



STRESS AND COPING AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS

Dakshita Sabharwal, Masters in Arts, Counselling Psychology, India

dakshitacounselling@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The secondary research delves into the multifaceted realm of stress among school teachers worldwide, aiming to dissect its causes and unravel the coping mechanisms employed. Once esteemed as a noble profession, teaching has undergone a perceptual shift, emerging as a complex and demanding occupation. The discourse unfolds through an exploration of stressors prevalent among teachers, including poor working conditions, strained relationships within the educational ecosystem, and administrative challenges. Notably, demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, and educational background intersect with stress experiences. While the discussion navigates through divergent findings regarding the relationship between these variables and stress levels, it converges on the consensus that stress among teachers is a pervasive concern with significant implications for both educators and students. The coping strategies delineated encompass a spectrum from seeking emotional support to engaging in leisure activities and spiritual solace. The conclusion reflects on the need for future research to

delve deeper into localized contexts, demographic nuances, and intervention strategies to mitigate the adverse impacts of stress on teacher well-being and educational outcomes.

Keywords: *Stress, Coping, School Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers have been eulogised for almost over decades now. There's nothing that already hasn't been said about them over the years. Yet the glory in which their children bask for the rest of their lives still seems kind of like an understatement to justify their effort, heart and soul that they completely immerse themselves with as a part of their role as a teacher, mentor and guide. Thus, teachers play an instrumental role in laying down the foundation of the education system, for they are the ones with immense power to shape the subsequent generations to come.

The education system in India has undergone paradigm shifts over the years. With its roots in the Gurukul system, students lived with their teachers (Gurus) till the time they attained the skills and knowledge required for life in totality (Dube, 1981). Subsequently drawing from the British, the ideas of formal schooling emerged.

Schooling system in India

In continuation with the same trend, today in India the division of schooling in accordance to the levels of education is as follows. The Pre-school is the first stepping stone for children, a peephole of sorts for the big world out there. Even though educational learning is not compulsory at this level, yet owing to the busy schedules of the parents and in hope of teaching their wards the basic skills, enrolments here are rather high. Private play schools are

essential for the children between the age groups of 18 months to three years with the aim of working on rudimentary skills like fine and gross motor, children enjoy their time learning and playing as well as making new friendships. The Kindergarten system has two divisions i.e. the lower kindergarten which is primarily for children between the age bracket of three to four years while the upper kindergarten includes children who are aged four to five, and this is the transitional phase to the formal system of schooling, where 'learning' begins along with increased hours of being away from their home environment.

The Primary school is concerned with children from classes one to five and the age group spans children who are aged six to ten and children are exposed to the ideas of teachers, peers, subjects and begin to dive into academics as well as extracurricular activities. The Middle school also known as the upper primary school broadly encompass children aged eleven to fourteen belonging to class sixth to eighth and is viewed as a new phase following a transition into a different environment with increased focus on academics. The Secondary school includes grades ninth and tenth (14- to 16-year-olds) which are viewed as the stepping stones for the higher secondary classes for the academic output here is crucial for the selection of streams for the next two years. The Higher secondary or pre-university includes grades 11th and 12th (16- to 18-year olds) considered to be of immense importance, for the selection of colleges and career options rests on this time (British Council, 2014).

In conjunction with the Indian educational system viewed as the largest and most complex system after China (Cheney et al., 2005), it makes sense to talk about the role of the workforce at play in the schools i.e. the teachers. According to the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009), the traditional role of teachers has been redefined and expanded manifold that envisions the teacher as a learner, counsellor, manager, innovator and assessor among other roles (Akhtar, 2017). The National Foundation for Educational Research (February, 2019) suggests that teachers endure great stress emanating

from their job especially when they are compared to individuals with other professions. This is likely to impact the foundation of education itself, for teacher stress has an indelible impact for the students encompassing not just academics but several other areas as well (Jennings & DiPrete, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Stress

Stress is an area that has been researched immensely in the past (Demjaha, Bislimovska & Mijakoshi 2015; Hassan, Rizk & Naser 2018; Solomon et al., 2017; Shumba et al., 2016; Nwimo & Onwunaka, 2015) and continues to be studied even today spanning a number of areas it seems to eclipse like the workplace, academic institutions, family setting, culture and so on. This construct seems to play with the population dynamics by focusing on stress in young children, (Compas, 1987; Compas et al., 2001) adolescents (Compas, 1987; Compas et al., 2001), young adults (Thomée, Härenstam, & Hagberg, 2011), adults (Boardman et al., 2001). and the geriatric population (Krause & Liang 1993), with variations in roles and settings i.e. school (Hussain, Kumar, & Husain, 2008), workplace (Giga, Noblet & Cooper, 2003) as parents (McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002), caregivers (Kim et al., 2006) and so on.

Thus, stress is viewed by and large as ‘unpleasant emotional experiences’ that give rise to subsequent feelings of anxiety, tension, frustration and anger in response to the triggers emerging in the individual’s environment (Kyriacou, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). In addition to the experience of negative emotional experiences, certain predictable changes are bound to occur within the body i.e. changes that manifest through one's overt behaviour, changes with regard to cognition, biochemical changes within the body along with physiological changes, which in turn may be directed either towards effectively dealing with the event causing stress or adapting to its effects.

Hans Selye was the first scientist to identify 'stress' as underlying the nonspecific signs and symptoms of illnesses that frequently occurred among people (Tan, 2018). He had observed these symptoms during the ward rounds in the medical school at University of Prague, where he encountered patients most of whom had many common complaints despite suffering from different illnesses.

It makes sense to accord value to another type of stress i.e. eustress which was coined by Selye (1936) to refer to the stress that emerges when positive events are appraised and the body is subsequently required to adapt and accommodate to them. Consider for instance a teacher who gets a promotion. Though the promotion is viewed in a positive light, nonetheless it requires a great deal of change with regard to the workload, preparation, habits, duties, and often a general change in lifestyle that tags along.

Though eustress plays an adaptive role, distress or stress seems to eclipse different areas of our life. Stressors refer to those events or experiences that cause stress and may thus arise from within a person or from outside her/him through external sources thus ranging from resulting in relatively mild to severe forms of stress. Some of the external stressors are catastrophes like wars, hurricanes, floods, fires, airplane crashes (Galea et al., 2002; Pollack et al., 2006), major life changes like divorce, pregnancy, death of a spouse or family member, personal injury or illness, marital separation, (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), hassles like daily frustration, irritation, disagreements that may be minor in magnitude (Lazarus, 1993; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Psychological stressors range from pressure (Amabile et al., 2002), uncontrollability (Breier et al., 1987; Henderson et al., 2012) to conflict along with frustration and aggression (Dollard et al., 1939; Miller et al., 1941).

Now that the causes of stress have been delineated, it is essential to glance over the process of assessing an event as stressful. Stress is viewed as the by-product of one's appraisal

process. The appraisal process may be understood in two ways i.e. primary and secondary appraisal. During primary appraisal, a person makes an effort to make sense of the event and the consequences it is likely to have for them. Hence, events are likely to be appraised for their threat, harm or challenge that they may pose for the individual. Harm corresponds to the damage that has already happened or taken place. E.g. a teacher may view a situation as a harm when students withdraw from her course. Threat entails understanding the likelihood of future damage that may take place. E.g. Repercussions of high absenteeism among employees in an organisation. Appraising an event as a challenge translates to having the confidence to effectively deal with the stressor likely to uproar. This is associated with comparatively more favourable or positive emotional reactions to the stressor like lower blood pressure for instance among other things (Blascovich, 2008).

Secondary appraisal on the other hand, lay focus on whether the resources of the individual are adequate to cater to the environmental demands of the situation encountered. Individuals feel little or lesser stress when they feel they are endowed with the necessary resources and instead may approach the situation as a challenge as opposed to when an individual feels that the resources available are not sufficient to deal with the situation arisen. Such an experience thus may be viewed as highly stressful.

Walter Cannon (1932) introduced the concepts of flight or fight response. When an individual perceives a threat, his/her body is at an aroused state. The individual is motivated due to the endocrine system and the sympathetic nervous system which seem to be activated. This response which is primarily physiological in nature, aids to prepare the individual to either attack in response to the threat i.e. fight or to escape by fleeing the situation i.e. flight. Even though the fight-or-flight is helpful in the sense that it aids the organism to quickly respond to the threat, it may take a sharp harmful turn owing to the damage being caused to the

physiological and emotional functioning for the individual. Additionally, when the stress is prolonged and untreated, it becomes the breeding ground for several health problems.

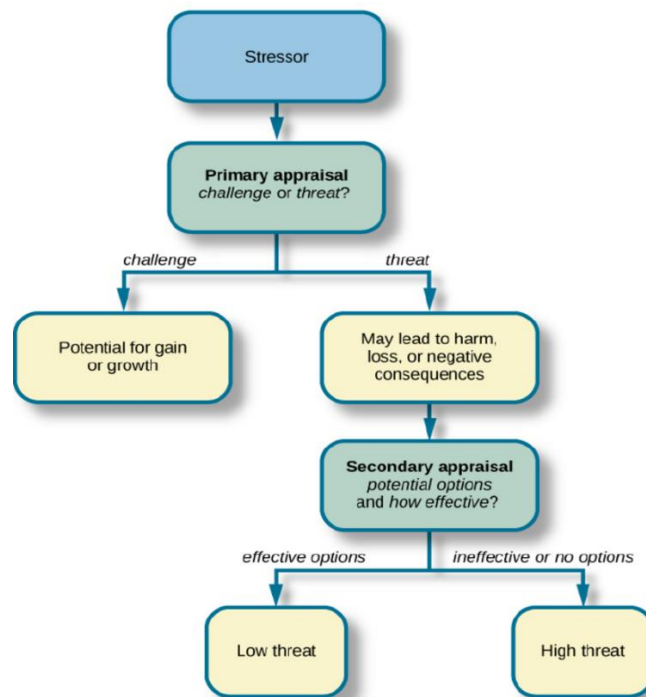


Figure 1

Represents Lazarus's Cognitive Appraisal Approach. According to which an individual responds to a stressor in two ways by cognitively assessing the degree of a potential stressor
(Source: CNX Psychology, Psychology. July 28, 2015)

Hans Selye made another powerful contribution in the domain of stress by proposing the General Adaptation Syndrome, a model of stress that is used till date. For the purpose of understanding the process of stress, Selye introduced the rats to a number of stress causing agents that included extremely cold conditions and fatigue and thereafter studied the physiological responses made by them. It was noted that barring the type of stressor the rats were exposed to, they all essentially produced the same pattern of physiological changes that

included for instance an enlarged adrenal cortex, the ulceration of the stomach and duodenum, and shrinkage of the thymus and lymph glands (Hans Selye, 1956, 1976)

From the findings of the research conducted, Selye (1956) proposed the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). Research revealed that when a stressor is encountered by an individual, she/he prepares oneself for action. He went onto say that the response produced is not specific with regard to the stress causing agent in the sense that barring the cause of the threat, the person will respond with the exact same physiological pattern of reactions. However, with due course in time, with repetitive and prolonged exposure to stress, wear and tear on the system is likely to occur and thereby impact the individual. (Ciccarelli & White, 2014; Selye 2013).

When an individual encounters a noxious stimulus or event, she/he is likely to pass through the following three phases. The alarm reaction phase is not an entire response in itself for the person here, gears up simply to meet the threat which in turn leads to the activation of the sympathetic nervous system. Subsequently, the adrenal glands release hormones that increase heart rate, blood pressure, and the supply of blood sugar, resulting in an outburst of energy which are often viewed as the common physiological changes taking place in the body. Resultants may include fever, nausea, and headache. (Ciccarelli & White, 2014; Selye 2013).

If the stressor persists and the individual does not collapse at this stage, he/she enters the phase of resistance where efforts are made to cope with the threat. The body subsequently settles into sympathetic division activity, where the release of stress hormones continue that help the body fight off, or resist, the stressor. This stage is likely to continue until the stressor ends or the organism has utilised the adequate resources available to her/ him (Ciccarelli & White, 2014).

The last phase is that of exhaustion which occurs if the person fails to overcome the threat and the individual has depleted its physiological resources and the stressor has surpassed the length of time and continued with its intensity. Exhaustion may take the form of stress-related diseases like high blood pressure or a weakened immune system or even death if outside help is unavailable (Stein-Behrens et al., 1994).

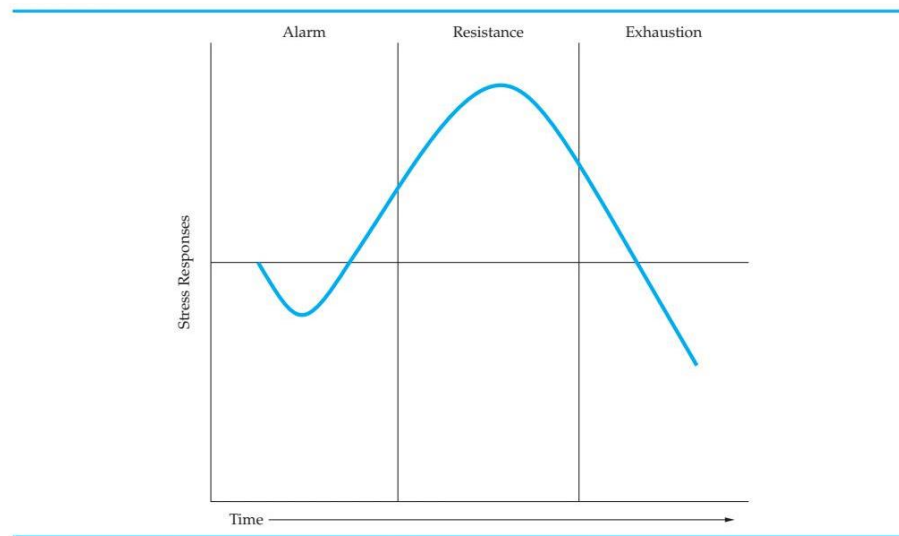


Figure 1.1

Following are the three phases of the GAS model i.e. Alarm reaction, Resistance and Exhaustion, developed by Hans Selye (Source- Health Psychology, 2006).

Stress and its Effects

Now that the process of stress has been understood, it is important to glance over the consequences of stress on us. The emotional effects of stress include increased susceptibility to experience mood swings, distancing from family and friends, display of erratic behaviour. Often stress creates a vicious spiral of reduced confidence, amounting to emotional upheaval

and associated issues. Feelings of anxiety and depression are thus common (NCERT Textbook, 2007).

The physiological effects of stress involve the production of adrenaline and cortisol take place which in turn result in changes in heart rate, blood pressure levels, metabolism and physical activity. Despite its adaptive role for a short period of time, during continued exposure to stress, it can have detrimental effects in the long run. Slowing down of the digestive system, expansion of air passages in the lungs, increased heart rate, and constriction of blood vessels are common (NCERT Textbook, 2007)

Stress impacts us cognitively through mental overload that we are exposed to. Faulty decision making may become common thereby impacting our work, family, social relationships etc. Poor concentration in general and reduced short term memory capacity are common as well (NCERT Textbook, 2007)

The behavioural effects of stress abound as well, culminating in the form of consuming food that is less nutritious, regular consumption of stimulants such as caffeine, increased consumption of cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs such as tranquillisers etc. Typical behavioural effects of stress include disrupted sleep, reduced work performance and increased absenteeism (NCERT Textbook, 2007)

The early researches conducted on stress helped curate how stress leads to poor health. The impact of stress manifests through direct effects on physiology that include high blood pressure, decreased ability of the immune system to fight off infections, and changes in lipid levels and cholesterol, among other changes. While with regard to health behaviors, people who live with chronic stress are likely to have poorer health habits than people who do not, they may even compromise on health habits and impact the psychosocial resources that act as buffers of stress (Ciccarelli & White, 2014).

Coping

In order to manage the stress and deal effectively with it, one needs to cope with it. Coping can be understood as the thinking and associated behaviour patterns that come handy in order to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are viewed as stressful by the organism (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Coping styles are imperative for the focus is on the propensity to deal with stressful events in a particular way. (Ciccarelli & White, 2014). There are a number of coping styles, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. They are as follows- Approach Versus Avoidance, Problem-Focused , Emotion-Focused, Proactive Coping (Ciccarelli & White, 2014).

There are several other ways people can cope with stress and one of them is Coping Interventions devised in order to aid those individuals who could not effectively deal with stress on their own. (Ciccarelli & White, 2014). Some of the interventions that have proved efficacy are as follows, Mindfulness Meditation and Acceptance/Commitment (Brown & Ryan, 2003), Expressive Writing (Pennebaker, 1997), Self-Affirmation (Sherman & Cohen, 2006, for a review), Relaxation Training (Barnes et al., 2004) and Coping Effectiveness Training. Another effective coping mechanism that acts as a protective psychosocial resource is social support. Social ties are emotionally satisfying, aid in successful coping (Taylor, 2011) and have health benefits.

Stress among School Teachers

Now that stress, its causes and effects have been glanced at, the need to understand them within the context of school teachers arises. With regard to the results of the Teacher Wellbeing Index (2018), the epidemic of stress is paving its way through the teachers' workforce and resulting in poor mental health as a consequence (Teacher wellbeing index, 2018). There are

several causes of stress experienced by school teachers. These stressors include role conflict, role ambiguity (Durham, 1976), lack of resources, excessive workload, lack of support from the school (Torf et al., 2011), lack of motivation among students, time pressures, constant evaluation by others, dealings with colleagues, the school administration and management along with frail working conditions (Cooper & Travers 1996; Pithers & Soden, 1998).

These stressors manifest themselves in several ways often taking a toll on the teacher's health and well-being as well as has implications for the students, the classroom, the student teacher relationship which acts as the foundation on which the system of education thrives ensuring effective student learning and teaching (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Teachers seem to engage in on-the-job-retirement, characterised by frequently absenteeism, reduced investment of time in preparation of lessons, alongside distancing themselves from their work and students (Dworkin et al., 1988; Hughes, 2001). Moreover, teachers may even begin to take less personal responsibility for student learning and outcomes (Hughes, 2001; Lens & Neves de Jesus, 1999; Goldberg & Maslach, 1998).

Further, highly stressed teachers are more likely to criticize and scold their students, lose their temper with them, and even pave the way for using punitive discipline strategies as compared to teachers experiencing lower stress (Neves et al., 1999; Yoon, 2002). Stress also causes lack of effective delivery of instructions from the teacher's side which in turn impacts the process of learning and achievement on the student's side (Ransford et al., 2009). When considering the impact of stress for the teacher her/himself, research suggests negative impacts for their physical health (re-occurring illness, difficulties in sleep, unhealthy eating habits, and frequent exhaustion), personal relationships (lack of patience while dealing with the family, irritability exhibited during parenting, unsteady work-life imbalance, and difficulty in maintaining contact with friends), and emotional well-being (feelings of withdrawal, anxiety, irritability, and depression) (Menta et al., 2011). Stress is contributory factor for decreased

overall job satisfaction for teachers. Perhaps increasing the likelihood for students to encounter and interact with teachers who may prefer an alternative career, while in the long-term acting as antecedents to absenteeism, attrition, disengagement and withdrawal (Rosenholtz, 1991).

Coping among School Teachers

Teachers cope in several ways some of which are planned and systematic problem solving, turning to social support, coping that is confrontative in nature, distancing, accepting responsibility, positive reappraisal, escape avoidance (Austin, Shah & Muncer, 2005) suppression of competing behaviour (Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999).

Review of Literature

The following segment examines the research studies conducted to explore the stressors among school teachers along with the coping mechanisms used by them.

Kavita and Hassan (2018) aimed to compare the stress as experienced by the teachers employed in the primary and secondary departments of schools. The results revealed that secondary school teachers experienced more stress when compared to the primary school teachers. Married teachers experienced more stress when compared to those who were unmarried. With regard to age, the bracket of 31-50 years experienced more stress when compared to those who were younger or even older. Finally, teachers who had a teaching experience of 11-15 years experienced more stress as compared to those with less or more experience.

Mohamed (2018) aimed to understand the stressors among school teachers in Turkey. The highest source of stress was the nature of work that the teachers were engaged in followed by

the relationships they had with others i.e. management, teachers, students and their parents. This was followed by the work environment that the teachers were in, followed by their social and educational relations. The least contributing source of stress was their wages and associated incentives.

Hassan, Rizk and Naser (2018) assessed the level of stress experienced along with the process of coping among teachers employed in primary schools. The research revealed that a majority of the teachers were under moderate to high level stress. The primary cause of stress for most was the structure and climate of the school they were associated with. Further the researchers reported the occurrence of a statistically significant positive correlation between the daily working hours of the teacher, overtime hours devoted by them, strength of students in each class, years of work experience and the total score on stress obtained. In addition, teachers heavily relied on emotion focused coping to deal with the emerging stress.

Kebbi (2018) aimed to understand the differences between the stress and coping as experienced by special educators and general classroom teachers. No significant difference between the causes and effects of stress as experienced by general classroom teachers and special educators were reported. In addition, the occurrence of a weak-positive correlation between the sources of stress and associated coping strategies while the effects of stress had a weak-negative correlation with the coping strategies used.

Osagie and Iyore (2018) aimed to delineate the causes of stress, their effects and associated coping utilised by teachers employed in secondary schools in Nigeria. Outcomes of the research mentioned that the level of stress directly impacts the quality of delivery of instruction, negatively impacts job satisfaction and performance at the workplace alongside lowering the morale of teachers, thereby increasing the attrition rate among teachers. The prominent stressors emerged from overburden of work, crowded classrooms, inadequate

working conditions, lack of social support and teaching equipment among other things. Finally, the popular coping mechanism seemed to be garnering emotional support from those individuals who had more experience.

Solomon, Robinson and Catherine (2017) aimed to examine the level of stress among the school teachers in Vellore. Results mentioned that most of the teachers experienced average levels of stress. Further, the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the level of education, years of teaching experience and the level of stress experienced by the teachers was reported. In addition, family income seemed to be a significant predictor for the stress caused by the school teachers.

Clipa (2017) aimed to understand the stress experienced by school teachers and the coping strategies utilized by them. Romanian school teachers seemed to experience high levels of stress due to their profession, thus often finding themselves at the threshold of quitting their job. Coping activities used by them were rather positive in nature like engaging in enjoyable activities. Thus, by employing a more qualified workforce, working towards creating a positive environment in the organization alongside communicating the results of the evaluation process to be conducted, would help diminish stress.

Kaur (2016) examined the stressors among the teachers of Indian government and private schools. Results mentioned that for Government schools stressors like political participation, mid-day meal schemes, additional paper work, additional work handed over by the government, lack of credit for work done, lack of availability of resources and motivation seemed prominent. While for private schools, involvement in clerical work, lack of coordination between the management and staff, along with lack of rewards, increased pupils in class, weary work-life balance, additional duties and responsibilities being imposed coupled

with an insufficient salary, lack of freedom with regard to making decisions as well as support from colleagues seemed to be contributing factors for stress as appraised by the teachers.

Aydin and Kaya (2016) identified the stressors and coping strategies reported by elementary teachers in private schools in Turkey. The stressors reported by them included lack of adequate resources, lack of time left for their own selves coupled with the high demands and expectations from them as teachers. Moreover, constant supervision, competitive work environment and problematic behaviours of the children, were the identified sources of stress. In order to manage the stress emanating from their profession, coping strategies used included viewing things more positively and allocating time to spend with loved ones, thereby fostering an environment that facilitates time spending with them.

Karthikeyan and Babu (2016) examined the experiences of stress and process of coping utilized by the school teachers employed in the senior wing in the Thanjavur district. Teachers aged 25-35 years perceived the maximum level of stress. Female teachers perceived more occupational stress as compared to the male teachers. Married teachers experienced more stress emanating from their families as compared to those who were single or unmarried. Monthly salary seemed to be a contributory factor for stress appraisal. Teachers with work experience of less than three years seemed to be employing stress relieving techniques at a higher rate.

Shumba et al. (2016) aimed to understand the stress experienced by teachers engaged in early childhood development. Results revealed that teachers exhibited signs and symptoms of stress owing to their occupation. In order to cope with the stress, they made use of both internal and external resources. Some ways of coping include relying on the divine intervention i.e. God, seeking support from others like family and church, other ways of diversion included gardening, strolling along the beach etc. Further, some teachers resorted to fate for they had no idea to curb the arising stress.

Prasad, Vaidya and Kumar (2016) examined the causes of stress owing to their job, coping techniques used and in turn their relationship with teachers' performance in Hyderabad schools. To begin with, teachers experienced medium level stress owing to their job roles of that of school teachers. Further, significant differences between the more experienced and less experienced teachers was observed, where the more experienced teachers with desired qualifications experienced less stress when compared to those with less experienced, who do not possess the required qualifications. In order to effectively deal with the emerging stress, teachers who received social support coped better with stress than those with no such sources to rely upon.

Fadia and Alhijaa (2015) examined the personal and job characteristics of teachers contributing to stress emanating from their profession. To begin with, female teachers reported having experienced more stress than their male counterparts. Results revealed that the more experienced a teacher, the more stress appraisal she/he is likely to engage in as opposed to the less experienced teachers, a possible factor contributing for the same stated was student's misbehaviour as well as the educational policy. Further, elementary school teachers are more susceptible to stress owing to their increased workload due to the age group they are engaged with. When considering coping, behaviour change seemed to be more effectively used by elementary school teachers who even viewed help seeking more favourably as opposed to the other teachers.

Demjaha, Bislimovska, and Mijakoski (2015) aimed to assess the level of stress among teachers in employed in the elementary schools in Macedonia. Results revealed that experiences of high stress were significantly related to the age, sex, designation at the workplace, work experience, along with the level of education. High levels of stress were perceived by lower-grade teachers as opposed to upper-grade teachers. Similarly, female teachers experienced more stress when compared to their male counterparts. Another essential

factor contributing to stress was the level of education, wherein teachers with higher educational qualifications viewed the workplace as less stressful when compared to those teachers with lower qualifications. However, years of experience did not account as a significant contributing factor for the experience of stress.

Nwimo and Onwunaka (2015) examined the stress experienced by secondary school teachers in Nigeria. Results revealed that secondary school teachers experienced a high level of stress when considering gender differences, male teachers reported having experienced more stress than their female counterparts.

Jain and Tyagi (2015) examined the psycho-social stressors as experienced by teacher educators. Results revealed how female teacher educators engaged in more stress appraisal when compared to their male counterparts. Further, age was a significant factor associated with stress, with younger teachers being more likely to experience stress when compared to older teachers. Similarly, the educational qualifications was another significant variable associated with levels of stress with more qualified teachers experiencing less stress as compared to less qualified teachers. Finally, the type of personality was looked into as well, with introvert teachers experiencing more stress when compared to those with an extrovert personality type.

Hasan (2014) attempted to compare the stress experienced by teachers employed in government and private school teachers of Haridwar. The primary school teachers were highly stressed. The private primary school teachers experienced higher levels of stress when compared to teachers employed in government primary schools.

Arora (2013) studied the stress emanating from the occupation and its impact on the health of school teachers. Teachers experienced moderate level of occupational stress. Results confirmed the existence of significant differences concerning occupational stress vis-à-vis

gender and marital status. Finally, they reported that stress did have a significant and positive impact upon the health of teacher.

Borkar (2013) aimed to study the effectiveness of secondary school teachers with regard to stress experienced by them. There exists a negative correlation between teacher stress and teacher effectiveness. Thus, less effective teachers are likely to experience more stress. Gender differences were evident when evaluating stress experienced by them despite both being placed equally in terms of salary and workload.

Manjula (2012) reported the factors causing stress that emanated from the teacher's personality. To begin with, teachers older than 40 years of age, with no flexibility of work timings and those with temporary employment were highly exhausted thus being susceptible to experiencing high levels of stress. Further, those teachers with an income less than Rs. 5000, graduate teachers as well as rural teachers seemed to be less assertive thereby being a cause of stress. The family structure seemed important with those teachers in joint families, losing control, in turn experiencing stress. Other factors leading to stress included graduate teachers being more supervised akin to those younger than the age of 30. Finally, communication seemed to be a contributing factor as well, with part time, rural, married and temporary teachers lacking communication among colleagues, thereby being a cause of stress.

Khatoon and Aftab (2012) examined the association between the demographic differences and stress among secondary school teachers. When considering gender differences in stress, males seemed to experience more stress when compared to female teachers. When considering the educational qualifications, trained graduate teachers were more susceptible to experiencing higher stress when compared to post-graduate and untrained teachers. With regard to years of experience, those with 0-5 years are likely to experience less stress as compared to those with 6-10 years of experience who are likely to experience higher levels of

stress. Finally results revealed no significant differences between the salary, marital status, subjects taught, and occupational stress as experienced by the secondary school teachers.

Bharambe and Kurkure (2011) aimed to examine the gender differences among the stressors experienced by secondary school teachers. No significant gender differences were reported when mean scores as well as each domain of job stress were analysed.

Kaur (2011) delineated the stressors experienced by school teachers. The prominent ones being the curriculum, the appraisal process, the media portrayal of teaching and education, relations with the management, the working environment, the student body and finally the policies and ethos of the school the teacher is employed in. The coping mechanism suggested for managing stress can be broadly classified under the following headers individual measures, hobby, healthy habits.

Nadeem, Tariq and Hanif (2011) assessed the job-related and personal predictors of stress among school teachers and the subsequent impact on their performance. Stress experienced by teachers seemed to have a significant negative correlation with their job performance. The significant predictors of stress reported were as follows- system of schooling, gender, years of teaching experience, number of family members, and number of students per class. Variables such as the gender of teachers, school system, number of family members, job experience and age were found to be significant predictors of teachers' job performance.

Jude (2013) aimed to assess the impact of emotional intelligence and gender on the stress experienced by secondary school teachers in Ondo state, Nigeria. Results revealed a significant difference with regard to stress as experienced by teachers owing to their emotional intelligence. However, there existed no significant gender differences while assessing the level of stress vis-a-vis their emotional intelligence.

Ali, Ishtiaq and Ahmad (2013) analysed work-related stress among school teachers of private schools in Pakistan. The results support a positive association between the attributes of stress at the workplace (educational qualifications of the teachers, lack of support from the administration, pressure exerted due to time, work pressure, riskiness of job, problematic relationships with co-workers and family) and overall job stress. Results revealed that stress experienced by teachers had a negative impact on their performance. Factors contributing to stress included work overload, risky job and poor co-worker relations. Effects of the stress included reduced performance, poor work life balance, overall dissatisfaction. Subsequently this had the following repercussions for the teachers- depression, resorting to smoking, heart disease, brain tumour among other problems.

Mondal, Shrestha and Bhaila (2011) examined the stress experienced by teachers emanating from their job and the subsequent impact of the same on their level of job satisfaction. School teachers were thus, partly satisfied and experienced mild to moderate stress from their job.

Miller et al. (2011) aimed to understand the experiences of stress and coping of secondary school teachers in Ireland. Prominent stressors experienced by teachers included maintenance of appropriate boundaries, classroom management and overall workload. With regard to the process of coping, discussing issues and problems with colleagues, involving the principal or other senior faculty with some kind of problems, and using techniques exercising or socialising.

Mohammadi, Danesh and Shejwal (2009) compared job burnout and subsequent coping among Indian and Iranian teachers. Results revealed that Iranian teachers when compared to Indian teachers used more problem focused coping. However, no significant differences between Iranian and Indian teachers with regard to the use of emotion-focused coping

mechanisms were reported. There were no significant differences between Iranian and Indian teachers with regard to job burnout in the areas of emotional exhaustion and loss of personal accomplishment. Yet, Indian teachers were high on job burnout in the area of depersonalization when compared to Iranian teachers.

Methodology

Aim

The aim of the research is to examine the causes of stress among school teachers across the globe alongside understanding the coping mechanism used by them.

Discussion

Teachers hold a special place in our heart despite the momentary friction that often abounds for they are the moulders of our personalities, impacting us in a number of subtle ways that are often recognised in hindsight. Teaching over the years has drastically changed as have the perceptions regarding it. While predominantly teaching was viewed as a passionate career path, over the years it has drifted into a backup career or a rather safe haven to dive into. However, even though over the years teaching has been viewed as an occupation that causes low levels of stress (French, et al., 1982), today the situation has changed. (Olivier et al., 2003) and teaching has become an increasingly challenging and complex profession all over the world. Researches are rapidly being conducted across the globe and express widespread concern regarding the effects of stress on teacher's wellbeing and their willingness to continue with the profession. The time before the 1970's revelled with the notion of teaching being considered as a noble profession. However, today researches have proved that teaching has transformed as one of the most stressful professions worldwide (Ravichandran et al., 2007;

Parray, Kumar & Awasthi 2016). Thus, through this research the idea is to delineate the stressors and subsequent coping strategies frequently used by the teachers employed in schools.

Even though stress has been accepted as a part and parcel of life spanning across almost every arena, not addressing it seems to be contributing to the increasing harm to the teachers and students alike across the globe. Teacher attrition, today a commonly occurring phenomenon rests on teachers who voluntarily step out of the field, has become a major concern for both policy makers and researchers. (Lamberta et al., 2018). It has been well documented over the past several decades for teacher attrition is associated with bearing a number of financial, organizational, and educational costs (Borman & Maritza, 2008; Kelly & Northrop, 2015; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Not only that, teacher turnover is disruptive with regard to the educational process and in turn is harmful to the student developmental progress and subsequent achievement of associated instructional goals. Research suggests that when teachers have more positive experiences vis-a-vis their job and consequently are less stressed, they are bound to be more effective in facilitating the growth and development of young children. On the contrary, when teachers are exposed to great stress, the learning environment for students as a by-product seems to be transformed into more stressful environments as well. (Pakarinen et al., 2010). Thus, there exists a dire need to focus on teacher stress due to its impacts on the teacher's mental and physical health (Arora, 2013; Ali, Ishtiaq, & Ahmad, 2013), job performance (Hanif, Tariq & Nadeem, 2011; Ali, Ishtiaq, & Ahmad, 2013), satisfaction and work life balance (Ali, Ishtiaq, & Ahmad, 2013).

Researches confirm the existence of a significant relationship between stress and a number of demographic variables (Kavita & Hassan, 2018; Hassan, Rizk, & Naser, 2018). Consider for instance age. School teachers falling in the age bracket of 31-50 years, experience more stress when compared to those who were younger or even older. (Kavita & Hassan, 2018).

Conversely Karthikeyan and Babu (2016) exclaimed that teachers aged between 25-35 years perceived the maximum level of stress.

Similarly, Jain and Tyagi (2015) stated that younger teachers are more likely to experience stress when compared to older teachers. While on the other hand Manjula (2012) reported that teachers older than 40 years of age, with no flexibility of work timings and those with temporary employment are likely to be highly exhausted, thus being susceptible to experiencing high levels of stress.

Gender is another variable associated with stress. The relationship between gender and stress is rather divided. While Karthikeyan and Babu (2016) assert that female teachers perceived more occupational stress as compared to the male teachers, Aftab & Khatoon (2012) suggest that male teachers report more occupational stress towards their job than do female teachers. This is supported by Nobile (2014) who stated that the male staff experiences higher levels of general occupational stress. Conversely several other researchers are of the view that female teachers are highly stressed when compared to their male counterparts (Nasser & Alhijaa, 2015; Demjaha, Bislimovska, & Mijakoski, 2015; Jain & Tyagi, 2015).

When considering the institution of marriage, researches abound that look at its relationship with stress. A consensus seems to exist that married teachers experience more stress when compared to those who are unmarried or single (Kavita & Hassan, 2018; Karthikeyan & Babu, 2016; Manjula, 2012). A reason postulated for the same is that married working women owing to their long working hours, coupled with a myriad family and official commitments, harassments and even improper work life balance seem to experience more stress (Bhuvaneshwari, 2013).

According to Manjula (2012) the family structure seems important when considering teachers in joint families who may be losing control and consequently experiencing increased levels of stress.

Kavita and Hassan (2018) asserted that secondary school teachers experience more stress when compared to the primary school teachers. Conversely, Demjaha, Bislimovska, and Mijakoski (2015) mentioned that high levels of stress were perceived by lower-grade teachers as opposed to upper-grade teachers. Hasan (2014) supports these findings by saying that primary school teachers are highly stressed. Thus, elementary school teachers are more susceptible to stress owing to their increased workload due to the age group they are engaged with (Fadia & Alhijaa, 2015). Thus, the relationship between stress and the classes taught seems to be divided.

When concerned with the educational qualifications required for teaching, there exists a statistically significant relationship between the level of education achieved and the subsequent stress experienced by teachers (Solomon, Robinson and Catherine, 2017). An agreement seems to prevail stating that more experienced teachers are likely to experience less stress as compared to those with less experience or those who do not possess the required qualifications. (Prasad, Vaidya & Kumar, 2016; Demjaha, Bislimovska, and Mijakoski, 2015; Jain & Tyagi, 2015). In addition, Aftab and Khatoon (2012) stated that trained graduate teachers experienced higher occupational stress than post-graduate teachers.

Solomon, Robinson and Catherine (2017) confirmed the existence of a statistically significant relationship between years of teaching experience and the level of stress experienced by the teachers. However, outcomes seem to be divided here. While Nasser & Alhijaa (2015) revealed that the more experienced a teacher, the more stress appraisal she/he is likely to engage in as opposed to the less experienced teachers. Kavita & Hassan (2018)

assert that teachers with an experience of 11-15 years experienced more stress when compared to those with less or more experience. Similarly, Aftab & Khatoon (2012) stated that teachers who served for 6-10 years as teachers experienced highest level of stress when compared with those who served for 0-5 years and experienced the least amount of stress. Conversely Demjaha, Bislimovska, and Mijakoski (2015) stated that the years of experience did not account as a significant contributing factor for the experience of stress.

Researchers compared the stress as experienced by Private and Government school teachers. Hasan (2014) stated that private primary school teachers experienced higher levels of stress as compared to teachers employed in government primary schools. Differences abound in the types of stressors experienced. Government school teachers reported the following stressors- political participation, mid-day meal schemes, additional paper work, additional work handed over by the government, lack of credit for work done, lack of availability of resources and motivation. On the contrary, private school teachers noted involvement in clerical work, lack of coordination between the management and staff, along with lack of rewards, increased pupils in class, weary work-life balance, additional duties and responsibilities being imposed coupled with an insufficient salary, lack of freedom with regard to making decisions as well as support from colleagues as contributory factors to stress (Kaur, 2016).

Manjula (2012) suggested that teachers with temporary employment were highly exhausted thus being susceptible to experiencing high levels of stress.

Personality seemed to be a contributing factor towards teacher stress. Jain and Tyagi (2015) reported that introvert teachers experience more stress when compared to those with an extrovert personality type.

Several causes of stress seemed to emerge from the pool of researches examined. Prominent stressors that seem to abound are poor working conditions (Ekundayo & Kolawole,

2013), poor relations with super ordinates or others like the management, teachers, students and their parents (Mohamed, 2018, Ekundayo & Kolawole, 2013) and late payment of salaries. (Ekundayo & Kolawole, 2013). The structure and climate of the school that teachers are associated with act as a contributory factor to their experience of stress. (Hassan, Rizk & Naser, 2018). Researchers report the occurrence of a statistically significant positive correlation between the daily working hours of the teacher, overtime hours devoted by them, strength of students in each class, years of work experience and level of stress. (Hassan, Rizk & Naser, 2018).

Other stressors include work overload (Manabete et al., 2016), crowded class conditions (Ekundayo & Kolawole, 2013), lack of social support and lack of teaching accessories and resources among others. (Osagie & Iyore, 2018; Aydin & Kaya, 2016). Another finding has clearly revealed that role ambiguity is a major source of stress for school teachers. (Manabete et al., 2016) along with changes in terms and conditions without consultation and given responsibility without the authority to take decisions subsequently (Demjaha et al., 2015). Aydin & Kaya (2016) pointed out the lack of time left for the teachers own selves coupled with the high demands and expectations from them as teachers acted as prospective sources of stress. In addition, constant supervision, competitive work environment and problematic behaviours of the children, were identified as common sources of stress.

In response to the emerging stressors, teachers use a number of ways to cope with them on a daily basis. For instance, teachers heavily rely on emotion focused coping to deal with the emerging stress (Hassan, Rizk, and Naser, 2018). One way of engaging in it is by garnering emotional support from those individuals with more experience (Osagie & Iyore, 2018).

Coping activities also include engagement in enjoyable activities (Otilia Clipa, 2017). Further, Aydin and Kaya (2016) mentioned that coping strategies used included viewing things

more positively and allocating time to spend with loved ones. (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013) Another popular coping mechanism was relying on the divine intervention i.e. God, thereby seeking support from others like family and church (Shumba et al., 2016). Diverting one's attention to activities such as gardening, strolling along the beach etc proved to be helpful (Shumba et al., 2016; Kerr et al., 2011). Some teachers even resorted to fate for they had no idea to curb the arising stress. (Shumba et al., 2016). Kerr et al. (2011) reported that discussing issues and problems with colleagues, even transferring certain problems to the principal or senior teachers were popularly used. An effective way to cope with arising stress is to manage one's time effectively (Ekundayo & Kolawole, 2013). Further, other ways of effective coping include improving one's self esteem, building onto one's self-confidence, developing a good sense of humour, practicing yoga and meditation, exercising regularly and fostering a supportive friend circle (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013).

Despite the increasing number of researches being conducted on the domain of stress and its subsequent impact on teachers, there is scope for future researches to be conducted. To begin with, considering the Indian educational scenario, a comparison between the divisions in the schools can be explored i.e. examining the stress experienced by pre-school, kindergarten, primary, middle and secondary school teachers. Further, variables like family income, one's own salary, comparison between single and dual earning members, socio economic status, teaching hours per week, subjects taught, language taught in can be explored. The impact of culture and prevailing political scenario can be analysed as well. A pan Indian comparison can be done that explores the stress experienced by teachers in different regions of India i.e. North, Central, East, South and West. The relationship between the existing physical and mental health conditions can be assessed to analyse the impact on teacher's stress appraisal. Moreover, there is a dire need to develop interventions extending from the researches being done and subsequently implementing them at the school level, alongside evaluating their efficacy.

Conclusion

The pool of researches suggest the existence of a relationship between stress experienced by school teachers and a number of demographic variables such as age, gender, family structure, marital status, educational qualifications, years of experience and type of employment. The common stressors experienced by school teachers are as follows- classroom structure and climate, relations with superiors, lack of available social support, role ambiguity, poor work life balance and lack of decision-making power. Subsequently the coping strategies commonly used include diversion, social support, divine intervention, fate and so on.

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