



## **A Study Of Occupational Stress In Relation To Demographic Variables**

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### ***Abstract:***

*In recent years, we have seen a rise in stress across all spheres of life, particularly in the work place. It is not surprising that we are seeing work place stress emerging as a major cause of physical and mental health problems. Stress is an individual's physical and mental reaction to environmental demands/pressures. Stress, in general and occupational stress, in particular is a fact of modern day life that seems to have been on the increase. Occupational (job, work, workplace) stress has become one of the most serious health issues in modern world ( Lu.et.al,2003) as it occurs in any job and is even more present than decades ago. Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job (Rees, 1997) because of poor fit between someone's abilities to his/her requirements and conditions. This investigation is an attempt to study the occupational stress in some of the demographic variables. A sample of 100 primary school teachers was selected and The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) by A.K.Shrivastva was used for collecting data. The response rate was 80%. Data was analyzed by using statistical techniques like mean, SD and t-value. It was found that the teachers have moderate level of occupational stress. Male and female teachers did not differ in their levels of occupational stress. The teachers working in Govt. and Private schools were not found to differ in their level of occupational stress.*

***Key words:*** Stress, Occupational Stress, Demographic variables.

## **1.Introduction**

The teaching job in itself is demanding. Teachers work under different management systems and working conditions which affect their psychological state. There is a wide spread belief that work related stress among teachers has serious implication for the teachers' mental health and performance. Teacher's mental health plays an important role in teaching-learning process. If the teachers are of unsound mind, they can harm nation in terms of poor teaching and guiding to the students. Their maladjustment will not adversely affect their personality but will produce maladjustment tendency in children. Teachers' stress has been identified as a disruptive factor towards productiveness within the classroom. It has been reported that job related stress is a common phenomenon among many teachers. Stress may vary depending on how an individual perceives stressful event. In recent years, we have seen a rise in stress across all spheres of life, particularly in the work place. It is not surprising that we are seeing work place stress emerging as a major cause of physical and mental health problems. For a working person, three relationships are known to be important psychosocial determinants of the mental and physical health of working people: the relationship between the employee and his/her job, the employee and people at work with him, relationship between the employee and organization culture. The culture of the organization in which a person is working plays a great role in keeping that person's health sound as senior manager of Vic Health said Stress and culture are quite interrelated, so if I've got high levels of stress, I would make the assumption that I've probably less than satisfactory organizational culture. If I've got low levels of stress then I would think that I would be moving more towards a healthy culture of people wanting to come to work.

### *1.1.Occupational Stress*

The word stress is derived from the Latin word "Strictus" which means "tight" or "narrow" and "Stringere" which means "to tighten". Stress is a common human phenomenon. Stress in humans results from a complex interaction between the events of the life and the perception of those events by an individual. Stress is an individual's physical and mental reaction to environmental demands/pressures. Extreme conditions are detrimental to human health. Stress was first studied in 1896 by Water B Cannon and

applied to the human behaviour by Hans Selye. Selye (1974) in his most recent definition stated that stress is 'the non-specific response of the body to any demand'.

Stress is a natural ongoing dynamic and interactive process that takes place as people adjust to their environment. Stress is a feeling of tension, which is both physical & emotional and is caused by physiological, psychological and environmental demands. Thus stress affects the individuals physiologically, emotionally and psychologically. Psychological effects of stress are associated with the onset of depression or anxiety. Stress, in general and occupational stress, in particular is a fact of modern day life that seems to have been on the increase. Occupational ( job, work, workplace) stress has become one of the most serious health issues in modern world( Lu.et.al,2003) as it occurs in any job and is even more present than decades ago. Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job (Rees, 1997) because of poor fit between someone's abilities to his/her requirements and conditions (Holmlund, Rytkonen and Strandvick, 2005). It is the mental and physical condition which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness personal health and quality of work (Comish & Swindle, 1994).Kariacou &Sutcliffe(1978) defined stress as " a response to negative effect by a teacher usually accompanied by potentially pathogenic, physiological and bio-chemical changes resulting from aspects of teacher's job and mediated by the perception that demands made upon the teacher constitute a threat to his self-esteem or well-being and coping mechanism activated to reduce the perceived threat." Stress up to a moderate level is inevitable and leads to motivation but prolonged occupational stress in teaching has been found to result In both physiological and psychological ailments which ultimately have deleterious effects on teachers' professional efficacy (Kariacou & Pratt,1989). In the present study, the main stress is on the occupational stress. In the occupational stress, the main source of stress is the occupation of the person. Occupational stress is defined as an individual's state of mind when he encounters a situation of demand and or constraint in an organization and perceives the same as harmful or threatening. Today stress in the organization has become a predominant feature of modern life. Job stress generally occurs because of misfit between a person's attitudes, abilities, skills and demands of the job and the organization.Organizational stress is defined as any characteristics of the job environment which poses a threat to the individual (Caplan.et.al, 1975). Occupational stress is defined as a condition where job related factors interact with the individual to change his/her psychological or

physiological condition in such a way that a person is forced to deviate from normal functioning (Selye, 1979). Job stress as a condition arising from the interaction of people with their jobs, characterized by changes within people that face them to deviate from their normal functioning (Beehr & Newman, 1986). Job stress is generally defined in terms of relationship between person and environment. There are several factors which lead occupational stress among school teachers. Looking at the everyday increasing work and life complexities stress has now become a major concern of the millennium. There are a variety of sources responsible for teachers' stress. Important among them are work-overload or job overload is found to be one of the most prominent causal factors of teachers' stress. A major factor related to work-load is role-overload, which takes place when teachers have to cope with a number of competing roles within their job. Another important source of stress among teachers includes constant changes within the profession and lack of information as to how changes are to be implemented. Apart from these the sources of teacher stress include pupils' misbehavior, student absenteeism, negative student attitude towards learning, poor working conditions, time pressure, large classes too much correction work, lack of encouragement, feeling of failure, non-cooperative parents, job insecurity, lack of public esteem, poor colleagues relationships, criticism by colleagues, lack of control over the job, delayed salaries, duties other than teaching, political interference, negative community attitude towards teaching (Gmelch 1983). Undoubtedly, teaching has become a very stressful profession in the present time. Thus occupational stress affects the mental health of the teacher and in turn affects the teaching efficiency.

#### 1.1.1.Sources Of Occupational Stress

Sources of occupational stress include poor working conditions, work overload and under-load, role conflict and ambiguity, unsatisfactory career development and erratic working hours (Quicks and Quick, 1984). Thus occupational stress affects mental health and thus influences teaching efficiency. Work stress is a major cause for poor mental health (Clusky, 1994 & Hedin 1994). Trendall (1989) found many teachers were under physical and mental strain and reported that the most frequent sources of stress were lack of time, large classes, teaching work load and pupils' misbehavior. There are different factors for the stress of teachers in general and women teachers in particular. Woman teachers have more stressful situations when compared to male counterparts. It is an

established fact that the performance of a teacher mainly depends upon his psychological state of mind. Newell (1979) contended that problems such as student's indiscipline, lack of student progress, inadequate budget, lack of administrative support etc. contributed to teachers' stress. Pratte J(1978) studied primary school teachers to see the relationship between stress and the background of children's socio-economic level and found financial deprivation in the home background of children to be positively & significantly related to perceived stress among teachers. Tellanback, Brenner & Lofgren (1983) conducted two studies on Swedish school teachers. In the first study on 1,838 teachers, 40.15% said teaching was 'always' or 'often' a mental strain. In the second study on 445 teachers 31% found their work to be 'very much' a mental strain. Trendall(1989) found many teachers were under mental or physical strain and reported that the most frequent sources of stress were lack of time, large classes, teaching work load and pupils' misbehavior. Women teachers have more stressful situation than male counterparts. Payne & Furnham (1987) reported data from 444 sec. teachers in Barbados and found that difficulties associated with instructional and managerial demands were perceived as the most stressful aspects of their work. Manso- Pinto (1989) administered the TOSFQ( Clark1980) to a sample 186 elementary and sec. school teachers in Chile. Four main factors were identified i.e. administrative support, professional distress, financial security and students' discipline among which lack of administrative support was perceived as the most stressful factor. Borg & Riding (1991) conducted a questionnaire survey of 710 Maltese primary school teachers and revealed four factors as sources of stress: Pupil misbehavior, time or resource difficulties, professional recognition needs and poor relationships with colleagues. The Professional Teachers' Union of Hong Kong (1995) also conducted a survey on teacher stress. It sent 1,100 questionnaires to its members by random sampling method in January 1995 with a return rate of 45%. The results showed that 61% of respondents found teaching stressful. The main sources of stress were: Students' unruly behaviour, large class size, too much marking, too much clerical work and so on. Warner (2005) conducted a study on the stress level in male and female and he found that constant stress at work or at home may be more dangerous for women than men. Kim. et.al found that the relationship of work stress and family stress to the health of women in Korea and found that there was a significant negative relationship between perceived health status and work stress and family stress. Carr (1998) found that work factors responsible for stress were - Feeling of

lack of support from systemic authority, coping with heavy work demands and employers' expectations. Downton (1987) conducted a survey on the stress experienced by primary school principals. Three major sources of occupational stress were identified- Work load pressures resulting from constrained time frames, perceived deficiencies of role performance; lack of access to staffing resources and expertise. Cooke, Pang, Kan & Shek (1990) based on their study of beginning teachers in Hong-Kong, reported that the first year of teaching was not at all easy. About 45% of the sample considered their first year difficult or extremely difficult. These teachers were under more stress. Work – related stress is, generally high in Hong-Kong. A group of British Academics, who conducted a survey with 5,000 people from 16 countries including 300 from Hong-Kong , reported that Hong-Kong had been ranked as the most stressful work place in the world. With respect to teaching specifically, with in a six-week period in Nov. & Dec. 1994, four Hong-Kong school teachers committed suicide. This study showed that work stress is very harmful and it leads to depression r other health problems in people.

#### 1.1.2.Effects Of Occupational Stress On Health Of The Individual

Stress up to a moderate level is inevitable and leads to motivation but prolonged occupational stress in teaching has been found to result in physiological and psychological ailments, which ultimately have deleterious effects on teacher's professional efficacy ( Kyriacou & Pratt 1989). Undoubtedly, teaching has become a very stressful. There is increasing evidence that work related stress can contribute to a variety of ailments; such as tension, headaches, backaches, high blood pressures, cardiovascular diseases and mental illness. It can also leads to alcoholism and drug abuse, the problems that are reaching epidemic proportion in organization and society. Researchers engaged in analyzing the antecedents and consequences of job stress, have reported different physical and psychological conditions at different type of work as potential occupational stressors ( Bogg & Cooper ,1995 and Kirkcaldy 1993). Failing to meet such a challenge can have detrimental effect on health and can reduce effectiveness of the education they provide.

## **2.Review Of Related Literature**

Upadhaya & Singh (2001) studied the occupational stress among school and college teachers. Their study revealed that the school teacher were under more occupational

stress as compared to college teachers. They found that work overload, role conflict, higher expectations of students and their parents were found to cause more stress among the school teachers. Dornan (2002) studied the stress related absence in schools of the City of York. The objective of the study was to improve school performance and teacher productivity. The results of the study showed that key sources of pressures include workload, worry, recognition and lack of influence. Younghusband L., Garlie N. & Church E. (2003) studied High School teachers' stress in Newfoundland, Canada. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of high school teacher's stress in workplace and to develop the theory of the causes of high school teachers' stress in Newfoundland. Firstly 50 school teachers were selected from urban and rural area but finally 15 were selected for data collection. Interview technique was used to collect data from the teachers. Practice and Bracketed interview technique were used. Grounded theory was the approach chosen to use in this study. After the analysis of 15 interviews, the results showed the following causes of teachers' stress as

Change

Culture of negativity

Workload & students' behaviour

Lack of administrative support

Disillusionment

Mathews (2005) studied the occupational stress of teachers. This study was conducted to find out the level of occupational stress of higher sec. school teachers of Kerala. A sample of 60 school teachers was taken from Idukki & Kottayam districts of Kerala. Results indicated that 48% of teachers of Kottayam district experienced low stress whereas 80% teachers of Idukki district showed low stress. In this study, it was found that there was no significant relationship between the levels of occupational stress of both the districts. Kaur (2006) studied the mental health and occupational stress among school teachers. This study was aimed at investigating mental health and occupational strain among school teachers. The objectives were to study the Mental Health and occupational strain of Male/Female teachers, Govt./ Private teachers and Muktsar/Ludhiana districts teachers. The results indicated that male and female teachers take care of their personal well being. Males are less anxious and have less disabling symptoms as compared to female teachers. Private school teachers are more mentally healthy than Govt. school teachers. Teachers of both the districts have poor attitude

towards job. Ravichandran & Rajendran (2007) studied the perceived sources of stress among the teachers. They also reported that there was a significant relationship between gender and mental health. Their study revealed that female teachers had more occupational stress as compared to male counterparts.

### **3. Rationale Of The Study**

The teacher is an employee of an institution where the future of the nation is being shaped. Acc. to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "The future of nation is being shaped in her class-room." Teachers play an important role in nation building. If a teacher is free from stress and strain, he will teach effectively. But we are living in a fast growing era of complexities and pressures where human constitutional capacities are taxed severely. Stress is a universal human experience. Both pleasant and unpleasant experiences can have stressful components with specific reference to teachers, and with in general concept of occupational stress. It has been reported that job-related stress is a common phenomenon among many teachers. The impact of this stress can prevent productive teaching and learning as well as affect the physical and emotional well-being of the individual teacher (1985). This study is an attempt to find out the factors responsible for stress among teachers. So the findings of the study will be helpful in understanding all those problems and on the basis of findings suggestions will be given. The effectiveness of the educational system largely depends upon the active, resourceful and competent teachers. An effective teacher not only imparts the entire educational curricula allotted to him in the best and most efficient manner but also ensures the best possible academic performance and an optimum development of the personalities of the students. In the present scenario, when there is a fierce competition in every sphere of life; effectiveness of the teachers becomes imperative to empower the students for facing the emerging challenges of global world. Effective teaching is a par excellence attribute of quality education. There are many factors which influence the effectiveness of the teacher in one or another way viz. Intelligence, Attitude towards teaching, Experience, Academic qualification, personality, occupational Stress & Mental health etc.

### **4. Research Methodology**

This study is exploratory in nature and it was conducted to find out the important factors of occupational stress in relation to their demographic variables.



#### *4.1.Statement Of The Problem*

A Study Of Occupational Stress Among Primary School Teachers In Relation To Some Demographic Variables.

##### 4.1.1.Operational Definitions Of Key Words Used In The Study

###### 4.1.1.1.Occupational Stress

The stress arising exclusively from job roles. Occupational stress is defined in terms of relationship between person and environment. “ ...there is potential for stress when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting demand which threatens to exceed the person’s capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand versus not meeting it. “

###### 4.1.1.2.Primary School Teachers

The teachers who are teaching at primary level i.e. from class 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> are called primary teachers.

#### *4.2.Objectives Of The Study*

To study level of occupational stress among primary school teachers.

To compare the level of occupational stress between male and female primary school teachers.

To compare the level of occupational stress of the teachers working in Government and Private school.

#### *4.3.Hypotheses Of The Study*

There exists no significant difference between male and female primary school teachers in their levels of occupational stress.

There is no significant difference between Government and Private primary school teachers in their level of occupational stress.

There exists no significant relationship between occupational stress and mental health of primary school teachers.

#### 4.4. Research Design

##### 4.4.1. Method Used

Probability sampling method was used for sampling.

##### 4.4.2. Sample

A sample of 100 primary school teachers of Panipat District including male/female, Govt./Private school teachers were selected for the study. The response rate was 80%.

##### 4.4.3. Tool Used

The investigator had used The Occupational Stress Index by Shrivastva.

### 5. Data Analysis And Data Interpretation

In order to compare the teachers in their levels of occupational stress, various statistical techniques like mean, SD and t-values were used.

S. No.	Subscales of the Variable	Mean	S.D.
1	Role Overload	20.5	3.01
2	Role Ambiguity	10.4	2.24
3	Role Conflict	13.2	2.56
4	Unreasonable group & Political Pressure	13.6	2.09
5	Responsibility for Persons	10.0	1.08
6	Under-participation	12.3	2.31
7	Powerlessness	9.4	2.08
8	Poor Peer Relationship	11.7	1.8
9	Intrinsic Impoverishment	9.2	2.28
10	Low Status	7.3	2.42
11	Strenuous Working Condition	9.4	1.6
12	Unprofitability	6.9	2.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>133.9</b>	<b>25.41</b>

*Table 1: Level Of Occupational Stress Among Primary School Teachers*

From the table 1, it is clear that the mean value of occupational stress score is 133.9. It shows that the teachers have moderate level of occupational stress.

Gender	No. of Teachers	Mean	St. Dev.	t-ratio	Significance Level
Male	40	133.4	25.35	0.545	Not Significant
Female	40	136.5	25.55		

*Table 2: To Compare The Male And Female Teachers In Their Levels Of Occupational Stress*

From the table 2, it is clear that the calculated t-value is 0.545 which is less than critical value at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the difference between the means of male and female teachers in their level of occupational stress cannot be taken significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the Ho “There exists no significant difference in the level of occupational stress between male and female primary school teachers” is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Thus it can be concluded that male and female teachers do not differ significantly in their level of occupational stress. The findings of this study is in consonance with the findings of Englezakis,D.(2001) in which there was found no significant difference in the occupational stress of male and female teachers.

S.No	Subscales of Variable	MALE		FEMALE		t-ratio	Level of Significance 0.05 level
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
1	Role overload	21.0	3.41	20.0	2.61	1.47	Not Significant
2	Role Ambiguity	10.4	2.41	10.4	2.06	0	Not Significant
3	Role Conflict	14.2	2.79	14.6	2.33	0.70	Not Significant
4	Unreasonable group and Political Pressure	15.2	1.72	12.0	2.45	6.80	Significant
5	Responsibilities for persons	10.6	0.8	9.4	1.36	4.8	Significant
6	Under-participation	12.0	2.28	12.6	2.33	1.15	Not Significant
7	Powerlessness	8.4	2.42	10.4	1.74	4.26	Significant
8	Poor Peer Relationship	10.6	1.20	12.8	2.4	5.24	Significant
9	Intrinsic Impoverishment	8.8	2.14	9.6	2.42	1.57	Not Significant
10	Low Status	6.6	1.2	8.0	3.63	2.33	Significant

S.No	Subscales of Variable	MALE		FEMALE		t-ratio	Level of Significance 0.05 level
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
11	Strenuous Working Condition	9.6	2.45	9.2	0.75	0.97	Not significant
12	Unprofitability	6.0	2.53	7.5	1.47	3.91	Significant

*Table 3: Comparison Between Male And Female Teachers In Various Domains Of Occupational Stress*

A close examination of the table 3, has made it clear that computed t-value for comparing male and female teachers in the domains of role overload, role conflict, under-participation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status and strenuous working condition is less than critical value at 0.05(1.96) level of significance. So mean difference in male and female teachers is not significant in case of all the above said domains is not significant. It means that male and female teachers do not differ in these areas. But in the domains of unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibilities for persons, powerlessness, poor peer relationship and unprofitability, the calculated value of t-ratio is greater than critical values. Thus in these areas the mean difference between male and female teachers is significant. In the area of role ambiguity, there was found no difference between male and female teachers.

Type of School	No. of Teachers	Mean	St. Dev.	t-ratio	Significance Level
Govt.	30	134.8	23.14	0.108	Not Significant
Private	50	135.4	25.40		

*Table 4: Comparison Of The Teachers Working In Government And Private Schools In Their Level Of Occupational Stress*

From the table 4, it is clear that the calculated t-value is 0.108 which is less than critical value at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the difference between the means of teachers working in Government and Private Schools is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the Ho "There is no significant difference between Government and Private primary school teachers in their level of occupational stress" is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Thus it can be concluded that teachers working in Govt. and Private schools do not differ significantly in their level of occupational stress. The findings of

the study are in contrast with Kaur (2006) in which Private school teachers were found to have more occupational stress than Govt. teachers.

S.No	Subscales of Variable	Govt.		Private		t-ratio	Level of Significance 0.05 level
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
1	Role overload	21.0	2.37	20.0	3.58	1.49	Not Significant
2	Role Ambiguity	9.2	1.72	11.6	2.06	5.58	Significant
3	Role Conflict	15.0	2.97	13.8	1.94	1.97	Not Significant
4	Unreasonable group and Political Pressure	15.0	1.79	14.2	1.47	2.05	significant
5	Responsibilities for persons	10.6	0.8	9.4	1.36	5.0	Significant
6	Under-participation	11.8	2.14	12.8	2.4	1.96	Not Significant
7	Powerlessness	8.8	1.47	10.0	2.83	2.5	Significant
8	Poor Peer Relationship	9.8	3.37	11.6	1.49	2.77	Significant
9	Intrinsic Impoverishment	8.8	1.94	9.6	2.58	1.57	Not Significant
10	Low Status	7.4	1.2	7.2	1.47	0.65	Not significant
11	Strenuous Working Condition	10.2	1.77	8.6	1.50	4.32	Significant
12	Unprofitability	7.2	1.6	6.6	2.72	1.25	Not significant

*Table 5: Comparison Of The Teachers Working In Government And Private Schools In Various Domains Of Occupational Stress*

From the table 5, it is clear that the calculated t-value in the domains of role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group & political pressure, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment, low status and unprofitability is not significant. Thus the teachers working in Govt. and Private schools do not differ in these areas. But in the domains of role ambiguity, responsibilities for persons, poor peer relationship and strenuous working condition, there was found a significant difference.

## **6. Discussion Of The Results**

On the basis of results, following conclusions are made:

The primary teachers were found to have moderate level of occupational stress.

Male and female teachers did not differ in their levels of occupational stress.

But if we critically examine the domains of occupational stress, male and female teachers did not differ in the domains of role overload, role conflict, under-participation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status and strenuous working condition.

Male teachers were found to have more stress in comparison to their counterpart due to unreasonable group & political pressures and responsibilities for persons.

The reasons for workplace stress in female teachers were found to be powerlessness, poor peer relationship, low status and unprofitability as compared to their counterpart.

The teachers working in Govt. and Private schools were not found to differ in their level of occupational stress if we look at the overall mean value of occupational stress.

But from critical analysis, it was found that the teachers working in private schools had more stress due to role ambiguity, poor peer relationship and powerlessness.

The teachers working in Govt. schools were found to have more stress due to unreasonable group and political pressures, strenuous working conditions and responsibilities for persons.

## **7. Suggestions To Reduce Workplace Stress**

Following are the some of the means which can be adopted to improve mental health of primary teachers:-

- Improve economic condition
- Improve social status
- Improvement in the condition of service( service security)
- No much interference by higher authority
- Place for mental hygiene in the curriculum
- Providing recreational facilities
- Overcrowd in the classes should be avoided
- Work overload should be reduced( reasonable workload)
- Democratic administration
- Arrangement for Seminars, workshops, conferences
- Spiritual exercise like meditation and yoga

- Establishment of teacher clubs.

### **8.Delimitation Of The Study**

This study is delimited to the area of Panipat district in Haryana, India only..

Only 100 primary school teachers have been selected to collect the data.

Only Male/Female and Govt./Private school teachers were selected for the collection of data.

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