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## A Study of occupational stress among teachers of private and Govt. schools

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### Abstract

Today's life is full of challenges. In everyday life we come across many situations. The work of a teacher is a physically and mentally challenging. A teacher needs to use a lot of energy in his daily chores in the classroom coupled with his personal and family commitments. This trend which is a routine for a teacher forwards a lot of stress to the teacher. More than ever before work is not seen as the root of infinite satisfaction and fulfillment, but rather a source of stress, discontentment and humiliation.

This increase negative orientation to work is probable due to the fact that man no longer finds meaning or a sense of him/herself in the community or as Freud (1962) ones suggested, but which does not seem to exist today, his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality in the human community. It is because of the dramatic changes that have taken place in society over the last decade or two that work and life stress have become more immediate focal points of interest. This interest has reflected itself in an ever increasing research orientation into occupational stress, the impact of life events, stress with a burgeoning and desperate range of investigations being undertaken into the sources and manifestation of stress, it was felt that we should 'step back' and reflect on what should or needs to be done, that is to focus on priorities or issues or problem areas of importance.

**Keywords:** Study, occupational stress among teachers, Govt. schools

### Introduction

Stress is a term in psychology and biology, first coined in the biological context in the 1930s, which has in more recent decades become commonly used in popular parlance. It refers to the consequence of the failure of an organism – human or animal – to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats, whether actual or imagined.

Stress symptoms commonly include a state of alarm and adrenaline production, short-term resistance as a coping mechanism, and exhaustion, as well as irritability, muscular tension, inability to concentrate and a variety of physiological reactions such as headache and elevated heart rate. Stress is a feeling that's created when we react to particular events. It's the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina, and heightened alertness. The events that provoke stress are called stressors, and they cover a whole range of situations - everything from outright physical danger to making a class presentation or taking a semester's worth of your toughest subject. The human body responds to stressors by activating the nervous system and specific hormones. The hypothalamus signals the adrenal glands to produce more of the hormones adrenaline and cortisol and release them into the bloodstream. These hormones speed up heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and metabolism. Blood vessels open wider to let more blood flow to large muscle groups, putting our muscles on alert. Pupils dilate to improve vision. The liver releases some of its stored glucose to increase the body's energy. And sweat is produced to cool the body. All of these physical changes prepare a person to react quickly and effectively to handle the pressure of the moment. This natural reaction is known as the stress response. Working properly, the body's stress response enhances a person's ability to perform well under pressure. But the stress response can also cause problems when it overreacts or fails to turn off and reset itself properly. Teachers not only have the stress of dealing with so many diverse children on a daily basis. They are also charged with educating and helping to mold these children into productive members of society.

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With rules, regulations, guidelines, and performance expectations all around teachers can have very high levels of stress. The job is very demanding in that it has hardly any end. Quite often teachers must take their work home overnight or on the weekends in order to be prepared for the next class section. The traditional summer break that so many teachers once looked forward to has begun to disappear as well with most schools beginning to adopt block schedules which require nearly year long school sessions with no more than one nine week vacation built in.

Good stress and bad stress stress is a word that everyone avoids but it cannot be. Everyone has some stress with varying degree. The words 'Stress' is defined as the status of psychological upset or disequilibrium in the human being caused by frustration conflicted and other internal as well as external strain and pressures. Now a days, everyone seems to be talking about stress. You hear it not only in daily conversation but also through Television, Radio, the newspaper's and the ever increasing number of conferences, stress centres and university courses are devoted to the topic. Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand. In some responses every demand made on the body is unique, that is specific. The first thing one should then bear in mind about stress is that a variety of dissimilar situations are capable of producing stress; and hence that no single ones can, in itself be pinpointed as the cause of the reaction as such. In all forms of life, there are common pathways which must mediate any attempt to adapt to conditions and sustain life. Man is ventured to study the stress in great detail since he is aware that his survival may depend on his ability to deal with it or get out of its way. On the other hand stress can cause fatal illness. Stress has also consigned rather large number of people to mental institutions, psychiatrists couch, prisons and hospitals.

According to Seyle (1950) "Stress has been defined as the state manifested by the specific syndrome which consists of all the non-specific induced changes within a biological system".

**Methods of Identifying Stress:** Identification is the first step towards correction; with this belief in mind it is strongly advised that a teacher should understand the implications of stress on his personal health and social life. The best ways to have stress identified easily is to remain active in his social circle and readily accept any recent psychological or behavioral change observed by the others. It is also possible to keep a track of own changes by maintaining a self checklist [i] (Appendix 1) this will help in establishing changes in ideas and opinions over a period of time. This will show a clear picture of how the work place environment have affected your thinking gradually and with the help of your friends, colleagues and relatives, you can change the effects of stress on your life.

**Self Analysis:** The best way is to keep a check on your own health, attitude and behavior. Any change in these should be noted and necessary remedial measures be taken immediately to overcome this situation. The self stress checklist given at appendix 1 can be a helpful aid in determining the change in attitude which can be useful for determining the own state.

**Mutual Analysis:** Another way is to maintain close liaison with other members of the faculty and discuss the irritants that are creating problems or are likely to create stress for the teachers. This is one way to identify and eradicate the issues

which are likely to become the cause of stress beforehand. The faculty members or an organization of teachers can benefit the affected teacher with each other's experience.

**Organizational Role:** The organization can also play a positive role in helping their teachers in identifying the causes of stress within their schools. Problems such as isolation and disruptive behavior on the part of students and their parents can very conveniently be handled at the top level by the management amicably without putting the teacher in a stressful situation.

**Occupational Stress:** Occupational Stress is stress at work. Stress is defined in terms of its physical and physiological effects on a person (or thing). Stress is mental, physical or emotional strain or tension or it is a situation or factor that can cause this. Occupational stress occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the environment/workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demand. Often a stressor can lead the body to have a physiological which in turn will result on a strain on a person physically as well as mentally. One of the main causes of occupational stress is work overload. Occupational stress is often caused by an increased workload without the addition of employees to take on that additional work. Instead the increased amount of work is given to the current employees to finish in the same time span that they would be asked to finish their regular or standard workload. But stress doesn't always happen in response to things that are immediate or that are over quickly. Ongoing or long-term events, like coping with a divorce or moving to a new neighborhood or school, can cause stress, too. Long-term stressful situations can produce a lasting, low-level stress that's hard on people. The nervous system senses continued pressure and may remain slightly activated and continue to pump out extra stress hormones over an extended period. This can wear out the body's reserves, leave a person feeling depleted or overwhelmed, weaken the body's immune system, and cause other problems. Occupational stress can be defined as the physical and emotional response that occurs where worker perceives an imbalance between their work demands and their capability and/or resources to meet these demands or in simple words it is the harmful physical and emotional response that can happen when there is conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control and employee has over meeting these demands.

### Conclusion

Some elements of stress are intrinsic while others are situational in the profession of teaching. The teacher has to understand how to cope with those which are intrinsic, while the situational ones can be managed with experience and common sense. When a person decides to adopt the teaching profession, he or she during the training phase must realize the demands of this profession in terms of effort involved and in terms of time investment. The workload on a teacher will always be great and everything will always be bracketed by a very tight time schedule. A teacher has to be punctual and able to meet the deadline without fail. A teacher will have to always face the criticism of parents of the weak students and face the school board with a different set of problems. A sensible teacher must know where to draw a line to prevent his social and personal life from being absorbed by his professional life. Though it is very difficult to leave the stresses of the school in the office and not let it affect their

personal life, but there are methods which can help a teacher to reduce these effects. It is very important for a teacher to have a hobby which is totally different from he teaches at school. Music, gardening, hiking and painting are a few examples of hobbies which a teacher may adopt. These can give them an outlet and take their minds off from the problems that they face at school. This is one way of getting the day's stress off from their minds. It is very important for a teacher to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Cutting back on bad habits like drinking and smoking will not just make you a healthy person, but will also make you a role model for your students and other faculty members as well. For a healthy living follow the following: Stop smoking as it will help you stay healthy. Reduce caffeine intake will help you stay focused and reduce stress Eat breakfast as it is the most important meal of the day as it will help you stay healthy Avoid junk snacks and eat right Don't let your life just roll by itself. Set realistic goals in life and then pursue them.

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