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OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Guntur district. Data was collected from a random sample of 100 school teachers in the area. The survey method was used for this study. The Occupational Stress Scale is a standardized tool developed by Dr. A.K. Srivastava and Dr. Ashok Pratap Singh in 2019. We calculated the mean, standard deviation, and percentage of the mean. The study showed that secondary school teachers have an above-average level of occupational stress.

KEY WORDS: *Occupational Stress, Secondary schools and Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Occupation, or more precisely, one's professional role, constitutes a central aspect of daily life for many individuals, often serving as a primary source of stress due to its pervasive influence on time, energy, and emotional resources. Occupational stress arises from various workplace demands, including high workloads, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts, which can lead to physical and psychological strain (Hoboubi et al., 2016). In today's competitive job environment, a significant portion of the global workforce dedicates excessive hours to work-related tasks, frequently at the expense of personal well-being and work-life balance. This imbalance not only exacerbates stress levels but also contributes to broader health issues, such as burnout and reduced mental health, as individuals prioritize professional obligations over family, leisure, and self-care activities (Chen et al., 2022). For instance, during periods of heightened pressure like the COVID-19 pandemic, employees in various sectors reported intensified stress from remote work demands and blurred boundaries between professional and personal spheres, leading to lower overall life satisfaction (Lin et al., 2024).

Moreover, the anxiety surrounding work outcomes-such as performance evaluations, deadlines, and career advancement-can profoundly alter interpersonal dynamics. Stressed individuals may exhibit irritability, reduced empathy, or communication breakdowns with colleagues, family, and friends, fostering strained relationships and a toxic work atmosphere. Research indicates that chronic occupational stress disrupts social interactions by increasing emotional exhaustion, which in turn diminishes one's ability to engage positively with peers (Agyapong et al., 2022). This ripple effect extends beyond the workplace, potentially leading to isolation and further compounding stress through a lack of supportive networks.

In broader terms, elevated levels of occupational stress are strongly linked to diminished job satisfaction and overall unhappiness within an organization. Employees experiencing high stress often perceive their roles as unfulfilling, leading to disengagement, higher turnover intentions, and decreased productivity (Yaacob & Long, 2015). Studies have consistently shown an inverse relationship: as stress intensifies, satisfaction wanes, resulting in a cycle where dissatisfied workers are less motivated and more prone to absenteeism or errors (Al Shuaili, 2024). This dissatisfaction not only hampers individual performance but also affects organizational morale and efficiency.

Particularly in the education sector, these issues are pronounced, making it crucial for teachers to recognize and address the sources of stress that trigger these adverse outcomes. Teaching is inherently demanding, involving heavy workloads, student behaviour management, and administrative pressures, which can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression if unmanaged (Nwoko et al., 2023). For educators, low job satisfaction stemming from such stress has been associated with poorer mental health, including heightened risks of depression and anxiety, especially amid challenges like pandemic-induced shifts to online teaching (Singh & Gautam, 2024). Therefore, proactive measures-such as stress management training, supportive school policies, and fostering resilience-are essential to mitigate these effects, ensuring teachers can maintain both their well-being and effectiveness in nurturing future generations.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The role of teachers at the secondary level is pivotal, as they serve as key facilitators in preparing students for future educational pursuits, vocational training, or professional careers aligned with their interests and aspirations. This responsibility demands that teachers possess not only subject expertise but also the ability to identify and address students'

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challenges, frustrations, and ambitions. However, the multifaceted nature of their role acting as educators, administrators, philosophers, guides, friends, and counsellor's places significant occupational stress on secondary school teachers. This stress can impair their ability to effectively support students, potentially affecting both their well-being and the quality of education delivered. Recognizing this, the investigator identified a critical need to conduct a study focused on examining occupational stress among secondary school teachers in the Guntur district, aiming to uncover its causes, manifestations, and potential mitigation strategies.

Secondary school teachers are tasked with nurturing students at a critical juncture in their academic and personal development, where they transition from foundational learning to specialized education or career-oriented paths. To achieve this, teachers must be adept at recognizing individual student needs, managing classroom dynamics, and fostering an environment conducive to growth. However, the pressures of heavy workloads, administrative duties, parental expectations, and student behavioral challenges often lead to significant stress, which can manifest as emotional exhaustion, burnout, or reduced job satisfaction. For instance, a study by Blaine et al. (2010) on "Work Stress of Teachers from Secondary and Primary Schools in Hong Kong" found that secondary school teachers reported higher levels of stress compared to their primary school counterparts, primarily due to the increased complexity of their roles and expectations. This aligns with findings by Kokkinos (2006) in "Primary School Stress," which highlighted that while primary school teachers in Cyprus experienced high emotional exhaustion, secondary school teachers faced even greater levels of stress due to intensified administrative and academic pressures. These studies underscore the unique stressors faced by secondary school teachers, necessitating targeted research to address their specific challenges.

The need for this study in the Guntur district is further justified by the broader implications of occupational stress on teachers' effectiveness and student outcomes. Stressed teachers may struggle to provide the emotional and academic support students need to navigate frustrations and achieve their goals. For example, chronic stress can lead to disengagement, reduced empathy, or ineffective classroom management, all of which hinder students' academic and personal growth. Research by Sargent and Hannum (2005) in "Keeping Teachers Happy: Job Satisfaction among Primary School Teachers in Rural North-west China" revealed that job satisfaction, closely tied to stress levels, significantly influences teachers' commitment and performance, with implications for student success. In the context of Guntur, where educational systems face unique regional challenges such as resource constraints and diverse student populations, understanding occupational stress is critical to developing interventions that enhance teacher well-being and, consequently, student outcomes.

Moreover, the teaching profession's multifaceted demands amplify stress, as teachers juggle roles beyond instruction, including counseling students, managing administrative tasks, and addressing parental concerns. This multifaceted role is particularly pronounced at the secondary level, where teachers must prepare students for high-stakes examinations and future career paths. A study by Agyapong et al. (2022) noted that such role overload contributes to emotional exhaustion and burnout, further exacerbating stress levels among teachers. The investigator's study aims to explore these dynamics in the Guntur district, examining how local factors-such as school infrastructure, administrative support, and cultural expectations-contribute to stress. By identifying these factors, the study seeks to propose actionable strategies, such as stress management workshops or policy changes, to support teachers in fulfilling their diverse roles effectively.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the occupational stress among secondary school teachers and to classify them.
2. To find out the occupational stress among secondary school teachers w.r.t. the following areas i.e.
   - Role Overload, ambiguity and conflict
   - Unreasonable group & Political pressures and Powerlessness
   - Responsibility for persons ad Poor peer Relations
   - Under participation and Strenuous working conditions
   - Intrinsic impoverishment and Low status and Unprofitability.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Survey method is used in the present study. The data gathered from 100 secondary school teachers were selected by using Simple Random Sampling Technique. The study is limited to 100 secondary school teachers in Guntur district only. The researcher adopted by Occupational Stress Scale developed by Dr. A.K. Srivasrava and Dr. Ashok Pratap Singh (2019) and Mean, S D, % of mean values are calculated.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Objective -1: To find out the occupational stress among secondary school teachers

Table-1: Showing mean, % of mean, S.D of the school teachers

N	Mean	% of mean	S.D
100	159.90	69.52	2.831

The secondary school teachers possess above average level of occupational stress

Objective – 2: To find out the occupational stress among secondary school teachers w.r.t. the following areas i.e.

a. Role Overload, ambiguity and conflict
b. Unreasonable group & Political pressures and Powerlessness
c. Responsibility for persons ad Poor peer Relations
d. Under participation and Strenuous working conditions

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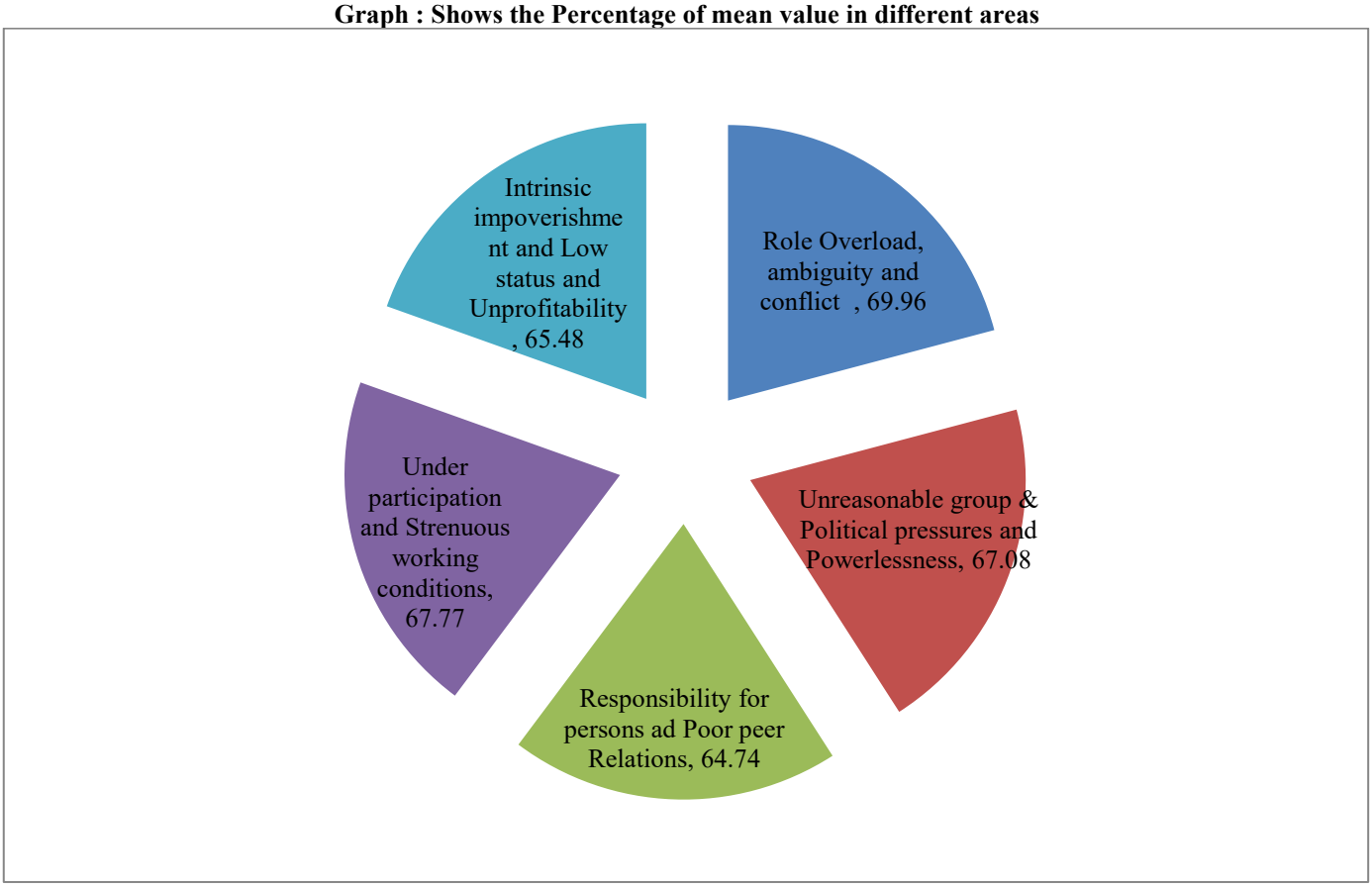
e. Intrinsic impoverishment and Low status and Unprofitability

Table 2. Shows the Mean SD and Percentage of mean value of different area

S.No	Name of the area	Mean	SD	Percentage of mean
1.	Role Overload, ambiguity and conflict	62.97	0.41	69.96
2.	Unreasonable group & Political pressures and Powerlessness	23.48	0.371	67.08
3.	Responsibility for persons ad Poor peer Relations	22.66	0.32	64.74
4.	Under participation and Strenuous working conditions	23.72	0.36	67.77
5.	Intrinsic impoverishment and Low status and Unprofitability	22.92	0.29	65.48

The area Role Overload, ambiguity and conflict follow the other areas i.e. participation and Strenuous working conditions, Unreasonable group & Political pressures and Powerlessness, Intrinsic impoverishment and Low status and Unprofitability and lastly Responsibility for persons ad Poor peer Relations.

Graph : Shows the Percentage of mean value in different areas



Findings

1. The mean value of secondary school teachers is 159.90 and SD is 2.831 and percentage of mean is 69.52. The secondary school teachers possess above average level of occupational stress
2. The area Role Overload, ambiguity and conflict follow the other areas i.e. participation and Strenuous working conditions, Unreasonable group & Political pressures and Powerlessness, Intrinsic impoverishment and Low status and Unprofitability and lastly Responsibility for persons ad Poor peer Relations.

Educational Implications

1. Policy-makers should examine the teacher training and assessment system, assuming that personal and social traits, along with working conditions, can impact teacher stress levels.
2. The heavy workload on teachers should be lessened by hiring more teachers. Additionally, non-teaching duties should be reduced, and if necessary, these tasks must be shared equally among all staff members.

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