Factors Influencing the Organizational Stress among Teachers Working in Higher Education Sector in Kerala: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

The study aims to explore the various factors that influence the organizational stress of teachers working in higher education sector in the state of Kerala. The data required for the study has been conveniently collected from 200 teachers working in higher education sector. Exploratory factor analysis revealed nine factors, which significantly influence the organizational stress: Interpersonal relationship in the organization, professional and competence development, recognition in the organization, work environment, autonomy in work, work family interaction, role conflict, job security and remuneration, and non-academic. It is therefore suggested that when attempting to draft policies and programmes for teachers working in higher education sector in the stae, these nine factors to be given due consideration.

Keywords: Organizational Stress, Teachers, Higher Education Sector,

1. The Context

The word of *stress* has been used in social science research since a well known medical expert, Selye pioneered the research for psychological stress in 1950's. Cox and Brockley (1984) stated that stress is a perception phenomenon which exists from a comparison between the command given and ability of a person to execute he task successfully. Stress is a prevalent problem in modern life (Smith, 2000; Chang & Lu, 2007).

Robbins (2001) defines stress as a dynamic condition in which the individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress results from a mismatch between the demands and pressures on the person, on the one hand, and their knowledge and abilities, on the other. It challenges their ability to cope with work. This

includes not only situations where the pressures of work exceed the worker's ability to cope but also where the worker's knowledge and abilities are not sufficiently utilized and that is a problem for them.

Stress can be caused by environmental, organizational, and individual variables (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1999; Cook & Hunsaker, 2001). Organizational based factors have been known to induce job stress for employees at the workplace (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Teaching as a profession involves many complex work environment, leading too much of stress.

Cooper and Marshal (1976) stated that organizational stress includes the environmental factors or stressors such as work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and poor working conditions associated with a particular job. Orpen (1991) observed that major source of stress is derived from the occupational environment; proponents of this view tend to argue that role holders in certain occupation, irrespective of individual differences, are much more likely to experience stress. Here, the emphasis is on the individual demands of various jobs that have the capacity over a period of time to exhaust the physical and psychological resource of employees in the organization. According to Wilkes et al. (1998) work overloads and time constraints were significant contributors to work stress.

High stress level of a teacher causes disappointment, aggressive behavior, anxiety, avoidance of work, absentee, and poor works performance (Kaiser & Polczynski, 1982). Bad working environment will lead into stress factor and causing work unsatisfactory. Ultimately, a teacher will have desire to leave their profession (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978).

Higher education is entrusted with the responsibility of teaching, research and extension. Teachers working in the higher education sector have to cater to the diversified needs of the different stake holders in the society. They are expected to perform different roles and discharge diversified responsibilities. Organisational stress of teachers has a significant impact on student learning.

In a study by Baker (2004), it was reported that teachers had higher levels of stress at work, almost double the rate (40%) when compared with other professions. A recent survey carried out by the Association of University Teachers found that 69% of academic and related staff found their job stressful and 50% reported psychological distress (Venables & Allender, 2006). Similar findings were reported elsewhere (e.g. Gmelch & Burns, 1994). Teaching is an occupation that demands many roles (Mc-Cormick, 1997). Role demands can become stressful for a teacher for many reasons.

2. Review of Related Literature

In the past three decades, empirical researches on the theme of stress have increased many folds. Researchers have focused their attention on causal factors of stress, stress manifestations, moderators of stress-strain relationship, and types of stresses experienced by diverse work populations, and various coping strategies adopted by organizational entities to cope with stress (Pestonjee, 1992). There are many variables which have been related to organizational stress. Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) proposed a model of organizational stress research that outlined the major antecedents of work stress. They noted the importance of individual differences as moderators of stress and detailed possible outcomes of stress at work.

Stress is associated with impaired individual functioning in the workplace. A number of aspects of working life have been linked to stress. Aspects of work itself can be stressful, namely work overload (Defrank & Ivancevich, 1998; Sparks & Cooper, 1999, Taylor et al., 2005) and role-based factors such as lack of power, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Burke, 1988; Nelson and Burke, 2000)

At a personal level, organizational stress might lead to increased morbidity and mortality (Mark, Jonathan and Gregory, 2003). Rapidly changing global scene is increasing the pressure of workforce to perform maximum output and enhance competitiveness. Indeed, to perform better to their job, there is a requirement for workers to perform multiple tasks in the workplace to keep abreast of changing technologies (Cascio, 1995; Quick, 1997). The ultimate results of this pressure have been found to one of the important factors influencing job stress in their work.

Role ambiguity is another aspect that determines the organizational stress in the workplace. According to Beehr et al. (1976), Cordes & Dougherty (1993), Cooper (1991), Dyer & Quine (1998) and Ursprung (1986) role ambiuity exists when an individual lacks information about the requirements of his or her role, how those role requirements are to be

met, and the evaluative procedures available to ensure that the role is being performed successfully. Jackson & Schuler (1985) and Muchinsky (1997) found role ambiguity to lead to negative outcomes as reduces confidence, a sense of hopelessness, anxiety, and depression.

A number of aspects of working life have been linked to stress. Aspects of the work itself can be stressful, namely work overload (DeFrank and Ivancevich, 1998; Sparks and Cooper, 1999, Taylor et al., 1997) and role-based factors such as lack of power, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Burke, 1988; Nelson and Burke, 2000). The quality of the social environment in the workplace is associated with stress (Sparks and Cooper, 1999) as are certain behaviours of the leader (Carlopio et al., 1997; Cooper and Marshall, 1976). Threats to career development and achievement, including threat of redundancy, being undervalued and unclear promotion prospects are stressful (Nelson and Burke, 2000). The conflict between home and work and the work impact on personal relationships is stressful (Sparks and Cooper, 1999). Also, physical conditions such as high noise levels, overcrowding in the workplace or a lack of privacy have been associated with stress (Burke, 1988).

Stress is associated with impaired individual functioning in the workplace. Negative effects include reduced efficiency, decreased capacity to perform, dampened initiative and reduced interest in working, increased rigidity of thought, a lack of concern for the organization and colleagues, and a loss of responsibility (Greenberg and Baron, 1995; Matteson and Ivancevich, 1982). Stress has been associated with important occupational outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee withdrawal behaviour (Naumann, 1993; Sullivan and Bhagat, 1992; Tett and Meyer, 1993; Williams and Hazer, 1986).

Satisfaction and commitment have invariably reported a negative relationship to intent to leave and turnover (Arnold and Feldman, 1982; Hollenbeck and Williams, 1986). High levels of work stress are associated with low levels of job satisfaction (Landsbergis, 1988;

Terry et al., 1993) and job stressors are predictive of job dissatisfaction and a greater propensity to leave the organization (Cummins, 1990).

3. Objective of the Study

The present study is an attempt to conceptualize the various factors that influence the organizational stress of teachers working in higher education sector in the state of Kerala.

4. Development and Administration of the Tool

On the basis of review of literature, a list of statements regarding variables which potentially influence the organizational stress of teachers working in higher education sector was prepared. The responses of the respondents (concerning the importance of these variables in determining the organizational stress) to these variables were anchored on a five point Likert type scale. The scale was pretested for validity and clarity on respondents conveniently selected from the relevant population. Following pretesting, the scale was conveniently administered to 200 teachers working in different institutions of higher education in the state.

5. Methodology

The collected data was reduced with the help of factor analysis. The extraction method used was Principal Component Analysis, followed by Varimax with Kaizer Normalization. The results of factor analysis are shown in table 2. Only those factors which had an Eigen value of greater than 1.0 were retained. Also the variables, which clearly loaded on one factor, with loadings of greater than 0.5 were retained.

6. Results and Discussion

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was used to determine the sufficiency of the sample size, and Bartlet test of sphericity was applied to calculate the meaningfulness of the correlation matrix. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy worked out to be 0.793, clearly establishing the reliability of the constructs (Malhotra, 2007). It showed that the exploratory factor analysis was permissible. Then, the exploratory factor analysis was

performed with maximum probability approach to identify the rate of loading of variables recognized in the component, and Varimax orthogonal approach was used to interpret the variables. The results showed that 9 factors came out from the 'organizational stress' component with Eigen values bigger than 1. These factors explained 21.702, 11.070, 6.536, 5.853, 4.775, 3.875, 3.656, 3.204 and 2.786 of the total variances respectively. Therefore, these 9 factors explained 65.457 % of the total variances of variables.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.793
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3.154E3
	Df	1035
	Sig.	0.000

Table 2: Organizational Stress: Factor Analysis

	Eigen values	% of Variance	Cumulative Variance %
1. Interpersonal relationship	9.983	21.702	21.702
2. Professional and Competence Development	4.792	11.070	32.772
3. Recognition in the Organization	3.087	6.536	41.308
4. Work Environment	2.772	5.853	47.161
5. Autonomy in Work	2.237	4.775	51.936
6. Work Family Interaction	1.822	3.875	55.811
7. Role Conflict	1.522	3.656	59.467
8. Job security and Remuneration	1.406	3.204	62.671
9. Non Academic Works	1.262	2.786	65.457
*Extraction Method: **Principal Component Analysis**.*			

Factor1: Interpersonal relationship in the Organization

For the smooth functioning of any organization and the there must not be any friction and there must have a good quality interpersonal relationship. Among the factors that influencing the organizational stress of teachers working in the higher education sector in the state, interpersonal relationship plays a crucial and significant role. A large number of items

have been loaded on this factor (Eigen value = 9.983). Interpersonal relationship in the higher education sector includes the relationship with the persons involved in the academic and administrative structure of the institution. The warm and cordial relationships with the head of the institution, colleagues, persons in the administrative wing etc., are the major elements that determine work environment of the institutions in the higher education sector in the state. There are ample research evidences to show that the nature of the heads of the institution, their attitude and dealings with the fellow being contribute to the nature and degree of the stress level in the organization. The leadership style and the personality types of heads of the institutions are also critical in determining the level of organizational stress among teachers working in the higher education sector (Areekkuzhiyil, 2011). Lack of team work and unity in the institutions contribute very dangerously to the organizational stress of the teachers and it negatively contributes to their morale.

The variables loaded on the current factor, opportunity to do thing with other people, interpersonal communication, fair work atmosphere etc., clearly indicate that good interpersonal relationships in the workplace reduce the friction and conflicts in the organization, results in low level of stress and there by improves the quality of work of teachers. Teachers working in the higher education sector in the state seek humanistic work environment, low levels of stress, openness, equality and dignity in treatment. Ensuring that the work environment provides these to the teachers will significantly help in improving their morale and hence work satisfaction.

Factor 2: Professional and Competence Development

With the expansion of higher education system and the new initiatives introduced in the country, professional development and advancement are an important prerequisite for a good quality of work life of teachers. If the organization does not provide for and ensure the facilities for the same, it will cause a huge amount of organizational stress and as a consequence, it will result in g job dissatisfaction and lessen the stress. The competency of the individual in his/her field of work is a determining factor of his/ her job satisfaction and the self esteem. Teachers working in the higher education sector need opportunities for their competence development. The lack of opportunities for competence development contributes to the organizational stress of the teachers. It is the second important factor that determines the organizational stress of teachers working in the higher education sector of the state. This is a positive indicator in the sense that the teachers are aspiring for competence development. The blockage to competence development arises from the organizational structure, administrative pattern of the head of the institutions, policy of the authorities etc. A good

number of items have been loaded on this factor and it contribute 11.07 % variance to the organizational stress of teachers (Eigen value = 4.792).

Without professional and competence development one cannot withstand in the higher education sector in the changing environment. Teachers working in higher education sector in the state seek opportunities for professional growth and competence development. The variables loaded on this factor clearly indicate that teachers consider opportunities for research and training in latest techniques, competence building and fair appraisal of their performance as important variables influencing their work life and the denial of such opportunities contribute to the increased level of organizational stress.

Factor 3: Recognition in the Organization

The teachers working in the higher education sector in the state consider the recognition they receive for their works as important. The lack of recognition and encouragement in the organization is a critical factor determining the organizational stress of teachers working in the higher education sector in the state. This factor contributes 6.536% of variance (Eigen value = 3.087). The human resource available in the higher education sector in the state is of high quality and the investigator feels that their caliber and competence have been remaining untapped fully. Hence the authorities should plan programmes and policies to utilize the teachers' competence to optimum level.

Factor 4: Work Environment

The work environment in the institution is a critical factor that determines the organizational stress of teachers working in the higher education sector in the state. The conducive and positive work environment reduces organizational stress, while negative work environment generate stress. It contribute 5.853% of variance in the organizational stress of the teachers (Eigen value = 2.772). Work environment has been greatly influenced by the communication pattern in the organization, cooperative and collaborative work culture etc.

Several studies had revealed that poor social environment and lack of support or help from co-workers and supervisors are considered job stressors (Dua, 1994; Johnson et al., 2005; Stress, 2008). Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems (Smith, 2000; Fairbrother & Warn, 2003; Manshor et al., 2003; Reskin, 2008) also cause organizational stress.

Negative culture based on blame for and denial of problems is shown to be associated with stress resulting from work relationships (Rees & Redfern, 2000). For instance, teachers who moved into unfamiliar cultures, acculturative stress could cause lowered mental health

(e.g., confusion, anxiety, depression) and feelings of alienation; those who feel marginalized can become highly stressed (Brown & Uehara, 2008).

Teachers work with an increasing number of students, who are also more demanding; they have to adapt to ever changing curricula, and implement newly introduced quality assurance procedures. Previous researches on work environment indicate significant and positive relationship between a good work environment and low level of stress (Sirgy et. al., 2001).

Factor 5: Autonomy in Work

Teachers working in higher education sector in the state have specific preference for autonomy in planning and executing their academic works. When there are elements which are limiting the academic autonomy and freedom of the teachers, as an impact, the stress level of teachers tend to increases. This factors contribute 4.775% of variance (Eigen value = 2.237). Being competent in the profession, teachers need autonomy in their work.

Factor 6: Work Family Interaction

Individuals need to create an effective balance between their personal life and work life. Ensuring that an individual has adequate time and opportunities to spend quality time with his/her family will definitely improve the quality of work life. The work family interaction, if not properly balanced has a potential to became a source of stress. In the present social context, where both the couples of the family are employed, this factor is of crucial importance. This factors explain 3.875% variance of teachers organizational stress (Eigen value = 1.822).

Factor 7: Role Conflict

Role demands are stressful when meeting one set of expectations makes it more difficult to meet other expectations (Koustelios et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2005). Role conflict occurs when different groups or persons with whom an individual must interact hold conflicting expectations about that individual's behaviour (Nwadiani, 2006; Chang & Lu, 2007). Role conflict can result from inconsistent information (Conley & Woosley, 2000). It is important to note that several studies have revealed that both role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with low satisfaction, absenteeism, low involvement, low expectancies and task characteristics with a low motivating potential and tension, which all affect the productivity and efficiency at the organisation (Conley & Woosley, 2000; Manshor et al., 2003; Koustelios et al., 2004; Nwadiani, 2006; Chang & Lu, 2007). Role demands could be stressful when they are excessive (role overload) (Johnson et al, 2005). For instance,

academic overload comes when teachers experience increased responsibilities (Stress, 2008). This factors contribute 3.656% variance (Eigen value = 1.522).

Factor 8: Job security and Remuneration

One of the least important factors that emerged out of the analysis is 'Job security and Remuneration' (Eigen Value: 1.406). This may be due to the nature of working conditions and the terms of employment currently prevailing in the state. The teachers feel that their remuneration is not the main purpose of their profession but only a bye product. It is a good indication that the teachers working in higher education sector in the state is giving more importance to their professional and competence development than the remuneration. It is a reflection of the academic dynamism and quality that exist in the field of higher education in the state.

Factor 9: Non Academic Works

Works which are of non academic nature like works of clerical nature, compiling works, report generation, record maintenance etc are responsible for organizational stress among teachers working in the higher education sector in the state.

Fig. 1: Determinant of Organizational Stress of Teachers Working in Higher Education Sector
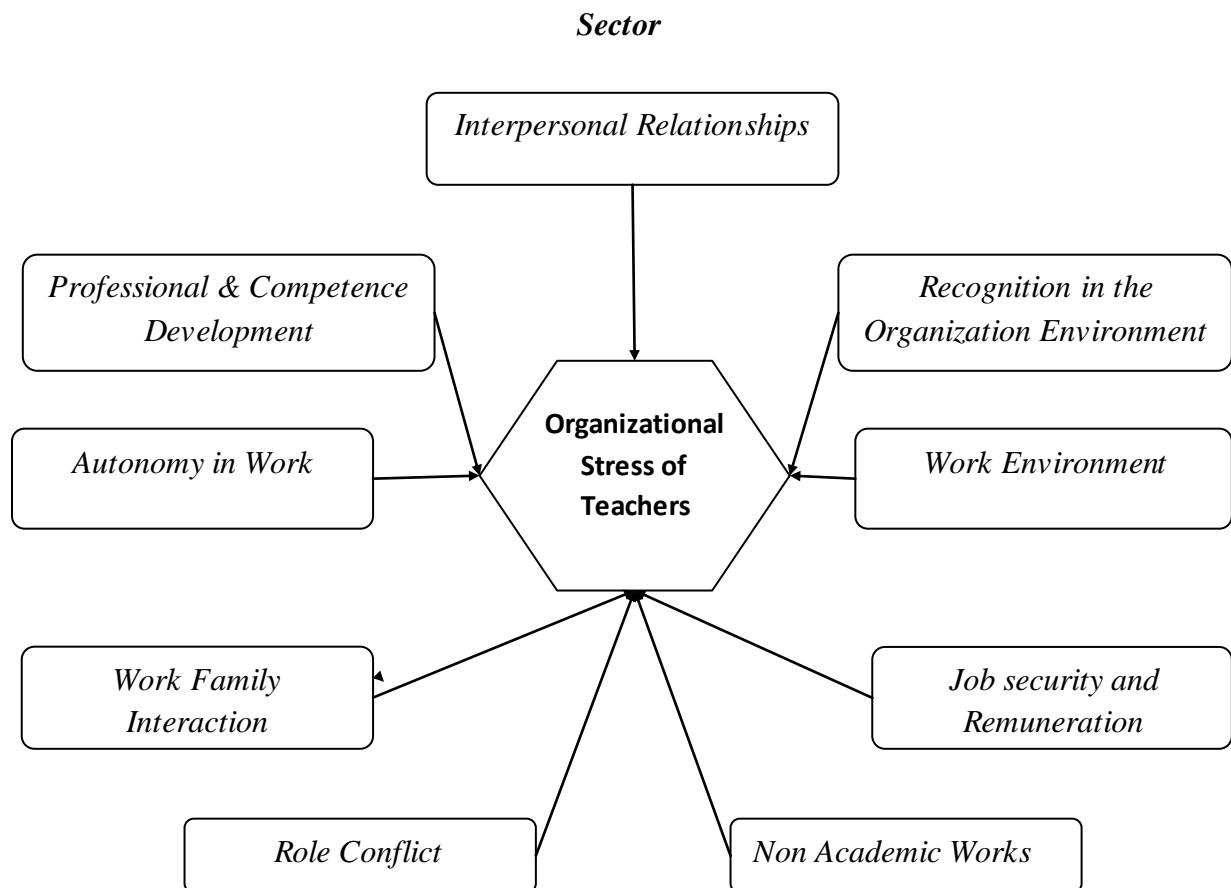
7. Conclusion

Higher education has significant role in developing a knowledge driven economic development in any country. The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of the citizens depends on quality of education. The quality of the education depends upon to a great extent on the quality of teachers. The keystone in the educational edifice is the teacher. The quality and effectiveness of the teachers is considered to be associated with his satisfaction towards his profession, his satisfaction with his values (Rao, 1989). Where the organization generates higher intensity stressors, it will adversely affect the teachers and the quality of their work.

In this study nine factors have been identified which determine the organizational stress of teachers working in the higher education sector in the state. These factors, which significantly influence the organizational stress of teachers in higher education viz., interpersonal relationship in the organization, professional and competence development, recognition in the organization, work environment, autonomy in work, work family interaction, role conflict, job security and remuneration, and non-academic works are to be taken into consideration when attempting to draft policies and programmes and strategies by the authorities. Then only we can maintain the dynamism and efficiency of teachers working in the higher education sector in the state.

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