

The Impact of Work Stress on Employee Commitment and Academic Performance of School Teachers

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Abstract:- In general parlance, the teaching job is considered to be relatively easier in comparison to other jobs due to certain benefits like less working hours and less killing targets etc. The present article focuses on various aspects of stress in teaching job like salary, work environment, student behaviour and work relations etc causing stress to teachers, and the impact of this stress on teacher's commitment towards the organization and on their performance.

Keywords: Stressed, Employee Commitment, Occupational stress, Mental Health, Organizational commitment.

I. INTRODUCTION

The pivotal role that teachers have in moulding a student's life and career cannot be underestimated. The quality of the education that is imparted to an individual has far-reaching consequences. In other words, the quality of a teacher is a significant variable when it comes to increasing the output of the students. Since they have to cater to the progress of each and every student of theirs, the teachers have to multitask between setting high standards, criticizing in order to spur achievement, helping get rid of the hindrances and so on. Thus, it becomes a necessity for teachers to adopt different strategies in order to be effective in their jobs. As Dworkin (1987) puts it, the teachers have an additional responsibility of catering to the well being of others, thereby managing the numerous stressors that emanate from their monotonous routine activities. Corey (1996) substantiates it further, stating that these responsibilities lead to a syndrome and those teachers who experience it, feel drained out, tired and without any enthusiasm. The feeling that their contribution is unwanted or that it goes unnoticed or unrecognized further adds to this syndrome.

II. WORKPLACE STRESS: CONCEPT, EFFECTS AND GENDER

New, threatening or over demanding aspects of the job, which are beyond the control, resources or abilities of a teacher, take a toll on him/her, thereby leading to negative adaptive reactions such as anger, frustration and even, depression. These aspects further affect the physical, emotional and behavioral health, performance and quality of life of the individual (Borg, 2010; Cummings and Worley, 2008; Kyriacou, 2001). Workplace stress has been defined as the

harmful physical and emotional responses that emanate within an individual, when the requirements of the job do not match the individual's capability, need or resources. While workplace stress is harmful, some experts have a different take on it. They perceive a moderate amount of physical and mental stress is necessary for the normal and healthy growth of the individual. A little workplace stress, as they see it, serves to energize the teachers both physically and psychologically, thereby motivating them to learn new skills and master their jobs. A moderate amount of workplace stress, thus, also aids in increased productivity. Its only when this stress is not managed properly that it becomes a problem.

The notion that teaching profession is less stressful in nature is nothing more but a myth. In fact, according to Travers and Cooper (1991), that this profession is stressful, has been acknowledged extensively and it has been found that the mental health of the teachers is comparatively poorer than of the other stressful jobs. Though the working hours are less, this does not exempt the teachers from workplace stress. Some of the factors adding to this stress include heavy workload, unsecured jobs, low pay emoluments, lack of communication, lack of career development, financial/family problems and so on. This stress not only restrains the quality of life of the teacher, but also has a negative impact on the overall performance. Teacher stress, as Kyriacou (2001) defines, is the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of his/her work as a teacher. School factors, such as emoluments, workload, position of the teaching career and troublesome pupils, are a major factor driving some of the teachers to leave their teaching profession altogether. Kyriacou et al. (2003) states that the above factors impact teacher preservation negatively. Teaching, thus, is not an easy task and makes undue demands on the mental power and vitality of a teacher.

Different scholars have perceived job stress differently. Akinboye et al. (2002) define job stress as a physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of job and capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands. Colquitt, Lipine and Wesson (2009: 142) have defined job stress as a psychological response to demands for which something is at stake and coping with those demands exceeds the individual's

resources or capacity. The source from where the job stress emanates is another factor adding to this stress. That is, demands from both the workplace and the family taxes the individual further and causes increased tension. Workplace stress generally occurs due to factors such as the relationship between colleagues and customers, attribution of the work and hierarchical situations (Drowkinet *al.*, 1990). The impaired functioning of an individual in the workplace is a major attributor to stress. Certain aspects of the workplace, such as work overload, lack of power, role ambiguity and role conflict, add to the stress. High levels of workplace stress lead to undesirable consequences such as injuries, industrial accidents and absenteeism. As Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) state, the stress, anxiety and tiredness of an individual occurring because of the over demanding work/family restrains the individual to perform other sorts of duties.

There is also a correlation between gender and job stress. Females are perceived to experience a higher level of organizational stress than their male counterparts and have different mechanisms to deal with those stressors. Antoniou *et al.* (2006) found out that female teachers have a higher degree of organizational stress than male teachers. Gender role has been considered to be a key constraint for working women. Heavy job and domestic obligations and the work-family conflicts arising out of those obligations are likely to have a major toll on working women. Since the primary responsibility for domestic chores (and also child-care, post becoming a parent) generally falls on women, those having full time jobs are likely to be over burdened. According to scholars Barnett and Baruch (1985), the dual stages of marriage and parenthood bring more responsibility on such women and have generally been linked with increased role conflict and overload for the working lot. This perception in the society that only women are responsible for the domestic chores taxes working women. This gender-role differentiation coupled with the work-family conflict that arises out of it, not only affects the work outcomes of the women but also impacts their well being. Swanson and Power (1998) have also argued that the relationship between the demands from home and work culminates in occupational stress. Multiple demands coming from work/home serves as a burden and lead not only to job stress, but also to strain and physical illness. Another factor adding to this negative mental and physical state (in the workplace) is the discrimination that women experience on the basis of their sex.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: THEORIES AND JOB PERFORMANCE

There have been numerous definitions of organizational commitment. In simple terms, it can be defined as the attitude of an employee towards his/her organization. Bateman and Strasser (1984) have defined it as an employee's loyalty towards the organization and his/her aspiration to preserve the ongoing membership. Marmaya *et al.* (2011) have explained it as the identification or the internalization of the goals of the organization one is working with. Meyer and Allen (1991)

have developed a three component conception of commitment. They have explained commitment as being of 3 different types— affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment, as they explain, is when the employee is emotionally attached to the organization and is deeply involved with it. An employee who is emotionally attached to the organization would completely identify with its goals and would desire to remain a part of it. Continuance commitment is the commitment that arises out of the analysis of the costs of leaving the organization. It is when the employee is aware of the benefits he/she is getting and realizes that it is beneficial to remain in the organization. Thus, this kind of commitment largely stems out of the need of the individual. Normative commitment is a result of the internal pressures resulting out of certain social norms. The employees feel bound to commit to the organization due to these societal norms, such as the expectation of their families, culture and so on. As Meyer and Allen substantiate normative commitment, employees feeling this kind of commitment feel that they must maintain their membership with their organization since that is the right or moral thing to do.

There is a significant correlation between organization commitment and job performance. Scholars have identified a positive relationship between organizational commitment and the job performance of the employees. Job performance can be defined as the way the teachers teach in the classroom and the overall impact their teaching has on the development of the students. Okeniyi (1995) has defined job performance as the ability of the teachers to combine relevant inputs for the enhancement of the learning process. According to Colquitt *et al.* (2009), job performance is the value of the employee behaviors that contribute either positively or negatively to the accomplishment of the goals of the organization. As Rao and Kumar see it, the performance of the teachers depend on teacher characteristics such as sense of responsibility, knowledge base, inquisitiveness; student characteristics such as the opportunity to learn and academic work; teaching factors such as the lesson plan and communication; learning aspects and the classroom environment. They argue that if the teacher takes care of these factors, their performance would be enhanced to the optimum level. But, scholars have identified yet other factors contributing to organizational commitment and thus, to job performance. Leigh and Mead (2005), for instance, argue that the quality of education has come down in the world largely because of the lowering down of the skills of the teachers. They have attributed this deterioration to the outdated preparation on the part of the teacher and the low compensation schemes by the organization. As a suggestion to further the performance of the teachers, they have argued for a periodical performance appraisal, just like in the corporate organizations. In such a system, the teachers would be assessed periodically and their compensation structure would be revised on the basis of their performance. Job performance, according to Colquitt (2009), is also affected by individual

mechanism, consisting of job satisfaction, motivation, stress, ethics, honesty, learning and decision-making.

IV. IMPACT OF WORKPLACE STRESS ON TEACHERS

The impact of stress on the teachers, as mentioned above, is taxing, restricting them to function effectively and lowering down their quality of life. Stress also adds to negative emotions, such as depression, anxiety and frustration. Reiterating, though moderate amounts of stress is essential for improving the productivity of a teacher, more than normal amounts of stress can lead to physical, emotional and psychological illnesses. According to McCormic (1997) and Winfield *et al.* (2003), the adverse effects of stress on teachers culminate into job disaffection, low morale, absenteeism, job turn over and low productivity, amongst other factors. Other studies state that stressed teachers feel increasingly exhausted and perform low. Increased levels of stress also hampers their social relations with their colleagues in the sense that such teachers are more nagging, uncooperative and intolerant of the people around them. Prolonged stress also leads to reduced mental capacity and low problem solving skills in individuals.

Scholars Brown and Ralph have worked on the effects of stress on the teachers and summarized them as: Reduction in output and work performance, low motivation, loss of confidence, inability to manage or delegate tasks, irritability with colleagues, persistent negative feelings, feelings of alienation and inadequacy, loss of appetite and accident proneness. While some help to such stressed teachers can lead them towards betterment, no help from the colleagues or the school head may lead them towards more serious stress-related consequences. Ekundayo and Kolawole (2013) have explained how stress can lead to more serious consequences such as migraine, heart disease, high blood pressure, impaired immune system and even death. They further add that such prolonged stress is also linked to problems like diabetes,

stroke, miscarriage, allergies, premature tooth loss and muscle and joint pain. The findings of the scholar Gorman (2007) have also pointed to the fact that excessive stress can significantly harm one's immune system and lower one's life span.

V. JOB STRESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Parasuraman and Alutto (1994) have established a correlation between levels of stress and their impact on the overall organizational commitment of an individual. They argued how high levels of stress lead to low organizational commitment and hence, to voluntary termination of the employees. Meyer and Allen (1998) have attributed comfort, competence and status related experience to organizational commitment. The scholar Chusmir (1982) argued that job commitment is influenced by three independent variables: sex role conflict, satisfaction of needs and work commitment. Elangovan (2001) researched on similar factors and pointed out the relation between stress, satisfaction and commitment. He argued that higher the stress, lower the satisfaction and more decreased, the organizational commitment. Some scholars have also linked higher satisfaction and organizational commitment levels with a lower propensity to leave the organization.

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