



STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN HYDERABAD

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of teachers' personal and job characteristics on the level of stress they experience from various sources, as well as their perception of the effectiveness of cognitive, behavioral and emotional coping strategies. Teacher Stress and Coping Strategies Scale. Results indicate that among the personal and job characteristics examined, the effects of gender, experience, school level and culture on levels of stress caused by some stressor categories and in the degree to which teachers believe in the effectiveness of some coping strategies were found significant.

KEYWORDS: teachers' personal and job characteristics , behavioral and emotional coping strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are assets of inestimable value in the teaching of members of a given society. They play important roles in nation building by sharpening and molding learner's character. In the performance of this, teachers just like any other worker, face workplace stress that makes them fatigued, experience burn out, less effective on their duties. Stress among secondary school teachers comes from various aspects of life including developmental and social changes, financial and accommodation problems, work demands, and the specific demands of academia.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) transactional model of stress and coping, which concentrate on how challenging events create stressful experience, when confronted by a given event, the individual engages in two consecutive processes of appraisal. The first is a primary appraisal through which the event is judged as stressful or pleasant dependent on the situation and the individual. Then the individual will engage in a process of secondary appraisal in which s/he will cognitively evaluate her/his personal and environmental resources to deal with the stressful event. The two sequential appraisal processes are both cognitive and depend, mainly, on the appraising individual. Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model also predicts that individuals will make use of several types of coping strategies (cognitive, emotional and behavioral) to deal with any given stressful event. Based on extensive review of the literature on teacher stress and a broad review of theoretical teacher stress models, Montgomery and Rubb (2005), proposed a model of key constructs related to teacher stress and coping and their interrelationship. According to their model, teachers are involved in intra-individual processes that consist of the experiences and evaluations of external stressful events, which stem from different aspects of teachers' professional life such as students, administration, colleagues, workload demands, and features of the school environment. Furthermore, problems in teachers' personal life, such as relationship with a partner or financial problems may also affect their emotional, cognitive and behavioral state.

Hemmings and Hockley (2002) identified various strategies that can be used to cope with stress. These strategies include:

- communications with others;
- self-help; relaxation;
- organization; engaging in sports, etc.
- fun and entertainment

These also reduces stress and improves the quality and enjoyment of life, and there is a noticeable influence in self-care (regular exercise and sport, eight hours of sleep a day, preserving a correct diet, applying relaxation techniques) on the reduction of stress and improvement in the quality of life.

Kyriacou and Chien (2004) investigated stress among elementary school teachers in Taiwan and found that stress among elementary school teachers constitutes a serious problem, since 26% of the teachers reported that they were under great to extreme stress. These findings correlate with the research of Kyriacou (2001) in which 20% to 30% of the teachers were reported to be suffering from stress. The main factors for stress were found to be the workload and the changes in educational reform that were conducted by the authorities. The extensive load and crowded conditions in the school and classes were an important factor for stress.

The different stressors in shape of workload, role ambiguity, resource constraints, time shortage, job insecurity and worst job conditions, etc, exists within environment and act as hurdles for the teachers and thus hampering their performance (LePine, LePine & Jackson, 2004). The resources (physical & psychological) and personality of teachers act as buffer in changing the effects of stress on performance. The performance of teachers is supposed to increase in presence of resources and positive personality traits and vice versa. The resources act as instrumental and it boosts performance in such way that the teachers have the strength to handle the job demands and thus minimize the negative effects of stress on the performance (Arnold, Jari, Evangelia, & Despoina, 2007). Consequently, stress coping strategies have often been encouraged. Coping does not require success but only effort, and forms the link between environmental stress and adjustment of the individual. Teachers come into daily contact with pupils, confronting innumerable disruptions and difficulties with special need pupils, with the absence of sufficient resources and the lack of support – all those factors that had been shown above as causing stress. Their work does not end when they come home, and in order to withstand all this, a teacher has to adopt strategies of coping and adjustment. If the ability to cope is low or dependent only on basic and not well-developed coping strategies, this might lead to negative emotional reactions and burnout among teachers (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005).

The problem of stress management is not to eliminate stress completely but to learn how to cope with it. Stress currently provides one of the most challenging and most demanding health problems in modern medical practice (Obianyo, 2006). The role most teachers play today in secondary schools has recently gone beyond their job description. In most secondary schools, it is not uncommon to find one subject teacher for instance; an English language teacher to be the only teacher teaching all the classes from Junior School.

ANALYZE OF STRESS & COPING STRATEGIES

Teachers play a vital role in building up the citizens of tomorrow nation. The teachers are the major key role in shaping the future of the students. But, while imparting their duties the teachers are being faced several stress and un satisfaction related to their job. To analyze the level of stress and coping strategies among the secondary school teachers 200 teachers were analyzed to test the stress effect and coping strategies in the selected secondary schools in Hyderabad. The level of stress among the teachers is more in private schools when compared to the government schools.

Table : 1
Analysis on effects of stress on secondary school teachers

S.No.	Effects	X	Std. Dev	Remarks	Mean ranking
1	Lowers Teachers Morale	2.8	0.92	Agreed	3
2	Encourages Absenteeism	2.18	1.17	Disagreed	7
3	Lessens teachers quality of instructional delivery	2.95	1.1	Agreed	2
4	Lessens teachers Job satisfaction	3	1.09	Agreed	1
5	Low job performance of teachers	2.75	1.14	Agreed	4
6	increase attrition among teachers	2.69	1.08	Agreed	5
7	increase fatigue among teachers	2.21	0.6	Disagreed	6
8	others	2.11	0.41	Disagreed	8

Table 1 shows that majority of the students agreed on effect 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 at a mean score ranging from 2.69 to 3.00 while they disagreed on item 2, 7 and 8 at a mean score range of 2.11 to 2.21 respectively. Hence, result showed that lowers teachers' morale, lessens teachers' quality of instructional delivery, lessens teachers' job satisfaction, low job performance of teachers and increases attrition among teachers were the major effects of stress among secondary school teachers.

The stress among the teachers of the private schools is more when compared to the private school teachers. The job satisfaction is also very low among the private school teachers due to very less low salaries and other allowances to them compared to the government school teachers.

Table: 2
Analysis on coping strategies used by secondary school teachers

S.No.	Coping Strategies	X	Std. Dev	Remarks	Mean ranking
1	Getting emotional support from others	2.61	0.97	Agreed	3
2	seeing the situation in different manner	2.56	0.99	Agreed	4
3	Making fun with the situation	2.18	0.88	Disagreed	7
4	Accepting responsibility to face the stress	2.52	0.95	Agreed	5
5	Finding comfort or solution through prayers	2.93	0.85	Agreed	1
6	Self -Criticism	2.34	0.95	Disagreed	6
7	Traking out some time to rest	2.00	0.89	Disagreed	8
8	Consumption of substance like stimulants or pain killers	2.66	0.96	Agreed	2

Table shows that majority of the student agrees on coping strategy 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 at a mean score ranging from 2.52 to 2.93 while the disagreed on item 3, 6 and 7 at a mean score of 2.00 to 2.34 respectively. Hence, result showed that getting emotional support from others, seeing the situation in different manner, accepting responsibility to face the stress, finding comfort or solution through prayers and consumption of substances like stimulants or pain killers were the were the most employed coping strategies used by secondary school teachers to manage stress.

The result showed that lowers morale, lessens teachers' quality of instructional delivery, lessens teachers' job satisfaction, low job performance of teachers and increases attrition among teachers were the major effects of stress among secondary school teachers in Hyderabad. Result corroborates that of Bradley (2007) that teachers who had more control as psychological resource were having better performance as compared to other teachers. Result is in agreement with that of Haastrup and Adenike (2013) that there was a significant relationship between sources of stress and the teaching effectiveness of teachers.

Result is line with that of Bakker, Demerouti and Verbeke (2004) that the stress has very negative effects in shape of low morale, absenteeism, poor teaching quality, less students satisfaction, and turn over on the overall performance of teachers. Result is in consonance with that of Betoret (2006) found that school physical resources and teachers selfefficacy had buffer the effects of stress on teachers, in such way that the teachers' performance increased with increase in resources.

The best way to overcome stress was to adopt coping strategies such as "ensuring a healthy family life", besides "someone is standing by you and understands you". Other coping means are: "to ensure a good understanding of the material you have to teach"; "to learn how to control your emotions"; "to see the humor in the situation"; and "to rest after work". Regarding the means that the schools and authorities should take, according to the views of the teachers, the first place is given to "lessening the workload", followed by acquiring professional advice and raising salaries.

CONCLUSION

Stress is one of the numerous challenges teachers face on a day to day basis at school. It is a cankerworm that emanates from work overload, crowded class conditions, poor working conditions, lack of social support and lack of teaching accessories among others. Based on findings, is it concluded that stress lessens teachers' quality of instructional delivery, lowers teachers' morale, job satisfaction, job performance and increases attrition among teachers.

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