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## Occupational stress among tribal primary teachers of Shillong, India

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**Abstract:** Occupational stress is unavoidable and there is a high number of working men and women struggling with it (Prasad, Vaidya, & Kumar, 2016). The teaching profession is considered one of the most stressful profession (Beers, 2011; Klassen et al 2013). Studies show that there is a global spread of teacher related stress and it has affected the well-being and keenness to work on this profession and when compared to other working population teachers have high risk of psychological distress and lower levels of job satisfaction (Hasan, 2014). Occupational stress affects not only the individual but the organization as well (Jeyaraj, 2009). Using a quantitative method this paper aims to identify the occupational stress levels among tribal primary teachers in urban Shillong. Stress levels among primary teachers are in the moderate and high levels. 75% reports moderate stress whereas 25% reports high stress. This shows that tribal primary teachers in Shillong have occupational stress.

**keywords:** social support; occupational stress; tribal primary teachers

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Occupational stress

Occupational stress has increased tremendously over the years. Occupational stress is usually caused by excessive or limited work, "time pressure and deadlines, fatigue from physical strain of work environment, excessive travelling, long hours, having to cope with changes in work" (Jeyaraj, 2009). According to International Labour Organization (2016), occupational stress affects everyone globally, all occupations and all kinds of workers. Occupational stress became a major industrial worry of the 1990s because of globalization especially in industrial and financial structures (Quick, Nelson & Quick, 2001). According to a research conducted by the UK Government Health and Safety Executive Agency they found that there is a relationship between bad health and stress and 105 million days are wasted each year which amounts to a loss of 1.24 billion pounds (Stefan, 2004). The American Psychological Association found in their annual survey that 65 percent of Americans claim that their cause of high stress is work (Stefan, 2004).

A comparative study in England shows that stress level was the same in 1978 as when it was in 1962 however the study shows that it started to rise in 1982. According to the North-western National Life employees rate their jobs as number one stressor (The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 2014). In many developed countries, 35% to 45% of work leave is because of mental health problems (Shetageri & Gopalakrishnan, 2016). In India, the Economic Times reported by Bhattacharyya and Vijayaraghavan (2016) reports that 46% of workers in firms have some kind of stress and that more than 2500 employees came for counselling who were suffering from suicidal tendency in the last ten years. The Economic Time Wealth as reported by Chakravarty (2016) states that 46% of all employees suffer stress in India. Studies worldwide show the rise of occupational stress. This is a major problem because it has effects that is harmful to the well-being of humans.

### 2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Teachers and stress

Studies conducted in various countries shows high stress levels and mental disorders among teachers (Siying et al, as cited in Pedrabissi, Rolland, & Santinello, 1991; Wang et al, 2002). Excessive stress is found to cause mental and physical health which leads to decrease work ability among teachers (Siying et al, 2006). Work stress among teachers can lead to a form of anxiety, depression, physical pain, use of drugs and alcohol consumption, absenteeism, and extreme stress leads to suicide (The International Labour Organization, 2007). Stress is also associated with violence. The International Labour Organization (2007) reports 2 to 6 percent of some form of violence towards teachers among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. When stress increases, teachers show lack of communication among staff, which leads to peer to peer violence (International Labour Organization, 2004). Cosgrove (2000) identified that chronic stress can even lead teachers to early retirement.

Rashmi et al (2013) conducted a study in Bagalkot District in Rajasthan found the following reasons that cause stress among primary and high school teachers which are completion of syllabus, extra-curricular responsibility, unbalanced work with personality, lack of attention from concern authority, working under two supervisors, lack of time for extra-curricular activity, no freedom of choice in selection of subjects, vague role in co-curricular activities, work without prior notice, shortage of teachers, lack of promotion, unbalanced salary, principal's attitude, colleagues behaviour, parents noncompliance, work overload, role conflict among colleagues, lack of voice, role vagueness, no motivation, weak social relationship. Dollard, Winefield, and Winefield (2003) also found similar causes of stress which teachers experience in their work.

A teacher's job is one that is demanding but yet enjoyable. Furudi (as cited in Friesen, 1988) states that teacher in spite of wanting to teach the body does not allow or adapt to stress, the term is called "adaptation energy", this energy is limited. Prolonged exposure to stressors cannot be tolerated for so long. Exhaustion will take place although the body is pushed through stressors (ibid.). Furudi (2007) found that there are three reasons why teachers faced exhaustion. First, their work is emotionally demanding; second, they possess special characteristics that allows them to choose human service as a profession; and third, their work is a "client-centered" focus.

According to stress effect can be categorized into three: health effects, psychological effects and behavioral effects. Health effects which include the cardiovascular system, respiratory system, immune system, and gastro-intestinal system. Psychological effects include inability to concentrate, work frustration, anxiety, depression, anger, headaches, perspiration and dizziness. Behavioral effects are increase use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, low work turn out, increase sick leave, industrial accidents, and staff turnover. Teachers experiencing high levels of work stress usually result "in low morale, reduced effectiveness, higher levels of absenteeism, and reduced commitment to the profession (Klassen et al. as cited in Hakanen et al. 2006), potentially resulting in the decision to leave the profession" (Klassen et al. as cited in Jepson and Forest, 2006, p. 1290).

## 2.2 Occupational stress effect

Stress can affect us mentally, socially, physically, and emotionally (Stefan, 2004; Jeyaraj, 2009). The American institute of stress found that 90% of health-related issues was because of stress (Stefan, 2004). In order to intervene and cope with stress we must understand the effects of it. In this section I will discuss the effects of occupational stress.

Occupational stress has a parent which is stress. The effects of occupational stress are closely related to the parent stress. Effects of parent stress are rise in blood pressure, fast heartbeat, low blood supply to the skin, interruption of digestion, increase sweat, emission of body sugar into the system to replace energy loss, and low immune system (Kaur, 2011).

Untreated stress can lead to what is called chronic occupational stress. Chronic occupational stress has been linked to cause cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, psychological disorders, workplace injury and suicide, cancer, ulcers, and impaired immune function (The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 2014). Jeyaraj (2009) also found that occupational stress over a long period leads to degenerative diseases of the heart, kidneys, blood vessels, and other parts of the body. According to Holinka, (2015) chronic stress is related to "chronic fatigue, inability to concentrate, irritability, chronic headaches, disordered eating, coronary disease, depression, and heart disease" (p. 300). Chronic Stress is related to causing physical problems in our body (Casey et al., 2006; Oman et al., 2008). The following list are some of the physical problems cause by stress. "Allergic skin reactions, chronic constipation, chronic pain, diabetes, dizziness, heart problems, such as angina and cardiac arrhythmias, heartburn, hypertension, infertility, irritable bowel syndrome, menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes, persistent fatigue, premenstrual syndrome, and insomnia" (Casey, et al., 2006, p. 26). Knowing all the effects of occupational stress, it is important for us to know how to prevent ourselves from it.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

This study uses a quantitative research design.

### 3.2 Sampling Design

A probability sampling design, specifically a stratified random was used for the quantitative.

### 3.3 Sample size

The quantitative data was collected from 69 participants.

### 3.4 Data collection

Data was collected using a questionnaire. The Occupational stress scale (OSS) was used for measuring occupational stress.

### 3.5 Analysis

Descriptive analysis and correlation analysis using excel was used to determine stress levels.

### 3.6 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted only in urban schools and the participants were 100 % women thus no comparison study was made among schools in rural and with male primary teachers.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Quantitative data

#### 4.2 Occupational Stress levels

Using Occupational Stress Scale, the mean occupational stress for primary teachers was 29.81 with standard deviation of 9.46 and the maximum and minimum values were 5 and 1 respectively. Occupational Stress Scores are as follows: 0-15: Low stress; 16- 37: moderate stress; 38-60: High stress; 61- 75: severely high stress. 75% of primary teachers reported Moderate stress (n=52) and 25% reported high stress (n=17).

Table 4.2 Levels of stress among primary Teachers (N=69)

Levels of stress	Number	Percentage
Moderate	52	75
High stress	17	25

#### 4.3 Age group and stress levels

28.98 % of primary teachers reported moderate stress levels among the age group between 26 -30 years old with mean scores of 34.8.

Table 4. 3 Comparison between age group and stress levels

Age	Mean (stress levels scores)	Occupational Stress Level	Percentage
<25	17	Moderate	1
26-30	34.8	Moderate	28.98
31-35	27.5	Moderate	20.28
36-40	26.27	Moderate	26.08
41-45	28.88	Moderate	13
46>	32.28	Moderate	10.14

Note: Occupational Stress Scores are as follows: 0-15: Low stress; 16- 37: moderate stress; 38- -60: High stress; 61- 75: severely high stress

#### 4.4 Salary range and stress levels

33.33% of primary teachers with salary less than 10,000 Indian rupees reported moderate stress levels with mean scores of 30.34 which is significantly high.

Table 4. 4 Comparison between salary range and stress levels

Salary range	Mean (stress levels scores)	Occupational Stress Level	Percentage
<10000	30.34	Moderate	33.33
10001-20000	29.87	Moderate	57.97
20001-30000	22.5	Moderate	2.89
30000>	29.75	Moderate	5.79

Note: Occupational Stress Scores are as follows: 0-15: Low stress; 16- 37: moderate stress;38- -60: High stress; 61- 75: severely high stress

#### 4.5 Years of experience and stress levels

Primary teachers of all age groups are susceptible to occupational stress.

Table 4. 5 Comparison of years of experience and stress levels

Years of experience	Mean (stress level scores)	Occupational Stress levels	Percentage
<3	25.81	Moderate	15.94
4-6	33.46	Moderate	21.73
7-9	29.3	Moderate	18.84
10-12	32.5	Moderate	20.28
13-15	27.33	Moderate	4.34
16-18	26.5	Moderate	5.79
19-21	27.6	Moderate	7.24
21>	27	Moderate	5.79

Note: Occupational Stress Scores are as follows: 0-15: Low stress; 16- 37: moderate stress;38- -60: High stress; 61- 75: severely high stress

#### 4.6 Types of Schools and stress levels

Primary teachers from all types of school report having moderate stress levels.

Table 4.6 Comparison of types of school and stress levels

Type of school	Mean (stress level scores)	Occupational Stress levels	Percentage
Private unaided	24.54	Moderate	32
Private aided	30.55	Moderate	42
Dept of Education	39.42	Moderate	10
SSA	32.27	Moderate	16

Note: Occupational Stress Scores are as follows: 0-15: Low stress; 16- 37: moderate stress;38- -60: High stress; 61- 75: severely high stress

### 4.0 DISCUSSION

Stress levels among primary teachers are in the moderate and high levels. 75% reports moderate stress whereas 25% reports high stress. The primary teachers who mostly responded are distributed between the age of 26-40 years old. 28.98 percent of primary teacher were between 26-30 years old, 20.28 percent were between 31-35 years old, and 26.08 percent were between 36-40 years old. All the primary teachers in this study regardless of age group reported moderate stress levels. Majority of the primary teachers which is 57.97 percent of the participants responded that their salary range is between 10001-20000 rupees. Primary teachers receiving salary below 10000 and also those receiving between 10000 and 30000 and above 30000 reported moderate stress levels. The years of experience among primary teachers did not determine any change in stress levels, regardless of the years of experience all primary teachers reported moderate stress levels. Participants were mostly from Private aided schools with 42 percent and private unaided schools with 32 percent of all respondents. Government schools has only 10 percent of respondents but shows the highest mean scores of 39.42 in compare to the private schools with 24.54 and 30.55 for private unaided and private aided respectively. Irrespective of types of schools, all primary teachers reported moderate stress levels.

### 5.0 CONCLUSION

From this study, we can understand that tribal primary teachers in Shillong, Meghalaya experience moderate stress levels. The demographic profile such as age, salary range, years of experience, and types of schools did not determine any change on stress levels. In all the factors, primary teachers reported moderate stress levels.

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