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A Study on Occupational Stress among Special School Teachers at Karuvadikupam, Pondy

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Abstract

Stress is a common problem that affects almost all of us at some point in our lives. This study investigates factors that contribute stress and level of occupational stress among special education teachers who are currently teaching in special education classes in Karuvadikupam, Ponducherry. The study Result shows that there are major factors that contribute to stress among special education teachers at Karuvadikupam, Ponducherry. A total of 100 special education teachers were chosen randomly to represent the population by using the cluster method. The tool for this study was adapted from the Teacher Stress Inventory constructed by Boyle, Borg, Falzon and Baglioni (1995) and had been modified by the researcher according to Indian education system. A pilot study has been conducted and the Alpha Cronbach for the instrument was 0.726. The data have been systematically analyzed using SPSS. Result indicates that the overall stress level of respondent is at moderate. Among the major stress factor, student population is the strongest determinant of teacher stress with Mean value of 4.00 followed by administrative pressure (Mean=3.177), pupil discipline with a Mean of 2.725 and teachers workload (Mean = 2.169) respectively. The other result also indicates that there is a significant difference of work stress among the respondent based on gender, marriage status, and academic qualification. Furthermore, the result of this study also indicated the significant correlation between teacher stress and demographic factors such as age, teaching experience, and the respondents' monthly salary.

Key words: Stress, Special Education Teachers, Occupational Stress.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is the summation of effects on all non specific biological experience extracted by difficult and unpleasant exterior pressures. One can feel it when he/she is confronted with a difficult and/or unavoidable situation.

Occupational Stress is created because of workers' under privileged skills that are not matched with the demands of job as it creates job dissatisfaction among the workers state of mind. Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead

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to poor health, it is a physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of job and capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands.

Special education is instruction designed for students with special needs. They are the group whose patterns of educational needs are very different from their peer group. Special education services are provided only to those children who possess deviations from normality and require special teaching competence or unusual school services. Among different categories of children with special needs, mentally challenged are quite different. As they are deviated from normal intelligence, they need special care and training to meet various needs.

In order to bring out child's talents, skills and potentials, the teacher should possess Emotional Intimacy with the challenged child. Comparing to normal children, teaching/training mentally challenged children is stressful. The special educators have to play different roles. As care taker, trainer, parent, his/her days become hectic and demanding. There by the days become more and more stressful. Besides these, many other factors like, working environment, interaction with parents, colleagues and challenged children, attitude of authorities and parents, salary, opportunities for promotion and professional growth will eventually contribute to their stress. Exposure to extreme stress in schools might leads to burnout. Burnout is considered to be a long-term stress reaction that particularly occurs among professionals who work with people in some capacity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of research studies have been undertaken with regard to occupational stress of Higher Secondary school teachers and its relationship with other factors in past several years. According to, [1] "misbehaviour of students" appears to be the most important source of teacher stress, particularly at the secondary school level. [2] found that personality characteristics might be a determinant and they reported that perception played a large role in teachers stress. [3] argues that "teachers are not burned out; they are worn out. They turn off to the job and stop attempting to succeed in situations that appear hopeless". [4] found a strong correlation between Occupational stress and negative feelings in teachers. Occupational stress results in considerable anger toward others. [5] found that difficulties associated with instructional and managerial demands were perceived as

the most stressful aspects of their work. [6] reviewed that high levels of stress are reported to be one of the main reasons for teachers leaving the profession in the early years of their career in British educational settings. [7] investigated that Younger teachers experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than older ones and male teachers show more depersonalization than female teachers. [8] Teacher stress can lead to alienation, apathy and absenteeism and eventually interfere with student achievements. [9] Perceived that poor Students behaviour is another factor contributing to teacher Burnout. [10] in his work titled Perfectionism in school teachers explains that teachers suffer from stress and burnout in numbers greater than those in similar professions. Although teaching is said to be a relatively easy job, teachers are said to be more prone to stress.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

1. To study the demographic and socio economic background of the respondents.
2. To find out the major cause of occupational stress for the special school teachers.

Hypothesis

1. There is a significant relationship between workload and occupational stress among the special school teachers.
2. There is a significant relationship between education qualification and occupational stress of the special school teachers.
3. There is a significant relationship between years of working experience and occupational stress of the special school teachers.
4. There is a significant relationship between income and occupational stress of the special school teachers.

Research Design

The researcher uses descriptive research design for the study. As the study basically attempts to describe the occupational stress of special school teachers in Karuvadikupam, Punducherry.

Universal and Sampling

The special school teachers of karuvadikupam are the universe of this study the population of the study is 150 special education teachers in various special education centers at karuvaddikuppam. The size of sampling is 100 respondents. The researcher used the simple random sampling technique with cluster method in this study.

Tool

Self edited, Teacher Stress Inventory constructed by Boyle, Borg, Falzon and Baglioni (1995) questionnaire was employed as tool for collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of various statements on different dimensions to find the cause occupational stress of special educators.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table - 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S. No.	Variables With Values	No .of the respondents (n=100)	Percentage (%)	
1.	Age	21-25 Years	34	34.0
		26-29 Years	46	46.0
		30-39 Years	16	16.0
		40-49 Years	4	4.0
2.	Gender	MALE	14	14.0
		FEMALE	86	86.0
3.	Marital Status	MARRIED	48	48.0
		SINGLE	52	52.0
4.	Education Qualification	HSC	4	4.0
		UG/PG	12	12.0
		S P E C I A L EDUCATION	82	82.0
5.	Employment Status	PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT	16	16.0
		TEMPORARY	84	84.0
6.	Work Experience	BELOW 1 YEAR	10	10.0
		1-2 YEARS	28	28.0
		3-5 YEARS	28	28.0
		6-10 YEARS	34	34.0
7.	Monthly Income	BELOW 8000	46	46.0
		8001-10000	42	42.0
		10001-15000	12	12.0

Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It reveals that more than one third (46%) of the respondents were from the age category of 26-29 years old. A vast majority (86%) of the respondents were female. With regard to marital status majority (52%) of the respondents are single. A vast majority

(82%) of the respondents are with special education qualification. A vast majority (84%) of the respondents are temporary employee. A one third of the respondents work experience (35%) is between 6-10 years. more than one third (46%) of the respondents monthly income is below 8000.

Table - 2: Distribution of respondent based health problems due to occupational stress.

S. No.	Variables With Values		No .of the respondents (n=100)	Percentage (%)
1.	GENERAL HEALTH 3 YEARS AGO	GOOD	92	92.0
		POOR	8	8.0
2.	GENERAL HEALTH AT PRESENT	GOOD	32	32.0
		REASONABLE	10	10.0
		POOR	58	58.0
3.	HEADACHES/ MIGRAINE IN THE LAST YEAR	NEVER	30	30.0
		SOMETIMES	54	54.0
		OFTEN	14	14.0
		ALMOST NEVER	2	2.0
4.	POOR SLEEPING PATTERNS	NEVER	28	28.0
		SOMETIMES	56	56.0
		OFTEN	16	16.0
5.	FEELING ANXIETY	NEVER	26	26.0
		SOMETIMES	62	62.0
		OFTEN	12	12.0
6.	GETTING DEPRESSION	NEVER	34	60.0
		SOMETIMES	60	34.0
		OFTEN	6	6.0
7.	FEELING IRRITATED WHILE WORKING	NEVER	30	30.0
		SOMETIMES	60	60.0
		OFTEN	10	10.0
8.	FEELING ANGRY WHILE WORKING	NEVER	24	24.0
		SOMETIMES	70	70.0
		OFTEN	6	6.0
9.	FREQUENTLY FEELING NERVOUS AND STRESSED	NEVER	26.0	26.0
		ALMOST NEVER	26	26.0
		SOMETIMES	26	26.0
		FAIRLY OFTEN	18	18.0
		VERY OFTEN	4	4.0
10.	DAILY WORK EVENTS MAKES ME UPSET	NEVER	20	20.0
		ALMOST NEVER	14	14.0
		SOMETIMES	26	26.0
		FAIRLY OFTEN	36	36.0
		VERY OFTEN	4	4.0

Table 2 Depicts the results obtained with regard to health problems due to occupational stress. A vast majority (92%) of the respondents were in good health condition three years back. A Majority (58%) of the respondent's present health condition is poor. A Majority (54%) of the respondent's get head ache sometimes. A Majority

(56%) of the respondent's has poor sleeping pattern sometimes. A more than half (62%) of the respondent feels anxiety sometimes. A more than half (62%) of the respondent feels depressed sometimes. A more than half (60%) of the respondent gets irritated at the work sometimes. A one third (36%) of the respondents gets upset with the daily work events.

Table - 3: Distribution of respondent based on major stress factors

S. No.	Variables With Values		o .of the respondents (n=100)	Percentage (%)
1.	STUDENT DISCIPLINE	NOT APPLICABLE	2	2
		OCCASIONALLY STRESSFUL	12	12.0
		STRESSFUL	22	22.0
		VERY STRESSFUL	64	64.0
MEAN= 25 / STD DEVIATION=2.725				
2.	STUDENTS POPULATION	NOT APPLICABLE	4	4.0
		OCCASIONALLY STRESSFUL	32	32.0
		STRESSFUL	36	36.0
		VERY STRESSFUL	28	28.0
MEAN= 32 / STD DEVIATION=4.000				
3.	INCREASE IN WORK LOAD	NOT APPLICABLE	16	16.0
		OCCASIONALLY STRESSFUL	6	6.0
		STRESSFUL	22	22.0
		VERY STRESSFUL	56	56.0
MEAN= 25 / STD DEVIATION=2.169				
4.	ADMINISTRATIVE PRESSURE	NOT APPLICABLE	2	2.0
		OCCASIONALLY STRESSFUL	14	14.0
		STRESSFUL	72	72.0
		VERY STRESSFUL	12	12.0
MEAN= 25 / STD DEVIATION=3.177				

Table 3 shows the details of the respondent based on major stress factors. A more than half (64%) of the respondent feels students discipline makes them very stressful in their occupation. A one third (36%) of the respondents feels students population makes them

stressful in their occupation. A majority (56%) of the respondent feels increase in workload makes them very stressful in their occupation. A vast majority (56%) of the respondent feels administrative pressure makes them stressful in their occupation.

Table - 4: Karl Pearson's Coefficient Of Correlation between Age, Experience, Educational Qualification, Monthly Income of Special Educators and their Stress.

Variable	Correlation Value	Relationship	Statistical Inference
Age	0.1858	Positive correlation	P < 0.05 significant
Experience	0.1039	Positive correlation	P < 0.05 significant
Educational Qualification	0.3804	Positive correlation	P < 0.05 significant
Monthly Income	0.1865	Positive correlation	P < 0.05 significant

Table 4 explains the relationship between Age, Experience, Educational Qualification, Monthly Income of Special Educators and their Stress. Karl Pearson's Coefficient Of Correlation test was applied to find the relationship. The test result shows that there is a positive

correlation between age, experience, educational qualification and monthly income of the respondent and stress of the respondent. Therefore the research hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING FINDINGS

1. There is a significant relationship between workload and occupational stress among the special school teachers.
2. There is an association between education qualification and occupational stress of the special school teachers.
3. There is a significant relationship between years of working experience and occupational stress of the special school teachers.
4. There is an association between income and occupational stress of the special school teachers.

FINDINGS

- A vast majority (92%) of the respondents were in good health condition three years back.
- A Majority (58%) of the respondent's present health condition is poor.
- A Majority (54%) of the respondent's get head ache sometimes.
- A Majority (56%) of the respondent's has poor sleeping pattern sometimes.
- A more than half (62%) of the respondent feels anxiety sometimes.
- A more than half (62%) of the respondent feels depressed sometimes.
- A more than half (60%) of the respondent gets irritated at the work sometimes.
- A one third (36%) of the respondents gets upset with the daily work events.
- A more than half (64%) of the respondent feels students discipline makes them very stressful in their occupation.
- A one third (36%) of the respondents feels students population makes them stressful in their occupation.
- A majority (56%) of the respondent feels increase in workload makes them very stressful in their occupation.
- A vast majority (56%) of the respondent feels administrative pressure makes them stressful in their occupation.

SUGGESTIONS

The above study shows that the occupational stress level among special educators at Karuvadikupam, Pudhucherry is moderate and the major factors of stress are to be considered for the betterment of special educators and children with special needs. The following suggestion and recommendation can be taken into consideration.

1. The special schools should maintain the appropriate Student to Teacher ratio in order to reduce stress level.
2. The administrators of the institutions should not put too much pressure on the teachers in accomplishing their task. Proper monitoring system should be followed in evaluating staff performance.
3. The work load of the teachers can be reduced and teachers should be given enough days leave to avoid monotony in work.
4. Special educators can be sent to motivational and refreshers course on regular interval to reduce their stress level

CONCLUSION

The main objectives of this study are to identify the main sources of stress and consequent stress levels among special education teachers, , recognition, and interpersonal relationship. The present study also indicates that there is a significant correlation between stress levels and demographic factors, such as age, length of teaching experience, and monthly salary among special education teachers.

Recently, teacher stress and burnout have become an area of interest among researchers and practitioners. Although this present study has indicated that the stress levels among special education teachers in Karuvadikuppam are still at the moderate level, but teachers' stress is a profound problem that must be attended to and concerned if the quality and productivity of education is not to be undermined.

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