

Research Paper

Stress Amongst Regular School Teachers and Special Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are the unsung heroes of society, shaping the future with their knowledge and dedication. They are not just imparting education but they are instilling moral values and life skills too. Special education teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that students with disabilities receive the support and guidance they need to succeed academically, socially and emotionally. These teachers are professionals who specialize in working with students who have a wide range of disabilities including learning disabilities, autism, speech, behavioural disorder etc. They need to adapt teaching methods and materials to meet the diverse learning abilities of the students with special needs. The work of the special educators is quite challenging and it's emotionally and mentally exhausting. They tend to experience strain while dealing with them on a regular basis. The aim of the study is to compare the stress among teachers of regular school and special school. A total of 30 participants were purposively selected from the special schools and regular schools in Gurugram, India. Age group of the sample was 25-55 years. The tool used was Perceived Stress Scale by Sheldon Cohen. The t test was applied on the data and the result indicated that there is a significant difference in the stress level among both the groups.

Keywords: *Special Needs Children, Special Education Teachers, Regular School Teachers, Stress*

Stress is how an individual feels when he or she is under pressure. In today's world every profession has some degree of stress. But teaching is one of the jobs that is stressful as it is highly demanding. A teacher plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the nation. In addition to their role as educators, they also serve as mentors and exemplary role models. They adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of their students. They inspire and encourage students to dream, set goals and work hard to achieve them. Teachers have a wide range of responsibilities from classroom management to student evaluation and resource management. A research done by Brown, Howcroft and Jacobs in 2009 found out that the special education is more demanding than regular school education as children with special needs require extra care, attention, resources and time compared to regular students. Teachers have to prepare the curriculum according to the ability of the

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child. They require more time to communicate the class instructions. Sometimes there is scarcity of teaching aids in the classroom and unusual behaviour of students which puts extra burden on the teachers which ultimately leads to stress in them.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the stress amongst special education teachers and regular school teachers. The outcome of this study will help the policy makers, school management and government to take the adequate measures to reduce the level of stress amongst the teachers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ayesha Siddiqui (2022) examined perceived stress level in male and female secondary school teachers in Hyderabad, India. 50 teachers were selected for the study, out of which 25 were males and 25 were females. The result revealed that female's teacher showed high level of perceived stress than the male teacher.

Radha K.V. & D.Mohana (2022) investigated the professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad district, India. 50 teachers participated in the study. It was found out that 76% teachers had average stress, 16% had severe stress and 8% teachers had low stress. Further it was found out that there was no significant difference in professional stress based on gender, type of management and teaching experience.

Alimatu Cecilia Issakah & et.al (2021) evaluated the perceived stress and coping mechanisms amongst teachers in three special schools in the northern parts of Ghana. A total of 60 teachers participated in the study. The result revealed that special education teachers face lot of stress and they use different coping strategies to cope with their stress and heavy workload.

James H.Potter (2021) analyzed the teacher's stress, anxiety and depression. A total of 598 teachers participated in the study in USA. 460 respondents were special education teachers and 138 respondents were general education teachers. It was observed that special education teachers have significantly high level of stress and higher rates of psychopathology diagnosis and symptoms as compared to their counterpart.

Judith Atukunda & Imelds Kemeza (2020) examined the stress level among teachers of learners with special needs in primary schools in Mbarara district, Uganda. The number of teachers who participated in the study were 53. It was found out that female teachers were highly stressed than male teachers due to the limited support and behaviour of the students.

Edward J.Cancio & et.al (2018) analyzed the stress and coping strategies of special education teachers. 211 special educators took part in the study. It was found out that special educators experience work-related stress and the most widely used coping strategies employed by them was adaptive coping strategies.

Ramya Srivastava & Shivali Sharma (2017) assessed the stress, anxiety and depression among general educators and special educators in Lucknow, India. A total of 40 teachers participated in the study. Out of which 20 were general educators and 20 were special educators. It was found out special educators had high level of stress and depression as compared to their counterpart. Further it was also revealed that there was no significant difference in anxiety among both the groups.

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Vijay Kumar (2015) investigated the institutional and gender differences on job stress among secondary school teachers in Hoshiarpur, India. A total of 280 teachers were selected for the study. Out of which 100 were teaching in private school and 100 were teaching in government school. The result revealed that there was no significant difference in both the group regarding the job stress. It was also found out the male teachers had more job stress than their counterpart.

Mohd Zuri Ghani & et.al (2014) examined the stress among special education teachers in Malaysia. A total of 92 special education teachers participated in the study. The result revealed that stress level was moderate among the respondents. Further it was also found out that there was no significant difference in stress among respondents based on gender, marital status and academic qualification.

John Mapfumo & et.al (2014) investigated the sources and level of stress among regular school teacher and special needs education teacher in Mutare Urban in Zimbabwe. 80 teachers took part in the study. Out of which 40 were males and 40 were female teachers from both the school. It was found out that women in both groups had high level of stress as compared to males. Further, it was found that both groups of teachers were stressed due to lack of government support and lack of resources.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective

To assess stress level amongst regular school teachers and special education teachers.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant difference in the stress level amongst regular school teachers and special education teachers.

Research Design

The design of the present study was causal-comparative research.

- **Independent Variable:** Regular school teachers and special education teachers
- **Dependent Variable:** Stress

Sample

The total numbers of participants were 30. Samples were drawn from the regular school (n=15) and special education school (n=15).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria

- Age range between 23-55 years.
- Both genders
- Willingness to participate in the study

Exclusion criteria

- Any mental or physical illness
- Not willing to participate in the study

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Tools

Perceived Stress Scale: It was developed by Sheldon Cohen in 1983. It consists of 10 items rated on a five-point scale ranging from never to very often. The scoring of the scale is as follows: 0- Never, 1- Almost Never, 2- Sometimes, 3- Fairly often, and 4- Very often. There are few items which are scored reversely. The internal consistency of the scale indicated by Cronbach's alpha ranged from .71 to .91 and test-retest reliability is $r > .70$.

Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from the head of the special school and regular school. A consent form was obtained from each participant. Rapport was established with the participants assuring them of confidentiality of their personal information. Further it was revealed to them that information will be used only for research work.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS software. T test was applied to compare the stress level amongst regular school teachers and special education teachers.

RESULTS

Table-1 shows the stress level amongst regular school teachers and special education teachers

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	t -value
Stress among regular school teachers	15	22.13	2.72	0.70	4.0692
Stress among special education teachers	15	26.27	2.84	0.73	

The result shows there is a significant difference in the level of stress among both the groups. T ratio is significant at level 0.05.

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the level of stress among regular school teachers and special education teachers. The findings of the study suggest that special education teachers reported a high level of stress ($M=26.27$ and $SD=2.84$) as compared to the regular school teachers ($M=22.13$ and $SD=2.72$).

Our study is supported by similar studies done in the past which revealed that special education teachers have a high level of stress because teachers need to prepare the teaching methods and materials according to the learning abilities of the children with special needs.

James H. Potter (2021) reported that special education teachers have a significantly high level of stress as compared to the general education teachers.

Adeniyi (2010) found that meeting the everyday learning and behavioural needs of the children generates stress among teachers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research suggest that there is a significant difference in the level of stress among regular school teachers and special education teachers. Special education teachers reported a high level of stress as compared to their counterpart.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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