

## EFFECTS OF STRESS FACTORS ON THE PHYSICAL AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF A LECTURER

Mrs. Shibe Rimo<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ashwini Ravi<sup>2</sup> and Dr. P.S. Venkateswaran<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract: Objectives:** *The present study tried to find out the effects of Stress factors on the Physical and the Psychological Well Being of a Lecturer in arts colleges in Chennai.*

**Methods/Analysis:** *Researcher used systematic random sampling method to find out the respondents to collect the data. A structured questionnaire was used and an interviews schedule method was adopted. A sample of 278 lectures were respondent for the study.*

**Findings:** *The research revealed that occupational stress is having more impact than other stress factors. Job insecurity has a major cause for stress and male lecturer are more stressed than their female colleagues. Pestonji and Azeemji carried out a similar study and the results were also similar.*

**Novelty /Improvement:** *The stress levels of lecturers and other educators needs to be dealt with care about their stress level so that the quality, standard and the levels of depression and mental illness among the educators will come done.*

**Keywords:** Stress, work, Depression, Lecturer.

### INTRODUCTION

The American Institute of Stress claim that the word stress defies definition because it is a high subjective state of an individual that is not only difficult to measure but it is even more difficult to understand what stress factors trigger what reaction in a precise manner to be able to deal with it and provide the correct treatment for it. When there are changes in an environment, then there is a demand on every individual in that particular environment to conform, or to be able to adapt to the environment. These environmental demands on individuals are specific factors but in most cases it is a combination of various factors over a prolonged period

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<sup>1.</sup> Research Scholar in Department of Management Studies, Dr. M.G.R Educational and Research Institute, Maduravoil, Chennai.

<sup>2.</sup> Research Guide, Dr. M.G.R Educational and Research University. Maduravoil, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

<sup>3.</sup> Professor, Department of Management Studies, PSNA College of Engineering and Technology, Dindigul. [Venkatespsna07@gmail.com](mailto:Venkatespsna07@gmail.com)

of time that creates responses from an individual physically, psychologically and emotional that are unspecified and immeasurable in an empirical manner. Hans Selye was the first individual to use this word as far back as 1936; today it is an integral part of anger management, emotional management, mental well being and physical well being in a individual. The Human Function Curve (Figure 1) shows the relationship between stress (good and bad) and performance (physically and mentally). (\*Adapted from Nixon, P: Practitioner 1979)<sup>1</sup>

One of the most interesting facets of this graph is that it is entirely personal. Although it represents the limits of the human organism in general, everybody has their own individual limits for stress.

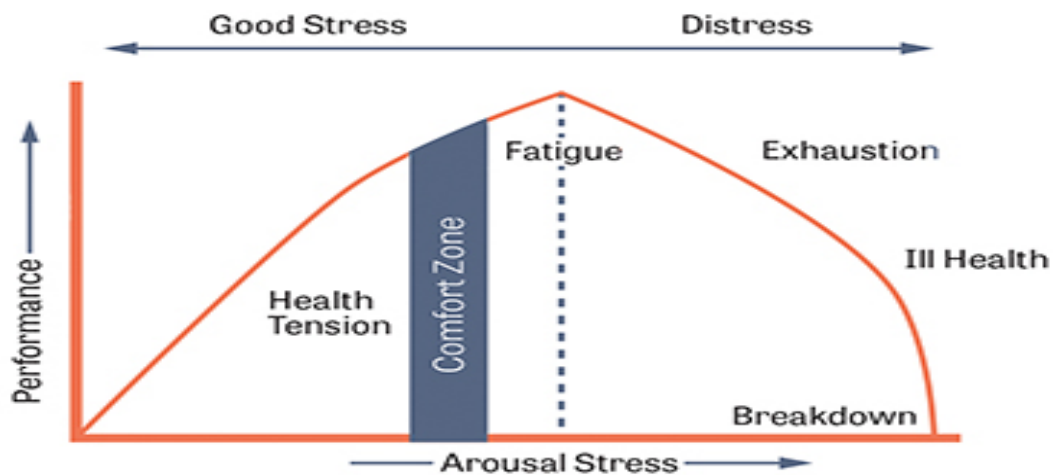
Furthermore: *Zero stress = zero performance*

In other words, to be 100% stress-free is to be dysfunctional!

The reason why a little bit of stress is actually “good” is because each of us has a degree of “healthy tension” in which our body and mind function throughout the day.

At just the right amount of tension we also have a “comfort zone” in which performance is optimal, neither underworked nor overworked.

Figure 1: The Human Function Curve (\*Nixon, P: Practitioner 1979)



What this curve illustrates is that stress till a particular level, which the human mind and body can take improves the performance on every way of an individual, but after a point everything disintegrates rapidly because of the burn out and the

inability to cope with the demands of stress related issues and situations. One of the unique characteristics of stress is that every individual has a different level of stress that the individual can endure.

*Physical symptoms of stress may include:*

- Angina
- Heartburn
- Gastritis
- Anemia
- Recurrent infections
- General malaise or weakness

*Mental symptoms of stress may include:*

- Excessive anxiety
- Insomnia
- Unexplained feelings of doom and despair

## **Introduction**

The stress levels in a lecturer can best be understood when we understand that the job of a lecturer is that of a professional educator who gets paid to teach students at a high level of education after having completed High School. A lecturer has to complete a fixed number of years of instructing fresher and sophomore students before the educator can be called a professor in the college. The purpose of becoming a professional educator is to help the learning process of students by using the correct instructional methods, techniques and assistive technology that makes the progress in students faster and as per the standards that are laid down by the college for fresher's and sophomore students. Stress in the occupational life of a lecturer can be considered to be an occupational hazard which leads to occupational stress, as an educator. Occupational stress has a negative effect in the health and the well being of a lecturer. As mentioned above one of the occupational hazards is occupational stress and occupational stress leads to occupational burn out which is why after a certain level the performance falls rapidly in an individuals. Working as a lecturer is a highly stressful job and there are many types of pressures that a lecturer has to deal with. A study was undertaken in 2000 where it was found that 42% of the U.K. educators. The levels were double the types of occupational stress that were faced by professionals in other professions in the U.K.

## Occupational Stress

The stress levels that the lecturers go through physically and emotionally is known as occupational stress since it is a level of discomfort that cannot be physically pinpoint and remains an unspecified discomfort that takes a toll psychologically and physically on a lecturer(Nagieh et al, 2015)<sup>2</sup>.

## Stress Model

The stress model that has been identified in the stress type that the lecturers go through in their occupation is known as the '*diathesis stress model*.' What this theory does is to separate the behavior patterns from the stress factors which enables the identification of the stressors that are responsible for the stress that is caused in educators. The broad types of stressors that are there are the mental stressors, the emotional stressors and the physical stressors. The stress in the lives of lecturers due to the work place is because the demands and the pressures of teaching are far in excess of the abilities of individual lecturers. The emergence of stress levels in lecturers starts with the physiological symptoms which is generally fatigue, mental tiredness, low morale, depending upon the severity of the stressors, the physiological conditions can become serious where, it cause an increase in blood sugar levels, constant headaches, nausea, irritant behavior and outbreaks of allergies in the body. The mental symptoms on the emergence of stress in lecturers are forgetfulness, lack of concentration, withdrawal from social activities and low responses to the surroundings and environment. (Hurrell, 1995)<sup>3</sup>

The factors that contribute to the increase in levels of stress in lecturers are:

- High workloads which the lecturers are unable to cope with
- Isolation which results in the mental withdrawal
- Long hours of work which the body strains to complete
- Lack of independence (Jonge et al 2000)<sup>4</sup>
- A toxic environment
- Difficult interactions with colleagues
- Difficult interactions with the administration
- Restrictions placed on the teaching styles and the censorship of topics in lectures
- Lack of growth opportunities

- Lack of incentives that lowers the motivation levels
- Inability to exercise the full extent of skills due to management restrictions (Colligan, et al, 2006)<sup>5</sup>

### **Measurement of Stress Levels**

The measurement of stress levels are done by two measurement models. These are:

#### **Demand-Control Model**

In this model the stress levels are due to the job profile of the lecturers and the load that the lecturer has to bear at work. This generally results from the high work load combined with a low control over the job which causes the strain for lecturers and is monitored on this scale.

#### **Effort Reward Imbalance Model**

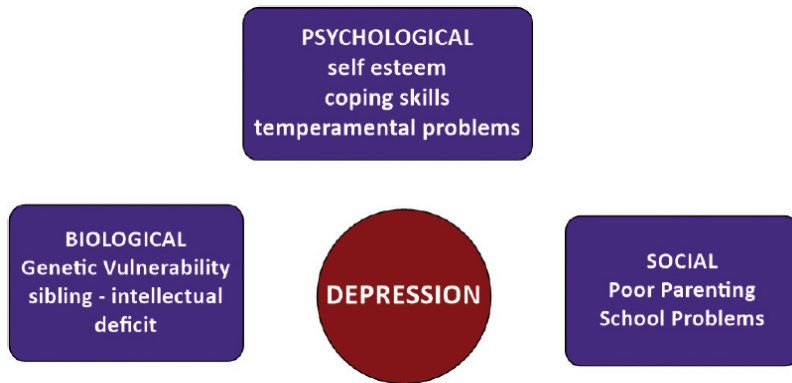
In this model the stress levels are due to the high level of efforts and work input but without the same ration of appreciation or rewards for the lecturers that causes levels of stress that produce both psychological and physiological symptoms. (Hart, Cooper, 2001)<sup>6</sup>

In studying the stress levels among educators that one area that is often neglected is the entire broad academic institutional structure which needs to be taken into account to understand why the stressors are so strong and have such a strong impact on lecturers.

There are a few categories that are associated with the stress levels in lecturers and these are:

- The unique features of the job description that they have to perform
- Their exact role in the academic institution
- The career development opportunities that are provided
- The interpersonal relationships
- The academic institution and the structure
- The working environment of the institution
- The facilities those are available or not available to teach and lecture students (Hart, 1999)<sup>7</sup>.

**Figure 2: Psychological, Biological and Social causes for depression**



The broad results of the stress that the lecturers go through are biological symptoms and social symptoms that stem from the psychological symptoms of stress. The stressors in lecturers are a result of all the combinations between the stressors that are psychological, social and biological where the breakdown of each broad category is illustrated above.

The stress related psychological disorders that arise are anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder, tension and fatigue. The conditions that surface as a result of such stressors having an impact on a lecturer are aggressive behavior, substance abuse, lack of concentration and focus which create the influences for poor performance, substandard lectures disinteresting methods of instruction and low productivity. Lecturers suffering from stress disorders have a tendency to be absent from work from long periods. The levels of hypertension that the stressors cause can lead to suicide, injury, hypertension heart attacks and mental un-balance. (Hartmut, 1978)<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 3: The Biopsychosocial Theory of Addiction**

- **biopsychosocial framework**: an approach to describing and explaining how *biological, psychological and social* factors combine and interact to influence physical and mental health



Male and female lecturers are subjected to the same type of stress but it has been reported that women are more prone to the psychological stress factors that affect them more than it affects men but men are prone to the physiological impact of stressors. Studies also indicate that this is perhaps due to the fact that women can express stress more freely but men tend to keep it inside and cope with it. There has been a 200% increase in healthcare costs for stress among lecturers which is an increase of \$1700 and its equivalent over the regular healthcare costs incurred per individual.

The results show that the five different types of stressors that were studied shows the following results in lecturers and the stress levels that they went through. 85% suffered stress because there were no breaks in between that they needed between lectures. 83% were under stress because of the long working hours that they had to work for. When time tables and routines were changed it was found that the respondents had stress levels that were lower by 30%.

53% of the lecturers feel that changes in time tables and longer breaks between lectures did not make much of a difference to their stress levels. From the study that was undertaken the p level was = 0.001 which shows that the hypothesis was accepted that workloads, interactions, incentives, job role etc. do make a difference to the stress levels that lecturers undergo (Pestonjee, Azeem, 2001)<sup>10</sup>

75% of the lecturers said that they were stressed out when the management, the students and other staff bullied and harassed them. 73% of the lecturers that showed signs of stress communicated sparingly with the other staff and colleagues. 18% were stressed out because of the lack of appreciation, 18% felt stressed out because of the changing management styles in the institution. The p level that was found for this study was p= 0.0069 which shows that the stressors of these types do have an impact on the stress levels in lecturers. Illustrated below are the different types of stressors and the effect they have on the lecturers who are exposed to such types of stressors. The change related factors that lead to high levels of stress are illustrated below:

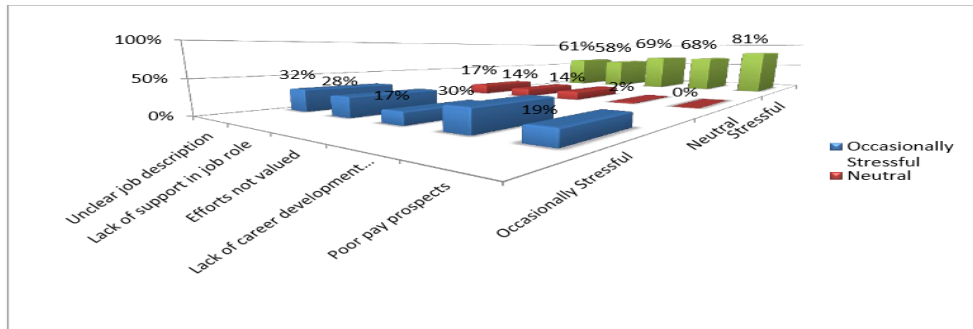
**Table 1**  
**Shows the stress level of the respondents**

*(Figure in percentage)*

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Occasionally Stressful</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Stressful</i>
1.	Unclear job description	32	17	51
2.	Lack of support in job role	28	14	58
3.	Efforts not valued	17	14	69
4.	Lack of career development opportunities	30	2	68
5.	Poor pay prospects	19	0	81

**Figure 4: The Biopsychosocial Theory of Addiction**

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The above figure 4 shows that the poor pay prospects cause the maximum stress among lecturers which is 81%. Lack of appreciation causing stress was found in 69% of the lecturers. 67.9% were stressed because of the lack of development opportunities and growth prospects in the institution. These are seen to be the three major stressors for lecturers in their occupation. The p value for this was  $p=0.003$  showing that such types of stressors have a high impact on the stress levels of the lecturers even if they may be denied by the management and the administration of the academic institution. Pestonji and Azeemji carried out a similar study and the results were also similar.

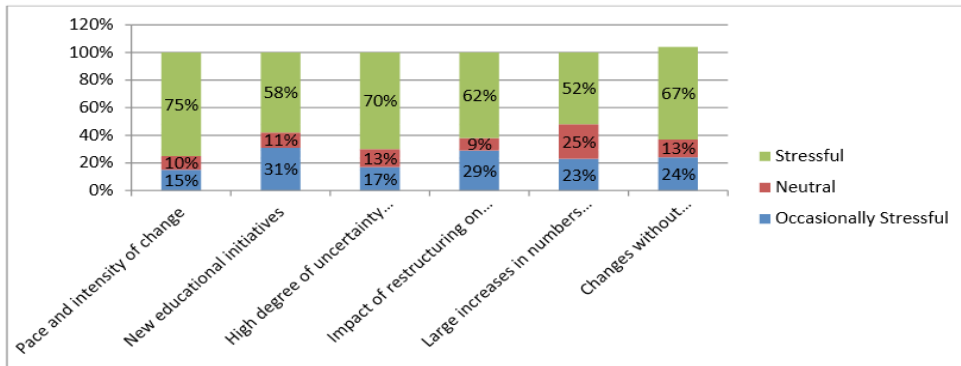
**Table 2**  
Shows the work related stressors

(Figure in percentages)

S. No.	Response	Occasionally Stressful	Neutral	Stressful
1.	Pace and intensity of change	15	10	75
2.	New educational initiatives	31	11	58
3.	High degree of uncertainty about work due to re-organization	17	13	70
4.	Impact of restructuring on workload/job responsibility	29	9	62
5.	Large increases in numbers of part time/temporary staff	23	25	52
6.	Changes without consultation	20	13	67



Figure 5: Shows the work related stressors



The above illustrations show that the results are similar; therefore the factors that affect and create the maximum stress that have severe stress impact on the lecturers in different locations and in different areas of lecture jobs. The statistics released under the Freedom of information Act shows that 58% of the lecturers and educators have been taking stress related absences from work. The research study that was conducted by the Health and Safety Executive in England showed that 41.5% of the educators said that they were highly stressed out, and that teaching was one of the most high pressure jobs in the U.K today. (Ratcliffe, 2012)<sup>12</sup>

In U.S.A 70% of the teachers that had been surveyed said they were not engaged in their jobs, 50% of all educators said they are under daily stress and found it difficult to handle such stress on a daily basis,

Figure 6: Shows the job engaged by teachers



The Gallup Report of 2014 shows that 13% of the educators are disengaged from their jobs which is 13% out of the total 18% in the U.S.A work force that is disengaged from their work.

## CONCLUSIONS

This shows that there is major issue developing with the stress levels of lecturers and other educators and this needs to be dealt with so that the quality, standard and the levels of depression and mental illness among the educators does not rise, there is an overall global increase of 10% of stress related absenteeism among educators which is a high level given the type of high pressure profession that lecturing and teaching is.

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