

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AT WORKPLACE : A CASE STUDY OF PRIVATE COLLEGES IN VARANASI

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of the study is to ascertain the stress amongst the faculties of higher education in private colleges at Varanasi. It has been found that high level of occupational stress can cause irritation, anxiety, ineffectiveness, depression and lower job satisfaction. The key objective of this study was to assess the level of occupational stress, causes and consequences among the faculties. Among the twelve occupational stressors gauged in the study, using Occupational Stress Index by A.K. Srivastava and A.P. Singh, role overload & role conflict was found to be with maximum variance among the faculties. It has also been observed that unfair distribution of work and under participation influences satisfaction and well being of faculty members at workplace in Varanasi. Implications of this research from the perspective of better stress management among faculty members are discussed.

Keywords : Occupational stress, Role Conflict, Role Overload, Occupational Stress Index, Unfair distribution of work, Job Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Stress has become the major reason for effecting the health and performance of the employees in the organization. Some level of stress is being found in every person, out of which the stress at workplace is the highest among all. The work place stress can be caused due to various factors such as meeting the expectations of institute, meeting the demands of peers group, sometimes resource constraints for attainment of the objectives. For any employee working in private colleges, meeting the expectations of students and the demands at the workplace has become very complex and causes stress among the employees. Stress has become a part of life therefore, it is impossible to avoid stress. The word "stress" is apparently derived from the Latin word, stringere, meaning to tighten up. In 17th century, the term meant hardship, strain, adversity or affliction. In 18th century, according to Hinkle (1973), the word stress popularly used

to denote force, pressure, strain or strong effort with reference primarily to a person's organs or mental power.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Occupational stress is the stress among the employees at workplace. It can be defined as the emotional physiological and psychological strain or tensions on an individual or in any situation with his behaviour. Workplace stress occurs when there is a conflict between the demand at workplace and the individual ability to complete these demands. Occupational stress is the stress related at work environment or on a job. Occupational stress often curtails from meeting the deadlines, high peer pressures, inability of an individual to meet up the expectation required for the job due to lack of knowledge and skill, with inability of an individual to cope up with that challenges. Beehr and Newman (1978) define occupational stress as "A condition arising from

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the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning.”

McGrath (1976) has distinguished stress at job location by categorizing several sources i.e. on the basis of Duties i.e. ambiguity, work overload, role and responsibilities i.e. conflict, ambiguity & role overload, inherent deeds i.e. effects of crowding, encompassing corporal environment, communal environment & intrinsic value of an individual i.e. anxiety, perceptual styles etc.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

The potential sources for stress among the faculties found to be environmental factors which include changes in UGC norms time to time, changes in policies related to academics. Other potential sources for occupational stress lay within the Institute itself which includes task demands, role demand, interpersonal demand, organizational structure and leadership. Other various causes of occupational stress embraces role overload, Interpersonal conflict, Bullying, Lack of resources, little or no involvement in decisions.

CONSEQUENCES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

The various consequences of stress can be identified on the basis of behavioral, physiological and psychological outcomes. Physiological consequences includes headaches, high or low blood pressures, high level of cholesterol, heart disease, loss in appetite, loss of sleep etc. Psychological effects of stress includes high level of depression, emotional imbalances, tensions, anxiety, nervousness, irritability, lack of concentration, and other types of emotional strains, and when it cannot be cope up by the individual it can be reflected in there behavior which includes low work performance, increase in absenteeism, increase in accidents, conflicts and clashes with peer group, emotional detachment with the spouse, etc. the extensive stress which is untreated consistently can become

a chronic condition which can effect in the form of burnout, mental health problems, weak immune body system, high level of hypertension which will not only effect the well being of the employee but also the performance of the individual in the organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To study the level of occupational stress among the faculties in private colleges at Varanasi.
- To assess the various causes and consequences of occupational stress at workplace.

Universe

The universe of the study consists of various private colleges at Varanasi.

Sample Size

The sample size selected for the study includes 110 faculties working at various private colleges in Varanasi and convenience sampling method is used for the selection of the sample.

Data Collection

The data has been collected with the help of psychometric device known as Occupational stress Index (OSI): developed by A.K. Srivastava and A.P. Singh (Dept. of Psychology, BHU, Varanasi) to assess the level of occupational stress arising from various aspects of the job.

The scale encompasses of 46 items with 5 alternative responses on likert scale, from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree and reverse in case of false keyed questions, selected on the basis of their significantly high indices of homogeneity (rbis) with the cut-off-point of 0.20. Out of 46 items, 28 were true-keyed and 18 were false-keyed. The items related to almost all relevant components of job life, which causes stress in some way or the other, such as:

- Role overload
- Powerlessness

- Role ambiguity
- Role conflict
- Low Status
- Responsibility for persons
- Under participation
- Poor peer relations
- Intrinsic impoverishment
- Group and political pressures
- Strenuous working conditions and
- Unprofitability.

Reliability : The split- half reliability coefficients by odd even method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale were found to be 0.935 and 0.90 respectively.

Validity : The employees' scores on the occupational stress index negatively correlate with their scores on the measures of certain attitudinal, motivational and personality variables which have been proved to lowering or

moderating the level of stress. The coefficients of correlation between the scores on the occupational stress index and the measures of job involvement, age strength and employees' motivation were found to be -0.80 (N=120), -0.40 (N=120), -0.44 (N=200) respectively. The employees' scores on OSI have been found to be positively correlated with their scores on the measures (indicators) of mental ill health.

Data Analysis

The study reprises the results which are obtained with the help of SPSS software. The scores of the present study are the responses of faculties on the standardized psychometric device, Occupational Stress Index.

Table 1 : Factor Analysis for Occupational Stress Score of Faculties at Private colleges at Varanasi (N= 110)

Factors	OSI Scores (Faculties)		T- test	Significance
	Mean	S.D.		
Role overload	23.11*	2.09367	-6.089	.000
Role ambiguity	10.46	1.9984	3.44	.000
Role conflict	12.79*	3.3485	5.67	.000
Unreasonable group & political pressure	10.94	2.53803	4.116	.000
Responsibility for persons	10.52	1.83134	3.774	.000
Under participation	11.65	3.4103	-4.69	.000
Powerlessness	9.52	1.9014	-3.837	.000
Poor peer relations	13.35*	2.04819	-1.483	.000
Intrinsic impoverishment	10.31	1.90420	4.472	.000
Low status	6.78	1.71395	5.665	.000
Strenuous working conditions	14.63*	2.08850	-8.951	.000
Unprofitability	5.86	1.28363	-.644	.000
Overall stress	126.55	9.825	3.269	.000

To compare the factors responsible for high and low occupational stress in faculties of private colleges at Varanasi mean and standard deviation of all the factors have been calculated. In table 1, mean stress score and standard deviation have been given. From the table, if we rank the causes of occupational stress in private colleges at Varanasi. The main factors responsible for it are:

1. Role overload (mean=23.11), then

2. Strenuous working condition (mean=14.63),

3. poor peer relation(13.35) and

4. Role conflict (mean=12.79).

126.55 have been treated as low stressed and above than this as highly stressed. On the basis of median, it has been found that 65.3 % of the faculties in private colleges are highly stressed. Further, the test of significance was conducted to evaluate the various factors significance, t-test

was computed to test the significant difference between mean OSI scores belonging to various faculties in private colleges in Varanasi and value of static was found to be 3.269 with p-value (.000) which is less than 0.05 and thus, proves to be significant. It shows that the differences among the factors were real and not due to chance.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Most of the faculties in private colleges are found to be highly stressed due to role overload (meeting the expectations of students & Institute, Deadlines for syllabus completion, feedback, marks submission) role conflict (Imparting discipline with moral values in students, maintaining relationship along with strictness with students), poor peer relations (Competition among faculties, research paper published by other faculties, politics and power in the institute) and strenuous working conditions (Long working hours, handling continuously four classes at a time) which ultimately results in lower job satisfaction, job involvement, high blood pressure, ulcers, irritability, difficulty in making routine decisions, loss of appetite, accident proneness etc.
- It can be recommended that more effort on the part of policy makers, practitioners and college management must be intensified to lessen the negative effects of occupational stress among the faculties, which can be achieved through better utilization of resources, better time management and proper planning.
- Regular Yoga & Meditation are highly solicited for such stressed faculties from different streams. Other than that motivational reward system can also be

incorporated by the institution to increase the greater amount of satisfaction among the faculty members which is presently lacking in private colleges.

SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

This study can be extended to more institutes as now it is being limited to the city Varanasi only. Not only this, further studies can also be done with various organizations and companies to study the level of stress amongst them.

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