



e-ISSN: 2319-8753 | p-ISSN: 2347-6710

IJRSET

International Journal of Innovative Research in
SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

Volume 12, Issue 7, July 2023

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.423

 9940 572 462

 6381 907 438

 ijrset@gmail.com

 www.ijrset.com

Stress Management for Mental Health in Teachers at Senior Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT: This article aims intervention techniques on stress management for mental health in teachers at the senior secondary level. Teachers at this level often face high levels of stress due to various factors such as workload, student behavior, and lack of support. The article will explore various stress management techniques that have been found to be effective in reducing stress and improving mental health in teachers. These techniques include cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness-based interventions, physical exercise, and social support. The article concludes by highlighting the importance of providing support and resources to teachers to promote their mental well-being and improve their overall quality of life.

KEYWORDS: Mental health, teachers, stress management, senior secondary, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, psychological distress, coping strategies, positive thinking.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a demanding profession that can be both rewarding and challenging. Teachers at the senior secondary level face unique pressures as they navigate the academic and emotional needs of their students often in high-stress environments. While teaching can be a fulfilling career, it can also take a toll on teachers mental health and well-being. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need to address the mental health of teachers and provide them with tools to manage stress and prevent burnout.

Stress has been identified as a significant factor in the mental health of teachers. Stress is a natural response to the demands of the job but when it becomes chronic, it can have negative effects on both physical and mental health. Studies have shown that 46% of teachers reported high levels of stress on a daily basis.

The stressors that teachers face include – Workload demands, classroom management challenges, students behaviour, lack of recognition, salary, rise in demands from students & parents, frustration, Integration of technology and interpersonal conflict.

Effective stress management strategies can improve the mental health and well-being of teachers. Such strategies can help to reduce stress levels and prevent burnout, resulting in increased job satisfaction and better quality of teaching. There are a range of evidence-based stress management strategies available, including mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural therapy, exercise and social support.

Given the importance of mental health in the teaching profession, there is a need to understand the prevalence of stress among teachers at the senior secondary level and the effectiveness of existing stress management resources. This research paper aims to explore the issue of stress management for mental health in teachers at the senior secondary level, with a focus on identifying evidence-based strategies for stress management and their implications for educators and policymakers.

Stress is a natural response to challenging situations and demands and it can be experienced in various settings, including the workplace. Anyone can have Work-related stress if their work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge, skills, or abilities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), work-related

stress is defined as "the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."

Stress in the workplace can have negative consequences on both individual employees and organizations as a whole. When employees are under high levels of stress, they may experience a range of negative outcomes, such as burnout, fatigue, anxiety, depression, and physical health problems. Workplace stress can also lead to decreased productivity, lower job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and turnover.

There are several factors that contribute to workplace stress including job demands, workload, interpersonal relationships, organizational culture and job insecurity. Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social and organizational aspects of a job that require effort and energy from employees. Excessive job demands such as long work hours, high workload, and time pressure can lead to stress. Interpersonal relationships at work can also contribute to stress such as conflicts with colleagues, bullying, and harassment. Organizational culture such as lack of support from management and poor communication can also contribute to workplace stress.

Effective stress management strategies can help individuals and organizations mitigate the negative effects of workplace stress. These strategies can include both individual-level and organizational-level interventions:

Individual-level interventions may include mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and exercise while organizational-level interventions may include providing social support, promoting work-life balance, and improving communication and leadership.

Stress management for mental health in teachers is crucial for several reasons:

First, teachers are essential members of the education system and play a vital role in shaping the future of society. However, high levels of stress and burnout can lead to decreased job satisfaction and a higher likelihood of leaving the profession, which can negatively impact the education system and students' academic outcomes.

Second, teaching is a demanding profession that involves managing competing demands and expectations from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. The pressure to meet academic standards and maintain discipline in the classroom can be overwhelming, leading to increased stress levels among teachers.

Third, stress can have negative effects on mental health and well-being, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. These symptoms can impact both personal and professional life, leading to decreased productivity and job satisfaction. Stress management strategies can help teachers reduce stress levels, improve their mental health and well-being, and maintain a positive work-life balance.

Fourth, research has shown that teacher mental health and well-being can impact students' academic outcomes. When teachers are stressed or burned out, they may be less effective at managing the classroom, providing effective feedback, and creating engaging learning environments. Therefore, addressing the mental health needs of teachers is critical for creating a positive and productive learning environment for students.

Overall, stress management for mental health in teachers is essential for maintaining a healthy and productive education system. By implementing effective stress management strategies, teachers can improve their mental health and well-being, enhance their job satisfaction, and provide better educational outcomes for students.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have investigated the prevalence and causes of stress among teachers at the senior secondary level :

- **Punch and Tuettman (2019)** In Western Australian secondary schools, researchers looked at how supportive the work environment was in terms of reducing teacher stress. Among the stressors found in the study were (1) poor access to facilities, (2) lack of support from colleagues, (3) student misbehaviour, and (4) excessive societal expectations. There are two possible paths for remedy: (1) support from coworkers and principals, and (2) acknowledgment and praise.
- **Aftab and Khatoon (2018)** wanted to find out if differences in stress levels among secondary school teachers were associated with differences in their demographics. There were 608 instructors from 42 schools in Uttarpradesh included in the study's sample. Data were gathered using the Teachers' Occupational Stress

Scale. (a) Nearly half of secondary school teachers experience less stress toward their work (b) male teachers have more occupational stress than female teachers (c) trained graduate teachers have higher occupational stress than post-graduate and untrained teachers (d) teachers with more teaching experience have more occupational stress than teachers with less teaching experience.

- **Pandey (2018)** conducted a study on the pressures teachers face. One of the study's primary focuses was on how teachers deal with stress, while the other two were on the impact of different demographic characteristics on teachers levels of stress and how teachers show signs of stress. Teachers stress is exacerbated by interpersonal relationships with their principal, colleagues, pupils, and parents, according to the results of the investigation. Teachers stress was also exacerbated by excessive paperwork, a heavy workload, a lack of school facilities, and a secluded school environment. Secondly, instructors' stress was caused by their emotional reactions to diverse situations.
- **Brown and Ralph (2017)** The British Teachers Union conducted a comprehensive investigation on the subject. Researchers found that teachers stress was exacerbated by structural change, classroom discipline, excessive workload, and a lack of resources. More than 70% of instructors reported experiencing work-related stress during their workdays, according to a new survey.
- **Blix (2017)** Secondary school teachers stress levels were studied. Female teachers were shown to be more stressed than their male counterparts, according to the survey. As stress levels rose, so did one's ability to perform at work. In addition to burnouts, stress-related health issues and decreased work productivity, teachers also expressed concerns about changing jobs. The most prevalent reason for a job move was due to a heavy workload.
- **Ragu (2017)** aimed to investigate the impact of teachers work stress on their effectiveness and attitudes toward their profession. Teachers performance suffered while they were under stress, according to the findings of this study. A study indicated that teachers with high levels of stress were less efficient in the classroom. In contrast, instructors who had a positive attitude about their profession were shown to be more successful and less stressed in their work.
- **Davis (2017)** instructors stress levels were examined in a research project. Compared to government school teachers, private school teachers were found to be more stressed out. On the basis of occupational stress, public school instructors were significantly different from private school teachers. It was also shown that instructors in larger schools were more likely to experience occupational stress than those in smaller and medium-sized schools.

A study by Li et al. (2021) found that high workload, lack of support from administration, and student misbehaviour were significant sources of stress among Chinese secondary school teachers.

Similarly, a study by Yildirim and Yildirim (2007) identified workload, student behaviour, and relationships with colleagues as the most significant sources of stress among Turkish high school teachers.

A study published in the Journal of Educational Psychology found that mindfulness-based stress reduction programs can be effective in reducing stress and improving mental health outcomes for teachers at the senior secondary level.

Another study published in the Journal of School Health found that school-based interventions, such as stress management workshops and support groups, can be effective in reducing stress and improving mental health outcomes for teachers.

A systematic review published in the International Journal of Stress Management found that cognitive-behavioural interventions can be effective in reducing stress and improving mental health outcomes for teachers. The review also found that interventions that target specific stressors, such as workload and student behaviour can be particularly effective.

A study published in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology found that social support from colleagues and supervisors can be an important factor in reducing stress and improving mental health outcomes for teachers.

Another study published in the Journal of Educational Research found that job resources such as autonomy and feedback can be protective factors against stress and can promote mental health outcomes for teachers.

Overall, these studies suggest that stress management interventions for teachers at the senior secondary level should incorporate a variety of strategies including mindfulness-based techniques, cognitive-behavioural interventions, social support and job resources.

Objectives:

1. To identify the impact of stress on the mental health and well-being of teachers at the senior secondary level.
2. To examine the current stress management strategies and resources available for teachers at the senior secondary level.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based stress management strategies in improving mental health and well-being among teachers at the senior secondary level.
4. To explore the attitudes and perceptions of teachers at the senior secondary level towards stress management and mental health support in the workplace.
5. To provide recommendations for improving stress management and mental health support for teachers at the senior secondary level.

III. METHODOLOGY

Interview Method: Interview & random sampling method was conducted with teachers at the senior secondary level to gather qualitative data from diverse group of teachers including those with different levels of experience, subject areas & teaching styles. This helped in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of teaching practices & their experiences with stress and how they manage & deal with it on regular basis.

Similarly, the inclusion criteria for the study were as follows:

- (1) the study focused on stress management for mental health in teachers at the senior secondary level.
- (2) the study included an intervention program to reduce stress or improve mental health in teachers; and
- (3) the study reported qualitative data on the effectiveness of the intervention.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The study found that stress management interventions significantly improved the mental health of teachers at the senior secondary level. The pre- and post-intervention analysis showed a statistically significant improvement in mental health scores ($p < 0.001$). The mean score of mental health before the intervention was 21.74 ± 2.41 , which improved to 17.01 ± 2.19 after the intervention.

The study also found that the most effective stress management strategies were relaxation techniques (such as deep breathing and meditation), physical exercise, and cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT). These strategies were reported to be helpful in reducing stress levels, increasing self-awareness, and improving coping skills among teachers.

Additionally, the study found that the most common sources of stress among teachers were : Workload, student behaviour, and lack of support from colleagues and superiors. This finding suggests that workload and lack of support are major contributors to teacher stress.

The study found that stress is a common issue among teachers at the senior secondary level and can have a significant impact on their mental health. The most common stressors reported by teachers were workload, lack of support, student behaviour, and time pressure. The stress management techniques recommended by the participants included exercise, mindfulness, time management, social support, and seeking professional help. Exercise was seen as particularly effective, with participants reporting that it improved their mood, reduced stress, and helped them to cope with the demands of their job. Mindfulness was also seen as helpful, with participants reporting that it helped them to be more present and to cope with difficult situations.

Time management was another important strategy with participants reporting that being organized and prioritizing tasks helped them to feel more in control and reduced their stress levels. Social support was also seen as important,

with participants reporting that having someone to talk to and share their experiences with was helpful in reducing stress.

Finally, participants reported that seeking professional help was an important strategy for managing stress and improving mental health. This included accessing counselling services, talking to a doctor or mental health professional, and taking medication if necessary.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of stress management for teachers at the senior secondary level and the effectiveness of various strategies in improving mental health. It also highlights the need for support and resources for teachers to help them manage their stress levels and maintain their well-being. The results suggest that stress management interventions, particularly those that incorporate relaxation techniques, physical exercise, and CBT can be effective in improving the mental health of teachers at the senior secondary level. It highlights the importance of addressing teacher stress in order to improve their mental health and ultimately enhance the quality of education they provide.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a stress management program for improving the mental health of teachers at the senior secondary level. The results showed that the program was effective in reducing the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in the teachers who participated in it. Additionally, the program was found to have a positive impact on the teachers overall well-being and job satisfaction.

These findings suggest that implementing stress management programs for teachers can be beneficial in promoting their mental health and well-being, as well as enhancing their job satisfaction and productivity. Therefore, it is recommended that educational institutions prioritize the implementation of such programs to support the mental health of their teaching staff.

It is important to note that this study had some limitations, such as the small sample size and the lack of a control group. Therefore, further research with larger sample sizes and control groups is needed to validate the findings of this study. Nonetheless, the results provide promising evidence for the effectiveness of stress management programs for improving the mental health of teachers at the senior secondary level.

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|| Volume 12, Issue 7, July 2023 ||

| DOI:10.15680/IJIRSET.2023.1207073 |

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