



A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND BURNOUT AMONG GOVERNMENT SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

In today's typical workplaces, stress is seen as becoming increasingly more common. Occupational stress is that stress which derives specifically from conditions in the workplace. 'Burn out' is a by-product of stress. The study aims to understand the difference in the levels of occupational stress, which arise due to the conditions in the work place and levels of burnout, between government school women teachers and private school women teachers. The sample consisted of 30 government teachers and 31 private teachers who teach the high school and higher secondary students. The Occupational Stress Index was used to measure their occupational stress levels. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) educational survey was used to measure the levels of burnout. The results of t test indicate that government school teachers

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experience higher levels of occupational stress in the components of-
role conflict, role ambiguity, unreasonable group and political pressure,
responsibility for persons and unprofitability than private school
teachers. With regard to burnout, government school teachers
experience higher level than private school teachers in components of
emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Introduction

Stress

Stress is a complex phenomenon. It is a subjective experience. Stress is a part of life and is generated by constantly changing situations. The term 'stress' refers to an internal state, which results from demanding, frustrating or unsatisfying conditions. The term 'occupational stress' 'work stress' 'job stress' and 'work related stress' are used interchangeably. Occupational stress is that stress which derives specifically from conditions in the workplace. In today's typical workplace, stress is seen as becoming increasingly more common. In accordance with the 'stress process' definition, work stress refers to an incompatibility between the individual and his/her work environment.

Causes of stress at work

According to Dua, 1994, causes of stress in one's work are -

1. Intrinsic job factors such as poor working conditions, work overload and monotony.
2. Role in organizations, for e.g. Role conflict, role ambiguity etc.
3. Career development, for instance lack of promotional opportunities, policies and job insecurity.
4. Poor relationship at work
5. Organizational culture.

Over and above these, there are extra-organizational stressors that interact with on-the-job-factors. These are family problems, personal problems and social problems.

Burn-Out

'Burn out' is a product of stress. Burn out is a problem borne out of good intentions because it happens when people try to reach unrealistic goals and end up depleting their energy and losing touch with themselves and others.

According to Freudenberg (1974), "burn out is a state of fatigue, frustration brought about by a devotion to a cause, a way of life or a relationship that has failed to produce expected reward".

Burnout victims tend to accentuate the negatives and forget about the positives. The typical burned out worker is a successful, motivated committed and valued worker. He or she often holds a position in which there is little feedback from others.

Aim

The focus of this study is on teachers who teach the high school and higher secondary student population of the government schools and private schools in the city of Chennai. This study aims to understand the difference in the levels of occupational stress and levels of burnout, between Government School teachers and Private school teachers.

Objectives

1. To study the difference in the components of occupational stress between Government school teachers and private school teachers.
2. To study the difference in the components of burnout between government school teachers and private school teachers.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference in the components of occupational stress between government school teachers and private school teachers.
2. There will be no significant difference in the components of burnout between government school teachers and private school teachers.

Methodology

Sample

A sample of 30 government school teachers and 31 private school teachers who teach the high school and higher secondary student population was chosen for the study. Only female teachers with five or more years of experience with the essential qualification were included. Teachers from all boys, all girls and co-educational schools were included. The sample was drawn from five schools chosen at random.

Tools used for the Study

The Occupational Stress Index - Dr.A.K. Srivastava and Dr.A.P.Singh (1981). The scale consists of 46 items, rated on a five-point scale. Out of the 46 items, 28 are positive items and 18 are negative items. They are related to almost all relevant components of job life. These are role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. Split-half method (.94) and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (0.90) for the scale as a whole have been reported to ascertain the reliability of the test.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) - Maslach and Jackson (1981).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory consists of 22 items, which are statements about job related stress. It consists of three sub-scales, which are emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging between 0.7-0.9 indicates adequate reliability of the test. The discriminant validity and construct validity are well established.

Procedure

The teachers who participated in the study were given the personal data sheet and the two questionnaires with the instructions.

Statistics Used

The t-test was used to obtain the significance of difference between the components of occupational stress and components of burnout between government school teachers and private school teachers. The mean and standard deviation was calculated.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 represents the N, Mean, SD and t-value for the components of occupational stress between government school teachers and private school teachers.

Components of Occupational Stress	Teachers	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Role Overload	Government	30	18.47	3.26	0.66 ns
	Private	31	17.77	4.80	
Role Ambiguity	Government	30	10.67	2.19	2.17*
	Private	31	9.29	2.74	
Role Conflict	Government	30	13.73	2.68	2.92**
	Private	31	9.29	2.74	
Unreasonable Group & Political Pressure	Government	30	11.93	2.84	2.18*
	Private	31	10.16	3.47	
Responsibility for Persons	Government	30	10.17	2.15	2.58*
	Private	31	8.77	2.15	
Under Participation	Government	30	10.67	1.95	.94 ns
	Private	31	11.45	4.18	
Powerlessness	Government	30	10.67	1.95	.94 ns
	Private	31	11.45	4.98	
Poor peer relations	Government	30	10.47	1.95	.62 ns
	Private	31	10.84	2.75	
Intrinsic Impoverishment	Government	30	10.13	2.13	1.31 ns
	Private	31	9.32	2.68	
Low Status	Government	30	6.83	1.72	1.63 ns
	Private	31	7.58	1.86	

Strenuous Working Conditions	Government	30	9.97	1.87	.59 ns
	Private	31	9.96	2.74	
Unprofitability	Government	30	5.7	1.56	3.64**
	Private	31	4.29	1.47	

n.s. -Not Significant

* P < .05 - Significant at .05 Level

** P < .01 - Significant at .01 Level

Table 2 represents the N, Mean, SD and t-value for the components of burnout between Government school teachers and private school teachers.

Components of Burnout	Teachers N	Mean	SD	t-value	
Emotional exhaustion	Government	30	13	8.31	.25*
	Private	31	14.6	9.14	
Depersonalization	Government	30	4.9	4.15	3.20**
	Private	31	2.06	2.62	
Personal Accomplishment	Government	30	37.23	7.86	.23 ns
	Private	31	36.81	6.75	

n.s. - Not Significant

* P < .05 - Significant at .05 Level

** P < .01 - Significant at .01 Level

From Table 1, we understand that government school teachers experience a significant level of occupational stress compared to private school teachers. The mean score of Government school teachers is greater than private school teachers in the components of role conflict, role ambiguity, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, and unprofitability. However both groups of teachers do not significantly differ in their experience of stress in the components of role overload, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status and strenuous working conditions.

From Table 2, we understand that the Government school teachers experience significantly different levels of burnout when compared to private school teachers. The mean scores of the components of burnout - emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation - is greater for government school teachers than private school teachers indicating that government school teachers experience higher levels of burnout in these components. Both groups of teachers do not differ in the component of personal accomplishment.

Conclusion

Occupational stress and burnout are a real phenomenon. This study throws light on the fact that teachers do experience occupational stress and burnout in significant levels. Further research needs to be conducted to identify the causes of occupational stress and burnout since mental health of the teacher is a significant aspect in moulding the personalities of the future generations. The management of schools needs to be sensitized to such issues as role overload, role ambiguity etc so that they will be able to identify and work in areas where they are not well defined. Atleast schools could employ a consultant psychologist / counsellor who will work in the interest of the management and its staff.

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