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Leadership and Organizational Behavior: A study on Stress Management in Teachers

¹Yadollah Khoramabadi, ²Parviz Dolatyari, ³Zibande Khorami

¹Assistant professor, Hamedan Payam-Noor University

²The head of Literacy Department of Education Administration, Kamyaran, Iran

³Highschool Teacher, of Education Administration, Kamyaran, Iran

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a review using theoretical investigation method to define and conceptualize different aspects of stress. Then, factors of teachers' stress are introduced. Their stress signs (including personal, group, physiological, mental, and behavioral stress), and the consequences and disadvantages of stress are enumerated. After that, the methods and techniques of stress management (personal and organizational) in teachers are discussed. And finally, some strategies are presented for prevention and management of stress.

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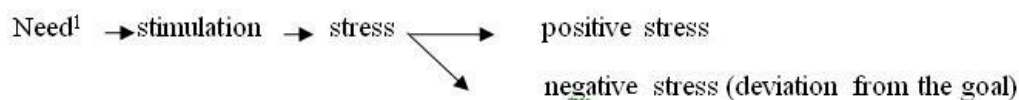
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INTRODUCTION

Stress as a pervasive concern has become slogan of human beings. The influence of stress is quick from personal to social life. Stressful factors have demonstrated themselves in various educational contexts and have some consequences for individuals. In this regard, teachers are among the most sensitive ones against stress (Hartney, 2011) (Is there any guild support for teachers in existing laws of society?). Teachers' stress is appeared inherently during teaching and it is variable in different countries. Many debates are collected from their tolerance in the medium and press. In addition, stress is considered as one of the productive sources in educational organizations. Stress management is the issue that is less being addressed. But since inattention to it will have some horrible consequences and in other hand, the attention to it causes performance improvement in school, there should be enough attention of teachers and principals of the schools toward stressful factors in the environment of school and classroom. They should develop and improve their role as educational leaders. In everyday life, stress can be seen in abundance and most of the times, all people have been influenced by stress and experienced it. When the stressed teacher comes to the classroom, usually students and coworkers can understand it and by the means of interaction, it will transmit to others.

What is stress?

Usually stress is referred to a physical, mental or emotional reaction that individuals show when they are faced an unpleasant setting (Hiradfar, 2011). Stress can be defined as the collection of general reactions toward incompatible and unexpected external factors or in simple words, disorder in compatibility system and the adjustment of human body with external setting (Hartney, 2011). Whenever the balance and compatibility of organism are destroyed by external devastating factors, the person would become stressful. The aspects of stress includes



a. *Positive aspect:* stress is not made with undesirable factors, rather it can create a very pleasant gospel and unexpected success in individuals, and unpleasant news will do the same (Gregson, 2006).

b. *Negative aspect:* stress cannot be necessarily considered as a negative phenomenon. The harmful and intruder stresses should be controlled and managed.

Corresponding Author: Parviz Dolatyari, The head of Literacy Department of Education Administration, Kamyaran, Iran.
E-mail: parvizdolatyari@yahoo.com

c. *Threatening aspect*: stress has psychophysical aspect.

The types and Sources of Stress in Teachers:

The causing factors are divided into two categories: a) individual factors arising from individual characteristics and properties, b) group factors resulting from social relations. If there wouldn't enough adjustment between occupational roles and responsibilities, laws and regulations, sources, facilities, expectations from teacher, a kind of conflict is created and leads to stress. There is ambiguity in occupational role which arises from inconsistent laws and regulations and not preparation of facilities and workplace, such as the implementing SABA plan in primary schools. When communications is weak in the organization and applied trainings would not be indispensable, teachers' stress will increase. Their stress can be divided into three general categories:

- a. Conscious-conscious stress: it occurs when teacher has some desirable and ideal goals, but he cannot realize or transfer all of them. Novice teachers get stress because by having much knowledge, energy and ability, the class and personal conditions is not suitable for learning (He wants to present his knowledge, but students' capacity is low).
- b. Conscious-unconscious stress: teacher intends to achieve his goal and at the same time prevents it. In these cases, the goal has two aspects: positive and negative. For example, teacher faces a question which has no place for discussion and in other hand, he gets stress because he cannot be respondent to students. Or principal is going to exert cultural plans, yet he doesn't want classes be closed and chastised teachers and parents of students.
- c. Unconscious-unconscious stress: teacher wants to prevent two things, but there is no possibility for their prevention. For example, the teacher who hates the extracurricular class and also is not satisfied with the method of principal's supervision. In such a case, conflict provides the causes of stress in teachers and disturbs the balance.

In-Organization Stress (School, Classroom):

The causing factors of group stress arise from social relations among individuals, school setting and classroom. Among these factors, it can be pointed out to unexpected accidents and changes, the content and methods of teaching, quick change of educational facilities, the ways of communicating with audiences. Additionally, causing factors of stress include conflict in goals between principal and teacher, teachers, teacher and students, teacher and educated and unaware parents in educational affairs, the amount of teacher's awareness and inconsistency of content information of lessons.

Organizational Policies:

Unfair policies and the lack of occupational justice (The primary school's teacher should be at school all days of the week. The teacher of art and education goes to school just 2 or 3 days of the week with the least work and equal facilities).

Implementing severe and inflexible laws: acceptance or transferring of responsibility leads to stress, especially if it isn't suitable for related authorities and it significantly contributes to depression, anxiety and psychosis. The more person's responsibility to others becomes, the more stress is created. The responsibilities of individuals significantly relates to stress, blood pressure and the amount of blood cholesterol. The risk of catching various physical and mental diseases is more in teachers who have great responsibilities for students;

Frequent combination and shifting of class, improper expectations from teacher (Teachers must work maximum of the times and for completion of 24 hours of teaching haunt some villages and school) and

The presence of false jobs with special facilities (IT department, executive department and etc. with at least 250000 tomans of special facilities for teachers).

Organizational Structure:

Excessive focus and the lack of enough authority for making decision in the level of school and classroom;

Impossibility of teacher improvement: in teaching, maintaining the class order is in priority. Certain aspects of workplace play role in stress. These features form four groups of factors which in brief include the tone of work, repetition of work, the number of workdays and the features of duty;

Excessive degree and specialty orientation and work duties part becoming and

The conflicts between the organization and staff (amount of authority)

- a. Relations with superior: in situations that teacher-principal relationships are created based on mutual confident, respect and intimacy, it leads to not expressing stress. Mutually whenever principal and teacher have negative viewpoint to each other's performance, some cues of stress can be observed in both. Moreover, mere use of traditional management in facing teachers, especially hierarchal and autocratic management, contributes to more stress and tension in the workplace (Gharachedaqi, 2007).

b. Relations with subordinates: invitation to work division and participation of teachers cause stress expression, such as apprehension and anxiety, which is due to distrust to students' task accuracy and secondary problems. It is the axis of distrust, lack of intimacy and unsound competition and one of the important causing factors of stress (Copper, 1987).

Physical Conditions of Organization:

Much crowd in classroom and excessive congestion of students;
Excessive heat or coldness in the classroom and very small or big spaces (disproportion of space to the number of students);
The presence of undesirable smells and moves in the classroom and
Occupational risks due to quick changes of science and technology

Organizational Process:

Incomplete relations and improper expectations from teacher: if teacher's career goals are not very clear and he cannot communicate truly with his goals and expectations, coworkers and assigned responsibilities, it leads to stress, reduction of self-confidence, lack of satisfaction of life and work conditions and reduction of work's motivation. These expectations above his abilities lead to stress and other negative consequences;

Unnecessary, disturbing, unprofessional and biased controls (experts, principals, other teachers and students' parents);

Sectional and annual unfair evaluation. They make no difference between the teacher follows continuously education and assessment and the teacher who only pays attention to passing percent (improper education only pays attention to passing percent) and

The lack of supplying and on time payment of incomes and necessary educational credits and work conditions of teachers has an important role in their stress. Of course some moderate stresses can be beneficial and provides teachers' stimulus and more attempts of students.

Out-Organizational Stress:

Various settings of classrooms and school (social, economic, cultural and political approach) can contribute to teachers' stress as an effective open system and if its effects are destructive. Economic turmoil or political instability, unfavorable social environment, and great difference in economic life level of teacher and student can be considered as causing factors of out-organizational stress.

Occupational conflict can occurs when the person has to do simultaneously a collection of career requirements which may be contrary to each other or their realizations are impossible. The most common matter is that the teacher is placed between two different groups with different intentions and goals and he has tendency toward both groups. Or he placed in a situation that there is a conflict between the demands and expectations from him (simultaneous teaching to interested students and the ones with lack of motivation) (Mctigo, 2005).

Work Mistakes:

Perhaps the maximum cost arises due to job stress and also its calculation is very difficult is the damage occurs as a result of teachers' fault whose works are sensitive. Peter Draker states that "the more a person is qualified, the more he mistakes; because he tries more new things to do".

Taking Advantage of Technology and Toleration:

The development of technology and the use of technologies such as computers, cell phones, electronics boards, educational soft wares and the internet have increased the speed and accuracy. Accordingly, it is expected that by using these facilities, teachers increase their creativity, usefulness and aptitude more than before and in teaching-learning process, they improve accuracy, speed and durability. Teachers are forced to learn multiple applications in a very short period and make them applied. On the other hand, technology can be used as a tool for continuous monitoring of teachers that this matter itself is one of the effective factors for job stress.

Inconsistency with Workplace:

This matter can be stressful from different dimensions and it is not important that he is new in workplace and classroom or he is working for many years in that school, field or grade. It requires following a series of predetermined policies, if the teacher intends to accompany herself with various options of workplace's culture, like communicational patterns among different people, following hierarchy and class norms, and behavioral patterns of coworkers. Therefore, the person inevitably leads to many difficulties with coworkers or even higher authorities. In many cases, occupational policies or baseless and unfounded rumors in school's setting (disproportion of income and received facilities to inflation) are among important sources of stress (Gharachedaqi, 2007).

Personal or familial problems (numerous economic problems, disproportion of income to family's expenditures): Teachers suffer from personal or familial problems sometimes combine their personal tensions with work matters and take them to school and classroom which result in depression and excessive exhaustion. Consequently, individual's attention is not focused on the task and his motives decrease largely. This results in not handling of job's responsibilities, his performance is affected and contributes to stress (Farevash, 1998)

Signs and Symptoms of Stress:

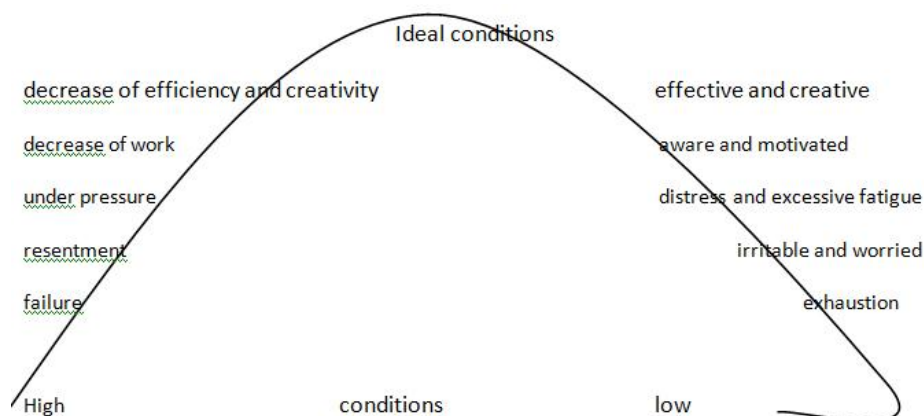
Since for the first time, stress matters are studied by physicians and experts of medical sciences, most of the attention was focused on physiological signs. Its signs are expressed differently. As an example, if a teacher get much stress, has feels of distrust, insomnia, blood pressure, ulcer, anorexia, suspicious, and angry, he shows other abnormal behaviors. According to Beer & Newman, the signs of stress include physiologic, mental and behavioral (Ras, 2006).

a. *Physiologic signs:* As it was mentioned, the intensity of stress depends on importance, length, intensity and durability of stressful stimulus:

- I. Response (warning)
- II. Resistance level
- III. Atrophy level
- IV. Depression (Bronez, 2006).

b. Mental signs include anxiety, worry, depression, nervousness, allergies, tension and feelings of blame and vanity. The effect of these factors is destructive for morality and moods of the teacher. Also it leads to lack of their self-confidence and reduction of their performance.

c. Behavioral signs: include intensive headache, insomnia, excessive exhaustion, anorexia or false appetite to food, hasty in talking, and rush and unrest in doing things. In teachers, more behavioral signs are seen as delay, backbite, conflict, job quitting, the lack of interest to job.



Stress and its Function: (Lucker & Geregson, 2006)

The consequences of stress are effective on human nervous system and have adverse effects on some parts such as brain, skin and hair, muscles, mouth, heart, lung, and digestive and breathing systems. It can be pointed out to some side effects, like digestive problems, duodenal ulcer, dizziness, headache, acerbate of stomach, hair becoming white and calvities, insomnia, nightmare, and behavioral and natural fluctuations.

Stress Management in School and Classroom:

The best method of stress management is removing the causing factors of stress, but it is impossible in many cases and we should adapt it, smooth its performance for ourselves and decrease its intensity. Finding an optimum and desirable level of stress which stimulates us is good, but it shouldn't drown us. In order to managing stress, the following methods are generally suggested:

The Implementation of Participatory Management in Schools:

Encouragement for group activities in school and planning for it. These kinds of participatory activities share and improve responsibility for student's learning and other members of school.

Improvement of consult core of school and continuous communication with student's parents:

We should try to create sympathy between student and his family. Ensure them that the teacher and education cadre of school try their best for building security, progress and self-prosperity of students.

Participation of Teachers and their Interactions with each other in the School:

- *Students' talent discovering and leading their interests:* principals and teachers with students and their parents should participate interactional in research groups, action-researching teams, learning association of parents-teachers, and educational meeting and identify the fields and interests of students.
- *Self-confidence increasing in students and fresh out of school setting:* group interaction of school members, like discussion and interlocution of professional groups, related newspaper and media publication, the internet, participation in school spacing, public utility plan and etc.
- *Building equal chances for all students:* students must be sure that teachers build equal chance in all educational activities.
- *Time management in school:* It is important for teacher the time of teaching and its subject for teaching. Unwanted holidays and program execution can damage the time of education (He fears about not fulfilling educational and assessment affairs in the determined time). Principals proceed in the beginning of academic year and term with coordination of teachers, regarding the lessons' content and budgets and regulation of educational plans, regular test, term's test and final exam.
- *Exercise and physical activities:* when the teacher gets stress, exercise can be helpful for achieving neural relaxation. Forget stress during exercising and this mind leisure of causing factors of stress contributes to rest and refection for managing stress and building resistance against it.
- *Dominating on achievements and environmental conditions (realistic expectation):* if the teacher could dominate and control annoying situations of school and classroom, he would manage stress. The teacher is sensitive to some students, information, conditions and situations. If you find out above mentioned factors, you must prevent them according to wisdom and makeshimself less stressful. In this method, rather than controlling the individual, he should try to make the setting desirable by awareness and surrounding the situations. Understanding optimistically the reality and thinking about good and promising events can shape the strategy of teacher's understanding; which less becomes stressful and can solve the problems with stronger moral (Lucker&Geregson, 2006).
- *Intimacy and group support:* it will be very effective in teacher's stress removal, if the school setting is intimated and friendly and the teacher can harbor to them. Statement of problems and matters that annoy the teacher leads to stress removal of a good friend or principal. And group support makes the teacher strong in facing stress.
- *Altruistic selfishness:* being helpful and supporting others give teacher a positive and strong moral and equip him against stress. If the teacher wants both himself and students and tries to be useful for them, he is satisfied and this feeling helps him to be safe against stress.
- *Turning to humor and jokes:* the proverb "the smile is a medicine for every kinds of irremediable illness" is effective in stress reduction. In doing things, sometimes it is necessary to not taking matters much serious and for escaping intolerable stresses turns to humor.
- *Being purposeful:* having purpose and trying for its achieving is a factor which gives the teacher hope and motivation. We will have a purposeful moral, if we have valuable goals which are either transcendental or achievable and regulate some plans for their achieving, create the motive and hope to future and take the advantage of all pervious experiences.

The members of school should remove causing factors of organizational stress or decrease it. Hence, in order to solve stress concerns, some techniques is useful including creation of supporting environment for teachers, job enrichment, decreasing of organizational conflicts, prevention of tight and inflexible laws in school as possible, and building a suitable physical space for teachers and students (Lucker & Geregson, 2006).

Teachers' proceedings for stress management (reduction)

- When you take the responsibility of students in the classroom, reduce your stress by following methods (Lucker & Geregson, 2006):
 - Spending some time away from your tasks.
 - Assigning activities and task division. In short period, it seems wasting time, but it is relaxing in long periods (Gharachedaqi, 2007).
 - Provide a condition for thinking and making plans for going outrather than making immediate decision.
 - Accept that everybody don't like you, be modest.
- When you take the responsibility of students in the classroom, reduce their stress by following methods:
 - Create motivation in students by encouragement rather than false promises and treats.
 - Make each kind of criticism fruitful and be a good listener (Mctigo, 2005).
 - Prevent each kind of illogical and dictatorial management in the classroom. Use participatory, free, and authoritative types less stressful.
 - The cultural development which reduces pressure, such as sectional rest along playing and joy in the classroom (Peefer, 2009).

- Act in such a way that it is easy for student to requesting a help.

Organization Proceedings for Stress Management (Reduction):

1. Appoint worthy, qualified and competent principals (fair and far away racial, wing and sectarian bias);
2. Making each decision for changing lesson contents or teaching methods and also applied training before the beginning of academic year;
3. Wisely and tactically organizing human staff and educational setting with clear, explicit rules and personal privilege before the academic year;
4. Plan and perform joyful plans (cultural, sporty, knowledge-based, camping and etc.) in the district, one-day, on weekends by education system and spending cost.
5. Assign consult staff and activate their role at schools for helping teachers and students in order to reduce stress;
6. Not issuing controversial circular and employing staff in non-specialist posts;
7. Approving the plan of improving teachers' altitude level in legislative communities for stress reduction and teaching stresses;
8. Being decentralized of educational rules and the teacher be free for selecting teaching and learning method and
9. Increase the income and facilities of teachers in proportion to economical inflation and teacher's dignity.

Conclusion:

Human beings do not become depressed by things but rather by their approach to things around them. According to existing studies and findings, teachers are among the most defenseless groups of society exposed to stress. It is important for teachers and principals to know and realize stress, the ways of going to school and classrooms, management techniques (prevention, toleration and contrasting), improvement of amity (magnification of coworkers, students and clients). It is the task of principals and executive agents of schools to care attentively to students and strictly prevent teachers from getting stressed-out to improve school performance in educational, training and knowledge transfer fields. Furthermore, they should provide a joyful setting without any kind of stress and mental concern for all members of school including employees and students. Besides this fact that teachers are not causing factor of stress in educational setting, they must try for making safe the suitable educational environment and conditions (teaching-learning), assuring of coworkers and students with a positive viewpoint. They should believe that a healthy person creates the society. After the family, the roles of teachers and school as the first pillar of kid's socialization are very crucial. Students' parents don't make teachers stressful by trusting in teacher, and not unspecialized interfering in educational affairs and activities as such. The education ministry is bound on its responsibilities toward teachers and they should try to improve the level of teachers' dignity in all areas by codifying a plan entitled "corporate support of teaching job".

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