

“A Study on Stress among 8TH – 12TH Std. School Teachers (In Selected Schools in Chennai)”

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Background of the study:

The stress is caused by both external factors like environment, the people around us, etc. and also by internal factors like ability, health condition, and willingness to accept the challenges. Stress is present in every job.

The heart breaking incident which took place in Chennai city school made the researcher to take this particular topic. The incident was about a teacher who was stabbed to death in the classroom of the private school on Thursday Feb 9th 2012, allegedly by a 15-year-old student who was upset at being repeatedly reprimanded by her for not doing well in studies (Deccan Herald 2012). In this case why should the teacher scold the student for not doing well in the exam? Was the student reprimanded for doing poorly in the studies or was the teacher under pressure of some kind if any may be due to many reasons like the behaviour of the student, work pressure, family problems etc. and the real cause for developing a poor relationship with the student.

Literature Review:

Stress is a multidimensional and multi-level phenomenon which is influenced by personal, situational or structural factors. Stress is recognized as an occupational disease resulting in significant human illness, both physical and psychological (Quick, Nelson, & Quick, 2001). The word stress was derived from the Latin word *stringere*, meaning to draw tight, and was used to describe hardships and affliction in the 17th century. **Do teachers experience stress?** Van der Linde (1992) refers to an investigation done by Wilson in 1979 in San Diego California where it was found that 90% of teachers experienced some form of stress and that 95% of them indicated the need for stress management training.

Teachers stress:

Teacher stress is described as any characteristic of the school environment that poses a threat to the teacher (Sutton, 1984). Teacher stress is defined as experiences in teachers of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from some aspect of their work as teachers (Kyriacou, 2001). The amount of research on teacher stress has increased steadily, and has now become a major research topic in many countries (Vandenberghe and Huberman, 1999; Kyriacou, 2001; Hanizah, 2003).

Causes of Stress for Teachers:

- Excessive working hours
- Excessive workload
- Rising class sizes
- Poor management
- Workplace bullying
- Crumbling schools
- Pupil misbehaviour

Methods of Identifying Stress:

- Self Analysis
- Mutual Analysis
- Organizational Role
- Remedial Measures
- Individual Measures
- Adopt a Hobby
- Adopting Healthy Habits

WORK STRESS:

Several studies had been undertaken to examine the prevalence, level and major sources of work stress among school teachers. The health of teacher could be seriously affected by stress. Moreover, apart from teachers themselves, work stress suffered by them can also adversely affect their students and the learning environment.

Emotional:

An emotionally competent teacher learns and applies skills to manage stress, improve self-esteem, confidence, personal change, decision making, leadership, assertion, comfort and commitment which raises the quality of teaching along with health and well-being (Nelson et al. 2005). But unfortunately many teachers often experience negative emotions than positive ones. Negative emotions, such as, anxiety interferes in cognitive capacity for processing information, while positive emotions increase creative capacity for generating new ideas and ability to handle difficulties (Frederickson 2001). This is why the capacity to identify, understand and regulate both positive and negative emotions is indispensable in teaching profession, in order to use and generate emotions to favour well-being by overcoming stress.

Change In Behaviour:

Teachers have varied responses to stress. Some teachers develop confrontational strategies, others experience changes in behaviour, emotional responses, or physical or physiological responses. Teachers confront classroom stress resulting from student discipline with strategies such as behaviour modification, removing the student from class, scolding the child, etc. If confrontational strategies do not work, teachers often experience personal changes in behaviour to cope with the stress. Most behaviour changes that occur as a result of stressors are very unhealthy to the teacher. These changes can include smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, unwanted outbursts of anger, sedentary lifestyle, and sleeping problems (Guglielmi&Tatrow, 1998).

Health Problems:

Chronic stress symptoms may also occur if stress continues to be present in the day to day activities of a teacher. These symptoms include fatigue, increased illness, and the inability to concentrate. A survey of 762 teachers and lecturers by the ATL and the Teacher Support Network (TSN) found that demands on staff and their time at all levels have increased over the past five years. More than two thirds (70%) of the teachers and lecturers surveyed said their health has suffered because of their job, and over 50% are stressed by working in education. The health impact is even higher among school leaders and heads of department with 75% and 73% respectively complaining. Female teachers (72%) admit to suffering more than male (66%).

Students:

Teacher-learner relationships are the third highest factor causing stress to teachers. Teachers under stress can induce stress in their students and colleagues (Brown & Ralph, 1998). Teachers under stress can exhibit behaviour changes that can affect and disrupt the learning of students in their classrooms. If several teachers in one school have high levels of stress, there is potential for the entire school to be affected in a negative manner (Brown & Ralph).

Family Stress:

Family stress has the most important impact on perceived health status with middle school teachers. One of the teachers shared with us: "The pressure from the family to meet their financial needs becomes the most challenging issue. Family members have their increasing expectations and it is so frustrating to struggle to meet their needs with a meager salary. It is very stressful and at times we feel exhausted and tired of our own life" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

Colleagues / Management/ Administrative / Principal:

Negative interpersonal relations and the absence of support from colleagues or superiors can be significant stressors for employees. Several international studies have highlighted that teachers perceive the implementation of the inclusive model as having insufficient support resources, the policies were confused and that inclusion had been imposed from the top, without adequate consultation. Several studies have also

highlighted that teachers feel that they have a lack of control and decision-making powers due to the hierarchical nature of bureaucratic structures at school which concentrates power in the hands of a few

Physical/ Physiological/ Stress:

Some physical symptoms of stress include fatigue, tiredness, overworked, burn out, headaches, stomach aches, chest pains, sleepiness (Blasé, 1982), trembling hands, shortness of breath, dizziness, restlessness, cold sweats, ill health, confused thoughts or difficulty concentrating, loss of memory, loss of appetite, trouble falling asleep, and the ability to hold productive conversations with colleagues. Some physiological symptoms of stress include an increase in blood pressure, heart rate and or cortisol, irregular heartbeat, and nervousness (Bacharach, Bauer, & Conley, 1986).

Coping With Stress:

Common positive strategies teachers use to alleviate stress include exercise, social resources, avoidance, reading, hobbies, movement, and meditation (Gulwadi, 2006). Teachers seek support from family, friends, and colleagues in order to receive advice, discuss feelings, get emotional support, get sympathy and understanding, and to talk about their feelings. Teachers who have more support within their personal lives tend to experience less stress in the workplace.

Scope of the study :

In this the scope of the study is limited to the factors causing stress, its impact on their family life, work life, health and also on students.

Importance of the study:

- a. To know the whether the stress is caused by work, family, students or by management or colleagues
- b. To know the factor causing work related stress
- c. To know how they manage stress
- d. To know the emotional suffering, Physical sufferings faced by them
- e. To know the amount of support they get from their colleagues, Management and family.
- f. To the school management to take necessary care on teachers work load
- g. The education department while framing certain rules or reconstructing the syllabus they would take the opinion of the experienced teachers.
- h. The society should not take teaching job as easy. It deals with the minds of young people who become great leaders in future.
- i. The government should frame policy to over come the problems faced by teachers.
- j. The private school teachers should give wages equal to govt. pay.

Limitations of the study:

- a. Time constraint
- b. The sample size was limited to 200 school teachers
- c. The Respondent's opinion could be biased because it was issued through management.

Data Collection:

The questionnaire was framed by referring to the old thesis done by Jeffrey Sprenger on the heading "STRESS AND COPING BEHAVIOURS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS". And the questionnaire was modified to suit the Indian style and culture. The questionnaire was issued to the teachers through the management or through the Principals of the schools

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the personal information about the teachers, which will be helpful in making comparisons for the study. The second part has 9 subdivisions They are:

- Managing stress
- Causes of work related stress
- Student related stress
- Emotional sufferings

- Physical sufferings
- Illness symptoms
- Management
- Colleagues
- Family related stress.

Findings:

- The primary data was collected from 75% of Female and 25 % of male respondents.
- 62% of respondent's place of birth was outside Chennai and only 38% belong to Chennai.
- The primary data was collected from 62% of Private school teachers and 38% of public School teachers.
- 43% of respondents belong to the age group of 41- 50, and 31% of respondents belong to the age group of 31-40, 14% of respondents belong to the age group of 20-30 and only 12% belong to the age group of 51- 60.
- 51% of teachers have completed UG or PG, 28% of the teachers have completed B.Ed. or M.Ed., and 21% of the teachers have completed M.Phil.
- The primary data has been collected from 62% of experienced teachers, 22% of young teachers and 16% of senior teachers in Chennai Schools.
- The data has been collected from teachers who handle 78% (31- 60) of class strength, 14% (1-30) of class strength and 8 % (61- 90) of class strength.

Test of difference results using Chi – Square:

- ✓ The poor pay does not cause work related stress to the school teachers. But when comparison is made between the genders, male school teachers feel poor pay cause them stress compared to the female school teachers.
- ✓ The female teachers feel more stressed when they need to do their house hold work after school hours.
- ✓ Taking care of their children after school hours does not cause stress to the teachers.
- ✓ The problems in their family affect the school work of the female teachers.
- ✓ The public school teachers feel that pressure from administration cause them work stress. The private school teacher says pressure from administration does not cause them work stress.
- ✓ The behaviour of the students cause stress to the school teachers.
- ✓ School teachers seek support from family, friends and co-workers to manage stress.
- ✓ In general the teachers do not have digestion problem but when we study in depth teachers in the age cadre of 31- 50 have indigestion problem.
- ✓ The most common physical sufferings faced by the teachers of all age cadres are lack of sleep.
- ✓ All school teachers come to school on time.
- ✓ School Teachers strongly agree that waking up late cause stress.
- ✓ In general school teachers do not have difficulty in decision making. But female teachers face difficulties in decision making compared to male school teachers.
- ✓ School teachers strongly agree that meditation or prayer helps them to manage stress.
- ✓ If the class strength / number of students they handle is more than 30 the teachers face tiredness.
- ✓ The school teachers get angry easily.

Test of difference results using Anova:

- ✓ The female school teachers have more health problems than male school teachers.
- ✓ The number of dependents in the family also causes health problems to the school teachers.
- ✓ The school teachers are not affected by multiplicity of stresses like loss of sense of humour, negative thinking, increase irritability, poor concentration etc.
- ✓ The school teachers are not affected by mutual causation of stress like tiredness by work at home, to take care of children's study etc.
- ✓ The school teachers are not affected by negative stress relievers like smoking, taking alcohol, recreational drugs etc.
- ✓ The school teachers face stress when there is no adequate facility.
- ✓ Group support helps the teachers to reduce stress.

- ✓ The school teachers face work and family stress like managing work and family; facing trouble in coping with work and family life and when the level of work is high.
- ✓ Management support / administrative support help the teachers to reduce stress.
- ✓ The subjects handled by the teachers do not cause them stress.
- ✓ The problems caused by colleagues do not create much stress to the school teachers.
- ✓ The school teachers seek the support of their colleagues to take care of their children.
- ✓ Both the private and public school teachers have work stress.

Regression findings show the causative of at least 8 dependent variables.

- ✓ Work related stress; multiplicity of stress; comfortable with work and mutual cause of stress affects the health of the School teachers.
- ✓ The school teachers will be comfortable with their work when they have colleagues support, relaxation techniques.
- ✓ Health problems and multiplicity of stress causes discomfort to the school teachers to do their work.
- ✓ Colleagues support is essential to get the support of the management, to face unfunctional causes of stress and mutual causation of stress and to overcome stress caused by other colleagues.
- ✓ Work and family stress is caused by mutual causation of stress and by work related stress.
- ✓ Work stress is not affected by student's related stress, mutual causes of stress, unfunctional causes of stress, comfortable with work and work related pain.

Suggestions:

- The schools can organise health camps for the benefit of teachers and students.
- The class strength should be made 30. The ratio should be 30:1. It means in a class, for every teacher there must be only 30 students. It will help the teachers to reduce stress. If the class strength is more than 30 it is difficult for the teachers to control the class.
- It is the duty of the school/ management to provide adequate facilities for the teachers. Teachers should be given a peaceful working environment like good class rooms, wash rooms, staff room etc.
- The management could try to create groups of teachers and make them work together. There should be regular change / circulation in the members of the groups to maintain friendly atmosphere. This will help to minimise the false commenting / rumours/ any other issues.
- The management should not show favouritism to a particular teacher alone. This work ethic should be encouraged by the management. All teachers should be treated equally.
- The teachers should be given adequate training and time to change or adopt themselves to the changing situations.
- There should not be over loading of work for a single teacher. Work load should be equal for all. This promotes the value of equality.
- The management can conduct refresher camps for the teachers. They can invite some experts who will help the teachers to come out of their stress and keep them healthy.
- The family members should also support the teachers in their house hold works. Particularly the female teachers need the help of their spouse and other members.

Conclusion:

It is the researcher's opinion after analysing the data collected through questioner. The objective of the study is to find the factors causing stress, assess the impact of stress caused by colleague, stress affecting the family life and students. The physical and mental impact caused by stress and the ways to overcome stress. The researcher found that factors like student's behaviour, waking up late, the class strength / number of students they handle, inadequate facilities, administrative pressure etc. cause them stress. The school teachers seek the support of their family members, friends and colleagues. To overcome stress teachers indulge in meditation or prayer. The teachers face tiredness, indigestion problems because of stress. The researcher suggests that the teachers can engage themselves in yoga, exercises to keep them away from stress. The management should take adequate administrative measures like providing proper working environment, counselling etc. The management should maintain the student teachers ratio (30:1). It helps the teachers to be interactive with their students and make them less stress. The government should implement certain policies regarding the facilities to be provided inside the school, the environment of the school, their minimum pay scale etc.

In the words of Yeats “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” So teachers play a vital role in lighting a lamp in the life of students who come out with millions cluster of colourful lights, to light the lamp in many people’s life. Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions. –Unknown (Google). Teachers are the main source to create a healthy future human resource.

Table 5.5.3 - Student Related Stress

S11S Student Related Stress			
Coefficients(a)			
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients
		B	Beta
3	(Constant)	15.289	
	W13S Work Stress	0.517	0.387
	S4R Stress Relievers	-0.211	-0.182
	U5F Unifunctional Causes Of Stress	0.12	0.144
A	Dependent Variable: S11S Student Related Stress		

Equations:

Student Related Stress = 15.289 + 0.387x1 -0.182x2 + 0.144x3 +e (3)

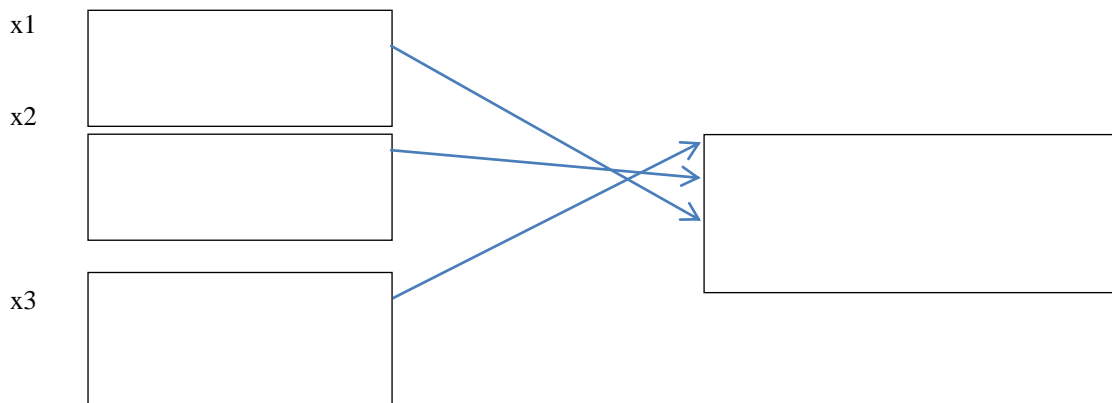


Figure 5.5.3 - Student Related Stress

Inference:

From the equation (3) and the figure (5.5.4) we come to know that Student Related Stress (behaviour of students, now a days students are sensitive, report of violence against teachers, students not listening etc.) is caused by Work Stress (0.387)(changing in professional std., complete syllabus on time, trying to keep work too routine and boring etc) Unifunctional Causes Of Stress (0.144)(changing policies, implementation of new teaching strategies, assessments, students behaviour etc.) and it is not caused by Stress Relievers(-0.182)(smoke, Drinking alcohol, raking recreational drugs etc.)

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