Factors influencing stress and coping strategies among high school teachers in the case of Amhara National Regional State, North Wollo Zone, Woldia Town, General High School

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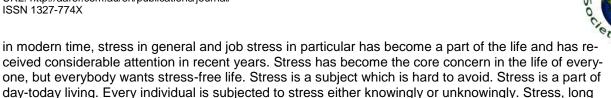
Abstract

High school teachers are predictable to fill various roles in their daily chores. From different roles, teachers are assessor, planner, curriculum developer, information provider, role model, facilitator and resource developer. As a result of harmonizing these different roles stress will always be a part of the teaching profession. The purpose this study was to investigate stress and copping behavior among high school teachers in the case of Woldia town general high school. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used for the study. The population consisted of in Woldia town general high school teachers. The sample was all 78(63 male and 15 female) teachers. Compressive sampling techniques were used. In order to gather relevant information closed ended questionnaire were distributed. The data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage and independent t-test. The study revealed that complex nature of their work baffle them, the need to sacrifice their values in meeting their role obligations, basically laziness and there were happy fewer responsibilities, the relation of the colleagues and subordinates and lack of involvement in decision making were major source of stress among high school teachers. The study also revealed that use of time and labor saving take rest, avoid strenuous posture, take balance diet, walking, religious activity, positive thinking, listening and relaxing after work were the major stress coping strategies adopted and practice by high school teachers. The study also revealed significant difference male and female teachers regarding stressors. It is recommended that government improve work condition, teachers should make good use of their time as well as relate cordially with their super ordinates and colleagues and also the school were counseling and guidance service should be strengthen and extended.

Key words: Copping strategies, Factors influencing stress, Stress, Stressors & Teacher stress

Introduction

According to Stephen Robbins (1999) and Spielberger (1979) the modern living has brought with it, not only innumerable means of comfort, but also a plethora of demands that tax human body and stress. Now-a-days everyone talks about stress (Bachkirova, 2005). Stress is cutting across all socio economic groups of population and becoming the great leveler. Not only just high pressure executives are its key individuals but it also includes laborers, slum dwellers, working women, businessmen, professionals and even children. Stress is an inevitable and unavoidable component of life due to increasing complexities and competitiveness in living standards. The speed at which change is taking place in the world today is certainly overwhelming and breathe taking. In the fast changing world of today, no individual is free from stress and no profession is stress free. Everyone experiences stress, whether it is within the family, business, organization, study, work, or any other social or economic activity. Thus

in modern time, stress in general and job stress in particular has become a part of the life and has received considerable attention in recent years. Stress has become the core concern in the life of everyone, but everybody wants stress-free life. Stress is a subject which is hard to avoid. Stress is a part of day-today living. Every individual is subjected to stress either knowingly or unknowingly. Stress, long considered alien to Indian lifestyle, is now a major health problem/hazard.

Stress is difficult to define precisely. The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Spielberger in 1979. It was derived from the Latin word 'stringere'; it meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Spielberger, 1979 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". Further, stress was defined as "any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium" (Spielberger, 1979). Another definition given by Stephen Robbins (1999) stress has been stated as "a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he/she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important."

Stress refers to any environmental, organizational and individual or internal demands, which require the individual to readjust the usual behavior pattern. Degree of stress results from events or situations that have potential to cause change. Stimuli or situations that can result in the experience of stress are called stressors. There are three major sources of stress-environmental, individual and organizational. Environmental stress is not only caused by the factors intrinsic to job, but also influenced by the environmental or extra organizational factors. Stress results because of the individual's interaction with environmental stimuli or factors such as societal or technological changes, political and economic uncertainties, financial condition, community conditions etc. (Stephen, 1999).

Like Stephen Robbins(1999) and Spielberger(1979) there are many factors at the level of individual which may be generated in the context of organizational life or his personal life like life and career change, personality types, role characteristics. Any change in career life of an individual puts him in disequilibrium state of affairs and he is required to bring equilibrium. In this process individual experiences stress. Personality type/characteristic such as authoritarianism, rigidity, masculinity, femininity, extroversion, spontaneity, locus of control are particularly relevant to individual stress. When people become members of several system like family, voluntary organization, work organization etc., they are expected to fulfill certain obligations to each system and to fit into defined places in the system. These various roles may have conflicting demands and people experiences role stress as they are not able to fulfill the conflicting demands or requirements.

Work which requires a lot of manual dexterity have a greater chance of inducing stress in the worker who work there. Work in the organization can induce stressors when the activities to be performed are either too difficult and complex or repetitive and monotonous. Uncomfortable working conditions extract extra energies from the worker. Stress is inevitable / unavoidable, when large amount of work is expected beyond the capacities of the worker and work has to be performed keeping in view the set deadlines. The five aspects related to stressors intrinsic to work like, boredom, physical working conditions, time pressure and deadlines, work demands, job design and technical problems(Agrawal et al.,1999).

The climate that persists in the organization can be potential source of stressors. The freedom given to plan the work, weight age given to the views and opinions, participation in decision making, sense of belonging, free and fair communication and sympathetic approach towards personal problems were considered to measure the stressors in organizational climate.

It is interesting to note that, stress has two faces. It is a good servant, but a bad master. In other words, it can be one's best friend or worst enemy. A certain amount of stress is necessary to achieve success, but undue stress causes distress. Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events in themselves are not stressful. Rather it is the way in which an individual interpret and react to events that makes them stressful. Stress is received by different people differently. If two people experience the same amount stress or pressure, one may take it as positive or healthy types or the other may accept it as negative. Stress is often referred to as having negative connotation. The calamitous consequences of stress can affect an individual in three ways i.e. physiological, psychological and behavioral.

Mental stress may be accompanied by anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, tension and boredom. Physical stress is accompanied by high blood pressure, digestive problem, ulcers and indigestion, palpitation, chest pain, skin disorder muscle tension, head ache, loss of appetite, restlessness, ulcers, shut down of menstrual cycle, impairment of fertility among male and depletion of vitamin

C,B and D in the body. Behavioral Stress may be symptomized in the behavior such a overeating or under eating, loneliness, sleeplessness, absentiseem, alcohol consumption, increased smoking and drug abuse (Tang et al., 2001).

Further the stress can affect either positively or negatively to employee performance. Positive qualities are those in which the individual may feel more excited and agitated and perceive the situation positively as a form of challenge (Tang et al., 2001). Stress is also described as posing threat to the quality of work life as well as physical and psychological well-being (Upamanyu, 1997). A high level of occupational stress, not only detrimentally influence the quality, productivity and creativity of the employees but also employee's health, well-being and morale (Cohen & Williamson, 1991). Job related stress tends to decrease general job satisfaction and life (Blase, 1982).

Stress can be either temporary or long term, mild or severe, depending mostly on how long it continues, how powerful they are and how strong the employee's recovery powers are. But major stress problems are sustained for long period. If one does not react to the stress, it may create some other Trauma. It is another severe form of stress. The nature of loss may have an effect on the individual's perception of the stressful events as well as the avoidance, intrusion and hyper arousal symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Upamanyu, 1997).

The specific stress experienced by people, often depends on the nature and demands of the setting in which people live. Thus, teachers, engineers, doctors, managers and people in other professions experience different types of stresses to different degrees. The professional role is extremely demanding because they serve to the society. Stress among teachers has become a topic of professional interest but studies relating to teacher's stress have not been carried out on large scale. Research comparing the stress level between teachers and others professional group are also scanty.

Stress disturbs the equilibrium of the body. It affects physically, emotionally, and mentally. When individuals experience stress or face demanding situation, they adopt ways of dealing with it, as they cannot remain in a continued state of tension. How the individual deals with stressful situations is known as 'coping'. There are two major targets of coping: changing ourselves or changing our environment. Coping refers to a person's active efforts to resolve stress and create new ways of handling new situations at each life stage (Erikson, 1979).

The goals of coping include the desire to maintain a sense of personal integrity and to achieve greater personal control over the environment. Then he modifies some aspects of the situation or the self in order to achieve a more adequate person-environment fit. Coping thus, is the behavior that occurs after the person has had a chance to analyze the situation, take a reading of his or her emotions and to move to a closer or more distant position from the challenge. The present study was designed to analyze the factors influencing stress and coping strategies among high school teachers.

The teaching profession can be stressful occupation most teachers agree   that daily interaction with students, parents and coworkers and the constant demand of teaching often lead to over whelming pressures and challenges which ultimately elates to stress(Ushashree et al.,195). Teachers are expected to fill many roles in their daily tasks. These many includes assessor, planner, curriculum developer, information provider, role model, facilitator and resource developer. As a result of balancing these many roles stress will always be a part of the teaching profession. Having this study emerged from due to stress. The study intended to assess the factors influencing stress and coping strategies among Woldia high school teachers. After the end of this research the following basic questions was answered.

1. What are factors influencing stress and the stressors among the high school teachers?

2. Is there gender difference exists with regards to stress and coping strategies?

3. What are the efficient strategies of coping that are adopted by high school teachers in order to reduce the stress

Methods

The study was conducted by employing a descriptive survey research design at Woldia general high school which is found in Amhara National Regional State, North Wollo Zone, Woldia Town. The participants of the study were 78 teachers selected using compressive sampling techniques. Inventories were selected on the basis of the objectives of the study. Since the respondents were highly educated,

questionnaire was considered to be the most suitable instrument for the data collection. To collect information about demographic characteristics, cause of stressors and coping strategies for stress were adopted and conducted make improvement. The scale developed by Telaprolu and George (2005), was adopted in the study to measure the cause of stress among the teachers.

To validate the strength of the questioners, the questioner was given to language experts and questioners were developed based on the comments obtained from the experts and were pilot tested. A pilot study was conducted on 20 teachers from the teachers in Woldia Millineym High School.

The data was subjected to test the reliability by split half method. The coefficient of correlation computed using Pearson product moment formula served as a measure of reliability. The correlation value of total stressors was 0.87 and was significant. Vague items and terminologies were improved for the final questionnaire.

Before data collection, training which lasted three hours was given to data collecting students about the procedure of the work. Therefore, each participant was informed about the purpose of the study and the procedure of data collection. Ethical clearance, permission, and informed consent were obtained from the Research, Community Services and Ethical Standard Committee (RCSESC), department of Psychology, Woldia University and the study participants, respectively. Before starting the questioning, informed consent was obtained from each participant and the participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they feel discomfort to participate. Confidentiality of data was maintained throughout this study. A lot of effort was made to safeguard participants against any risk. Privacy of respondents was violated at any stage of the study. After the intended data gathering the researcher was analysis by using both quantitative and quantitative methods information obtained through closed ended questioner items analyzed using quantitative methods (percentage, frequency and independent t-test).

Results and Discussion

Although 79 participants were expected to respond to items of data collecting instruments, only 78 participants responded to the items of the data collecting instruments. Hence, due to the presence of non-response, the analysis was done based on the data secured from 78 participants who completed the data well.

Sources of stress among high teachers

Majority of the respondents(71.67%) were said their job lack opportunities to utilize their skill and abilities(70.33) were said waiting for the day to come when they could relax and (65%) were said that the complex nature of their work baffle them. So by result the teacher stressed always. The results of the present study were supported with the studies reported on the nature of the work time pressure and work opportunities by Fulcheri et al.(1995) also observed that job opportunities.

The complexity of tasks and responsibilities were the major sources of stress. Based on the result the study(51.67%) were said employment organization responsibilities interfere with their family responsibilities and (58.33%) were said not clear to what type of work and behavior their higher authority and colleagues expect for them . and also their role in the school is not adequately planned. therefore those result the teachers stressed always. Similarly, Madhu et al. (1990) also reported that role conflict and role ambiguity as role stressors. Further the role conflict role ambiguity and roll over load that cause stress was refuted Peterson (1995) and Upadhyay and Singh (1999).

Majority (78.33%) of the respondent said that they experienced stress always, because they were basically lazy persons and thereby were happy with fewer responsibilities followed by stress always was their work in the school not goes per their plan (61.67%) they had aspirations and qualifications but the system does not have better position for them and their college peers with same qualifications were in better position them was the cause of stress always among (60%). Findings of the present study strongly support the earlier researchers of Fulcheri et al. (1995), Upadhyay and Singh (1999). Fellowmen and allow erosion of states are the main reasons for function among the managers Upadhyay and Single (1999) revealed that the respondents

Showed significant higher levels of stress than executives of intrinsic impoverishment and status factors.

Majority(75%) of respondents said that they experienced stress always, because them relation with their colleagues not caused great deal of anxiety, followed by their colleagues not caused me a great deal anxiety extracting work from their sub- ordinates was an ordeal for them. Correspondingly, Madhu et al.(1990) reported that the contribution of the interpersonal relation factors to job stress was found significant among the teachers interpersonal stressors at work place have influence on the teacher was reported by Potter et al.(2002).

Majority (76.67%) of respondents said that they experienced stressed ideal members were up- pleasant stress was experienced always because of the considerable environment tolerance that persist in the their school makes then irrigated they get motivation to work hard since they made to feel responsible for the school and their point of view was ignored in the school. Findings of the present study support provirus researchers' Das and Sighal (2003) reported that the climate that persists in the organization decision and responsibilities of the organization can be potential sources of stressors.

Coping strategies among high school teachers

The physical stress management strategies include are reducing practical stress, relaxation, correct posture, diet, physical exercise and medical therapy. For reducing physical stress majority of respondents 53.33% were said used of time and labor saving & 28.33% were said set priorities. These reduce physical stress management was adopted and practiced by high school teachers were take rest 70.7% and take out time for leisure 15% for the correct posture management strategies, the majority of respondents 61.67% were said avoid strenuous posture, the work. Therefore, those correct posture management strategies was adopted and practice by high school teachers. For the diet management strategies, the majority respondents 80% were take balanced diet and 10% were high fiber diet. Therefore, those diet strategies was most adopted high school teachers. For the physical exercise management strategies the majority respondents 56.67% were said walking and 13.33% were said playing games. Therefore, physical exercise management strategies was practiced by high school teachers. For the medical therapy more adapted by high school teachers were tranquilizers, alcohol consumption, mood altering, steeping pill and smoking? The finding of the present study were supported with the previous researchers Aujla et al.(2004) the researcher rapport that the effectiveness of techniques are preparation, correct posture, diet, medicinal therapy and natural are therapy. And also standard furniture and high fiber diet by Harshpinder (2001) and relation, exercises, diet and yoga by Upamanyu (1997).

The psychological stress management strategies includes are religious, meditation, psychotherapy, social support, altering situation, reduce, responsibility, performing most liked activities and active coping on the personal and professional level. For religious meditation management strategies the majority of respondents 66.67% were religious activity. On other hand, 16.67% were meditation. So those religious management strategies more practiced by high school teacher. For psychotherapy techniques the majority of respondents 51.67% were positive thinking and also 33.33% were said reaction with family. Those management strategies most practiced by high school teachers were working. For altering situation stress management strategies the majority respondents 40 % were avoiding painful. The remaining were maintain well organized home and change of place. Therefore, the altering situations stress management strategies was most adopted and practiced by high school teachers. For reducing responsibilities a stress management strategies the majority respondents 30% were postponing certain tasks. The remaining were delegating the work, changes in preference job and legitimately avoid dislike task. These strategies more practiced by high school teacher. For performing most liked activities as a stress management strategies, the majority respondents 45% were listening songs and the remaining watching TV and spending time in park with nature. Therefore, those strategies was more practiced by high school teachers. For active coping on the personal and professional level as a stress management strategies the majority respondents 51.67% were relaxing after work. The remaining were deviating more time to communication with parents and time to one self(for leisure activity).Those stress management strategies more adapted by high school teacher. The finding of the present study was strongly support earlier studies. The studies also showed that   outing, listening to music (Bhattacharya and Guha, 2006), yoga (Sikthingnanavel, 2006), friend ship and social support (Aditi and Kumari, 2005), mediation, Psychotherapy, social support, altering situation and reduce responsibilities (Aujla et al. 2004) are effective stress management techniques.

Gender difference with sources of stressors and coping strategies

Regarding, gender differences with different sources stressors. There was significant difference between male and female teachers (t= -2.756) in the work stressor and interpersonal relation stressors. Female teacher were more experience with work stressors to compared male teacher. Whereas interpersonal relation stressors more experienced by male teachers (t= 2.549). There was no significant difference between male and female teachers in the role stressors, personal development stressors and school climate stressors. The finding of the present study were supported earlier researchers. According to, Beena and Poduval (1992) study shows that female exceptive higher rate stress. Pandey & Tripathy (2001) indicated no gender difference in the experience of burn out, but female doctors' experiences significant more stress.

Gender differences with coping strategies

There was no significant differences between male and female teachers in the physical (t= 0.256) and psychological (t=0.147) stress management strategies. The finding of the present study were strong supported earlier researcher of Khan et al. (2005). The result shows that there is significance difference was not found to exist between male and female teachers on different types of coping strategies except use to humors teachers have adopted arrange of capping strategies most tend to be functional or active and some were by functional or passive (i.e. self-destructive and use of harmonies.

Conclusion

Most of respondents were experience of stress always because of their job lacks opportunities to utilize their skill and abilities, the complex nature of their work baffle them, it is not clear to what types of work and behavior their higher authority and collages expect from them, basically due to their laziness they were happy with fewer responsibilities, them relation with their subordinates not causes from a great deal of stress. In addition stressors always for respondents was their fell they part of their school and decisions made by superiors keeping envious the good of the organization rather than the individual members were un-palatable.

Most of respondents adopting and practiced physical coping strategies were use of time and labor saving, take rest, avoid stressor posture, balance diet, walking and tranquilizers. On other hand, psychological coping strategies adopted by respondents were religious activity, positive thinking, working in group, avoiding painful reminder, listening songs and relaxing after work.

As the respondents of the study stated that there was significant difference among male and female teachers regarding to their work stressors and interpersonal relation stressors, while it was non-significant different regarding to role, personal development and social climate stressors. On other hands, the respondents of the study stated that coping strategies there was no significant difference among male and female teachers regarding to physical and psychological stress strategies.

In this study the researcher based on the conclusion forward the following recommendations in order to reduce source s of stressors and coping strategies of stress. Evaluation of working environment staff should be done to tackle problem of words how they become fruitful or effective in their works. The school counseling and guidance service should be strengthen and extended counseling service should be better given for teachers on how to reduce & aviate the sources of stressors. Government should improve the working conditions of the teachers by providing them better salary, some social facilities such as computer with internet connections. Teachers should make good use of their time as well as maintain cordial relationship with their super-ordinates and colleagues.

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