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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF COLLEGE TEACHERS

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Abstract *Emotional intelligence determines an individual's success at workplace and it has been realised that it is more important than even the IQ. Occupational stress is increasing among teachers on accounts of increasing workload, poor quality of students seeking admission to colleges, inadequacy of resources, involvement in non-academic activities, and poor interpersonal relations with superiors, subordinates, colleagues and students. The present study was undertaken to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress and compare the occupational stress levels of college teachers with varied levels of emotional intelligence (high, average and low). 218 college teachers were randomly selected from the colleges of Chandigarh. Emotional intelligence was found to be significantly negatively co-related with five dimensions of occupational stress and with total scores on occupational stress (r=.19) indicating that higher the emotional intelligence, lower is the occupational stress and vice versa. Significant differences existed among the college teachers with varied levels of emotional intelligence on seven dimensions of occupational stress namely role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility for others, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment, low status and on total scores of occupational stress. In most of the cases, college teachers with higher level of emotional intelligence showed lower level of occupational stress.*

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Occupational Stress, College Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching profession is quite demanding and challenging. A teacher is expected to plan, organise, implement and evaluate instruction to facilitate learning on the part of students. In addition, he is expected to design and develop curricula, provide guidance and counseling to students, undertake research, guide research, and also undertake administrative responsibilities. Teaching profession poses multiple challenges to teachers working at various levels of education system on account of ever increasing workload, number of students in a class, diversity among the students, professionalism and accountability and availability of learning technologies; emergence of newer forms of education systems (open and distance learning); declining standards of education; resource crunch; poor interpersonal relations; lack of rapport between teacher and students; and unreasonable demands from internal and external stakeholders. In addition, teachers, like any other human beings, are faced with increasing complexities in life, rapid changes-political, economic and social. Teachers, nowadays, are experiencing higher levels of stress. Haberman's (2004) review of literature showed that stress level among teachers and educational administrators has been rising dramatically over the years and the average tenure for urban teacher is only eleven years. Burnout has also become a serious concern for teachers at all levels of tenure (Brock & Grady, 2000). Cooper & Marshall (1978) classified the major causes of stress in to six categories namely, factors intrinsic to job, role in the organisation, relationships at work, career development, organisational structure and climate, and organisational interface with outside world. Dunham & Varma (1998) in their book 'Stress in Teachers', cited studies showing clear relationship between the stressors inherent in teaching and physiological systems namely- physical exhaustion/fatigue, skeleton-muscular tension/pains, heart symptoms, and high blood pressure, headaches, digestive disorders, respiratory difficulties, sleep disturbances, and voice loss. Montgomery & Rupp (2005), in a meta-analytical study to explore the diverse causes and effects of stress on teachers, observed a high average correlation between the emotional response variables and burnout showing that the degree to which teachers responds to stressful events and how satisfied they are as a consequence, either mediated through coping mechanism or not, has a strong influence on the degree of burnout they experience. They concluded that subjectively perceived quality of environment and support structures available to individual teachers, both at home and work, are important for dealing with stressful situations. Emotions have a more central role for understanding the intricate relationship between stress, burnout, personality and support variables. King & Gardner's (2006) study findings suggest

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that predominant source of work demands were relationship at work, followed by factors intrinsic to job, role factors, career development, organisational factors and interface between home and work. He also found that emotional self-awareness and the ability to understand others emotions were related to adaptive processes in which demands were appraised as challenges rather than as threats, and task focused coping strategies used rather than avoidance. Positive affect was related to use of challenge appraisals, task focused coping and high levels of self-management while negative affect was related to threat appraisals, avoidance and low levels of emotional self-management. Emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between challenge appraisal and task focused coping, and partially mediated the relationship between threat appraisal and avoidance coping.

He further proposed that appropriate skills in emotional reaction might help to build adaptive responses to work–related demands. The role of emotions in the stress process is important, as noted by Lazarus (1999), emotions and stress are interdependent – where there is stress, there is emotion.

The role of emotions in teaching and learning cannot be undermined as it involves continuous human interaction. The concept of emotional intelligence has assumed greater importance during the last two decades. It is now a well-accepted fact that EQ is more important than IQ at workplace especially in case of star performers (Goleman, 1998, 2001). Yate (1997) has listed various jobs on the basis of emotional intelligence required for performing the job successfully and satisfactorily. For those jobs that require high interaction with people, like jobs of psychiatrist, human services worker, social worker, teacher and so on, must be filled by persons having high level of emotional intelligence (Prasad, 2006). Teacher brings his emotional side to workplace everyday. The emotional well-being of the teacher is vital for his job success and achievement in life. Studies by Pool (1997) and Ediger (1997) lend support to this. Pool (1997) stated that emotional well-being is a predictor of success in academic achievement and job success among others. Ediger (1997) stated that the emotions, feelings and values are vital for persons' well-being and achievement in life.

Ioannis & Ioannis (2002) found emotional intelligence to be negatively correlated with stress at work. The results showed that respondents with high scores on overall emotional intelligence suffered less stress related to occupational environment. A study by Gardner (2005) demonstrated the effectiveness of the EI training programme in terms of improving levels of EI, decreasing feelings of stress and strain and improving the outcomes of stress. These changes were evident immediately after completion of the training program and were maintained (or improved upon) at the follow-up time period (five-week). Oginska-Bulik (2005) studied the effect of emotional intelligence on occupational stress using a sample of 330 human service workers (physicians, teachers, managers) and found a significant (though not very strong) negative relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress in the workplace. Petrides & Furnham (2006) found that high traits EI was related to lower levels of stress and higher levels of perceived control, satisfaction and commitment. Adeyemo & Ogunyemi (2006) studied the effect of emotional intelligence on occupational stress using a sample of 300 academic staffers from Nigerian University and found significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. It was also found that emotional intelligence made a significant contribution to the prediction of occupational stress. Brand (2007) found that respondents who report lower levels of emotional control and low emotional management are more likely to report higher levels of occupational stress. Augusto *et al.* (2008) studied a sample of 180 nurses and found a differential effect of emotional intelligence components in stress and health. The results showed that the nurses who scored high in clarity and emotional repair reported less stress and nurses who scored high on attention to emotions experienced greater levels of stress. Ismail *et al.* (2010), in a study of 80 academic employees, found that capability of employees to manage their own and other employees' emotions, increased their ability to control psychological stress in implementing job. Jude (2011) studied a sample of 392 secondary school teachers and found significant differences between the occupational stress of teachers with low and those with high emotional intelligence. Teachers with high emotional intelligence were found to have low occupational stress than the teachers with low emotional intelligence. Vembar & Nagarajan (2011) in a study of 480 executives from the banking industry found that executives with low emotional intelligence had higher organisational stress than executives with moderate and high emotional intelligence. Sherafatmandyari *et al.* (2012) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress and found them to be significantly related. Min (2013) found emotional intelligence to be inversely correlated to occupational stress.

From the review of literature, emotional intelligence and occupational stress thus appear to be negatively associated.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was undertaken to:

- study the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress of college teachers of Chandigarh.
- examine the differences in the stress level of college teachers of Chandigarh at varied levels of emotional intelligence.

HYPOTHESES

The study was advanced on the hypotheses that (a) there will be significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and occupational stress and its various dimensions, and (b) there will be significant differences in the occupational stress level of college teachers at varied levels of emotional intelligence (high, average and low).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A descriptive (survey) research design was used to undertake the study as it aimed at determining the relationship between the emotional intelligence and occupational stress, and examine the differences among the stress levels of college teachers at varied levels of emotional intelligence namely, high, average and low.

SAMPLE

Sample for the study comprised of 218 randomly selected college teachers from eleven degree colleges of Chandigarh.

TOOLS USED

Emotional Intelligence Scale (Hyde, Pethe & Dhar, 2002) was used to assess the emotional intelligence of college teachers. The scale consists of 34 items measuring ten factors, namely self-awareness (SA), empathy (EMP), self-motivation (SMOT), emotional stability (ESTA), managing relations (MREL), integrity (INT), self-development (SDEV), value orientation (VO), commitment (COM) and altruistic behaviour (ALT). A five-point scale strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree has been used for responses. The split-half reliability of the scale is .88 and validity worked out from coefficient of the reliability is .93.

Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava & Singh, 1981) was used to measure occupational stress as perceived by college teachers arising from various constituents and conditions of their jobs. The index consists of 46 items (28 rightly keyed and 18 wrong keyed items). The item relate to role overload (RO), role ambiguity (RA), role conflict (RC), unreasonable group and political pressures (UGPP), responsibilities for persons(RP), under participation (UNP), powerlessness (PLN), poor peer relations (PPR), intrinsic impoverishment (IMP), low status (LS), strenuous working conditions (SWC) and unprofitability (UP). Split-half reliability of the scale is .94 and Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is .90. The reliability indices for twelve subscales ranged between .54 and .84.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the values of correlation between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. Significant negative correlation was found between emotional intelligence and occupational stress (r = –.19) meaning thereby that higher the emotional intelligence, lower is the perceived occupational stress by the college teachers and vice versa. Significant negative correlations were found between emotional intelligence and five dimensions of occupational stress namely, role conflict (r = –.14), under participation (r = –.31), powerlessness (r = –.22), intrinsic impoverishment (r = –.27) and low status (r = –.22).

These findings indicate that college teachers with high emotional intelligence tend to show lesser role conflict, have lesser feeling of under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment, and low status. All other correlations were found to be insignificant. Significant positive correlation was found between emotional intelligence and dimension of responsibility for persons.

The results indicate that higher the emotional intelligence, lesser is the perceived stress arising due to role conflict. Even in the situation of conflicting roles, and contradictory instructions, the emotional intelligence helps one to stay focused and handle multiple demands. Emotionally intelligent persons are able to make intelligent decisions using a balance of emotion and reason.

Table 1: Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Dimensions of Occupational Stress

Dimensions of OS	Correlation with EI (Total)
Role Overload (RO)	0.00
Role Ambiguity (RA)	-0.13
Role Conflict (RC)	-0.14(**)
Unreasonable Group and Political Pressures (UGPP)	-0.02
Responsibilities for Persons (RP)	0.17(*)
Under participation (UNP)	-0.31(**)
Powerlessness (PLN)	-0.22(**)
Poor Peer Relations (PPR)	-0.08
Intrinsic Impoverishment (IMP)	-0.27(**)
Low Status (LS)	-0.22(**)
Strenuous Working Conditions (SWC)	-0.11
Un profitability (UP)	0.02
Occupational Stress Total (OS Total)	-0.19(**)
*p=.05, **p=.01	

The significant negative correlation with the dimension of under participation indicates that higher the emotional intelligence, the better is the ability of a person to cope with stress caused due to feeling of under participation. When cooperation is not sought for solving administrative problems or opinions are not taken in framing important departmental/ organisational policies, a feeling of under participation arises. Emotional intelligence helps individuals to stay composed in both good and bad situations and hence does not let feeling of under participation to overpower one and create stress.

The negative relation between emotional intelligence and powerlessness showed that emotional intelligence provides an ability to cope with situations when an individual's decisions/instructions are not followed or when his suggestions are not given due significance, leading to a feeling of being powerless. Emotional intelligence helps one to control and manage this emotion and thus does not let stress creep in.

Intrinsic impoverishment, that results from monotonous assignments, and inability to use varied skills at work, also showed a significant negative relationship with emotional intelligence. Since a person with high emotional intelligence has an ability to transform his negative emotions into positive productive emotion, and is motivated to work even in unfavourable situations, the stress due to intrinsic impoverishment is less.

Again, the dimension of low status was found to be negatively related to emotional intelligence, thus indicating that higher the emotional intelligence, lesser is the perception of stress due to the feeling of low status. When the higher authorities do not consider the job of the employee to be important or do not care for the employee's self-respect, the felling of low status arises and leads to stress. The emotionally intelligent individual is self confident, sure about his worth and capabilities, knows his strengths and limitations, and hence does not let this feeling of low status arise and create stress.

Emotional intelligence was found to be positively related to the dimension of 'responsibilities for persons'. This result indicates that excessive responsibility for other people's

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA

EI	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
RO	Between Groups	19.15	2	9.58	0.77
	Within Groups	2658.01	215	12.36	
	Total	2677.16	217		
RA	Between Groups	33.23	2	16.62	3.01*
	Within Groups	1186.20	215	5.52	
	Total	1219.43	217		
RC	Between Groups	50.31	2	25.15	3.47*
	Within Groups	1557.68	215	7.25	
	Total	1607.99	217		
UGPP	Between Groups	8.49	2	4.24	0.65
	Within Groups	1409.81	215	6.56	
	Total	1418.29	217		
RP	Between Groups	37.82	2	18.91	4.63**
	Within Groups	877.79	215	4.08	
	Total	915.62	217		
UNP	Between Groups	288.56	2	144.28	18.56**
	Within Groups	1671.22	215	7.77	
	Total	1959.78	217		
PLN	Between Groups	86.76	2	43.38	9.57**
	Within Groups	974.37	215	4.53	
	Total	1061.12	217		
PPR	Between Groups	15.61	2	7.81	2.06
	Within Groups	816.68	215	3.80	
	Total	832.29	217		

IMP	Between Groups	112.49	2	56.24	9.11**
	Within Groups	1327.39	215	6.17	
	Total	1439.87	217		
LS	Between Groups	56.14	2	28.07	6.49**
	Within Groups	930.15	215	4.33	
	Total	986.29	217		
SWC	Between Groups	21.34	2	10.67	2.02
	Within Groups	1134.04	215	5.28	
	Total	1155.38	217		
UP	Between Groups	0.04	2	0.02	0.01
	Within Groups	663.43	215	3.09	
	Total	663.47	217		
OS Total	Between Groups	3786.16	2	1893.08	6.42**
	Within Groups	63435.75	215	295.05	
	Total	67221.91	217		

*p=.05, **p=.01

Table 3: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

Dimensions of OS	EI	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Group differences	Mean differences	Std. Error
RO	Low	61	16.03	3.08	Low-average	0.71	0.58
	Average	96	15.32	3.49	Low-high	0.34	0.64
	High	61	15.69	3.94	Average-high	-0.37	0.58
RA	Low	61	9.79	1.78	Low-average	0.63	0.39
	Average	96	9.16	2.54	Low-high	1.03*	0.43
	High	61	8.75	2.52	Average-high	0.40	0.39
RC	Low	61	13.33	2.36	Low-average	0.45	0.44
	Average	96	12.88	2.76	Low-high	1.26*	0.49
	High	61	12.07	2.89	Average-high	0.81	0.44
UGPP	Low	61	11.03	2.27	Low-average	0.22	0.42
	Average	96	10.81	2.64	Low-high	0.53	0.46
	High	61	10.51	2.71	Average-high	0.30	0.42
RP	Low	61	8.44	1.96	Low-average	-0.07	0.33
	Average	96	8.51	1.90	Low-high	-0.97*	0.37
	High	61	9.41	2.25	Average-high	-0.90*	0.33
UNP	Low	61	13.21	2.65	Low-average	0.68	0.46
	Average	96	12.53	2.79	Low-high	2.90**	0.51
	High	61	10.31	2.91	Average-high	2.22**	0.46
PLN	Low	61	9.89	2.11	Low-average	0.42	0.35
	Average	96	9.47	2.05	Low-high	1.61**	0.39
	High	61	8.28	2.27	Average-high	1.19**	0.35
PPR	Low	61	11.16	1.68	Low-average	-0.32	0.32
	Average	96	11.48	2.11	Low-high	0.33	0.35
	High	61	10.84	1.93	Average-high	0.64	0.32
IMP	Low	61	10.87	2.59	Low-average	0.49	0.41
	Average	96	10.38	2.53	Low-high	1.84**	0.45
	High	61	9.03	2.30	Average-high	1.34**	0.41

LS	Low	61	7.66	2.06	Low-average	0.22	0.34
	Average	96	7.44	2.25	Low-high	1.25**	0.38
	High	61	6.41	1.81	Average-high	1.03**	0.34
SWC	Low	61	9.64	2.13	Low-average	0.54	0.38
	Average	96	9.10	2.28	Low-high	0.82	0.42
	High	61	8.82	2.48	Average-high	0.28	0.38
UP	Low	61	5.59	1.63	Low-average	0.03	0.29
	Average	96	5.56	1.74	Low-high	0.03	0.32
	High	61	5.56	1.90	Average-high	0.01	0.29
OS Total	Low	61	126.64	14.48	Low-average	4.00	2.81
	Average	96	122.64	18.30	Low-high	10.97**	3.11
	High	61	115.67	17.82	Average-high	6.96*	2.81

*p=.05, **p=.01

performance, or the performance of the organisation, leads to stress in those who have high emotional intelligence. Since emotionally intelligent individuals can encourage others to work, even under unfavourable conditions, and can manage relationships, they usually land up with too much of responsibility for others and thus create a source of stress for themselves.

It can be argued that emotionally intelligent people who are able to understand and regulate their emotions, understand others 'emotions, remain focused, self motivated and show exemplary behaviour tend to perceive lower levels of occupational stress. Findings of the earlier studies by Oginska-Bulik (2005), Petrides and Furnham (2006), Adeyemo & Ogunyemi (2006) lend support to the findings of the present study.

Table 2 shows the results of ANOVA for the eleven dimensions of occupational stress and its total. Significant differences were observed among college teachers at varied levels of emotional intelligence (high, average and low) on seven dimensions of occupational stress namely, role ambiguity (F= 3.01), role conflict (F=3.47), responsibility for persons (F=4.63), under participation (F=18.56), powerlessness (F=9.57), intrinsic impoverishment (F=9.11), and low status (F=6.49) and on occupational stress total (F=6.42). The differences among teachers with high, average and low levels of emotional intelligence on all other dimensions were found to be insignificant.

It is evident from Table 3 that college teachers with high levels of emotional intelligence perceived significantly lower levels of stress than the college teachers with low emotional intelligence on all these dimensions (i.e. role ambiguity, role conflict, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment, low status) and on occupational stress total . Studies by Jude (2011) and Vembar & Nagarajan (2011) support the results of the present study.

College teachers with high emotional intelligence perceived lesser occupational stress caused by the feeling of under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic impoverishment, and low status as compared to the college teachers with average emotional intelligence.

However teachers with high emotional intelligence perceived higher occupational stress due to high responsibility for other people, as compared to teachers with low or average emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the hypothesis that there will be significant negative correlation between the emotional intelligence and occupational stress and its dimensions, stands accepted for the occupational stress (total) and five of its dimensions and the hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the occupational stress levels of college teachers with varied levels of emotional intelligence, stands accepted for occupational stress total and its seven dimensions. Emotional intelligence of college teachers can be enhanced through training in various competencies of emotional intelligence and as a result occupational stress among teachers can be reduced and greater job satisfaction can be generated.

In addition, colleges, by reducing the role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and by enhancing/improving participation, empowerment and cordial relations, and working conditions, can reduce the stress levels of college teachers.

Further research can be undertaken to study the relationship of various dimensions of emotional intelligence with occupational stress, experimental studies can be undertaken to study effect of emotional intelligence on occupational stress of college teachers and the study can be replicated for

teachers working at various levels and in different types of educational institutions.

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