Understanding And Mitigating The Burden: Exploring The Impact Of Occupational Stress On Primary School Educators With Special Reference To Walapane Educational Zonal, Nuwara Eliya District, Sri Lanka.

Abstract

Occupational stress among educators is a critical issue that can impact both their personal well-being and professional effectiveness. This study examines the nature and causes of occupational stress on primary school teachers in the Walapane Educational Zone, Nuwara Eliya District, Sri Lanka. Through a quantitative approach that includes surveys and observational data, the study identifies the impact of stress on teachers and the subsequent influence on teaching quality and student outcomes. Findings aim to inform policy recommendations that address the specific needs of educators in rural settings, with the broader goal of improving educational outcomes and fostering a supportive teaching environment.

Key Words : Occupational stress, Primary teachers, Sri Lanka

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education in particular shapes children's minds and destinies, making it a vital component of society growth. But the teachers in charge of this important job frequently experience high levels of occupational stress, which can negatively impact their effectiveness and well-being. The purpose of this study is to identify the complex consequences of occupational stress on primary school teachers, looking at its causes, symptoms, and aftereffects on both their personal and professional lives. The objective of the study is to better understand these stressors to emphasize the value of coping strategies and support networks, which will ultimately improve learning environments for both instructors and students.

This study examines the impact of occupational stress on primary teachers in Sri Lanka, a significant occupational hazard worldwide. It aims to understand the effects on teaching performance, psychological well-being, and classroom dynamics. The research aims to expand

understanding of teachers' issues and inform the creation of solutions and support systems to improve the teaching environment.

Occupational stress, a growing issue, affects workers and businesses. Factors such as personal characteristics, family issues, and financial hardships can contribute to workplace stress. In USA, 5.3% of teachers leave due to increased stress (Lambert, Lauren, Paul, & Chritopher , 2018). This study aims to identify causes and impact of occupational stress among primary teachers in Sri Lanka.

This research investigates the challenges faced by primary teachers in Sri Lanka due to work-related stress, focusing on its impact on both teachers and pupils and to identify the impact of occupational stress among primary teachers on the education of the students.

The purpose of this study is to comprehend how occupational stress affects primary school teachers in Sri Lanka's educational system. It seeks to discover strategies for overcoming stress and the negative impacts on teachers' physical, mental, and emotional health. The results may aid in drawing in fresh talent and keeping on board seasoned teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A study in the U.S. found that despite significant resources spent on teacher training and professional development, there is an increasing trend in teacher turnover due to higher occupational stress. In Hong Kong, 97.3% of teachers reported increased perceived stress levels (Alan , Chan, & Elaine , 2010).Teacher stress is a response to negative effects, such as anger or depression, and is mediated by the perception that demands constitute a threat to their self-esteem or wellbeing. Primary school teachers experience higher stress levels than secondary level teachers. Domestic variables, such as job dissatisfaction, psychological distress, burnouts, and sickness absence, also contribute to occupational stress. Low student enrolment also contributes to stress among teachers due to questionable job security.

The Stressors and Strain Approach is a crucial theory in occupational stress studies, focusing on work characteristics causing stress and the psychological and physiological reactions of employees (Cooper, Peter, Hart, & Cary, 2001). The Cybernetic Theory of stress focuses on how systems adapt to environmental reactions to cope with personal and organizational goals, providing a comprehensive understanding of person- environment interaction (Cooper, Cummings, & Cary, A Cybernetic Framework for Studying Occupational Stress, 1979).

List 1-Variables identifies from Literature.

Variables	Author
Work-family Conflicts	(Natasha, David, Maureen , & Carol, 2004), (Nart & Batur, 2014)
Job Performance	(Sandra, Agustinus , & Basillus , 2020), (James & House, 1974)
Behavioural changes	(James & House, 1974), (Natasha, David, Maureen , & Carol, 2004), (Wadesango, Gudyanga, & Mberewere, 2015)
Health Impacts	(Natasha, David, Maureen , & Carol, 2004), (Spector, 2002), (Sharon & Cary, 2010)
Environment	(Lambert, Lauren, Paul, & Chritopher , 2018), (Antoniou, Vasiliki, Fotini, & Olga, 2023)

3. METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research designs are used to examine causal relationships and associations between variables. ~~The research design framework, including the type of study, research approach, and time horizon, is crucial in obtaining relevant information for a study~~. The type of explanatory study is used to analyse the cause-effect relationship of occupational stress among primary level teachers in the Walapane educational zonal of Nuwara Eliya District. The study collects data from selected teachers, focusing on work family conflicts, job performance, behavioural changes, common health issues, proper learning environment, and occupational stress. The analysis employs a quantitative approach to test the statistical relationship between identified variables and the hypothesis. The study examines the impact of occupational stress on primary level teachers using a cross- sectional time horizon, collecting data at a single point to identify current occupational stress levels.The hypothesis which were formulated in this study are that all the independent variables identified in this study have a significant relationship with the dependent variable of occupational stress.

The sample consists of 107 respondents and collected data by filling the semi structured questionnaire and before giving revised questionnaire, pilot study was carried out and revised the questionnaire accordingly.

4. ANALYSIS

The sample consists of 59.81% of male primary teachers and 40.19% of female primary teachers. The majority of respondents (28.97%) are aged 26-35, followed by 36-45 (25.23%), 46-55 (16.82%), and 18-25 (13.98%), with the least respondents (15.89%) aged 56 or above. The sample comprises 65.42% married primary teachers, 30.84% unmarried, and 3.74% divorced, with 30.84% being unmarried and 3.74% being divorced. The majority of the sample, 34.58%, have 11-

20 years of teaching experience, followed by 28.04%, 21-30 years, and 15.89%, with 31 or above years of experience. The sample consists of 23.36% teachers teaching to grade 5, 20.56% teaching to grade 4, 22.43% teaching to grade 3, 22.43% teaching to grade 2, and 11.21% teaching to grade 1.

The study reveals that individual ratings for dependent variable of occupational stress and independent variables of work family conflict, job performance, behavioural change, health impact, and proper learning environment vary by approximately 0.45, 0.35, 0.37, 0.39, 0.40, and 0.36 respectively around the mean.

Cronbach's Alpha measures internal consistency dependability, indicating the relatedness of scale or questionnaire items. A high value of 0.907 indicates high internal consistency and reliability of the items used in this study. Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items, with a mean and standard deviation of 0 and 1, maintains high internal consistency even after standardization.

Multiple regression analysis and correlation analysis is conducted using SPSS ver.29.0 in order to analyse the inferential data.

In this study, only 34.2% variance of the dependent variable (occupational stress among primary level teachers) is explained by the variance of independent variables.

Other 65.8% can be explained by other variables which were not identified in the literature review. Therefore, occupational stress among primary level teachers is affected only 34.2% by work family conflict, job performance, behavioural changes, health impact and proper learning environment which were identified in this research.

The F-statistic is obtained by dividing the "Regression" term's mean square by the "Residual" term's mean square. It calculates the proportion of explained to unexplained variation. The F-statistic is 10.520 in this instance.

The p-value for the F-statistic is shown in the Significance field. The F-statistic's statistical , is evaluated using the p-value. Given that the p-value in this instance is ".001b," it is very close to zero (significantly less than 0.001) and is hence low. This shows that the regression model's overall results are statistically significant.

In this study according to the Beta values the independent variables such as work family conflicts and health impacts have a positive relationship between the dependent variable occupational stress while the remaining independent variables such as job performance, behavioural changes and proper learning environment have a negative relationship with the dependent variable.

- **Correlation Analysis**

Occupational stress and work-family conflict have a 0.084 Pearson correlation coefficient. Since this number is close to zero, there is only a very weak positive correlation between the two variables.

Occupational stress and job performance have a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.122. A weak negative correlation between the two variables is shown by the negative value of this ratio.

Occupational stress and behavioural changes have a Pearson correlation coefficient of –0.115. A weak negative correlation between the two variables is shown by the negative value of this ratio.

Occupational stress and health impact have a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.543. A moderate positive correlation between the two variables is shown by the negative value of this ratio.

Occupational stress and a proper learning environment have a correlation coefficient of-0.095. The correlation between these two variables is extremely weakly negative, as indicated by this number.

List 2- Summary of the Hypothesis

No	Hypothesis	Results
H1	Work-Family Conflicts and Occupational Stress among primary school teachers have a Significant relationship.	Do not Reject
H2	Job Performance and Occupational Stress among primary school teachers have a Significant relationship.	Do not Reject
H3	Behavioural Changes and Occupational Stress Among primary school teachers have a significant relationship.	Reject
H4	Health impacts and Occupational Stress among primary school teachers have a significant relationship.	Do not Reject
H5	Proper learning environment and Occupational Stress among primary school teachers have a significant relationship.	Reject

5. KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that only 34.2% of occupational stress among primary level teachers is explained by independent variables, while 65.8% is due to other variables. Work family conflict, job performance, behavioural changes, health impact, and proper learning environment were identified as significant factors. Beta values showed a positive relationship between work family conflicts and health impacts, while job performance, behavioural changes, and proper learning environment had a negative relationship.

Because the independent variables such as work family conflicts and health impacts tend to increase due to the increase in occupational stress and hence the study has identified that these two variables have positive relationship with occupational stress. On the other hand, the independent variables such as job performance, behavioural changes, and proper learning environment have negative relationship with occupational stress because they tend to reduce when the occupational stress increases. Finally, three hypotheses were not rejected, while two were rejected.

The other variables which can explain the rest of the 65.8% of the impacts of occupational stress which were not identified in the literature of this study could be absenteeism, conflicts with co workers, domestic and workplace violence, over reactions to little provocation, low tolerance of frustration, development of negative unhealthy and unproductive escapist individual and organizational behaviours and mental illnesses linked to stress such as schizophrenia, claustrophobia, agoraphobia and depression. Additionally prolonged chronic stress results in burnout.

6.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aimed to identify the impacts of occupational stress on primary level teachers, focusing on work family conflicts, job performance impacts, and health impacts. The analysis revealed a positive relationship between occupational stress and work family conflicts, a negative correlation between occupational stress and job performance, and a positive relationship between occupational stress and health impacts. The study also sought to provide suggestions to overcome occupational stress among teachers, including yoga, meditation, sports, hobbies, reading, sleeping, social media, therapy, travel, and exercising. These suggestions aim to address the primary research question and help primary level teachers cope with occupational stress.

The study highlights the impact of occupational stress on primary teachers, highlighting work family conflicts, job performance impacts, and health impacts. It suggests that teachers should not underestimate these issues and take measures to maintain work-life balance while reducing occupational stress. Coping strategies collected from affected teachers can help overcome these issues. Job performance can also be affected, as teachers must be mindful of their performance and self-assess their performance regularly. Health impacts are inevitable due to their role in engaging with students and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The provided suggestions can help teachers overcome these impacts and maintain a pleasant work life.

Furthermore, Research gaps that were identified are, since this study consider only the primary school teacher’s occupational stress and teachers from only one educational zone, the sample size can be expanded by including Secondary school teachers from all of the Nuwara Eliya district or the central province in order to capture various sample characteristics. Also this expansions of sample could be identified as the future Research area.

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