



EXAMINING STRESS, SATISFACTION AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AMONG JUNIOR COLLEGE EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Educational transitions are pivotal moments in the professional journey of junior college educators, often accompanied by varying levels of stress, anxiety, and a plethora of professional growth. This exploratory study, titled "Examining Stress, Satisfaction and Professional Growth among Junior College Educators," endeavours to delve into the multifaceted experiences of junior college teachers during periods of educational change. The primary aim of this study is to analyze the stress, anxiety, and professional growth of junior college educators. To achieve this, the study sets out the following objectives: first, to understand the demographic profile of junior college teachers in Mumbai and its suburbs; second, to investigate the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by junior college educators during educational transitions and third, to explore stress coping mechanisms employed by junior college educators. The methodology used and ethical considerations were meticulously adhered to, with informed consent obtained from each participant. A sample size of 200 junior college educators was randomly selected, ensuring a diverse representation, from which 107 (53.5%) are female and 93 (46.5%) are male. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and validity of the data collected, which included the teachers who didn't sign the consent form and were not considered as samples. The age group of 21 - 60yrs. was taken into consideration. Data collection was carried out through a multi-method approach, incorporating a self-constructed questionnaire which was validated by the mentor, observation method, interviews, the Cornell Modified Discomfort Questionnaire (CMDQ), and adapted the Job Stress Questionnaire (JSQ). These tools enabled a comprehensive exploration of the experiences and perceptions of junior college educators. Data was analyzed employing simple Microsoft Excel and statistics. The findings delineated the stressors, professional growth, level of satisfaction, and coping strategies prevalent in this population, valuable insights are gleaned for the development of tailored support mechanisms aimed at bolstering the well-being and resilience of junior college educators.

KEYWORDS : Educational transitions, Stress, Anxiety, Aspirations, Coping mechanisms, Junior college educators, Support strategies.

INTRODUCTION:

In the dynamic landscape of education, junior college teachers emerge as the cornerstone of academic progression, guiding students through pivotal stages of their educational journey. These educators, stationed within the confines of junior colleges or community colleges, wield profound influence in shaping the intellectual, professional, and socio-emotional trajectories of their students. Tasked with the responsibility of imparting knowledge across a diverse array of subjects, they nurture budding intellects, instilling essential skills and fostering a sense of academic curiosity and inquiry. At the heart of educational reform lies the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a transformative framework envisioned by the Government of India to revolutionize the educational landscape and nurture a generation of empowered learners and educators. Within this policy framework, provisions have been set forth to elevate the role of junior college teachers, recognizing their pivotal contributions to the educational ecosystem. Through scholarships for integrated B.Ed. programs, incentives for rural teaching, and a renewed emphasis on socio-emotional learning, the NEP 2020 seeks to fortify the foundational pillars of education, ensuring equitable access and quality learning experiences for all (Ministry of Education, 2023).

However, amidst these noble endeavours, lurks a silent adversary: teacher stress. The relentless demands of the teaching profession, compounded by factors such as lack of support, student challenges, and pervasive job-related pressures, cast a shadow over the well-being and resilience of junior college educators. As stalwarts of academia, they shoulder the weight of immense responsibility, navigating through turbulent waters fraught with challenges and uncertainties. To illuminate the intricate tapestry of experiences woven by junior college educators, it becomes imperative to delve into the realm of occupational stress and its multifaceted manifestations ("Stress, Burnout, Anxiety and Depression among Teachers: A Scoping Review", Belinda et al., 2022). The Job Stress Questionnaire was adapted to understand the various stressors faced by junior college teachers. A job stress questionnaire is a survey that helps understand if employees are stressed about their jobs and what factors are causing that stress. The information gathered from these questionnaires can help identify areas for improvement to prevent and manage work-

related stress.

Peering beneath the surface of teacher stress unveils a tapestry of interconnected factors, each contributing to the intricate mosaic of educator well-being. Job characteristics such as time pressure, limited career development opportunities, and conflicts with students emerge as potent stressors, gnawing away at the core of teacher satisfaction and fulfilment. Amidst the push for academic excellence, the quiet struggles of overworked educators echo in academia, highlighting the urgent need for tailored support and systemic reform. Let's delve into the complexities of teacher stress and its impact on education, aiming to foster a culture of well-being and resilience. Together, we can navigate towards a brighter future for both educators and students.

Rationale:

The need for this study stems from the critical role that junior college teachers play in the educational landscape and the challenges they face amidst evolving educational reforms and societal expectations. At the heart of this necessity lies the recognition of junior college teachers as pivotal influencers in shaping the academic, professional, and socio-emotional trajectories of their students. As stewards of knowledge and mentors to budding intellects, these educators are entrusted with the responsibility of imparting essential skills and fostering a sense of curiosity and inquiry among their students. However, despite their profound influence, junior college teachers often find themselves grappling with a silent adversary: teacher stress. This stress, emanating from various sources such as job-related pressures, lack of support, and student challenges, poses a significant threat to the well-being and resilience of educators. Against the backdrop of educational reforms like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which seeks to elevate the status of teachers and enhance the quality of education, addressing the issue of teacher stress becomes imperative. To understand the complexities of teacher stress, it is essential to delve into its multifaceted manifestations through tools like the adapted Job Stress Questionnaire (JSQ).

These instruments provide insights into stressors that impact educators, shedding light on the profound implications of occupational stress on their holistic well-being. With alarming statistics revealing

high-stress levels among educators and the detrimental effects of chronic stress on physical and mental health, there is an urgent need to address this pervasive issue (Kourmoussi et al., 2015). Many studies indicate that the teaching profession is greatly impacted by occupational stress. (Ntina, 2012). Workplace stressors can cause physical and mental strain on individuals. (Aryanath, 2019). Financial problems, work-life balance, and poor communication contribute to teacher stress. (Shailaja). NEP imposes additional responsibilities on teachers. (Kalyani, 2020). Uninspiring job profiles and exploitative service conditions demotivate and discourage teachers. (Soni, 2022). Stress counselling and management in India are not as prominent as in the West. (Shailaja)

In essence, this study endeavours to chart a course towards a brighter, more sustainable future for educators and learners alike by cultivating a culture of well-being and resilience. Through rigorous inquiry and compassionate understanding, it aims to empower junior college teachers to thrive amidst the tumultuous seas of educational reform. By addressing the issue of teacher stress head-on, the study seeks to uphold the foundational pillars of education, ensuring equitable access and quality learning experiences for all students. Thus, the imperative for this study lies in its potential to catalyse positive change within the educational ecosystem, fostering a nurturing environment where educators can flourish and students can thrive.

Aim And Specific Objectives:

This study focuses on analysing stress levels, job satisfaction, and opportunities for professional growth among junior college educators in Mumbai and its surrounding areas. The research has three primary objectives: (i) To examine the demographic characteristics of junior college teachers, (ii) To assess the stress and anxiety levels experienced by these educators during periods of educational transition, and (iii) To explore the various stress coping strategies employed by junior college educators.

Through these objectives, the study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by educators in this specific academic environment, particularly during times of change, and to identify methods they use to manage stress effectively. This information will contribute to a better understanding of factors impacting teacher well-being and professional development in junior colleges.

Methodology:

The study was conducted in two districts (Mumbai and Thane) of Maharashtra state. 107 female and 93 male junior college teachers were randomly selected from 25 colleges. The inclusion criteria set for the study detailed to include both female and male junior college teachers (20 – 60 years) a minimum work experience of 1 year, and the willingness of the teachers to participate in the research. The exclusion criteria encompassed non-teaching staff, administrative staff, and teachers who refused to sign the informed consent. The collected data underwent analysis using simple statistical methods, allowing for a preliminary understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

The main tool of data collection is a self-constructed questionnaire divided into five sections:

- Section A focused on the demographic profile of the participants, including their name, age, gender, work experience, type of employment, qualifications, and marital status.
- Section B addressed subjects taught, job title/designation, work timings, salary range, rest breaks, teaching hours, class size, satisfaction with student-to-teacher ratio, and feelings about the current teaching workload.
- Section C explored participants' awareness and knowledge of the National Education Policy (NEP) implemented by the Government of India.
- Section D delved into the impact of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) and participants' thoughts on it.
- Section E focused on work stress due to NEP and participants' opinions on teachers' needs in today's college setting.

The data collection process involved observation and interview methods. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining permission from college principals and informed consent from participants before conducting one-on-one interviews with teachers and using applications to measure light and sound levels of their classrooms. A pilot study was conducted to test research methods, and

necessary modifications were made based on the questionnaire. For data analysis, Microsoft Excel was utilized to organize, sort, filter, and visualize the data. Simple statistics were employed to analyze the data, interpret results, and draw meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Understanding the demographic profile of junior college teachers is crucial for gaining insights into the various factors that may influence their stress levels. The average age of the sample is 40.6 years and the average work experience is 11.6 yrs. Most of the teachers having work experience of 10.1-15 years are postgraduate (Fig. 1).

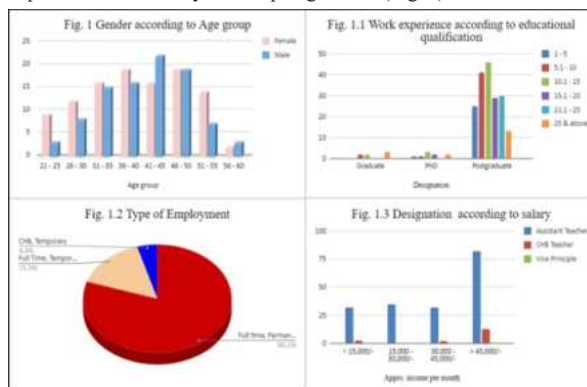


Fig. 1.2 Represents type of employment from which 160 (80.1.5%) teachers have full time permanent job, 31 (15.5%) teachers have full time temporary job and 9 (4.5%) teachers work on clock hour basis.

Level of Stress Experienced	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Average	84	42%
High	66	33%
Low	52	26%

The level of stress was calculated by adapting the Job Stress Questionnaire (JSQ), Table no:1 represents level of Stress experienced during Teaching Hours, from which 84 (42%) teachers experience average stress, 66 (33%) teachers experience high stress, and 52 (26%) teachers experience low stress.

Level of Stress Experienced	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Average	93	46.50%
High	60	30%
Low	47	23.50%

Table 2 represents level of Stress experienced during Administrative Tasks, from which 93 (46.5%) teachers experience average stress, 60 (30%) teachers experience high stress and 47 (23.5%) teachers experience low stress.

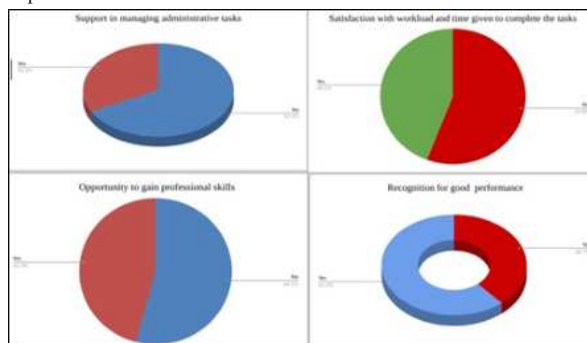


Fig 2: Administrative Tasks done

134 (67.4%) teachers don't receive support in managing administrative tasks. 111 (55.5%) teachers are not satisfied with the amount of workload and the time given to complete it. 108 (54.1%) teachers don't have opportunities to gain professional skills. 78 (38.7%) teachers are not recognized for their good performance (Fig 2).

8 (19.3%) teachers aspire to take leadership roles in the future, and 51 (25.4%) teachers aspire to improve their existing skills. 43 (21.5%)

need training sessions, more staff, and less administrative work. 36 (17.7%) need proper rest breaks and 28 (13.8%) need a balanced workload, career development opportunities, and a good work culture.

Level Of Anxiety And Stress: A significant proportion of junior college educators are experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress as they adapt to new educational dimensions. This could be due to factors such as changes in curriculum, teaching methods, or administrative procedures. The study pinpoints specific stressors that contribute to anxiety, such as uncertainties about the new educational system, lack of training or support, or increased workload. Understanding these stressors can inform targeted interventions. This might include aspects like classroom engagement, student-teacher interactions, and overall job satisfaction.

Needs Of Junior College Teachers: The study reveals specific areas where educators feel the need for professional development. This includes demands for training in new teaching methodologies, technology integration, leadership skills, or subject-specific knowledge. Results highlight the absence of workplace support systems for junior college educators. Positive outcomes could showcase effective mentorship programs, career development opportunities, and a conducive work environment.

Obstacles To Professional Development: The study pinpoints specific obstacles such as lack of resources, time constraints, and insufficient access to training programs, that hinder their professional development.

Recommendations:

The study recommends a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the interconnected factors contributing to this issue and implements systemic reforms and support mechanisms to alleviate teacher stress and promote well-being among junior college educators:

For Educational Institutes

- i. Integrate stress management techniques into the curriculum and daily routines of junior colleges. Teach students and teachers alike mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and stress-reduction strategies to promote well-being and resilience. By normalizing discussions about mental health and stress management, educational institutions can reduce stigma and create a more supportive environment for all members of the community.
- ii. Foster a positive work culture that values collaboration, respect, and appreciation. Recognize and celebrate the contributions of teachers through awards, acknowledgments, and professional development opportunities. Encourage open communication and feedback mechanisms to ensure that teachers feel heard and supported in their roles.
- iii. Offer professional development opportunities that empower teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge. By investing in ongoing training and career advancement initiatives, educational institutions can demonstrate a commitment to the professional growth and fulfillment of their staff. Additionally, mentoring programs can pair experienced educators with newer teachers to provide guidance and support.
- iv. Implement workload management strategies to alleviate time pressure and prevent burnout among teachers. This may involve evaluating workload distribution, providing resources for lesson planning and grading, and promoting work-life balance through flexible scheduling options. By addressing excessive workload demands, institutions can create a more sustainable and supportive work environment for teachers.
- v. Provide adequate resources and infrastructure to help mitigate Musculoskeletal issues.

For Government And Policy Makers:

- i. Develop and implement policies that prioritize the health and well-being of Junior College educators.
- ii. Resource allocation to promote good posture to reduce physical strain.
- iii. Evaluate to assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing teacher stress. Monitor stress levels, job satisfaction, and well-being outcomes to inform future decision-making and program development. By continuously monitoring progress and adapting strategies based on feedback, educational institutions can ensure that their efforts are aligned with the evolving needs of their staff and students.

- iv. Provide funding towards professional development aimed at enhancing teachers' capability.
- v. Support Research initiatives to address professional growth issues.

For Individual Teachers:

- i. Actively participate in stress management programs and utilize learned coping strategies and relaxation techniques.
- ii. Take advantage of professional development programs to enhance teaching skills and stay up to date with current education trends and policies.
- iii. Personal health and well-being to be prioritised by practising self-care strategies and securing help from resources.
- iv. Communicate needs and concerns to the revengement authorities promptly to ensure that not only the voices heard but also concerns are taken up and plans made to find solutions to the problems.

Addressing teacher stress in junior colleges requires a holistic approach that considers the complex interplay of individual, organizational, and systemic factors. By implementing comprehensive support programs, offering professional development opportunities, managing workload effectively, strengthening student support services, promoting a positive school culture, integrating stress management techniques, providing leadership and administrative support, and conducting research and evaluation, educational institutions can create a more supportive and sustainable work environment for junior college educators. Through collective effort and commitment to well-being, we can cultivate a culture of resilience and empowerment that benefits both teachers and students alike.

Scope of study:

By identifying the health challenges faced by junior college teachers, this study can pave the way for interventions and strategies aimed at enhancing their overall well-being. By implementing targeted interventions tailored to address specific stressors and challenges, teachers can experience improved mental and physical health, leading to greater job satisfaction and resilience.

As teacher stress and challenges are alleviated through the implementation of interventions informed by this study, the overall teaching quality is expected to improve. Focused, engaged, and effective educators, who are supported in managing their stressors, are more likely to provide high-quality instruction, foster positive learning environments, and facilitate better academic outcomes for their students.

The study's findings can inform the development of support systems for junior college teachers, including initiatives for stress management, ergonomic improvements in the workplace, and professional development programs. By providing teachers with the necessary resources and support structures, educational institutions can help mitigate stress and promote well-being among their faculty members.

Healthy and satisfied teachers have a direct impact on the educational quality within their communities. By fostering a supportive environment for educators, this study can contribute to shaping a skilled and knowledgeable future workforce. Students benefit from the expertise and dedication of well-supported teachers, leading to positive social and economic outcomes for the community as a whole.

The insights generated from this study can inform the development of policies aimed at supporting teacher occupational health. Addressing issues related to school management, work environment, and workload distribution can lead to a healthier and more balanced teaching profession. By advocating for policy changes based on research findings, stakeholders can create a more sustainable and supportive environment for junior college educators.

The knowledge generated from this study can serve as a valuable resource for future research endeavours in the field of teacher well-being and occupational health. By contributing to the body of literature on this topic, this study can aid in the development of more effective interventions and strategies for supporting teacher well-being in junior college settings and beyond.

Author Statements:

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