Relationship between Stress Management and Conflict Handling Styles of School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper the problem on “Relationship between stress management and Conflict Handling Styles of school teachers” was selected in which 300 sec. school teachers from various schools of 4 districts of Haryana were taken as sample in which the school teachers were further classified into equal no. of male, female and rural, urban area school teachers. Two tools were used for collection of data i.e. Conflict handling styles inventory prepared by investigator and Stress Management Scale by Dr. Vandana Kaushik and Dr. Namrata Arora Charpe were used. The statistical techniques like Mean and Correlation-Coefficient by Product Moment correlation method were used. In this research paper it was found there exists significant positive correlation between conflict handling styles and stress management of school teachers. The research can help in the understanding of the knowledge and skills needed by teachers in order to resolve conflict situations harmoniously in a multicultural work setting. The research can also help in the understanding of the knowledge and skills needed by teachers in order to manage stress. Understanding of stress management will increase positive outcomes and will lead to improved relationships, increased job satisfaction and increased retention of teachers in educational institutions.

Key Words: Stress Management, Conflict Handling Styles

INTRODUCTION

Stress

Stress is defined as a nonspecific response of the body to a stimulus or event (stressor). Under a general model of the stress response, when an individual experiences a stressor, the stressor will lead to a physiological response, one that can be measured by several indicators, such as elevated heart rate. In related literature, the term "stress" is used to refer to this physiological response. Stressors vary in form and can include extreme temperature or lighting, time pressure, lack of sleep, and exposure to threat or danger, among others. All stressors, however, tend to produce similar physiological responses within the body. Although several authors posit a negative linear relationship between stress and performance, other evidence suggests that this relationship is actually an inverted U shape. This hypothesis suggests that individual performance on a given task will be lower at high and low levels of stress and optimal at moderate levels of stress. At moderate levels of stress, performance is likely to be improved by the presence of enough stimulation to keep the individual vigilant and alert, but not enough to divert or absorb his energy and focus. At low levels of stress, in contrast, activation and alertness may be too low to foster effective performance, while at high levels of stress; arousal is too high to be conducive to task performance.

Teacher stress

Teaching can be a stressful occupation. The daily interactions with students and coworkers and the incessant and fragmented demands of teaching often lead to overwhelming pressures and challenges, which may lead to stress. Where work stress is unrelenting, some negative physiological, psychological, and behavioral consequences may result.

Many teachers would agree. Teaching is not only hard work; it can be full of stress. Pressure due to school reform efforts, inadequate administrative support, poor working conditions, lack of participation in school decision making, the burden of paperwork, and lack of resources have all been identified as factors that can cause stress among school staff.

Teacher stress is defined by Kyriacou (1987) as “the experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions, such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger, and depression, resulting from aspects of work as a
Stress Management refers to the wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person’s levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning.

Conflict
Conflict is known to be inseparable in all human interactions. An organization can be recognized as an entity that is attempting to move towards common goals, productivity, profit and recognized success, but within the organization itself, conflicts arise everyday relating to various factors on which employees, managers and departments will disagree. The intensity and the seriousness of these conflicts will vary dramatically from amicable disagreement to open conflict, such as strike action. It is important however to recognize the uses of conflict. In a controlled manner, conflict can stimulate creativity and action to a project, or even an organization. Conflict can be a serious problem in an organization. It can create conditions that make it nearly impossible for employees to work together. On the other hand, conflict also has a less well known positive side.

Conflict can be defined "as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about”.

The five independent dimensions of interpersonal conflict handling styles are:
1. Dominating Style: When one person seeks to satisfy his or her own interests, regardless of the impact on the other parties to the conflict, he or she is competing. It is also called a competing style.
2. Integrating Style: When the parties to conflict each desires to fully satisfy the concern of all parties, we have cooperation and the search for a mutually beneficial outcome.
3. Avoiding Style: A person may recognize that conflicts exist and want to withdraw from it or suppress it. Low concern for self and others is identified in this style.
4. Obliging Style: When one party seeks to appease an opponent, that party may be willing to place the opponent’s interests above his or her own. Low concern for self and high concern for other is identified in this style.
5. Compromising Style: When each party to the conflict seeks to give up something, sharing occurs, resulting in a compromising, there is no clear winner or loser.

Justification of the study
Understanding conflict handling styles and how they are perceived by others is a critical process. The training related to conflict management and stress management for school personnel is seldom addressed. The spiraling nature of conflicts in educational institutions over past decade sends a clear signal that there is need for more intensive study of conflict and stress management in educational institutions.

The current competitive environment in the world of business does not restrict itself to competition among educational institutions. Competition exists as well between education administrators who compete for resources within their institutions in search of goal achievements for the institutions or for personal gains. Such competition usually leads to conflicts and stress which is inevitable in institutions and is considered a natural aspect of social relationship. Each individual involved in a conflict and stress may react to it differently as a result of the situational variables perceived as well as the personality of the individual. The main objective of this study is to examine the stress management and conflict handling styles of teachers of schools. The research will help to examine the relationship between conflict handling styles and stress management and its effect on decision making of educational administrators because a poor psychosocial work environment may be the result of excessive or conflicting work demands. As
conflicts and stress are sensitive issues, the knowledge of conflicts and stress in a diverse multicultural environment such as educational institutions schools is crucial in ensuring the success of institutional operations. The dearth of research in this area would greatly help educational institutions by providing an insight into the relationship between decision making, stress management and conflict handling styles of educational administrators. A review of literature shows that research focusing on stress management of educational administrators as well as their conflict handling mode preference is lacking. The research will help in the understanding of the knowledge and skills needed by education administrators in order to intervene and resolve stress and conflict situations harmoniously in a multicultural work setting. It will give a better understanding of the impact on decision making of individual approaches in resolving conflicts and stress. The delineation of research question is to find out the various methods of conflict handling employed by teachers in schools and significant relationship in conflict handling styles and stress management. Thus study is significant because conflict and stress is something that happens in every institution for the growth and development of the institution. Understanding of conflict management styles and stress management will increases positive conflict outcomes and will lead to improved decision making resulting in improved relationships, increased job satisfaction and increased retention of teachers in educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Relationship between Stress Management and Conflict Handling Styles of School Teachers.

Operational Definitions of the Related Terms:

Some of the terms in the above statement need to be defined for the purpose of study, to avoid any vagueness, the operational definitions of important terms included in the statement of problem are described as under:

- **Conflict** - It is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affects something that the first party cares about.
- **Conflict Handling Styles** - It is a process of employing various approaches for the sake of reducing conflict among groups.
- **Stress** - It is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it. It is a condition of disequilibrium within the intellectual, emotional and physical state of the individual.
- **Stress Management** - It refers to the wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person’s levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning.

Objectives of the Study

- To know the different styles of conflict handling of school teachers.
- To examine the relationship between stress management and conflict handling styles of teachers.
- To reduce affective stress at all levels and to enable the teachers to select and to use the appropriate styles of managing stress so that various situations can be effectively dealt with.

Hypotheses of the Study

- There is no significant correlation among different conflict handling styles.
- There is no significant relationship in conflict handling styles and stress management of school teachers.
Sample of Study
The sampling frame comprises all school teachers. In view of the objectives of the present study the investigator collected the data from the teachers of government and non-government schools of four districts of Haryana. The present study was conducted on 300 school teachers, out of 300 teachers 150 were male, and 150 were female. Which were further subdivided into 75 rural and 75 urban for both the categories.

Tools
(A) The investigator has used Stress Management Scale by Dr. Vandana Kaushik and Dr. Namrata Arora Charpe
(B) Conflict handling styles inventory prepared by investigator

Results
Hypothesis No.1 – There is no significant inter-correlation between different conflict handling styles.

Table - 1
Inter-correlation between different conflict handling style of school teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Conflict Handling Styles</th>
<th>Dominating/competing</th>
<th>Integrating</th>
<th>Avoiding</th>
<th>Obliging</th>
<th>Compromising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dominating/competing</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.321</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.462</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

df = 298  .01 = .148  .05 = .113

Hypothesis No.2 – There is no significant relationship in conflict handling styles and stress management of school teachers.

Table - 2
Correlation coefficient between conflict handling styles and stress management of school teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Mean/df</th>
<th>Coefficient of correlation</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conflict Handling Styles</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>Significant at both levels i.e. .05 &amp; .01 level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

df = 598  .05 = .062  .01 = .081

Findings of the study
- Some variables of dimensions of conflict handling style have no significant correlation like dominating with avoiding, obliging and compromising similarly integrating with avoiding, obliging further no significant correlation between avoiding and compromising and obliging with compromising. Some dimensions of conflict handling style have significant correlation with each other like dominating with integrating, integrating with obliging, similarly avoiding with obliging etc. It is further analyzed that the integrating style is the most desirable. In the case of the integrating style a high concern for self and others
exist. The integrating style is considered to be the best. This style is also associated with better work performance. Integrating is also positively correlated with perceptions of effectiveness and people who use the style also tend to perceive themselves as relationally and situationally appropriate. The results reveal that the integrating and obliging styles are found to be in association with each other. If a superior is perceived as having integrating style, this will also augment other style e.g. obliging styles at his/her disposal. On the other hand dominating is least correlated with all other styles. Negative correlation exists between dominating and integrating style.

- There is significant positive correlation between conflict handling style and stress management. It may be because those who are capable to manage stress also handle conflicts effectively. Also participants with high harm avoidance and low self-directedness report increased stress while low harm avoidance and high self-directedness appear to be a protective factor against the development of distress. Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways strengthens trust between people and relieves workplace stress and tension.

**Educational Implications of the Study**

The most outstanding characteristics of any research are that it may contribute something new to the development of the area concerned. So also is the case in educational research. On the basis of the findings, some implications are derived for the benefits of students, teachers, head of schools, administrators and the school system as whole.

- The present study reveals some interesting results that would be helpful to the teachers, educationists and educational planners as well. So the study can help educational institutions by providing an insight into the relationship between conflict handling styles and stress management.

- The study can help teachers to organize and maintain certain environment which enhances their emotional stability, decisiveness and other positive behavioral aspects which in turn help the teachers to take challenges like using innovative methods in their teaching that boost their competency.

- Teachers have been considered as the backbone of any education system. Teachers are the person who educate the youth of society who in turn become the leader of the next generation. This is only the teacher who en-lights the students as well as the society by imparting knowledge and experiences. It is said that good performance of students depends upon effective teaching of their teachers. As the quality of education to a large extent depends upon the teachers, so maximum efforts should be put into providing stress and conflict free environment at working place.

- Results of this study indicate that teacher stress is an area of concern that is in need of significant attention. By identifying causes of stress, it is hoped that supports can be utilized in a preventative manner to help teachers cope with stress on the job.

- Overall, responses from teachers indicated that in many cases they felt very vulnerable in their teaching roles. Given these feelings, it is important that all parties involved should begin to collaborate in further efforts to create awareness and support for teacher stress concerns. Within this process, school psychologists should take on an active role by supporting students and teachers through direct and indirect servicing.

- There should be good co-ordination between teachers and head of institutions. Teachers should be included in the decision making process of organization. This promotes a healthy communication flow in the organization.

- The research can help in the understanding of the knowledge and skills needed by teachers in order to intervene and resolve conflict situations harmoniously in a multicultural work setting. The research can also help in the understanding of the knowledge and skills needed by teachers in order to manage stress.
• Understanding of conflict management styles and stress management increase positive conflict outcomes and lead to improved relationships, increased job satisfaction and increased retention of teachers in educational institutions.

Suggestions for further Study
This section highlights several areas where additional research could prove insightful:
• The present study was confined only to school teachers of four districts of Haryana. A similar study can be done in other districts of Haryana as well with the same variables, in order to have more conclusive results.
• Present study can also be replicated at college and university level teachers.
• Since only a few of the important variables have been studied in present study, it is also suggested that researcher should explore the relationship and effects of some other variables on conflict handling styles.
• Comparative study can also be conducted to study the stress management of college and school teachers of different personality dimensions.
• The impact of stress management on academic achievement, college adjustment, self-concept, achievement motivation can be studied.
• Future research should attempt to validate these findings by using other design and data collection techniques such as direct observation of individual behaviors either in simulations or in real-life work situations.
• It is advisable to conduct some longitudinal studies as it is likely to go a long way to evaluate the variables of the present study on students’ personalities.
• A comparative study can be conducted between two states.

Bibliography