

# Status of stressors among female teachers of primary school

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to know the stressors among primary school female teachers. The purposive sample consisted of 155 primary school teachers. The stress scale (Bhagwatwar, 2000) was used to identify stressors among the teachers. The data collected were subjected to frequency, percentage and rank analyses. The results revealed that the first order stressors experienced by the teachers was having their one time peers (equals) as their bosses today, child has developed bad habits, the students general misbehaviour, spouse has started drinking alcohol, considerable deficit in the financial matters, management always encourages unhealthy competition at work, have to work with non-co-operative sub-ordinates, have to work in the organization where chances of promotion are rare, the management does not have healthy promotion policies, have to work where the climate is hostile to me, have to work in the organization of low social status, colleagues laugh at my way of functioning, a family member in my house is suffering from an incurable disease (permanently ill).

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian context-the transition of gender inequality and gender roles away from traditional to modern gender role expectations has been observed to constitute cultural universals that affect the work-family interface. Although research has acknowledged the role played by individual characteristics in appraising environmental variables and reactions to competing role demands between work and family domains, limited research is found to have investigated the relationship between individual personality characteristics and work-family conflict. Individuals are found not only to interpret and react to situational variables, but also to proactively shape them according to their personal characteristics (Watanabe *et al.*, 1998). The modern world which is said to be a world of achievements and competition, whether it be within the family, business organization or any other social or economic activity, the expectations, demands and pressures are increasing. Perceived complexity of demands and pressures are

responsible for the experience of stress. In any job, there are wide variety of potential causes of stress, some of which are common to both men and women, and others are specific to each group.

The entry of women in the jobs is not accompanied with a simultaneous shift in the social division of labour. The sex role ideology emphasizing upon the separate spheres of activity for men and women still exerts considerable influence on the public psyche. Even most of the dual earner wives continue to view themselves primarily as homemakers, and their work status did little to alter their sex role orientation (Rajadhyakasha and Smita, 2004). Thus, women still consider their primary duty to look after the household affairs and care for the family, while men find earning for the family as their primary, or may be, the sole responsibility. Women are thus confronted with the challenge of playing the dual-role, to excel at home, as well as at the workplace. In a bid to prove her competence on both the fronts, women are facing the problem of overwork and are often being stressed out or drained of their energy.

Stress is the most pervasive phenomenon in one's life in work as well as in family. According to Cooper and Marshal (1978) occupational stress is the by-product of complex industrial organizations. Many researches have highlighted the importance of cognitive factors in stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Evans and Carrere, 1991).

The goal of every organization, whether profit or non-profit oriented, is to work towards achieving the objective for its existence. The major goal of the school at any level is towards attainment of academic excellence by the students. Although there may be other peripheral objectives but major emphasis is placed on the achievement of sound education. The extent to which this goal can be actualized depends principally on the emotional intelligence of workforce-most especially the teaching personnel.

Stress has now become an area of concern for all types of occupations. There is little doubt, however, that some professions have fared worse than others. The transactional perspective of stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) emphasizes the role of 'cognitive appraisal' and 'coping responses'. A stressful transaction begins with primary cognitive appraisal, which a situation requires as an effective response to avoid or reduce physical or psychological threat or harm, and a secondary appraisal that no completely effective response is immediately available. Any event or situation is not stressful in itself. It becomes a source of stress only when the focal person appraises it as to be a threat and to exceed his or her capability to deal with it. The person makes the best response possible and actively defines and shapes stressful transactions by means of his cognitive appraisals and coping responses. This is the reason that same situation or event is differently responded to by different persons. The concept of stress is bound to person, and is a subjective experience.

Teaching, by its nature demands that teachers demonstrate or display emotion they may not actually feel. For instance, teachers are expected to demonstrate unusual love and kindness to their students. They are also expected to serve as mentors and motivate students who are even unwilling to learn. Stress is an unavoidable characteristic of life and work. Occupational stress describes physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of job and the capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands (Akinboye *et al.*, 2002). Three classes of definitions of stress are known:

- As a response,
- As a stimulus and
- As an intervening variable.

Cox (1978) has described three classes of definitions. Stress can be variously thought of *as a response*, *i.e.*, the stress response to an extreme stimulus; *as a stimulus* *i.e.*, as the stressor itself and *as an intervening variable*. Researches on dual-career families also indicate that conflicts between

professional and parental roles are especially stressful for the female spouse (Holahan and Gilbert, 1979). Given uneven societal expectations regarding work and family roles among men and women, factors contributing to burn-out would vary with their sex roles. Given the emphasis placed in our society on familial roles for women (regardless of whatever extra familial roles they enact), it is expected that variables related to familial roles will be more important for women in the experience of burn-out than in men.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The objective was to study the status of stressors among primary school female teachers. The sample for the study was drawn from the population of primary school teachers residing in Dharwad city, Karnataka. The criteria for the respondents to be the part of the study included that they should be primary school teachers, who had been married for at least 5 years and having at least one child and who were willing to become the subjects. Thus, the final sample comprised of 155 primary school female teachers. The tools and instruments used to carry out the present research are enumerated below:

- Personal information schedule
- Stress scale (Bhagwatwar, 2000).

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads:

### Status of stress among primary school teachers:

#### *Status of the primary school teachers on self-stressors :*

Stress caused due to the behaviour of an individual or the environmental circumstances due to which an individual is under stress are grouped as 'self stressors'. It consisted of 12 stressors which denoted stress caused due to the individual.

Stressors which caused more number of teachers to be stressed always were grouped as 'first-order' stressor. It included the stressors living away from the family. Table 1 shows that around 8.4 per cent of the primary school teachers were stressed because they were forced to live away from their family. Second-order stressor caused the primary school teachers to be always under stress from 7.7 per cent to 5.8 per cent. It was because of peers and being involved in a legal dispute.

The third order stressor contributed from 4.8 per cent to 3.8 per cent among the primary school teachers. It included quarrelling neighbours, avoidance from friends, lower socio-economic status, cannot take up job in other city/town. Among the 12 stressors related to self, 2 stressors *viz.*, living away from the family and avoidance from friends had developed high stress among primary school teachers. Stressors such as gap in the values of self and that of the society, rumours,

isolation from the relatives, high expectations by the society and unfulfilled ambitions contributed from 1.3 per cent to 3.2 per cent among the primary school teachers formed the fourth-order stressor.

*Status of the primary school teachers on stressors related to children :*

Stress caused due to the children- their feelings, behaviour, habits, academic performance and progress, marriage etc., were included under the stressors related to children. It included 12 stressors and is enlisted in Table 2. The first-order stressor contributed to stress always among 7.1 per cent to 6.4 per cent of the primary school teachers. It included bad habits of the children, not finding a suitable match for the daughter and student's general misbehaviour. The second-order stressors

included children are in care of others, children's unsatisfactory academic progress, difference in the values of self and that of the children, negative attitude of children towards studies. All these stressors contributed to stress always among 3.8 per cent to 5.2 per cent of the primary school teachers.

The stressors such as, bad treatment of children in the school, children's avoidance to interact formed the third-order stressors and contributed to stress always among 2.6 per cent 3.2 per cent of the primary school teachers. Being disliked by the children and getting complaints about children's poor academic progress formed the fourth-order stressors and had contributed to stress always among 1.0 per cent the primary school teachers. All the stressors had developed more or less similar level of stress among the primary school teachers.

Order	Stress statements	High stress	Medium stress	Low stress	No stress
1 <sup>st</sup>	I am forced to live away from my family	13 (8.4)	12 (7.7)	32 (20.6)	98 (63.2)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	My one time peers (equals) are my bosses today	12 (7.7)	14 (9.03)	26 (16.7)	103 (66.45)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	I am involved in a major legal dispute	9 (5.8)	12 (7.7)	14 (9.03)	120 (77.4)
	My close friends generally avoid me	7 (4.8)	3 (1.9)	37 (23.9)	108 (69.6)
	I am staying in a much lower socio-economic class than that of my relatives	6 (3.8)	3 (1.9)	35 (22.6)	111 (71.6)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Because of family responsibility, I cannot take up a job in other town/city which I desire very much	6 (3.8)	12 (7.7)	31 (20.0)	106 (68.4)
	Neighbours are in the habit of picking quarrels	6 (3.8)	9 (5.8)	36 (23.2)	104 (67.0)
	Relatives / neighbours / friends spread rumors about me.	5 (3.2)	13 (8.4)	18 (11.6)	119 (76.7)
	I am generally isolated from my relations	5 (3.2)	7 (4.5)	32 (20.6)	111 (71.6)
	My ambitions could not be fulfilled	4 (2.6)	7 (4.5)	52 (33.5)	92 (29.6)
	There is a considerable gap between my values and of the society in which I stay	4 (2.6)	12 (7.7)	33 (21.3)	106 (68.4)
	Society has very high expectations from me	2 (1.3)	4 (2.6)	52 (33.5)	97 (62.6)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

Order	Stress statements	High stress	Medium stress	Low stress	No stress
1 <sup>st</sup>	My child has developed bad habits	11 (7.1)	14 (9.0)	8 (5.2)	122 (78.7)
	The students general misbehaviour	11 (7.1)	10 (6.4)	31 (20.0)	103 (66.4)
	I am not finding a suitable match for my daughter	10 (6.4)	11 (7.1)	31 (20.0)	103 (66.4)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Children are in care of others	8 (5.2)	18 (11.6)	24 (15.5)	105 (67.4)
	The negative attitude of children towards studies	6 (3.8)	13 (8.4)	38 (24.5)	98 (63.2)
	My child / children's academic progress is very far from satisfactory	6 (3.8)	17 (10.7)	49 (31.6)	83 (53.5)
	My values of child/children are radically different from mine	6 (3.8)	18 (11.6)	60 (38.7)	71 (45.8)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	My child / children is / are badly treated in the school	5 (3.2)	18 (11.6)	14 (9.0)	118 (76.1)
	My children criticize my job/profession	4 (2.6)	2 (1.3)	19 (12.2)	130 (83.8)
	My children avoid interacting with me	4 (2.6)	20 (12.8)	21 (13.5)	110 (71.0)
4 <sup>th</sup>	My children dislike me	1 (0.6)	8 (5.2)	20 (12.8)	126 (81.3)
	Frequently I get complaints from the school/college about poor academic performance of my child/children	1 (0.6)	18 (11.6)	38(24.5)	98(63.2)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

*Status of the primary school teachers on stressors related to spouse :*

Spousal stressors indicate the stress that occurred due to either of the spouse's behaviour, feelings, habits, spouse's job dissatisfaction, temperament etc. There were 10 stressors indicating spousal stressors which are enlisted in Table 3. The more number of primary school teachers were always stressed because their spouse had started drinking alcohol. Hence, it was the first-order stressor and accounted for up to 18.7 per cent of the primary school teachers. The second-order stressors included short-temper of the spouse and criticism by the spouse. It contributed for stress always around 4.5 per cent and 7.7 per cent, respectively of the primary school teachers.

The third-order stressors which caused stress always among 3.2 per cent to 3.8 per cent of the primary school teachers included temperamental mismatch of the spouse, comparison with the high status of the neighbours by the spouse and difference in the values of self and that of the spouse and spousal belief in corporal punishment to children. Spousal avoidance to interact, spouse is dissatisfied with the job; formed the fourth-order stressor and contributed to stress always around 1.9- 2.6 per cent of the primary school teachers.

*Status of the primary school teachers on financial stressors :*

Statements concerning financial matters such as amassed wealth through corrupt practices, deficit in financial status, debts etc., were categorized under this category. There were 5 stressors which denoted the nature of financial stressor. Table

4 shows that having a considerable deficit of finance caused more number of primary school teachers to be stressed *i.e.*, around 10.0 per cent. It was the first-order stressor. In this condition, the first-order stressor was having a deficit in financial condition. The second-order stressor was amassed wealth through corrupt practices which contributed for stress always around 6-8 per cent of the primary school teachers. The stressors such as debts and lower spousal income were grouped under third-order stressor. It contributed around 5.0 per cent of the primary school teachers to be stressed always. The higher socio-economic status of the immediate neighbours caused stress always among 1.3 per cent of the primary school teachers. Hence, it was grouped as fourth-order stressor.

*Status of the primary school teachers on job stressors :*

The term 'stress' has increasingly become an integral part of everyday use. The reviews of the research on stress have identified a number of stressors in work environment. It consisted of 26 stressors which are indicated as job stressors in Table 5. The more number of primary school teachers were always stressed due to hostile work climate, colleagues laugh at the way of functioning, unhealthy promotion policies, and unhealthy competition at work, work does not suit the ability. It accounted for stress in about 6.4 to 7.1 per cent of the primary school teachers; and hence was grouped as first-order stressor; unhealthy promotion policies gave stress always among more number of females. The second-order stressors included non-co-operative sub-ordinates, rare chances of promotion, strained

**Table 3 : Status of stressors related to spouse**

Order	Stress statements	High stress	Medium stress	Low stress	No stress
1 <sup>st</sup>	My spouse has started drinking alcohol	29 (18.7)	22 (14.2)	20 (12.9)	84 (54.1)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	My spouse has short temper.	12 (7.7)	14 (9.0)	31 (20.0)	98 (63.2)
	My spouse criticizes me	7 (4.5)	10 (6.4)	48 (31.0)	90 (58.0)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	My spouse believes in corporal punishment to children which I do not like	6 (3.8)	15 (9.6)	47 (30.4)	87 (56.1)
	Temperamentally my spouse is not a match for me	6 (3.8)	4 (2.6)	26 (16.7)	119 (76.7)
	My values of spouse are radically different from mine	5 (3.2)	14 (9.0)	71 (45.8)	65 (41.9)
	My spouse always compares our status with the high status of our neighbours	5 (3.2)	6 (3.8)	31 (20.0)	113 (72.9)
4 <sup>th</sup>	My spouse avoids interacting with me	4 (2.6)	12 (7.7)	27 (17.4)	112 (72.2)
	My spouse is dissatisfied of my job / profession	3 (1.9)	10 (6.4)	23 (14.8)	119 (76.7)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

**Table 4 : Status of stressors related to finance**

Order	Stress statements	High stress	Medium stress	Low stress	No stress
1 <sup>st</sup>	There is a considerable deficit in the financial matters	15 (9.6)	9 (5.8)	59 (38.0)	72 (46.4)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	I have amassed wealth through corrupt practices	12 (7.7)	15 (9.6)	20 (12.8)	108 (69.6)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The income of spouse is less	7 (4.5)	18 (11.6)	67 (43.2)	63 (40.6)
	Presently I am in debt	7 (4.5)	12 (7.7)	35 (22.6)	101 (65.1)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Socio-economic status of my immediate neighbours is much higher than that of mine	2 (1.3)	4 (2.6)	37 (23.9)	112 (72.2)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

relations with colleagues, tiresome mode of commutation, difference in the values of self and that of the organization, feeling ashamed of the job and low social status of the organization. It contributed to stress among 5 and 6 per cent of the primary school teachers.

The third-order stressors contributed to stress in about 3.0 per cent and 4.0 per cent of the primary school teachers. They included stressors such as non-co-operative colleagues,

over-burden of the organizational responsibilities, isolation from the colleagues, working with the out-dated technologies, losing interest in the job, strained relations with the superior, poor professional achievements, relatives show no respect towards the job, and no permission to take initiative, and dissatisfaction of the boss. The fourth-order stressors included the timing of the job, too many job demands and expectations, monotonous work and finally dislike towards the job. All the

**Table 5 : Status of stressors related to job**

Order	Stress statements	High stress	Medium stress	Low stress	No stress
1 <sup>st</sup>	My colleagues laugh at my way of functioning	11 (7.1)	8 (4.8)	35 (22.5)	101 (65.1)
	The management does not have healthy promotion policies	11 (7.1)	11 (7.1)	18 (11.6)	115 (74.1)
	I have to work where the climate is hostile to me	11 (7.1)	6 (3.8)	30 (19.4)	108 (69.6)
	Management always encourages unhealthy competition at work	10 (6.4)	11 (7.1)	31 (20.0)	103 (66.4)
	My work does not suit my ability	10 (6.4)	1 (0.6)	39 (25.1)	105 (67.7)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	I have to work with non co-operative sub-ordinates	9 (5.8)	15 (9.6)	28 (18.0)	103 (66.4)
	I have to work in the organization where chances of promotion are rare	9 (5.8)	11 (7.1)	29 (18.7)	106 (68.3)
	I have to work in the organization, which has values entirely different from my own values	9 (5.8)	13 (8.3)	30 (19.3)	103 (66.4)
	My mode of commutation to work place is tiresome	9 (5.8)	8 (4.8)	44 (28.3)	94 (60.6)
	I have to work in the organization of low social status	8 (4.8)	5 (3.2)	24 (15.4)	118 (76.1)
	I am ashamed of my job.	7 (4.5)	6 (3.8)	29 (18.7)	113 (72.9)
	Relations with colleagues are strained	7 (4.5)	11 (7.1)	21 (13.5)	116 (74.8)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	I want to implement several new changes but colleagues do not co-operate with me	6 (3.8)	6 (3.8)	38 (24.5)	105 (67.7)
	My boss is generally dissatisfied with my performance	6 (3.8)	6 (3.8)	36 (23.2)	107 (69.0)
	My boss does not allow me to take initiative	5 (3.2)	12 (7.7)	44 (28.3)	94 (60.6)
	At present I have lost interest in my job	5 (3.2)	11 (7.1)	28 (18.0)	111 (71.6)
	Daily I have to work under the superior with whom my relations are strained	5 (3.2)	19 (12.2)	17 (10.9)	114 (73.5)
	I have to work in the organization where I am over-burdened with the responsibilities	4 (2.4)	6 (3.8)	28 (18.0)	117 (75.4)
	My professional achievements are poor	4 (2.4)	12 (7.7)	37 (23.9)	102 (65.8)
	Relatives have no respect towards my job	4 (2.4)	8 (4.8)	18 (11.6)	125 (80.6)
	Daily I have to work with out-dated technology	4 (2.4)	13 (8.4)	38 (24.5)	100 (64.5)
	I am generally isolated from my colleagues	4 (2.4)	6 (3.8)	23 (14.8)	122 (78.7)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Job demand and expectations from me are too many	3 (1.8)	12 (7.7)	39 (25.1)	101 (65.1)
	My work is too monotonous	2 (1.3)	11 (7.1)	31 (20.0)	111 (71.6)
	I do not like my job	2 (1.2)	8 (4.8)	15 (9.6)	130 (83.8)
	The timing of my job	1 (0.6)	7 (4.5)	35 (22.6)	112 (72.2)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

**Table 6 : Status of stressors related to health**

Order	Stress statements	High stress	Medium stress	Low stress	No stress
1 <sup>st</sup>	A family member in my house is suffering from an in curable disease (permanently ill)	11 (7.1)	22 (14.1)	23 (14.8)	99 (63.8)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	I often experience sickness	8 (5.2)	14 (9.0)	27 (17.4)	106 (68.4)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	I am suffering from a major illness	8 (5.2)	9 (5.8)	34 (21.9)	103 (66.4)
4 <sup>th</sup>	I am physically weak	3 (1.9)	11 (7.1)	31 (20.0)	110 (71.0)

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

above stressors contributed to stress always around 0.6 per cent to 2.6 per cent among the primary school teachers. Among 26 stressors related to job, 3 stressors viz., my work does not suit the ability, tiresome mode of commutation to job, and strained relations with the superior had contributed high stress among greater percentage of female respondents compared to male respondents.

#### *Status of the primary school teachers on health stressors :*

Health is one of the important conditions of well-being of the individuals. There were 4 stressors concerning health stressors such as physical ill health, weakness, ill person in the family etc. Table 6 shows that the first-order stressor contributed to stress always around 7.1 per cent of the primary school teachers. Family member's permanent illness was the first-order stressor among primary school teachers. Often experiencing sickness caused stress around 5.2 per cent of the primary school teachers and was categorized as second-order stressor. Suffering from a major illness formed the third-order stressor and contributed to stress among 5.2 per cent of the primary school teachers. Finally, physical weakness was the fourth-order stressor and contributed to stress always around 1.9 per cent of the primary school teachers. Among 4 stressors related to health, the stressors *i.e.* suffering from a major illness contributed high stress among female respondents compared to male respondents.

#### **Conclusion :**

- First-order stressor related to self among primary school teachers was because they were forced to live away from their family.
- The first-order stressor contributed to stress always among primary school teachers included bad habits of the children, not finding a suitable match for the daughter and student's general misbehaviour.
- The more number of primary school teachers were always stressed because their spouse had started drinking alcohol. Hence, it was the first-order stressor among the primary school teachers.
- With regard to financial stressors, the first-order

stressor was having a deficit in financial condition.

- The more number of primary school teachers were always stressed due to hostile work climate, colleagues laugh at the way of functioning, unhealthy promotion policies, and unhealthy competition at work, work does not suit the ability. Hence, these were the first-order stressors related to job among the primary school teachers.
- Family member's permanent illness was the first-order stressor among the primary school teachers.

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