

**A STUDY ON STRESS AMONG LECTURERS  
IN TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES IN  
PAHANG AND TERENGGANU**

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**A PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
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## ABSTRACT

Stress is not a new phenomenon and is experienced by almost everybody at one time or another. Stress can be work-related or non-work related. Since work occupies a major part of most of our lives, many of us at times find work-life stressful. Teaching or lecturing, like most human service occupations is a stressful job. In Malaysia, a large number of teachers and college lecturers are opting for early retirement. This can be taken as a sign of work-related stress.

This study attempts to examine some of the stress factors among lecturers in teacher training colleges in Pahang and Terengganu. The stress factors were grouped into two namely, work-related (*role ambiguity, the lack of status, changes taking place*) and non-work related (*home-work interface*). The study focused on the relationship between these factors and the demographic variables of the respondents such as age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, qualifications, lecturing experience and dual-career.

A field survey was carried out with the instrument adopted from Travers and Cooper (1996). It was modified to suit the Malaysian setting and some new items were also added. A sample of 200 lecturers from four teacher training colleges, two in Pahang and another two in Terengganu, responded to the survey. The data collected were factor analyzed to test for validity and reliability.

Twenty-eight hypotheses were developed based on the relationship of the four stress factors and the demographic variables. Pearson's  $r$ , T-tests and One-way analysis

of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses. Out of the twenty-eight hypotheses, three were supported while the rest were not. The study discovered that *role ambiguity*, *the lack of status* and *home-work interface* differ significantly with the ethnicity of the respondents. The rest of the demographic variables such as age, gender, qualifications and so on do not have a significant relationship with the stress factors.

# APPROVAL PAGE

TITLE OF PROJECT PAPER: A STUDY ON STRESS AMONG LECTURERS  
IN TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES IN  
PAHANG AND TERENGGANU.

NAME OF AUTHOR: SWARAN KAUR

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The undersigned certify that the above candidate has fulfilled the condition of the project paper prepared in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Management.


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Date: 28<sup>th</sup> february 1998

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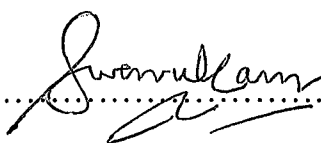
  
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by reference notes and a bibliography is appended.

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> February 1998

Signature .....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Swaran Kaur', written over a dotted line.

Name: SWARAN KAUR

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## DEDICATION

*This Study is dedicated to:*

*My late father, Tara Singh, who had always  
instilled in me the importance of education and a quest for knowledge.  
Pa, this is for you!*

*My husband, Balan*

*My kids, Natasha, Praveen and Arvind*



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Stress and burnout are among the two most talked about topics in our society today. We hear about these topics not only in our daily conversations, but also on the media, in seminars and courses devoted to them. However, stress is nothing new. The cavemen's fear of attack by wild animals, or death by hunger, cold, or exhaustion must have been just as stressful as our fear of war, ozone depletion, the crash of the stock market or overpopulation.

Work occupies a major part of most of our lives, in terms of both time spent and importance. It contains the potential for many forms of gratification and challenge - and harm. So, it is not surprising that many of us at times find work life stressful. Indeed stress at work is so common that we tend to accept it as part of the necessary frustrations of day to day living. The abrasive boss, the boredom and monotony of some jobs, the threats of layoffs are some stressors, that can be simply annoying; a few may lead to serious disability, some may actually cause death ( McLean, 1986 ).

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Teaching, like most human service occupations is a stressful job. All educators regardless of whether they are school teachers or college lecturers, experience some level of stress. Although its effects can be reduced, it cannot be totally eliminated from the work. In fact, a little stress is good, providing us with extra energy to meet external or self-imposed demands.

However excessive and prolonged stress saps any teacher's energy and sharply reduces productivity. The experience of stress is manifested in feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, and anger. The individual subjected to prolonged stress experiences fatigue, reluctance to go to work, withdrawal, hypersensitivity to criticism and hostility and aggression toward others ( Cedoline, 1982 ).

Over time, the frustration, anger, disappointment, and guilt that teachers experience have a cumulative effect on their feelings about themselves and about their work which results in a condition known as burnout. Burnout has been defined as a form of alienation characterized by the feeling that one's work is meaningless and that one is powerless to bring about change that would make the work more meaningful. The experience of meaninglessness and powerlessness is intensified by the feeling that one is alone and isolated ( Dworkin, 1987 ).

Statements like the following are not uncommon:

*I became a teacher because I really care about kids, but now the kids are what I have the least time for..... reports and paper work take most of my time and energy. I'm tired of working hard at a job no one respects..... society, parents don't support us like they should.*

(Swick, 1983, p.14)

In Malaysia, the scenario is very similar. The phenomenon of teacher stress has become a great government concern as shown by the setting up a special committee in August 1995 to review all aspects of the teaching profession ranging from their scheme of service, workload and job specifications.



Teachers' woes were highlighted in a Newspaper ( New Sunday Times. 1996, 22 Sept.). According to the report entitled 'Proposals to overcome grievances of teachers', a special committee was set up on the instruction of the Cabinet, to review all aspects of the teaching profession and eighty two recommendations were made to overcome grievances of the 250,000 teachers, including their scheme of service and workload. The Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak mentioned in the report that the government did not want teachers to be demoralized because of these problems or leave the service for greener pastures.

The implementation of the New Remuneration System in 1992 has initiated many changes in the education system. These changes are being perceived as being thrust upon teachers and making additional demands to implement effectively without adequate preparation and induction. Those who are unable to keep pace and handle these changes successfully are highly prone to stress. The many reforms being introduced into schools and teacher training colleges make teachers feel they have lost control over their own actions ( Capel, 1989 ).

To make matters worse, many teachers and lecturers felt that they had been unjustly appraised and denied fair salary increments to commensurate with the efforts expended by them under the New Remuneration System (New Straits Times, September 16, 1993). Teachers felt that it is their duty to mould the future generations and took upon the teaching profession as a challenge but under the New Remuneration System, they have lost confidence (New Straits Times, June 5 1995) . Gone are the days when teaching

was glorified as a noble profession. The media has played its part in damaging the reputation of teachers by frequently highlighting on student-teacher crisis.

Most of us jitter at the thought of going through the process of being appraised by our boss. Baron (1986) is of the opinion that performance appraisal is a stressful feature especially if it has any impact on our job prospects and career progression.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Lecturers being in the human service line, work under stressful conditions. Excessive and prolonged stress saps any person's energy and sharply reduces productivity. The experience of stress is manifested in feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, and anger. The individual subjected to prolonged stress experiences fatigue, reluctance to go to work, withdrawal, hypersensitivity to criticism and hostility and aggression towards others (Cedoline, 1982).

Stress affects job performance as can be seen by an increase in absenteeism by those plagued with it. Many teachers take leave due to stress-precipitated ill-health (Owen, 1984). In Malaysia, a large number of teachers and college lecturers opt for early retirement. It has been reported that almost about 800 teachers apply for early retirement every month (The New Straits Times. 1994. 27 Sept.).

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the dominant factors (work and non-work related) that cause stress among teacher training college lecturers. Since college lecturers teach and deal with adults, and work under different environments and conditions, it can be presumed that their stressors will be different from those faced by school teachers. The relationship between stress and lecturers' biographical variables will also be investigated, such as age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, working experience and academic qualifications.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. Are work-related stressors more dominant than non-work related stressors?
2. Is there a relationship between stress and biographical variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, academic qualifications, dual-career couples and working experience?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study will investigate the sources of stress experienced by lecturers in Teacher Training Colleges in the states of Pahang and Terengganu. Since studies have shown that too much of stress affects job performance, it is felt that management should be aware of this milieu and take the necessary steps to reduce it.

Since not many studies on stress among college lecturers have been carried out in this country, it is hoped that this study will pave the way for more similar studies to be carried out in the future.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

This study is only confined to the states of Pahang and Terengganu. Lecturers in the other regions of the country will perceive stress differently. Other sources of stress such as Type A pattern and sense of control, workload, and so on are not examined.

This study is limited to its sample, methods of sampling, the instrument used and the analytical techniques deployed. The survey was limited to two Teacher Training Colleges in Pahang and two in Terengganu. Therefore it is not representative of the whole population of lecturers in Malaysia.

The responses were subjected to respondents' perceptions, values and biases and experiences in teaching and issues that concerned the teaching profession at that time. Lecturers in the other regions of the country and at different time will most probably perceive stress differently.

Furthermore the instrument used may not be accurate enough to measure the actual stress levels such as physiological changes (e.g. altered blood flow, changes in gastric secretions and heartbeat). The limited time frame to carry out this study has also been a constraint. Other mediating factors such as size of the college, its location, and

total number of trainee teachers could have distorted the data. Lastly, this is also a correlational study and no attempt has been made to establish causal relationships between the variables.

## **1.7 Operational Definitions**

### **Stress**

Stress is a response syndrome of negative effects (such as anger or depression) usually accompanied by potentially pathogenic physiological changes (such as increased heart rate). (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1978)

### **Stressor**

Stressor is something in the environment that acts as a stimulus, and is either physical, psychological or behavioral in nature. (Travers and Cooper, 1996)

### **Vision 2020**

Vision 2020 refers to the Malaysian vision towards achieving a fully developed and industrialized nation by the year 2020.

## **1.8 Organization of the Project Paper**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one comprises an Introduction, Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Limitations of the Study, Operational Definitions, and Organization of the Project Paper.

Chapter two provides the literature review of the study. It consists of eight main sections. The first section is Introduction. The second section looks at the various definitions of stress, followed by the models of stress in the third section. The fourth section reviews stress from the teachers' perspective, while section five looks at the sources of teacher stress. Section six is about costs and the consequences of stress among teachers. A conceptual framework is presented in section seven. Finally in the last section of chapter two, several hypotheses are proposed based on the literature review.

Chapter three describes the research methodology that was used in collecting and analyzing data. This chapter is divided into five sections namely, type of study, sample and sampling technique, data collection technique, instrument and finally data analysis technique.

Chapter four reports the results of the data analysis. It comprises three sections. The first section provides a description of the respondents' characteristics. The second section discusses the psychometric properties of the stress measurement scales, and the third section reports on the hypotheses tests.

Chapter five provides the conclusions and implications of the study. It consists of an introduction, discussion of the major findings, limitations, implications and future directions in the area of stress.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first section in this chapter looks at the various definitions of stress, followed by a discussion on the models of stress. Subsequently, this chapter looks at teacher stress, sources of teacher stress, costs and consequences of stress among teachers, and conceptual framework. Finally, in the last section, several hypotheses are proposed based on the literature review.

### 2.1 Definitions of Stress

Stress means different things to different people. There are a multitude of ways in which stress may be defined, ranging from one- word statements such as ‘tension’ or ‘pressure’ to complex medical explanations. According to Goldberg (1983 ), “ *stress is ordinary and commonplace, but its clearly definable properties are elusive*’. Arnold (in Travers and Cooper 1996) calls it “*This strange disease of modern life*”.

In order to study stress among teacher training lecturers, we need to be clear about what this word means. It is difficult to understand stress because it has taken on many different meanings, which are sometimes contradictory and confusing. In fact, it has become a buzz word that is used in a variety of settings. Many of the criticisms of its usage have come down on the fact that we do not have a clear picture of current thinking about what stress actually is (Travers & Cooper 1996).