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TEACHERS MENTAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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ABSTRACT:

Stress is a summation of effects on all non-specific biological experience extracted by difficulty and unpleasant exterior pleasures. One can feel it when he/she is confronted with a difficult and unavoidable situation. Stress in teaching profession restraints the quality of the teachers and the same creates a misery in the minds of the teachers due to heavy workload, multiple roles, changes in educational policy, inspection regime, continuous professional growth and demands and high expectations from the teacher. Hence this study is performed to understand the factors causing stress among teachers and its effects on the education system, health and quality of life and thereby providing some suggestive measures for stress management. Teaching is a noble, prestigious and a responsible profession where the life and future of the students is dependent upon the performance of the teacher. Therefore, the teachers are the most valued assets of the country. They need to be competent as well as possess a good mental health. But today the increasing expectations from the teachers in performing the multiple tasks at institutional levels has paved the way for stress which has adverse effect on their mental health and performance. This directly affects the knowledge level of the students and may have far-reaching consequences on the entire education system. Hence, a descriptive analytical method using secondary sources of data from published books, journals and websites have been undertaken to understand the factors causing stress among teachers and its effect on their mental health and the education system and thereby recommending some suggestive measures.

Key words: Teacher, stress, mental health.

INTRODUCTION:

Job stress is the most common psychological phenomena that are prevalent among people who are in different jobs and professions. Researchers have come to believe that stress may be especially prevalent among human service professions, particularly the teaching profession. According to S.Radhakrishnan 'teacher is a nation builder'. Teaching is a noble, prestigious and a responsible profession where the life and future of the students is dependent upon the performance of the teacher. Therefore we the teachers are the most valued assets of the country. So, how far the teachers stress is affecting the mental health of the teachers and their teaching performance are the questions waiting for answer.

RATIONALE:

Today the increasing expectation from the teachers in performing the multiple tasks at institutional levels has paved the way for stress. At the higher level of education the expectations from the teacher are very high and this leads to the experience of stress which negatively affects the performance and health of the teachers and which in turn indirectly affects the knowledge level of the students and may have far-reaching adverse consequences on the entire education system. So, how far the teachers stress is influencing their teaching performance are the questions waiting for answer.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the factors causing stress among teachers
2. To identify the effects of stress
3. To provide suggestions for relieving stress

METHOD:

A descriptive method is employed using secondary sources of data were collected from published books, journals and websites to prepare this paper

MEANING OF STRESS

According to Selye (1956) stress is defined as the pressure experienced by a person in response to life demands . These demands are referred to as stressors and include a range of life events, physical factors, environmental conditions and personal thoughts. Stress is a state of mental tension, pressure and worry caused by problems in your life , work etc. or something that causes strong feeling of worry and anxiety. Stress can affect people of all ages, gender and circumstances and can lead to both physical and psychological health issues. By definition stress is any uncomfortable emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes. In psychology stress is a feeling of strain and pressure (Hans Selye, 1976) "Stress is a positive or a negative reaction occurring when there is a substantial imbalance (perceived of real) between environmental demand and the response capability of the individual". Stress is a biological and psychological responses experienced on encountering a threat that we feel we do not have the resources to deal with. Stress is a condition stream on ones emotions, thought processes and physical conditions. When it is excessive, it can pretend once ability to cope with environment. A very much

overlooked side of stress is its positive adaptations. Positive psychological stress can lead to motivation and challenge instead of anxiety. The effects of experiencing eustress, which is positive stress versus distress, defined as negative stress are significant. Selve (1974) proposed four variations of stress. On one axis he locates good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress). On the other is over-stress (hyper-stress) and under stress (hypo-stress). Selly advocates balancing these: the ultimate goal would be to balance hyper stress and hypo stress perfectly and have as much eustress as possible. Stress is extremely useful for a productive lifestyle because it makes working enjoyable instead of a chore, as seen with distress. Eustress results when a person perceives a stressor as positive. Medically defined distress is a threat to the quality of life. It occurs when a demand vastly exceeds a person's capabilities.

CAUSES OF STRESS:

Researchers have come to believe that stress may be especially prevalent among human service professions, particularly the teaching profession, (Kryacou and Sutcliffe 1977-78; Pettigrew and Wolf 1982, Cherniss 1980; and Cooper and Marshall 1980). As teaching is a human service profession, stress within the teaching profession is considerable and may have far-reaching consequences on the entire education system. Teaching is a complex process where in teacher is expected to exhibit many skills. This makes a teacher to experience stress in the profession. Further Pettigrew and Wolf (1982) opined, "Teacher stress has a Nation-wide concern and relatively new area of empirical research". Concerns regarding stress among schoolteacher have been raised for over 40 years (Tunk, Meeks and Turk 1982) stress is considered very significant in any educative process much attention is not drawn towards this. Teacher behavior and his performance, classroom interactions, school and classroom climate may consider as the important components of any educative process. It is not easy to ascertain sources of teacher stress, as its ambit is unlimited. However, several attempts are made to identify the sources that possible, create stress among teachers. Factors prepared by teachers as being troublesome or stressful have included students discipline, negative student attitudes towards school, physical violence, is adequate preparation time, lack of clear role definition and heavy workloads".(Bearly, Myette and serna, 1983;Chichen and Koff, 1978;Gollady and Noel 1978;Olanderand Ferrel, 1970). Further Kaiser and Polezynsky (1982) identified factors within educators themselves as a potential source of excess stress. Quick and Quick (1979) proposed four groups of factors creating work stress. They are 1) Role factors, 2) Job factors, 3) Physical factors and 4) Interpersonal factors. Pages and Price (1980) discovered in their study of 130 teachers that the factors contributing most to job dissatisfaction are in order of important.1.lack of planning time. 2. Tedious paper and clerical work 3.On out of tough and autocratic administration.4. Disruptive and unmotivated student's 5.Non teaching activities, such as faculty meeting and "time wasting" workshop 6.Uncooperative parents 7.Lack of autonomy to prescribe curriculum 8.Feeing of failure and 9.Low occupational prestige. Kyriacou listed 10 sources teacher stress with maintaining discipline, time pressure and workload (p.29) especially releveant to overall stress. Boyle, Borg&Falzon(1995) noted, "workload and student misbehaviour as the two major contributors to teachers stress. Pei and Guoli (2007) reported that considerable stress for teachers at all grade levels, with elementary teachers having the lowest levels of stress.

Reddy and Poornima (2012) revealed that majority of the University teachers experienced moderate to high level of occupational stress. Kavitha (2012) revealed that the faculties in colleges are doing multiple roles apart from teaching at colleges that led to higher job stress. Sindhu (2014) reported that college teachers are affected by work stresses which were personal development stress, inter-personal relationship stress and organizational climate stress. Carton and Fruchart (2014) found that less experienced teachers were stressed mainly by student behaviour. They fear the rudeness and learning difficulties of the students. In contrast most experienced teachers were reported being stressed by the future of their profession and by institutional decisions that influence the field. Manjula (2007) conducted a study to identify the personality factors that cause stress among school teachers; she found that seven out of 10 teachers are exhausted because of inflexible working hours and lost their control in classrooms. Jayashree Nayak (2008) stated that college teachers were always in stress due to multi-faceted nature of the work. Ferreira (1994) found that the administrative duties emerged as one of the third big factor among the list of factors which contributes teachers stress.

A heap of literature available on job stress identified main sources such as job setting, organizational, situational, lack of control over work, coworkers etc. Teacher is subjected to stress due to incoherent social life, widening social distance, segregation, lack of social support, corruption, nepotism, unnecessary societal involvement in day-to-day activities, high degree of social indiscipline, deterioration of values, lack of social security etc. Besides the potential stress that occurs outside the school, there are also those associated with the school itself. Teaching as a profession demands continuous growth, but teachers while discharging time for further studies, unable to utilize the training the salaries, lack of opportunity for reading training, less change for further promotion etc. are acting as source of stress on teachers. Teaching as an occupation, present certain situation where in the teacher has to adjust to unhealthy school atmosphere, lack of recognition, for effective teaching. Teaching the subject is which he is not interested, lack of support for innovative approaches, lack of enthusiasm in staff meeting, monotonous working conditions, difference of opinions with head of the institution etc., are the situations acting as sources of stress. Student behavior is also a major component in the teaching learning process. Continuous misbehavior or certain students, non-acceptance of teacher's authority indiscipline in the class, lack of interest on outsiders. Threat from the students, lack of attention in the class, unable to estimate the student, lack of positive responses from the student etc., are some of the significant sources of stress on teachers. Thus, student as a group can be a significant source of teacher stress. Similarly lack of group cohesiveness in school, lack of social support and interpersonal conflicts create teacher stress. So far, extra organizational, organizational and group stressors are discussed; teacher is the ultimate consumer of stress due to previously mentioned stressors. Thus individual dispositions such as role conflict and ambiguity at organizational and group levels, causes stress. Teachers have to play multiple roles and these often make conflicting expectation. In the present education system heavy expectation are there on teachers. Hence, teachers are supposed to undertake high magnitude of work. Now teachers are experiencing stress as

they are supposed to teach more periods a day without rest between periods, excess correction work, lack of time for completing syllabus, conduct of co-curricular and extracurricular activities etc.

EFFECTS OF TEACHER STRESS:

Teaching is a stressful occupation (Chaplain, 2008; Kyriacou, 2001), and high levels of occupational stress have strong effect on teachers performance, career decisions, physical and mental health and overall job-satisfaction (Jepson& Forrest, 2006). Teacher stress- defined as experience of negative emotions resulting from a teachers work (Kyriacou,2001)- is inversely related to teacher self-efficacy (Betorot,2006;Skaalvik & Skaalvik ,2007) and positively related to poor teacher-pupil rapport and low level of teacher effectiveness (Abel & Sewell,1999; Kokkinos,2007). The outcomes of teachers work related stress are serious and may include burn-out , depression, poor performance, absenteeism, low level of job satisfaction and eventually the decision to leave the profession.(Betoret;Jepson& Forest,2006).Teacher's stress effects teacher performance in teaching. Mild stress can even enhance performance but high level of stress can create physical, Psychological and behavioral problems among teacher. There are several research studies, which observed that, a high level of stress accompanied by physical illness such as high blood pressures, ulcers and even cancer. Similarly high level of stress may be accompanied by psychological problems such as anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, tension and boredom. Excessive stress may also result in behavioral problems such as sleeplessness, under eating or over eating, increased smoking and drinking and drug abuse. Many researches of teacher studies have established some strong correlates of teacher stress. From these researches, it has found that teacher stress related to job dissatisfaction (Rudd and Wiseman 1962; Krysacon and Suteliff 1979). Absenteeism, (Bridger 1980; Kaiser and Polezynsky 1982); greater intention to leave profession (Kryiacon and Suteliff 1979), Physical Distress (Coats and Thoresen, 1979) The modern research studies observed that the teacher performance and teacher behavior are strongly affected by stress. Aryacdu and Sutcliffe (1977) stated that, "The stress with the teaching profession may affect the school as an organization, teacher performance, the physical and emotional well being of the teacher". In this modern world human beings are confronted with many perplexing problems caused due to perpetually changing world resulting in frustration, Conflict, Anxiety, Stress and so on. Coleman (1982) also observed that, "The 17th century has been called the age of enlightenment, the 18th century the age of reason, the 19th century the age of progress and the 20th century the age of anxiety". This emphasizes that a meaningful and satisfying way of life has become difficult in this age of anxiety the teacher of today is not exempted from the above age of anxiety. Teaching is a sensitive weapon to achieve the expected educational goals through effective teaching learning process. The effective teaching is possible only with the teacher, those who are mentally sound. We should make the teacher away from the Anxiety, Stress and so on. So as to utilize all his teaching competencies to make the teaching learning processes in an effective way.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT:

- It is to be realized that stress creators harm the teacher effectiveness and teaching competency
- The government or Private management of the institution should improve the conditions for better teaching by reducing the stress factors.
- The main stress creators like lack of promotional opportunities lack of professional growth are to be tackled to improve the teaching competency.
- Unless stress creators are reduced qualitative improvement of teaching, learning process cannot be improved.
- Interventions on the organizational or individual level, or those that reach both, can help reduce teacher stresses by changing the culture and approach to teaching.
- Programs for mentoring, workplace wellness, social emotional learning and mindfulness are all proven to improve teacher well being and student outcomes.
- Establishment of counselling unit in schools, colleges and universities to cater for both teacher and students
- the management of the University needs to conduct an overall job stress assessment in each work unit to map out the main causes of work stress and to exercise control such as rewarding and detailed job description mapping
- Constructive feedback that help improve their performance
- Cultivating good working condition
- Workplace Wellness Programme
- Exercise: Physical exercise is accepted as the best antidote to stress. It keeps the body healthy, makes one emotionally strong, and eases nervous tension. It keeps the mind, body and action coordinated.
- Relaxation: Relaxation response is an innate physiological change elicited by some psychological means. Evidence indicates that the immune function in the body improves by relaxation training, and its regular practice can help maintain the cool. These can include hobbies like reading, listening to music, etc.
- Meditation: It is a continuous stream of effortless concentration, on a single point, over an extended period. It is suggested that the concentration should be maintained unbroken. Psychologists have found out that meditation leads to better emotional and physical health.
- Yoga: Srivastava (1981) persons coping more effectively with stress have more positive orientation to life in general, and employ a valuable mix of coping and defense response. Yoga is a holistic science, which gives to the person tools and techniques to expand conscious awareness into the unconscious.

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