

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Summary of findings

Stress is a complex multidimensional phenomenon and has its antecedents, broadly speaking, in individual, organizational and extra organizational factors. Any attempt to understand stress, thus, entails looking into a complex and numerous combinations of these individual, organizational and extra – organizational factors.

First, extra organizational factors include daily hassles which are also known as micro stressors. Due to the explosion of technology in the last decade or so, life has become very complex. As a consequence, a new set of unprecedented problems have raised their heads in the daily life of people. These include transportation, communication, education, health services, inflation, taxes, corruption, family obligations, religious and community functions, housework, political or social issues and so on. Another factor contributing to stress is major life events. These factors, as the name indicates, are major events and occur rarely or once in the life time of an individual.

Second, Organizational factors include on the job stressors such as work overload, work under load, responsibility challenge, control, decision making, support, career opportunities, salary and allowances, safety and job security; occupational position and type of organization.

During the study only about one-third of the responding teachers felt that the level of occupational stress experienced by them is low. Almost equal percentage of teachers felt that they experienced a moderate and high level of occupational stress. The percentage of male respondents with high level of occupational stress was quite higher than that of females. Among the teachers with high level of occupational stress

there is a larger percentage among unmarried than among the married. In case of those with high levels of stress, their percentage in both the highest and lowest income groups is less than in other income groups.

Among those with highest level of educational qualifications, nearly two-fifths of them had been experiencing high level of occupational stress. Even among the graduates highest percentage of respondents were experiencing high level of occupational stress. Highest percentage of teachers, with ten or less years of teaching experience, experienced high level of occupational stress. In case of those experiencing high levels of occupational stress there were larger percentage of private school teachers than those in government schools. Among those experiencing high levels of occupational stress there were larger percentage of school teachers from South district and lowest among the teachers from West district.

Over two fifths experience a high level of functional job stress. The percentage of respondents with high stress level is above forty percent in the lower as well as higher age groups with one-third in the middle age group. The percentage of male respondents with high level of functional job stress, accounting for over half of the male respondents, was quite higher than that of females. There is a larger percentage among unmarried than among the married who are experiencing high level of functional job stress. In case of those with high levels of stress, their percentage in both the highest and lowest income groups is less than in other income groups.

Among those with graduation and post graduation level of educational qualifications, over two-fifths each of them had been experiencing high level of functional job stress. Highest percentage of teachers with five or less years of teaching experience, experienced high level of functional job stress. In case of those experiencing high levels of occupational stress there were larger percentage of school teachers from South and North districts and lower among the teachers from West and East district.

The percentage of male and female respondents with high level of physical stress symptoms was nearly same at around one-third. With respect to teachers with high level of physical stress symptoms; there is a larger percentage among unmarried than

among the married. In case of those with high levels of stress, their percentage in both the highest and lowest income groups is less than in other income groups.

Among those with high level of physical stress symptoms there were substantially larger percentage of primary school teachers than secondary school teachers. Higher percentage of teachers with ten or less years of teaching experience, experienced high level of physical stress symptoms. In case of those experiencing high levels of physical stress symptoms there were an equal percentage of private school teachers and those in government schools. Also, there were larger percentage of school teachers from North district and lowest among the teachers from West district.

About one-third of the responding teachers felt that the level of psychological stress symptoms experienced by them is high. The percentage of male respondents with high level of psychological stress symptoms was lower than that of females. Also, there is a larger percentage among unmarried than among the married who are experiencing high level of psychological stress symptoms. Among those with high levels of stress, their percentage in both the highest and lowest income groups is less than in other income groups.

Among those with highest level of educational qualifications, nearly two-fifths of them had been experiencing high level of psychological stress symptoms. Even among the graduates highest percentage of respondents were experiencing high level of psychological stress. There was a higher percentage of those teaching in secondary schools, than those in the primary schools. Highest percentage of teachers, with ten or less years of teaching experience, experienced high level of psychological stress symptoms in case of those experiencing high levels of Psychological Stress Symptoms there was an equal percentage of private and government school teachers. Also, there were larger percentage of school teachers from North district and lowest among the teachers from East district.

About two fifths of the respondents experience a high level of social stress. The percentage of male respondents with high level of social stress was lower than that of females. There is a larger percentage among unmarried than among the married who

are experiencing high level of social stress. Their percentage in both the highest and lowest income groups is less than in other income groups.

Teachers with lowest level of education had over two-fifths of them with high level of social stress. Among those with highest level of educational qualifications, nearly two-fifths each of them had been experiencing high level of social stress. Even among the graduates highest percentage of respondents were experiencing high level of social stress. Highest percentage of teachers, with ten or less years of teaching experience, experienced high level of social stress. The percentage of respondents with high levels of social relationship stress was almost same among the government and private schools. Among those experiencing high levels of social relationship stress there were larger percentage of school teachers from West and South districts and lower among the teachers from East and North districts.

About one-third each show low, moderate and high level of stress resistant cognitive behavioral patterns. The percentage of respondents with high stress level goes on increasing with the age. There was a higher percentage of male respondents showing low levels of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns than females. The percentage of male respondents with high level of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns was less than that of females. In respect of teachers showing high level of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns, there is a larger percentage among married than among the unmarried. In case of those with high levels of stress, their percentage is highest in the highest income group.

Among those with highest level of educational qualifications, nearly two-fifths of them were exhibiting high level of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns. In case of those showing moderate level of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns there was substantially larger percentage of teachers in secondary schools than in primary schools. Among those with less than five years of experience, the percentage of teachers showing low levels of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns was highest and the percentage goes on decreasing with increase in years of teaching experience.

There is not much difference in the percentage of respondents showing different

levels of stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns between the government and private schools. The percentage of respondents with moderate levels of occupational stress was higher among the teachers from South and East districts and lower among teachers from other two district schools. In case of those showing high levels of stress resistant cognitive behavioral patterns there were largest percentage of school teachers from West district and lowest from North district.

The total number of respondents were nearly equally divided with respect to the different levels of coping strategies adopted by them. The percentage of respondents across the three age groups were also nearly equally divided among those showing low, moderate and high levels of copying strategies.

Among those showing low levels of coping strategies, there is a substantial difference between the married and unmarried teachers. A substantially higher percentage of married teachers show low level of coping strategies than unmarried ones. However, the opposite is true with respect to teachers with high level of coping strategies; there is a larger percentage among unmarried than among the married who are adopting high level of coping strategies. In case of those with high levels of stress, their percentage is highest in the second highest income group and lowest in the second lowest income group.

Among those with highest level of educational qualifications, nearly two-fifths of them had been exhibiting high level of coping strategies. Even among the graduates highest percentage of respondents were adopting high level of coping strategies. Among those adopting high level of coping strategies, there is a substantially higher percentage of secondary school teachers than primary school teachers. In case of those adopting moderate level of coping strategies there were nearly equal percentage of teachers in primary and secondary schools. Among those adopting high levels of coping strategies it was highest among those with less than five years of teaching experience and lowest among those with six to ten years of teaching experience.

There is higher percentage of respondents adopting low levels of coping strategies among the private schools than in government schools. In case of those exhibiting

high levels of coping strategies, the difference between the teachers of private and government schools is not much. There is highest percentage of respondents adopting low levels of coping strategies among the teachers of schools from South district and lowest percentage among the teachers of schools from North district. The percentage of respondents adopting moderate levels of coping strategies was lowest among teachers from South district than the teachers from other districts. In case of those exhibiting high levels of coping strategies there were largest percentage of school teachers from South district and least among the teachers from East district.

There is no difference in the perceived levels of different types of stress and the stress resistant cognitive behavioral patterns and coping strategies adopted by teachers of the varying age levels. Hence age of the teachers has no effect on their level of stress. There is also no difference in the perceived levels of stress among male and female teachers except in case of functional job stress experienced by them. Hence sex of the teachers has no effect on their level of stress. There is also no difference in the perceived levels of stress among married and unmarried teachers. However, annual family income level makes a significant difference to the levels of stress experienced by them.

Educational qualifications make a significant difference in the levels of stress experienced, the stress resistant cognitive behavior patterns shown and the coping strategies adopted in many cases. Teaching levels – primary or secondary - do make a significant difference in the levels of stress experienced by teachers. Years of teaching experience also makes a significant difference in the levels of stress experienced by teachers.

There is no difference in the perceived levels of different types of stress, the stress resistant cognitive behavioral patterns shown and the coping strategies adopted by teachers from the varying sector of teaching. Hence sector of teaching of the teachers has no effect on their level of stress. But there is a significant difference in the perceived levels of stress among the teachers from the different districts. Hence district of teaching of the teachers is an important variable contributing to their stress.

7.2 Personal Observations

1. There was a wide gap in areas of working and communication between the heads of almost all the Government institutions and their teachers. The teachers gave the impression that they knew what to do and did not have to be consulted upon. The heads of the institutions gave the feeling that they had no real authority over their colleagues.
2. Some of the teachers of a very renowned private school in Sikkim conveyed to the researcher that the teachers in Sikkim were not under stress but only people who live in metropolitan cities undergo stress and strains. However, after filling and submitting the questionnaires they expressed that they learnt quite a lot from it.
3. One of the government schools in North Sikkim where the teachers preferred filling the questionnaires with the help of a pencil and preferred making circles then tick marking the answers. The researcher failed to understand why they behaved like that.
4. A private school in West Sikkim which was relatively a small school, its teachers loved to give their extra comments at the end of the questionnaire. Basically their comments were about meaning of Stress and how they reacted positively towards it.
5. The researcher got the impression that the Government school teachers were very happy and proud that their jobs were secured.
6. Most of the teachers of the private schools did not know the real purpose, mission and the aim of the school that they were working for, of course the same plight was with the government schools. The teachers basically were very keen in completing the syllabus, having weekly tests and the regular exams but there was very little interaction with the students. They were subject teachers rather than guiding and counseling the students and behaving as true educators.

7. Sikkim being rather a remote place and seeing the political and social environment of the place the teachers had a mind set for their attitude and style of working. So their thinking was very limited and hence the concept of education and learning was also very limited. For example the researcher was given the impression that he was doing a survey rather than it was an educational project and study.

8. The researcher felt very sincerely that if all the teachers had known the beauty of being a teacher and the rewards and bounty bestowed upon the true and sincere one then working would have been more of a joy and the strains and stress of work would have been reduced.

Some quotes from the great Master Abdu'l – Baha are given below which are very encouraging and uplifting:

“Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children”

“Blessed is that teacher who shall arise to instruct the children, and to guide the people into the pathways of God, the Bestower, the Well- Beloved.”

“Devote ye the utmost attention to this matter, for the basic, the foundation – principle of a school is first and foremost moral training, character, and the rectification of conduct.”

7.3 Recommendations And Suggestions

In real life, occupational stress is an inevitable phenomenon and it exists in all kinds of occupation although it varies in degree and extent. There is no doubt that the teaching profession is highly stressful as is known from public opinions and the results revealed in the present study. If teacher stress is left unresolved, it will have substantial negative impacts on teachers' physical and mental health.

From the results of the present study, a few recommendations and suggestions are raised for the school principals, teachers' organizations, the Education Department and for the futures scholars.

1. Recommendations and suggestions for the school principals:

The following methods are proposed for the school principals to help in reducing teacher stress and strain:

1. The school authority should try to see that there are more interactions between the teachers as well and to create more opportunities for communications among members of the staff. This can be achieved by organizing social gatherings on an informal basis and also various kinds of extra-curricula activities for the teachers with the aim to help and promote mutual understanding amongst the teachers. The principal should strive to see that a friendly and supportive relationship with the staff takes place.
2. The school principal should find ways and means to lessen the heavy workload of teachers by distributing workload among the teachers in a proper and even manner. Studies of occupational stress have shown that workload and lack of proper communications are the significant causes of increasing stress among the teachers.
3. Efforts should be made in school to see that teachers have the opportunity to fulfill their needs in self-actualization, autonomy and esteem in order to avoid the feeling of strain. The school authority should help teachers to develop their potential in teaching by allowing them a higher degree of flexibility and independence in teaching. Besides, the school authority should promote the image of teachers as deserving respect.
4. In order to familiarize quickly and easily with the work there should be orientation programs for the younger and inexperienced teachers.

2. Recommendations and suggestions for teachers' organizations:

Below are some means proposed for teachers' organizations to help in reducing teachers' stress and strain:

1. Teachers' organizations should organize seminars and workshops to help teachers cope with work stress and reduce the feeling of strain. Some of the topics to be discussed can be the joys of working together, class-room management and discipline

and importance of good health and positive attitude through different kinds of practices.

2. They should help arouse the awareness of teachers towards the importance of social support especially from their supervisors and co-workers and this will help persuade them to seek more support during the time of stress and strain.
3. They should try to seek justice for the teachers in terms of monetary and non-monetary rewards so that the teachers' security and their needs can be fulfilled.
4. They should try to provide professional counseling to the stressed and strained teachers.

3. Recommendations and suggestions for the Education Department:

In the present study, it was found that many stress factors contributed to the teachers' strain. The Education Department should play a role in reducing this problem. The following are some proposed methods to do so:

1. The Education Department should see to the genuine needs of the teachers by discussing with the government with the hope of increasing the welfare benefits and upgrading the social status of the teachers.
2. Work overload was found to be the cause of tremendous stress and strain to the teachers. The Education Department should increase the teacher - class ratio with the aim of reducing the workload of teachers. Besides, and if possible more subsidies should be granted to each school so that more clerical staff can be employed to relief the non-teaching duties of teachers.
3. Teaching aids and resources to be provided for different subjects so that teachers can avail more information easily.

4. Recommendations and suggestions for future research:

Usually a research project raises more questions than it answers. The following are some proposed recommendations for future research:

1. The study should be replicated in colleges, junior colleges and for heads of the institution and results should be compared with that of the present study.
2. Other job stress factors as role-based stress, job complexity, organizational climate in school, teachers' participation in decision making, teachers' expectation about teaching, communication of teachers with school authority and colleagues, principal's leadership style and career development factors should also be taken into account in future stress-strain research.
3. The present study only examines one intervening variable, namely social support, between stress and strain. Personality variables as Type A/B and hardiness or hardy personality as conditioning variables should be investigated in future research to see whether they are effective in buffering the stress-strain relationship.
4. The present research cannot include all measures of strain nor could the consequences of strain be studied this was due to the limitation of resources. However, the future researchers can pay attention to both behavioral and physiological strains and their effects on illness, teacher turnover, absenteeism, performance, quality of life of teachers and students' academic achievement.
5. It is hoped that causal models of teachers' stress can be established in future research as the present study is basically a correlation one.
6. The present research is a study on teachers' perceived stress, perceived social support and perceived strains. It is worthy to include for future research objective measures of stress, strain, and support, and to understand their relationship to each other and with perceived stress, strain, and support.

7. In alleviating stress and strain social support plays an important role, so future research should aim at constructing a model of support that helps and predicts the effects of support, but to also understand how it works. Such a model must include the concepts of information processing, psychological defenses, coping and adaptation, and structural / environmental characteristics, such as role relations and networks of support.
8. There should be more study made on how to change job stresses, how to improve the person and his job, and how to increase ones participation and social support.
9. It is recommended that future research should include direct observations and interviews rather than only depend on self-reported responses. It is also essential for future research to be expanded to include more sophisticated experimental and longitudinal procedures.