



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Perceived Occupational Stress among Teaching and Non-Teaching Employees
Working in L.N. Mithila University, India**

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation was aimed at studying the occupational stress and its stressors among teaching and non-teaching employees working in L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India. For the present study total sample consisted of one hundred twenty employees (N=120) comprising teaching (n=60) and non-teaching (n=60) which were selected randomly from different departments of L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, Data collected through questionnaire schedules using occupational stress index developed by Singh and Srivastava (1981). Having collected the data on each item of the index, data tabulated according to procedures as provided by authors for giving statistical treatment. Results revealed the fact that no significant difference have been found in terms of total occupational stress between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees, whereas, four dimensions/stressors of occupational stress, namely, Role overload, Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Unreasonable group and political pressure, Responsibility for persons and Strenuous working conditions have been emerged as the predictors of occupational stress between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees. It is interestingly to note that non-teaching employees were found more prone to occupational stress than the teaching employees while working in LNMU. The discrepancies of results obtained have been discussed in detail by highlighting the probable reasons.

Key Words: Occupational Stress and University Employees

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INTRODUCTION

In the present changing scenario of the world of work stress has become a part of our life. Thus, the present era is considered as the era of stress and consequently these days research interest in occupational stress, coping and health grown considerably. It is because of the fact that job related stress is inevitable in working life today. It occurs whenever a person has inadequate stress management and need frustrating work environment. It is indeed that in many job situations, particularly in human services, high levels of stress are an integral and largely unavoidable component of the work (Cooper and Payne, 1978). The literature on occupational stress has revealed many different classes of job related stressors and related them to such issues as job satisfaction and worker productivity (Beehr and Bhagat, 1985).

'Job life' in the present day world has become probably the most significant aspect of one's life because people keep themselves engaged in some job where they spend more time than in any activity but sleeping. Those who are working in any industry or organization may develop apprehensions and vague as a result of various unpleasant stressful and threatening work situations. Therefore, the phenomenon of stress, in general, and occupational stress in particular, is more important to be studied, especially, in the work situation to identify stressors.

The term 'Stress' emanated from Latin literature. It was first used in English during 17th century. The term means distress, oppressions, and hardships. During the 18th and 19th century the meaning of stress shifted to natural sciences and engineering to represent

force, pressure or strain, and or strong influence acting on a physical object or person which an individual resists in an attempt to maintain his original state.

Bridge Water and Sherwood (1956) have indicated in the Columbia Encyclopedia, stress is the internal force exerted by one part of a body upon the adjoining part, while strain is the deformation or change in dimension occasioned by stress. When body is subjected to pull it is said to be under tension, and when it is being pushed, i.e., is supporting a weight, it is under compressive stress. Shearing stress results from a force tending to make part of the body or one side of a plane slide past the other. Tensional stress occurs when external forces tend to twist a body around an axis.

Change in work life causes stress. Hence, nowadays, everyone seems to be talking about stress. We also hear it not only in daily conversation but also through television, radio, the news papers, conferences, stress centers, and university courses devoted to the topic. Remarkably, few people define the concept the same way and hardly bother to attempt for a clear-cut definition. In general, stress occurs when biological and physiological needs, as well as external demands and pressures are greater than the ability of the individual to adapt.

According to Basowitz, *et. al.* (1955) stressful situations do not always produce responses in individuals. In the light of this view Panchanathan and Shanmugaganesan (1992) have inferred that stress is a reaction to something that is happening to an individual. Moreover, it is one's way of coping with environment and threatening situations that he faces daily.

Selye (1956) in his pioneering work used the concept of stress in a manner relevant in social sciences. Selye expounded his biological concept of stress as the 'General Adaptation Syndrome' (GAS), a three phase response to stress that begins with an alarm, continues with resistance, and terminates with exhaustion. This three phase response to stress incorporates the orchestrated set of physical and chemical changes which prepare an individual to fight or flee. This fight or flight label grows out of an evolutionary analysis of the origins of the stress response when our cave dwelling ancestors had only two options for dealing with the stress or "fight or flight response". The major concerns of our ancestors were found protecting themselves from environmental hazards and wild animals.

It is a centuries old programmed-response to threat that is a master piece of survival engineering, and yet is tragically flawed in the sense that while the human nervous system is still responding the same way to environmental stressors, the stressors are not the same and the environment is radically different. The present day world abounds with uncertainties, which include natural calamities as well as unpredictable events and incidents.

It has been, in all times, a universal truth that the world is changing which is very much evident in the present era. Thus, the change and its effects have become the dominant features as the various authors have written on the Age of discontinuity (Drucker, 1968), the Age of Uncertainty (Galbraith, 1977) and the Age of Anxiety (Albrecht, 1979). However, the change is a continuous process which in itself is a great stressor in human life. In view of Lazarus (1966) stress is a universal human and animal phenomenon. A review of definition on stress reveals that stress has been one of the important aspects that everyone has experienced but few could define, Lazarus stated that stress results in intense and distressing experience that appears to have tremendous influence on behavior.

Thus, stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demands or resources related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Robbins and Judge, 2007). Most of the studies demonstrated the effects of stressors in relation to job anxiety and satisfaction (Cohen, 1984; Powell, 1972). Although, it is often observed that excessive workload, feeling, undervalued and communication issues are common and bullying some sources of stress.

OBJECTIVES

Various studies on occupational stress and its stressors in relation to different psychosocial and organizational aspects have been studied (Ahmad, 1994; Pestonjee & Singh, 1982; Pareek, 1983; Maddi and Kobasa, 1984; Misra & Singh, 1987; Dharmangadan, 1988) but the sample undertaken for the present investigation is of utmost value and still has not been studied in relation to occupational stress with particular reference to employees working in L. N. Mithila University (LNMU), India. Thus, the present study was aimed at studying the occupational stress and its stressors among teaching and non-teaching employees working in LNMU, India. No doubt, the present study will fill the void of knowledge in the area chosen by present investigators and the whole study will help in making congenial environment to stress free life.

HYPOTHESES

On the basis of broad objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be no significance of difference between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees working in L.N. Mithila University, India with regard to the occupational stress and its stressors.
2. Teaching employees will have higher degree of occupational stress than Non-teaching employees working in L. N. Mithila University, India.

SAMPLE

For the present piece of research work total sample consisted of one hundred twenty employees (N=120) comprising teaching (n=60) and non-teaching (n=60), randomly selected from different departments of LNMU. Total subjects' age were ranged 30 to 60.

TOOLS USED**1. OCCUPATIONAL STRESS INDEX:**

For measuring levels of occupational stress and its dimensions or stressors, an occupational stress index, developed by Srivastava and Singh (1981) was used. Index consisted of 46 items covering 12 dimensions of occupational stress. These dimensions have been stated by the authors as sub-scales (or occupational stressors) are- (1) role overload, (2) role ambiguity, (3) role conflict, (4) unreasonable group and political pressures, (5) responsibility for persons, (6) under participation, (7) powerlessness, (8) poor peer-relations, (9) intrinsic impoverishment, (10) low status, (11) strenuous working conditions, and (12) unprofitability. Covering above stated 12 – sub-dimensions as stressors, in all, occupational stress index consisted of 46 items as stated above which had to be rated on a 5-point scale “ranging from” strongly agree to strongly disagree out of 46 items, 28 are true-keyed items and the remaining 18 items are false-keyed items. The reported split-half reliability of the scale is .94; hence, it confirms the efficacy of the scale. The brief description of the stressors of occupational stress used by the present investigator in the context of present study is stated below:

- a. Role Overload: A state in which the work responsibility given to a person needs more time and resources than is available to him.
- b. Role Ambiguity: A state in which the person has inadequate information to perform his role (information about work objectives, scope and responsibility of the job, expectation of significant others and scope of jurisdiction and authorities).
- c. Role Conflict: A situation where the demands made on a person are contradictory or are in conflict with his own expectations and working style.
- d. Unreasonable Group and Political Pressure: A situation in which one is required to take a lot of decisions against his will or against formal rules and procedures under pressure.
- e. Responsibility for Persons: A person has the responsibility for the work, productivity and development of many employees.

- f. Under participation: Lack of one's influence on decision making process of the organization
- g. Powerlessness: A situation in which authority given does not commensurate with the responsibilities of the Job.
- h. Poor Peer-Relations: A situation in which relationships coworkers are characterized by low trust, low supportiveness and low interest in listening to and trying to deal with the problems confronting the other .
- i. Intrinsic Impoverishment: Lack of opportunity to realize one's potential abilities and develop one's aptitude.
- j. Low Status: A state of insignificance in the organizational network as well as in the social system.
- k. Strenuous Working Conditions: Lack of comfort and safety on the job.
- l. Unprofitability: Poor compensation and reward for the work done.

2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION BLANK (BIB):

For tapping information regarding the respondents biographies, a "Biographical Information Blank" (BIB) was also prepared that included age, marital status, salary (basic and gross), qualification, designation, department, total experience (in years), present experience (in years) and number of dependents and the respondents were requested to furnish these information.

PROCEDURE

The above two test materials viz., occupational stress index and, biographical information blank were in printed form and were administered individually on all the doctors working either in private or government hospitals in different places of Bihar as cited above. All the doctors were assured by taking in to confidence that provided information would be kept strictly confidential and would be used for research purposes only.

Having collected the responses to the items of the scales, they were scored according to the procedure and the individual scores were obtained. Finally scores were given statistical treatment and presented in tables. The obtained results were discussed and the formulated hypotheses were tested.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In quest of obtaining the results regarding the study of occupational stress and its stressors among the teaching and non-teaching employees working L.N. Mithila University (LNMU), India table- 1 reveals the picture that only six dimensions of occupational stress as stressors namely 'role overload', 'role ambiguity', 'role conflict', 'unreasonable group and political pressure', 'responsibility for persons' and 'strenuous working conditions' have been found significant statistically as obtained t-values are 3.91, 4.33, 2.49, 5, 2.96 and 2.86 respectively between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees working in LNMU. Hence, the hypothesis formulated that none of the dimensions of occupational stress will be found as the significant difference between the group of teaching and non-teaching working in LNMU stand rejected. It can also be observed from the table- 1 that significant difference has not been found between the groups of teaching and non-teaching employees in LNMU in terms of total occupational stress as the obtained t- 1.96 has been found insignificant. Thus, the formulated hypothesis i.e. there will be significance of difference between the group of teaching and non-teaching also stands rejected.

Elaborating the table-1, table- 2 highlights the levels of perceived occupational stress reactions between the groups of teaching and non-teaching working in L.N. Mithila University (LNMU), Darbhanga in which 43.33 percent of non-teaching have shown higher level of stress in comparison to teaching employees working in LNMU i.e. 36.67 percent which is comparatively lower degree than non-teaching employees. 30 percent of non-teaching group employees who have reported their moderate level of stress,

whereas, 43.33 percent of teaching group employees working in LNMU have shown moderate level of stress which is comparatively higher than non-teaching employees working in LNMU. Moreover, from the table- 2 it can also be observed that only 20 percent of teaching group of employees working in LNMU have reported to have their low degree of occupational stress respectively, although, non-teaching group of employees more than this group i.e. 26.67 percent.

Table1: Showing Means, SDs and t-values on different dimensions of Occupational Stress and overall between the group of Non-Teaching and Teaching Employees Working in L.N. Mithila University, India

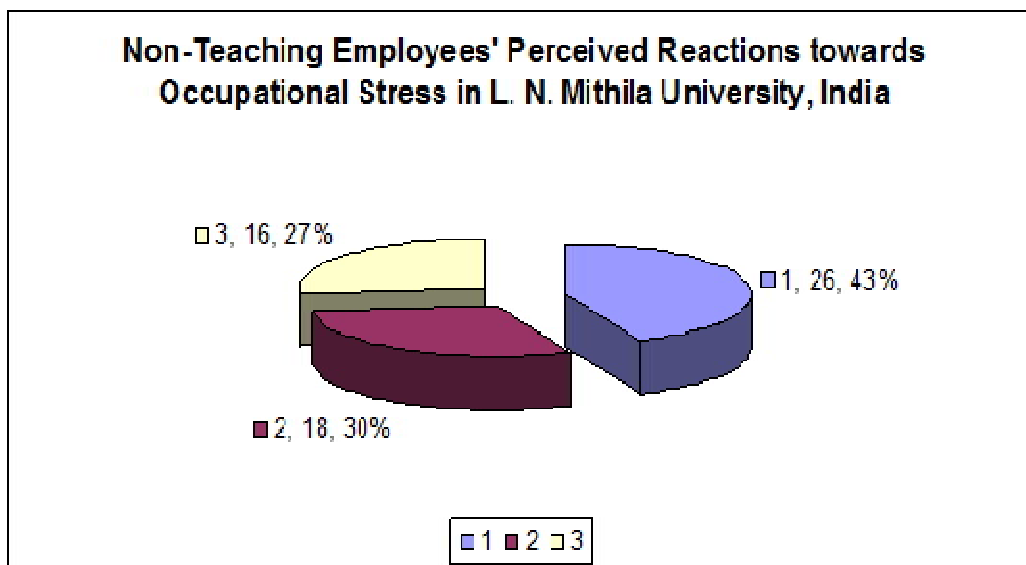
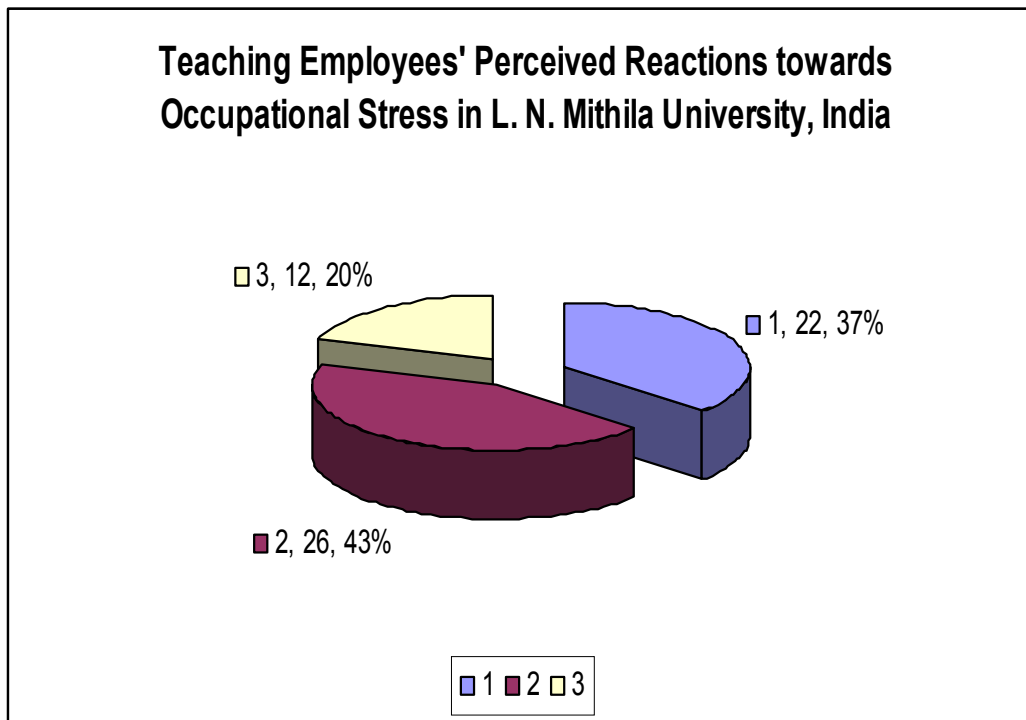
S. No.	Occupational Stress and its stressors / Dimensions	Non-Teaching (n=60)		Teaching (n=60)		t-values
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Role overload	18.28	4.77	15.39	3.21	3.91*
2	Role ambiguity	12.23	2.05	10.24	2.87	4.33*
3	Role conflict	9.29	2.83	8.02	2.80	2.49**
4	Unreasonable group and political pressure	9.03	2.87	6.68	2.15	5*
5	Responsibility for persons	10.67	3.02	9.25	2.19	2.96**
6	Under participation	11.24	2.48	11.25	2.43	0.02 ^{NS}
7	Powerlessness	8.14	2.28	8.46	2.32	1.78 ^{NS}
8	Poor peer-relations	9.16	2.82	8.57	2.14	1.28 ^{NS}
9	Intrinsic impoverishment	12.59	2.85	12.57	2.78	0.04 ^{NS}
10	Low status	8.33	2.34	8.46	2.38	0.31 ^{NS}
11	Strenuous working conditions	17.53	5.34	15.24	3.13	2.86**
12	Unprofitability	6.08	2.11	6.59	2.13	1.31 ^{NS}
13	Total occupational stress	132.57	35.76	120.72	30.15	1.96 ^{NS}

* Indicates significance level at .01 Level, ** indicates significance level at .05 Level

Table 2: Showing Levels of Perceived Occupational Stress Reactions among Non-Teaching and Teaching Employees Working in L. N. Mithila University, India

Levels	Non-Teaching		Teaching	
	n=60	Percentage	n=60	Percentage
High	26	43.33%	22	36.67%
Moderate	18	30%	26	43.33%
Low	16	26.67%	12	20%

Fig. 1: Pie Chart Showing Levels of Perceived Occupational Stress Reactions among Non-Teaching and Teaching Employees Working in L. N. Mithila University, India



1 indicates for High, 2 for Moderate and 3 for Low Levels of Stress perceived by Job Incumbents

The results presented above on the basis of analyses seem to be logical that higher stress was found among non-teaching employees (Mean value = 132.57) as compared to teaching group of employees (mean value=120.72) which can be observed from the table-1 and 2. The present trend of results can be interpreted in the sense that non-teaching's professional occupations are more likely to suffer from occupational stress and its countering stressors than other professional groups because employees have more responsibility for people, organization and society as well. It is because of these reasons role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, and strenuous working conditions have emerged as the significant predictors for the present piece of research endeavor. It is generally observed that occupational stress is especially common and severe among employees either non-

teaching or teaching who deliver direct care and assistance to emotionally distress in public institutions or agencies.

Extending the discussion, it is important to be mentioned that in the preset era of stress, stress is prevalent in the life and at the workplace as well but still both the group of employees working in L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga have a perceived control, which is a powerful mediator of stress providing a sense of being able to cope effectively and predict events. They believe that outcomes in a particular endeavor are contingent upon their own behavior, showing that they can control the events/happenings they experience in their not only in lives but in professions with whom they are associated. In today's world, changes and challenges are inevitable. This notable difference is that they can handle the stress because of their capacity to take control over the factors that cause stress. It is crystal clear that challenge is an orientation that welcomes changes as a natural part of life as a source of opportunity rather as a great showing that both the group of employees working in L. N. Mithila University view life changes as an exciting challenges for further growth and developing nation at large.

Discussing the results obtained with regard to the non-teaching group of L.N. Mithila University (L.N.M.U), Darbhanga, it is important to point out that this group of employees has also shown higher degree of stress on occupational stress index than their teaching group which can be observed from the table- 1 & 2. In obtaining such a discrepancy of results, it is significant to throw light on some of the observations, experienced by the present investigator, i.e. lack of organizational resources such as delay in salary, inadequate amount of salary, political uncertainty prevailing in the L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga regarding the policies, lack of proper care and cooperation from the side of authority in general and state government in particular and lack of other benefits, etc. these are basic reasons as have been observed by which non-teaching group especially in L.N.Mithila University and its constituent colleges are being affected. Non-teaching group also reported that they feel lack of social support and unhappiness of their family members due to inevitable delay in payment along with all perks and benefits, although, they are ready to contribute a lot to the betterment of higher education in all respect to uplift hygienic society.

In addition to the above context, it is important to be mentioned here that to attain this sense of achievement non-teaching employees of L.N. Mithila University willingly sacrifice leisure, family life, love and that comfortable social preservative, the conventions. Therefore, it is indeed that no significant differences have been found between the group of non-teaching and teaching employees in terms of total occupational stress especially in LNMU from where the present piece of research work has been carried out.

CONCLUSION

Having discussed the obtained results in detail the following conclusions are drawn-

1. Six dimensions/stressors of occupational stress out of twelve dimensions namely, "Role Overload", "Role Ambiguity", "Role conflict", "Unreasonable group and political pressure", "Responsibility for Persons" and "Strenuous Working Conditions" have been found significant predictor between the group of Teaching and Non-Teaching employees working in L.N. Mithila University, India
2. Significance of difference has not been found between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees in terms of total occupational stress.
3. Non-teaching employees are more prone to occupational stress as they scored higher degree of "mean" in comparison to teaching employees but significance of difference has not been found between the group (table- 1& 2)
4. Observations have revealed the fact that both the group of employees working in L.N. Mithila University experienced and perceived stress more or less equally. It is because of that individuals vary greatly in their personality and the capacity to undergo stressful situations, and there is, indisputably, self-selection in the kinds of jobs and stressors that individuals choose. It is to be sure that sources of stress may vary from

individual to individual, providing a solution for one individual may create stress for another. For instance, an example can be cited that if the organization provides more opportunity for influencing over the work process, the change in control may be experienced positively by some but negatively by others. A partial solution to this problem may involve intervening with group of employees that are formed based on person-environment relationships, and which contribute to the reduction of stress.

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