

## Study of occupational stress of secondary school teachers

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### Abstract

In the present study an attempt has been made to measure the occupational stress of secondary school teachers of district Mandi in Himachal Pradesh. A sample pool of 200 secondary school teachers from the government schools was randomly taken. The relevant information from the sampled subjects were collected through the standardize Occupational Stress Index. It was found that the secondary school teachers generally had occupational stress having high, moderate and low levels. Further significant differences were found in the occupational stress of male and female secondary school teachers.

**Keywords:** occupational stress, role overload, role conflict, secondary school teachers and gender

### Introduction

In these days the life of an individual is full of stress and storms in the fast moving society at global level. There, in the society at every step, one after the other problem is taking place which make the life of an individual unhappy, tiring and filled with negative thoughts. The increasing frequency of rapes, thefts, murders and intolerance feeling made human life pathetic, horrible and caused the sense of committing suicide etc. The man is not safe even in educational institutions and at his/her home. He or she may choose any occupation for surviving but any type of occupation is also no more source of the pleasure giving or fulfilling the desires of the life without any stress or pressures. Cotton and Hart 2003<sup>[3]</sup>, had reported that Occupational stress is a growing problem worldwide, which results in substantial loss both to employees and organizations. Further, Stress related with a job or occupation is called occupational stress and Stress is a universal phenomenon, excess of which results in intense and distressing experience. Selye in 1936<sup>[18]</sup> asserted that the concept of stress was first time introduced in the Life Sciences and the term of stress was derived from the Latin word 'stringere' which spelt out as the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Selye<sup>[17]</sup>, further in 1974 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". Jarvis 2002<sup>[5]</sup>, pointed out that the Occupational stress refers to a situation where occupation related factors interact with employee to change i.e. disrupts or enhance his / her psychological and physiological conditions such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning. Generally, Occupational stress is defined in terms of relationship between a person and his environment where every occupation has some stress, which may differ in its degree only.

Being increasing job complexities and economic pressure on the individuals, the Occupational stress has also become an increasingly common in teaching profession. A major source of distress among teachers is the result of failure of school to meet the social needs and job demands of the teachers. Teaching profession occupies important and prestigious place in society. Teacher is the principle means for implementing all educational programmes of the organizations of education.

Claxton 1989<sup>[1]</sup>, indicated that teaching is an occupation which is always demanding and changing. Stress has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. Stress is the "wear and tear" of our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment. Teachers are over burdened with regular teaching load. A uniform work load for all the teachers may not be a satisfactory solution but differential work generates discontent among teachers, occupational satisfaction is a necessary condition for a healthy growth of teacher's personality. A teacher at present has a vulnerable position and has low self-esteem and that is the main reason for psychological stress. The occupational stress emerged out from the many sources. The description of which is given as follows.

### Sources of Occupational Stress

In general occupational stress is caused by a mismatch between perceived effort and perceived reward, or a sense of low control in a job with high demands. Low social support at work and job insecurity can also increase occupational stress. It is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressure of the situation. Stress can undermine the achievement of goals both for individual and for organisations also. Cooper and Marshall<sup>[2]</sup>, 1976 have listed out the following five sources:

- 1. Intrinsic to the job:** includes factors such as poor physical working conditions, work overload or time pressures.
- 2. Role in the organization:** includes role ambiguity and role conflict.
- 3. Career development:** includes lack of job security and under/over promotion.
- 4. Relationships at work:** includes poor relationships with boss or colleagues, an extreme component of which is

bullying in the workplace.

**5. Organizational structure and climate:** includes little involvement in decision making and office politics.

The occupation stress occurs slowly and slowly in the way of continuously working for a long time by concentrating entirely on a particular occupation being away from the other social desires which remain unfilled with the passage of time and experienced stressful life of an individual within the institution, the symptoms of which appear very slowly which effects the progressive working style of an individual. Here, are a few symptoms of an occupational stress which have been reported by the various investigators.

### Symptoms of Occupational Stress

Occupational stress has various symptoms from which it can be identified. Signs and symptoms of stress vary from one individual to another but can be generalised and grouped in three types; namely physical, emotional, and behavioural signs/symptoms.

Schultz & Schultz, 2002 <sup>[6]</sup>, had reported the physical signs/symptoms of stress, as palpitations/throbbing heart, skin irritation or rashes, pain and tightness in the chest, fainting, indigestion, frequent colds, flu or other infections, breathlessness, recurrence of previous illnesses, nausea, constipation or diarrhoea, headaches, rapid weight gain or loss, muscle twitches, tiredness, vague aches and pains.

Malta, 2004 <sup>[6]</sup>, pointed out that the Emotional Signs/symptoms of stress are swings in mood, feeling nervous, apprehensive, anxious, increased worrying, feelings of helplessness, irritability, loss of confidence, feeling tense, lack of self-esteem, drained/no enthusiasm, lack of concentration, cynical, and withdrawal into daydreams.

Mead 2000 <sup>[10]</sup>, has said that the Behavioural Signs/symptoms of stress may also include; more accident prone, change in sleep pattern or difficulty in getting to sleep and waking tired, poor work, loss of interest in sex, increased smoking, withdrawal from supportive relationships, increased consumption of alcohol, too busy to relax, increased dependence on drugs, not looking after oneself, overeating or loss of appetite, poor time management, and impaired speech etc.

### Reviewing the Past Studies

Keeping in view the nature of the study which presents the status of occupational stress of secondary school teachers in the educational institutions, the investigators reviewed the past studies so as to move on exact situation and come out with appropriate results. Pal 2011 <sup>[12]</sup>, in his study on job satisfaction and occupational stress among secondary school teachers found male teachers to be more satisfied and less stressed with their jobs as compared to their female counterparts. Also a strong inverse relationship between the job satisfaction and occupational stress of the teachers was established. Kayastha and Kayastha <sup>[8]</sup>, 2012 found a significant relationship between job stressors, job stress and job satisfaction. Nagra 2013 <sup>[11]</sup>, observed that teacher educators experienced moderate level of occupational stress. No significant differences were indicated regarding occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to their gender, and subject streams while significant results were observed in relation to nature of job. Jeyaraj 2013 <sup>[7]</sup>, indicated that aided school teachers had more occupational stress levels

than government school teachers.

Teachers who reported greater stress were less satisfied with teaching, they reported greater frequency of absences and a greater number of total days absent, were more likely to leave teaching (career intention), and less likely to take up a teaching career again (career commitment). Hasan 2014 <sup>[4]</sup>, found the primary school teachers highly stressed. Moreover, the private primary school teachers had also found to be highly stressed in comparison to their government primary school teacher counterparts. Rana 2014 <sup>[14]</sup>, observed that less effective teachers were having high occupational stress and female teachers were found under more occupational stress. Pathak 2015 <sup>[13]</sup>, found significant differences in occupational stress and mental health with respect to male and female primary school teachers. Rao 2016 <sup>[15]</sup>, observed that male and female upper primary school teachers differed significantly on overall occupational stress levels. It was also found that female upper primary school teachers had more occupational stress level than that of the male counterparts.

### Rationale of the Study

The whole advancement of our civilization is based on advancement of our education and qualitative improvement of it. Teachers play a vital role in the educational process and in all round development of the students. It is well accepted fact that the quality of nation depends upon the quality of the education imparted to its students which in turn depends upon the quality of teachers. To meet the increasing needs of the students and to maximize the effectiveness of curriculum teachers need to develop and update their skills and competencies continuously. Today, in the changing educational context; teachers are experiencing expanded duties and expectations in a variety in educational settings. With the continuous increase of these responsibilities of the teachers, they become over-burdened and to work under stress. An optimum level of stress leads to better performance and long term exposure. But acute stress is dangerous to both the individual as well as people around him/her. A teacher working under stressful conditions may not handle the classroom situation skilfully and peacefully. This shows negative effect on the way of teaching and on the educational aim. Based on a review of related literature, it concluded that occupational stress among teaches has the potential to impact their own performance; achievement levels of the students' and even the whole education system. Hence, the present study is an attempt to study the levels of occupational stress and to compare the levels of occupational stress of male and female secondary school teachers. Therefore, it was decided to investigate the level of occupational stress among the secondary school teachers and to compare it on the basis of gender.

### Objectives

1. To study the occupational stress of secondary school teachers.
2. To compare the occupational stress of male and female secondary schoolteachers.

### Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There will not be any occupational stress on secondary school teachers.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There will not be significant differences of occupational stress between male and female secondary school teachers.

**Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to in terms of area, objectives, hypotheses, design, variables and samples etc.

**Methodology**

The study was conducted through the descriptive survey method of research on a sample of 200 teachers (100 male and 100 female) with the help of Occupational Stress Index a widely used research tool by A.K. Srivastava, and A.P. Singh which measures the components like the job size which cause stress in some way or the other, such as, role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic, impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. The percentage and the ‘t’ values were calculated for comparing the opinions of the respondents on the occupational index scale.

**Results and Discussion**

This study focuses on to study the levels of occupational stress of secondary school teachers and to find out the differences in the levels of occupational stress between male and female secondary school teachers. Table 1 below presents the percentages in respect of each level of occupational stress of secondary school teachers.

**Table1:** Percentage of secondary school teachers on each of the Occupational Stress levels.

S. No.	Level of Occupational Stress	No. of Teachers	Percentages
1	High level of Stress	71	35.5%
2	Moderate level of Stress	67	33.5%
3	Low Level of Stress	62	31%
	Total	200	100%

It is revealed from table 1 above that a large portion of the secondary school teachers i.e. as many as 35.5% secondary school teachers have high level of stress and similarly a quite good number of these secondary school teachers i.e. 33.5% have moderate level of stress as well as almost close to this, the remaining 31% of these secondary school teachers have low level of stress. Since high, moderate and low level of occupational stress has been found among secondary school teachers, so the H<sub>01</sub> “There will not be any occupational stress on secondary school teachers” is rejected.

It means a major portion of the secondary school teachers having high level of stress are facing some problems in the present day of schooling due to one or the other reasons may be at the verge of their retirement, may have some social or personal problems, may be continue with their ill-health, may got tired or sick and may have so many other reasons etc. Out of 200 secondary school teachers 71 secondary school teachers are working under big stress in the schools they are no longer enthusiastic with their occupation. This is a big hindrance in the way of continuously progress of education system within this district. The previous studies showed that this type of situation affect the smooth functioning of the educational

institution and stopped its progress which in turn resulted in big loss of the educational growth of children in particular area.

Another portion of the secondary school teachers out of 200, 67 of these teachers are having moderate type of stress in their occupation. It means like the above teachers, these teachers are also under stress in the educational institution although they are in initial stage. This can be stopped at the earliest by taking careful measures of guidance and counselling and as well as by fulfilling their academic needs so as to save the educational institutions from the big loss of growth and development of the children in that particular area.

A very small portion having only 62 secondary school teachers out of 200 are not much dissatisfied with their occupation. It means they are working enthusiastically for the progress of the institution so as to achieve the educational goals within the educational institutions. These teacher must be proved with incentives so that they may god motivated towards their occupation and may be able to utilized their energy in a right way by availing the each and every opportunity for progressing in the particular occupation.

This study shows that the situation is under control provided extra care and caution may be taken by all the stakeholders. In this area of the study the growth and development of educational activities at this juncture as generally appeared is of average type. It only can be enhanced if teachers are really empowered and every care and caution be taken into consideration by the stakeholders. Good functioning of the institution will lead towards good governance in stress free environment and the teachers will certainly love their occupation.

Now the investigators had tried to find out the occupational stress of male and female secondary school teachers. Whether, gender had some connection to occupational stress or not, the ‘t’ value was calculated and the obtained results have been presented in the Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Means, SDs and t- value for Male and Female Secondary School Teachers.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value
Male	100	114.430	17.851	198	2.253*
Female	100	108.730	17.929		

**Note:** \* indicates that the calculated t-value is Significant at .05 Level.

Table 2 above presents the ‘t’ value 2.253 which was found significant at 0.05 level of the confidence for the df 198. Since, the calculated ‘t’ value is greater than the table value for df 198, it can be interpreted that the significance differences were found in the occupational stress of male and female secondary school teachers of Govt. Schools of Mandi District. The mean values for male secondary school teachers of 114.430 is higher than that of the mean values for female secondary school teachers of 108.730 which means that the occupational stress is more in male secondary school teachers as compared to their counterparts female secondary school teachers.

This may be due to the fact that the male teachers are having more responsibilities than that of their counterparts’ female teachers. Generally, it has been seen that the male teachers are pressurize to work more and more as compared to female teachers due to some special privilege. To concentrate at one

particular tasks provide pleasures to work with interest and zeal but as far as moving away from the focussed tasks disturb the whole plan of actions which resulted in desperation. Like election, census and some other extra duties caused a lot of desperation to the concerned teachers. It has been observed that these kinds of duties are generally assigned to male teachers.

Since, there occurs significant differences in the occupational stress of male and female teachers, the hypotheses stated at serial number 2 that “There will not be significant differences of occupational stress between male and female secondary school teachers” is rejected.

### Findings of the Study

1. Secondary school teachers of Mandi district were found definitely under occupational stress at all the three levels of high, moderate and low.
2. Male secondary school teachers of district Mandi were found under occupational stress as compared to their counterparts of female secondary school teachers.

### Educational Implications

From the findings of the study it is evident that the occupational stress had been found at all the three levels among the secondary school teachers and further significant differences were found on the basis of their gender. Therefore, to prevent occupational stress following steps may be initiated at the level of school and administration:

- School authorities should facilitate supportive and collaborative culture; should provide training for stress and time management, specific training to manage the behaviors of disruptive people; should provide leisure facilities to the faculty and should encourage involvement of faculty in decision-making.
- Lack of resources such as inadequate staff and lack of equipment must be advocated by the heads of the department or sections for the benefit of the staff.
- In order to prevent the teacher of adverse consequences the policy makers, stake holders, educationists and administrators must find ways to lessen their stress levels such as providing congenial working environments, less work load, job securities, maximum provision of facilities, etc.

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