International Journal of Arts & Education Research

A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Alka Rani*[1], Dr. Rita Chopra[2]

[1]Research scholar, Department of Education, Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra, India.

[2]Professor, Department of Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, India.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the difference between the occupational stress of principals belonging to different type of school, sex, and year of experience. A sample of 140 principals was randomly selected from Senior Secondary Schools of Haryana. Significant difference was found in occupational stress of male and female principals as well as principals having less than 5 years of experience and more than 5 years of experience. It was found that male principals are more stressed in comparison to their female counterpart. Further it was also found that more experienced principals have low level of stress in comparison to less experienced principals. However, no significant difference was found in the occupational stress of principals working in government and private schools. Difference was also calculated dimension wise and significant difference was found on the domains of role insufficiency, role ambiguity, responsibility, and physical environment between male and female principals but on the domains of role overload and role boundary male and female principals do not differ significantly. Significant difference was found on the domains of role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility, and physical environment between the principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience but no significant difference was found on the domain of role over load between high and less experienced principals. No significant difference was found on the domains of role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary and physical environment between government and private school principals but on the domains of role overload and responsibility government and private school principals differ significantly.

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of the role of leadership and their effectiveness has long been recognized by many researchers who propounded that leaders are dynamic, vitalizing element in every organization. Without their headship the resources which are available in any institution remain resources and never become useful. By the nature of their activities in the organization, leaders have informal authority over the department they manage. Leaders occupy special position of status in organization that is characterized by many decisive roles that are interpersonal, informational, decisional and managerial etc. They have to take decisions, make planning to get the best results and also solve the problems of the colleagues and take actions to improve the existing situation.

Schools around the world have undergone a considerable transformation, from old to new models of infrastructure of schools. Several changes are noticed in the needs of the students, parents and those of society. These days, schools face a tremendous pressure to have their

students perform well at state test. In addition schools face problems related to drugs, gang policy and personal issues. As a leader of the institution it is the responsibility of the principal to deal with all such type of problems. Sergiovanni (2001) found that principals are facing ever changing job roles and increased responsibility. These roles being integral aspect of management activities create some level of stress for the leaders who work under highly stressful circumstances in the quest for organizational excellence.

Today's life is full of challenges. These days stress is seen across all spheres of life, particularly at the work place. Stress is the sum total of all non-specific biological phenomenon elicited by adverse external influences. One feels stressed when one is confronted with the unexpected results and situations. Stress may vary, depending on how an individual perceives stressful event. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stress. These days stress emerges as a major cause of physical and mental health problems.

Stress is a common human phenomenon. It is a natural ongoing dynamic and interactive process that takes place as people adjust to their environment. Stress is a feeling of tension, which is both physical & emotional and is caused by physiological, psychological and environmental demands. Thus stress affects the individuals physiologically, emotionally and psychologically. Although some stress is a common and necessary element of life but excessive unmanaged stress has been linked to a long list of physical and mental health problems (Sapolsky, 2005; Weil, 2005; Wheeler, 2007; Colbert, 2008). As Colbert (2008) explains, not all stress is harmful and a certain amount of stress is a normal part of life. However, when an individual experience high levels of ongoing stress, the excessive release of stress hormones can cause damage to cells, organs, and tissues (Wheeler, 2007 & Colbert, 2008). The world of work differs considerably from the working environment of 30 years ago: longer hours at work are not unusual, frequent changes in culture and structure are often cited, as well as the loss of lifetime career paths which leads to greater presence and levels of stress. Occupational (job, work, or workplace) stress has become one of the most serious health issues in the modern world, as it occurs in any job and is even more present than decades ago. Occupational stress describes physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by discordant between the requirement of job and the capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands (Akinboye et al., 2002).

In education sector stress is increasing day by day because teaching today's young people is not only exhausting work, but can be dangerously stressful. Particularly, school principals come across many pressures from different directions such as: norms and standard set by NCERT, various conditions set by state level agency, expectations of NCERT from the institutions to go hand in hand with the changing times. Management's expectations for optimum utilization of minimum resources, one's own pressure to develop professionally, co-curricular activities to meet the needs of the quality school functioning required in future, all such demands increase the stress level of the leaders as they are expected to fulfill all these in stipulated time with great efficiency.

Anxiety due to school reform efforts, minimal administrative support, poor working conditions, lack of involvement in decision making, the burden of paper work, and lack of

resources have all been identified as factors that can cause stress among educators (Hammond & Onikama, 1997). The daily interaction with pupils, co-workers and the increased and fragmented demands of teaching in general, often lead to overwhelming pressures and challenges, which further lead to stress and strain. Principals stress include pupils' misbehavior, student absenteeism, poor working conditions, time pressure, lack of encouragement, feeling of failure, non cooperative staff members, job insecurity, lack of public esteem , criticism by colleagues, criticism from parents. Apart from these sources, lack of control over the job, delayed salaries, multiple duties, political interference, meeting state and federal mandates, large amounts of paperwork, funding difficulties, frustrated teachers, long working hours, growing lists of responsibilities, and rising accountability standards are responsible for the increased level of stress for school principals (Cushing et al., 2003; Queen & Queen, 2005 & combs et al. 2009). Principalship has long been described as a challenging position, many principals are reporting increasing pressure as well as serious concerns regarding time demands (Friedman, 2002; Cushing, et al., 2003 & Queen & Queen, 2005). All these factors increased the stress of the principals which affects the mental health of the leaders and in turn affects the working efficiency of the principals.

Brock and Grady (2002) found that over the past twenty years, principals have indicated higher levels of exhaustion and stress, resulting in reduced mental and physical stamina. Mitchell (2010) described the modern elementary principalship as being, "…filled with constant challenges such as meeting the needs of diverse student populations, budget cuts, and strict accountability measures." Cushing et al.(2003) stated that for principals, stress comes from high levels of responsibility, while authority and flexibility are simultaneously reduced via union contracts and fiscal and legal requirements.

Researches indicate that the demands on principals are increasing. But it is also a fact that effective leadership is crucial to the proper working and endurance of non-profit organization phenomena on earth. Principal's mental peace is an important component for any organizations. If the principals are of unsound mind, they can harm nation in terms of poor teaching and guiding to the teachers and students. Their maladjustment will not only adversely affect their personality but will also produce maladjustment tendency in teachers and in turn poor performance of the organization. When an individual faces intense job-related stress for long periods of time, even the most rewarding position can become unmanageable and undesirable which compels an individual to leave the profession rather than to cope with it. According to Tomazin & Waldon (2004) school principals are so stressed by the pressure of their jobs that nearly half have work-related medical problems and some find it hard to have intimate relationships. The dichotomy of stress as a motivator or negative force in school contributes significantly to the emergent shortage of qualified school administrators and teachers (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Childress, 2003). In order to promote the health and retention of quality individuals in this critically important leadership role further research is needed to investigate principals' current levels of job-related stress and to promote practices that can assist school leaders in coping successfully with their challenging jobs. Research on principals' stress is needed especially in Indian context so that the measures to cope with the challenges could be suggested and this study is intended to find the same.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the difference in occupational stress of male and female principals (Total and dimension wise).
- To study the difference in occupational of principals having more than five years and less than five years of professional experience (Total and dimension wise).
- To study the difference in occupational stress of the principals working in Government and Private schools (Total and dimension wise).

HYPOTHESES

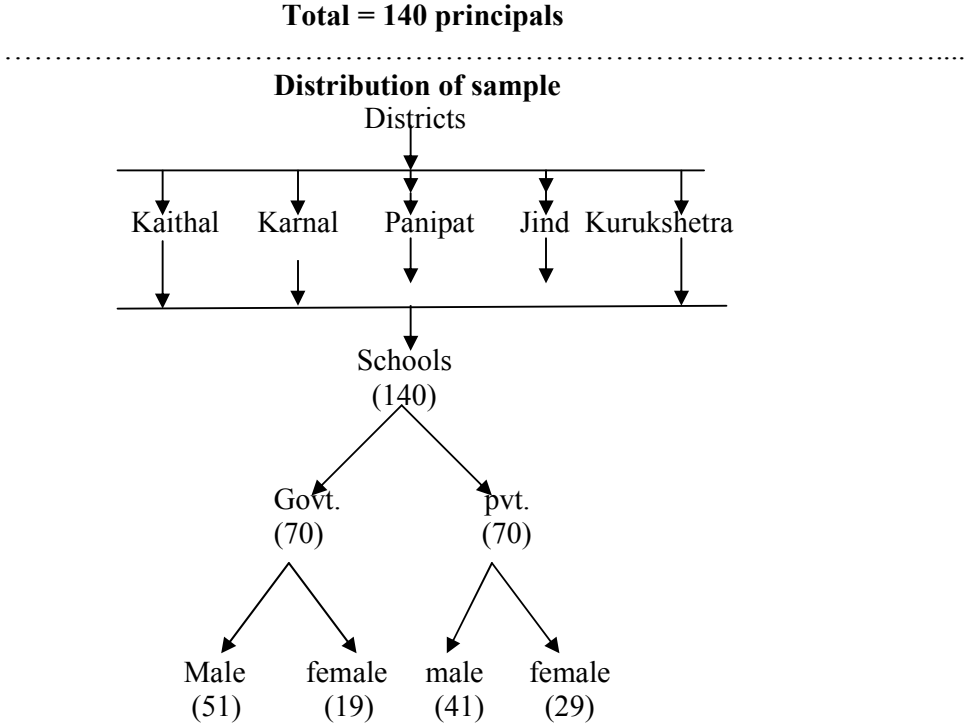
- There exists no significant difference in occupational stress of male and female principals (Total and dimension wise).
- There exists no significant difference in occupational stress of principals having more than five years and less than five years of professional experience (Total and dimension wise).
- There exists no significant difference in occupational stress of principals working in government and private schools (Total and dimension wise).

RESEARCH METHOD

Descriptive survey method was used for collection of data for the present study.

SAMPLE

Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the present study. A sample of 140 senior secondary school principals from five districts of Haryana was taken for the study. The sample comprised of 92 males and 48 female principals.



TOOLS USED

The success of research depends upon the tools. Tools are the means for collection of data. In order to collect data from the selected samples, following tools were used by the researcher:

- Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI-R) developed by Osipow (1998) and adapted by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To fulfill the objectives of the study, the obtained data was calculated and was analyzed with the help of mean, standard deviation and t-test. The results of different groups have been discussed below:

Dimension wise difference in Occupational Stress (O.S) of male and female principals

To find out whether any difference (dimension wise) exists in the occupational of male and female principals, t-ratio was calculated which is presented in Table-1**.**

Table 1: Significance of difference (Dimension wise) in Occupational Stress (O.S.) of male and female principals

S. No.	Dimensions of O.S.	Male		Female		t	significant
		mean	S.D.	mean	S.D		
1	Role overload	17.46	4.82	17.02	4.00	0.579	Not significant
2	Role Insufficiency	17.02	6.02	14.19	4.12	3.29	Significant**
3	Role Ambiguity	18.58	6.61	16.04	4.55	2.82	Significant**
4	Role Boundary	19.27	5.22	18.13	5.08	1.25	Not significant
5	Responsibility	11.17	3.32	12.54	2.83	2.58	Significant*
6	Physical environment	13.42	4.46	11.58	3.84	2.52	Significant*

**significant at .01 level; *significant at .05 level

A close examination of Table-1 has made it clear that the computed t-value for comparing male and female principals in the domains of role insufficiency, role ambiguity, responsibility, and physical environment is greater than the critical values. Thus in these areas the mean difference between male and female principals is significant. Male principals showed higher level of stress in the above said areas in comparison to their female counterparts. But in the domains of role overload and role boundary the calculated value of t-ratio is less than the critical value. So, mean difference in male and female principals is not significant in case of the above said dimensions. It means that male and female principals do not differ significantly in these areas. The probable reason could be that in changing scenario women made themselves so capable that now they could compete with the males in a better way.

Difference in Occupational Stress (O.S.) of male and female principals

To find out whether any difference exists in the occupational of male and female principals, t-ratio was calculated which is presented in Table-2.

Table 2: Significance of difference in Occupational Stress (O.S.) of male and female principals

S. No.	Groups	N	mean	Standard deviation	t	significant
1	Male	92	96.93	23.46	2.17	Significant*
2	Female	48	89.5	16.66		

* Significant at .05 level

From Table-2, t-ratio (2.17) for the difference between occupational stress of male and female principals is significant. It implies that gender affect the level of occupational stress of principals. Mean scores of male principals are (96.93) which is higher than the mean scores of female principals (89.5) which indicate that male principals are more stressed than their female counterparts. These findings may be supported through the findings of Brember et al. (2002); Gursel et al. (2002); Mondel et al. (2011) and Aftaab & khatoon (2013). They also came out with the conclusion that significance difference is existed between male and female. The results also showed that males are more stressed in comparison to their female counterparts.

It could be because these days females are coming ahead in every field, working more efficiently in this competitive age and also could have higher motivation level which helps them in reducing their level of stress. Furthermore, it is said that females have higher emotional intelligence (curtbirth, 2010; Mondell & Pherwani, 2003). It is a world known fact that emotional intelligence is a factor helps in adapting according to the situation which ultimately reduces stress.

Dimension wise difference in occupational stress (O.S) of principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience.

To find out whether any difference (Dimension wise) exists in the occupational of principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience, t-ratio was calculated which is presented in Table-3.

Table 3: Significance of difference (dimension wise) in occupational stress (O.S.) of principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience

S. No.	Dimensions of O.S.	Experience less than 5 years		Experience more than 5 years		t	significant
		mean	S.D.	mean	S.D		
1	Role overload	17.92	4.66	16.66	4.36	1.66	Not significant
2	Role Insufficiency	17.55	6.76	14.46	3.36	3.47	Significant**
3	Role Ambiguity	19.49	7.22	15.84	3.83	3.76	Significant **
4	Role Boundary	20.25	6.13	17.43	3.45	3.39	Significant **
5	Responsibility	12.22	3.41	10.03	2.89	4.13	Significant **
6	Physical environment	13.75	4.55	11.78	3.86	2.78	Significant**

**significant at .01 level

From Table-3 it is clear that the computed t-value for comparing principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience in the domains of role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility, and physical environment is greater than the critical values. Thus in these areas the mean difference between the principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience is significant. Less experienced principals showed

higher level of stress in the above said areas in comparison to the more experienced principals. But in the domain of role overload the calculated value of t-ratio is less than the critical value. So, mean difference in principals having less than 5 years of experience and more than 5 years of experience is not significant in case of the above said dimension. It means that experience wise, principals do not differ significantly in these areas. The probable reason could be that less experienced principals feel difficulty in developing rapport with their subordinates and fails in seeking their cooperation that leads them to experience higher level of stress.

Difference in occupational stress (O.S) of principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience.

To find out whether any difference exists in the occupational of principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience, t-ratio was calculated which is presented in Table-4.

Table 4: Significance of difference in occupational stress (O.S) of principals having less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience

S. No.	Groups	N	mean	Std. Dev.	t	significant
1	Experience less than 5 years	72	100.13	27.48	3.69	Significant**
2	Experience more than 5 years	68	85.78	17.74		

** Significant at .01 Level

From table-4, t-ratio for the difference in occupational stress of the principals having less than 5years and more than 5 years of experience is significant at .01 level of significance which indicate that years of professional experience affect the level of occupational stress of the principals. Mean scores of principals having less than 5 years of experience are (100.13) which are higher than mean scores of principals having more than 5 years (85.78) which indicate that less experienced suffered from higher level of occupational stress than their more experienced counterparts. Support to the findings may be sought from that of Lau et al. (2005) & Bhadoria Singh (2010). They reported that younger and less experienced teachers were observed to be more burned out than older or more experienced teachers. Tyagi & Kirmaani (2012) also revealed that there is significant difference in the occupational stress level as the year of experience of principals varies. They concluded that more experienced principals had less job stress than their less experienced counterpart. It could be because less experienced principals do not acquire relatively much practical knowledge that can help them to control and adjust their work demands. As a result they can feel that they are less skillful in performing their duties.

Dimension wise difference in Occupational Stress (O.S.) of government and private school principals

To find out whether any difference (dimension wise) exists in the occupational of government and private school principals, t-ratio was calculated which is presented in Table-5.

Table 5: Significance of difference in Occupational Stress of government and private school

S. No.	Dimensions of O.S.	Government		Private		t	significant
		mean	S.D.	mean	S.D		
1	Role overload	16.38	4.24	18.22	4.68	2.45	Significant*
2	Role Insuffiency	16.57	5.61	15.53	5.55	1.11	Not significant
3	Role Ambiguity	17.84	5.99	17.58	6.21	0.252	Not significant
4	Role Boundary	18.76	4.96	19	5.43	0.272	Not significant
5	Responsibility	10.67	3.09	12.61	3.05	3.73	Significant**
6	Physical environment	13.37	4.03	12.21	4.56	1.59	Not significant

** Significant at .01 level; *significant at .05 level

From Table-5 it is clear that the calculated t- value for comparing government and private schools principals in the domains of role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary and physical environment is less than the critical value. Thus there is no significant difference between government and private school principals in the above said dimensions. But in the domains of role overload and responsibility the computed value of t-ratio is greater then the critical value. So, government and private school principals differ significantly in these areas. The probable reason could be that these days government school principals also have to do lots of work in limited time and also it is their responsibility to implement the policies which the government made time to time in a better way so that the desired results could be get.

Difference in Occupational Stress (O.S.) of government and private school principals

To find out whether any difference exists in the occupational of government and private school principals, t-ratio was calculated which is presented in Table-6.

Table 6: Significance of difference in Occupational Stress of government and private school principals

S. No.	Group	N	mean	Std. Dev.	t	significant
1	Govt. school principals	70	93.6	21.75	0.428	Not significant
2	Private school principals	70	95.17	21.55		

It may be inferred from Table-6 that there is no significant difference in occupational stress of govt. and private school principals. Value of t is .428 which is not significant at any level of significance. It can be concluded that type of school does not affect the level of occupational stress of the principals. The finding of the study is consistent with the one reported by Rani & Singh (2012) who also reported no significant difference between govt. and private school teachers. But while giving a close look at the mean scores, it was found that private school principals have higher level of occupational stress than the government school principals. These findings are in line with those of Dick & Wagner (2001) and Tyagi & Kirmani (2012) who found that private school administrators are highly stressed in compression to government school administrators. The probable reason could be that in changing scenario responsibilities of the principals working in govt. schools has been increased because of the SSA, RTE etc. and also now they are more accountable for the upliftment of the institution.

On the basis of the findings of the study it can be concluded that increased level of occupational stress may hinder the ability of the principals and also distract the new entrants towards this profession. This research suggests that supportive techniques for reducing the stress of principals should be implemented. There are several ideas found in the literature that might be of help to principals. Some of these include increased professional development regarding particular aspects of the job, training in problem-solving skills, communication workshops, time-management classes, improved principal evaluation procedures, and opportunities for principals to observe one another (Cushing et al., 2003). Principals must be educated about stress management. They should gain a basic knowledge of the negative impacts that persistent stress can adversely affect their health. They should also learn strategies to combat negative effects of stress. They need to develop and follow personal stress-management plans and for this specific training for stress management should be provided to them and they should continuously be in contact with those principals who have low level of occupational and for this meetings should be held frequently at district or state level.

REFERENCES

Akinboye JO, Akinboye DO, Adeyemo DA. Coping with Stress in Life and Workplace. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers, 2002.

Aftaab M, Khatoon T. Demographic differences and occupational stress of secondary school teachers. European Scientific Journal 2013; 8(5): 159-175.

Bhadoria D, Singh T. Relationships of age and gender with burnout among primary school teachers. Indian Journal of Social Science Researches 2010; 7(2): 10-17.

Brember I, Brown M, Ralph S. Gender-related causes of stress in Trainee Teachers on teaching practice in the School of Education, University of Manchester, UK. Westminster Studies in Education 2002; 25(2): 175-186.

Brock BL, Grady ML. Avoiding burnout: A principal's guide to keeping the fire alive. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2002.

Bottoms G, O'Neill K. Preparing a new breed of school principals: It's time for action. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board, 2001.

Colbert D. Stress Less. Lake Mary, Florida: Siloam Publishers, 2008.

Combs J, Edmonson SL, Jackson SH. Burnout among elementary school principals. Journal of Scholarship and Practice 2009; 5(4): 10-15.

Cushing KS, Kerrins JA, Johnstone T. Disappearing principals. Leadership 2003; 32(5): 28-37.

Cutbirth S. An examination of the relationship of emotional intelligence levels to balanced leadership responsibilities and leadership effectiveness in high school principals, 2010. Retrieved September 9, 2013 from https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/.../research.pdf?...

Dick R, Wagner U. Stress and strain in teaching: a structural equation approach. Br. J. Educ. Psych 2001; 71(2): 243-259.

Friedman IA. Burnout in school principals: Role related antecedents. School Psychology of Education 2002; 5(3): 229-251.

Goodwin RH, Cunningham ML, Childress RB. The changing role of the secondary school principal. NASSP Bulletin 2003; 87(634): 26.

Gursel M, Sunbul AM, Sari H. An analysis of burnout and job satisfaction between Turkish headteachers and teachers. European Journal of Psychology of Education 2002; 17(1): 35-45.

Hammond OW, Onikama DL. At risk teachers. Honolulu, HI: pacific resources for education and learning, 1997.

Lau P, Yuen M, Chan R. Do demographic characteristics make a difference to burnout among Hong Kong secondary school teachers? Social Indicators Research Series 2005; 25: 491–516.

Mondel J, Shrestha S, Bhaila A. School teachers: Job stress and job satisfaction, Kaski, Nepal. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Health 2011; 1: 27–33.

Mitchell CM. Job satisfaction of elementary principals in large urban communities, 2010. Retrieved August 16, 2013 from http://ecommons.txstate.edu/eapstad/12.

Mandell B, Pherwani S. Relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style: A gender comparison. Journal of Business and Psychology 2003; 17(3): 387-404.

Queen JA, Queen PS. The frazzled principal's wellness plan. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005.

Rani R, Singh A. A study of occupational stress in relation to demographic. International Journal of Innovative Research and Development 2012; 1(9): 253-270.

Sergiovanni T. The principalship: A reflective practice perspective. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

Tyagil H, Kirmaani M. Effect of type of school, gender, age, qualification and experience on role stress: An empirical study on educational administrators of eritrea. International Journal of Modern Management Sciences 2012; 1(1): 19-29.

Tomazin F, Waldon S. Stress making principals ill: A study on Stress. The Age Company Ltd, 2004.

