

Comparing the Stress Level of Teachers at Public and Private Universities in Pakistan

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to compare the stress level of teachers at public and private universities. An instrument developed by Glazer (1978) was used to assess the stress level of teachers. It consisted of twenty opposite sets of questions based on work experience. A total number of 307 teachers from public and private universities in Islamabad participated as sample of the study. Results of the study revealed that majority of university teachers reported high level of stress. The teachers of public sector universities reported moderate level of stress at their workplace while teachers of private sector universities reported high level of stress at their work place. There was no difference found in the stress level of male and female teachers. The implication of the findings is some measures should be taken by the private universities on how to assist their teachers to overcome their stress problem. Some measures could be: universities may focus more on the stress control techniques in the form of counseling, workshops, and seminars among teachers as well as students. So that, they may focus more on the students' progress.

Keywords: stress level, university teachers, public and private universities, gender, workplace

Introduction

In universities, teachers are facing higher stress level than nonacademic staff. Insufficient resources, poor management practices, work overload, insufficient recognition and job insecurity are some of the factors of causing stress among university teachers. Stress in university teachers causes a negative impact on their personal welfare and professional work (Gillespie et al., 2010). Negative consequences of stress include negative effects on the physical health, poor performance, and poor

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students' outcomes. Teachers with greater stress are less likely to create a conducive classroom environment (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016).

Teachers shape the lives of our children. Teachers facilitate child's learning and socio-emotional development (Greenberg, et al., 2016). In an energetic and positive learning environment, both students and teachers learn from each other. There are multiple rewards of good teaching for the students and teachers alike. These rewards are source of generating enthusiasm, satisfaction, excitement and sense of purpose in the life of teachers. Stress among teachers can cause difficulties in the life of teachers at workplace. Major stressors in the life of teachers are to bring balance in students' needs & problems, parents' expectations and curriculum demands (Hayes, 2006). Encountering increased level of stress at workplace is not only threatening for the individual but also harmful for the organization (Masuku & Muchemwa, 2015). High stress among teachers are not only affecting teacher well-being and health but also causing teacher job dissatisfaction, burnout, poor performance, and lack of engagement (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016).

There are multiple theories which discuss the stress and its coping strategies. Selye's theory discusses about the systemic stress which relates stress with physiological functions. According to Selye's stress can be described in terms of biological response of body to physiological mechanism. Stress is a nonspecific response of our body towards the demand on it. There is a limited capacity of our body to respond to demands or stressors. At workplace individuals face lot of demands which causes a constant stress for them. Stress with high intensity with long period of time definitely exhausts the ability of individual to cope with stress. Selye is considered as the father in the field of stress researches (Selye, 1974). Lazarus (1999, 2001) in his theory, identifies the primary and secondary appraisal. He ascertains three primary appraisals: harm/loss, threat and challenge. Secondary appraisal identifies the strategy of individual for coping the situation keeping in view the resources. Appraisals are associated with emotions which explain either positive or negative appraisals.

According to Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (2000), stress can be stated as feelings, result of an individual reaction to the demands on his/her energy. Stress is a natural phenomenon of life and occurs as an outcome of change. These changes can be positive or negative. All stresses are not bad. Some changes which cause stress are good and known as positive stress and challenge. In certain a situation in which individual is unable to cope with the high intensity of stress may cause psychological and physical changes in person.

Stress is described as mind-body naturally occurring response to the emergency and demanding situation. It can be episodic or chronic in nature. Individual responds to stimuli either psychological or physical are commonly known as demands or stressors. When individual encounter demand or stressor, s/he also analyze encounter in the

context of its significance. Individual's evaluation process is the result of its cognitive appraisal. In the case, when cognitive appraisal process of individual defines the negative response towards stressor as individual perceive stressor as harmful or threatening then it is termed as distress. Distress is linked with adverse health outcomes, turnover and absenteeism (Quick, Horn, & Quick, 1987; Quick et al., 2000). Stress can also be described as a way of individual's thinking and behaving which lead to tension, physical disease and worry. It is caused by interaction between organism and environment (Woolfolk & Richardson, 1978).

Mostly stress is perceived as negative. Stress has a positive side as well. Selye (1974) introduced a term eustress which can be explained as an event which follows something positive. Another side of stress is its positive value. People also use stress for enhancing the performance. Some professionals take deadlines and heavy workload as positive challenge for increasing their work quality (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Stranks (2005) also favors that all types of stresses are not bad for people. Certain level of optimistic or positive stress is important for the individual to perform well. Some people have a capacity to perform well and deal with high but positive pressure. This is known as 'butterfly feeling' or classic fight response. Such type of stress is also felt by people before going for interview or examination hall. Mature leaders and competent managers have the ability of positive stress. Positive stress helps to fuel achievement, improve performance and wellbeing. Skakon et al. (2011) also favor the stress to some extent and consider it essential for completion of a task efficiently. So, positive stress has significant effect on the effectiveness and satisfaction of managers. It is also evident in teaching profession that positive stress enables teachers to perform better in teaching tasks. Positive stress enhances the performance of teachers. If task is not challenging and rewarding the performance of the teachers will suffer (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2010).

With positive side of stress, the harms stress cannot be ignored. Most common stressor for the teachers are poor working conditions, ill-discipline and low motivation of students. Stress among teaching profession throughout the world is getting worse. Most of the teachers experience stress due to demoralization, disillusion and exhaustion in work (Cosgrove, 2000). Increased workload, long working hours and deadline pressures are also the cause of stress among the teachers working in schools (Masuku & Muchemwa, 2015).

Teachers encounter stress throughout the journey of their career. Teachers become worry about their students due to the emotional attachment and close working with their students. Stressors among teachers include mountains of never seeming diminish paperwork, accumulation of hours to the professional development, keep up the test score high, meet the litany of standard and making the career place. Teachers may start honoring and take pride of their work for getting relief from stress. The stress teachers are taking today will not be with them tomorrow (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2010).

Delegation of responsibilities and deadlines are also the causes of stress. Stress with high intensity leads to ill health. Stress also destroys the quality of individual's life (Stranks, 2005).

For overcoming the harms of distress, stress coping strategies may be followed by educational intuitions. Mindfulness program, mentoring programs, workplace wellness program, social and emotional learning programs may help to reduce the teachers stress (Greenberg et al., 2016).

Mostly educational institutions focus on the academic success of students. Teachers are the key contributor in the whole process. Unfortunately universities are paying least attention to teachers' stress. The result is that they cannot perform even their routine tasks with as much that proficiency and dedication which is demanded. The present research on stress in the university teachers will not only capture the attention of the researchers and educational institutions but will also provide useful information for how to cope with the stress and how universities can contribute in minimizing the stress for teachers.

Rationale of Study

Above discussion on stress among teachers provides a basis for research about stress among the university teachers. Teaching is multitasking and teachers at all levels are performing multiple tasks. University teachers are also performing numbers of teaching and non-teaching assignments. Pressures to complete all these teaching and non-teaching assignments on time are also causes of stress. Two sectors public and private for the higher education are working side by side in Pakistan. Both public and private educational institutions are facing different circumstances and work environment. Present study explored the stress among teachers in both public and private universities.

We cannot ignore the negative consequences of stress. Stress has many harmful effects on the physiological mechanism of body. Those who have low self-efficacy are at higher risk. These illness can be in the form of poor functioning of immune system, upper respiratory illness (Schaubroeck et al., 2001) and heart disease (Kivimäki et al., 2006).

Prolonged stress is not only harmful for the individual but also detrimental for the organizational output. This is also a fact that stress in normal range is good because it also works as motive to do something better. According to Palmer et al. (2004), stressed employees are likely to be less productive, unhealthy, feel insecure at workplace and poorly motivated. Some symptoms of stress are related with the behavior which include absence, reduction in production, and turnover. Increased smoking, forgetting, rapid speech and sleep disorder have also been observed in the people due to stress (De Croon et al., 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2013)

Much of the focus of organizations is on the increase of productivity and ignoring the employees who are the source of increase in productivity. Organizations may conduct surveys for measuring the stress of their employees and especially work on the strategies for overcoming stress among employees.

Not only the business organizations are dealing with the problem of stress among employees, educational organizations are also facing the same. Stressed workers cannot be ignored by any organization especially in educational institutions. Future of our generation is dependent on the teachers. Teachers with stress cannot perform better and put in their best for the students' progress.

Teaching is a profession where teachers promise for best teaching, but also want personal satisfaction rewards and accomplishment which is being unfulfilled. In spite of this, teachers are facing stultifying conditions, tensions, and unrealistic demands. Professionals including teachers facing pressures. These are in the form of upgraded knowledge and complex responsibilities, social changes, role ambiguity, varied professional expectations and greater job demands. Result of all these are in the form of decrease in personal as well as professional satisfaction (Gold & Roth, 2005). Students' academic outcomes and teaching performance is also linked to teacher stress. Stress among teachers results in lower students' achievement and higher schools costs (Greenberg et al., 2016).

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, researches on stress among teachers are still less focused especially in universities. Students of universities are our future contributors for development of our country. Stressed teachers cannot produce productive students.

Conceptual Framework of Study

The purpose of present research is to compare the stress levels of teachers at public and private universities. The main construct of the study is stress among teachers. For this purpose teachers working in public and private universities were selected. An instrument on stress control lifestyle was used. The conceptual framework of this study is based upon the theoretical orientation of Friedman and Rosenman's Type A and Type B theory. During 1950s, Friedman and Rosenman defined Type A and Type B personalities. They pointed out that Type A people want to achieve more in less time, have high aspiration, highly competitive, work hard, hate failures and measure their success in terms of quality with high risk of heart disease. While Type B people are less competitive, more relaxed and are lower in risk. Type AB are striving type (Friedman, 1996). Glazer (1978) developed a questionnaire on stress control lifestyle based on these behavioral styles Type A, Type B and Type AB.

Stress control lifestyle instrument consisted of 20 pairs of statements. They described five types of behavior. These are type A1, A2, AB, B2, and B1. Type A1, A2 behavioral styles are more inclined towards the very high and high level of stress, Type

AB are more inclined towards the moderate stress while Type B1 and B2 are more inclined towards the less level of stress. Common characteristics of type A behavior are being competitive, always in hurry, being aggressive, do many things at the same time, ignores the stress signs, being impatient and fast moving.

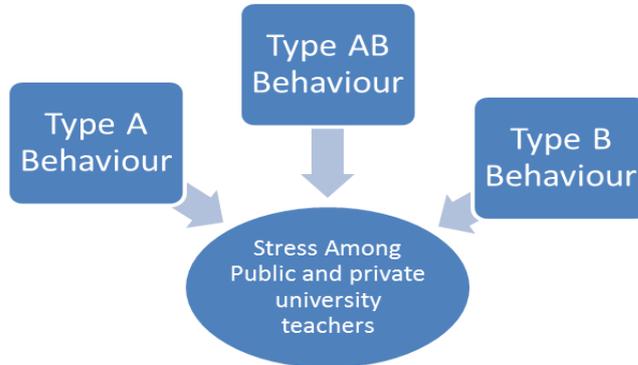


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of Study about Stress among teachers of public and private university*

People with Type B behavior are generally relaxed and adequately cope with stress. People with type AB behavior have the qualities of both type A and type B and they also have the tendency to slip into the type A behavior category.

Objectives

Objectives of study were:

1. To determine the stress level of private and public universities' teachers.
2. To determine whether there is any significant difference in the stress level of public and private universities' teachers.
3. To determine whether there is any significant difference in the stress level of male and female teachers.

Hypotheses

1. H01: Stress control behavioral patterns of university teachers are independent of public and private sector.
2. H02: Stress control behavioral patterns of university teachers are independent of their gender.

Methodology

Present study was comparative survey which employed quantitative research design. All public and private sector university teachers of Islamabad Capital Territory were the population of the study. 307 teachers from three public and three private universities were selected as sample of the study by applying stratified sampling

technique. 150 teachers were from public sector universities while 157 teachers were from the private sector universities. From 307 teachers, 143 were male participants while 163 were female participants.

Instrument of Study

Stress level of university teachers was assessed with the use of Stress control life-style instrument developed by Glazer (1978) based on twenty opposite sets of questions ranging from 1-7. These statements described the work experience. There are five types of stress control life-style: A1, A2, AB, B2 and B1. Scores from 110-140 describe very high level of stress and indicates A1 type of personality, whereas the scores from 80-109 indicate A2 personality type and is associated with high level of stress. While scores from 60-79 describes the moderate level of stress with AB types. Whereas scores from 30-59 and 20-29 describe low level of stress and very low level of stress with B2 and B1 types respectively.

Results of Study

Table 1

Description of Stress level among Teachers (N=307)

Stress Control life-style	Frequency	Percentage
Type A1	3	1
Type A2	224	73.0
Type AB	78	25.4
Type B2	2	.7
Type B1	0	0

Results show that majority of the teachers were experiencing a high level of stress and fall under the stress control behavioral style A whereas a large number of teachers were also experiencing the moderate level of stress. No teacher was found in the category of very low stress. Fewer teachers were having the very high level of stress and low level of stress. The findings of this study also matched with the study conducted by fSlišković and Seršić, (2011) which also identified that university teachers are facing high level of stress.

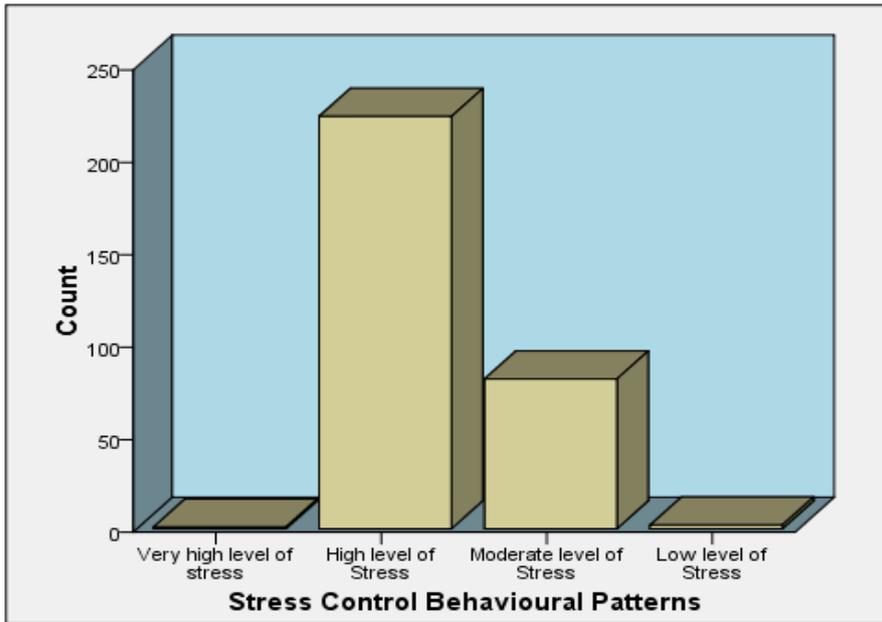


Figure 2. *Stress level among University Teachers*

Results of the Figure 1 revealed that majority of the university teachers were experiencing high level of stress at their workplace.

Table 2

Stress Level of Teachers at Public and Private Universities

S.no	Statements regarding Type B1, B2 types	Public Sector	Private Sector	Statements regarding Type A1, A2 types
		Mean/SD	Mean/SD	
1	Doesn't mind leaving things temporarily	3.60/1.31	4.74/1.02	Must get things finished once started
2	Calm and unhurried about appointments	3.88/1.19	4.85/.791	Never late for appointments
3	Not competitive	3.85/1.40	4.78/1.05	Highly competitive
4	Listens well, let's others finish talking	3.97/1.31	4.75/.933	Interrupts/ Anticipates others in conversation
5	Never in hurry	3.95/1.21	4.73/1.04	Always in hurry
6	Wait calmly	4.07/1.30	4.83/1.05	Uneasy when waiting
7	Easy going	3.94/1.31	4.93/.914	Always going full speed ahead

8	Takes one thing at a time	3.97/1.37	5.01/.984	Do more than one thing at a time
9	Slow and deliberate speech	3.93/1.24	4.89/1.10	Vigorous and forceful in speech
10	Satisfying self, not others	3.98/1.44	4.84/1.04	Wants recognition from others
11	Slows things down	4.14/1.45	4.83/1.03	Does things fast
12	Relaxed	4.02/1.39	5.01/1.17	Hard driving
13	Expresses feelings openly	4.00/1.42	4.89/1.03	Holds feelings in
14	Has a large number of interests	3.97/1.42	4.67/1.06	Few interests outside work
15	Satisfied with job	3.98/1.31	4.83/1.00	Ambitious
16	Never sets own deadlines	3.93/1.32	4.76/1.14	Often sets own deadlines
17	Feels limited responsibility	3.93/1.36	4.69/1.02	Always feels responsible
18	Never judges things in terms of numbers	3.95/1.43	4.83/1.20	Often judges things in terms of numbers
19	Casual about work	3.97/1.38	4.87/.985	Takes work very seriously
20	Not very precise	3.91/1.16	5.11/1.05	Very precise

Seven point scale was used for describing the stress control behavioral patterns of teachers in both public and private universities. The mean score (4-7), indicates types A1, A2 which explain the high stress level. The mean score (1-3), indicates B2, B1 behavioural patterns of teachers with low level of stress. The mean score between the mean value 3 and 4 describes the type AB behavioral style which is associated with low level of stress.

Results of mean value shows that teachers in public universities scored high on statement “11” so inclined towards “does things fast” while lower on statement “1” so, more inclined towards “leave things temporarily”. While teachers in private universities scored high on the statement “20, 12, 8” which indicates that they are more inclined towards “very precise”, hard driving and they do multiple tasks at a time consecutively. Teachers of private universities scored low on the statement 14 and inclined towards the “little interests outside work”.

In public universities, the teachers have moderate level stress at their workplace and are more inclined towards “leave things temporarily”, “calm about appointments”, “competitive attitude of employees”, “listen to others”, “hurry attitude”, “easy going”, “one task at a time”, “deliberate in speech”, “self-satisfaction”, “large interests”, “job

satisfaction”, “deadlines”, “responsibility”, “judgment in numbers”, “precise and casual about work”. They only have high level of stress that is exhibited by “uneasy while waiting”, “does things fast”, “hard driving”, and “can holds feelings”.

In case of private sector universities, the findings reveal that teachers have high level of stress and are more inclined towards “finished things once started”, “hurried about appointments”, “highly competitive”, “interrupts conversation”, “hurried attitude”, “can’t wait”, “tries to work on more than one task”, “vigorous speech”, “recognition from job”, “quickly tries to finish the job”, “hard driving holds feelings”, “more concentration on work”, “ambitious”, “sets deadlines”, “have feelings of responsibility”, “quantitative”, “precise and “take work seriously”.

Results also indicate that in public sector university teachers are more tending towards the type AB behavioral style regarding the stress control while teachers in private sector universities have more inclination towards the type A stress control behavior.

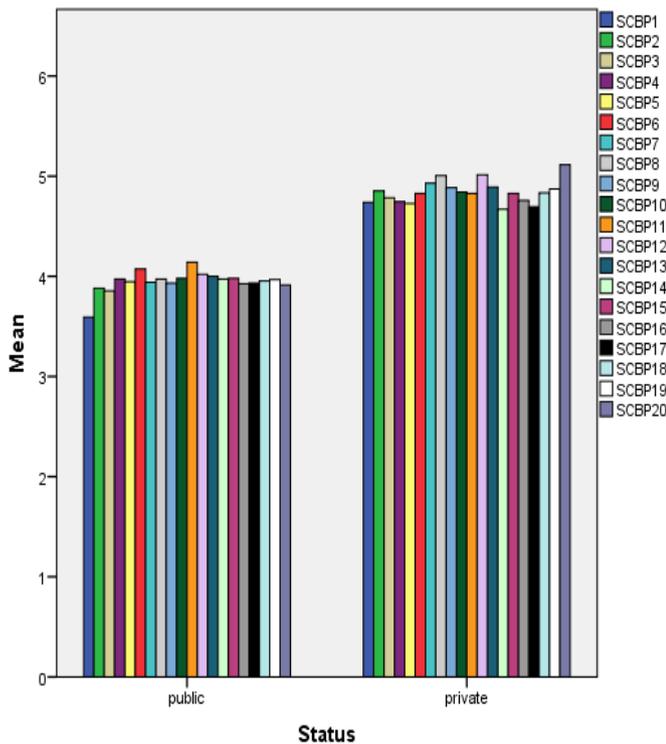


Figure 3. Stress Level of Teachers at Public and Private Universities

Results on comparison of public and private university teachers on twenty statements regarding the stress control behavioral style revealed that private university teachers were experiencing high level of stress. While in the public universities, teachers were experiencing moderate level of stress at their workplace.

Table 3

Comparison of stress among public and private university teachers

University Teachers	N	mean	Df	t	Sig
Public Sector	150	79	305	19.052	.000
Private Sector	157	97			

Results regarding stress control behavioral pattern of public and private university teachers indicate that teachers of public sector universities were falling under the behavioral pattern of type AB, which describes the moderate level of stress regarding the work environment. Because values show that teachers are at the marginal type of AB stress control behavioral style that is why can take a shift towards the type A stress control behavioral style. In case of private sector university teachers, results indicate that teachers fall under the category of Type A2 stress control behavioral style. This also reject the hypothesis H01 that university teachers have same Stress control behavioral style in spite of public and private sector.

In a study conducted by Aslam (2013) identified that work load is a cause of stress among both private and public colleges but teachers of private colleges are facing more workload than teachers of public colleges. Teacher in the private colleges also mentioned that time management is also reason of stress among teachers. Teachers have to manage the classes, meetings and extra efforts for betterment. So workload management in limited time brings stress

Table 4

Comparing the Males and Females Teachers Stress level (N=307)

Gender	N	Mean	Df	t	Sig.
Males	143	87.41	305	1.368	.172
Females	164	89.29			

Results of mean-value indicate that both males and females have type A2 stress control behavioral style. This explains that both males and females fall under the same category and have high stress level. So, stress control behavioral patterns are independent of gender, thus accepts the null hypothesis H02 and also insignificant. Another research conducted by Slišković and Seršić (2011) reported opposite results than the present study. Stress in females was found higher than males.

Discussion

The purpose of present study was to compare the stress levels of teachers at public and private universities. For this purpose total three hundred and seven teachers from universities of Islamabad were selected as a sample of study through stratified sampling technique. 150 teachers from public while 157 from private sector were selected from total six universities. For analyzing the objectives and hypotheses of the study, mean, standard deviation, and t-test was applied.

First objective of the study was to determine the stress level of private and public universities' teachers. Results of the frequencies and percentages showed that majority of the university teachers were having high stress level. Results also divulged that no teacher was found on type B1 behavior pattern and few teachers were having the type B2 and A1 behavioral style. According to Robbins, Judge, and Sanghi (2009) people with type as behavioral style are under high level stress. They put themselves in pressure and make deadlines for themselves. In contrast to the Type As behavioral patterns, people with Type BS behavioral style are less nervous, easygoing, many supportive friends and relaxed (Mahajan & Rastogi, 2011).

For further clarification, mean score and standard deviation was also calculated on all twenty opposite pairs of items. Results revealed that in public sector universities, teachers were more tended towards the type AB (people who display moderate level of stress) behavioral patterns while responding majority of the statements as: "leaves things temporarily", "calm about appointments", "competitive attitude", "listen well", "not in hurry", "easy going", "perform one task at a time", "deliberate speech", "self-satisfaction", "satisfied with their jobs", "setting deadlines", "limited responsibility", "qualitative judgment", "casual about work", and "not precise". While in fewer statements teachers of public universities displayed type A2 (People who display high level of stress) behavioral patterns as "uneasy while waiting", "hard driving", "do things fasts" and "hold feelings". As far as teachers of private universities were concerned, they displayed type A2 behavioral patterns in all of the statements, except "do more than one thing at a time", "hard driving" and "very precise" where they exhibit type A1 behavioral pattern (person show very high level of stress). Results of Wainwright and Calnan (2002) explain that people with type A behavioral patterns have more risk of experiencing the serious effects of stress. Another study identified that there are two types of stressor: challenge and hindrance. Stressor related with work pressures, workload and time urgency work as a source of challenge and employees work better. While there are some stressors which become hindrance in the accomplishment of goals like ambiguity about their role, office politics and red tape work as hindrance stressors in performance (Wallace et al., 2009).

Second objective of the study was to determine whether there is significance difference of the stress level based on different types of universities. Results identified

that public university teachers were having the moderate level of stress while Private university teachers were having the high level of stress.

Third objective of the study was to determine whether there is significance difference of the stress level of male and female teacher. It was derived from the results that both male and female teachers have same stress control behavioral patterns and do not differ in their patterns due to their gender. A study by Matud (2004) explains that women relate stress with health and family related events while men relate stress causes with work related events, finance and relationships.

Conclusions

The findings of the study reveals that majority of the teachers have high level of stress. While it is also concluded that teachers of public and private sector universities are significantly different on their level of stress. Teachers of public sector universities have moderate level of stress among teachers. Teachers of private universities exhibit high level of stress among teachers. Whereas, while describing the differences in male and female teachers stress control behavioral patterns, no difference is found. Both male and female teachers have high level of stress therefore, it is recommended that some measures may be taken by the private universities to assist their teachers to overcome their stress problem. Few proposals may be followed for reducing the stress level among teachers. Universities may identify the stress enhancing factors among employees and take specific measures to eliminate or reduce the stress. In addition to this, recognition and rewards may be given to employees for better performance and reduce stress among employees. Organization may encourage the social support groups and mentoring to employees. Trainings about time management may reduce the stress level of employees. Availability of counselling services to the teachers may also improve the stress among teachers. Universities may also encourage supportive work attitude among teachers to reduce the stress level. Furthermore, organization may work on the better interpersonal relations among employees through formal and informal gatherings.

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