

PROFESSIONAL STRESS OF SPECIAL SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT

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Abstract

The present study aimed to find out the professional stress of special school teachers in Palakkad District, Special school teacher's experience a high degree of emotional stress on the job as a result of the demanding nature of their roles, including complex student needs, administrative challenges and the pressure to meet IEP goals. Early studies of teacher stress found a relatively high degree of stress. For example, 76% and 87.1% of teachers described their stress levels at their school as moderate or significant, respectively. The research, involving 50 teachers working with students with hearing impairments (HI), Visual impairments (VI), Intellectual disabilities (ID) and autism spectrum disorders (ASD), reveals varying stress levels. About 76% of teachers report average stress 16% experience serve stress, and 8% have low stress. The study shows no significant differences in stress levels based on gender type of school management or teaching experience. Key stressors include student behavior and parental involvement and administrative norms have a lesser influence. The findings indicate the need to empower special school teachers in the district to deal students and their parents in a most pleasing and diplomatic way.

Introduction

Teaching is one of the most demanding and challenging professions, particularly in the context of special education. Special school teachers cater to students with diverse needs, including intellectual, physical, emotional, and behavioral disabilities. This role requires exceptional patience, adaptability, and emotional strength, as these teachers must address not only academic but also developmental and social challenges faced by their students. In Palakkad district, a region known for its diverse socio-economic and cultural landscape, special school teachers face unique professional stressors. These stressors may include inadequate resources, lack of specialized training, high workloads, and societal misconceptions about special education. Furthermore, managing the expectations of parents, balancing administrative responsibilities, and handling the emotional demands of teaching can add to their stress.

Review of Literature

Kyriacou, C. (2001) explored teacher stress and identified it as an unpleasant emotional experience linked to aspects of the teaching profession, including workload, student behavior, and time pressures. His study emphasizes that while teaching is inherently rewarding, the continuous exposure to emotionally charged situations can lead to psychological strain. The research highlights that teachers working with special needs students face an even higher risk of stress due to the diverse educational, emotional, and behavioral demands these students present. Kyriacou suggests that institutional support, professional development, and coping strategies are crucial in reducing occupational stress.

Punia, V., & Berwal, S. (2017) conducted a study focusing on work stress among special education teachers and the role of demographic variables such as age, experience, and qualification. Their research revealed that special school teachers experience moderate to high levels of stress, primarily due to lack of resources, excessive workload, and emotional attachment to students with special needs. Interestingly, the study found that younger teachers reported higher stress levels compared to their senior counterparts, suggesting that experience and adaptability play a role in stress management. The findings underline the need for supportive school environments and professional counseling for special educators.

Need and Significance of the Study

Since emotions makeup and shape our minds as well as the personality structure, the self-esteem developed during each stage of the profession is a matter of impetus to teaching professionals. Studies and observations show that teaches of special schools are among the most stressed in the teaching profession due to reasons defined and even un explored. In spite of the academic interventions and massive awareness programs in the area, It is felt that we neglect what should be emphasize. Despite the valuable and timely proposals and recommendations of authentic educational forums, the steps and initiatives adopted at the pedagogy or organizational level is quite nominal.

Statement of the Problem

Advancement of social system has made our life more comfortable and complex too. As teachers confront with the cross section of the society, possibility to be stressed is more. Teachers of special schools are also victims of professional stress since they need to handle differently able students. The researcher with long year of teaching experience could interact and mingle with teachers of special schools. The opportunities to visit special schools motivated the researchers to study more about the working atmosphere and the various aspects generating professional stress

Objectives

- To assess the level of professional stress experienced by special school teachers in Palakkad District.
- To identify the major sources of professional stress among special school teachers.
- To examine the relationship between professional stress and demographic variables such as age, gender, teaching experience, and type of school (government or private).
- To suggest possible strategies to reduce professional stress among special school teachers.

Hypotheses of the Study

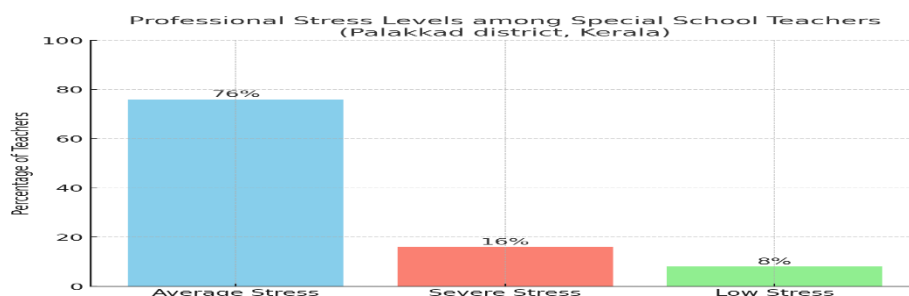
1. There is no significant difference in the level of professional stress between male and female special school teachers in Palakkad District.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of professional stress based on the teaching experience of special school teachers.
3. There is no significant difference in the professional stress levels of special school teachers working in government and private institutions.
4. There is a significant relationship between demographic variables and the professional stress experienced by special school teachers.

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the professional stress experienced by special school teachers in Palakkad District. The population for the study consisted of teachers working in government and private special schools catering to children with disabilities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 100 special school teachers from various institutions across the district. Data were collected using a standardized stress scale questionnaire, which was validated for reliability and relevance to the Indian educational context. The tool measured multiple dimensions of professional stress including workload, role conflict, student-related challenges, and administrative pressures. The collected data were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, and inferential tools like t-tests and ANOVA were applied to determine significant differences based on demographic variables such as gender, teaching experience, and school type.

Major Findings

A study conducted in Palakkad district, Kerala, examined the professional stress levels among special school teachers. Data were collected from 50 teachers working with students having hearing impairments (HI), visual impairments (VI), intellectual disabilities (ID), and autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The findings revealed that 76% of these teachers experienced average stress levels, while 16% reported severe stress and 8% reported low stress. Notably, there was no significant difference in professional stress based on gender, type of school management, or teaching experience. Among various factors contributing to professional stress, student behavior and parental involvement were identified as the most influential, whereas working environment and administrative norms were the least impactful.



Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a need to empower special school teachers in the district to manage interactions with students and their parents more effectively and diplomatically. The professional stress experienced by special school teachers is both significant and multifaceted, stemming from the unique demands of working with students who have diverse and often complex needs. This stress is further compounded by factors such as high workload, emotional demands, limited resources, administrative pressure, and insufficient support systems. Despite their dedication and resilience, many special educators face burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and compromised well-being.

It is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to acknowledge these challenges and take proactive measures to support special school teachers. This includes providing targeted professional development, ensuring manageable class sizes, offering psychological support,

fostering collaborative work environments, and implementing policies that prioritize teacher well-being.

Addressing professional stress is not only crucial for the health and longevity of special educators but also for the overall quality of education and care provided to students with special needs. A well-supported teacher is better equipped to deliver effective instruction, maintain a positive classroom environment, and contribute meaningfully to student development.

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