

A study on occupational stress among faculty members in Higher Education Institutions in Pune

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Abstract

The topic “**Occupational Stress among faculty members in Higher Educational Institutions**” was selected with the overall purpose of understanding the phenomenon of stress among faculty and to find out how they combat stress operatively and strategically in higher educational institutions. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 200 faculty members of different higher educational institutions in Pune. The sample was taken by the stratified random sampling among the institutions of management, engineering, law, science and other faculties. The sample included all teaching positions: assistants, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors. Seventy six per cent of the respondents were women. The respondents’ responses were measured by the following Stressors: workload, conditions at work, and relationships with colleagues at work, work with students, work organisation, and social recognition and status. The results showed that the determinants of stress among the administrators are numerous and varied, with compilation of results, time pressures, lack of infrastructure, student’s indiscipline and poor pay prospects as very high ranked stressors. The findings also revealed that the administrators experienced, on an average a low to moderate level of stress and this did not negatively affect their performance. This research will benefit the faculty in coping with work related stress.

Keywords: Work, Stress, Higher education, academic administrators, Stressors, job satisfaction, stress management

Introduction

"And so off I go, into a new career where the workload is probably just as heavy, but where I hope I will not be stressed and will not have to stress anyone else into working."

Teaching is no longer merely hard work; it has become a highly stressful profession. The nature and organization of the job makes teaching inherently difficult. Professors face new challenges and opportunities from increasingly diverse and needy student populations. Demand on professors develops new knowledge and skills to perform new tasks are rapidly. This often leads to over whelming pressures and challenges for the faculty, which consequently leads to conflict and stress. The aim of this research is to study the reasons for organizational stress among management teachers and to examine the correlation between stress and job satisfaction. The study will identify the main stressors and methods applied to manage them. The study was limited to teaching fraternity of professional educational institutes only and the parameters for measuring the effects of stress were subjective rather than objective.

Objectives

1. To study the reasons for occupational stress among teachers of higher education.
2. To examine the correlation between stress and job satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Pestonjee and Azeem (2001) conducted a study on “A Study of Organisational Role Stress in relation to Job Burnout among University Teachers”. Their study consisted of (N=300) university teachers, which has been classified into three groups of 100 each. The results of the study indicate that organizational role stress is highly correlated with job burnout among all the three groups of teachers (Lecturers, Readers and Professors). Lecturers have higher level of role stress as compared to other two counterparts. Professors are found to have least amount of the level of stress and burnout as compared to Readers and Lecturers. Thus a deep analysis helped the researchers conclude that different set of teachers have different predictors of job burnout and stress levels vary with experience and demographics.

Brewer and Landers (2003) in their research found out the “Relationship between Job stress and Job Satisfaction among Industrial and Technical Teacher Educators”. They took a random sample of 133 industrial and technical teacher educators. The research revealed a strong correlational analysis. They found an inverse relationship between the constructs, with stressors related to lack of organizational support being more strongly associated with job satisfaction than stressors related to the job itself were. Hence we can conclude that stress is a major factor that affects not only job satisfaction level, but also job performance. These results have implications for addressing job stress and job satisfaction in higher education.

Methodology

The present research topic was selected keeping in mind the growing level of stress among different faculty members teaching in higher educational institutions. An attempt was made to select a sample of respondents who have been teaching and have exposure to the job of teaching. For this purpose, 200 faculty members of different higher educational institutions in Pune were chosen as the sample population by Stratified Random Sampling. To test the feasibility of the research, a pilot study was conducted on 15 respondents by way of a trial questionnaire consisting of 8 questions. The respondents were faculty from Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, Pune.

Based on the results of the pilot study, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypotheses 1:

H₀: Age, Gender and Marital status does not have a direct relationship with Stress.

H₁: Age, Gender and Marital status have a direct relationship with Stress.

Hypotheses 2 :

H₀: Factors like work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support affect stress level among faculty do not affect stress level among faculty.

H₁ : Work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors affect stress level among faculty.

Primary Data was collected with the help of a questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from the Journals, magazines, articles and online sources.

Results

1) The Demand related factors causing maximum stress were lack of regular breaks (85%) and long working hours (83%). On a contrast frequent changes to timetable or courses added the least amount of stress with 30% respondents. None of the respondents felt that dealing with aggressive or violent behaviour had no effect on stress level. 53% of respondents felt occasionally stressed out with frequent changes to timetable or courses. To test the Hypothesis, statistical tools such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation was applied. The significance was that p value was $p=0.001$. This result rejects the null hypothesis of Hypothesis 2 which states that “Factors like work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors does not affect stress level among faculty.” Hence, the alternate hypothesis i.e. “Work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors affect stress level among faculty” is accepted.

2) The Relationship factors that caused maximum stress were; 75% of respondents felt harassed by managers/staff/students. Also 73% of the respondents felt lack of communication with staff. Only 18% of the respondents felt neutrally stressed out due to work not valued, whereas 37% of respondents felt occasionally stressed out due to new styles of institutional management. To test the Hypothesis, statistical tools such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation was applied. The significance was that p value was $p=0.007$. This result rejects the null hypothesis of Hypothesis 2 which states that “Factors like work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors does not affect stress level among faculty.” Hence, the alternate hypothesis i.e. “Work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors affect stress level among faculty” is accepted.

3) Table 1: Role related factors that can lead to work related stress

(Figures in percentages)

SNo	Response	Occasionally Stressful	Neutral	Stressful
1.	Unclear job description	32	17	51
2.	Lack of support in job role	28	14	58
3.	Efforts not valued	17	14	69
4.	Lack of career development opportunities	30	2	68
5.	Poor pay prospects	19	0	81

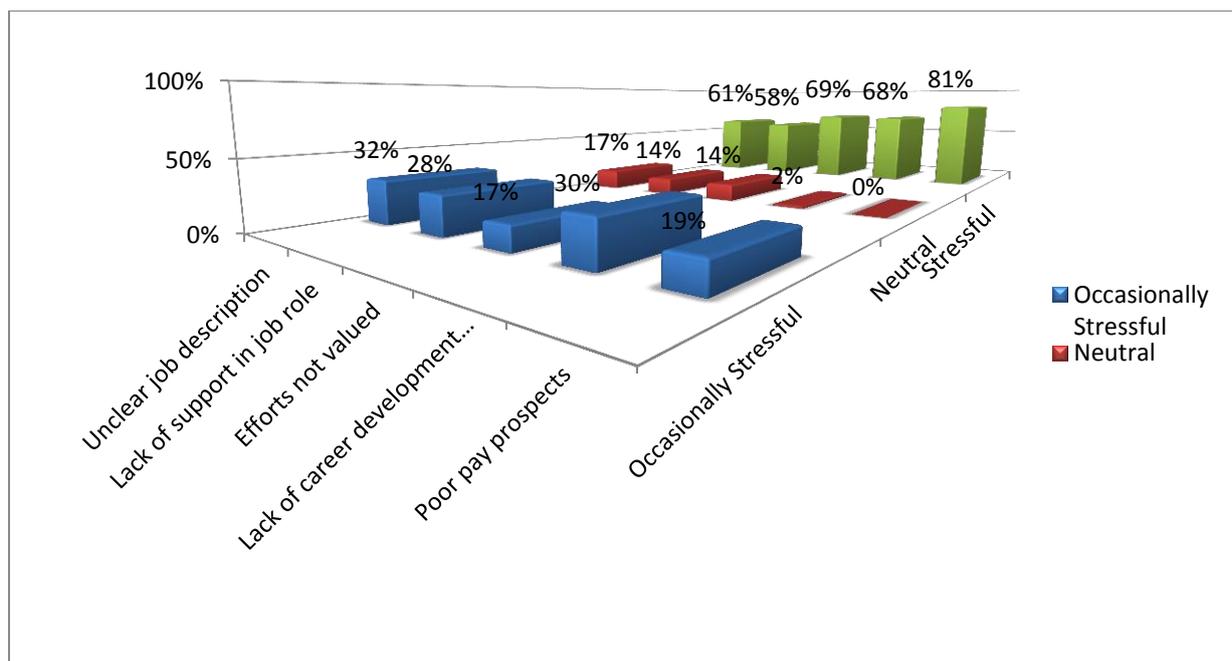


Figure 1: Role related factors that can lead to work related stress

Discussion

Table 1 and Figure 1 shows that role related factors of poor pay prospects (81%) added maximum stress followed by efforts not valued (69%) and lack career development opportunities (68%) were the greatest factors affecting stress.

To test the Hypothesis, statistical tools such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation was applied. The significance was that p value was $p=0.003$. This result rejects the null hypothesis of Hypothesis 2 which states that “Factors like work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors does not affect stress level among faculty.” Hence, the alternate hypothesis i.e. “Work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors affect stress level among faculty” is accepted.

The above results are in general agreement with the results of **Pestonjee and Azeem’s** who in **2001** research also did a study on Role Erosion, Role Overload, Resource Inadequacy, Role Isolation, and Role Ambiguity that increase the level of job burnout and stress.

1) Table 2: Change related factors that can lead to work related stress

(Figures in percentages)

SNo	Response	Occasionally Stressful	Neutral	Stressful
1.	Pace and intensity of change	15	10	75
2.	New educational initiatives	31	11	58
3.	High degree of uncertainty about work due to re-organization	17	13	70
4.	Impact of restructuring on workload/job responsibilities	29	9	62
5.	Large increases in numbers of part time/temporary staff	23	25	52
6.	Changes without consultation	20	13	67

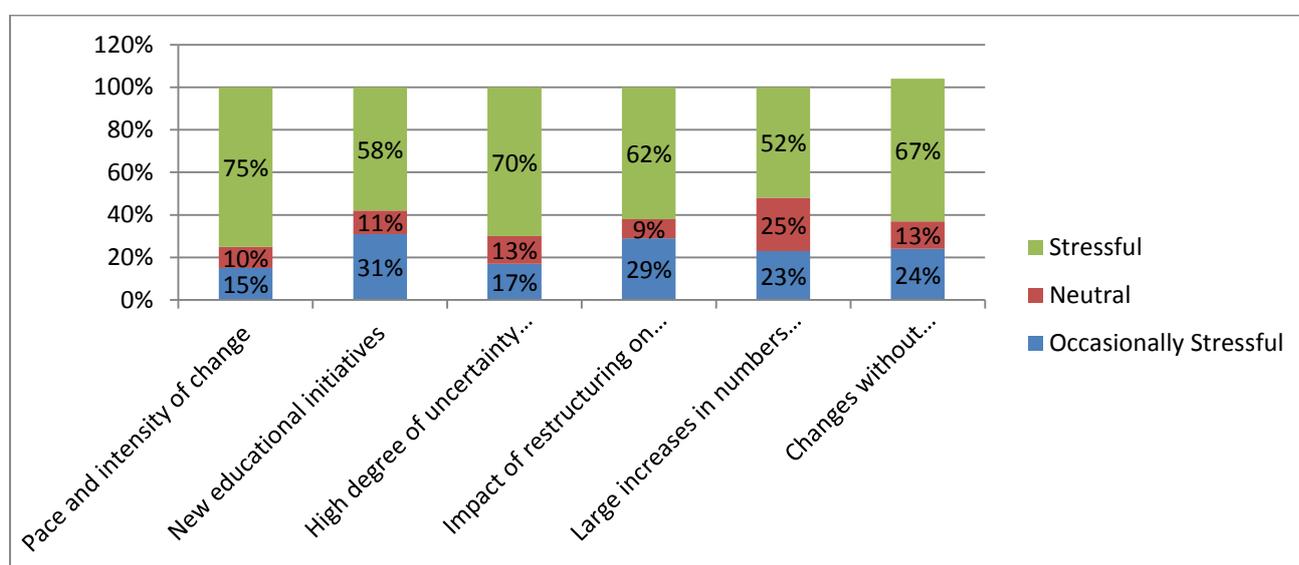


Figure 2: Change related factors that can lead to work related stress

Discussion

Table 2 and Figure 2 clearly states that change related factors like pace and intensity of change (75%) and high degree of uncertainty about work due to reorganization contributed maximum stress. On a contrast only 23% of respondents felt occasionally stressed due to large increases in numbers of part time temporary staff.

To test the Hypothesis, statistical tools such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation was applied. The significance was that p value was $p=0.002$. This result rejects the null hypothesis of Hypothesis 2 which states that “Factors like work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors does not affect stress level among faculty.” Hence, the alternate hypothesis i.e. “Work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors affect stress level among faculty” is accepted

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to study the reasons for organisational stress among management teachers and examine the correlation between stress and job satisfaction. This was done to enable a better understanding of the phenomenon of stress among scholars and to find out how they combat stress operatively and strategically in higher educational institutions. It was found that determinants of stress among teachers are numerous and varied. The major stressors included work related demands, work relationships, role related factors, pace and intensity of change in the workplace and lack of organisational support.

The hypothesis that “Age, Gender and Marital status have a direct relationship with Stress” is accepted. It is found that significant differences were indicated regarding occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to gender and marital status. The secondary hypothesis which states that “Age, Gender and Marital status does not have a direct relationship with Stress” is disproved.

It was found that the stress levels are affected by numerous factors in educational institutions. Based on compilation of results, the major causes of stress amongst respondents included poor relations with workmates, lack of regular breaks, long working hours, harassment by staff, lack of communication, poor pay prospects, pace and intensity of change and limited access to training. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis i.e. “Work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors affect stress level among faculty” is accepted. It can be agreed upon that role erosion, role overload, resource inadequacy, role isolation, and role ambiguity increase the level of job burnout and stress. The hypothesis which states that “Factors like work demands, relationships at work, job roles, work changes and support related factors does not affect stress level among faculty” is thereby disproved.

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