CHAPTER - IV

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS

4.1. TEACHERS STRESS

In general job stress can be defined as a lack of harmony between the individual and the work environment. The teaching profession is unique in many ways, and as such, it is concerned with certain stress-related conditions.

Teacher stress has come under considerably scrutiny since the 1930s. Both international and national teacher stress studies are numerous (e.g. Haikonen, 1999, 23). Differences in the concepts used, and methodological problems make it difficult to comprise studies. Teacher stress studies have usually been cross-sectional and focused mainly on psychological stress indicators.

"Teacher stress may be defined as a response syndrome of negative affect (such as anger or depression) by a teacher usually accompanied by potentially pathogenic physiological and biochemical changes (such as increased heart rate or release of adreno corticotrophic hormones into the blood stream) resulting from aspects of the teacher's job and mediated by the perception that the demands made upon the teacher constitute a threat to his self-esteem or well-being and by coping mechanisms activated to reduce the perceived threat."
Teacher stress is found to be associated with both subjective (e.g. interaction with pupils) and objective (e.g. sex, age, school level) factors. The most general stressors are associated with the quality of social interaction at work (with pupils and colleagues) and time demands and the amount of work (e.g. Cooper & Kelly, 1993; Rasku & Kinnunen, 1999; Salo & Kinnunen, 1993). Also, changes in society based requirements (Esteve, 1989) and structural changes in schools (Bell, 1995) have been seen as reasons for teacher stress. In studies, the teaching profession has been seen as a mission where feelings of inadequacy and risks of self-esteem are common (e.g. Niikko, 1995). Of course, none of these studies claims that all teachers share these feelings. Line of business is not a central explanatory factor for stress in the same way as are the organizational mode of actions and the contents of duties (Elo, Leppänen & Jahkola, 1999). Teaching and teacher stress is very individual and dynamic by its nature (Kinnunen, 1989; Salo & Kinnunen, 1993).

In the same way as the magnitude of stress and stressors vary according to the criteria (psychological, behavioural, psychosomatic or health variables) used, the manifestations of teacher stress also vary according to their duration and quality. During the short term different emotions are emphasized while in the long-term stress have effects on work satisfaction and
commitment as well as on psychosomatic symptoms (Rajala, 1988a). Prolonged stress is also seen to be in connection with burnout.

Stress management is to enhance the understanding of negative effects of stress in the classroom. Furthermore, this focus will be to understand the nature of stress and to address specific sources of stress that undermine effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

Teachers strive to care for their students and administer to their emotional and social needs while meeting a demanding schedule and a constantly changing curriculum. In addition, Tamilnadu teachers are expected to supervise extracurricular activities, provide lunch hour supervision, supervise playground activities and monitor bus loading and unloading plus a multitude of other duties ranging from census to Electoral rolls Verification.

A teaching job is a delicate job that requires specific behavior in the classroom. Teachers need psychological, physical and spiritual balance. Our society expects teachers to be well equipped educationally and emotionally. However, teachers experience a number of different pressures and stressors such as: taking work home, difficult students, difficult classes, lack of administrative support, pressure from parents, teachers' evaluation, ongoing
learning, social isolation, job uncertainty, integration of intelligence and technology, students’ and parents’ bullying.

4.2. TEACHERS BURNOUT

Burnout is a term used to describe people who are physically and psychologically burnt out. Maslach & Jackson (1986), both researchers in this field, defined burnout according to three criteria: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. People experiencing these criteria usually feel as though they were unable to assist their students, and even more negative attitudes toward students, parents, and colleagues. The teachers also felt as though they were unable to accomplish any goals. Burned out teachers were less committed to creating good lessons, and correcting work, as well as less tolerance for classroom disruptions. There are two types of variables that effect burnout: organizational factors and personality factors.

The first organizational factor associated with burnout is role ambiguity. Teachers who constantly struggle with this feel as though there are inconsistent school policies in regards to student behavior, there are constantly changing curriculum and teaching methodologies, and they feel as though no one cares about the work they are doing. When teachers are unsure of their roles it brings on emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.
The second organizational factor associated with burnout is work overload. Teachers experience excessive paper work, oversized classes filled with students of different academic abilities and the need for teachers to complete tasks beyond their knowledge base.

Classroom climate is the third organizational factor. When the working environment is less, then ideal stress occurs. Teachers, who have student discipline problems, student apathy, low student achievement, and face verbal and physical abuse from students, become overwhelmed with stress.

Teachers who are involved in the decision making process are said to have higher morale, motivation, and self-esteem. Nevertheless, in general, teachers are minimally involved in the decisions of their school. They feel a declining sense of morale, lack of job satisfaction, and loss of control and self-esteem. These factors form a cumulative relationship with stress and burnout. (Byrne, 1994, p. 649).

The final organizational factor that leads to burnout is lack of social support. Teachers who constantly feel as though their administrators are judging their work are not confident in themselves. They feel as though anything new that they try to do will not be supported by their administration, so why bother to try.
Other factors associated with burnout fit into the category of personality. The first factor is locus of control. Teachers who are experiencing burnout tend to feel as though all the events in their classroom are beyond their control, due to fate, luck or other people. In other words they see their teaching as completely out of their control. The second factor is self-esteem. Teachers low in self-esteem are more threatened by rejection, and therefore more vulnerable to stress and burnout.

With nearly 90% of all teachers experiencing moderate to high levels of stress it is very important that teachers use stress relieving techniques to improve both their career and their health. While stress is evident in any job, teachers seem to face increased levels of stress due to their unique circumstances. Think about what a teacher must deal with day in and day out...high stake exams, overcrowded classrooms, grading tests, grading homework, grading class work, administrative paperwork, meeting with parents, Department meetings, Faculty meetings, challenging students, angry parents, an unsupportive community, and the list goes on...

Without using stress relieving techniques, Teacher stress can manifest itself in many ways including headaches, back pain, frequent illness, heartburn, anger, impatience, depression, eating disorders, and insomnia. If
not addressed, these manifestations may likely turn into heart disease and hypertension. Stress can even damage memory and cognitive skills.

What's worse is that teachers often don't know how to handle their stress and therefore it comes as no surprise that nearly 50% of all teachers quit within their first five years.

Fortunately, there are many simple stress relieving techniques that teachers can use that will help improve both their health and their career.

The phenomenon of Occupational stress of teachers has been receiving increased global attention and concern in recent years. Several studies had been undertaken to examine the prevalence, level and major sources of Occupational stress among school teachers.

The health of teachers could be seriously affected by stress. Moreover, apart from teachers themselves, Occupational stress suffered by them can also adversely affect their students and the learning environment. In addition, stress problems of teacher might cause an increase in teaching costs It was sympathetic and worth studying this issue so as to minimize the adverse effects of Occupational stress of teachers on students, classrooms, schools and teachers themselves. Studying on the issue of Occupational stress of
teachers was essential and it was important for the management and teachers to work together to improve the working environment and conditions so as to combat stress.

4.3. EFFECTS OF STRESS

Stress is considered as an involuntary response to a dangerous situation. When we face a situation which our brain is incapable of handling, it puts the body on alert by producing hormones which are required in fight or flight situation, which are:

- Increased blood pressure.
- Rapid heartbeat.
- Reduced blood supply to the skin.
- Cessation of digestive activities.
- Increase perspiration.
- Additional release of sugar into the system to cope up with the additional energy requirement.
- Decrease in immune system’s functions to preserve it for later action.

All these actions are a perfect requirement if we come across a physically stressful situation, like being attacked by a large predator, but most unbefitting in a classroom scenario.
All these actions which are mentioned above have a very long-lasting negative effect if these stressful situations are to become frequently occurring feature. They may lead to the following serious and even fatal conditions:

- Depression and anxiety.
- Alcoholism.
- Drug dependency.
- Congenital heart diseases.
- Stress related Diabetes.

In relation to the profession of teaching, where a teacher is viewed as dispensers of knowledge; teachers are perceived as facilitators or managers of knowledge. They work in a constant socially isolated environments surrounded by hostile views and sometimes threat of physical abuse, and at the same time under a constant fear and threat of accountability for each and every action of both own self and that of the pupil. This alone can be a sufficient cause for stress for an individual, but in the case of a teacher it is multiplied by other factors as well.

4.4. CAUSES OF STRESS FOR TEACHERS

From the outside teaching seems all together a different job with summer vacations, winter vacations, but considering everything that a teacher has to go through everyday all these days off do not do much to get a teacher back
in the right frame of mind. According to a research the major causes of teacher stress are:

- Excessive working hours
- Excessive workload
- Rising class sizes
- Pressures due to inspection
- Changes in curriculum & courses
- Changes to assessment & testing requirements
- Poor management
- Workplace bullying
- Crumbling schools
- Pupil misbehavior
- Risk of violence from pupils, parents and intruders
- Lack of support with bureaucracy, form filling and routine tasks
- Lack of job security due to redundancy and fixed term contracts
- Lack of control over the job
- Threat to early retirement arrangements
- Denigration of profession by politicians & media
- Lack of public esteem
4.5. METHODS OF IDENTIFYING STRESS

Identification is the first step towards correction; with this belief in mind it is strongly advised that a teacher should understand the implications of stress on his personal health and social life. The best ways to have stress identified easily is to remain active in his social circle and readily accept any recent psychological or behavioral change observed by the others.

It is also possible to keep a track of own changes by maintaining a self checklist. This will help in establishing changes in ideas and opinions over a period of time. This will show a clear picture of how the work place environment have affected your thinking gradually and with the help of your friends, colleagues and relatives, you can change the effects of stress on your life.

4.5.1. Self Analysis

The best way is to keep a check on your own health, attitude and behavior. Any change in these should be noted and necessary remedial measures be taken immediately to overcome this situation. The self stress checklist given at appendix 1 can be a helpful aid in determining the change in attitude which can be useful for determining the own state.
4.5.2. Mutual Analysis

Another way is to maintain close liaison with other members of the faculty and discuss the irritants that are creating problems or are likely to create stress for the teachers. This is one way to identify and eradicate the issues which are likely to become the cause of stress beforehand. The faculty members or an organization of teachers can benefit the affected teacher with each other’s experience.

4.5.3. Organizational Role

The organization can also play a positive role in helping their teachers in identifying the causes of stress within their schools. Problems such as isolation and disruptive behavior on the part of students and their parents can very conveniently be handled at the top level by the management amicably without putting the teacher in a stressful situation.

4.6. REMEDIAL MEASURES

Some elements of stress are intrinsic while others are situational in the profession of teaching. The teacher has to understand how to cope with those which are intrinsic, while the situational ones can be managed with experience and common sense.
4.6.1. Individual Measures

When a person decides to adopt the teaching profession, he or she during the training phase must realize the demands of this profession in terms of effort involved and in terms of time investment. The workload on a teacher will always be great and everything will always be bracketed by a very tight time schedule. A teacher has to be punctual and able to meet the deadline without fail. A teacher will have to always face the criticism of parents of the weak students and face the school board with a different set of problems.

A sensible teacher must know where to draw a line to prevent his social and personal life from being absorbed by his professional life. Though it is very difficult to leave the stresses of the school in the office and not let it affect their personal life, but there are methods which can help a teacher to reduce these effects.

4.6.2. Adopt a Hobby

It is very important for a teacher to have a hobby which is totally different from what he does at school. Music, gardening, hiking and painting are a few examples of hobbies which a teacher may adopt. These can give them an outlet and take their minds off from the problems that they face at school. This is one way of getting the day’s stress off from one’s minds.
4.7. LINK BETWEEN JOB STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Several studies have tried to determine the link between stress and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction and job stress are the two hot focuses in human resource management researches. According to Stamps & Piedmonte (1986) job satisfaction has significant relationship with job stress. One study of general practitioners in England identified four job stressors that were predictive of job dissatisfaction (Cooper, et al., 1989). In other study, Vinokur-Kaplan (1991) stated that organization factors such as workload and working condition were negatively related with job satisfaction. Fletcher & Payne (1980) identified that a lack of satisfaction can be a source of stress, while high satisfaction can alleviate the effects of stress. This study reveals that, both of job stress and job satisfaction were found to be interrelated.

The study of Landsbergis (1988) and Terry et al. (1993) showed that high levels of Occupational stress are associated with low levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, Cummins (1990) have emphasized that job stressors are predictive of job dissatisfaction and greater propensity to leave the organization.
4.8. EYSENCK’S PERSONALITY INVENTORY AND THE FOUR TEMPERAMENTS

British psychologist Hans Jurgen Eysenck (1916-97) was born in Berlin. A Jewish sympathiser, he left Germany in 1934 for England, where he studied and later taught psychology at London University. He became a prolific writer in the field of clinical psychology and also had a great interest in psychometrics. He disagreed with the principles of psychoanalysis and preferred the (at times controversial) view that genetics (inherited factors - our genes) are significant in determining the psychological differences between people, and more besides.

Eysenck used extensive research and questionnaires to build a personality inventory which he related to Galen’s Four Temperaments. The fit is not perfect with the more recent interpretations of the Four Temperaments (Keirsey, Myers Briggs®) but there are certainly many common aspects between the Eysenck and Galen models.

Within which are several key words of graduated significance relative to the heading elements (Eysenck presented this as a four-quadrant circle containing his describing words, rather than the matrix shown here). The colors merely reflect those used in the Four Temperaments section for ease of comparison and do not appear in Eysenck’s theory:
TABLE NO. 4.1.

TABLE SHOWING EYSENCK PERSONALITY INVENTORY SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stable-extraverted (unemotional-extravert)</th>
<th>stable-introverted (unemotional-introvert)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sociable outgoing talkative responsive easy-going lively carefree leadership (sanguine)</td>
<td>calm even-tempered reliable controlled peaceful thoughtful careful passive (phlegmatic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unstable-introvert (emotional-introvert)</td>
<td>unstable-extravert (emotional-extravert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moody anxious rigid sober pessimistic reserved unsociable quiet (melancholic)</td>
<td>touchy restless aggressive excitable changeable impulsive optimistic active (choleric)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eysenck personality inventory

4.9. JOB INVOLVEMENT

Job involvement has emerged an important variable in organizational research. It has drawn the attention of management scientist and organizational psychologists. This variable is being studied with different prospective in the organization. It has great importance and significance in organizational development. Large numbers of studies have been conducted to see the job involvement among organizational employees.

Inclination for an individual's action is determined by possible expected results and the relationship between the results and the action adopted. To take a different approach, job involvement for a teacher is determined by
his/her expectancy level, which results in incentives for action. The results of this interaction are displayed in. If expectations are lower than the inducement provided by the institution, job involvement will increase. On the other hand, when expectations are higher than the inducement provided by the organization then job involvement will decrease.

4.10. JOB ANXIETY SCALE

All of us experience stress in life and one of the commonest reaction to stress is anxiety. Any situation that threatens the well being of the organism produces a state of anxiety. Conflict and frustration that blocks the individual’s attachment of his/her goal provides another source of anxiety. Anxiety but worry, apprehension, fear or tension, we all experience. All of us react differently to different situation. The extent of response varied from individual to individual. Freud differentiated between objective anxiety and neurotic anxiety. Objective anxiety is a realistic response to perceived danger in the environment, whereas neurotic anxiety is stemmed from an unconscious conflict within an individual.

Most of these tests are inventories or scales, where the respondent gives responses to statements given in the test. Certain personality tests also cover the dimension of anxiety where depending upon the scores acquired, the individual is classified as mildly anxious to highly anxious.