

## Occupational stress of teachers in primary schools; often remains unnoticed !

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**Abstract:** 'Occupational stress' is an important issue among primary school teachers in India. Stress is an inevitable and unavoidable part of life. A teacher's life is adversely affected by stress as it reduces his abilities to function effectively. With this assumption, the present investigation intends to examine the level of occupational stress of teachers in primary schools. The main objective of the study was to find out the occupational stress of male and female primary School teachers. Descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. A sample of 80 primary school teachers was selected randomly. The occupational stress Index developed by Dr. A.K. Srivastava and Dr.A.P- Singh (1984) was used as the tool for collecting data. Mean, SD and 't' test was applied for analysis of collected data. Findings revealed that most of the teachers of primary schools experience occupational stress. Both male and female primary school teachers possess more or less equal level of occupational stress.

**Key Words:** occupational stress, primary school teachers.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The importance of a teacher in the educational process is unquestionable. Right from the earliest time to the present day, it is an accepted fact that an effective teacher alone could be able to contribute to educational development. The entire edifice of education will be proved meaningless if the teacher is weak, ineffective, imbalanced and stressed. What is more important today is that the teacher, his teaching behaviour and working condition in the truest sense of the term are not so much sensed and the teacher's work as a highly complex phenomenon has not been viewed with seriousness.

Stress, in general and occupational stress in particular, is a fact of modern-day life that seems to have been increasing day by day. It is an unavoidable characteristic of life and work. Occupational stress describes physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of the job and the capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands (Akinboye and Adeyemo, 2002).

Stress is a general term used to describe the pressures people experience in daily life. It results from an imbalance between environmental demands and personal adequacies to meet those demands. While for some people "stress" solely refers to a crisis or disaster, for others it also refers to minor irritations and challenges with day-to-day living. Both the events that cause stress and how that stress is felt vary widely from person to person (Kaur and Kaur, 2011).

Stress is a contributing factor in causing numerous emotional and behavioural difficulties including depression, anxiety, temper, tantrums, suicide attempts, child abuse, physical assault, destructive expression of anger, feelings of bitterness and resentment, irritability, impatience and stuttering (Greenburg, 1980).

Stress is an inescapable part of life-a natural and inevitable factor of life. The physical, mental and emotional chaos it causes can make our daily lives miserable. It can also affect our physical and mental health, sometimes drastically. We are not always aware that we are under stress. The habits, attitudes and signs that can alert us to problems may be hard to recognize because they have become so familiar. Thus, it becomes difficult to understand how high is our stress index. It can result in distress if not properly managed and checked.

Nowadays, teaching is considered to be the most stressful occupation as teachers are today facing much dysfunctional stress arising due to certain job characteristics and of other factors related to the job and incumbent (Beilin and Knuiman, 1998; Bennett, 1995). A teacher has to play multiple roles as an information provider, facilitator, mentor, accessor, planner, resource developer and the study guide producer. To fulfil his duties, he needs a state of mental peace,

and suitable atmosphere in the institution as well as at home. In the prevailing educational setup, a teacher has to reel under pressure of working under too many constraints imposed on him from all sides. A teacher's life is adversely affected by stress leading to ill-health and mental ill-health as well (Jeyaraj, 2013; Korala and Sharma, 2013; Raheem, 2014). Stress affects his ability to function effectively. If a teacher is in stress, he cannot do justice to his job.

## **2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:**

Stress can create problems in the performance and affect the health and wellbeing of the teachers as well as the schools. There have been many studies stating that a teacher's mental health has direct and significant relationship with his/her work efficiency (Mathews, 2005; Kumari, 2008; Johannsen, 2011; Hasan, 2014). Primary school teachers experience high level of stress due to problems like heavy workload, poor working condition, delay and non-payment of salary, lack of support, overcrowded class etc. Hence appropriate knowledge in respect of his level of occupational stress becomes the matter of utmost concern. Moreover, reliable information regarding the types and nature of the teacher characteristics in general and his occupational stress in particular owe greater priority to be investigated. The present investigation was undertaken to study the level of occupational stress among primary school teachers.

## **3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

The present study was entitled as: "OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS".

## **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

- To study the level of occupational stress of primary school teachers.
- To compare the occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers.

## **4.1 HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:**

There is no significant difference in the level of occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers.

## **4.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY TERMS:**

**Stress:** The body's non-specific response to a demand placed on it.

**Occupational Stress:** The condition of mental and physical exertion brought about as a result of harassing events or dissatisfying elements or general features of the working environment.

**Primary School Teachers:** Teachers who teach various subjects in primary schools.

## **4.3 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

The present study has the following delimitations.

- 1) The present study was confined to teachers of primary schools.
- 2) The study was limited to primary school teachers of Bhubaneswar town, Khordha district.

## **5. METHODOLOGY:**

Descriptive Survey Method was followed in the study to find out the "Level of occupational stress among the primary school teachers".

## **POPULATION OF THE STUDY:**

All the Primary School teachers working in Bhubaneswar, Khordha district constitute the population of the present study.

## **SAMPLE:**

In this study, 10 primary schools of Bhubaneswar, Khordha district of Odisha were selected randomly. From these schools 80 teachers both male (40) and female (40) were chosen randomly. Thus the sample of the study consisted of 80 primary schools teachers.

## **TOOL:**

The occupational Stress Index developed by Dr. A.K .Srivastava and Dr. A.P. Singh (1984) was used as the tool in the present study for the collection of data. This is a 5point scale which comprised of 46 items out of which 28 are 'true-keyed' and rest 18 are 'false-keyed'.

## **STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS:**

Mean, Standard deviation and "t" test were used for the analysis of collected data.

### PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION:

The investigators personally visited the selected primary schools. The questionnaires were administered to the sample of 80 primary school teachers accordingly.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The researchers wanted to compare the difference in the level of occupational stress among male and female primary school teachers. To test this objective one null hypothesis was framed which was tested by application of SED (Standard Error of difference between means) and its significance was verified by finding out 't' value.

**Table-1: Significance of Difference in Level of Occupational Stress among Male and Female Primary School Teachers**

Group	N	Mean	SD	SED	Table value at 0.05 level	Obtained 't' Value	Remarks
Male	40	161.25	25.16	5.043	1.99	1.83	Not significant
Female	40	170.5	19.61				

It is found that the mean scores of male and female teachers are 161.25 and 170.5 respectively. The SD was found to be 25.16 and 19.61 for male and female primary school teachers respectively. The 't' value of the score was found to be 1.83 which was less than the table value of 1.99 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the difference is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis that "there is no significant difference between the male and female primary school teachers with regard to their occupational stress" is accepted. So, it is concluded that there exists no significant difference in the level of occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers.

### 6. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. It was found that most of the teachers of primary schools experience occupational stress.
2. There exists no significant difference on the occupational stress with respect to gender. Hence it can be concluded that male and female primary school teachers possess more or less equal level of occupational stress.

### 7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

On the basis of the findings of the present study suggestions were made for the policy makers, administrators and headmasters to examine the level of stress among teachers of primary schools. Government should also take necessary steps to help the teachers manage their level of occupational stress in the following directions:

- Assuming service security
- Offering an alluring pay-package
- Helping teachers to tackle stressful situations
- Providing better infrastructure with modern IT facilities
- Fixing targets to be achieved within the stipulated time
- Assessing teachers' accountability
- Judging teacher efficiency on the basis of student evaluation
- Organizing teacher associations to fight for their noble causes
- Safeguarding financial matters

### 8. CONCLUSION:

The teacher occupies a very significant place in the educational process. Teaching is a profession where every day radical changes take place in the educational system. These changes are very likely to increase the level of stress in teachers. Primary school teachers experience higher level of stress due to demanding situations, while dealing with little students. These stressed teachers create negative impact on the quality of education. In this regard Lawrence (2005) concluded that stress leads to suffering of low self-esteem by most of the teachers and if unattended these problems can create havoc and distort self-concept of teachers. Therefore, this is high time that utmost care should be taken to help the teachers in coping and managing stress so that they have control over their stress and minimise its effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

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