

Teachers' Stress, Performance & Resources The Moderating Effects of Resources on Stress & Performance

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Abstract

In today's knowledge economy the importance of education has been worldwide recognized. All developed countries are spending a major part of their budget on education. Within education system of any country, teachers have vital position, as the success of educational institutions is mostly dependent on teachers, who educate the most valued assets of country, i.e. students; therefore the teachers' performance is fundamental concern of all educational institutions. The teachers' performance is negatively influenced by different stress contributing factors which either exists within or outside the educational institution, that impede the performance of teachers, resulting in lower individual as well as institutional productivity. The present study has carried out a non-systematic narrative overview of the teachers' stress, performance and resources by conceptualizing them for understating the phenomenon of "moderating effect of teachers' resources on the teachers' stress and performance". It has been found that the teachers' stress is a reaction of teachers to the unwanted environment factors furthermore the performance of teachers is both tasks and non task related. The teachers' stress negatively affects the performance of teacher by lowering the productivity of

individual teacher and of educational institution. The teachers' resources act as moderator by minimizing negative effects of stress. The educational institutions should focus on teachers' problems through understanding teachers' problems and also providing proper support to the teachers for dealing problems. On other side the teachers by themselves should learn to adjust to the demands of teaching profession. Together teachers, educational institutions and society as whole can ensure the success and growth of educational institutions for the socio-economic development of a country.

Keywords: job stress, teaching profession, educational institutions, teachers' performance, teachers' resources

Introduction

Teachers are the most valued assets of any country. They impart knowledge and skills to the students, who after completion of their studies, join the different sectors of country and start contributing towards the development of country's economy. Recent global changes have resulted in creation of new challenges in shape of global competition, technological advancements, quality assurance, standardization and cost minimization, which have hardly hit the each and every sector throughout world; the educational sector has no exemption. The academician working in different educational institutions are under immense pressure to meet the expectations of their customers, no matter either these customers are students, parents, or employers. In this process of meeting the expectations of customers, the teachers are exposed to certain unwanted internal or external environmental factors, which hamper their routine abilities and results in development of feeling of exhaustion and strain. Once teachers develop such like symptoms then their performance and satisfaction level is decreased and thus the overall productivity of educational institution is suffered.

The effects of teachers 'stress on the performance have widely been recognized. Research studies like (Akhlq, Amjad, Mehmood, Seed-ul-Hassan, & Malik, 2010; Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Tahir, 2011) shows that the stress has very negative effects in shape of low morale, absenteeism, poor teaching quality, less students satisfaction, and turn over on the overall performance of teachers. Under this process certain factors like resources, both personal as well as job resources buffer the negative effects of stress on the performance. These factors can be termed as moderators. In same way certain other factors like individual personality traits also intervene, which also slow the effect of stress on performance. The effects of resources and personality traits have been studied by researchers in past for example (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010; Salanova, Schaufeli, Martínez, & Bresó, 2009; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008) which shows that these factors act as moderators in the process of the effects of job stress on the performance.

The present study is about knowing the moderating effects of resources, and personality factors on the job stress and teachers' performance. For this purpose a non-systematic narrative review of related literature has been carried out. A non-systematic narrative review methodology was adopted as it is less structured and give more freedom in gathering information on any topic of discussion (Kumar, 2005). Moreover, it is one of the basic qualitative techniques used for reviewing related literature (Ridenour, Benz, & Newman, 2008). In the first part, the terms like teachers' stress, teachers' performance, teachers' resources and teachers' personality traits have been conceptualized, and in later part a discussion has been made for understanding the moderating effects of the teachers' resources and personality traits on the job stress and performance. The knowledge of the moderating effect analysis will help to know how to manage teachers' stress and performance. In this way not only the teachers will be save from the devastating effects of stress but also their performance will be managed in such direction that would lead towards more individual as well as institutional productivity and growth.

Conceptualizing Teachers' Stress

Stress in general and teachers' stress in particular is a complex and multifold phenomenon, which has diverse meaning. Generally, stress is an inability of a human being to cope with its surrounding environment (Dobson & Smith, 2000). In fact stress is the human's body response to the negative demands of environment. Whenever human beings encounter any environmental factor (stressor)

which is a threat to his/her survival then it experiences a feeling which is considered as stress (Selye, 1984).

Teachers' stress in particular means a situation where the teachers are exposed to certain unwanted environmental factors, which either exist within the educational institution (internal factors) or exist outside the educational institution (external factors), these factors hamper the normal routine life of teachers by negatively affecting their performance at work. A routine stress is all right, and has no negative effects on teachers, but if the stress continuously hits the teachers' working lives then they react in different ways like showing job dissatisfaction, less morale, weak performance, and general exhaustion (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001; Thorsen, 1996). The stress contributing factors among the teachers vary from situation to situation, but there is a general agreement on certain factors which exist either within the institution or outside the institution, which as a whole contribute to stress among the teachers.

Internally within the institution, the factors like fewer rewards, work overload, existence of too many students, tight institutional policies, poor relationship with boss and colleagues and less career progression, etc., these factors put pressure on teachers and ultimately cause stress (Boyd, Lewin, & Sager, 2009; Forlin, 2001; Sharpley, Reynolds, & Acosta, 1996). On the other side, the factors which are outside the institution include demanding parents, tight governmental rules regarding the education sector, ever-changing educational policies and reforms, downsizing, etc., these factors put pressure on the teachers by causing stress among them (Kyriacou, 2001; Winefield, Boyd, Saebel, & Pignata, 2008). The typical consequences of teacher stress include, less morale, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, negative health effects, lower productivity and job turnover, etc. (McCormick, 1997; Winefield, et al., 2003).

Teachers' Performance

Commonly job performance refers to the degree to which an individual employee executes a particular role or responsibility, in accordance with certain specified standards (Nayyar, 1994). Whereas a teacher's performance means the behavior of a teacher which changes differently with the change in the surrounding environment, in such a way that when a particular task is assigned to a teacher, he/she successfully takes action to carry out that task (Cheng & Tsui, 1998; Marsh, 1987; Medley, 1982).

In fact, the process of imparting education to the students is dependent on the good performance of the teacher. Therefore, many factors contribute to it. A good teacher has not only to teach in a way that he/she can satisfy the class with his prominent teaching style, moreover he/she has to manage time and other duties assigned to him/her apart from teaching, like managing ethics and discipline in class, motivating students, ensuring students' interaction, and maintaining a proper link with the parents of students and administration of the educational institution (Hanif, 2010).

The teachers' performance can be broadly divided into three major categories, i.e. task performance, contextual performance and adaptive performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Cai & Lin, 2006; Carson, 2006; Min, 2007). The task performance means a set of behaviors by which an employee recognizes and comprehends that the organizational goals have been highlighted and explored (Cai & Lin, 2006). Task performance is actually the technical behavior and activities involved in the employee's job (Griffin, Neal, & Neale, 2000). Here the employee's proficiency with which he/she can perform technical activities is actually tested (Borman & Brush, 1993). From a teaching perspective, the task performance means a set of regulated job behaviors, which a teacher can do. The teachers' task performance consists of teaching effectiveness, teacher-student interaction, and teaching value (Cai & Lin, 2006).

Apart from task performance, the contextual performance refers to the employees' activities, which do not contribute to the technical core but support the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the organizational goals are followed (Borman & Brush, 1993). It consists of occupational morality, job dedication, and assistance and cooperation among the teachers (Cai & Lin, 2006). In the last, the adaptive performance is a new performance concept in which learning comprises a major performance dimension (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). Under this new concept of performance, there is a departure from the past conceptualization of performance in which learning was viewed as a prerequisite for performance. Now, under the adaptive performance, the

learning itself is seen as part of performance, which should be considered as performance element (London & Smither, 1999). According to Pulakos the adaptive performance consist of dimensions like handling emergencies, handling stress at work, solving problems creatively, demonstration of interpersonal adaptability, and showing physically oriented adaptability (Pulakos, et al., 2000).

These three types of teachers' performances are not only connected with each other but also they influence each other, however these types can be distinguished and studied separated (Cai & Lin, 2006; Griffin, et al., 2000; Stephan & James, 1994). Furthermore, they are equally important in contributing towards the overall performance of an employee (Conway, 1999) in such way that they present the three prerequisite of employees' effective performance i.e. proficiency, adaptability and pro-activity (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007).

Teachers' Resources

The resources broadly mean the entities that have either value in their own rights e.g. close attachment, health and self esteem or act as a mean to achieve desire targets e.g. money, status, support (Stevan E. Hobfoll, 2002). The resources are mainly divided into job resources and personal resources. The job resources mean those physical, psychological, social, or organizational facets of the job which are functional in achieving work related goals, which reduces job demands and the associated costs and which stimulate growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). On other side the personal resources refer to those resources, which are commonly associated with the people's self evaluation that enable them to control and influence their environment (Stevan E Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003). The job resources include elements like autonomy, support, feedback, opportunities for professional development and subjective occupational success (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Grebner, AchimElferingand, & K.Semmer, 2010). Whereas the personal resources comprised of elements like self efficacy, self esteem, optimism, hope, hardy personality and religiosity (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, & Masco, 2010; Luria & Torjman, 2009; Tremblay & Messervey, 2011). The resources, no matter job related of personal recourses have a significant role in buffering the effects of job stress on the performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Teachers' Personality

Normally personality is a combination of traits and a pattern of behavior which are unique to an individual for playing different roles and functions in life (Callahan, 1966). Specifically, teacher's personality means the specific set of teachers' characteristics that make the behavior of teacher while doing his/her job of teaching. These are organized set of characteristics possessed by teachers, which uniquely influences the cognition, motivation and behavior of teachers in various situations (McKenny, 2008). In fact teacher as a person is a significant variable in the process of imparting knowledge to students and enhancing their learning level. The personality of teacher influences the behavior of teacher in different ways, such as interaction with students, teaching methods selection, and learning experiences chosen and ensure that teacher successfully complete the task of educating his/her students (Murray, 1972).

The personality has been divided into different types. In this regard the most famous personality classification is five big personality, which includes Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrea, 1992). From teaching point of view a number of characteristics and traits have been related to the personality of a teachers, which are believed to be contributing towards the effective teaching, these characteristics includes clarity of knowledge being organized, interpreted and explained by teacher, Encouragement of class discussion and the presentation of diverse points of view , Stimulation of students' interests, motivation and thinking, Manifestation of attentiveness towards students and Manifestation of enthusiasm, while working within class (Eble & Teaching, 1970; Hildebrand, Wilson, University of California, & Education, 1970).

The teachers' personality has a significant role in the success or failure of students. If the teachers are exhibiting positive personality traits, which support the students learning, share knowledge in

multiple ways, create an environment of learning and cooperation, and encourage the students to come forward and show participation in the class activities then the students will learn more, their skills and competencies will increase and their level of confidence on the teacher will increase and vice versa (Fairhurst & Fairhurst, 1995; Garcia, Kupczynski, & Holland, 2011). Apart from the students, the effective teacher's personality has also positive effects on the career development of teachers themselves. Those teachers whose personalities are balanced, mature and stable have more chances to move ahead and make progress in their respective teaching carrier (Pulkkinen, Ohranen, & Tolvanen, 1999). Therefore the teacher's personality is an important factor for the individual success of not only students and teachers but also for the success of educational institution as a whole.

Teachers' Resources & Personality as Moderators

In general terms, a moderator is a qualitative or quantitative factor that affects the direction or strength of the relation between an independent or independent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In the process of job stress, the job demands is considered as independent variable which creates stress and shed its effects on the performance, the dependent variable. Here certain factors, buffer the effect of job stress, these factors can be termed as resources and personality traits, which they act as moderators. In order to fully understand the nature of resources, personality traits and its moderating effects, certain models on job stress resources and personality traits need to be studied. In this regard the most famous models for stress and resources are JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), Success Resource model (Grebner, et al., 2010), and Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). On other side five big personality model (Costa & McCrea, 1992) is used to understand the five big personality types.

According to JD-R model the job stress is associated with two important factors, i.e. job resources and job demands. The job demands refer to physical, psychological aspect of job that requires sustained physical or psychological efforts and costs. On other side the job resources are physical, psychological, social, or organizational facets of the job which are functional in achieving work related goals, which reduces job demands. JD-R model states that when there are more job demands then there would be more stress in such way that job resources buffer the effects of job demands and thus reduces stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

In same way the Success Resource model and The Conservation of Resources Theory also explain the importance of resources in stress-performance relationship. The Success Resource model states that subjective success acts as resource in such way that it promotes well being and health and it buffers the negative effects of job stress (Grebner, et al., 2010). And The Conservation of Resources Theory is build on the idea that people strive to obtain and preserve resources as these resources save them from stress. Resources may be either objects, conditions, or energies, which act as shield against worried of life (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

In the last the five big personality model states that human personality is consisted of five types of personality traits including Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrea, 1992). Personality is one of potential type of resource, which helps in dealing the stressful situation in different ways like either by developing defense mechanism against stress or by avoiding stress or learning handling stress in proper way by adapting according to need of situations (Charles & Rudolf, 1986). Thus resources no matter of which type, moderate the effects of job stress as the availability of resources can defend people from both short as well as long term negative effects of job stress such as job dissatisfaction, exhaustion, disengagement, substance abuse, health problems, (physical & psychological) and undesired attitudes like absenteeism and job turn over (Kahn & Byosiene, 1992).

Teachers' Stress and Performance: Role of Resources & Personality

It is already understood that the job stress has negative effects on the performance of teachers. The different stressors in shape of work load, role ambiguity, resource constraints, time shortage, job insecurity and worst job conditions, etc, exists within environment and act as hurdles for the teachers

and thus hampering their performance (LePine, LePine, & Jackson, 2004). The resources (physical & psychological) and personality of teachers act as buffer in changing the effects of stress on performance. The performance of teachers is supposed to increase in presence of resources and positive personality traits and vice versa. The resources act as instrumental and it boosts performance in such way that the teachers have the strength to handle the job demands and thus minimize the negative effects of stress on the performance (Arnold, Jari, Evangelia, & Despoina, 2007).

A review of studies in past proves the moderating effects of teacher's resources on the stress and performance. Bradley (2007) found teacher's control as potential resources for buffering the effects of stress on the overall functioning of new start teachers in Australian schools. He found that those teachers who had more control as psychological resource, were having better performance as compared to other teachers (Bradley, 2007). Like teachers' control, the teacher's hardiness has also been found to have buffering effects on the stress in such way that teachers who have more psychological hardiness are in more better position to handle stress at work and they can perform well especially their performance is good during tough times, when the job demands are high (Chan, 2003). Apart from control and hardiness, other teachers' resources (physical or psychological) like salaries, empowerment, autonomy, good physical conditions, self efficacy, recognition etc, have also moderating effects job stress and performance. Betoret (2006) studied Spanish secondary school teachers and found that school physical resources and teachers self efficacy had buffer the effects of stress on teachers, in such way that the teachers' performance increased with increase in resources (Betoret, 2006). In last Russell (1987) found that the social support within educational institution in shape of support from boss and outside institution from the family and friends have strong moderating effects on the stress negative impact, and positive effect on the performance (Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987). After having a brief review of the studies conducted in past on the effect of stress on the teachers' performance and the moderating role of resources, it is clear that the resources have strong potential for their effects on minimizing the effect of stress and enhancing performance.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the important role of teaching profession in economic and social development of a country, the concept of teachers' performance has achieved a strategic significance. The performance of a teacher is affected by intra as well as extra organizational factors, which act as impediments to normal routine functioning of teachers. Once the routine functioning of teachers is disrupted, then teachers develop feelings of exhaustion and frustration, and if the disrupted situation persists then negative dysfunctional feelings hit the teachers which can be termed as stress, which is a reaction to the unwanted environmental stressors.

Teachers under stress cannot perform well. Their job satisfaction and motivation levels are decreased and they show unwanted behaviors like absenteeism, mistakes during work and violence at work. Furthermore they have more health related physical and psychological complaints. Their students' satisfaction level is also decreased in such way that they cannot impart quality instructions to the students. Resultantly complaints come from parent and employers' side, which have hired students as their employees thus the overall image of the educational institution gets damaged.

During the process of development of stress among the teachers, certain factors act as moderators, which buffer the negative effects of stress on the teachers' performance. These factors can be termed as teachers' resources. They included both personal as well as job related resources. The teachers' resources minimize the negative effects of stress by giving strength and support to the teachers in fighting stress. Thus the teachers' resources have vital importance in the management of teachers' stress and performance.

The educational institutions should create general awareness among the teachers regarding the existence of job stress and it related negative consequences. Furthermore, they should provide suitable job resources to the teachers in such way that it can help in fighting stress and increasing performance. Apart for job resources, the teachers should also try to utilize their personal resources for managing their job related stress and performance. It should be done in such way that there is a balance between the teachers' resources utilized and the stress dealt for maximizing the performance.

In case of an imbalance, more resources will be utilized and less stress will be reduced, resultantly performance inconsistency will occur.

The teachers' stress and performance management is not a single person activity. The individual teachers, educational institutions, parents, and society as whole should actively take part in process of teachers' stress and performance management. The survival and growth of nations in this knowledge economy is totally dependent on teaching profession as teachers facilitate the process of creation, acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. If we have knowledge and technology, our economy would grow and there would be peace, prosperity and wealth in a country and vice versa.

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