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## OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND STRESS COPING STRATEGIES OF TEACHERS WORKING IN B.ED. COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN UNITED ANDHRA PRADESH STATE

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### ABSTRACT:-

**T**he present day teacher's roles and responsibilities are more dynamic and demanding a variety of knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and competences to train the younger generations of the nation. The role of teachers as agents of change in promoting understanding and tolerance, and improving the quality of education of learners cannot be over-emphasized. It necessitates demand for teachers who are professionally competent, responsible, and responsive to the needs of society; who are enthused with motivation, appropriate knowledge and skills; who display a positive attitude towards life and other people; and teachers who have personal characteristics of integrity and a kind of spiritual orientation to the young generations. 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 college of education has to prepare future teachers and if the teacher educator is stressful, he/she will no doubt will directly or indirectly transfer that stress to student teachers also. This further hampers the future students who come in their contact, after placement. The present study makes an earnest effort to understand the Occupational Stress and Stress Coping Strategies of teachers working in B.Ed. colleges of education in united Andhra Pradesh State. The investigator have developed the two rating scales i.e. Occupational Stress Rating Scale and Stress Coping Strategies Rating Scale for assessing the occupational stress and stress coping strategies of 364 teachers working in B.Ed. colleges of education in united Andhra Pradesh State. For the analysis of data mean  $\pm$  1SD and graphs have been used by the investigators in the present study. The overall result of the study explore that the level of occupational stress of teachers possess moderate and high levels of occupational stress indicating the need for enhancement of personal and professional competencies of teachers, improving the intra and interpersonal interactions within and outside the colleges of education, providing conducting

the environment in their profession, orienting the teachers to maintain balance between the home-work interface, apart from creating appropriate organizational structure and climate to work comfortably.

**KEYWORDS:** Occupational Stress, Stress coping Strategies, B.Ed. colleges of education

### INTRODUCTION

Stress is unique and personal to each of us. What is relaxing to one person may be stressful to another. Stress can be any action or situation that places special physical or psychological demands upon a



person. The environmental demands, social obligations, family responsibilities, aspirations, demands and the problems of complexities of life exert a good deal of pressure. This forces humans to stretch beyond capacity resulting in severe stress. The hazards and calamities of life like losing a job, money or property, a severe illness or death of someone close, financial liabilities beyond one's income etc. serve as threatening stimuli which cannot be ignored or underestimated. Such stresses are capable of bringing about behavioral disorders and personality disorganizations of a serious nature.

Work stress has been described as an incompatibility between the individual and his or her work environment. Work-related stress is defined as a pattern of emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological reactions to adverse and noxious aspects of work content, work organization and work environment. The National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (1999) defines work-related stress as 'the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker', and expresses the view that working conditions are a primary factor, but that personal factors are also influential.

Coping refers to the thoughts and actions an individual use to deal with threatening situation. Coping refers to 'how the mind reacts to stress'. It is not possible to tolerate stress for long period as it produces feelings of discomfort. Consequently, when an individual recognizes a situation as stressful, will seek to escape from it or alleviate the anticipated harm as quickly as possible, using the devices that are successful or comforting. These are called as coping strategies or comfort tricks. Coping includes all the possible responses to stressors in one's environment. As a stressor makes demands on an organism and initiates a stress response, the organism initiate behaviors and thoughts which attempts to remove the stressor or to interrupt its effects. Coping creates new and different problems. Individuals and organizations cannot remain in a continuous state of tension. Even if a deliberate and conscious strategy is not adopted to deal with stress, some strategy is adopted; for example, to leave the conflicts and stress to take care of themselves. This is also a strategy, although the individual or the organization may not be aware of this. This is called avoidance coping strategy.

### **EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES SHOWS THAT THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND STRESS COPING STRATEGIES ARE AN ASSET TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

Jain, Tyagi and Kumar (2015) studied to determine the influence of type of personality, gender, age, qualification and experience causing stress among teacher educators at work. A sample of 100 subjects from male and female teachers teaching in teacher training colleges, Delhi, India was drawn randomly. The results revealed that (i) Female teacher educators are more likely to experience stress as compared to male teacher educators. (ii) Younger teacher educators are more likely to experience stress as compared to older teacher educators. (iii) Less qualified teacher educators are more likely to experience stress as compared to highly qualified teacher educators. (iv) Less experienced teacher educators are more likely to experience stress as compared to highly experienced teacher educators. (v) Introvert type of teacher educators are more likely to experience stress as compared to Extrovert teacher educators.

Nagra (2013) conducted a study on occupational stress among teacher educators. This study aims at finding out the level of occupational stress among the teacher educators in relation to gender, subject streams, and nature of job. Occupational Stress Index was used to collect data from a random sample of 52 teacher educator. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation and t-test were employed for the analysis of data. The results revealed that teacher educators experienced moderate level of occupational stress. No significant differences were indicated regarding occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to gender, and subject streams while significant results were observed in relation to nature of job.

Maolin and Xiaoxin (2008) studied the job stress and coping strategies of 182 special school teachers. The Questionnaire and Interview were employed. The results showed that special school teachers are experiencing moderate stress and the major sources of stress were the problems caused by students. Secondly, the most popular coping strategy used by teachers was problem solving, followed by seeking support. Thirdly, there was significant difference of special school teachers in gender, teaching experience and professional background in terms of job stress and coping strategies.

The relationships among teacher occupational stress, self-efficacy, coping resources, and burnout was studied by Betoret (2006). The sample consists of 247 Spanish secondary school teachers to examine the effect of teaching stressors on teacher burnout and the role of self-efficacy and school coping resources as mediator or moderator variables in the stressor-burnout relationship. The results showed that the teachers' with a high level of self-efficacy and more coping resources reported suffering less stress and burnout than teachers with a low level of self-efficacy and fewer coping resources, and vice versa.

### **NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

Stress is a prevalent problem in modern life. The reason for current global concern about occupational stress is that it leads to health problems, counter-productive behavior and poor performance among employees. Thus, stress is significant from both its human and economic costs. Teaching as a profession comes under the gamut of stress making it more demanding and challenging every day. Fontana (1989) described teaching as being, by its nature, a stressful profession. Work overload, role overload, constant changes within the profession and lack of information as to how changes are to be implemented are the major causes for teacher stress. Apart from these, pupils' misbehavior, student absenteeism, negative student attitude towards learning, poor working conditions, time pressure, large classes, too much correction work, lack of encouragement, feeling of failure, non-cooperative parents, job insecurity, lack of public esteem, poor colleagues relationships, criticism by colleagues, lack of control over the job, delayed salaries, duties other than teaching, political interference, negative community attitude towards teaching also act as stressors. High stress level of a teacher causes disappointment, aggressive behavior, anxiety, avoidance of work, absenteeism, and poor works performance.

Occupational stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the workers. Stress is an ineffective and unhealthy reaction to change. Stress describes force, which affects human being physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. It is the body response to any undesirable mental, physical, emotional, social or environmental demand. Stress describes physical trauma, strenuous exercise, metabolic disturbances and anxiety, which challenges the body wellbeing. Stress has also been defined in terms of role demands originating in the work environment. Thus excessive stress is aroused by stressors drive, conflict and overload responsibilities lead to burnout.

There is lack of knowledge about the stressors and the level of occupational stress experienced by B.Ed. teachers. There is no monitoring of stress levels among the B.Ed. teachers. The available teacher education programs are not tailored to include stress relief training in pre-service or in-service programs of teacher educators. The officials from the Education Ministry, Department of Higher Education, and Teacher Education Institutes have been taking the B.Ed. Teachers for granted and have not given much a thought to the stressors such as work overload, role overload, and resource crunch.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

#### **The following are the objectives of the present study:**

1. To find out the number and percentage of B.Ed. colleges teachers with low, moderate and high levels of Occupational Stress.
2. To find out the number and percentage of B.Ed. college teachers using Stress Coping Strategies at low, moderate and high levels.

### **METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY**

#### **i) Method used in the Study**

#### **SURVEY METHOD IS USED IN THE STUDY**

#### **ii) Tools used in the Study**

For the purpose of the present study, the researcher adopted the Rating Scale developed by Reddy

(2007) and modified for the occupation stress of teachers working in the B.Ed. colleges of education based on 5 dimensions with 54 statements. Further, the researcher developed the Rating scale to assess the stress coping strategies of teachers working in the B.Ed. colleges of education based on 3 dimensions with 56 statements. These statements are selected based on the literature and the earlier studies conducted in this area. The statements are given to a panel of experts and their opinions are incorporated in revising of the statements. The content validity, face validity, intrinsic validity and criterion validity of the tools have been established through appropriate procedures. Similarly, Split-half method is used to establish the reliability of the tools.

**iii) Locale and Sample of the Study**

The locale of the study is the united Andhra Pradesh State of India. United A.P. State consists of three regions i.e. Telangana, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema regions comprising of 23 districts. For the purpose of the study, total sample of the study is 364 teachers working in B.Ed. colleges of education and University departments offering B.Ed. course by using simple random sampling technique.

**iv) Data Collection and Analysis**

The tools were administrated to the teachers working in the selected B.Ed. colleges, after establishing good rapport with the principals and teachers. The B.Ed. college teachers were directed to go through the instructions carefully before rating the statements in the respective tools. The collected data were analyzed by using number and percentage, mean, S.D, mean± 1SD. By using mean±1S.D, the number and percentage of teachers coming under low, moderate and high level of occupational stress was calculated. The same procedure is followed for identifying the number and percentage of B.Ed. college teachers using occupational stress coping strategies at low, moderate and high levels.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**1. Number and Percentage of Teachers working in the B.Ed. Colleges of Education with Low, Moderate and High Levels of Occupational Stress-Dimension wise**

Table-1 shows the number and percentage of B.Ed. college teachers experiencing low, moderate and high levels of occupation stress aroused out of organizational structure and climate, personal and professional efficiency, intra and interpersonal interactions, environmental factors, home work interface and occupational stress as a whole.

**Table-1: Number and Percentage of B.Ed. College Teachers with Low, Moderate and High Levels of Occupational Stress-Dimension wise**

Occupational Stress Dimensions	Number and Percentage of Teachers with Low, Moderate and High Levels of Occupational Stress					
	Low ? Mean-1SD		Moderate In between		High ? Mean +1SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Organizational Structure and Climate	68	18.7	225	61.8	71	19.5
Personal and Professional Efficiency of Teachers	39	10.7	280	76.9	45	12.4
Intra and Interpersonal Interactions	51	14.0	245	67.3	68	18.7
Environmental Factors	48	13.2	263	72.3	53	14.6
Home Work Interface	64	17.6	230	63.2	70	19.2
Occupational Stress as a Whole	37	10.2	278	76.4	49	13.5

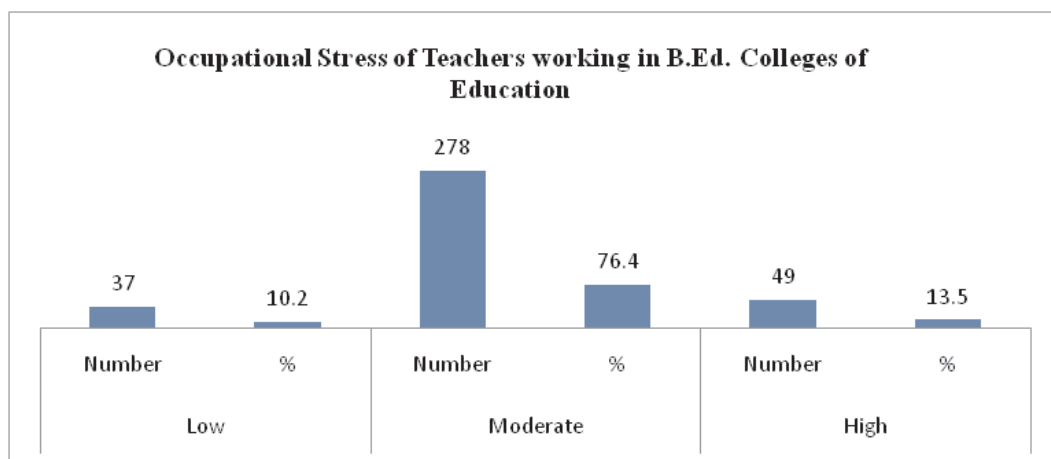
**Note: The number and percentage of teachers with low, moderate and high levels of occupational stress has**

*been arrived based on mean ± 1SD for each item for the sample of the study.*

From table-I, it is observed that majority of the B.Ed. college teachers working in B.Ed. colleges of education experience moderate level of occupational stress due to organizational structure and climate of the college of education (61.8%), personal and professional efficiency (76.9 %), intra and interpersonal (67.3%), environmental factors (72.3%), home work interface (63.2%), and occupational stress as a whole (76.4%). Subsequently, 19.5 percent of teacher’s owing to organizational structure and climate, 12.4 percent of teachers owing personal and professional efficiency, 18.7 percent of teachers owing intra and interpersonal interactions, 14.6 percent of teachers owing environmental factors, 19.2 percent of teachers owing home work interface and 13.5 percent of teachers owing occupational stress dimension as a whole, experience high level of occupational stress.

An inter comparison of the dimensions in which the teachers experience stress reveals that, more number of teachers experience moderate levels of stress due to their personal and professional efficiency followed by environmental factors and intra and interpersonal interactions. Similarly, the organizational structure, home work interface, and intra and interpersonal interactions are causing high stress to more percentage of teachers (19.5%, 19.2%, and 18.7% respectively). From the above, it is concluded that, majority of the 89.9 percent of the B.Ed. college teachers are experiencing moderate and high levels of stress. The results of the study by Ahgher(2008), and Rajeswari (2008) on school teachers; Reddy(2006) and Poornima(2011) on special education teachers; Vijaya Anuradha(2012) on higher secondary teachers; Melendez and de Guman(1983) and Kantarao(2010) on university teachers, are consistent with the present findings, where the majority of the respondents experience moderate and high levels occupational stress. Further, the personal and professional efficiency, environmental factors, intra and interpersonal interactions in the colleges of education are the major stressors contributing the teachers stress, as more percentage of teachers are experiencing moderate and high levels of stress due to these dimensions (89.3%, 86.9% and 86.0% respectively). In the remaining dimensions of occupational stress i.e. organizational structure and climate and home-work interface around 80 percent of the teachers experience moderate and high levels of occupational stress.

The bar diagram showing the number and percentage of B.Ed. college teachers with low, moderate and high levels of occupational stress illustrated in Figure- 1.



**Figure-1: Number and Percentage of teachers with low, moderate and high levels of occupational stress**

From the above, it is inferred that, 89.9 percent of the teachers working in the Colleges of Education possess moderate and high levels of occupational stress indicating the need for enhancement of personal and professional competencies of teachers, improving the intra and interpersonal interactions within and outside the colleges of education, providing conducting the environment in their profession, orienting the teachers to maintain balance between the home-work interface, apart from creating appropriate organizational structure and climate to work comfortably. On the other hand, around 10 percent of the people only experience low stress.

**2. Number and Percentage of Teachers working in the B.Ed. Colleges of Education using different Levels of Stress**

Coping Strategies-Dimension wise

Stress is a common a term that is used in different fields. Occupational stress is an integral part of everyday life and simply cannot be avoided. People encounter stressful stimuli many times a day in their personal and social domains and, as work is an essential aspect of human existence, in the workplace. The stress may be caused due to the organizational aspects, individuals personal and professional efficacy, his or her intra and inter personal relationships with in the family and work place, the environment in which he or she is living and working, maintaining the balance between work and home and so on. To overcome this stress, human-beings adopt different stress coping strategies. Such strategies can be broadly classified into three groups i.e. stress preventing strategies, stress avoiding strategies and stress management strategies. Depending upon the situation and individual capabilities, one may adopt different strategies or a combination of the other to overcome stress in day to day life and in many occasions in professional life.

**Table-2: The Number and percentage of Teachers working in the Colleges of Education with Low, Moderate and High Occupational Stress Coping Strategies-Dimension wise**

Occupational Stress Coping Strategies Dimensions	Number and Percentage of Teachers with Low, Moderate and High Levels of Occupational Stress Coping Strategies					
	Low <i>? Mean-1SD</i>		Moderate <i>In between</i>		High <i>? Mean +1SD</i>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Stress Preventing Strategies	80	22.0	221	60.7	63	17.3
Stress Avoiding Strategies	29	8.0	267	73.4	68	18.7
Stress Management Strategies	67	18.4	244	67.0	53	14.6
Occupational Stress Coping Strategies as a Whole	53	14.6	224	61.5	87	23.9

**Note: The number and percentage of teachers with low, moderate and high levels of occupational stress has been arrived based on mean ± 1SD for each item for the sample of the study.**

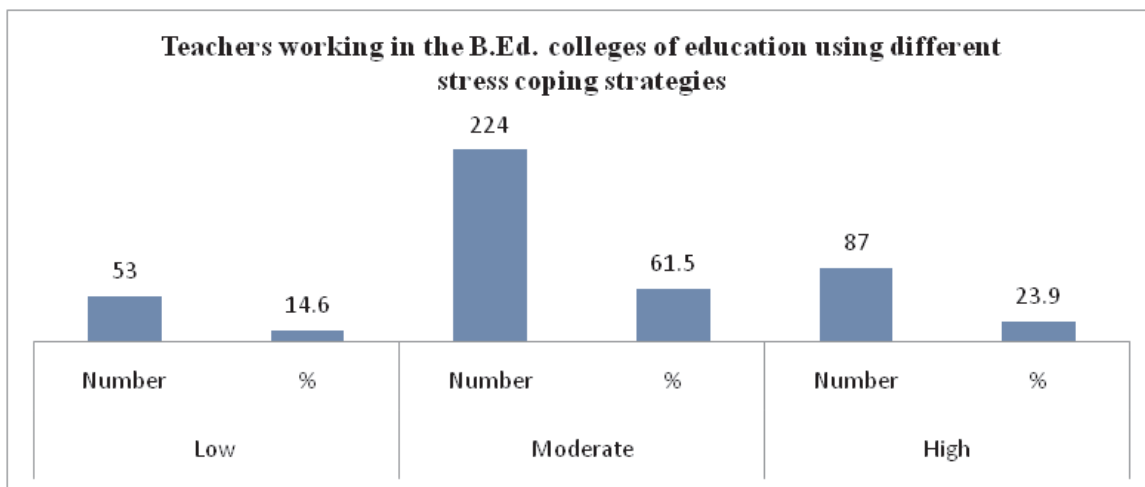
One of the main objectives of the study is to identify the stress coping strategies and the level of usage of the strategies by the B.Ed. college teachers to overcome the occupational stress. For this, mean and standard deviation of the occupational stress coping strategies scores have been calculated for each teacher working in the B.Ed. colleges of education. By using mean, ± 1SD, occupational stress coping strategies scores of B.Ed. college teachers have been divided for each item into three levels i.e. low, moderate and high. The obtained results were presented in form of tables and are discussed.

Table-2 shows the number and percentage of teachers working in the B.Ed. colleges of education using different stress coping strategies i.e. stress preventing strategies, stress avoiding strategies, stress management strategies and stress coping strategies as a whole with low, moderate and high levels.

From table-2, it is clear that out of 364 B.Ed. college teachers, majority of the them are using stress avoiding strategies (73.4%) at moderate level followed by 67 percent of teachers with stress management strategies, 60.7 percent of the teachers with stress preventing strategies and 61.5 percent of teachers using occupational stress coping strategies as a whole. Subsequently, 18.7 percent of teachers using stress avoiding strategies followed by 17.3 percent stress preventing strategies and 14.6 percent teachers using stress management strategies at high level. An inter comparison of the dimensions in which the teachers using different stress coping strategies also reveals that more number of teachers are using moderate and high levels of stress avoiding strategies.



The bar diagram showing the percentage of B.Ed. college teachers using low, moderate and high level of occupational stress coping strategies is illustrated in Figure-2.



**Figure 21: Number and Percentage of teachers using low, moderate and high levels of stress coping strategies**

From the above, it is concluded that, majority i.e. 82.7 percent of teachers working in the colleges of education are using stress coping strategies at low and moderate levels. Further, the percentage of teachers using stress avoiding strategies (81.4%) are less than the percentage of teachers using stress management strategies (85.4%) and more than the percentage of teachers using stress preventing strategies (72.7%). This result indicates the need for developing appropriate competencies among teachers in stress preventing strategies.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

86.6 percent of the teachers working in the Colleges of Education possess moderate and high levels of occupational stress indicating the need for enhancement of personal and professional competencies of teachers, improving the intra and interpersonal interactions within and outside the colleges of education, providing conducive environment in their profession, orienting the teachers to maintain balance between the home and work interface, apart from creating appropriate organizational structure and climate to work comfortably. On the other hand, around 13.4 percent of the people only experience low stress.

82.7 percent of teachers working in the colleges of education are using stress coping strategies at low and moderate levels. Further, the percentage of teachers using stress avoiding strategies (81.4%) are less than the percentage of teachers using stress management strategies (85.4%) and more than the percentage of teachers using stress preventing strategies (72.7%). This result indicates the need for developing appropriate competencies among teachers in stress preventing strategies.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Majority of the B.Ed. college teachers experienced moderate and high levels of stress due to organizational structure and climate, paving way for stress reduction and interventions strategies. The interventions like changing the work environment will reduce the stressors arising out of the organizational structure and climate of the B.Ed. colleges in which the teachers are working. The results highlighted that, the teachers working in the B.Ed. colleges challenged with over workload and inadequate salary. This is because of understaffing and not paying the salaries as per the norms. In many-times, working with unnecessary assignments that are not necessary to the profession is causing stress in teachers. Similarly, not involving the teachers in the decisions making process of the activities related to profession and taking responsibility for the activities of the others are the major sources of stress under organizational structure and climate of the college. In teacher education most of the colleges are in private management and only a few are receiving aid from the

government. Even the departments of education at university levels offering B.Ed. courses are understaffed and running the courses with contract lecturers. In most of the colleges, the number of staff is not exceeding 4 to 5, both permanent staff as well as contract lecturers. Some of the colleges are engaging staff on part-time basis where a meager amount is paid for the services rendered. Rarely, the staff are involved in the decision making process of the activities of the college. All these cause stress in teachers. The college management, and the department heads should provide facilities to carry-out the teaching learning and research activities by allotting sufficient funds to the B.Ed. colleges. Moreover, the respective departments of the college/ university should involve the staff during the decision making process. In addition, opportunities for promotions and carrier development shall be arranged. The academic autonomy of the teacher should be protected in the workplace. The teacher should be given clear job description in order to reduce role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. Newman's (1990) research revealed that, goal setting through goal specification assisted in reducing unnecessary role ambiguity in producing better research. Maurer, Weiss and Barbeite (2013) research also revealed that goal setting was beneficial to increase role clarity by focusing on individual efforts and attention in a specific direction.

In order to reduce stress arising out of personal and professional efficiency the B.Ed. college teachers should be given opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and skills by permitting them to participate in the orientation and refresher courses from time to time. The teachers both permanent and temporary should be given training in decision making process to solve the problems arising out of their work and should be oriented to adopt the new procedures and policies whenever implemented. Similarly, there is a need to develop healthy interactions among the teaching members, students and teachers, college management/ administration and teachers, as good communication will act as a good strategy to solve the problems arising out of stressors and also act as a moderator to reduce the stress in teachers. Adequate feedback and information from the college management / the principal will facilitate them clarify the goals in teaching and research and also will find appropriate working methods to solve their problems.

The primary aim of stress coping is appraising and reappraising a situation, dealing with the reality of the situation, and handling the emotions aroused by the situation. Coping may either take the form of avoiding the situation (reactive strategy), i.e., dysfunctional style, or confronting and approaching the problem (proactive strategy), i.e. functional style. One category consists of persons who decide to suffer from, accept, or deny the experienced stress, or put the blame on somebody (self or others) or something for being in that stressful situation. These are passive or avoidance strategies and are termed as 'dysfunctional' styles of coping with stress situations. The other category consists of persons facing the realities of stress consciously, and taking some action to solve the problems themselves or with the help of other people. These are active approaches and are termed as 'functional' styles of dealing with stressful situations and are more approved by social scientists as these are supposed to be more effective and healthy when compared to the 'dysfunctional' styles.

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