

Sources of stress
among teachers
psychology essay



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Stress is a psycho-physiological process which arises out from the intercommunication of the individual with the environment (Muhammad et al, 2010) and (Luthans, 1998) which ends up in disturbances and manifestations depending on the individual characteristics such as health status or psychological process such as attitude (Muhammad et al, 2010). As reported by Ingrid (1997) adapted from Hans Selye (1982), few people would be able to give the definition of stress or even attempt to give a clear cut definition due to the huge number of causes which can contribute to stress. Stress can be defined as a charismatic situation in which a person is affront with an event, constraint or appeal related to what he desires and for which the result is perceived to be both ambiguous and vital (De Cenzo, 1998) whereas Hans Selye simply said that stress is the expansive response of the body to any appeal made upon it. It is to be noted that stress can be classified into eustress and distress whereby eustress is a positive psychological response to a stressor and distress is the negative response (Geraldine, 2011). An example of eustress is an opportunity or a challenge which will lead to a promotion and for distress if any tension, worry or frustration. This study will be focusing mainly on distress. Stress is experienced by nearly all people in their life; however occupational stress is more present in the daily life of worker. As stated by Smith (2000) occupational stress is widespread and can be a major cause of ill health.

2. 2 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Jobs have always been a little stressful however over the last few years the workplace has become increasingly stressful. As per the report of National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health 75% of workers believe that

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today's workers experience more work stress than the prior generation. In 1992, the United Nations in its report even qualified job stress as the 20th century disease (Bob, Rollin, and Bruce, 1997). The World Health Organization (WHO) has characterise job-related stress in countries that are developing as a " modern hazard in a traditional working environment" and it is not to be forgotten that Mauritius as well is a developing country. Due to the important metamorphosis in company organization, change in nature of work, and technological advances, stress affect employees of all hierarchical level.

Work-related stress can be said to be experienced when the appeals from the work environment exceed the employees ability to cope with (or control) them. It is not a disease, but it can lead to problem of ill health in areas like mental and physical health. Occupational stress is a sign of a problem within the organization, not individual weakness (European Agency 2000a, 2002a). It is to be noted that in this study, the term ' work related stress' and the term ' occupational stress' has been used interchangeably however they are distinguished from each other(Health and safety executive, 2006) work related stress includes cases where work may have aggravated the stress experienced hence work may be a contributory factor but not necessarily the sole cause whereby the term occupational stress refers to cases where work is the sole cause of the stress experienced and associated symptoms of ill health. The Health and safety executive defined work related stress as the unfavorable reaction people have to increasing pressures or any types of request on them at work. Those reactions, people have to cope with a great number of demands, trying to cope with their duties and responsibilities

concerned about their job and they have difficulty in doing so. On an individual level, it is often the fact of not being able to cope with the work load and environment with an associated negative manifestation. In comparison with other professions, teaching is considered as a high stress occupation. (Lambros, 2006) and (Mc and Von, 2005).

2. 3 MODELS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

A stress model helps to better understand the various stages, and therefore can help people to better cope with the stress. The main model of stress is discussed below:

2. 3. 1 HANS SELYE MODEL OF STRESS

Selye (1977) developed the “ general adaptation syndrome” model . The general adaptation syndrome can be defined as the sum of whole expansive, systemic reactions, of the body which arise due to continuous and prolonged exposure to stress. When a person emits symptoms of not being in good health, it may surely be due to the fact that he is stressed. He identified that stress gather up in the body and if the relevant stressor is not removed, the person body will go through predictable phases as shown in Figure 1. Hans selye talked of three phases:

ALARM STAGE

This is the stage whereby the body recognize that there is a danger and prepare to deal or not to deal with the threat which is also known as the stressor, this situation is often called the fight or flight response. The stress

hormone, adrenaline, is secreted and give the person the energy to fight or “flight” the stressor.

RESISTANCE STAGE

In this stage the body tries to return to a situation of psychological tranquility by resisting the alarm due to the fact that the threat still exists. The body remains activated however on a lesser extent than in the alarm stage but sufficient to cause an increase in the metabolic rate and consequently it may enter the third and final stage

EXHAUSTION STAGE

Exhaustion takes place when one or more target organs shows sign on dysfunction, this happens when the body can no longer meet up with the demand places upon it and start to dysfunction.

This is the state whereby a disease is diagnosed which shows that a disease is the consequence of the related stressor. This can result in having serious consequences even death of the organ or the organism as a whole.

<http://210.9.134.6/zinecmt/templ/aipc/ezoneimages/stress.gif>

Diagram 1: graphical evolution of the three stages of general adaptation syndrome.

(Source: Carlson et al,(eds) (2007). Psychology: The Science of Behaviour (6th Ed). Boston, USA: Allyn and Bacon-Pearson)

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The above theory has been a basis for later research work to be carried out, however there are some issues with it, as it has been carried out on rats, and to extend it to humans may not be that clever, considering the emotional content of the stress perceived which may alter the way a human will react to the stress. Also as the name of the theory state, selye claimed it to be ' general' irrespective of any nature of stress, however different type of stressors may act differently and hence different responses may be observed.

2. 3. 2 THE PERSON- ENVIRONMENT FIT MODEL

The person-environment fit model is one of the well known among others, whereby it lays emphasis on the interaction between the peculiarity of the individual and that of the situation. One important aspect of this interaction is that occupational stress is the extent to which the individual will fit to his working environment, in other words, according to the person-environment fit model , the extent to which the person will face occupational stress depend on how much can he fit the workplace and the demands of the work thereof. Other factors can be motivation, ability and productivity. If the person-environment fit turn out to be wrong, it can cause serious problems in any work environment. Occupational Stress and lack of productivity are natural conflicts related to the fact of a failure between a person fit into their workplace environment.

This model can be highly related to occupational stress as it is important for the person to feel his importance in the work place and to fit the working environment so that later on, the problem of occupational stress don't arise,

this was confirmed by Edwards and Ship (2007) whereby the study he did confirmed that the misfit between the person and the environment can lead to people having stress. As well as not being able to meet up the demands, the person-environment fit can also failed due to different motives of the individual and the work respectively which will surely lead to occupational stress. Person-environment fit theory argues that stress effects may arise when threatening job demands lead to disequilibrium in the interaction between an individual and the work environment. Although influential, the model is considered to have some drawbacks . There remains confusion over the notion of fit and its measurement (Edwards & Cooper, 1990) and also difficulty to conceptualise the notion of fit (Julian and John, 2010)

2. 3. 3 THE KARASEK DEMANDS- CONTROL MODEL

The demand-control model was developed by Karasek in 1979 and it focuses on the job demands and control at a work place situation whereby the employee is faced with a heavy work load/demand and at the same time , is given little control over the work. Hence any job which has a very high demand and very little or simply no control is given to the employee will end up in the employee facing stress, as confirmed by Doi. Y (2005), this is also known as the ' strain hypothesis'. Demands can be in terms of various work activities, such as a close deadline to submit a particular work, too much responsibilities to handle, conflicting roles at work, not having the right to share views in decision making among others and control can also be in terms of the decision making of the employee and the way how he want to carry his job, this model divide the employees in four categories.

The first category is the one who have high control over the high demands are known as active employees, second category, those who have high control but low demand, as low strain category of employees. Third category, those with low demands and low control are known as the passive category and finally the one with low control and high demands, as the high strain category (D Overgaard et al, 2004). The most common criticism is that the demand -Control model is too simple. Peter, Arnold B., Ad de (2001) and Johnson (1989) has argued that job control is not the only resource available to coping with job demands and proposed that social support from colleagues or superiors may also function as a mediator of the relationship between job demands and Stress reactions which agrees with the study done by Cristina et al (2012) who said that this model does not apply equally to all individuals and various factors, such as personality can act as a moderator or a buffer.

2. 4 TEACHERS STRESS

In the field of education, it is not easy to define teachers stress; however Kyriacou (2001) defined the latter as “ the involvement by a teacher of abhorrent, negative emotions, such as anger, Anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher”. Since the late 1970's, many research work has been done to analyse teacher stress. The wealth of research published over the last years shown that there is a big problem concerning teachers and they do face stress. Compared to other professions, teaching is considered to be high stress occupations (Mc Shane and von Glinow, 2005), which therefore results to higher stress level among teachers consequently leading to poor performance, staff health problems <https://assignbuster.com/sources-of-stress-among-teachers-psychology-essay/>

and higher job dissatisfaction (Williams and Gersh, 2004). Occupational stress did had a negative effect on the job performance of the teachers in a secondary school which in turn may result in poor teaching to the students (Mohammad Aklaq et al, 2010). A survey carried out by Karl Peltzer et all (2008) proved that teachers do have a high level of stress as well as job stress were associated with most stress- relating illnesses such as hypertension, mental distress, tobacco and alcohol abuse which agrees with the study of Wang pei and Zhang Guoli (2008) who deducted from their study that the negative effect of occupational stress on teachers health are significant. Teachers stress can have various consequences therefore it is important to manage it and one way of managing it , is by knowing the sources which stress the teachers most and deal with it directly.

2. 5 MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS AMONG TEACHERS

Sign and symptoms of stress among teachers can be seen as manifestations when they face a threshold of stress that they cannot control or deal with. It can differ individually as some may be more prone to certain symptoms than others. Sign and symptoms of stress or those manifestations need to be identified as soon as possible so that it doesn't end up in serious consequences or even fatalities. These can be categorized into three main areas: first of all, the mental symptoms, for example depression and anxiety, secondly, the physical symptoms such as indigestion, palpitations and stomach cramps, and finally the behavioural symptoms which may be in terms of alcohol abuse, using prescription drugs etc. Despite being exposed to same level of stress, secondary school teachers may react differently and have different symptoms to that stressor, some teachers may exhibit

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depression whereas others may have back ache (leung et al, 2009). Mental symptoms/emotional symptoms tend to be most present and among the first reaction to stress from the teachers. A study carried out in the George region in south Africa showed that teachers stress manifest itself mainly on a mental or emotional level as well as but to a much lesser extent in terms of physical level (M. A. J Olivier, D. J. L and Venter, 2003). In the study carried out by Kyriacou. C and J. Sutcliffe (2011) they found that, the most frequent symptoms of stress reported were tiredness and feeling frustrated

2. 6 SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG TEACHERS

The sources or causes of stress are also known as stressors. Stressors vary in severity and duration, some situations maybe stressful for everyone but in other situations, individuals may react differently. What is a stressor for a particular individual may not be a stressor for the other one. For some teachers, not being able to cope with the classroom indiscipline maybe a source of stress whereas for others, this may be easily tacked with and not a source of stress hence despite every one of them are teachers; sources of stress may vary from people to people, from organization to organization as well as from situation to situation. Factors such as the mental state of the individual, degree of stress coping, experience of teaching and other demographic variables may play a vital role in deciding if a specific problem can be a cause of stress or not. The research conducted by Brown & Ralph (1992) concluded the following most Prevailing work-related factors leading to stress among teachers, which gave us a better Idea and knowledge on teachers' stress:

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Students-An absence of discipline or disruptive students, students motivation and their respective attitude towards the class and their teachers, the size of the class and their ability to cope and preparing the students for examination purposes. Stressors such as disruptive students may endanger the mental health of the teachers as confirmed by (Nurrul Izzah Abdul Samad et al , 2010) and the national union of teachers in UK(2009)

Changes- A lack of information and the necessary resources to smoothen or make changes easier as well as more changes than the demand by the teachers which end up in stress among the teachers. This agrees with the study of kyriacou.(2001) whereby change itself is implicated in teachers stress and could be a problem thereof

The management of the school -There is poor cooperation in terms of decision making process and no required training is given to meet the job new demands which keep increasing day by day, an example can be new and latest technological demands, the latter may as well be a potential source of stress for teachers (Olivier and Venter, 2003).

Interpersonal relationships- poor social interactions among colleagues and lack of team spirit which may result in interpersonal conflicts. Reviews studies have identified interpersonal conflicts as a major source of teachers stress.(lambros lazuras , 2006)

Parents and the community-parents pressure on the teachers to make their children achieve good results and accommodate unrealistic expectations. A study done by G. M steyn and G. D. Kamper (2006) shown that Parents
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pressure do cause educators to experience stress and the community poses a serious hindrance to learning. Another modern problem nowadays is a particular type of role ambiguity as often the teachers have to nurture, counsel or be mother and father of certain students due to family shift work factors or simply divorce factors.(Nhundu, T, J, 1999) which was confirmed by Joachim Stoeber and Dirk Rennert(2008).

In short, the most common sources of stress for teachers mentioned above are poorly motivated pupils, ill discipline, organizational culture, poor working conditions and poor collegiality.

Jarvis (2002) in his critical review of more recent findings on teacher stress focus on three ample causative factors for this:

- (1) Factors intrinsic to teaching, (e. g., working condition, work under load/overload, repetition and boredom)
- (2) Cognitive factors which affect the teachers (e. g., time pressures, role conflict and role ambiguity), and
- (3) Systemic factors operating at the institutional and managerial level (e. g., appraisal system, Non-managerial support, reward system)

Holmes (2005) stated that several scholars researching on teachers stress and stress management have categorized some situations that caused stress as follows:

- (1) Stress resulting from anticipation: fear of what's to come, worry and anxiety.

(2) Stress as a response to a current situation: it's happening now, and you have to react.

(3) Stress from the past: it happened a while ago, but is still lingering in your mind and seemingly impossible to let go.

(4) Chronic stress: it's an on-going situation, or reaction to a specific event, the impact of which is lingering.

Career development can also be a major source of stress (G. M steyn and G. D. kamper, 2006), which agrees with the study done by Ahlam b el shikieri and Hassan A. musa (2012) These can be classified into three main categories namely, job security, performance appraisal and professional training whereby the threat of losing one job is a potential source of stress (M. A. J Olivier and Venter, 2003). Any possibility of demotion may also lead to stress (Rout and Rout, 2002). The performance appraisal system can also be a major source of stress for the individual especially if the outcome may influence any promotion or the latter salary. (Rout and Rout, 2002). Required training programme is needed to meet new demands and challenges of the education sector.

2. 7 FIMIAN TEACHER STRESS INVENTORY

In the present study, we have followed the Fimian's teachers stress inventory with minor adaptations to suit the local context in Mauritius. This model explains the teacher stress in a ten factor theory, whereby five consist of sources of occupational stress and the other five about manifestations of stress. According to Fimian, when those stressors are present, teachers do

have stress and it becomes evident in terms of psychological, behavioural and other type of symptoms. It should thus be possible to identify one array of events that acts as sources of stress and other array of stress that acts as manifestations of stress. Teachers stress is related more to environmental events and the perception of these events, than it is to personal or professional variables such as teacher age, gender, age, education level and number of years of teaching. The factors described in the inventory are time management, work related stressors, professional distress, discipline and motivation, professional investment, emotional manifestations, fatigue manifestations, cardiovascular manifestations, gastronomical manifestations and behavioural manifestations. A study carried out by M. A. J Olivier(2003) using the fimian teachers stress inventory concluded that teachers stress manifest itself mainly on an emotional level as well as on a physical level and the most significant source of stress among them was professional investment however the results cannot be generalized as the limited scope of the investigation. In 2009, the study carried out by Victoria sanderlin hand in New Orleans, among novice secondary school teachers, using the fimian teacher stress inventory found that time management, along with discipline and motivation, were the two highest sources of stress for novice teachers moreover Fatigue manifestation and emotional manifestation were the most apparent manifestations of stress, novice secondary teachers may not have those experience to tackle with stress and it may have been different sources or manifestations if they were not novice. Another study carried out by Rubina hanif, Sadaf tariq and Masood nadeem (2011) using the same inventory concluded that teachers shows highest level of stress at work related stressors and fatigue manifestations was the most common one, <https://assignbuster.com/sources-of-stress-among-teachers-psychology-essay/>

however this study was carried out in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, and the teachers of Islamabad may not be facing same problem as small town or cities teachers are facing, hence the sample is not well represented.

2. 8 SUMMARY OF LITTERATURE REVIEW