



Professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad District

Radha K.V.¹, Dr. D.Mohana²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Annamalai University Annamalai Nagar.

²Professor, Department of Education, Annamalai University Annamalai Nagar.

*Corresponding author: kvrpmna@gmail.com (Radha K.V.)

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ABSTRACT

The present study is aimed to find out the professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district, Kerala State. Data were collected from 50 special school teachers dealing students with LD, HI, VI, MR and Autism by administering professional stress scale developed by the researcher and her supervising teacher. Teachers with average stress are 76% where as teachers with severe stress and low stress are 16% and 8% respectively. There is no significant difference in professional stress based on gender, type of management and teaching experience. Among the various components contributing to professional stress, students' behaviour and parental involvement are more influential than rest of them. The least influential components are working environment and administrative norms. The findings indicate the need to empower special school teachers in the district to deal students and their parents in a most pleasing and diplomatic way. .

Introduction

Special education which has become a prominent stream in its ethical sense is the practice of educating students in a way that provides accommodations that address their individual differences, differences in abilities and special needs. This segment of the education

domain serves children with behavioral, emotional or cognitive environments or with learning, speech, hearing, vision or interactive problems. Gifted children with advanced academic abilities and children with orthopedic or neurological impairments also come under this domain. Special education is designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for a wide variety of

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reasons, require additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods in order to participate and meet learning objectives in an educational programme. In this circumstance students of special schools are supported to benefit from additional services such as specially adapted curriculum different approaches to teaching, a resource room or a separate classroom.

The interventions of the stream are designed to help individuals with special needs at higher level of self-sufficiency and success in school and their community which may not be available if the students were only given access to a typical classroom education. Special school teachers play a

key role in the educational process and in imparting knowledge to the learners. It is evident that the success of any special education programme by and large, depends on the quality, efficiency, performance and dedication of teachers. The concept of stress is derived from the Latin word 'Stringer' popularly used in the 17th century to mean hardship, strain, adversity or friction. Professional stress is defined as "Organizational stress, which is also called professional stress, is the interaction between working conditions and the working person in environments in which the work demand exceeds the skill of the worker" (Ross & Altmaier, 1994).

Need and significance of the study

As in other professions, physical and psychological health of a teacher is very important in order to evolve good changes among children. Since emotions makeup and shape our mind as well as the personality structure, the self esteem developed during each stage of the profession is a matter of impetus to teaching professionals. Studies and observations show that teachers of special schools are among the most stressed in the teaching profession due to reasons defined and even unexplored. In spite of the academic interventions and massive awareness programs in the area, it is felt that we neglect what should be emphasized. Since these teachers are not properly recognize by the academic and social circle, they couldn't come to the expected level in terms of their academic inputs as well as establishing personal relationship with students ,parents, colleagues

and administrators. Despite the valuable and timely proposals and recommendations of authentic educational forums, the steps and initiatives adopted at the pedagogy or organizational level is quite nominal. In this circumstances the researcher intends to conduct a study on professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district, Kerala state. And also wishes to use the findings of the study to scaffold the teachers to manage their stress. Moreover, it will help to motivate new researchers to address these issues in its perfect psychological, pedagogical and practical spirit.

Statement of the problem

Advancement of social system has made our life more comfortable and complex too. As teachers confront with the cross section of the society, possibility to be stressed is more. Teachers of special schools are also victims of professional stress since they need to handle differently abled students. The researcher with long years of teaching experience could interact and mingle with teachers of special schools. The opportunities to visit special schools motivated the researcher to study more about the working atmosphere and the various aspects generating professional stress. The present study is to find out the professional stress of special school teachers in the district of Palakkad, Kerala state. So the study is entitled as "Professional Stress of Special School Teachers in Palakkad district".

Objectives

1. To find out the professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district.
2. To compare the professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district for the sub- samples based on
 - a. Gender
 - b. Type of management
 - c. Teaching experience
3. To find out the strength of the component which influences the professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district.

Hypotheses

1. Professional stress of special school teachers varies.
2. There does not exist significant difference in the professional stress among special school teachers with respect to
 - a. Gender
 - b. Teaching experience
 - c. Type of management.
3. Strength of the components of professional stress varies.

Methodology

Normative survey method is used for the study.

Sample

The sample selected for the study consists of 50 teachers of special schools in Palakkad district dealing with LD, HI, VI,MR and Autism students and are selected by random sampling method.

Tool

Professional stress Scale was Constructed, Standardized and validated by the Guide Dr.D.Mohana & investigator Radha K.V. Consisting 40 items related to dimensions such as students behavior, working environment, personal affairs and accomplishments, professional skill and self confidence, administrative norms, policies and ethos and parental involvements and family background of the students. Five point scale is used with responses such as severe stress, more stress, moderate stress, mild stress and no stress with corresponding scores 5,4,3,2and 1 respectively.

Statistical techniques used

1. Test of significance for difference in mean for large independent samples _student's t test.
- 2.ANOVA.

Data analysis and interpretation

The data is analysed into the following sections, each corresponding to the objectives of the study.

Level of professional stress of special school teachers

Based on the score obtained for measuring the professional stress, the teachers are classified as the high, average and low using the standard statistical techniques as scores above Mean+SD were treated as high, below Mean -SD as low, and in between as average and is presented in table 1

HO 1: Professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district varies.

Table 1. Professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district.

Stress level	Frequency	Percent
High	8	16.0
Average	38	76.0
Low	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 1 shows that sample having high professional stress is 16.0%, average professional stresses is 76.0% and low professional stresses 8.0%. Result shows that professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district is average.

Comparison of stress based on gender, teaching experience and a type of management.

HO 2: There does not exist significant difference in the professional stress of special school teachers for the sub samples based on gender, teaching experience and type of management .Comparison of professional stress based on gender was done using independent sample t_test. Comparison of professional stress based on teaching experience and type of management was done using analysis of variance and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of stress based on gender, teaching experience and type of management.

Dimensions		N	Mean	SD	Test value	P value
Gender	Male	10	80.70	17.51	1.047	.300
	Female	40	89.15	23.89		
Teaching experience	0-10yr	19	85.37	27.07	F= .161	.922
	10_15	9	89.22	18.99		
	15_20	10	91.20	27.54		
	Above 20 yrs	12	86.33	14.83		
Type of management	Gov	4	96.50	21.06	F= .450	.640
	Aided	18	84.61	23.69		
	Unaided	28	88.00	22.96		

Table 3. Influence of components on professional stress.

Components	N	Mean	S.D	F-value	p-value
Students behaviour	50	2.5650	.60411	7.166	.000
Working environment	50	1.9775	.73743		
Personal affairs& accomplishments	50	2.1133	.74112		
Administrative norms and policies	50	1.8533	.78941		
Parental involvement	50	2.4500	.72394		
Professional skill &self confidence	50	2.1033	.75434		

Professional stress score of female teachers (89.15) is greater than male (80.70). Independent sample t_test discloses that ($t=1.047$, $p=0.30$) there is no significant difference in the professional stress score based on gender, since the p_value is greater than 0.05.

Professional stress scores of teachers with different years of experience is also compared. Here the teachers with less than 10 years of experience are of less stress (Mean score=85.37, SD=27.07) where as teachers within 15 to 20 years of experience feel relatively more stress.(Mean score=91.20,SD=27.54). Analysis of variance shows that the difference is not significant since the p-value ($F=0.161$, $P=0.922$) is greater than 0.05.

While comparing the professional stress of teachers under different types of management , it is found that teachers from government schools are more stressed (Mean 96.50, SD=21.06) than teachers from

aided(Mean= 84.61, SD= 23.69) and unaided sector (Mean= 88, SD= 22.96) and the difference is not statistically different at 0.05 level, since the P value ($F=0.450$, $p=0.640$) is greater than 0.05.Hence the hypothesis 2 is substantiated.

HO 3: There exists influence of components on professional stress

Table 3 indicates that the difference in Mean score of the components of professional stress is significant since the obtained F ratio(7.166) is significant at .05 level. since the Mean score of students behaviour (2.565) is the greatest, it shows that among the components, students behavior is the most influential in determining the professional stress of special school teachers. The least influencing component is administrative norms and policies(Mean=1.853).Since all the components influence professional stress in a relatively same magnitude,H0 3 is substantiated.

Findings and conclusion

1. Professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district is average. 2. A good majority of the teachers are under average stress .
2. Gender, teaching experience and type of management do not create significant difference in the stress of teachers.
3. Teachers of aided schools are less stressed than their counterparts in government and unaided sector.
4. Out of the components , students' behavior is identified as the most influencing one leading to stress to teachers.

Conclusion

As in other professions , teachers of special schools also prefer to work in a situation where the school climate is friendly, safe, co-operative, supportive and trustworthy so that they will have less stress . Whether the stress level is severe, moderate or low, efforts are needed to address various aspects of the issue at micro level with deserving spirit. As stress, even to a single individual, adversely effects the success of the whole system, teachers of special schools in Palakkad district demand scientific strategies and innovative initiatives to keep them ' stress free' irrespective of its nature and

magnitude. Arranging teacher empowerment programmes specifically for developing professional skill and self confidence.

Organising periodical awareness programmes to parents of special schools. Steps for ensuring the availability and use of advanced equipment for all the sections such as LD,HI,VI,MR and Autism. Ensuring incentives and facilities for recreation and counselling for teachers.

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