A STUDY OF THE LEVEL OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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A B S T R A C T

Occupational stress has become a significant concern in the teaching profession due to increasing academic responsibilities, administrative demands and continuous educational reforms. The present study aimed to examine the level of occupational stress among secondary school teachers of Bangalore district and to determine whether stress levels differed with respect to selected background variables such as gender, locality, marital status and teaching experience. The study adopted a descriptive survey method. The population comprised secondary school teachers working in different management schools during the academic year 2012–13. A sample of 132 teachers was selected using the stratified random sampling technique to ensure equal representation of male and female teachers as well as teachers from urban and rural schools. Data were collected using the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (TOSFQ) developed by Clark (1980) along with a personal proforma. The collected data were analyzed using percentages, mean, standard deviation and 't'-test. The findings revealed that occupational stress is prevalent among secondary school teachers; however, no significant differences were found in stress levels based on gender, locality, marital status or teaching experience. The study concludes that occupational stress is a common phenomenon among teachers irrespective of demographic factors and highlights the need for institutional support, stress management strategies and improved working conditions to enhance teachers' well-being and professional effectiveness.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Secondary School Teachers, Teaching Profession, Stress Management

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely regarded as one of the most demanding and stress-prone professions because it requires continuous intellectual engagement, emotional involvement and physical effort. Teachers are expected not only to deliver academic content but also to manage classrooms, address students' behavioral and emotional needs, complete administrative responsibilities and balance personal and family commitments. These multiple expectations are often make teaching both physically and mentally challenging thereby increasing the likelihood of occupational stress. In recent years, work has increasingly been viewed not as a source of satisfaction and fulfillment but as a source of pressure, dissatisfaction and strain. Rapid social changes, educational reforms, increased accountability and organizational demands have intensified stress levels among professionals, particularly teachers (Cox, 1978).

Occupational stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's capacity to cope effectively, resulting in psychological and physiological strain. Two major sources of occupational stress are commonly identified: the characteristics of the job itself (task-related stressors) and the organizational environment (organizational stressors). Within the teaching profession, heavy workloads, lack of support, continuous policy changes and inadequate recognition contribute significantly to stress. Travers and Cooper (1997) reported that teachers experience high stress due to insufficient government support, constant educational reforms and increasing curricular demands. Similarly, a survey conducted by the National Association of

Head Teachers (2000) revealed that many teachers suffered from stress-related health problems such as hypertension, insomnia and depression. The Secondary Education Commission (1953) emphasized that the quality of education largely depends on the quality and well-being of teachers, indicating that teacher stress may adversely affect educational outcomes.

Several empirical studies have documented the prevalence of occupational stress among teachers. Chan, Chen and Chong (2010) found that most teachers in Hong Kong reported increasing stress levels due to workload and time pressure. Morrison (2005) observed maladaptive levels of occupational stress and personal strain among school teachers. Jeyaraj (2013) found that aided school teachers experienced greater occupational stress than government school teachers and that higher stress reduced job satisfaction and career commitment. Antoniou, Ploumpi and Ntalla (2013) reported higher stress and burnout among teachers, with coping strategies playing a significant role in stress management.

Studies conducted in the Indian context also highlight similar concerns. Sapna and Gabha (2013) identified occupational stress as a serious problem among engineering college teachers. Ritu and Ajmer (2012) and Rani and Singh (2012) found moderate stress levels among school teachers, with limited differences across demographic variables. Poornima and Reddy (2011) reported a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress among special education teachers. Niveditaa, Jangra and Saluja (2011) observed differences in stress levels based on gender, experience and type of school management, with private school teachers experiencing greater stress.

These studies collectively suggest that occupational stress among teachers is influenced by institutional conditions, personal characteristics and coping mechanisms. However, stress levels may vary across regions, school management types and demographic backgrounds, making localized investigations necessary.

2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Teachers play a crucial role in modifying students' academic achievement, personality development and social values; therefore, their mental health and job satisfaction are essential for the effective functioning of the education system. Persistent occupational stress can negatively affect teachers' performance, health, motivation and commitment, ultimately reducing educational quality. Previous studies (Travers & Cooper, 1997; NAHT, 2000; Jeyaraj, 2013; Antoniou et al., 2013; Chan et al., 2010) have shown that teachers frequently experience stress due to heavy workloads, organizational pressures and lack of support. Despite this evidence, limited research has focused specifically on secondary school teachers in local districts such as Bangalore, considering background variables like gender, locality, marital status and teaching experience. Hence, there is a clear need to systematically examine the level of occupational stress among secondary school teachers to identify stress patterns and suggest appropriate interventions for improving their professional well-being and educational effectiveness.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teaching is recognized as a profession that involves continuous intellectual effort, emotional commitment and multiple responsibilities that may lead to considerable occupational stress. Secondary school teachers, in particular, face diverse challenges such as heavy workloads, administrative pressures, classroom management issues and expectations from parents and school authorities. Persistent stress may adversely affect their mental health, job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness, thereby influencing the overall quality of education. Although several studies have examined occupational stress among teachers in different regions, limited research has been conducted specifically among secondary school teachers in the Bangalore district, considering background variables such as gender, locality, marital status and teaching experience. Hence, the present study attempts to investigate the level of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. Therefore, the problem of the study is stated as: **"A Study of the Level of Occupational Stress among Secondary School Teachers."**

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of occupational stress among secondary school teachers.
2. To compare the occupational stress of male and female secondary school teachers.
3. To compare the occupational stress of secondary school teachers working in urban and rural schools.
4. To compare the occupational stress of married and unmarried secondary school teachers.
5. To compare the occupational stress of secondary school teachers with less and more teaching experience.

5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the level of occupational stress between male and female secondary school teachers.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of occupational stress between secondary school teachers working in urban and rural schools.
3. There is no significant difference in the level of occupational stress between married and unmarried secondary school teachers.
4. There is no significant difference in the level of occupational stress between secondary school teachers with less teaching experience and those with more teaching experience.

6. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study adopted the descriptive survey method to examine the level of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. The population of the study comprised all teachers working in different management secondary schools of Bangalore district during the academic year 2012–13. From this population, a sample of 132 teachers was selected using the stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of different groups. Accordingly, the sample consisted of 66 male and 66 female teachers drawn from various government and aided schools of the district. For the collection of data, the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (TOSFQ) developed by Clark (1980) was employed to measure occupational stress levels, along with a personal proforma to obtain relevant demographic information. After administering the tools, the collected data were organized and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Percentages were used to describe the distribution of the sample, while mean and standard deviation were calculated to determine the level of stress. The 't'-test was applied to find significant differences in occupational stress with respect to selected background variables. The results were interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions regarding occupational stress among secondary school teachers.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is an essential step in research as it helps in organizing, summarizing and interpreting the collected information to draw meaningful conclusions. In the present study, the data collected from secondary school teachers regarding their level of occupational stress were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Percentages were computed to describe the distribution of the sample across selected independent variables such as sex, locality, marital status and teaching experience. Further, mean, standard deviation and 't'-test were used to compare the occupational stress levels of different groups of teachers and to determine whether significant differences existed between them. The analysis and interpretation of the data are presented below table-wise.

PART-A: PERCENTAGES

Table 1: Distribution of Sample over Independent Variables

Variables		Frequency	Percentage	Total Percentage
Sex	Male	66	50.00	100
	Female	66	50.00	
Locality	Urban	66	50.00	100
	Rural	66	50.00	
Marital Status	Married	112	84.80	100
	Unmarried	20	15.20	
Teaching Experience	Less Experience	87	65.90	100
	More Experience	45	34.10	

The percentage distribution of the sample shows that out of 132 secondary school teachers, 66 (50%) were male and 66 (50%) were female, indicating equal representation of both genders. With respect to locality, 66 teachers (50%) belonged to urban schools and 66 teachers (50%) to rural schools, ensuring balanced coverage of both areas. Regarding marital status, the majority of the teachers, 112 (84.80%), were married, while only 20 (15.20%) were unmarried. In terms of teaching experience, 87 teachers (65.90%) had less teaching experience and 45 teachers (34.10%) had more teaching experience. This distribution indicates that the sample adequately represents different categories of teachers and provides a reliable basis for comparison across demographic variables.

PART-B: 't' TEST ANALYSIS

Table 2: Occupational Stress of Male and Female Teachers

Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	Level of Significance
Sex	Male	66	67.712	17.346	0.826	NS
	Female	66	65.257	16.811		

NS-Not Significant

The mean occupational stress score of male teachers was 67.712 with a standard deviation of 17.346, whereas female teachers obtained a mean score of 65.257 with a standard deviation of 16.811. The calculated 't' value of 0.826 was found to be not significant at the prescribed level. This indicates that there is no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female secondary school teachers. Hence, gender does not appear to influence the level of occupational stress among the teachers in the present study.

Table 3: Occupational Stress of Teachers in Urban and Rural Schools

Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	Level of Significance
Locality	Urban	66	67.863	16.509	0.928	NS
	Rural	66	65.106	17.611		

NS-Not Significant

The mean stress score for urban teachers was 67.863 with a standard deviation of 16.509, while rural teachers recorded a mean score of 65.106 with a standard deviation of 17.611. The obtained 't' value of 0.928 was not significant. This shows that there is no significant difference in occupational stress between teachers working in urban and rural schools. Therefore, locality does not significantly affect the occupational stress levels of secondary school teachers.

Table 4: Occupational Stress of Married and Unmarried Teachers

Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	Level of Significance
Marital Status	Married	112	65.285	16.459	1.734	NS
	Unmarried	20	73.200	19.184		

NS-Not Significant

The mean stress score of married teachers was 65.285 with a standard deviation of 16.459, whereas unmarried teachers had a higher mean score of 73.200 with a standard deviation of 19.184. However, the calculated 't' value of 1.734 was not statistically significant. Although unmarried teachers appear to have slightly higher stress levels, the difference is not significant. Thus, marital status does not significantly influence occupational stress among secondary school teachers.

Table 5: Occupational Stress of Teachers Based on Teaching Experience

Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	Level of Significance
Teaching Experience	Less	87	66.701	17.315	0.204	NS
	More	45	66.066	16.739		

NS-Not Significant

Teachers with less teaching experience obtained a mean stress score of 66.701 with a standard deviation of 17.315, while teachers with more teaching experience recorded a mean score of 66.066 with a standard deviation of 16.739. The computed 't' value of 0.204 was not significant. This indicates that there is no significant difference in occupational stress between less experienced and more experienced teachers. Hence, teaching experience does not appear to have a significant effect on occupational stress levels.

8. FINDINGS

The major findings of the present study reveal that occupational stress is prevalent among secondary school teachers irrespective of their personal and professional background variables. The percentage analysis showed equal representation of male and female teachers as well as urban and rural teachers, while the majority of the teachers were married and had comparatively less teaching experience. The 't'-test analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female teachers, teachers working in urban and rural schools, married and unmarried teachers and teachers with less and more teaching experience. Although minor variations were observed in mean scores, none of these differences reached statistical significance. This suggests that occupational stress is experienced uniformly by secondary school teachers and is not significantly influenced by gender, locality, marital status or teaching experience.

9. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of the present study are consistent with several earlier investigations. The absence of a significant difference in occupational stress between male and female teachers supports the findings of Ritu and Ajmer (2012) and Rani and Singh (2012), who also reported that gender does not significantly influence teachers' occupational stress levels. Similarly, the finding that locality does not affect stress levels aligns with the results of Ritu and Ajmer (2012), indicating that teachers in urban and rural settings face comparable work-related pressures.

The lack of significant difference in occupational stress based on marital status may be attributed to the fact that both married and unmarried teachers experience similar professional responsibilities and organizational demands. This observation is in agreement with earlier studies that reported uniform stress levels across demographic variables (Rani & Singh, 2012). Likewise, the finding that teaching experience does not significantly influence occupational stress contradicts some studies (Niveditaa, Jangra, & Saluja, 2011) but supports Morrison (2005), who found that occupational stress is more closely related to role overload and responsibility rather than years of experience.

The overall presence of occupational stress among teachers supports the theoretical views of Cox (1978), who emphasized that stress results from continuous interaction between individuals and their work environment. The findings also reinforce the observations of Travers and Cooper (1997) and Chan, Chen and Chong (2010), who highlighted workload, administrative pressure and constant educational changes as major contributors to teacher stress. The results indicate that occupational stress is a generalized issue affecting secondary school teachers regardless of demographic distinctions.

10. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that occupational stress is a common and persistent problem among secondary school teachers of Bangalore district. The analysis revealed that occupational stress levels do not differ significantly based on gender, locality, marital status and teaching experience, suggesting that stress is an inherent aspect of the teaching profession. The findings emphasize that professional demands, organizational climate and role expectations may play a more dominant role in contributing to stress than individual demographic characteristics. Since prolonged occupational stress can adversely affect teachers' health, job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness, addressing this issue is essential for maintaining the quality of secondary education.

11. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study have important implications for educational administrators, policymakers and teacher educators. Since occupational stress is experienced uniformly among teachers, stress management and wellness programs should be implemented at the institutional level rather than targeting specific demographic groups. School managements should strive to reduce workload, provide adequate instructional resources and foster a supportive work environment. Training programs focusing on coping strategies, time management and emotional resilience can help teachers manage occupational stress effectively.

Additionally, educational authorities should ensure that policy changes and curricular reforms are implemented with adequate support and clear communication to minimize stress among teachers.

12. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Based on the findings of the present study, it is suggested that future research may include a larger and more diverse sample covering different districts or states to enhance generalizability. Further studies may also examine the role of organizational factors such as leadership style, school climate, job satisfaction and emotional intelligence in relation to occupational stress. Longitudinal studies may provide deeper knowledges into how stress develops and changes over time among teachers. At the practical level, schools should establish teacher support systems such as counseling services, peer mentoring and stress-reduction workshops to promote teachers' psychological well-being and professional effectiveness.

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