
Job Stress: A study on Primary school teachers in Gajapathi Dist.

Odisha

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Abstract

People don't remember the last time they participated in any one of the relaxing activities. Today they are generally obsessed with the need to be the move. Although, we recognize the need for (or even desire for) relaxation, it's often difficult to stop and take time to relax. Job stress is one of the major health hazards of the modern workplace. It accounts for much of the physical illness, substance abuse, and family problems experienced by millions of blue and white-collar workers. Also, Job stress and stressful working conditions have been linked to low productivity, absenteeism, and increased rates of accidents on and off the job

The Objective of this paper is to identify the levels of stress in primary school teachers in a block, Gajapathi Dist, Odisha. The respondents are 150 primary school teachers.

Data analysis has been done and graphical approach was followed for explaining some economic relationships. Bar charts, pie charts, line graphs were used where ever appropriate. For analyzing the results of the Stress, 20 questions weighted average, corresponding percentage scores and overall mean score were also calculated to know the nature of stress in the research area. After tabulation and the calculation of weighted averages for each table separately the same have been presented.

The research instrument is a structured questionnaire through which researcher collects data in Likert five point scale. In this, the researcher defined the problem by observation of a teacher's job radius and the activities attached. With a good response from various respondents, this study has observed that the teachers are undergoing high level stress due to some parameters in their job along with the difference of age group also.

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Teaching,
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Appraisal Systems.

INTRODUCTION

Stress may be understood as a state of tension experienced by individuals facing extraordinary demands, constraints and opportunities. The stress normally refers to extraordinary demands that which cause us to lose something we desire or constraints as things that keep us from doing what we desire or opportunities demanding excess activity. The pressure of modern life, coupled with emotional imbalances can be collectively labeled as stress. It is an individual adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's well being. It is an adaptive response to an external factor that results in physical, psychological, and/or behavioral deviations in an individual.

Stress is usually understood and thought in negative terms. It is thought to be caused by something bad. In-fact stress itself is needed to an extent or a moderate to arouse the edge required for completing a challenging task. There is also a positive and pleasant side or stress caused by good things called as "Eustress". The term was coined by the pioneers of Greek word 'Eu' means good.

DEFINITIONS

"Stress is an adaptive response mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes, that is a consequence any external action, situation or event that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person¹".

"A condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning²"

- i) "An environmental stimulus (stressors) often described as a force applied to the individual,
- ii) an individual psychological response to such an environmental force and
- iii) an interaction between these two events³"

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the stress levels of school teachers at their work place.
2. To examine the variance in behavior at their duty.
3. To study the teachers' opinion on working conditions in the schools
4. To find out the effectiveness of behavior at home.
5. To find the opinion about their improvement skills in work.
6. To study the load balance and its effect on their personal health .

¹ Ivancevich & Matteson definition of stress,

² Beehr & Newman

³ J W Mason

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

To fulfill the above stated objectives, the study confined to measuring the stress levels .It includes working conditions, job satisfaction levels, supportive climate from the superiors, opportunities to utilize the knowledge at work place etc. The study is confined to know the opinions of 150 primary school teachers in Kashinagar Block, Gajapathi Dist., Odisha.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is not exempt from certain inherent limitations normally associated with time constraint and availability of material. There are several constraints that impede the faculties for an in-depth analysis covering wider area. The most important disappointing feature was the lack of interest on the part of teacher's respondents to provide necessary information

METHODOLOGY

The present study is adopted case study method & survey method. The *case study method* is adopted for in depth study of stress levels at work place. *Survey method* is the fact-finding study. It is the method of research involving collection of data directly from the population or a sample thereof at a particular time. It must not be confused with the mote clerical routine of gathering and tabulating figures. It requires experts and imaginative planning, careful analysis and rational interpretation of the findings. Data may be collected by observation or by mailing questionnaire. The analysis of data may be made by using simple or complex statistical techniques up on the objective of study.

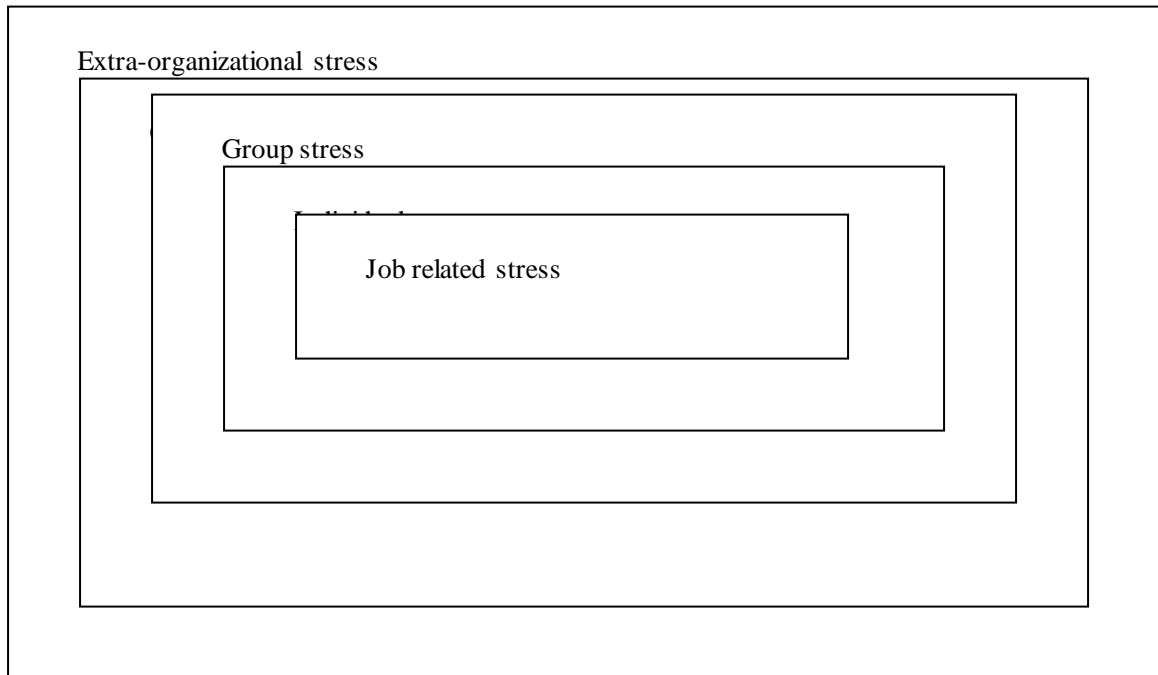
LITERATURE REVIEW OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress Management refers to a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situations, and severity. These can include physical health decline as well as depression. According to the St. Louis Psychologists and Counseling Information and Referral, the process of stress management is one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management provides a number of ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall well-being.

SOURCES OF STRESS

The first important step in managing stress is to examine and understand stress and various sources of it. The sources are

1. Job related stress
2. Individual stress
3. Group stress
4. Organizational stress
5. Extra-organizational stress



Job related stress is a source of stress. This stress related to job is difficulty, boredom factors, job conditions, participation and growth factors, feeling of inequity and working or interpersonal relationships.

Individual stress may be generated in the context of organizational life or a person's personal life. There are several such events which may work as stressors. There are

- ✓ **Life and Career Changes** where stress is produced by several changes in life and career, research studies show that in general, every transition or change produce stress.
- ✓ **Personality type** such as authoritarianism, rigidity, masculinity, femininity, extroversion, introversion, supportiveness, emotionality, tolerance for ambiguity, locus of control, anxiety, and need for achievement etc is particularly relevant to individual stress.
- ✓ **Role Characteristics** may be role stress either because of role conflict or role ambiguity.

Group stress which effects human behavior. Therefore, some factors in group processes may act as stressors. They are

- ✓ Lack of group cohesiveness
- ✓ Lack of social support
- ✓ Conflict

Organizational stress which is composed of individual stressors and groups and, therefore individual and group stressors may also exist in organizational context. However there are macro level dimensions of organizational functioning which may work as stressors. The major organizational stressors are

- ✓ Organizational Policies
- ✓ Organizational Structure
- ✓ Organizational Processes
- ✓ Physical conditions

Extra-organizational stress which interacts continuously with its environment, events happening outside the organization also works as stressors. Thus, social and technical

changes, economic and financial conditions, social class conflicts, community conditions etc.

Extra Organizational stress interacts continuously with its environment, events happening outside the organization. Thus, social & technical changes, economic and financial conditions, social class conflicts, community conditions etc work as stressors. Family relations, when they are not healthy, create stress in employees.

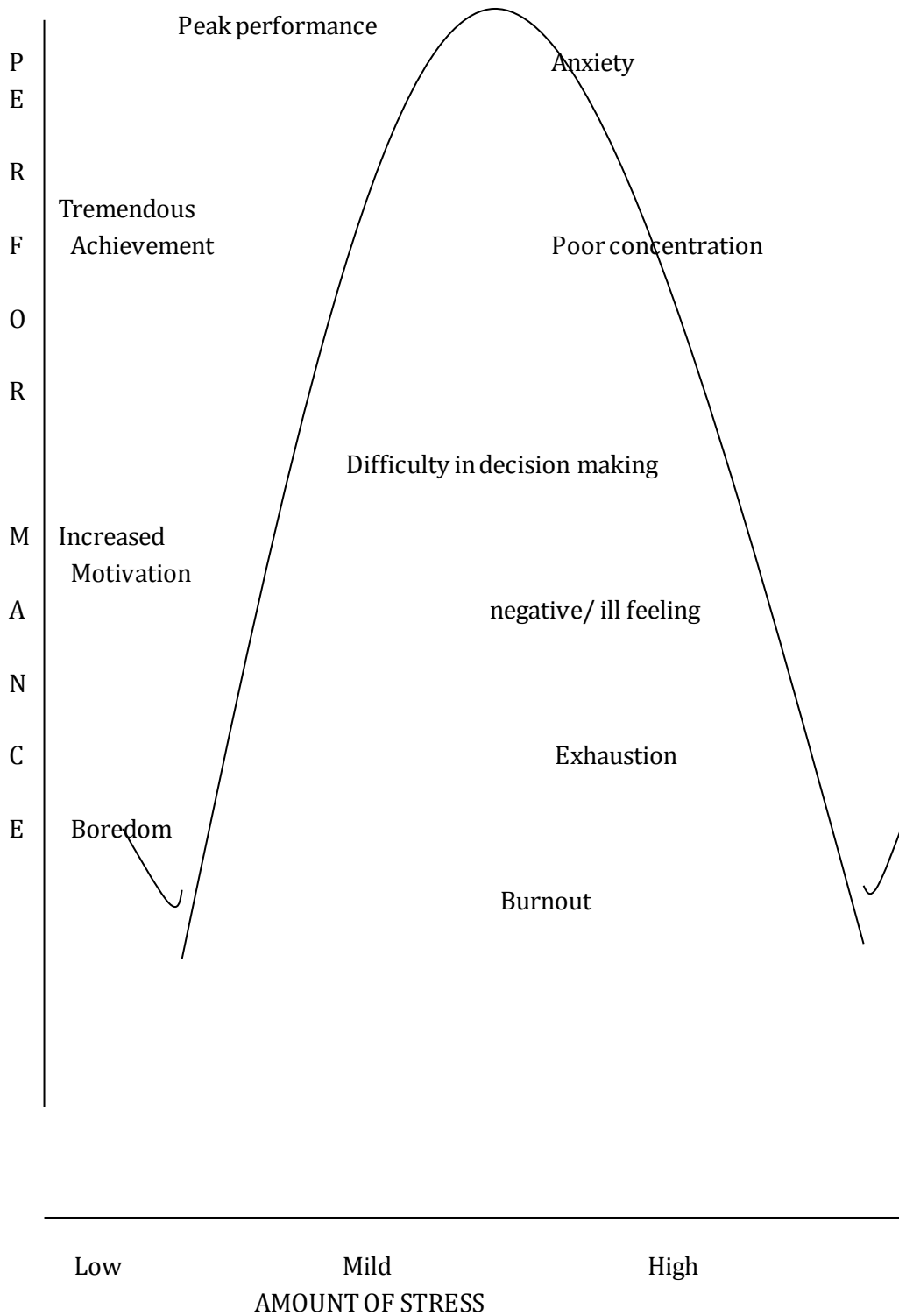
STRESS RESPONSE

It is scientifically proved that mild stress levels in students, employees or any person engaged or going to engage in work would seen to benefit in that. But when stress is negatively affecting the human being, then automatically as a response on the psychological and physical changes, co-ordinate in the body to create readiness in a way to cope with the stress and it burns up considerable amount of energy.

The second stage in the stress response is combat stage or resistance stage where the energy consumption increases heavily to resist the stressor from its negative effects. We develop the habits of dealing with stress but if he is unsuccessful in combating with the stress, he reaches the fuel storage situation with vague feeling of loss. At the same point, later in this stage many of the most symptoms of job stress make their acceptance. The symptoms appear in this stage are job dissatisfaction, inefficiency at work, fatigue, sleeplessness, and escapism.

The third stage of stress response is called the state of exhaustion. This stage of job stress usually begins with a rather profound feeling that “something is happening to me”

The physical and psychological symptoms of earlier stages become more pronounced and results in the chronic illness stage of suffering from job stress. It is especially during this stage the people experience chronic exhaustion, physical illness, anger, blood pressure and depression. At this stage, gastrointestinal system, the blood circulatory system, nervous system gets seriously affected. This will be depressed psychologically and discontent become so intense that the suffer often look for escape hatch in the final stage. The typical relationship between health, performance, and stress can be shown as below



EFFECTS OF STRESS

- High blood pressure
- Ulcers
- Headaches
- Sleep disruption
- Digestive problems
- Emotional stability
- Moodiness
- Nervousness and tension
- Chronic worry
- Depression
- Burnout
- Excessive smoking
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Absenteeism
- Aggression
- Safety problems
- Performance problems

COPING STRATEGIES

The coping strategies for stress can be made at two levels.

Individual Coping Strategies

Coping strategies may be adapted by individuals without reference to the organization. Individual coping strategies tend to more relative in nature. Following are the individual coping strategies.

Physical exercise: It is a good strategy to get body fitness and to overcome stress such as walking, jogging, swimming, playing, etc. The role of YOGA, a scientific technique of physical exercise to keep body fitness and to overcome stress is also tremendous.

Relaxation: It can be a simple one which cans an individual overcomes the stress feeling like biofeedback and meditation. In biofeedback, the individual learns the internal rhythms of a particular body process through electronic signals feedback is wired to the body area. Meditation involves quiet concentrated inner thought in order to rest the body physically and emotionally.

Work-home transition: Work-home transition also resembles relaxation technique where in this technique, a person may attend to less pressure inducing type of routine work during the last 30 or 60 minutes of work time.

Cognitive therapy: Because of increase illness, special cognitive therapy technique has been developed by psychologists. In this techniques, lecturers and interactive discussion sessions are arranged to help participants.

Networking: networking is the formation of close associations with trusted, empathetic

co-workers and colleagues who are good listeners and confidence builders. Such persons provide mental support to get the person through stressful situation.

Organizational Coping Strategies

Organizational coping strategies are more proactive in nature that is they attempt at removing existing potential stressors and prevent the onset of stress on individual job holders. Following are organizational coping techniques and efforts

Supportive Organizational climate: Organizational stressors can be controlled by creating supportive organizational climate. Supportive organizational climate, as discussed later, depends upon managerial leadership rather than the use of power and money to control organizational behavior. The focus is primarily on participation and involvement of employees in decision making process.

Job enrichment: A major source of stress is the monotonous and disinteresting jobs performed by employees in the organization. Improving content factors such as responsibility, recognition, opportunity for achievement and advancement or improving core job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback may lead the motivation. Such a phenomenon helps in reducing stress.

Career planning and counselling: career planning and counselling helps the employees to obtain professional advice regarding career paths that would help them to achieve personal goals. It also makes them aware of additional qualifications, trading, and skills they should acquire for career advancement. Various career planning and counselling programmes for individuals go a long way in providing them satisfaction and reducing the stress.

Stress Control Workshops and Employee Assistance Programmers: The organization can hold periodical workshops for control and reduction of stress. Such workshops may help individuals to learn the dynamics of stress and methods of overcoming their ill effects. Both types of coping strategies for stress – individual and organizational – taken together to not necessarily guarantee that individual will not expertise stress. However, such strategies may help in reducing the tendency of occurring stresses or if stresses have occurred, help in minimizing their negative impact.

STUDY

To have a snap shot study on the occupational stress levels among school teachers in Gajapathi Dist, Odisha state, first I defined the problem by observation of a teacher's job radius and the activities attached. The tool is a questionnaire, refined to suit the purpose.

A sample size of 150 is chosen, which can represent various age groups, various places. The questionnaire is administered on head masters and assistant teachers also. Queries are clarified as and when posed by a respondent. Hence it is a stratified sampling.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was subjected to both conventional and functional analysis. The conventional approach includes weighted average and percentage methods. In addition, graphical approach was followed for explaining some economic relationships. Bar charts, pie charts, line graphs were used where ever appropriate. For analyzing the results of the Stress response, 20 questions

weighted average, corresponding percentage scores and overall mean score were also calculated to know the nature of stress levels. After tabulation and the calculation of weighted averages for each table separately the same have been presented.

In Stress survey, a weighted mean score for each item ranges from 1 to 5, where weighted average mean score of 1 indicates strongly disagree and score of 5 indicates strongly agree. These scores are almost never obtained by any organization. Weighted average mean score around 3 (between 2.5 and 3.5) indicates an average stress levels on that dimension giving substantial scope for improvement. While average mean score around 4 is indicative of a good response where most employees have positive attitudes towards stress levels, weighted average mean score around 2 (between 1.5 and 2.5) indicates an imbalance life. The same interpretation applies to overall mean score across all statements.

In order to make the interpretations easier, the mean scores are converted into percentage using the formula:

$$\text{Percentage Score} = (\text{Mean Score} - 1) * 25$$

For example of the 150 sample respondents, it is assumed that 50 of them felt the statement – ‘Strongly Disagree’. 40 out of them felt that the statement – ‘Disagree’. 30 out of them felt that the statement – ‘Undecided’. 20 out of them felt that the statement – ‘Strongly Agree’. 10 out of them felt that the statement – ‘Strongly Agree’. These numbers are multiplied with their corresponding weights viz.5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Then it is divided by the total number of sample respondents who

Rating	Responses	No. of	%
1	Strongly Disagree	19	12.67
2	Disagree	38	25.33
3	Undecided	51	34.00
4	Agree	32	21.33
5	Strongly Agree	10	6.67
	Total	150	100.00

constitute 150. In short, the calculation in simple terms can be expressed as follows:

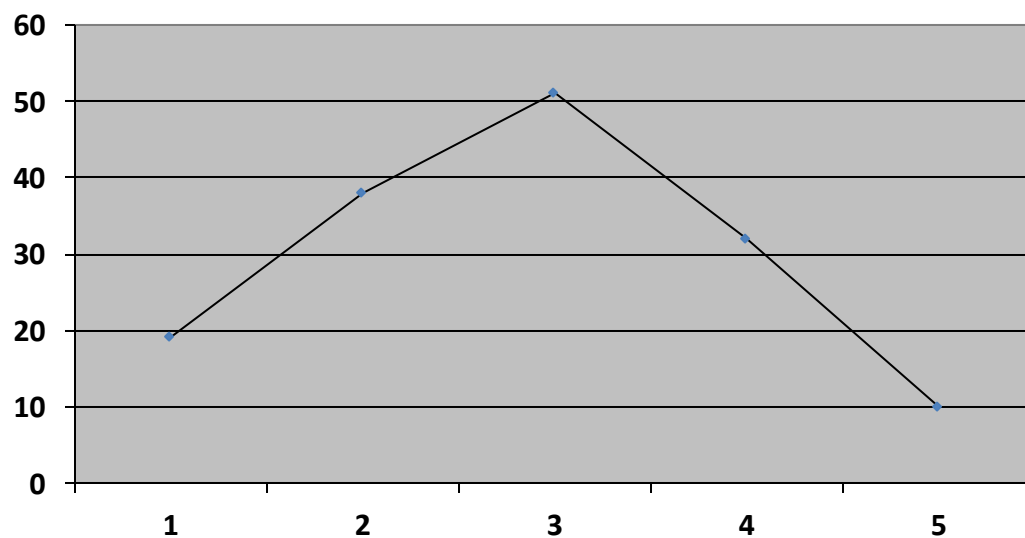
$$\begin{aligned} & (50 \times 5 + 40 \times 4 + 30 \times 3 + \\ & 20 \times 2 + 10 \times 1) / 150 = \\ & 550 / 150 \\ & \text{Weighted} \\ & \text{average} = 3.66 \end{aligned}$$

Data Analysis Examples

Since I am busy with the class work, memo work and administrative responsibilities often creates tension in me.

	Weighted Average	2.84		
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Table above table reveals that more than one third of the respondents are disagree with the above statement. This is followed by more than Half of the respondents are undecided about their tension levels. . More than one third respondents are agree that they are feeling some tension at their work.



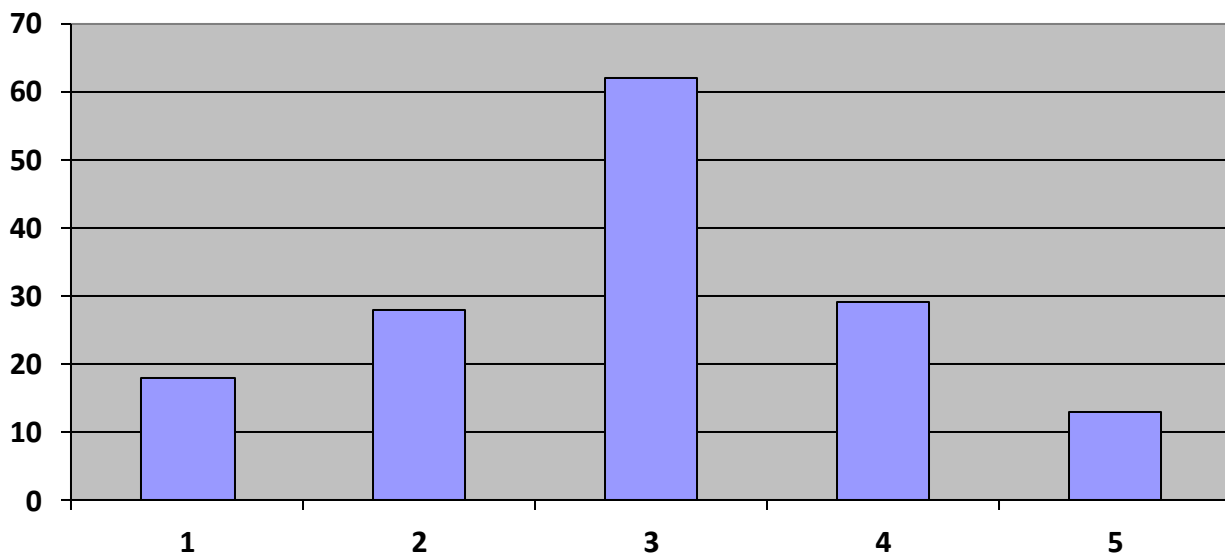
I receive full encouragement from my superiors and they recognize myself respect

Rating	Responses	No. of	%
1	Strongly Disagree	18	12.00
2	Disagree	28	18.67
3	Undecided	62	41.33
4	Agree	29	19.33
5	Strongly Agree	13	8.67
	Total	150	100.00
	Weighted Average	2.94	

Table above table reveals that more

than one third of the respondents saying that they cannot decide the above statement. This is followed by more than one fourth of the respondents are agree that they receives full encouragement from their superiors, and nearly one third of the teachers said that they disagree

about the statement.



DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS / FINDINGS

- Viewed from the activities and assignments within the job content and context, the total population of school teachers under this study, expressed that they are suffering from high amount of stress due to over workload.
- The school teachers are undergoing high level of stress as and when their fellow-teachers are absent on leave or on any other grounds.
- Considerable number(65%) of them are receiving high stress due to lengthy class work(6 periods) and more of them(70%) responded that planning, memo work and administrative work is throwing more strain in addition to class work.
- 85% of the school teachers expressed that they are not able to meet the job responsibilities and responded with dissatisfaction, since they are not fruitfully doing justice to the students due to other assignments (elections, surveys) in their job.
- Only 45% of the school teachers expressed that they get tense and feel the impact due to under performance of their students and the rest told that they won't feel for the mal performance of the students.
- Almost the majority of the teachers who expressed their responsibility and stress, because of the bad performance of the students and also informed that their compensation is inadequate for their hard work, committed service and it is also inappropriate when compared with others. They expressed their dissatisfaction and the resulting stress due to the improper incentives.
- The teachers are expressing that it is very stressful for them since they have no clear cut job definition, unspecific role and insufficient information on precise and expected results.

- Those who are in 40-48 years of age group are receiving more stress when compared with those are having 49 years and above.
- There is a mixed response in view of the freedom in their job and 55% of them expressed that their job is not challenging and often they undergo boredom.
- Half of the population felt that discipline management of the students is a high stress creating one.
- It is observed that 25% of the school teachers are suffering from high stress and the remaining 75% are receiving moderate stress in their job. Nobody of them is falling under low stress scale.

SUGGESTIONS

- The work load should be moderate to each and every teacher.
- There should be adequate number of teachers to overcome the lengthy workload
- The teachers should have the specific information about their job definition and specific role.
- There should be some freedom to the teachers in their job
- There should be a specific person in the school (clerk) for the planning, memo work and for the administrative work so that the teachers can concentrate on students.

Since it is a snap shot pilot study, we cannot derive full-fledged conclusions and hence at this juncture it is not possible to suggest anything rather than the above suggestions in this regard.

CONCLUSION

So as per the available research on occupational stress, revealed the truth that mild stress exerts performance from the employees, whereas stress at high levels is always bad and its impacts also negative both to employees, the organization and the community at large. In view of these findings, we can conclude that both individual coping strategies and organizational coping strategies are necessary to handle the stress response. By this we can make the employee feel good at work and can expect good performance. So understanding and implementing stress coping measures always works positive and give us good results.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS INVENTORY

NAME ; _____

AGE : _____

DESIGNATION: _____

- *This Questionnaire is meant for helping a pilot study, where the information collected will be confidential.*
- *Please put a () on the selected response.*

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. As an employee, I have to do a lot of work in this job.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree () Strongly Agree

2. The available information relating to my job, its role and the results are unspecific and insufficient.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree () Strongly Agree

3. Freedom to carry out my job assignment is adequate

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree () Strongly Agree

4. Often times, I am getting a feeling that my work is not challenging.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree () Strongly Agree

5. I got an ample opportunity to utilize my knowledge and talent fully here in this job.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree () Strongly Agree

6. Lengthy class work in the day's work often gives me pressure.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree () Strongly Agree

7. Since I am busy with the class work, memo work and administrative responsibilities often creates tension in me.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

8. I often feel that no adequate training is given to improve my skills and competencies.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

9. Due to other assignments given as a part of my job, I am not able to utilize my time fully to give services to students.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

10. I feel that the compensation given is not adequate when compared with others.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

11. The compensation is not adequate for my services in this job.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

12. I am not happy with the incentives provided for my hard work.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

13. Due to job responsibilities, I am not able to meet my family obligations.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

14. I am compelled to work more and stay more here due to the procedures and superior pressures.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

15. Facilities and working conditions are happy here for smooth execution of my job work.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

16. I often receive pressure due to bad performance of the students.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

17. Managing the students is a tough area in my job.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

18. I need to dispose if my day works hurriedly owing to exercise work load.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

19. I receive full encouragement from my superiors and they recognize myself respect.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

20. Sometimes, my superiors ask me to handle more assignments, due to the absence of others.

() Strongly Disagree () Disagree () Undecided () Agree
() Strongly Agree

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