

Teachers' Stress Management Competencies

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Abstract

Work-related stress is one of the most significant hazards of working in the education sector. The level of reported stress in teaching is well above the average for other industries, services and society in general. But it is not just teachers in the sector who suffer from stress, other workers such as cleaners and administrative staff are also affected. This study examines both the causes of work-related stress in education and ways to tackle this problem. To estimate the stress management competencies of teachers it has been observed that they pusses stress and their competencies are quite low in the education sector and action that can be taken to defeat stress.

The prevalence of job stress and the enthusiastic pursuit of better performance in a wide range of professions have attracted much research attention.

Key Words: Teachers' Stress, Higher educational institutes, workplace stress, education sector.

Introduction

In recent years stress is catching the interest of many scholars particularly the stress related to the workplace. Due to the globalization of economy, use of information technology, modern communication system and the growing diversity of workplace, has changed it in an impressive manner (Kompier, 2002; Landsbergis 2003).

Today, an emphasis is put on the education but less attention is paid to the stress which is related to this field. The reality is quiet different. According to Dr.Aphrodite (2002) "Stress and teaching - is there any difference?" There are many different occupations in the education sector but teaching is identified as a particularly stressful job (Smith et al 2000).

Kyriacou (1989) said that teachers experience many physiological problems like anger, depression, anxiety, etc. Stress among teacher's leads to illness as well as a cause for some leaving the profession (Aitken 2002). A

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German study ranked teaching as the professions having the highest risk of poor mental health specially the teachers who are engaged with disable pupils and those who are involved in the complementary education of apprentices most at risk (Hasselhorn and Nubling 2004).

A deep study of teaching stress and solving this particular issue is essential. Otherwise the outcomes will be severing. Poor performance of the teachers is mostly due to this stress, as there is now a blow of improving the quality of education so poor performance is not acceptable. (Jegade & Okebukola 1995). The causes of stress, anxiety and depression include culture, government, policies, population and economy.

In private sector teaching seems very easy and a relax job but there is also another side of the picture in which teachers are involved in checking the assignments, searching for the relevant material for the students, marking and preparing their papers even teachers have to see the newspapers for the students to keep them updated. Many teachers are given some extra responsibilities like coping with the co curricular activities which puts extra burden on them causing irritation and depression, and they can't put their job aside even if they are not on the job.

Political instability, rapid changes in the curriculum and policies of HEC, unavailability of needed resources has granted the teachers a failure in their performance.

In many private sector universities teachers are treated as "just nothing" mean they have to follow only those things which are being imposed on them.

Problem Statement

Most of the available studies based on stress are mainly on level of stress, causes, impact of stress etc while the stress management qualities of working class is somehow neglected. People related to academia are always surrounded by tight schedule and multi tasks, and have so many difficulties to cope up with time constraints, produce quality of work, satisfaction and to deliver results in terms of knowledge and education. Therefore, there is a strong need to find out stress management competencies and to measure its effectiveness as well as to provide some guidelines to the governing bodies.

Aim of study

The main goal of this study is to find out the competency of teachers in the private universities and to know their power of opposing with this stress.

Other purposes include:-

- To estimate stress management competencies of teachers.
- To reckon the areas that needs to be addressed.
- To find out their competencies and level of stress that they can manage themselves.

Objectives

The focus of “Stress Management for Teachers” is a comprehensive explanation of the impact of teachers’ stress on students and on teachers themselves. There are many indicators that teachers’ stress is not adequately addressed in our higher education institutes.

This research is to enhance the understanding of negative effects of stress in the classroom. Furthermore, the paper’s focus will be to understand the nature of stress and to address specific sources of stress that undermine effective teaching and learning.

Research Questions

This study focuses on finding the answers of following questions:

- What is the emotional and integrity (respectful and responsible) level of teachers?
- What is the level of managing and communication (work management, problem solving) tendencies of teachers?
- How teachers manage individuals within team?
- Up to what extent teachers can manage difficult situations (conflicts, use of resources, responsibilities)?

Limitations of study

Limitations are practically present in every study carried out. The difficulties faced in collecting data and analyzing them is in number but great in scope. The most obvious constraint was the time available for the completion of the study in a manner that was satisfactory to the author himself.

Another great constraint was that the teachers of different universities were busy in different areas of their field preparing exam papers and supervising student’s activities.

Data was collected from a specific area due to geographical constraint and thus was assumed that it may be the case in every higher educational institute as teachers in private sector are from diversified fields as well as are representing all types of diversity in terms of gender, age, education level, societal and ethnicity etc.

Literature Review

“Strictus” meaning strict and “stringere” meaning to draw stiff are the Latin root words of the word Stress. Stress is the tempo of the particular moment “Selye”, a pioneer in the biological research of the causes and effects of stress. People are confused in some terms related to stress such as pressure, demands, and stressor. These terms do have links but are different in nature. For instance, an individual is pressurized when demands are imposed on them. When this situation persists and the individual is unable to accomplish or meet those demands and seems beyond his capabilities for any reason, these expectations and demands turn into stressor. This state of affair leads to stress. On the other hand, the response of the individual will remain pressure if the same demands do not appeal stress Hiebert (1985). The negative impact and effects on human body both mentally and physically depends on the acuity of the individual Stevenson, Harper (2006).

Stress at work place may lead to a number of different diseases from minor cold to major diseases like cancer (Lowe & Northcott, 1987; Cooper & Travers, 1996; Eysenke, 1996; Farazher, 1996). Teachers stress and anxiety not only affects the teachers themselves but also results in poor student outcomes. (Forman, 1982: Hains and Szyjakowski, 1990). Stress has intolerable negative impact on teaching performance of the teachers. Jegede and Okebukola (1995). The main reasons of teachers stress are huge number of students with fewer facilities, weak students with low or no motivation and their ill behavior, less career opportunities with poor moral and material motivation, disrespect in the society and abrupt changes in the curriculum. Kyriacou (September 1989).

Pakistan is an underdeveloped country and if anything that can help Pakistan come out the current crisis is education. It would not be wrong to say that the progress of this country highly depends upon the educational policies and system. The teachers play a vital role in the whole educational system. Unfortunately, there are a number problems associated with this field which are overlooked resulting in poor outcomes. Stress and burnout severely blight the correlation of the teachers with their students. In addition, it negatively affects the performance and profession loyalty of the teachers Kyriacou (1987).

The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. Emotional intelligence is the potential for learning these competencies. Being high in emotional intelligence does not guarantee that the person will have the acquired skills necessary to excel in work, it only means that (s)he has a high potential for learning them. (Daniel Goleman 1988).

Sometime we work for others because we are told that is our job and other times we work for others purely because we want to be associated with that person. Those who we would rather not work for often give offense through their personal management style. Those we want to work for treat us well and are consistently fair in their dealings with us. Perhaps, the difference could be called possessing emotional intelligence competence. (Ireland, 2006). Work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. Getting good players is easy. Getting them to play together is the hard part. (Casey Stengel, 2006). Task interdependence reflects the extent to which team members have to exchange information and/or means for the completion of their contribution to the team task (e.g. Thompson, 1967). Most research on effective combinations of task and goal interdependence or task and reward interdependence has been conducted under the label of task and outcome interdependence (see review by Van der Vegt & Van de Vliert, 2002). Mitchell & Silver (1990) found that high task interdependent teams in an independent goal condition performed significantly worse than teams in different types of positive goal interdependent conditions. Much research has been conducted within corporations to ascertain what makes employees successful in dispersed work situations. My own research project confirmed what has been found by a number of studies. (e.g. Bredin, 1996 & 1998; Curran & Williams, 1997; Jackson & van der Weilen, 1998; Nilles, 1998). It is not possible to manage by e-mail! E-mail is a great medium for sharing information and making announcements.

It is a very bad medium for handling difficult situations and attempting to resolve conflicts. Short, clear e-mails that utilize itemized lists and specify the kind of response expected are the most effective.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for research and report writing is as follows:

Primary Data

Data for this study was gathered by utilizing primary source and the techniques used for data collection was interviewing (structured) teachers in private sector higher educational institutes and by recording their responses via questionnaire.

Population

Population for this study was the higher educational institutes of Peshawar (management, engineering, computer sciences, mathematics, pharmacy and education).

Sample for Study

Several private sector universities of Peshawar district were used for this study. A niche questionnaire was used to collect data from 10 randomly selected high educational institutes of Peshawar, Pakistan regarding their perception of job stress, students, colleagues and institutions.

The questionnaire was distributed among all the teachers of different subjects and they were required to mark the extent which each statement applied to them. The data was collected from 40 male and 35 female selected on the basis of biographical characteristics. Those respondents who wanted to be a part of study completed the questionnaire. Respondent's age ranged about 25-65 years.

Data collection tool

Questionnaire used in this study was adopted from CIPD and HSE (health and safety executive) (2009) and was comprised of four sections (Respectful and responsible, managing and communicated existing and future work, managing individual within team, and managing difficult situations. With the help of this questionnaire several behaviors/ competencies were assessed to draw a conclusion regarding stress management competencies of teachers.

Findings and analysis.

Kyriacou, (1987) reported that "studies worldwide typically indicate that a large proportion of teachers report experiencing stress or burn out. From this study this is revealed that teachers have suffered from more stress. the age group of 25-30 years suffer stress because it is the mid life transition age where there occur major changes in life, like change from single to married life, career transitions like choosing of one last career and having no other choice left because there is no time left for choosing another career. In this age the people are often given other major social responsibilities like running of homes and responsibilities at job because of seniority that this why in this age there are more chances that the teachers suffer from stress as compared to other age groups. When we see the marital status then it is noted that the single teachers

suffer from more stress as compared to the married, it is because of the factor that marriage provides a strong social support and it helps in reducing stress. The work over load and long working hours are also major source of stress therefore those teachers who work for longer hours suffer from more stress as compared to the teachers with less than 8 hour work.

The findings showed that major areas of the stress management competencies are covered because all the data shows that respondents fall in reasonable situation except one and that is “managing with difficult situations.

Competency	Percentage	Effectiveness	Min.	Max.	75% & below	76% to 89%	90% & above
Respectful and responsible; managing emotions & having integrity	76.22	Reasonable	55.29	91.76	21	33	2
Managing and communicating existing and future work	82.33	Reasonable	50.91	92.73	9	38	9
Managing individual within the team	84.23	Reasonable	65.33	96	13	29	14
Reasoning/ Managing difficult situations	74.31	Develop-	55	90	27	21	8

As the above table represents the poor competency of teacher in the “managing difficult situations” part thus, showing that teachers are not having appropriate competencies in this regard. This part includes the management of conflicts like the conflicts among the coworkers, dealing with them and acting as a mediator in different conflict situations. Secondly the use of organizational resources, which includes the seeking of advice from different managers and using HR dept. Thirdly it comprises of taking the responsibility of many coworkers which is rather a difficult situation for every person.

Conclusions & Suggestions

The problem of teachers stress is an important issue in the educational institutions of under developed countries like Pakistan. It is necessary that we

not only trace the occurrence of the teachers stress but also try to find its causes, so to address this problem of teachers stress in broader terms. If the problem of teachers stress remained unaddressed then the country's most valued people, i.e. teachers would suffer would not be in position to work in healthy way. The job stress among the teachers can be improved by development of an organizational and societal structures and education in form of awareness among general public on how to support the teachers having stress during work. The educational institutions need to create an environment in which teachers not only feel confident enough to discuss their problems and issues with head of institution or colleagues so that they can receive the support they need to continue working healthy.

It has been suggested that the teacher should cope with the job stress by developing good communication skills that will ultimately lead to the development of friendly relations with colleagues and sharing of information. Other ways to cope stress were having some engagement in recreational activities and development of healthy home life.

Strategies that can be helpful for employees to cope with stress

- Involve employees identifying concern related to physical environment and create physical solutions to deal with them.
- Help employees balance work and home life by building flexibility in work schedules when possible
- Design jobs that provide meaning, stimulation and opportunities for workers to use their skills and knowledge,

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