

Workplace Stress: A Critical Insight of Causes and Effects on Employees' Well- being -A Study on Private University Teaching Staff

Author(s), NISHATH ANJUM¹ AND URMEE GHOSE²

Abstract:

Work stress is a growing problem around the world that affects not only the health and well-being of employees but also the productivity of organizations. Work stress has become significant due to dynamic social and organizational factors as well as changing needs of life styles. The aim of this study was to investigate the teacher's exposure to stress at work in university. The study examined the factors causing work stress and the effect of stress on employees' well-being. The study was a descriptive research. Data was collected using a structured survey questionnaire having a sample size of 80. The sample was made up of Professors, Associate professors, Assistant professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers from different private universities of Sylhet city, Bangladesh. The study used Principal Component Factor analysis which extracted eight variables. Correlation was computed to find out the internal consistency among variables. Frequency distribution has been done for all descriptive information. Result showed that all variables positively and significantly correlated with work stress and the internal consistency among different variables was also significant.

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About Author

Author(s), ¹Department of Business Administration, Metropolitan University, Bangladesh

(Corresponding Author) Email: nishath@metrouni.edu.bd

²Department of Business Administration, Metropolitan University, Bangladesh

Email: urmeeg@metrouni.edu.bd



Introduction

Stress as the body's general response to environmental situation which can lead to change in physical, emotional, behavioral or mental state. Stress is a part of human existence. Every individual regardless of race or cultural background, social and occupational status and even children experience stress in many ways (Kulkami G.K.,2006). An optional level of stress can be a source of positive motivation to succeed but too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems. When stress becomes excessive, the sufferer experiences disrupted emotional and physiological functioning. Stress is a common aspect in most professions; however, it has been consistently linked to the teaching. Teaching has been considered as one of the most stressful occupations. Moreover, the work of university teachers has largely changed recently. The occupation of academics had lost the characteristics for which it was traditionally considered stress-free and beneficial for work well-being (Kyriacou, C.,2000). In recent years, this increasing pressure on university teachers especially in case of private university is a result of change in the policy and social status of higher education. The working conditions at universities are becoming similar to those of other professions. This study examines the factors that causes stress among private university teachers and the effects of stress on their health and well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress is a general term applied to the pressures felt in life. It is almost inevitable in many jobs and has become a major buzzword and a legitimate concern of the time (R Neelamegam and S Asrafi, 2010). Stress is the reaction that people take due to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope (Kathirvel, 2009). Work stress is an individual's state of mind which is an encounter of a demanding situation or any constraint in the organization which s/he feels harmful or threatening for her/himself (L.S. Kang and R.S. Sandhu, 2011). Workplace stress is a mismatch between the individual capabilities and organizational demands. Employees often experience stress because of work overload, an expected work pace, difficult work schedules, role conflict, uncertainty regarding job security, poor interpersonal relationships and unpleasant working conditions. This stress manifests in conflict, depression, headaches, hypertension, alcoholism and other conditions (Pratibha Garg, 2010). Rapid change of the modern working life is associated with increasing demands of learning new skills, need to adopt to new types of work, pressure of higher productivity and quality of work, time pressure and hectic jobs are increasing stress among the workforce (Kulkarni 2006,).

Stress is the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression resulting from some aspect of his/her work as a teacher.



Stress is triggered by the teacher's perception of a threat to his/her self-esteem or well-being (Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers experienced serious symptoms of stress as a result of teaching-related pressures such as demanding workloads or abusive students which effects them physically, psychologically and emotionally (Dean, 2000). Stress levels varied based on the teacher's sex, age and amount of experience. For example, female teachers scored higher than male teachers in terms of occupational stress. Females and males not only experienced different levels of stress but also reported different sources of stress. Female teachers experiencing more stress as a result of lack of time for family, pressure at work place, handling student behavior and accomplishing personal goals. Male teachers reported professional tasks as being one of their main stressors; these tasks included completing specialized activities, obtaining professional support, controlling students' behaviors and attitudes, future growth prospects etc. There was a tendency for less experienced teachers to be more stressed than experienced teachers. Overall, the two groups that are most likely to experience the highest stress levels were the youngest teachers and the oldest teachers (Chaplin, 1995).

Several studies have examined work-life imbalance as a source of stress in academic staff. Given the increasing work demands, due to which university teachers are forced to work evenings and weekends, the boundary between work and private life becomes blurred and for most of them the level of work-life balance is far below desired. Teachers who perceived less control over work, schedule inflexibility and less support from their superiors, experienced a higher level of work-life imbalance which is also connected with the lower levels of psychological well-being, job dissatisfaction and the intention of giving up the academic career (Kinman and Jones, 2008).

One traditional feature of work in organizations of higher education that may favour stress is the highly hierarchical system of power dominated by the power distance culture. The hierarchical structure of higher education is based on greater legitimate power of teachers in higher positions. Legitimate power stems from the formal authority/position. As the advancement to higher academic positions is partly based on scientific performance, legitimate power may partly stem from the expert power. Expert power is based on specific knowledge and experience. The amount of power, the level of autonomy, work content and job security markedly separate two groups of staff: assistants and professors (assistant professors, associate, and full professors). These positions go with different stressors and with different exposure to stressors that are common for both groups (Muchinsky PM., 2006).

The responsibility load creates severe stress among employees. If the individuals cannot cope with the increased responsibilities it may lead to several physical and psychological disorders among them (Cobb, 1975). Work overload is perceived as workload beyond the scope of



statutory requirements of a position and as time pressure caused by colliding teaching, research and administrative duties. Along with the work overload in terms of quantity, all the domains of the teachers' work in higher education are becoming more demanding. This primarily refers to the research domain because the teacher is now required to possess entrepreneurial skills to obtain funding and to the increasing pressure to publish. (Kinman G.,2011). The "publish or perish" imperative very often has a counterproductive effect as it lowers the working morale of university teachers. In addition, 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. And while teachers have to keep abreast with rapid technological advances in all aspects of their work, administrative support is being cut down so that a substantial amount of administrative work is left for them to do (Gillespie et al., 2001).

Teachers experience the lack of human and material resources as the major obstacles to improve work efficiency and quality standards. They also see their autonomy and control downsized and are dissatisfied with bureaucratic management. Job insecurity and a lack of promotion opportunities, poor interpersonal relationships, particularly the lack of support from colleagues and/or superiors and the feeling that their work is not adequately recognized and paid still further lower the morale of university teachers (Cownie F.,2011). Besides working conditions, other characteristics of this profession have also changed. In comparison with other sectors, the number of people working in science and higher education has increased especially of women. Most research indicates a greater vulnerability of women when we talk about the experiences and consequences of stress at work. This means that women employed in institutions of higher education experience higher levels of stress than men and have more often consider leaving the job due to stress. Women in higher education more often report work/home imbalance and increased pressure to publish scientific papers as major sources of stress (Hofstede G, 2004). The prevalence of subjective health complaints among the teachers was also relatively high and mainly associated to job related pressure and lack of support (Anne Marie Berg. et al, 2006).

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Workplace Stress

Workplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when there is a poor match between job demands and the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. These conditions may lead to poor work performance or even injury. Job stress is also associated with various biological reactions that may lead ultimately severe health issues. Stress is a prevalent

and costly problem in today's workplace. About one-third of workers report high levels of stress. (Nirmala. R., 2015).

Symptoms of Stress

There are many symptoms of stress such as- absenteeism, escaping from work responsibilities, arriving late, leaving early, deterioration in work performance, more of error work, memory loss, over-reacting, arguing, getting irritated, anxiety, deteriorating health, more of accidents, improper eating habits (over-eating or under-eating), excessive smoking and drinking, sleeplessness etc. (Nirmala. R.,2015).

Sources/Causes of Stress

Organizational factors- There are many organizational factors that can cause stress such as- discrimination in pay/salary structure, strict rules and regulations, ineffective communication, Peer pressure, Goals conflicts/goals ambiguity, more of centralized and formal organization structure, Less promotional opportunities, Lack of employees participation in decision-making, Excessive control over the employees by the managers etc.

Individual factors- There are various expectations from family members, peer, superior and subordinates to employee. Failure to understand such expectations or to convey such expectations lead to role ambiguity/role conflict which in turn causes employee stress. Other individual factors include inherent personality traits such as being impatient, aggressive, rigid, feeling time pressure always, etc. Similarly, the family issues, personal financial problems, sudden career changes all lead to stress.

Other factors- Apart from organizational and individual factors there are some other factors that can cause stress such as- Monotonous nature of job, Unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, Lack of confidentiality, Disagreement, Unethical\Aggressive behavior, Lack of cooperation/ support, Personality issues etc. In today's world- Inflation, technological change, social responsibilities and rapid social changes are other extra-organizational factors causing stress. (Harish Shukla, 2013).

Effect of Stress on the Performance of University Teachers

Stress is a subjective phenomenon that differs for each of us. Things that are good and pleasurable for some people might be distressful for others. People respond to stress differently. Some of the challenges of stress on the performance of Private university teachers are- reduced work productivity, lie/give

excuses to cover up poor work, frequent headaches and depression, social withdrawal or isolation, constant tiredness\weakness\fatigue, increased frustration\anger\hostility, increased number of minor accidents, difficulty in taking decision, increase smoking\alcohol or drug use, trouble learning new information, nsomnia\nightmares or disturbing dreams.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study include:

- To examine the factors causing stress among the teachers of private university
- To find out the internal association between different factors that causing stress
- To study the effects of stress on employees health and well-being

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is a descriptive research. Several statistical techniques also used in this study. Both primary and secondary sources of information have been used. Primary data were used to assess the causes and effects. Secondary sources have been used to construct the theoretical part.

Questionnaire Design

A survey questionnaire has been used in this study. The questionnaire included a five-point likert scale and was divided into three parts. Part-A included the demographic information of the respondents. Part-B included respondent's perception on factors causing work stress and Part-C included respondent's perception on effects of stress.

Participants

The sample was made up of Professors, Associate professors, Assistant professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers from different private universities of Sylhet city, Bangladesh. 80 respondents returned the questionnaire with a response rate of 75.2%.

Plan for Analysis

This study used Principal Component Factor analysis which extracted eight variables of factors causing work stress. All variables were rated on 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Concerned reliability alpha are presented in Principal Component Factor



Analysis. Correlation was computed to find out the internal consistency among variables. Frequency distribution has been done for all descriptive information. Percentage analysis also carried out to summarize the respondent's perception regarding effects of stress. Data analysis was carried out with the use of SPSS 17.0 version software.

FINDINGS & RESULTS

All the findings are based on the survey of teachers. The result of the work summarized below:

Frequency Distribution: This analysis has been carried out for all demographic questions. As different people provided different opinions regarding the questions so the frequency distribution of respondents in terms of gender, age, education, type of organization and job experience are given in the table below:

Table No.1: Frequency distribution of demographic information

		No of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	54	67
	Female	26	33
	Total	80	100
Age	20-25 Years	10	13
	26-30 Years	41	51
	31-35 Years	12	15
	35+ Years	17	21
	Total	80	100
	Undergraduate	07	9

Level of Education	Graduate	15	19
	Postgraduate	50	62
	PhD	8	10
	Total	40	100
Job Title	Lecturer	35	44
	Senior Lecturer	25	31
	Assistant Professor	10	12
	Professor	6	8
	Associate Professor	4	5
	Total	40	100
Experience	1-5 Year	45	57
	6-10 Year	25	31
	11-15 Year	05	6
	15+ Year	05	6
	Total	80	100

Table No. 2: Principal Component Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.502
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square		2739.561
	Sig.	.000	
Extracted Factors and Factors Loading			

	Insufficient Management Support	Role Ambiguity	Resource Constraints	Workload	Frequent New Course	Evaluation System	Long Schedules	Time Overload
Harassment by managers/ staff/ students	.887							
Given responsibility without the authority to take decisions	.878							
Limited or no access to training	.741							
Lack of career development opportunities	.699							
Changes in terms & conditions without consultation	.671							
Insufficient time for scholarship and/or research	.663							
Work linked to deadlines & targets	.537							
Lack of management support	.483							
Efforts not valued		.894						
Lack of support in job role		.820						
Lack of information about what is going on		.781						
Conflicting demands in job role		.655						
Over competitive/ confrontational institutional culture		.592						
Lack of promotion prospects		.564						
Lack of communication with staff		.557						
Insufficient admin support		.481						
Inspection/policy processes			.808					
Lack of funds/resources			.675					
Lack of support to do the job			.627					
Off-site/multi-site working			.558					
Dealing with aggressive behavior				.790				
Lack of participation in decision making				.652				
Lack of regular breaks				.608				
Increased workload				.428				
Teaching new courses					.837			
Dealing with new education initiatives						.818		
Leave Policy						.594		
Staff appraisal						.564		
Larger classes/more students							.890	
Dealing with student discipline								.807
Long working hours								.500
Initial Eigenvalues	12.01	2.84	2.51	1.82	1.72	1.38	1.2	1.17
Total Variance Explained (%)	38.74	9.18	8.11	5.90	5.56	4.45	3.8	3.79
Reliability Alpha (σ)	.927	.906	.707	.820	.835	.569	.89	.598
							0	



Eight dimensions of factors causing stress were extracted and all extracted variables have shown good internal consistency as the Cronbach's Alpha (α) value more than 0.50. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.520 (>0.5), which depicts that the sample is sufficient for performing factor analysis. The Bartlett Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2=2739.561$, $p<.00$) is also significant. The eight factors extracted based on Eigenvalue greater than 1 explain 79.61% of total variance.

Table No.3: Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Correlations												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Age	1												
Education	.61**	1											
Position	.48**	.56**	1										
Experience	.47**	.52**	.79**	1									
Insufficient Management Support	-.14	.26*	.41**	.09	1								
Role Ambiguity	.14	.55**	.45**	.11	.74**	1							
Resource Constraints	.30**	.38**	.41**	.18	.55**	.50**	1						
Workload	.15	.33**	.26*	.07	.67**	.61**	.58**	1					
Frequent New Courses	-.19	-.20	-.11	-.27*	.33**	.06	-.08	.20	1				
Evaluation System	.20	.31**	.23*	-.08	.50**	.42**	.50**	.65**	.12	1			
Long Schedule	-.033	-.03	-.016	-.01	.04	.04	.01	.21	-.25*	.28*	1		
Time overload	.051	.25*	.12	.01	.44**	.28*	.41**	.36**	.00	.32**	.04	1	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

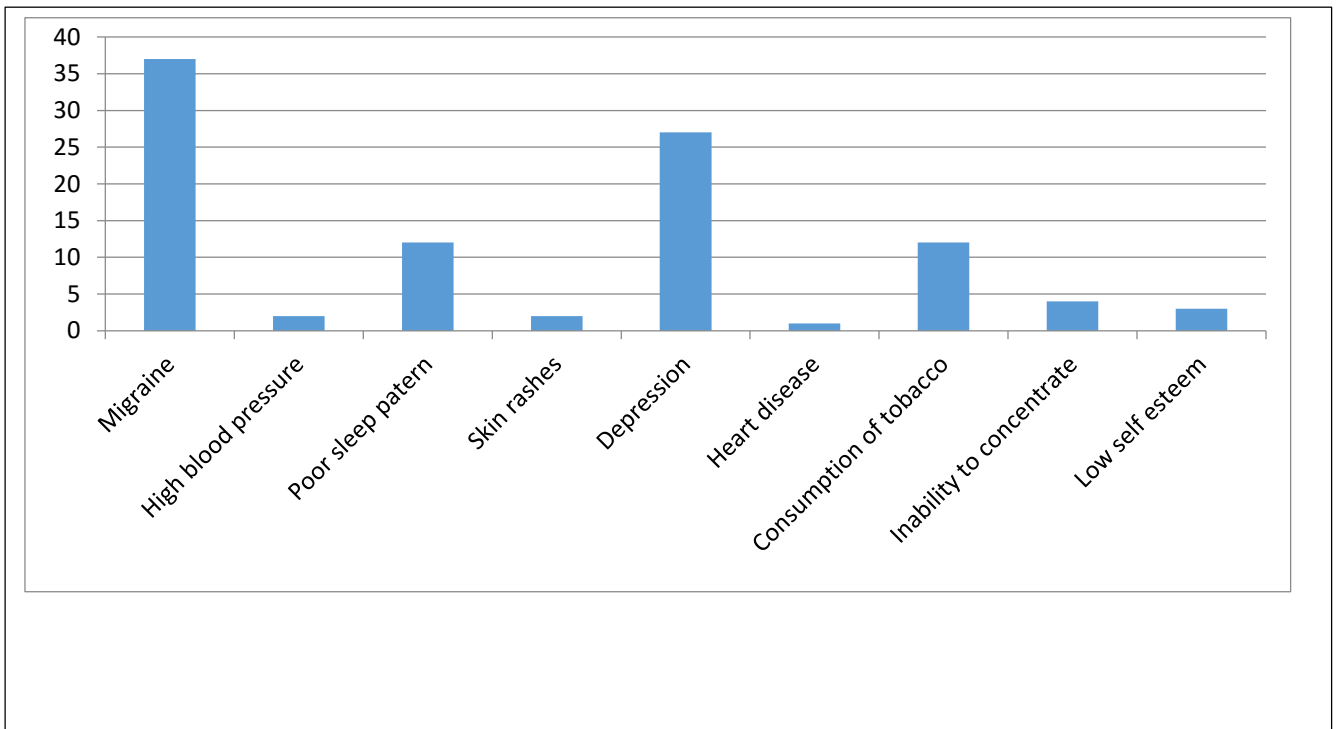
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation shows internal association between different variables. This association point out that teacher’s age, education, position and experience has significant relationship with the factors that causes stress.

Percentage analysis of respondents’ perception regarding effects of stress on their health:

- 20% of the respondents having good health condition in comparing with previous years
- 52% of the respondents having poor health condition in comparing with previous years
- 48% of the respondents having as usual health condition in comparing with previous years

Table No. 4: Percentage analysis of symptoms of stress:



LIMITATION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In this study, many facts have been left unexplored because of the shortage of time. It was also not possible to conduct the survey at large level. Respondents were also not willing to fill up the questionnaire properly because of their hectic work schedule. Convenient sampling has been used in the study which has its own limitations. Personal bias of the respondents also might have crept in while answering a few questions. In further studies, area of present study can be increased from district level to national level as well as international level. Sample size can be increased and other statistical tests can be used for comprehensive analysis & findings.

CONCLUSION

Stress issue has become contemporary, being an occupational hazard specially in teaching profession, needs to be addressed without delay. Stress can make an individual productive and constructive if it is well managed. Stress can be minimized if organizations take the right steps. Stress-free individual performs better, work harder, feel happier and have a long term commitment to the organization as compared to their counterparts. The organization should take positive steps to make its people free from stress so that they can work with optimum efficiency and effectiveness. Individual should be made free from not only fear of quality of performance but also from other types of fear generating in their minds. Guidance, counseling and psychological support can help in reducing the level of stress. Our brain and body are completely pliable; we can shape our brain through thoughts and action. Having broader perspective about life can definitely change the perception of stress. Let us hope that we will be successful in controlling stress for our healthy lifestyle as well as organizational well-being.

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