



International Journal of Medical Research & Health Sciences

www.ijmrhs.com

Volume 2 Issue 4 Oct-Dec

Coden: IJMRHS

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ISSN: 2319-5886

Received: 25th Aug 2013

Revised: 17th Sep 2013

Accepted: 29th Sep 2013

Research article

LEVELS OF STRESS AMONGST THE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL OF RURAL WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Teachers are among the professions reporting highest level of work-related stress, the study was undertaken to evaluate the levels of stress amongst school teachers in a public school of rural western Maharashtra **Methods:** Prospective survey based study was carried out amongst school teachers of rural western Maharashtra using Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ). The survey was carried out on 3 scheduled visits over a period of 2 months after the Institutional Ethical committee approval. Total 110 Primary and secondary school teachers, satisfying inclusion and exclusion criteria were randomly selected for the study. All the questions in the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) were graded according to 1 (Always-0), 2 (Sometimes-25), 3 (Often-50), 4 (Seldom-75) and 5 (Never-100). The scale value was calculated as the simple average. More the average score less the stress and vice versa **Results & Conclusion:** Inability to understand the meaning and importance of work, improper clarity about the job, inability to cope with the problems were found to be the factors always contributing to stress of teachers.

Keywords: School teacher, Job related stress, COPSOQ, Personal Stressors

INTRODUCTION

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Work-related stress has been identified at international and national levels as a concern for both employers and workers”. Occupational stress is known as stress at work. It occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the workplace and that of an individual. Such individuals under occupational stress, experience of negative emotional states such as frustration,

worry, anxiety and depression attributed to work related factors.¹ Occupational stress in the human service professions, particularly teachers, has been a focus of study in the last decades. Most surprisingly, school teachers have been considered to be under stress and undergoing the process of burnout.² Teaching is a physically and mentally challenging job. The daily chores in the

classroom coupled with personal and family commitments require a lot of energy and forwards a lot of stress to the teacher.³

Undoubtedly, teachers are among the professions reporting the highest level of work-related stress. The increasing workload on teachers, the role overload, the increased class size per teacher and an increasing number of pupils behaving in an unacceptable way are some of the trends identified in several countries as leading to a rise in stress-related illnesses.⁴

Teachers are exposed to a wide variety of multi-dimensional predisposing factors leading to stress which can be classified as job related and related to the personal events.⁵ Job related contributory factors can be like inadequate working conditions, role conflict and ambiguity, pupil (student related) problems, time pressures, threat of redundancy, work pressure, little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks, stereotypes and discrimination against minority groups, inadequate salaries.⁵

Those related to the personal events are Marriage, Divorce, Pregnancy, Death of a loved one, change of residence and others if any. In addition, it has been found that job satisfaction and teacher stress are strongly correlated.⁶ The amount of stress and degree of satisfaction experienced by teachers influences the quality of life and may create various stress related health problems like Hypertension, cardiac disorders, Acid peptic diseases, psychological disorders.^{7,8}

Work involving responsibility for other people creates potential stress as it may heighten expectations for job performance and emotional availability. The complexity and diversity of teachers' work, clearly links workload and stress not only to the quantity of hours worked, but also to the diverse nature and demands placed on teachers.⁵⁻⁸

In view of above mentioned etiological factors and detrimental adverse effects of stress among school teachers, it was thought prudent to evaluate levels of stress amongst them by using Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) a well-

structured questionnaire developed by the Psychosocial Department, National Institute of Occupational Health, Copenhagen, Denmark.⁹

Hence a study was planned with the following aims and objectives

Aims and objectives

1. Evaluate levels of stress amongst school teachers in a public school of rural western Maharashtra
2. Find out various stressors or predisposing factors responsible for stress among them.
3. To find out the most common stressor or stress indicator if any amongst primary and secondary school teachers in a public school of rural western Maharashtra

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This was a prospective survey based study. This survey was carried out school amongst the teachers in a public school of rural western Maharashtra. The School was selected on the basis of ease and access. Consent from the school authorities and Institutional ethical committee approval were obtained before the commencement of the study. The primary and secondary school teachers were selected on the basis of following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Primary and secondary school teachers of Public School (Standard L.K.G to X)
2. Teachers willing to participate in the study
3. Ready to give written informed consent
4. Teachers completing the survey, i.e present on the days of data collection

Exclusion criteria:

1. The teachers of XI Std. onwards.
2. The teachers who were absent on either day during data collection.
3. The teachers suffering from debilitating physical or psychiatric illness
4. Teachers with history of addiction, drug history or any chronic illness

Study tool:

Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ): The scales of the COPSOQ were formed by adding the points of the individual questions of the scales by giving equal weights to each question. In most cases the questions had five response options.

The Questionnaire was divided into two types: **Job related Questionnaire and Personal stressor Questionnaire.** The scale value was calculated as the simple average from 0 to 100. Respondent absent for any one visit were considered as a drop out

Study conduct: Data was collected in 3 scheduled visits approximately 7 days apart

according to the convenient date and time given by the school authorities.

Visit-1: 1. Introduction of the project 2. Explanation of the Study Tool 3. Obtaining consent

Visit-2: Job related questionnaire

Visit-3: Personal stressor questionnaire

Study period: 2 months from the date of approval of the study by the Institutional Ethical Committee

Statistical analysis: The data was collected, pooled, subjected to appropriate statistical analysis and conclusions were drawn

Sample size: Out of total 110 teachers enrolled for the study effective sample was 78

Table 1: Psychological Questionnaire

Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ): ⁹		
Grade	Score	Interpretation
1	0	ALWAYS
2	25	SOMETIMES
3	50	OFTEN
4	75	SELDOM
5	100	NEVER

RESULTS

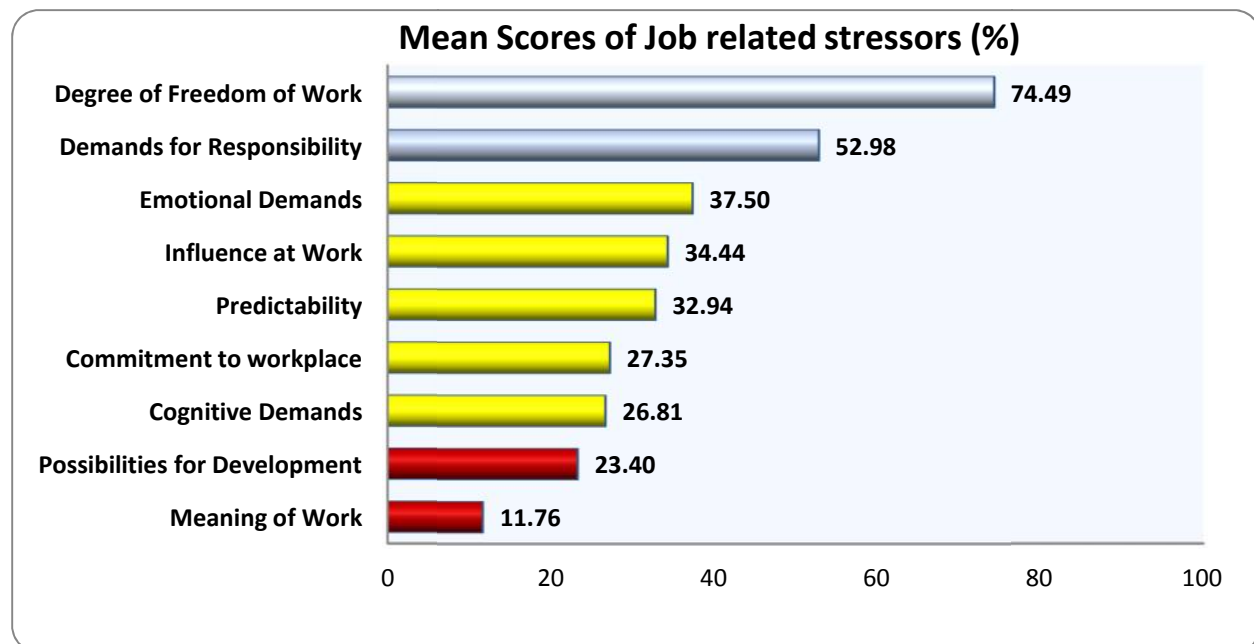


Fig 1: Mean scores of job related stressors

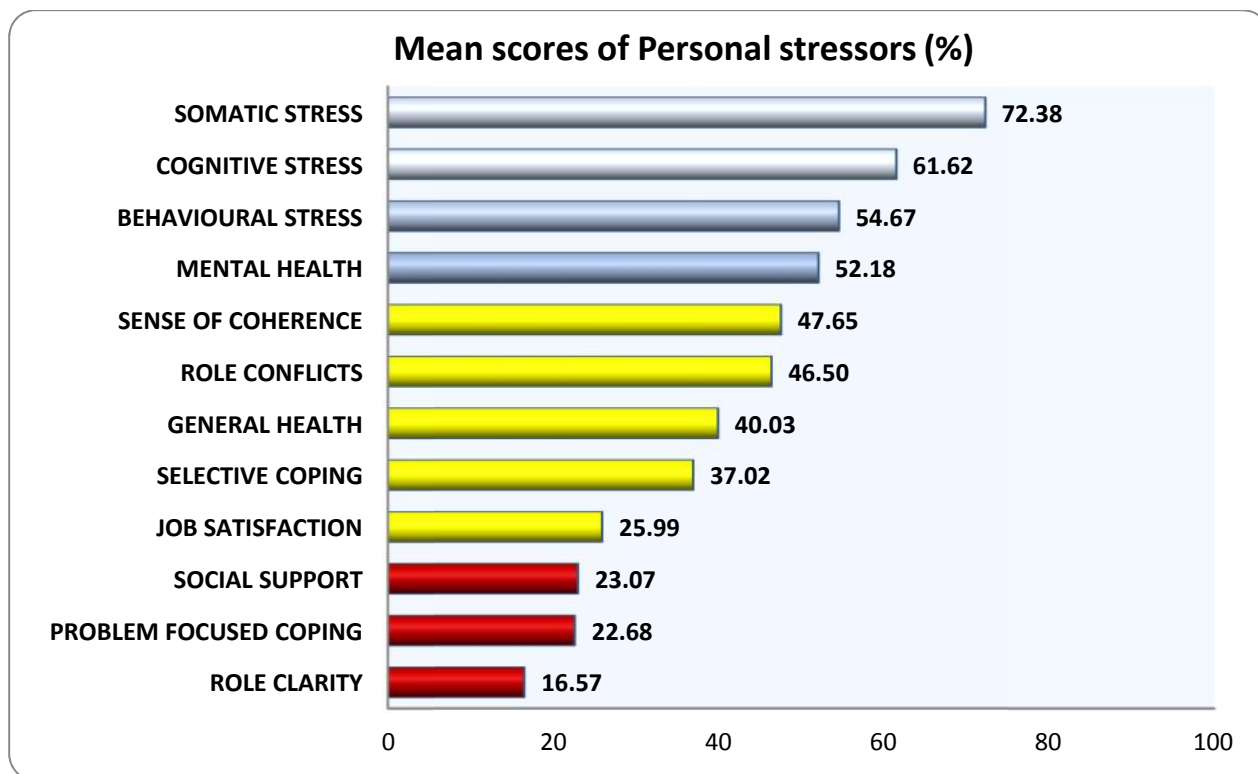


Fig 2: Mean score of personal stressors

DISCUSSION

Among all the Job related stressors mean score for meaning of work (11.76), possibilities of development (23.70) were Grade I stressors always causing stress.(Fig I)

Teachers were of the opinion that possibilities for development were very less and was worrying them the most. The school authorities should give emphasis on understanding the importance, meaning and clarity about the job and work so that the teachers can give their best for the school.

The personal stressors with mean score ranging between (0-24) were Role Clarity, Problem focused coping and social support thus were Grade I stressors always causing stress.(Fig II)

Many of the teachers were not clear about their own role and revealed an inability in coping day to day problems resulting in stress. There is consistent evidence that teachers with more support from others experience lower strain and burnout¹⁰ and teachers facing potentially stressful demands, conflicts and problems in the workplace, having support from others may reduce the impact of the pressures on the individuals well-being.^{11,12}

This study reveals incorporation of measures for coping with day to day problems. Teachers should incorporate habit of keeping Proper balance between the personal, family and professional life There is a requirement and necessity of analysing the system of teacher training. Workshops on stress management, positive attitude should be incorporated periodically. It is necessary to provide social support for the teachers for their betterment through social gatherings.

A lack of appropriate professional training specifically where teachers are required to implement new practices with inadequate ongoing training in order to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population is a particular source of stress.

The factors that influenced the teachers' mental health status were workload. In urbanised and modern societies, high demands by parents and community that are constantly increasing is becoming unrealistic with the resources that are given to teachers¹³. An study indicated that sources of burnout and stress in the working environment are related to role conflicts,

professional isolation, lack of support, ineffective teaching aids, student disciplinary and behavioural problems, inadequate working conditions and general lack of respect for the teacher's role. Our results were consistent with Shankar and Famuyiwa (1991)¹⁴

Stress affects the efficiency of the individual. So, there is a need to provide a proper conducive environment and support for teachers to maintain individual stress at their workplace. Positive attitude of teachers in facing their challenges will help them in improving their functional skills and reduce stress. Regular assessment of stress level, direct physiological measures of stress like diagnostic tests and consultation with medical professionals and preventive measures should be taken accordingly. Besides that, the institution or management should check that, supervision, support and relationship with the teachers is properly taken care of and enhanced most strongly. Most importantly, it is recommended that principals and supervisors should investigate the causes of stress and evaluate the organizational climate of the school. They should also suggest ways, like workshops and seminars to alleviate and cope with stress.¹

Limitations:

- Similar studies should be done using larger samples in different region including both private and public schools
- The accuracy of the research results should be checked by other methods (interviews, observations, etc.)

CONCLUSION

The factors always causing stress like job related clarity, ability to cope with problems, inadequate social support should be tackled by various measures at the individual and institute level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors dually acknowledge the teachers, Principal and the Director of a Public school in rural western Maharashtra for their support and

participation in the study for the betterment of teachers

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