

Occupational Stress and Professional Burnout among School Teachers in Mumbai City

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the occupational stress and the professional burnout of school teachers. The locale of the study was Mumbai City of Maharashtra State. The sample of the study was from 20 schools selected through stratified random sampling technique. Occupational stress rating scale and Professional Burnout rating scales were used. Content Analysis was used to analyze the data obtained through the rating scales. The results revealed that the percentage of school teachers who experience low, moderate and high levels of occupational stress are 26.07 percent, 60.84 percent and 15.92 percent respectively. The results also revealed that the percentage of school teachers experiencing low, moderate and high levels of occupational burnout are 13.30 percent, 70.68 percent and 16.02 percent respectively. Also, the analysis showed strong support for the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between the occupational stress and professional burnout of school teachers.

Key terms: Occupational stress, Professional Burnout

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the building blocks of a person's future. They bring out the curiosity to learn of a child at a young age. Teachers commit their time, effort and expertise in order to provide everything that a student needs to get a high-quality education. Traditionally, teaching was a combination of information-dispensing, custodial child care and sorting out academically inclined students from others. The underlying model for schools was an education factory in which adults, paid hourly or daily wages, kept like-aged youngsters sitting still for standardized lessons and tests. Teachers were told what, when, and how to teach. They were required to educate every student in exactly the same way and were not held responsible when many failed to learn. They were expected to teach using the same methods as past generations, and any deviation from traditional practices was discouraged by supervisors or prohibited by myriad education laws and regulations. Thus, many teachers simply stood in front of the class and delivered the same lessons year after year, growing gray and weary of not being allowed to change what they were doing. Many teachers today, however, are encouraged to adapt and adopt new practices that acknowledge both the art and science of learning. They understand that the essence of education is a close relationship between a knowledgeable, caring adult and a secure, motivated child.

They grasp that their most important role is to get to know each student as an individual in order to comprehend his or her unique needs, learning style, social and cultural background, interests, and abilities. Teachers have to be committed to relating to youngsters of many cultures, including those young people who, with traditional teaching, might have dropped out -- or have been forced out -- of the education system. Their job is to counsel students as they grow and mature -- helping them integrate their social, emotional, and intellectual growth -- so the union of these sometimes-separate dimensions yields the abilities to seek, understand, and use knowledge; to make better decisions in their personal lives; and to value contributing to society. They must be prepared and permitted to intervene at any time and in any way to make sure learning occurs. Rather than see themselves solely as masters of subject matter such as history, math, or science, teachers increasingly understand that they must also inspire a love of learning. The day-to-day job of a teacher, rather than broadcasting content, is becoming one of designing and guiding students through engaging learning opportunities. An educator's most important responsibility is to search out and construct meaningful educational experiences that allow students to solve real-world problems and show they have learned the big ideas, powerful skills, and habits of mind and heart that meet agreed-on educational standards. The result is that the abstract, inert knowledge

that students used to memorize from dusty textbooks comes alive as they participate in the creation and extension of new knowledge. Thus, teachers not only have the stress of dealing with so many diverse children on a daily basis, but they are also charged with educating and helping to mold these children into productive members of society. With rules, regulations, guidelines, and performance expectations all around teachers can have very high levels of stress. The job is very demanding in that it has hardly any end. Quite often teachers must take their work home overnight or on the weekends in order to be prepared for the next class section. Teacher stress also affects the school climate and makes educators reluctant to be involved in the school community or take extra steps to engage with parents. Recent research also has shown that teacher stress levels have a significant effect on student behavior, creating a “burnout cascade”. Thus, this research study was conducted to **investigate the occupational stress and professional burnout among teachers in schools of Mumbai City.**

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In light of the fact, it was found that there is paucity of research linking occupational stress and professional burnout of the school teachers in the Indian context. For example, the studies by Azeem and Nazir (2008) limited their research to investigate the level of professional burnout among the university teachers and found that they are having high levels of emotional exhaustion. Pandey and Tripathi (2001) examined the level of perceived occupational stress and burnout in 56 engineering college male teachers. Srivastava and Pandey (2000) examined the relationship between role conflict and tension among 100 school employees. Vijayalakshmi (2004) studied the influence of teaching cadre, level of school, type of school and management on the stress of 220 women teachers. Thus, the few studies available in the Indian context do not exclusively focus on the occupational stress and professional burnout of the school teachers in Mumbai. The present study is an endeavor to investigate the occupational stress and professional burnout of the school teachers in Mumbai.

Statement of the Problem

The research is aimed to examine the relationship between occupational stress and professional burnout of teachers working in schools of Mumbai City.

Aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to conduct a comparative analysis of occupational stress and professional burnout among school teachers of Mumbai City.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the percentage of school teachers with low, moderate and high levels of occupational stress.
2. To identify the percentage of school teachers with low, moderate and high level of professional burnout.
3. To find out the relationship between the dimensions of occupational stress and professional burnout of school teachers.

Research Questions

1. What are the percentage of school teachers with low, moderate and high level of occupational stress?
2. What are the percentage of school teachers with low, moderate and high levels of professional burnout?

Hypotheses of the Study

There is significant relationship between the dimensions of the occupational stress and the dimensions of the professional burnout of the teachers working in the schools of Mumbai City.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Design – This study was established using correlational survey methods of research since the main goal was to investigate the relationship between occupational stress and professional burnout of school teachers.

Sample of the Study – Stratified random sampling is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller sub-groups known as strata. In this study the populations of teachers were divided on the basis of their school affiliation. These schools are affiliated to Maharashtra State Board (SSC Board), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate of Secondary Association (ICSE) and International Baccalaureate (IB). 100 teachers working in the sample schools were taken as the sample of the study.

Tools and techniques used for data collection – This study was conducted by using rating scales. The rating scales used were the Workplace Stress Scale and the Professional Burnout Rating Scale.

Procedure of data collection-The survey was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed online to randomly selected 5 State Board affiliated schools, 5 Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) affiliated schools, 5 Indian Certificate of Secondary Association (ICSE) affiliated schools and 5 International Baccalaureate (IB) affiliated schools in Mumbai City. A total of 300 rating scales were administered to the school teachers. Among 300 rating scales administered, only 100 were returned by email because of absence.

Procedure of data analysis - Descriptive Survey method is used in the study. The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as mean, SD, mean ± 1 SD, correlation and stepwise multiple regression analysis with the help of SPSS package.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Answering of Research Questions

RQ 1. What are the percentage of school teachers with low, moderate and high level of occupational stress?

From table-1, it is observed that the majority of teachers working in the schools of Mumbai city experience moderate and high levels of occupational stress due to organizational structure and climate (84.72 %), personal and professional efficiency (60.10 %), intra and interpersonal interactions (62.09 %), environmental factors (62.52 %) and occupational stress as a whole (76.76 %). Subsequently, 15.29 percent of teachers owing to organizational structure and climate dimension, 39.90 percent of teachers owing to personal and professional efficiency, 37.38 percent of teachers owing to intra and interpersonal interactions, 37.49 percent of teachers owing to environmental factors and 26.07 percent of teachers owing to occupational stress dimension as a whole, experience low level of occupational stress.

Table-1: Percentage of Teachers Working in the Schools with Low, Moderate and High Levels of Occupational Stress

Sr. No.	Responsible for stress	Low	Moderate	High
1	Organizational Structure and Climate	15.29	65.45	19.27
2	Personal and Professional Efficiency	39.90	45.65	14.45
3	Intra and Interpersonal Interactions	37.38	47.64	14.45
4	Environmental Factors	37.49	46.60	15.92
5	Occupational Stress as a Whole	26.07	60.84	15.92

RQ 2. What are the percentage of school teachers with low, moderate and high levels of professional burnout?

It is noted from table-2, the majority of the school teachers experience moderate level of professional burnout due to emotional exhaustion (68.38 %), depersonalization (66.07 %), personal accomplishment (64.82 %) and, professional burnout as a whole (70.68 %). High level of professional burnout was experienced by 19.06 percent of school teachers due to depersonalization followed by 17.80 percent teachers owing to reduced personal accomplishment, 16.02 percent due to professional burnout dimension as a whole and 14.35 percent due to emotional exhaustion. Further, the minority of the school teachers experience a low level of professional burnout due to emotional exhaustion (17.28 %), depersonalization (14.87 %), personal accomplishment (17.38 %) and professional burnout dimension as a whole (13.30 %).

Table-2: Percentage of Teachers Working in the Schools with Low, Moderate and High Levels of Professional Burnout

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Low	Moderate	High
1	Emotional Exhaustion	17.28	68.38	14.35
2	Depersonalization	14.87	66.07	19.06
3	Personal Accomplishment	17.38	64.82	17.80
4	Professional Burnout as a Whole	13.30	70.68	16.02

Testing of hypothesis

There is significant relationship between the dimensions of the occupational stress and the dimensions of the professional burnout of the teachers working in the schools of Mumbai City.

Relationship between the Dimensions of Occupational Stress and Professional Burnout of School Teachers

To find out the relationship between occupational stress and professional burnout of school teachers, correlations have been worked out and presented in *Table-3*

Table-3 Correlation between the Dimensions of Occupational Stress and Professional Burnout of School Teachers

O.S .S P.B	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment	Professional Burnout as a Whole
Organizational Structure and Climate	0.199**	0.241**	0.217**	0.252**
Personal and Professional Efficiency	0.169**	0.212**	0.210**	0.227**
Intra and Interpersonal Interactions	0.198**	0.185**	0.185**	0.219**
Environmental Factors	0.241**	0.230**	0.232**	0.271**
Occupational Stress as a Whole	0.230**	0.248**	0.241**	0.276**

Note : ** Significant at 0.01 level / **p<0.01

From table 1- it is clear that the first dimension of the occupational stress i.e., organizational structure and climate has significant and positive relationship with all the dimensions of the professional burnout i.e., emotional exhaustion (0.199), depersonalization (0.241), personal accomplishment (0.217) and professional burnout as a whole (0.252) as the calculated R values are significant at 0.01 level. Similar type of relationship is observed between all the other dimensions of occupational stress i.e., personal and professional efficiency, intra and interpersonal interactions, environmental factors and occupational stress as a whole and the dimensions of the professional burnout i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment and professional burnout as a whole. Thus, the stated hypothesis, 'there is a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of the occupational stress and the

dimensions of the professional burnout of the teachers working in the schools of Mumbai City' is accepted. From the results, it is observed that the school teachers reporting high occupational stress owing to organizational structure and climate, personal and professional efficiency, intra and interpersonal interactions, environmental factors and occupational stress as a whole will report higher level of professional burnout because of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment and professional burnout as a whole. For example, the school teachers reporting higher levels of work stress owing to intra and interpersonal interactions will also report higher levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment and professional burnout as a whole and vice versa. The results of Wu et al. (2008) on doctors; Pandey and Tripathi (2001) on engineering college teachers; Reddy (2007) on special education teachers; Kaur and Kaur (2007); Misra (1986) on secondary school teachers and Idris (2009) on Malaysian university teachers supported the present findings, where significant positive relationship was found between the occupational stress and professional burnout.

DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS

As the majority of the school teachers are experiencing stress due to organizational structure and climate, it is paving way to follow stress reduction interventions. The interventions like changing the work environment will reduce the stressors arising out of the organizational structure and climate of the school institutions in which the teachers are working. Also, the school teachers are challenged with work overload. This may be because of understaffing. It is observed that in many of the State and Central schools in India, 40 percent of the teaching posts are vacant and are not filled. This can be checked out by filling up the vacancies in the school institutions and recruiting adequate supportive staff. Further, the school administration should provide adequate facilities to carry out the teaching-learning activities. Moreover, the school administration and school management should involve the staff during the decision making process and supervisory activities must be supportive to discharge the responsibilities of junior staff rather than showing authority over them. In addition, opportunities for promotion and career development shall be arranged. Similarly, the rules and regulations should be relaxed to promote autonomy in the workplace. Objectivity and transparency should be observed in staff selections and promotions so as to develop work ethics, which is one of the essential aspects to reduce stress among the staff at the school in India.

Several researches has been conducted to reduce stress in teachers such as introduction of stress management programmes, for e.g., emotional intelligence training which helps the teachers to be self-aware of the abilities and skills required for the range of roles, responsibilities and demands of their work, manage emotional reactions to specific situations and people, accurately pick-up on emotions in other people and react to others emotions and understanding others needs and, socially skilled enough to use awareness of one's own emotions and the emotions of others to manage interactions successfully. Also, Steel (2001) suggested introducing staff support for teachers through supervision in the field of education. Supervision in other helping professions has been successful in providing support, changing perceptions, managing emotions and coping with stressful situations and in doing so has improved relationships with others and work performance. In addition to these, the cognitive behavioral programme to enhance teacher stress management shall be taught to overcome stress. In this technique, the individual is encouraged to reappraise or restructure the stressful situations so that they are no longer stressful by removing cognitive distortion such as over-generalizing, magnifying and personalization and introducing assertiveness training (Travers and Cooper, 1996).

Further, the Employee Assistance Programs or Counseling Services shall be adopted by the school administration apart from organizing yoga classes and sports activities regularly to reduce the stressors in teachers. With regard to the professional burnout, the majority of the school teachers are experiencing moderate and high levels of burnout. For this, the schools should develop mechanisms to detect the stressors causing strain in school teachers. Further, in order to reduce professional burnout, Greenglass and Burke (2003) suggested social support, where it is seen as the exchange of information leading a person to believe that he /she is cared for. It can also involve provision of information, tangible, practical and for emotional help. Social support may also moderate the impact of stressors on burnout so as to assist people with high stress to cope better. Thus, the colleagues and the Principal should be motivated to support the teachers adequately in their teaching activities in order to reduce burnout.

Further, the administration should be supportive and facilitative rather than authoritative. Also, low self-efficacy is a central factor in the etiology of burnout (Cherniss, 1990). High self-efficacy was associated with lower emotional exhaustion, less cynicism, less depression and anxiety (Greenglass and Burke, 2000). Thus, there is a need to improve the self-efficacy of the school teachers which acts as a personal resource, reflecting the person's optimistic self-beliefs about being able to deal with critical demands by means of adaptive actions. It can also be regarded as an optimistic view of one's capacity to deal with stress (Greenglass and Burke, 2003). In order to reduce burnout caused due to

reduced personal accomplishment, the school teachers should be motivated to set goals and should be supported to achieve the goal. The work should be allotted in such a manner that suits to their skill and interest which will give scope to accomplish the task which in-turn will improve their optimistic behavior. Also, involving the school teachers in group discussions and decision – making process will enhance their social interaction which will lead to accomplish the task allotted. Further, the results revealed a significant positive relationship between occupational stress and professional burnout. Thus, to prevent professional burnout of the school teachers, their occupational stress should be checked from time to time. Also, occupational stress has predicted the professional burnout of the school teachers which once again recommend the policy makers, national bodies, educational administrators & teachers and researchers to work towards managing the stressors causing prolonged stress in school teachers which in turn prevent their burnout. The prevention and management of workplace stress requires organizational level interventions, because it is the organization that creates the stress. Further, several stress management techniques such as emotional intelligence training, cognitive behavioral management techniques, social supportive systems, counseling services, yoga and sports activities should be introduced. Success in managing and preventing stress will depend on the culture in the organization. At school level, the culture of openness and understanding, rather than of criticism, is essential.

Implications of the Study –

This research will help in identifying the relationship between the dimensions of occupational stress and professional burnout of the teacher working in the schools of Mumbai City. This research will benefit the educational institutions to improve the workplace culture in order to reduce occupational stress of teachers. It will also benefit the teachers to identify the stress triggers and effectively work in reducing it, in order to avoid professional burnout at the workplace. It will benefit the curriculum planners to plan a concise curriculum which suits the needs of the learner and the society and feasible for the teachers to accomplish the objectives using their skills and knowledge. This research will benefit the research students to use it for further research references.

Suggestions for further Research -

The empirical study in this research was restricted to twenty schools located across Mumbai, wherein the opinions of 100 teachers were studied. Therefore, the scope of this study was limited to Mumbai City, and more specifically to those offering State Board (SSC Board), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate of Secondary Association (ICSE) and International Baccalaureate (IB) affiliated schools. Since the sample of the study was limited to Mumbai city, further research can be conducted with more samples derived from schools in various parts of the different countries. The study can also be conducted with variables such as age, gender, educational qualifications, working experience and economic factors.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a need for organizational level interventions like emotional intelligence training, cognitive behavioral management techniques, counseling services, yoga and sports activities. Principals and supervisors should develop the culture of openness and understanding, investigate the causes for stress and evaluate the organizational climate of the school. Administration should provide adequate facilities to teachers, so that they can work and concentrate on their job. There should be equal opportunities of promotion and career development classes, time to time performance appraisal is needed. So to conclude, occupational stress and professional burnout is a problem which should be addressed, prevented and treated.

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