

Analysis of Occupational Stress and Coping Strategies among Female Primary School Teachers

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Abstract: Teaching is not a simple job; many elements increase the level of stress in teachers. Teachers use different stress-coping strategies to focus on teaching tasks. The study was conducted to analyze the occupational stress of female primary school teachers and their coping strategies. The objectives were to (i) investigate the stress level and major occupational stressors among female primary school teachers and (ii) explore coping strategies for female primary teachers' stresses. All the female primary school teachers serving in the 630 primary schools of Tehsil Sargodha were the population, out of which 50% (315) female primary schools were selected randomly, and one teacher from each school was conveniently selected. Two self-developed rating scales with reliability coefficient values of 0.85 and 0.79 were research instruments. The data analysis was carried out using percentages, frequency, t-tests, and ANOVA. Results revealed that all female primary school teachers were highly stressed and adopted coping strategies in order to encounter stress. The recommendation is that head teachers should support teachers in school affairs and involve them in decision-making.

Keywords: Occupation, Stress, Coping Strategies, Teachers, Primary School, Education, Female

Introduction

In our culture, stress is a common phenomenon. Day-to-day, everyone faces many challenging situations. It is a person-to-person attitude that allows them to face challenges or escape from them. Such situations are different from individual to individual. A challenging situation in which one is unable to cope converts into a source of stress for him. Teaching is one of the stressful professions, as many stressful elements are present in the environment of educational institutions (Karina et al., 2015).

Stress is defined as a disorder of the Biological functions of humans. Stressful conditions have too many effects on human health and produce adverse results (Kyrou, 2009). Many experts think stress is a normal happening but in a modest form; physical pressures of the workplace, working hours, time pressures, excessive travel, fatigue of workload and deadlines cause work-related stress (Wong et al., 2019).

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Teaching is a profession where numerous basic alterations happen every day in the education system, and these modifications are expected to increase rather than decrease. of stress on teaching activities. Struggling with teenage apprentices, a primary school teacher would have trouble just coping, which only fuels stress levels. A teacher has a tough time working as the supply of accommodation is lower, there is pressure on the syllabus, and there is finite space for teaching everyone. (Dollard et al., [2003](#)).

Undoubtedly, in an educational platform with complications such as a shortage of resources, teachers are a leading and credible character in the success of students. The severe level of stress is due to the shortage of resources, teaching methods, and job problems. Grimshaw ([2004](#)) found that an increase in workload, greater size of classes, low funding for institution-relevant things and consistent pressure of demands from teachers are also the causes of stress. It is well known that in the current market demands, every person is experiencing greater stress in life. In the previous decades, it has been noticed that the stress level has increased and is triggered by the pressure initiated by employers and complex demands from students or their parents. (Admiraal, & Wubbles, ([2000](#)). Looking at things in their current modern state, Earth seems to be a place that is developing into a universal depository of undue lavishness. It has become a despoiled earth. The public wants to have everything, but they are not rich enough to have everything. The first thing that provokes emerging feelings of stress and vexation is that they cannot afford everything. Weak relationships between supervisors and employees, the absence of rewards or compensation, overwork, and discriminatory behaviour create stress not only in teachers but also in students. Work demands have increased all around the globe. Schools and colleges are considered stressed environments due to a number of factors like student expectations, daily routine pressures from students, administrative pressure, scheduling, administering examinations on time and with human touch and teachers are also exposed to scary classroom environments (Iroegbu & Etudor-Eyo, [2018](#)).

Stressful situations arise due to some negative factors related to "human behaviour", "psychology and physiology". In recent years, it has also been noted that stress has become a problem in education. Stress in teaching has become a priority for education leaders as they seek to help teachers 'combat job stress' (Leung et al.,[2009](#)). So as to overcome the impacts of teacher stress, additional consideration must be given to this problematic situation. The physical and emotional reactions of a teacher result from the coping strategies professed in the institution. Reliant upon the individual-to-individual scrutiny, it can be positive or negative results in teaching (De Nobile & McCormick, [2005](#)). Teaching stress is influenced by the organization's check on teachers' work. The organizational elements that cause teachers' stress include the threat of censorship, unrealistic time, too much unnecessary information demand and budgetary constraints (Cheema et al., [2022](#); Areekkuzhiyil, [2014](#)).

Teaching is considered a tough profession, and instructors face regular strain that spoils their competence of effective teaching; it ends in effects consisting of extended absence, quitting of new teachers, early retirement, and also quitting professional teachers inside the early 05 years of their profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, [2016](#)). Increasing levels of stress are noted among teachers during teaching routines, which keep on increasing. However, teachers play a role in setting educational goals, communicating and interpreting institutional policies, managing and supervising personnel, curriculum, classroom instruction, organization of physical facilities, and evaluation (Jackson, [2004](#)).

Sources of workplace stress have been identified as workplace relationships, organizational structure and climate, among others. (Sharma & Singh, [2023](#)). The place where people do their assigned tasks to make a living may be the cause of stress for many people. However, specific circumstances resulting from changes in the workplace can make life uncomfortable for workers. Stress is exacerbated by many factors such as withholding of promotion, nomination for promotion, denial of promotion, failure to pay according to agreed pay scales, denial of fringe benefits, poor relations between directors and related employees, side effects, duplication of purpose, lack of support from subordinates, and growing dissatisfaction with perceived poor leadership (McGrath, [2008](#)).

Literature also revealed that important contributing factors to teachers' stress are maintaining discipline in teaching, overload of work, overall time pressure, meetings, and lack of inspiration, which is very evident in the numerous swings rated by others who have strong associations with administration, management, and contemporaries (Chaudhari, & Dahad, [2022](#)). Furthermore, it is also found that a disadvantaged working environment, inappropriate work situations, ambiguity in the teacher's role, unfair relationships with administrators, students, and contemporaries and job insecurity (Kyriacou, [2001](#)). Teachers are an important element in the educational process, keeping discipline in the implementation of educational policies in the schools by setting academic goals, interpreting instructional policies, communication, personnel management, instructional activities and management of physical facilities, supervision of curricular activities, actual classroom instruction, and evaluation. So, stressors and the copy strategy must be studied. Teachers are considered central to all professions. They have the final role in achieving the school's overall progress and goals. There are many challenging states of affairs for teachers that produce a degree of stress for them. The major agents of change are the teachers, who can bring about the desired revolution, but inappropriately, they face the meagre resources to undergo innumerable toils and problems in the performance of their sacred duties. When an individual faces work stress, he adopts different coping strategies to cope with it; it can be accepting, avoiding, planning, or using some social activities. Every person counters stressors in a different way. Each individual needs to explore and exercise alternative coping strategies Huang ([2018](#)). People practice various management techniques in the form of exercise, behaviour modification, and social and family activities to reduce work stress (Panigrahi, [2016](#)). It is necessary for teachers to use appropriate coping strategies specific to their personality. This allows teachers to be more objective, motivated and transparent about their abilities (Bachkirova, [2005](#)). Hence, the study opted to analyze the occupational stress and coping strategies of primary school teachers of Sargodha District.

Objectives of the Study

This study was planned to achieve the objectives described below.

1. To investigate the major occupational stressor among female primary school teachers
2. To explore coping strategies for stresses among female primary school teachers

Methodology

Due to financial constraints, time, and resources, this study was demarcated for all the public primary schools of Tehsil Sargodha. A descriptive survey research design was used to collect data at one point in time (Cohen & Wills, [2006](#)). The population for the study was all the female Primary teachers working in

the 630 government Primary Schools situated in Tehsil Sargodha. From the population, 50% (315) of female schools were selected randomly, and one female teacher was selected conveniently from each selected school as the sample of study. After reviewing literature and available research instruments which are not suitable due to school cultural diversity, a scale was developed to measure the stress of the female teachers on five-point rating responses with 08 factors, in which three statements were included in "Lack of Cooperation", 7 statements were related to "Administration", 4 statements were included in factors "Time", "Poor Working Environment" and Salary and Facilities", two statements were for each of factors "Parents Insults and Assaults" and "Student Misbehavior" and three items were relevant to "Non-Teaching Activities". The second section of the scale was developed to catch on to the stress coping strategies of female teachers with eleven factors, in which three statements were related to each of the factors "Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasoning", "Planning", "Acceptance", "Denial" and "Restraint Coping" whereas five statements were related to the factors "Positive Reinterpretation and Growth", and two statements were related to each of the factors "Religion", "Mental Disengagement", "Focus on Venting Emotions", "Humor", and "Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons".

Both the research instruments were validated through the opinion of five university teachers having PhD in Education. Both the scales were pilot tested on 100 female teachers and the reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha values were 0.85 and 0.79 respectively that is greater than 0.8 is considered to be excellent (De Vellis, 1991). For data collection the researcher personally visited the primary schools.

Data Analysis

After completing data collection, relevant statistical techniques were applied, i.e. percentages, frequency, t-test and ANOVA.

Table 1

Factor-wise wise female teachers' level of stress

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
Total of factor level of stress due to time	518 41%	569 45%	49 4%	112 9%	12 1.0%	1260 100%	4.15	0.89
Total of Stress due to Lack of Cooperation	366 38.7%	413 43.7%	81 8.6%	70 7.0%	16 2.0%	945 100%	4.11	0.90
Total Stress due to poor working environment	365 28.9%	575 45.7%	113 8.9%	200 15.9%	7 0.6%	1245 100%	3.86	0.9
Total of Stress due to Administration	958 43.4%	953 43%	170 7.7%	120 5.4%	4 0.2%	2205 100%	4.24	0.73
Stress due to Insults and Assaults by Parents	284 45.1%	243 38.6%	24 3.8%	73 11.5%	6 1%	630 100%	4.15	0.9
Total of Stress due to Misbehavior of Students	171 27%	277 44%	90 14.3%	65 10.4%	27 4.3%	630 100%	3.79	1.07
Total of Stress due to Non-Teaching Activities	308 32.6%	407 43.1%	96 10.1%	121 12.8%	13 1.4%	945 100%	3.92	0.95

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
Stress due to Lack of Salary and Facilities	323 25.6%	547 43.4%	112 9.7%	231 18.3%	37 3%	1260 100%	3.70	1.09
Total	3293 36.1%	3984 43.6%	735 8.05%	992 10.8%	122 1.3%		3.99	.92

Table 1 shows that 86% of female teachers of primary schools with a mean value of 4.15 and SD = 0.89 was high with respect to time. The majority (82.4%) of teachers' perceptions (mean score of 4.11 and SD = 0.9) of the stress level was high due to lack of cooperation. The majority (74.6%) of teachers answered that their level of stress from a bad working environment is high. Similarly, the majority (86%) of female teachers of primary schools (mean score of 4.24 and SD = 0.7) expressed that their level of stress was high due to administration. The majority (83.7%) of female teachers (with a preferred mean score of 4.15 and SD = 0.9) reported that teachers perceived the level of stress due to parents misbehaving. The majority (71%) of primary school teachers (with a supportive mean value of 3.79 and SD = 1.07) reflected that teachers expressed that their level of stress was high because of students' misbehaviour. The majority (75.7%) of teachers reflected that their level of stress was high because of non-teaching activities. Many (69%) female teachers responded that due to pay and lack of AV aids, their level of stress was high.

The data analysis in Table 2 shows that the stress level of female teachers working in primary schools was analyzed on average score basis following the criteria: weight 1= very low for scores > 2.5, weight 2= low = for scores 2.5-3, weight 3= average = for scores 3.01-3.5, weight 4= high = for scores 3.51-4 and weight 5= very high = for scores 4.01-5.

Table 2

Female Primary teachers' level of occupational stress

Stress Level	Range	Frequency	Percent
very low	>2.5	0	0%
Low	2.5- 3	11	3.5%
Average	3.01 - 3.5	29	9.2%
High	3.51- 4	84	26.7%
very high	4.01- 5	191	60.6%
Total		315	100%

Table 2 shows that 60.6% of female teachers of primary schools reported that their occupational stress was of a very high level, and 26.7% of female primary teachers reported a high level of stress, whereas only 9.2% of female primary teachers reported that their stress level was average and low level of stress was reported by only 3.5% female primary teachers. The trend showed that the majority of female teachers of primary schools had high and very high levels of occupational stress.

Table 3*Analysis of Stress Coping Strategies of Female Primary Teachers*

Statements	SA f (%)	AG f (%)	UND f (%)	DA f (%)	SDA f (%)	Total f (%)	Mean	SD
Positive Reinforcement and Growth	508 32.2%	559 35.5%	231 14%	251 16%	26 8.0%	1575 100%	3.8	1.01
Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasoning	342 36.1%	464 49%	73 7.7%	64 6.3%	2 0.6%	945 100%	4.14	0.8
Planning for stress-coping	344 41%	353 45%	69 4%	162 9%	17 1.0%	945 100%	3.71	1.2
Religion as stress coping strategies	250 41%	294 45%	42 4%	42 4%	5 1.0%	630 100%	4.17	0.8
Acceptance of stress	261 41%	420 45%	137 4%	91 9%	36 1.0%	945 100%	3.82	1.03
Mental disengagement	196 31.1%	131 37.6%	59 17.3%	81 12.9%	7 1.1%	630 100%	3.84	0.9
Mental disengagement	196 31.1%	131 37.6%	59 17.3%	81 12.9%	7 1.1%	630 100%	3.84	0.9
Focus on venting emotions	150 41%	264 45%	101 4%	96 9%	19 1.0%	630 100%	3.68	1.07
Denial of stress	205 21.7%	317 33.5%	142 15.3%	246 26.3%	35 3.7%	945 100%	3.43	1.15
Restraint Coping strategy	427 45.1%	409 43.2%	63 6.6%	46 4.8%	0 0.0%	945 100%	4.28	0.7
Humor strategy	65 10.5%	62 9.8%	80 12.7%	345 54%	78 12.3%	630 100%	2.51	1.1
Social Support for Instrumental Reasoning	217 34.4%	276 43.8%	42 6.65%	81 12.9%	14 2.20%	630 100%	3.9	1.1

Table 3 shows that many (67.5%) female teachers of primary schools (with a supportive mean of 3.8 and SD = 1.01) responded that they use positive reinforcement and growth as a coping strategy for stress. The majority (85%) of female primary teachers (with a mean score of 4.14 and SD = 0.8) responded that they seek social support for emotional reasoning to cope with stress. The majority (86%) of female primary teachers (with a supportive mean score of 3.71 and SD = 1.2) plan to manage stress. Most (86%) of female primary teachers (with a favouring mean score of 4.17 and SD = 0.8) reported the use of religious activities as a stress management strategy. The majority (86%) of female teachers with a supportive mean score of 3.82 and SD = 1.03 responded that they use stress acceptance as a coping strategy. Many (68.7%) female primary teachers (mean score of 3.84 and SD = 0.9 reported) used mental disengagement as a stress management strategy. Majority (86%) female primary teachers) the mean score of 3.68 and SD = 1.07), reported that they use a focus on venting emotions as a stress management strategy. Many (55.2%) female primary teachers (with a supportive mean score of 3.43 and SD = 1.15) reported the use of stress denial as a coping strategy. The majority (88%) of female primary teachers (with a favouring mean score of 4.28 and

SD = 0.7) reported using a restraint coping strategy. The majority (71.6%) of female primary teachers (with a mean score of 2.51 and SD = 1.1) responded that they use humour as a coping strategy. The majority (78%) of female primary teachers (with a supportive mean score of 3.9 and SD = 1.1) reported using social support for instrumental reasoning as a coping strategy.

Table 4

Locality-wise comparison of level of stress

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Urban	175	117.47	11.24	4.23	314	.000
Rural	140	111.71	11.39			

Table 6 shows that the difference between female primary teachers' occupational stress with respect to locality was significant, as reflected by t-value 4.23 with df = 314 and p-value .000 < .005. The bigger mean score of 117.47 indicated that the occupational stress of urban female teachers was higher as compared to female primary teachers working in rural schools (mean score of 111.71).

Conclusions

All the government female teachers working in primary schools experienced high levels of stress during their jobs. Primary school teachers felt the pressure of long hours of work and agreed that the lack of time for refreshment, school timing, and less time for covering the syllabus creates stress in primary school teachers' tehsil Sargodha. It was found that female primary school teachers' expectations of colleagues' non-cooperation and poor relationships with co-workers face stress. Female Primary school teachers stated that shifting responsibilities to others, overcrowded classrooms, lack of instructional materials and basic facilities, and poor working environment make them stressed. According to female primary school teachers, administrative tasks, continuous assessment of classes, unexpected decisions, policy changes, strict rules, and lack of reward create feelings of stress. Moreover, parent-teacher meetings and the disobedience and misbehaviour of the students create feelings of stress. It was also found from the analysis of data of female primary school teachers' responses that low salaries and lack of facilities for teachers create feelings of stress. It was found that female primary school teachers focus on coping strategies like getting advice and social support, some planning for coping with stress, using religious prayers as coping strategies, emotional self-control coping, acceptance, avoidance, planning for coping and use of social relations are the coping strategies mostly used by female primary teachers. It was concluded that all the urban female primary school teachers feel more stressed than rural ones in their jobs, while neither differs much in regard to coping strategies.

Discussion

The study showed that time, poor working environment, lack of relationships among workers, low salaries, unexpected decisions of authority, indiscipline students, and lack of instructional material are all the most important sources of stress among female primary teachers. The study also revealed that teachers can use different coping strategies for encountering stress. By coping with stress, they can get benefits and can focus more on student improvement. The coping strategies used by primary school teachers were

active coping, acceptance, plan full coping, and religious and social activities. By using all these techniques, a teacher can encounter stress easily.

The results revealed that the workload for female primary teachers, such as teaching many subjects, overloaded classrooms, and an underprivileged working environment, e.g. meagre and irregular salary, deficiency of social backing and dearth of AV-aids, were the major sources of stress (stressors) in Girls Primary schools. The results were similar to the findings of Kyriacou and Chien (2004), who found that the problem of stress among elementary school teachers is of grave concern. Results are also in line with the results of Kyriacou (2001), who stated that the heavy workload of teachers and overcrowded classrooms were momentous factors of teachers' stress. Moreover, the results are also in line with that of Garth (2015), who found that the stress level of teachers in China was very high due to China's education system being more demanding as compared to other countries due to rigid value system and school environment; the important position of mathematics in secondary schools in China has enhanced the stress of teachers teaching mathematics. Moreover, the results are similar to the findings of Jackson (2004), who stated that the top five factors of stress were students' poor attitude towards classroom tasks, lack of teaching aids, unmotivated students, students' misbehaviour and lack of public consideration of difficulties faced in the teaching job. Grayson and Alvarez (2008) found that deficiency of public respect, poor relations with the administration, and inappropriate behaviour of students increase the level of stress in teachers. De Nobile and McCormick (2005) also revealed similar results to educational reforms and innovations. Frequent changes create stress. Further, they described that social and family problems, poor working conditions, separation among parents and absence of societal support create high stress among teachers.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusion, it is recommended that School Education may provide appropriate teaching aids basic teaching material for the effective teaching-learning process and, increase pay and offer encouragement for female primary teachers. Moreover, Guidance and counseling program may be organized for using coping strategies especially for female primary school teachers.

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