, 1995). Research done worldwide indicates that teachers' stress is becoming endemic (van Wyk, 1998).

What is the concept of stress in the context of teaching and teachers?

Teachers stress is defined as the experience by a teacher of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher (Chris Kyriacou , 2001). David W. Chan (2002) took a sample of 83 Chinese prospective teachers in Hong Kong and found that prospective teachers or teachers in training, after their first teaching practice with actual classroom experience, frequently comment that teaching is highly stressful and some might even become less determined in their pursuit of a teaching career. Teachers are exposed to traumatic stress, which include primary stress and secondary stress. Examples of primary stress include assault, threats of violence and intimidation and secondary stress includes news of violent and distressing events and witnessing how others are subjected to trauma (Fisher, 2001).

What are the different factors that have influence on stress of teachers?

Elaine Adams (2001), found that there is an interlink with three causes towards teachers stress and they are a) Institute systems b) Teachers internal characteristics c) Students' behaviour. A brief explanation of the different factors is given here.

- *Personal factors* - The endorsement of the beliefs that a teacher is good, noble and great, was widespread and the implications were that teachers suffered from stress and burnout due to their own internal attributions. This suggested that teachers who blame themselves for difficulties are more vulnerable to stress (Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou & Kiosseoglou, 1999).

- *Technological developments* - Rapid changes in the world and technology have exacerbated teacher's perceived professional incompetence. Teachers experience stress due to the lack of occupational confidence as a result of the difficulty that they experience to keep up to date in their areas of expertise (Fimian & Santoro, 1983; Terry, 1997).
- *Adverse work environment*- John L. Romano & Kyla Wahlstrom (2000), identified stress levels were significantly correlated with factors like student demands, physical demands of teaching, parents, interactions with colleagues and after school class preparation. Job timings, workload, number of employees vs load, less armamentarium, employer attitude, peers' attitude, pay, bonus, shares and holidays are the few of the important factors which can lead to stressed job environment and less than 100% efficiency (Muhammad Umair Manzoor, Muhammad Usman, Muhammad Akram Naseem and Malik Muhammad Shafiq, 2011). Kyriacou, (1998) has shown that casual factors for stress include role overload, poor learner behavior and lack of resources. According to Robert M. Klassen (2010), teachers stress will be caused from workload and students behaviour. However student's behaviour may be changed by improving students discipline but stress from workload will be higher.
- *Related people and expectations* - The number of individuals for whom teachers are responsible, diversity in individuals with whom they have to work, resistance and lack of motivation of co-workers cause stress. According to Smylie (1999), work involving responsibility for other people creates potential stress as it may heighten expectations for job performance and emotional availability. The cognitive factors affecting

individual susceptibility to stress amongst teachers were investigated by Chorney (1998), and it was revealed that teachers' responses to being a "good teacher" were couched in absolute terms, such as "must" and "need".

What is the influence of stress on outcome variables?

Positive impact of stress leads to bring competitive spirit and more involvement towards their profession but negative stress leads to problems related to health, morale, quality and etc. Stress if not properly managed, would affect the level of productivity of the workers (M. Olalekan Arikewuyo, 2004).

Christian Jacobsson, Anders Pousette and Ingela Thylefors (2001) examined both sides of stress: the negative stress referred as 'stress reactions' and the positive stress as 'feelings of mastery'. According to them, colleague support has a positive relationship to work demands; co-operation had a negative relationship to feelings of mastery. Teacher's age had a positive relationship to feelings of mastery.

What sort of coping methods teachers make use of?

Olalekan Arikewuyo (2004) identified four coping strategies that can be categorized into cognitive and behavioral strategies, which can be further classified into active and inactive. He observed that Nigeria teachers frequently use active behavioral strategies and inactive (escape) cognitive strategies in managing stress.

Nagel and Brown (2003) described the ABC's of stress management for teachers. Teachers may mitigate some stress by first Acknowledging factors that they perceive to be most stressful to them. Behavioural modification strategies can help teachers reach a state of homeostasis while Communication provides an avenue for teachers to prevent stress or to minimize the impact of stress. .

Is stress influenced by Demographics of teachers?

Robert M. Klassen (2010), stated that higher levels of stress from workload will be on female teachers compared to male teachers Jennifer A. Lindholm & Katalin Szelenyi, (2008) opined that younger faculty experiences greater stress compared to experienced faculty. Millicent H. Abel & Joanne Sewell, (1999) found high levels of stress among rural school teachers due to poor working conditions and poor staff relations as well as from pupil misbehavior and time pressure.

Objectives and methods

A survey of teachers working in higher educational institutions is undertaken with the following objectives.

- To identify the level of stress experienced by them, and know the factors that have caused it.
- To find the impact of stress on the teachers and the coping methods adopted by them.

A structured questionnaire is canvassed among 150 teachers in 10 post graduate colleges offering MBA and MCA courses in Tirupati town. They have been functioning for the last three years and have similar working conditions like private management, courses affiliated to University (either Sri Venkatesara University, Tirupati or Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad), semester system, centralized student admissions through a state level common entrance test, semester examinations and internal assessment.

About 121 teachers have responded by filling in the questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed using rational construct criterion (referring to existing literature) to ensure validity

The questionnaire has four parts: (a) personal details (b) source of stress (c) impact of stress and (d) coping strategies. Factor analysis is used to reduce the 27 variables identified as sources of stress. Cronbach's Alpha for the 27 items of stress sources indicating reliability is 0.843.

Profile of respondents

Table -1 shows the demographics of respondents who have taken part in the study. Most of them (77%) belong to middle age group of 26-45 years. About 60% of them are male, and 57% of them married. Around 63% of them have nuclear families. Only 23% of them have no children. Most of them are earning below Rs.40,000 per month. There are about 14 teachers who earn below Rs.10,000. They are bachelors without family responsibilities.

Professional details are presented in Table -2. As can be expected all the respondents have PG qualification. Of them 21% have either M.Phil or PhD. About 75% of them are Assistant

professors, 81% of them belong to professional studies and 69% of them stated that they have chosen the career with an ambition. When it comes to experience, only 21% of them have below 2 years' experience.

Table - 1 Demographics of respondents
(N= 121)

Factor	Categories	f	%
Age	Below 25 Years	23	19
	26-35 Years	77	64
	36-45 Years	16	13
	46-55 Years	3	2
	Above 55 Years	2	2
Gender	Male	73	60
	Female	48	40
Marital status	Un married	52	43
	Married	69	57
Type of family	Nuclear	76	63
	Joint	45	37
Dependents	No	28	23
	1-2	46	38
	3 and above	47	39
Monthly income	Less than Rs. 10,000	14	12
	Rs. 10000-20,000	67	55
	Rs.20001-40,000	29	24
	Rs.40,001-60,000	3	2
	Above Rs.60,000	8	7

Table -2 Professional information about respondents
(N= 121)

Factor	Categories	f	%
Education	PG	96	79.3
	M. Phil	16	13.2
	PhD	9	7.2
Designation	Professor	4	3.3
	Associate professor	26	21.5
	Assistant professor	91	75.2

	MCA	23	19.1
	MBA	98	80.9
Service type	Permanent (Regular)	85	70.2
	Contract	36	29.8
Experience	Less than 2 years	25	20.7
	2-5 Years	49	40.5
	Above 5 to 10 years	27	22.3
	More than 10 years	20	16.5
Reasons for career choices	For livelihood	38	31.5
	To fulfill ambition	83	68.5

Source of stress

Factor analysis is conducted. Table -3 shows that approximate chi-square statistic is 990.492. With 351 degrees of freedom it is significant at 0.05 level. The KMO statistic (0.753) is also large (>0.5). Hence factor analysis is considered as an appropriate technique for further analysis of data. Results of Principal Component Analysis for stress related qualities are tabulated in Tables 4. Table -4 has given out nine Eigen values greater than 1. These nine factors are subject to continuous varimax rotation with respect to the correlation values and component wise segregation is presented in Table -5. The rotated component matrix explains the variables loadings in each predominant factor of sources for stress. Table -6 presents the mean scores of the different items placed under nine factors. The nine factors are named based on the key element in the related statements.

Table -3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.753
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	990.492
	df	351
	Sig.	.000

Table -4 Factor Analysis – Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.774	21.384	21.384	5.774	21.384	21.384	2.658	9.846	9.846
2	2.313	8.567	29.950	2.313	8.567	29.950	2.363	8.752	18.598
3	1.951	7.225	37.176	1.951	7.225	37.176	2.058	7.622	26.220
4	1.573	5.828	43.003	1.573	5.828	43.003	1.998	7.399	33.619
5	1.442	5.341	48.345	1.442	5.341	48.345	1.859	6.886	40.505
6	1.359	5.033	53.377	1.359	5.033	53.377	1.852	6.858	47.363
7	1.227	4.545	57.922	1.227	4.545	57.922	1.752	6.488	53.850
8	1.182	4.377	62.299	1.182	4.377	62.299	1.714	6.349	60.200
9	1.064	3.941	66.241	1.064	3.941	66.241	1.631	6.041	66.241
10	.853	3.159	69.400						
11	.821	3.041	72.440						
12	.798	2.956	75.396						
13	.734	2.719	78.115						
14	.684	2.535	80.649						
15	.619	2.294	82.943						
16	.567	2.100	85.043						
17	.549	2.035	87.078						
18	.515	1.906	88.985						
19	.475	1.760	90.744						
20	.426	1.578	92.323						
21	.383	1.418	93.740						
22	.354	1.311	95.051						
23	.309	1.144	96.195						
24	.294	1.090	97.284						
25	.267	.989	98.273						
26	.246	.913	99.186						
27	.220	.814	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table -5 Rotated Component Matrix

Factors	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
The college suffers from lack of effective leadership	.801								
We don't receive appropriate training in the college	.739								
There is less staff consultation when change is proposed	.739								
I find difficulty in coping with the changes in curriculum		.848							
I find it difficult to cope up with the pace of organizational change		.748							
I feel nervous when I fail to accomplishing my task in job			.657						
I feel that I have been over loaded with too many jobs			.647						
I have to do many things in my role which are against my personal opinion			.548						
My skills are underused			.513						
I am receiving inadequate recognition for the work				.715					
My classroom physical working conditions are very poor				.645					
Management is constantly introducing new procedures					.700				
I have worries about job security						.770			
I have worries about my career Development						.514			
I expect to be rewarded to do any work							.842		
I do my work under considerable tension							.744		
I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on my Job							.500		
My working hours are excessive								.804	
I have to teach too many students								.518	
Changes are not accompanied by appropriate support and training								.503	
I am not able to control the discipline of the student in the classroom									.815

My work objectives are not always clear to me									.514
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.									
a. Rotation converged in 18 iterations.									

Table -6 Sources of Stress
(N= 121)

S.No	View	Mean	SD
Factor – 1 Ineffective leadership			
1.	The college suffers from lack of effective leadership	3.02	1.44
2.	We don't receive appropriate training in the college	3.02	1.24
3.	There is less staff consultation when change is proposed	2.83	1.22
Factor- 2 Job change			
4.	I find difficulty in coping with the changes in curriculum	2.33	1.11
5.	I find it difficult to cope up with the pace of organizational change	2.38	1.02
Factor- 3 Role stress			
6.	I feel nervous when I fail to accomplishing my task in job	2.94	1.29
7.	I feel that I have been over loaded with too many jobs	2.63	1.21
8.	I have to do many things in my role which are against my personal opinion	3.02	1.29
9.	My skills are underused	2.41	1.22
Factor- 4 Motivation			
10.	Receiving inadequate recognition for the work	2.84	1.26
11.	My classroom physical working conditions are very poor	2.17	1.07
Factor- 5 Change			
12.	Management is constantly introducing new procedures	2.88	1.21
Factor- 6 Job insecurity			
13.	I have worries about job security	2.62	1.34
14.	I have worries about my career Development	2.95	1.24
Factor- 7 Working conditions			
15.	I expect rewarded to do any work	3.02	1.31
16.	I do my work under considerable tension	3.21	1.19
17.	I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on my Job	4.07	1.09
Factor- 8 Job challenges			
18.	My working hours are excessive	2.52	1.19
19.	I have to teach too many students	2.85	1.31

20	Changes are not accompanied by appropriate support and training	3.02	1.20
Factor- 9 Control			
21.	I am not able to control the discipline of the student in the classroom	1.64	0.94
22.	My work objectives are not always clear to me	2.28	1.17

Scale 5- Strongly agree 1- Strongly disagree

Two important observations emerge from the data. First, the stress is mild. Respondents established- “I do my work under considerable tension (3.21)”. Second, considering the factors which have mean value above 3, it can be said that the notable sources of stress are: working conditions and ineffective leadership. To identify details, consider the statements with mean values of 3 and above.

“I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on my Job (4.17)” indicates pressure is not related to time. The relevant factors are:

- *Ineffective leadership and change* - The College suffers from lack of effective leadership (3.02). We don't receive appropriate training in the college (3.02). Changes are not accompanied by appropriate support and training (3.02).
- *Role stress and lack of reward* - I have to do many things in my role which are against my personal opinion (3.02). I expect to be rewarded to do any work (3.02).

Personal interviews with some faculty members has revealed that changes in work schedules, assignment of subjects against the wish of faculty members, additional work load by assigning teaching work in other courses etc. are at times irritating. Faculty members are asked to promote college especially during the time of admissions. They are asked to work like salespeople

offering incentives like internal assessment marks, attendance etc. This is not liked by many participant respondents.

Impact of stress

Some of the teachers have problems like hyper tension and diabetes but they reported that they cannot be attributed to work pressures. Work related pressures did cause minor problems like tiredness, sleeplessness, back and shoulder pains, gastric trouble, occasional anger, anxiety etc. Table 5 presents the data.

Table -5 Negative impact of stress on respondents

(N= 121)

S.No	Effects	f	%
1	Back or shoulder pains	83	68.6
2	Gastric trouble	62	51.2
3	Sleeplessness	42	34.7
4	Eating disorder	35	28.9
5	Low Self-esteem	26	21.5
6	Anger	55	45.5
7	Anxiety	59	48.7

Coping methods

What do the teachers do to be rid of daily routine boredom and stress that has impacted their moods? About 50 % of the teachers relax at home, watch TV and read magazines. About 20% of the teachers, especially the younger ones either play in college, or do exercises in gyms. About 25% of the teachers go for regular walk in morning and evening. Only 5% of them reported that they would do Yoga two to three days in a week.

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