

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effective Stress Management Strategies for Teaching Staff: An Educational Management Perspective

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Abstract

Workplace stress is common situation in educational institutions. There are a number of reasons of teachers' stress. Difficult workloads, poor educational environment, pressure of high organizations, poor work-life balance and low income casuse stress for teachers. The above-mentioned reasons effect teacher's overall well-being, productivity and the quality of education. This study explores effective stress management strategies for educators. This work consists of introduction, literature review, materials and methods, results, discussion, conclusion and references' list. This work was done by educational management perspective. The study explored academic articles about teachers' stress, reasons of stress and conflict, organizational support, leadership and motivation. According to results, stress is not only personal problem of teachers, it might be caused by leadership styles, poor communication between employees and employer, workpalce culture and management decisions by directors and leaders. Supportive leadership styles, open communication, healthy work-life balance and teachers' involvement in decision-making of organization can reduce stress at work. The study also analyses the structural issue of education system of Uzbekistan which can cause stress among teachers in educational institutions. This work examines five main area of managing stress: early identification of stress, workload management, supportive leadership, haelthy work-life balance, supportive environment for teachers and good communication.

KEY WORDS

Organizational support, organizational culture, work-life balance, stress management, management of conflict, supportive leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Stress occurs when our mind or emotions are under a lot of pressure because of bad or difficult circumstances (Kyriacou,1987). Workplace stress is common all over the world. Among workplace stresses, teaching is the one of the highest stressful profession in the world. The term "teacher stress" was first defined by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978).

When we talk about managing stress, each culture or nations have different approaches. If it comes about educational

institutions, educators face various challenges regarding work stress. Because teachers need to plan lessons, teach students, do adminstrative tasks, communicate parents, attend meetings and assess students. Especially, adminstrative duties are more stressful than other responsibilities. It may include doing public work or attending useless meetings of high organizations. Moreover, all responsibilities should be done in limited time. If workload is difficult, educators will experience

burnout, tiredness and emotional pressure. In some educational organizations, employers or hr managers do not support teaching staff, even they face emotional pressure and heavy workloads. Managing stress is more complex and important aspects of modern management. If teaching staff feel stress and emotional discomfort, it will be difficult for educators to concentrate and communicate in the classroom. As the time passes, educators' productivity and overall well-being decrease, and they try to find reasons for absence from work. Additionally, the intention of leaving job increases, and at the end they quit the job. If teacher's financial situation is not good enough there is no other way, they will just go to work but not showing productivity, they just spend time at work. Therefore, stress management in educational organizations might be too important in order to mitigate this type of unpleasant situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher's stress was the main idea of many research topics. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) examined firstly stress of teachers. They highlighted that stress occurs when teachers expect work demands. According to them, stress occurs when they feel harm about their confidence or well-being. They also studied that teachers' reaction to stressful situation. They explored how stress was perceived and understood.

Bradshaw (1991) introduced practical stress management program for educators. According to him classroom interruptions, many responsibilities, poor work-life balance are early sign of stress. He recommended relaxation techniques when educators notice stress signs about themselves.

Hartney (2008) likely examined teachers' stress and explained practical ways of managing stress. This book discusses main sources of stress such as administrative tasks, poor work-life balance, difficult colleagues and classroom demands. The author reviewed previous studies about effective stress-management methods and educational changes. She recommended managing strategies for teachers.

Stoica and Buicu (2010) likely examined how to avoid stress at personal and organizational level. They highlighted the prevention of any level of stress rather than coping with it. To be precisely, most of companies try to cope with stress when it happens. Their work highlighted open communication, fair responsibilities, healthy work-life balance, worker's involvement in decision making and flexible management

styles.

Von der Embse et al. (2019) conducted review of 24 articles regarding teachers' stress which are published between 1998-2017. They compared several stress management methods. The study result was different than expected. The study found that behavioural and cognitive-behavioural methods worked better than only information giving programmes.

Hagermoser Sanetti et al. (2021) reviewed 18 studies which were published from 1987 to 2016. They found that meditation and mindfulness were the most common methods for reducing teachers' stress. They highlighted the importance of these methods, and recommended to use these methods to reduce teachers' stress.

Agyapong et al. (2023) conducted review of 40 articles which were published between 2018 and 2022. They found 16 types of stress-management programmes. They are mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural methods, resilience training, physical exercise, relaxation, emotional-intelligence training, and group support. Mindfulness was more effective method for reducing stress among other methods. They recommended to schools more organised methods in order to improve teachers' overall well-being, and to reduce their stress.

METHODS

This study reviewed several articles in order to find effective stress management strategies for educational staff. A literature review method was used, because the study did not collect new data by interview or surveys. It compared existing research materials by adding authors own recommendations and conclusions about teachers' stress, its coping strategies and proper organizational support for teachers' happiness. Materials included articles and review studies published between 1978 and 2023.

RESULTS

Analysis showed five areas of effective stress management for educators. It included early identification stress and personal coping with it, workload management, supportive leadership, effective communication and supportive work-life balance. Findings identified that personal coping with stress may not solve the problem if workplace stress continues. Therefore, both teachers and employers should act together in order to cope with stress.

According to first finding, stress should be recognised before

it happens. Teacher's duties are not easy as we know, their duties are usually done at the same time. Classroom problems, lesson interruptions and administrative tasks happen at once. This makes it difficult for them to notice stress before it happens (Bradshaw, 1991). The analyzed findings show that stress appear as physical, mental and behavioural signs. Physical signs include headache, bad sleep, fast breathing and tiredness. Mental signs consist of anxiety, negative thinking and problems with decision making. Behavioural changes include low work efficiency, being late to work and lower social interactions (Bradshaw, 1991).

Stress-awareness training need to implement in educational institutions, and this training should be part of staff development program. On the one hand, educators should know changes their mood, concentration and motivation. On another hand, managers need to recognise possible stress signs of teachers instead of punishing them for their poor performance at work. Personal stress coping strategies are useful and productive, teachers use them during working hours as well. Bradshaw recommended this type of techniques such as slow breathing, short pauses in difficult situations, muscle relaxation, positive dialogue, humour with colleague, and good communication (Bradshaw, 1991).

Agyapong et al. (2023) analyzed 40 studies, and found 16 types of coping methods of stress. Among these mindfulness related methods were 18, cognitive behavioural strategy and rational emotive behaviour studies both were seven (Agyapong et al., 2023). Mindfulness related strategies include breathing exercises, meditation, body awareness, and simple physical activities. Cognitive behavioural strategy help teachers identify negative thoughts and replace it with realistic and positive thoughts. Rational emotive behaviour has similarities with cognitive behavioural strategy (Agyapong et al., 2023). The above-mentioned methods do not provide identical effective strategy for each educational institution. Therefore, each educational organization should identify own strategy which suit their employees and their working conditions.

The second finding is that teachers' stress is also connected to their workload management. Relaxation and mindfulness techniques can make teachers calmer in working environment, but they cannot solve too much work, unrealistic administrative tasks, unclear classroom duties and impossible deadlines by educational managers. We can reduce stress when

responsibilities are clear, deadlines are realistic. Teachers need to have some freedom in their work, and their duties should match their skills and abilities (Stoica and Buicu, 2010).

Workload management should be reviewed in accordance with ethical principles of humanity. Especially, it should be done in developing countries, such as Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Tadjikistan, Bangladesh and other countries. In these countries, higher organizations should remove unnecessary tasks from teacher's duties. Workload management need to include lesson preparation, student support, assessment duties, teaching lesson and reporting requirements. In practice, educational managers can reduce stress by removing unnecessary meetings and documentation. It will help them provide sufficient time for lesson preparation and assessment. In Uzbekistan, teachers have to do some unnecessary tasks during working hours. They spend most of their valuable time for documentation, meetings and administrative tasks (World Bank, 2018). Another important problem is that higher educational organizations monitor teachers' work too much. It makes them pressure during work hours, even after coming back home. A teacher is able to manage heavy workload only short time. If it continues for a long time without organizational support, as a result educator will face a number of health-related and emotional problems.

Third finding was supportive leadership. In practical way, good organizational culture plays a big role. Organizational support and fair management style can help teachers balance personal needs and organizational goals. If organizational atmosphere is warm, the feedback will be accepted positively by educators. This positive organizational atmosphere gives employees motivation in completing educational tasks. Supportive leadership is not just communication, it is more than just friendly communication. Managers always listen to concerns of teachers, provide simple instructions, and offer necessary assistance to teaching staff. Additionally, financial assistance might be useful for educational staff, because financial support also helps educators maintain discipline at work.

The fourth finding was communication. Poor communication leads uncertainty, lower productivity, misunderstanding and conflict at work (Stoica and Buicu, 2010). While clear and respectful communication help teachers understand problems, and improve productivity in staff. In practice, teachers should receive important information in simple form, and it avoids uncertainty at work. Big changes about schedules, teaching

procedures and school curriculum should be explained before implementation.

From Uzbekistan point of view, teacher's problems are also connected with communication problems. Because teachers do not communicate with students and each other, they also communicate with parents of children. Additionally, teachers need to communicate with administrators and different organizations which can influence teachers' job. When communication is poor between these groups' teachers feel additional pressure. Another problem is too much interference from parents in teachers' job. Good communication is necessary between parents and teachers, because both sides need student's future. However, problems appear when parents try to control lesson methods which were made by educator. In some cases, parents disagree with grades and disciplinary decisions of teachers, this is extra pressure to teachers (Lasater, 2016). In this type of cases, managers and educational institution do not support educators. Such situations can create emotional pressure to teachers, they experience the feeling of leaving job. Teachers should listen to concerns of parents, but communication have to remain respectful. Managers should not blame teachers as soon as hear parents' complaint. They need to listen to both sides, and firstly examine situation then accept fair decision. Teachers feel secure when they know managers support them.

The fifth finding was work-life balance and psychological support. Teachers need to have enough time to have a rest with their families in order to recover work related problems. However, educators do not have proper work-life balance. To be more precise, working duties continues after working hours by responding calls, doing administrative tasks and doing different reports. Therefore, they cannot spend time with families, and it creates an additional emotional pressure to teachers (De Carlo et al, 2019). So that educational institutions should create appropriate working conditions for educators. Work-life balance is important because teachers have responsibilities such as as parent or partner. Psychological support helps educators provide a healthy work-life balance. Therefore, teachers should have opportunities of receiving emotional support in difficult situations. This might be mentoring, support groups, stress-management sessions and patience trainings. The open communication is also important. Aggressive criticism, public embarrassment, threats or continues pressure increase stress instead of solving

the problem. Therefore, managers should provide useful feedback, listen to teachers' problems, and create friendly atmosphere for all staff. Overall, findings show that effective stress management requires both personal coping methods and organizational support. Therefore, educational institutions and teaching staff should work together in order to create supportive and healthy working conditions.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify effective stress management strategies for educational staff by reviewing existing literature. Findings show that stress is not only personal issue, it is combination of personal, organizational and systematic factors. It supports argument of Stoica and Buicu (2010) which is the presentation of stress is significant before it has happened. The first finding which is recognizing stress and using personal coping strategies, is similar to Bradshaw's (1991) work.

The second finding was workload management. Many studies show that heavy workloads can cause stress in educational institutions. In Uzbekistan and other developing countries, Teachers face extra stress due to administrative work and too much monitoring from higher educational organizations. This means that western countries should change their stress management methods in order to fit different education systems.

The third and fourth findings were supportive leadership and good communication. These two findings support Stoica and Buicu (2010), who highlighted the importance of open communication and involvement in decision making.

The fifth finding was about work-life balance and psychological support. This finding support studies which were written by Agyapong et al. (2023) and Hagermoser Sanetti et al. (2021). They highlight mindfulness and emotional skills as well.

CONCLUSION

This study examined effective stress management strategies for teaching staff from an educational management perspective. Analysis showed that stress is not only personal problem of teachers, it is combination of personal, organizational and systematic problems. Effective management strategies of stress include early recognition of stress and coping with it, fair workload management,

supportive leadership, open and respectful communication, healthy work-life balance and psychological support. Personal coping strategies such as relaxation techniques and mindfulness make calmer teacher in short term. However, if stress occurs due to organizational culture or poor communication among teachers, managers and parents, it will be solved by working together for making better working conditions. In Uzbekistan context, it is essential to reduce unnecessary administrative tasks by higher organizations, to teach leaders for supporting teachers, and to build healthy communication among educator, managers, parents in order to decrease teachers' stress.

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