

Section 1. General questions of psychology

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THE WAYS AND RESULTS OF ACUTE(EPISODIC) STRESS AND CHRONIC STRESS AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS IN UZBEKISTAN

Abstract. Stress is a global health issue which restricts people to have wellbeing and self-efficacy. In this article, we analyzed types of stress and how it impacts teachers in their career development. Particularly we emphasized the level of stress among higher education teachers in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, gamification is proposed as a solution to reduce the level of occupational stress among teachers.

Keywords: Occupational stress, teacher self-esteem, self-efficacy, acute and chronic stress.

Introduction

Teaching is one of the most challenging professions in the world. Teachers have lots of work at their institutions such as planning the lesson, designing the lesson materials and handouts, delivering the lesson, giving feedback during and after the lesson, assessing homework and many more. In addition to teaching responsibilities, they have to deal with bureaucracy – doing paper work, students' late self-study submissions, marking pressure, writing academic articles for publication in Web of Science or Scopus-based higher impact factor journals and other additional duties that lead to occupational stress in Uzbekistan at Higher education institutions.

What is an occupational stress? According to Work Cover State of Queensland "Occupational stress pertains to the physical, mental, and emotional reactions of employees who perceive that their work demands

exceed their abilities and/or their resources (e.g. time, access to help/support) to do the work" (2019. p. 10). The World Health Organization (2019. p. 15) claimed that "As health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being a healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones". Quick and Demetria (2016) stated that occupational stress is a known health risk for a range of psychological, behavioral, and medical disorders and diseases. They also described stress as directly linked to the top leading causes of death in the world, such as cardiovascular disease being the prominent cause for both men and women.

The above-mentioned realities prompted to examine the emotional intelligence and occupational stress among higher education teachers in

Uzbekistan using a descriptive-correlational research design. Likewise, a relationship between those two constructs was determined to come up with teacher development plan designed to strengthen the emotional intelligence of teachers and lessen their occupational stress.

Some teachers do not know whether they have symptoms of stress, they do what they have to do in their daily routines at work such as conducting lessons, writing articles, going some required places told by administrative orders. They have lots of pressure and one day they have burnouts because they do not have enough resilience. Besides work they have family issues as well. How to be persistent if they are already over with all these.

Materials and methods

As Rosenthal (2002), stated stress is a negative emotional experience associated with biological changes that trigger our body to make adaptations, it happens when a person has some unusual (not ordinary/typical) situation and body starts to react it while having hormones to *fight and flight*. She explains it as in response to stress, the adrenal glands pump out stress hormones that speed up the body. The heart rate rises up and the blood sugar levels increases so that the body can divert glucose to the muscles in case a person to flee dangerous situations. So, together, these experiences are known as the *flight and fight* response. The stress hormones, technically called the **catecholamines**, are broken down into epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine. The problem with stress hormones in the 21st century is a global issue not only among ordinary people but also among teachers whose work is considered interpersonal and they have interpersonal relations with their administrative representatives, colleagues, students and parents. As mentioned above teachers do not even feel that they have stress and consequently it will become burnout. According to Kyriacou (2001), here are some examples of bad stress triggers among teachers include stagnant jobs or relationships such as:

- Students' Behavioral Problems;

- Students who have a lack of motivation;
- Maintaining discipline;
- Coping with changes;
- Being evaluated by others;
- Dealing with colleagues;
- Self-esteem and status;
- Administration and management;
- Role conflict and ambiguity;
- Long Working Hours;
- Poor Working Conditions;
- Low salary;
- No career promotions;
- Parent;
- Assessments. Exams;
- Misunderstanding and problems while have assessments;
- Lack of Peer Interaction Among Students;
- Mixed Level Students Classes (NOVICE TEACHERS);
- Reluctance of administration.

These kinds of situations can lead to depression, low self-esteem and a host of physical and psychological illnesses. Initially, stress hormones stimulate the immune system, but after the stressful event can suppress the immune system, leaving the body open to a wide variety of psychological and physical illnesses and their symptoms.

Selye (1956), considered the father of stress management, defined stress as the wear and tear on the body. Once a person in a state of stress, the body adapts to the stress by depleting its resources until it becomes exhausted. The wear and tear on the body is mounting; a person can suffer from stress-related conditions:

- Allergies and asthma;
- Back pain;
- Cardiovascular problems;
- Depression;
- Dental and periodontal problems;
- Emotional outbursts (rage, anger, crying, irritation-seen in recent reports on “air rage” and “desk rage”);

- Fatigue;
- Headaches;
- Gastrointestinal problems (digestive disorders, bowel problems, and so on);
- Herpes recurrences (especially in women);
- High blood pressure;
- High cholesterol;
- Immune suppression (predisposing us to viruses, such as colds and flu, infections, autoimmune disorders, and cancer);
- Insomnia;
- Loss of appetite and weight loss;
- Muscular aches and pains;
- Premature aging;
- Sexual problems;
- Skin problems and rashes.

Above mentioned health related problems by Selye (1956) in his book “*The Stress of Life*” stress greatly contributes physical and psychological illnesses and disease. Teachers are also suffer from these health issues such as headaches, fatigue, insomnia, gastrointestinal problems, high blood pressure, and others in their daily life at work most of the time. The main cause of this problem is having stress our being under stress.

According to The American Institute of Stress (2022):

- About 33 percent of people report feeling extreme stress;
- 77 percent of people experience stress that affects their physical health;
- 73 percent of people have stress that impacts their mental health;
- 48 percent of people have trouble sleeping because of stress.

Moreover, 70 to 90 percent of all visits to primary-care physicians are for stress-related complaints or disorders. In the workplace alone, about a million people per day call in sick because of stress. That rate translates into about 550 million absences per year. Other studies show that roughly 50 percent of all North American workers suffer from **burnout**-a

state of mental exhaustion and fatigue caused by stress- and that 40 percent of employee turnover is directly caused by stress. Moreover, according to The American Institute of Stress, (2022) after COVID19 the rate of stress related problems increased significantly among teachers as well. 55–70% of teachers suffer from stress and they have stress related health problems.

In Uzbekistan teachers also have this issue, according to current statistics (2021–2022), 60–70% of teachers all over Uzbekistan suffer from stress and work burnouts. They claim that they have above mentioned work related problems and health issues.

The consequences of stress experienced by the teacher can result in different negative aftereffects, which can have implications both for teachers and students. Loaded with much stress, a teacher can reduce his/her engagement in quality conducting a class and will not be attentive to lesson planning. Teachers can express more criticism towards colleagues, students rather than supporting and encouraging them. Wettstein et al. (2021) pinpoint that a stressed-out teacher may emotionally and cognitively distance himself/herself from work and his/her duties. In more severe cases, teachers who experience constant stress may face a “burnout” and obtain health problems which can subsequently bring to his/her retirement. Terms such as office rage and desk rage are emerging, too, as workplace violence escalates. A more subtle but compelling statistic is this: In 1997, the Japanese word **karoshi**, which means sudden death from overwork, began appearing in English dictionaries.

How to manage the stress

Rosenthal (2002), wrote in her book “*50 Ways To Prevent And Manage Stress*” that managing the stress is not a simple accomplishment, particularly since there are different types of stress: *acute (episodic)* stress and *chronic* stress. *Acute* stress results from an acute (intense) situation, such as a sudden, unexpected negative event or a difficult task like organizing a wedding or planning for a conference. When

the event passes or the task ends, the stress goes away. Acute stress has numerous symptoms: anger or irritability, anxiety, depression, tension headaches or migraines, back pain, jaw pain, muscular tension, digestive problems, cardiovascular problems, and dizziness.

Kyriacou (2015) studied and said about teacher stress that teachers also have *acute(episodic)* stress and *chronic* stress in their institutes. For example about *episodic* stress, when teachers organize some important events such as conferences, theatrical performances or demo lessons. They are responsible for everything for decoration of the stage, costumes for students and for inviting guests. All these happen until the end of the ceremony of the event or conference. They feel and have anger or irritability, anxiety, depression, tension headaches or migraines, back pain, jaw pain, muscular tension, digestive problems, cardiovascular problems, and dizziness. When the event finishes, the next day teachers forget about all their hardworking weeks and days and they do not have health issues related to stress. They feel relieved.

There are some teachers who have episodic (acute) stress very often, meaning that one stressful event follows another, creating a continuous flow of acute stress. They always take on too much workload at once and may suffer from episodic acute stress. They do not do it because they are workaholics or those with the so-called Type A personality (i.e., perfectionists), classic sufferers of episodic acute stress but they have to do it because it is one of the modern education system's written and unwritten requirements not only in Uzbekistan but also all around the world. Often, good things come from this kind of stress, even though it feels stressful or bad in the short term. Acute stress challenges teachers to stretch themselves beyond their capabilities. It is what makes them meet deadlines, have career promotions, higher salary with 50% increase if they take IELTS (7+) or CEFR (C1) certificates, write articles, do

PhD research work, and invent creative solutions to their problems. Consider a few examples of good stress:

- *Challenging projects* such as applying for grants or scholarships;
- *Positive work-changing events* (career promotions, 50% increase, higher; salaries, better working environment, motivated students and others);
- *Confronting fears* such as losing a job, career degradation, poor working conditions and others.

These situations can be difficult to put up with, but often the results are good for teachers in the long term. Essentially, whenever a stressful event triggers emotional, intellectual, or spiritual growth, it is a **good stress**. It is often not the event itself but the people's response to the event that determines whether it is a good or bad stress. Even the lose of a loved work and colleagues can sometimes lead to professional growth. For example, we may see something about ourselves we did not see before, such as new resilience and it can develop self-efficacy. In this case, having financial problems or having a lack of money can be a good stress, though everything seems impossible in the short term.

As the coin has two sides, there is also a bad stress which is known as **chronic** stress as Rosenthal (2002), mentioned *chronic* stress results from boredom and stagnation, as well as prolonged negative circumstances. Fundamentally, when no growth occurs from the stressful event, it is bad stress. When negative events do not seem to yield anything positive in the long term, but more of the same, the stress can lead to chronic and fatiguing health problems. Some examples of bad stress among teachers include not having a good working condition, demotivated and misbehaved students, conflicts and poor relationships with colleagues and administrations, parents, stagnant jobs or lack of opportunities for change such as career promotions or having 50% increase. These kinds of situations can lead to de-

pression, low self-esteem, and a host of physical and psychological illnesses.

In addition to acute and chronic stress Keith C. Herman and Wendy M. Reinke in their book *Stress Management for Teachers: A Proactive Guide (The Guilford Practical Intervention in the Schools Series)* (2014) said that stress can be defined in even more precise ways:

- Physical stress (from physical exertion);
- Chemical stress (from exposure to a toxin in the environment, including from substance abuse);
- Mental stress (from taking on too much responsibility and worrying about all that has to be done);
- Emotional stress (from feelings such as anger, fear, frustration, sadness, betrayal, or bereavement);
- Nutritional stress (from deficiency in certain vitamins or nutrients, overindulgence in fat or protein, or food allergies);
- Traumatic stress (from trauma to the body such as infection, injury, burns, surgery, or extreme temperatures);
- Psychospiritual stress (from unrest in your personal relationships or belief system, personal life goals, and so on –in general, the factors that define whether or not you are happy).

The consequently *stress* can make people *sick* and make their life miserable.

According to Fiorilli et al. (2019) there are solutions such as developing emotional intelligence which may help them reorganize their priorities so that they can reduce *chronic* stress as well as incorporate a few new healing strategies to help combat acute stress. Finding ways to workload while incorporating with colleagues and students, implementing teacher initiated humour as a means of stress relieving for teachers during the class according to Kholmatov's study (2022) may dramatically reduce teacher stress during the class and assessment week.

Conclusion

In conclusion teachers should take appropriate and specialized stress management trainings such as how to develop stress-coping strategies for foreseen and implemented in undergraduate and postgraduate teachers' studies to cope with *chronic* stress. They should establish teachers' union where they can discuss and share about their difficulties at work and find solutions together.

It is necessary to provide educators with training on how to maintain a balance between work demands and duties, and personal and social-life time, on how to set realistic targets in order to fulfill them, on how to communicate and sustain supportive relations in the workplace. The government and university authority should support teachers financially and mentally to reduce their stress by helping them with article publications and career development. They can minimize their workload for teachers who do research and give some financial support until they defend their PhD work.

If there are supportive and helpful relations in the workplace and practicing coping and empowering techniques may help teachers significantly in reducing anxiety and in dealing with occupational stress. If teachers do not have stress issues they will have job satisfaction and develop their self-esteem. The students who they work with will also have good prosperity and grades with excellent achievements.

So, the purpose of this literature review is to study the following:

Research questions:

1. What is the role of stress in teachers' life and career promotions? How does it influence their life and work?
2. Are there any relationships between teachers' *episodic* and *chronic* type of stress?
3. What are advantages of *episodic* stress for teachers?
4. Should teachers take appropriate and specialized stress management trainings such as how

to develop stress-coping strategies for foreseen and implemented in undergraduate and postgraduate teachers' studies to cope with *chronic* stress?

5. Is it necessary to provide educators with training on how to maintain a balance between work demands and duties, and personal and social-life time, on how to set realistic targets

in order to fulfill them, on how to communicate and sustain supportive relations in the workplace, and on?

6. Will it help if there are supportive and helpful relations in the workplace and practicing coping and empowering techniques may help teachers significantly in reducing anxiety and in dealing with occupational stress?

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