

A Qualitative Study on the Causes of Stress and Management Mechanisms among Non Teaching Staff in Autonomous Colleges

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ABSTRACT

Stress at workplace has become an increasing phenomenon due to external factors such as technological advances and changes in the working environment, which might lead to becoming redundant so on. Stress can be considered as an inevitable condition at least at one point in time or another; however it can also be minimized to the extent that the productivity and health of the employee is maintained which could lead to a productive institution. Stress is also bound to occur in autonomous colleges where work load is high due to academic autonomy and employees have different cultural background. Purpose this study is to have a clear understanding of the causes of stress among nonteaching staff in autonomous colleges in Ernakulam district. And to make necessary recommendation based on the findings. The causes of stress at the work place range from personal problems to work overload, physical working environment, work situation and conflict among colleagues and management. Many employees struggle with stress, in worst cases leading to uncertainties and severe impairments on health and performance. This study qualitatively finds the causes of stress and made recommendations such as reducing work load by appointing additional employees, automation of work, give recreation facilities and refreshment activities, holidays, and casual leave etc.

1. Introduction

There are two types of colleges. (1)Affiliated (2) Autonomous. The first type are affiliated to some or the other university. They have to follow the syllabus prescribed by the university and also the norms & regulations etc. The admissions are decided centrally by the university. The exams too are conducted by the university. This means all the colleges affiliated to the same university will have same question papers and will be evaluated by same people with same criteria. Autonomous colleges on the other hand are granted freedom and in some or all the matters. They can have their own syllabus, evaluation patterns etc. It is not easy to get the status of an autonomous college, Currently, any affiliated college which has been accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation council of India (NAAC) for three times with a higher grade. This assessment is five yearly. The college can apply for autonomous status and U.G.C may or may not grant it autonomy.

Work Related Stress (WRS) is stress caused or made worse by work. It simply refers to when a person perceives the work environment in such a way that his or her reaction involves feelings of an inability to cope. It may be caused by perceived/real pressures/deadliness/threats/anxieties within the working environment. 'Stress' occurs when an individual perceives an imbalance between the demands placed on them. On the other hand, their ability to cope-up with others. It often occurs in situations characterized by low levels of control and support.'(Professor Tom Cox, I-WHO, University of Nottingham, UK).Audits for hazards leading to stress have become more and more commonly integrated into health and safety systems generally. This owes partly to the fact that stress also has implications for Human Resource Management

(HR), sickness absence management and occupational health generally.

People behave differently when under pressure:

- Some people feel very threatened but keep it to themselves
- Others behave in very aggressive ways, without acknowledging that their behaviour caused by stress
- Others react to the same issue in quite calm ways, feeling unthreatened and relaxed
- Others who are highly aware of their moods report that they are not very stressed by the issue, but enjoy its challenge.
- Others have very low tolerance of any threats, and so find smaller, simpler demands made of them quite threatening and start feeling stress as soon as these demands are made of them.

It's not easy to establish the degree to which the work environment and factors outside of work contribute to an individual's stress level. Someone who is experiencing stressful life events may find that he or she is less able to cope with demands and deadliness at work, even though work is not the cause and had never been a problem before. Workplaces which have good communication, respectful relations and healthy systems of work can help people recognize and manage the type of stress which may have more than one cause; such workplaces tend to get the best results in achieving a healthy and productive workforce.

Stress management is a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. In the context, the term 'stress' refers only to a stress with significant negative consequences, or distress in the

terminology advocated by Hans Selye, rather than what he calls eustress, a stress whose consequences are helpful or otherwise.

Stress produces numerous physical and mental symptoms which vary according to each individual's situational factors. These can include physical health decline as well as depression. The process of stress management is named as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management provides a number of ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall wellbeing. The nonteaching staffs playing significant role in the success of autonomy. Our study is a qualitative one focusing on the concept of stress and stress management, causes and consequences of stress, and how can we manage stress among nonteaching staff in autonomous colleges. The level of stress should analyzed and management of stress is necessary for the increased job satisfaction and better performance.

2. Objectives of the study

1. To understand theoretical concept of stress and cause of stress
2. To find out causes of stress and consequences among non-teaching staffs in autonomous colleges in Ernakulam district.
3. To find out methods of managing stress followed by them
4. To make recommendations based on the study

3. Significance of the study

UGC granted autonomy to selected colleges so has to improve the quality of education and administration. Autonomy provides flexibility to both academic and administrative wings of concerned colleges. At the same time it has some kind of impact on both teaching and non-teaching staff. It is clear that workload has increased more than ever. This study focusing on whether non-teaching staff in autonomous colleges have any work related stress or not. Finding out cause and consequence of stress. This study enables such autonomous colleges to reduce stress and can take measures to improve performance of their non-teaching staff.

4. Methodology

Data for the purpose of this study has collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collected from the respondents using a structured questionnaire and personal interview. Population of the study consists of the total number of non-teaching staffs in autonomous colleges in Ernakulam. We followed convenience sampling to collect data. The data were analyzed and interpreted using percentage analysis, diagrams. Secondary data collected from journals, magazines, articles, websites, news etc.

5. Theoretical framework and profile of colleges

5.1 Meaning of stress

Stress is a general term applied to various psychological (mental) and physiologic (bodily) pressures experienced by people throughout their lives.

5.2 Stress management

Stress management is a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. In the context, the term 'stress' refers only to a stress with significant negative consequences, or distress in the terminology advocated by Hans Selye, rather than what he calls eustress, a stress whose consequences are helpful or otherwise.

5.3 Causes of stress

- Some of the causes of stress are long working hours, heavy work load and changes within the organization
- Tight deadlines, changes of duties and over supervision will also lead to stressful jobs
- Poor relationship of employees with management create stressful atmosphere
- Insufficient skills for the job
- Lack of proper resources and discrimination among colleagues

5.4 Consequences of stress

- Stress will lead to anxiety and depression
- Reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions
- It will lead to disinterest and low performance
- An increase in sick days or absenteeism
- Problems with interpersonal relationships and creativity

5.5 Profile of colleges

❖ Maharajas College

Maharajas college is a centre of excellence and a college with potential for excellence, two titles conferred on it by the government of Kerala and the UGC respectively on account of its commendable academic performance and co-curricular activities. NAAC reaccredited the college with A grade in 2006. It was accredited (third cycle) by National Assessment and Accreditation Council in 2013 at a level. An autonomous body setup chiefly to share the resources of few select colleges in and around the city

❖ St. Teresa's College

St. Teresa's college, Autonomous committed to enrich the lives of students by empowering them. Women's Education is a crucial factor that contributes to nation building and for the past nine year they have been educating women from different strata of our society. St. Teresa's was granted autonomous status in the year 2014 by the UGC.

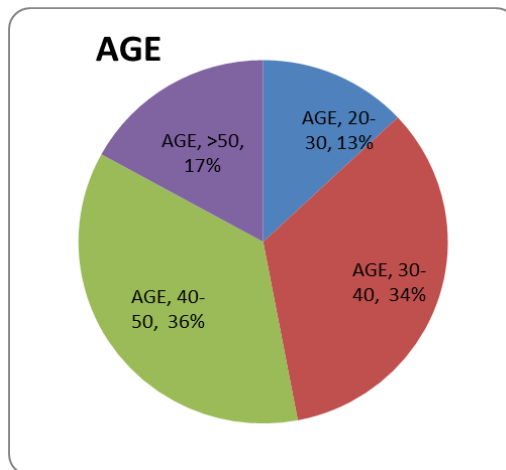
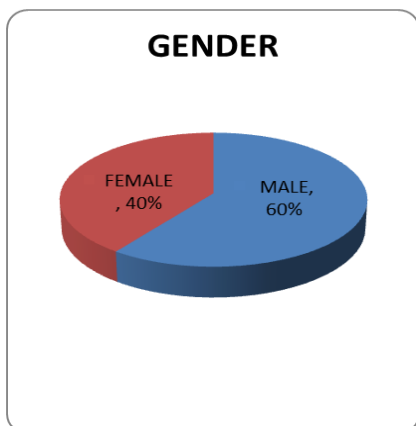
❖ St. Albert's College

St. Albert's College is Autonomous college run by the Archdiocese of Verapoly.. Its mission state that "Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms". It has been granted autonomous statue in 2016 by UGC.

❖ Sacred Heart College

Sacred Heart College is Autonomous college by the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI).It aims at the fashioning of an enlightened society founded on the relentless pursuit of excellence and a secular outlook combined with a firm faith in god. The college was accredited by (NAAC)at the five star level and 2013 it was reaccredited at the A level.

6. Analysis and Interpretation



(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: 40% of the staff belongs to the female category and the rest 60% belong to the male category 13% of the staff belongs to the age group of 20-30, 34% belong to the age group of 30-40, 36% of the people belong to the age group of 40-50 and the rest belong to the age group of more than 50.

Table: 6.1.1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	ANSWERS	THEORTICAL FRAMEWORK
What makes you feel stress?	Workload Overcrowded Lack of time Conflict Unrealistic deadline Under pressure and overwhelmed	Causes of stress
What are the main sources of stress?	Lack of support Role conflict Long working hours Over supervision Changes within the organization Lack of proper resources Poor relationship with management	
Does stress affect your productive at the workplace?	High level of stress decrease productivity Negative effects on both tar workplace and routine Low performance Constraints to creative mind Bad relationship with management	Consequences of stress
Does it affect the level of satisfaction?	It will lead to depression and anxiety It damages mental and physical health	
How do you cope up with stress? How do you manage it?	Manage time better Focus on positive share feelings with friends Physical training Good communication Increase self esteem	Stress management
Does the management perform some activities in order to reduce the stress level of employees?	Provide rest room Entertainment functions Leisure time Holidays	Management role

(Source: Primary Data)

7. Major Findings

- Overall the staff who participated in our research feels stress in some way, because of increased work load, time left to manage the issues and dead line for the completion etc.
- Generally the level of stress at the workplace differs due to the nature of work and employees behavior.
- The stress refers here is cognitive because it related to the thinking of a person is normal or changed .It will also lead to anxiety and depression and result in low performance.
- Most common methods used for stress management is increasing the self-confidence, creating a positive attitude and sharing feelings with dear ones. By proper companionship and leisure activities management aims at good output.
- Work load of employees were increased after autonomy when compared to previous status.
- There is no uniformity in the methods used by various autonomous colleges to manage stress.
- Increased stress influencing their performance and productivity.
- Increased stress leading to increased absenteeism.
- Stress influences their loyalty and work life balance.

8. Recommendations

- Implement time management mechanism in autonomous colleges
- Proper communication between colleagues should be ensured
- Physical exercise classes like yoga to get relief from stress

- Entertainment programs should be conducted
- Conduct professional counseling and training programs
- Discuss issues and grievances with management
- Cut down on the need of overtime by reorganizing duties or employing extra staff
- Seek advice from health professionals

9. Conclusion

This study concludes that the autonomous position granted to colleges has increased the workload and stress of employees. Because it put the staff under pressure to perform too many tasks with in short time. This study is purely a qualitative one using primary data to understand the causes of stress at the workplace. The management is not paying much attention to their actual situation. So it leads to low level of satisfaction among staff which intern leads to low productivity. Stress factors are not always stable and consistent. It varies from environment to environment and work to work. Sharing of feelings and emotions contribute to relieve stress also provide them to enjoy from their professional life and personal life. We have also found out from the staffs opinion who contributed to the study that stress at workplace can be managed by proper time management, Human Resource management. Emotion focused strategies like leisure activities, exercise can also be used to relieve stress. Nonteaching staffs has an important role in the success of autonomous colleges, to improve the performance of the institution not only manage the stress of teaching staff but also they have to manage the work related stress of nonteaching staffs.

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