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OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND JOB BURNOUT AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS



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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between occupational stress and job burnout of teachers working in primary schools. The sample consisted of 434 teachers from 40 schools in Mysore, India. The instruments used to measure the variables were: 1) The Occupational Stress Index by Srivastava and Singh (1984) and 2) Maslach Burnout Inventory by Maslach and Jackson (1981). The statistical techniques of descriptive statistics, Independent samples t test and Pearson's coefficient were employed to analyze the data. The findings of the study indicated significant positive relationship between job burnout and occupational stress. Occupational stress was found to be significantly and positively related to Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Lack of personal accomplishment. Higher the stress among the teachers, higher was the job burnout. Teachers working in private schools had higher job burnout in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than teachers working in government schools. School type did not influence the occupational stress of the primary school teachers working in government and private schools.

Keywords: Occupational stress, job burnout, primary school teachers

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is difficult to define precisely. 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. Selye Hans, 1936 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". Further, stress was defined as "any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium" (Selye Hans, 1956).

Stress affects not only our physical health but our mental well being, too. Stress refers to any environmental, organizational and individual or internal demands, which require the individual to readjust the usual behavior pattern. Degree of stress results from events or situations that have potential to cause change. Stress has been considered as one of the major factors in work organization (Agrawal et al., 1979). Sources of stressors in the employment organization identified by Pestonjee (1992) are work, role, personal development, interpersonal relations and organization climate. Work which requires a lot of manual dexterity have a greater chance of inducing stress in the worker who work there. Work in the organization can induce stressors when the activities to be performed are either too difficult and complex or repetitive and monotonous.

Further the stress can affect either positively or negatively to employee performance. Positive qualities are those in which the individual may feel more excited and agitated and perceive the situation positively as a form of challenge (Selye, 1956). Stress is also described as posing threat to the quality of work life as well as physical and

psychological well-being (Cox, 1978). A high level of occupational stress, not only detrimentally influence the quality, productivity and creativity of the employees but also employee's health, well being and morale (Cohen and Williamson, 1991) Job related stress tends to decrease general job satisfaction. The specific stress experienced by people, often depends on the nature and demands of the setting in which people live. Thus, teachers, engineers, doctors, managers and people in other professions experience different types of stresses to different degrees.

Burnout has been defined as a syndrome with three dimensions - emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and lack of personal accomplishment (PA) - that usually occurs among those who work with people (Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion, in the teaching profession, happens when the teacher has a feeling of tiredness and fatigue that develops when emotional energies are drained. As a result, the teachers find that they cannot give their best to students as they once could. Teachers experience depersonalization or cynicism when they do not have positive feelings about their students. For example, they show cold, callous, negative, and indifferent attitudes toward them and sometimes resort to physically distancing themselves from the students. Depersonalization usually develops in response to the overload exhaustion (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). The lack of personal accomplishment or inefficacy occurs when teachers feel that they can no longer help the students to learn and grow. In other words, their feelings of competence and successful achievement in relation to the students decrease. Among the three

dimensions, emotional exhaustion represents the basic experience of an individual stress (Malach et al., 1996).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Occupational Stress

The organizational factors seem to have the most significant influence on an individual. The relationship between Organizational factors viz., work, role, personal development, interpersonal relationship, organizational climate and stress of the individual reviewed as below.

Tharakan (1992) studied on occupational stress and job satisfaction among working women. He observed that professional women experienced greater work related stress than non-professional women. The expectation of technocrats was much higher than the no technocrats. Latha and Panchanatham (2007) found out the job stressors and their implications on the job performance of 40 software professionals. Result showed that work load acts as major stressors for software professionals. Long work hours are indirectly associated with psychological distress.

Upadhyay and Singh (1999) compared the level of occupational stress experienced by the 20 college teachers and 20 executives. The executives showed significant higher levels of stress than college teachers on role over load, role ambiguity, role conflicts factor. Hasnain et al. (2001) on his study "role stress and coping strategies in different occupational groups" assessed the coping strategies in three different occupational groups (20 engineers, 20 managers and 20 teachers). Role over load and role erosion were found to be major sources of role stress in all three groups. Pandey and Tripathy (2001) also found that teaching is a stressful occupation. Job stressors in this profession are role ambiguity and unreasonable group pressure. Bhatia and Kumar (2005) attempted to explore occupational stress and burn out among employees. A sample consisted of 100 employees belonging to supervisor and below supervisor level. Employees at supervisor rank experienced more occupational stress than below supervisor level due to more responsibility and accountability. Occupational stress was significantly positively related to all burnout dimensions in Wu et al.(2007) research.

Job Burnout

Teacher burnout, in particular, has received a high amount of attention for being an extremely stressful profession (Friedman, 2000). High level of burnout has been found among the teachers. In this respect, different negative effects of teacher burnout involving the decrease in workplace motivation, increase in probability of personnel turnover, and impact on the schooling climate have been reported (Kyriacou, 2001). Workplace stress, in turn, can lead to physiological, psychological and behavioral changes (Young & Yue, 2007).

Most of the studies on teacher burnout have explored the correlations or significant effects of demographic variables on the three dimensions of burnout experienced by teachers. In this regard, moderate, low, and high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment, were found respectively, among the teachers (Bibou et al., 1999; Croom, 2003).

Kirilmaz (2003) reported similar findings for the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in Turkey. He found that factors of age, gender, tenure, and number of children did not have any effect on the burnout level of primary school teachers, while their marital status did.

Gavrilovici (2009) studied the burnout level of teachers in primary, secondary, high schools, and special schools in Romania during the period 2007-2009. The results showed that emotional exhaustion of teachers with work experience of more than 17 years was significantly higher than teachers with less work experience. In contrast, no significant differences were found between the teachers work experience and their levels of depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. Likewise, gender and marital status did not show any effect on any dimension of the burnout. In the case of gender, mixed results have been reported. Lau et al. (2005) and Timms (2006) indicated that female teachers experience more burnout, while Bauer et al. (2007) showed the reverse.

Mukundan and Ahour (2011) studied the burnout level of female teachers in primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. The results showed that the number of children, level of teaching, age, and years of teaching experience were significant indicators of burnout among the female teachers, while marital status and workload were not significantly related to their burnout syndrome.

A recent study among teachers in Malaysia revealed that emotional exhaustion of female teachers and depersonalization of male teachers were significantly high, while both had significantly high level of lack of personal accomplishment. Teachers with less than 26 years of teaching experience revealed a significantly high level of emotional exhaustion. Teachers with more than five years of teaching experience had significantly high depersonalization, while teachers with less than five and more than 25 years of teaching experience showed significantly high lack of personal accomplishment (Mukundan & Khanderoo, 2009).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and job burnout among school teachers.
2. There is no significant difference between occupational stress and job burnout among government and private school teachers.

3.2 Sample:

The study was conducted in both primary and high schools of Mysore city, India. By stratified sampling method from all schools in Mysore city 40 schools were selected and in these school, 500 questionnaires were randomly distributed, 434 questionnaires completed and returned.

3.3 Instrument

Occupational Stress Index

Occupational Stress Index developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984) will be used in this study. The scale consisted of forty six items, each to be rated on five point scale. Out of 46 items, 28 are true keyed and rests 18 are false

keyed. Split half method was applied to establish the reliability of the scale which was found to be 0.935 by the authors.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

Job burnout was measured by the Job Burnout Questionnaire, developed and standardized by Maslach and Jackson (1981). This is a widely used scale, and it consists of 22 statements that assess the three facets of professional burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. The emotional exhaustion was regarded as the basic individual stress component of the syndrome (Maslach et al., 2001). The respondents identify as to how often they feel professional burnout on a "six-point Likert-type rating scale" ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6). This scale has been employed in a considerable number of Greek and international studies that have investigated the professional burnout of a substantial number of occupations, such as civil servants, doctors, and teachers in special and mainstream schools (Kanas, 1996). Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) reported Cronbach alpha internal reliability estimates of 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.76 for depersonalization, and 0.76 for personal accomplishment. The validity of the MBI was substantiated by studies conducted by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981).

3.4 Data collection

The questionnaires were administered individually. The data required for the present study were collected from the primary and high schools in Mysore. In the questionnaires stipulated, the responders were explained, each individually about the researcher's aim and were requested to read each question carefully and then encircle the choice which best described their opinion regarding each item. The researcher distributed 500 questionnaires among the teachers. Each participant received questionnaire related to job performance. Finally, the investigator collected 434 questionnaires from participants.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 Correlation coefficients between occupational stress and components of job burnout

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation coefficient	Significance (p value)
Occupational stress	Emotional exhaustion	.234	.001
Occupational stress	Depersonalization	.253	.001
Occupational stress	Lack of personal accomplishment	.232	.001

N=432; df=430

Between occupational stress and job burnout significant and positive relationship were observed, where we find that as the stress increased, job burnout also increased linearly and significantly. Pearson's product moment correlations obtained for stress and Emotional exhaustion ($r=.234$; $p=.001$), stress and Depersonalization ($r=.253$; $p=.001$), and for stress and Lack of personal accomplishment ($r=.232$; $p=.001$), the obtained correlation coefficients were found to be significant at .001 levels.

Table 2 Mean scores on various components of job burnout and occupational stress of teachers working in government and private schools and results of independent samples t tests

Components of Burnout	Type of School	N	Mean	S.D	't' value	P value
Emotional exhaustion	Government	254	17.37	11.78	2.308	.021
	Private	178	20.13	12.90		
Depersonalization	Government	254	10.28	6.43	1.948	.052
	Private	178	11.61	7.68		
Lack of personal accomplishment	Government	254	33.39	9.16	1.053	.293
	Private	178	34.43	11.29		
Occupational stress	Government	254	140.10	12.05	.216	.829
	Private	178	140.38	15.21		

Df=43

From the above table it is clear that in 2 components of job burnout significant differences existed between teachers working in government and private schools. In the case of emotional exhaustion, teachers working in private schools (mean 20.13) had significantly ($t=2.308$; $p=.021$) higher burnout scores compared to teachers working in government schools (mean 17.37). In the case of depersonalization, again it was found that teachers working in private schools (mean 11.61) had significantly ($t=1.948$; $p=.052$) higher burnout scores compared to teachers working in government schools (mean 10.28). However, in the 3rd component of job burnout, i.e. in Lack of personal accomplishment teachers working in both government and private schools had statistically equal scores ($t=1.053$; $p=.293$).

In occupational stress also, teachers working in government and private schools did not differ significantly as the obtained t value of .216 was found to be non significant ($p=.829$). The mean occupational stress scores of teachers working in government and private schools were 140.10 and 140.38, which were statistically the same.

5. DISCUSSION

Main findings of this study were:

- Occupational stress was found to be significantly and positively related to Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Lack of personal accomplishment. Higher the stress among the teachers, higher was the job burnout.

- Teachers working in private schools had higher job burnout in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than teachers working in government schools.

- School type did not influence the occupational stress of the primary school teachers working in government and private schools.

Hypothesis 1 stated as 'There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and job burnout among school teachers' is rejected. Hypothesis 2 stated as 'There is no significant difference between occupational stress and job burnout among government and private school teachers' is partially accepted.

The first finding of this research was that occupational stress is related to Emotional exhaustion,

Depersonalization, and Lack of personal accomplishment significantly and positively. Higher the stress among the teachers, higher was the job burnout. It means that by increasing occupational stress burnout will increase among teachers. These results support Wu et al. (2007) study results. Stress affects physical health and mental well being. Burnout has been defined as a syndrome with three dimensions - emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and lack of personal accomplishment (PA) - that usually occurs among those who work with people (Maslach, 1982). Then it can be the reason of relationship between occupational stress and job burnout.

Second finding of this study was that teachers working in private schools had higher job burnout in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than teachers working in government schools. Depersonalization is defined as losing contact with them; it's possible that they no longer see themselves or others as valuable. As well, the person loses track of their personal needs. Their view of life narrows to seeing in the present time only, while their life turns to a series of mechanical functions (Cordes, & Dougherty, 1993). High anxiety scores, a high incidence of burnout and depersonalization are described in the literature. Some studies indicate that the causes for the underlying stress due to the lack of free time, high examination pressure, the financial realities and the interaction with parents, colleagues and students. School management styles, school culture and climate can be the reason for this difference. In government schools, teachers are supported by government till retirement. Compare to private schools, the pressure of work is not much. The level of emotional exhaustion which is experienced by an employee is influenced by a variety of determinants, such as: personal resources, coping strategies, emotional culture, and supervisory regulation of display rules. And the third finding is that school type did not influence the occupational stress of the primary school teachers working in government and private schools. Nivedita, Jangrab and Salujac (2011) found that private teachers are more stressful than government teachers. But results of study by Ritu and Ajme (2012) showed that there was no significant difference in the occupational stress of secondary school teachers on gender, type of school and locality basis.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between occupational stress and job burnout of teachers working in primary schools. From the main findings of this research it can be concluded that by increasing occupational stress, job burnout will increase among teachers. Teachers working in private schools had higher job burnout in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than teachers working in government schools. Then the management styles of principals can effect on job burnout of teachers.

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