



Education

Explore—Journal of Research for UG and PG Students

ISSN 2278 – 0297 (Print)

ISSN 2278 – 6414 (Online)

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<http://www.patnawomenscollege.in/journal>

Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress among Special School Teachers – A Case Study

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Received : November 2012

Accepted : March 2013

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Abstract : *Emotional intelligence is a positive personality attribute, whereas, occupational stress is an individual's response to excessive demands or pressures placed on him/her. It is very interesting to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress. The present study investigates **Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress among Special School Teachers.** Sample for the investigation comprised of all the special*

educators working in two special institutions i.e. Pre-School Tripoliya and Asha Deep. Data used collected through a standardized tool for Emotional Intelligence and a self-designed questionnaire for Occupational Stress. Findings of the study indicate more occupational stress among married and older educators. Scores of Emotional Intelligence of special educators were found to be between 48-77. Final observation was found to be negative correlation between occupational stress and emotional intelligence for the present sample.

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Key words: *Emotional Intelligence, Occupational Stress and Special School Teachers.*

Introduction :

Special Education is the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses the students individual differences and needs. The job of special school teachers is much more demanding with the need of experimentation with novel activities. The need for flexibility, autonomy and novelty makes their job inherently challenging making room for more conflicts. The increased demands and changes in special education field makes the special education teachers play diverse

and challenging roles while planning and organizing the educational program for the students with disabilities. One of their main responsibilities implies adapting the regular educational curriculum to the needs of the children they need to teach because every child has his own needs; this often implies that the teacher has to design and implement techniques, procedures, and sometimes, create equipment in order to help a child learn.

Another common problem that the special education teachers have to face is the misunderstanding of their role in regular schools. The special education teacher is the link between normal teachers and the children with special education and the children with special needs. Regardless of whether the special education teachers are working in a regular school or in a lack of administrative support school for children with special needs, the common problem they will have to face is the class disruptions.

The literature in Indian and Western world provides evidence of special education teachers stress (Antonniou et al., 2009; Billingsley, 2002; Boutskou, 2007; Male and May, 1997; Reddy 2007; Singhal, 2004) often linked with diversification of roles, increased responsibilities, inadequate salary and poor fringe benefits. Billingsley (2002) in analyzing the literature studies on special education teachers' retention and attrition found that problematic district and school factors especially low salaries, poor climate, lack of administrative support, role overload and dissonance lead to negative affective reactions e.g. high levels of job satisfaction and low level of commitment.

Though the special education teachers cannot control issues related to salary, teaching assignment, paperwork, student behavior, and support from administrators, they can learn and

choose to develop skilled behaviors to deal with these stressors. Thus the special education teachers require considerable capacities in emotional competencies that help them to build resilience to adversity in the field to self-monitor performance and to regulate emotions through both reactive and proactive coping. Baron (2003) defines Emotional Intelligence as a cross section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills, and factors that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them and cope with daily demands (3–13).

Thus, it is found out that the special education teachers require considerable capacities in emotional competencies that help them to build resilience to adversity in the field to self monitor performance and to regulate emotions through both reactive and proactive copings.

However, the research review suggests that studies in the selected area are still in infancy specifically in Patna. Hence investigators felt motivated to undertake the present problem.

Objectives of the Study :

The following objectives were proposed for achievement in this study:

- To enlist the factors responsible for occupational stress among the special school teachers working in Patna district.
- To compare the levels of EI of special school teachers handling disabilities.
- To study the relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence among special school teachers working in Patna district.
- To identify the different coping strategies adopted by the special school teachers for overcoming occupational stress.

Hypothesis of the Study :

H3 ¹ There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence among special school teacher working in Patna district.

Operational Definition of Important Terms:

The operational definitions of important technical terms have been given below:

Occupational Stress- Occupational stress can be defined as the experience of unpleasant, negative emotions such as tension, anxiety, frustration, anger and depression resulting from aspects of work. In the present study the occupational stress among the special educators was measured through a self designed questionnaire comprising of 23 questions on three measures which were management, work experience and relationship with colleagues and parents.

Emotional Intelligence-It refers to the individual differences in the perception, processing, regulation and utilization of emotional information. Individuals with high Emotional Intelligence believe that they are in touch with their emotions and they can regulate them in a way that promotes well-being. Emotional Intelligence in the context of our study was measured through the scale of Mangal and Mangal.

Special Educators- They work with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional and physical disabilities. With students who have mild or moderate disabilities, they ensure that lessons and teaching strategies are modified to meet the students' needs. With students who have severe disabilities, they teach the students independent living skills and basic literacy, communication, and math. In the present study the educators were for hearing impaired and mentally challenged children.

METHODOLOGY :

Methodology of the Study

To achieve the objectives of the present study, that is basically a survey research, an appropriate methodology was planned.

Setting of the Study

This study was carried out on the special school teachers teaching in Pre-school Tripoliya and Asha Deep, Patna.

Population of the Study

Teachers serving in the five special institutions of Patna district formed the population.

The aim of this study was to assess the level of emotional intelligence and occupational stress and the correlation between them for the teachers serving in special schools of Patna. Hence, the population selected for the purpose of this study was special school teachers of Patna.

Sample of the Study

A sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis. By observing the characteristics of the sample, one can make certain inferences about the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn.

Sample selection

Random sampling technique was adopted to select a representative sample from the above mentioned population. Two special schools were randomly selected from the population by the investigators and for in depth information all the special educators of both the institutions were interviewed.

Sample size

All the teachers working in Asha Deep and Pre-School Tripoliya of Patna were taken as the sample of the study. Table 3.1 given below shows the break-up of the study sample finally selected for the purpose of data collection through the

administration of an appropriate tool.

Break-up of the sample

Sl. No.	Name of the School	Sample Size (teachers)
1.	Pre-School Tripoliya	2
2.	Asha Deep	14
	Total	16

Tool of the Study

The results of a research depend upon the quality and appropriateness of the tools used; hence selection or development of appropriate tools is an important step in the research. For this investigation investigators used 2 tools for data collection

- (a) Emotional Intelligence : Emotional Intelligence in the context of our study was measured through a standardized scale of Mangal and Mangal having 100 items. Emotional Intelligence Inventory has been designed for use with Hindi and English knowing 16+ years age of school, college and university students for the measurement of their emotional intelligence (total as well as separately) in respect of **four areas** or aspects of emotional intelligence namely, **Intra-personal Awareness** (Knowing about one's own emotions) **Inter-personal Awareness** (Knowing about others emotions), **Inter-personal Management** (Managing one's own emotions) and **Inter-personal Management** (Managing others emotions) respectively.
- (b) Occupational Stress : A self designed questionnaire comprising of 23 questions to measure the level of occupational stress on three measures which were management, work experience and

relationship with colleagues and parents were framed. Five options were given for each questions which were strongly agree, cant' say, disagree and strongly disagree. They were scored as 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively.

Description :

For the collection of relevant data, two questionnaires were used. One was self designed and the second was a standardized test. Type of questions used in this study was closed ended? The closed-ended questions are the fixed-choice questions. They require the respondent to choose a response from those provided by the researcher.

The first questionnaire dealt with emotional intelligence among special school teachers.

The second questionnaire dealt with occupational stress among special school teachers.

Interview :

An unstructured interview of the special educators was conducted by the investigators to find out the different coping strategies adopted by them for overcoming personal and occupational stress they encounter.

Description of data and statistical technique used :

The nature of the data was quantitative so descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data and to find out the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress. The product moment correlation was calculated.

Findings of the Study :

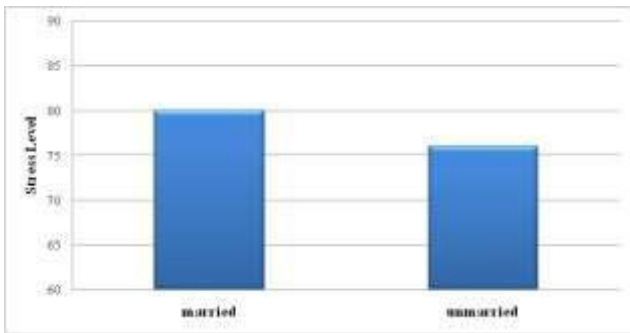
Objective 1 : To enlist the factors responsible for occupational stress among the special school teachers working in Patna district.

In this objective we split our samples into two categories:-

1. Marital Status
2. Different Age Groups

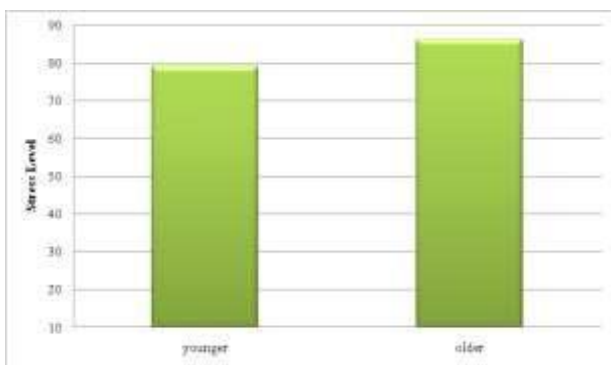
On the basis of marital status it was observed through the scores that level of occupational stress in married teachers was identified to be 80% whereas the percentage of stress level was relatively less for the unmarried individuals that is 76%.

Figure 1: Stress Level among Married and Unmarried Special Educators



The sample was also bifurcated on the basis of age. The age group from 20-30 were labeled as younger units while units aged 30 and above were labeled older. Percentage of stress level candidly indicates that younger units in the population have lower level of stress (79%) whereas the older units were having more percentage of stress that is (86%)

Figure 2 : Stress Level among Younger and Older Special Educators

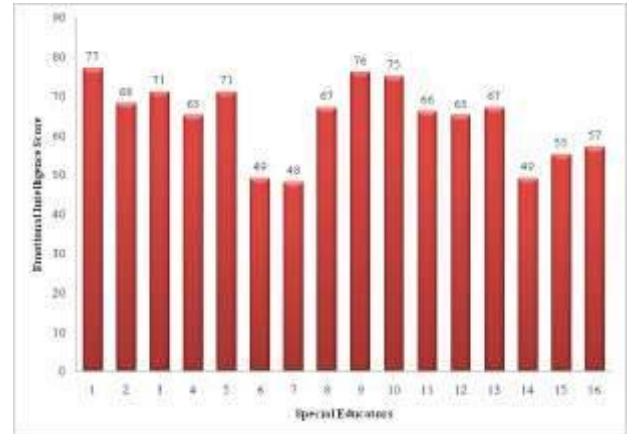


Objective 2: To compare the levels of EI of different special school teachers handling disabilities.

After scoring of the responses to the questions given in the questionnaires framed by Mangal and

Mangal, the level of emotional intelligence for different special educators has been shown in the figure. It can be inferred from the graph that most of the teachers teaching in special schools have high level of EI.

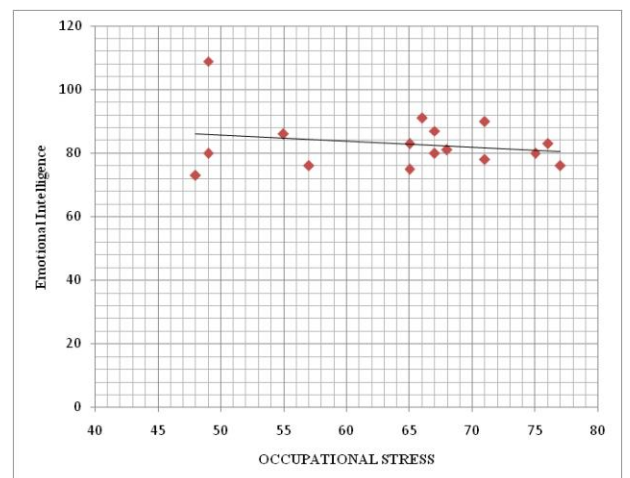
Figure 3: Emotional Intelligence Scores for Special Educators



Objective 3: To study the relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence among special school teachers working in Patna district.

The correlation coefficient was found to be $r = -0.213$. It was found that there is negative correlation between the occupational stress and emotional intelligence for the selected sample. Hence, null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. So, it can be inferred that among the special educators with higher the emotional intelligence lower the occupational stress and vice-versa.

Figure 4: Correlation between Occupational Stress and Emotional Intelligence



Objective 4: To identify the different coping strategies adopted by the special school teachers for overcoming occupational stress.

Through personal interview by the investigators it was identified that special educators can combat stress

- Through interpersonal interactions i.e. developing social skills.
- Developing self awareness of the feelings and emotions.
- Learn to integrate thought and emotion, heart and mind.
- Provide more time and effort for developing affective skills as it leads to the development of emotional intelligence.
- Adopting measures for proper development of social skills for better communication and inter-personal relationship with others.

Conclusion :

Some important conclusions are drawn from the study, which are listed below:

- For the first objective, the factors responsible for occupational stress among the special school teachers working in Patna district were marital status and different age group. For marital status it was observed that the unmarried units in the sample were having low occupational stress with 49% value whereas the married units were having higher stress level with 51% value. For the second factor it was observed that the younger units in the sample were having low occupational stress with 48% value whereas the older units were having higher stress level with 52% value.
- Conclusion for the second objective was to compare the levels of EI of different special school teachers handling

disabilities. It can be inferred that the level of emotional intelligence falls between 48 -77 i.e. and most of them lie in moderate to higher level EI.

- For the third objective it was concluded that there is a negative correlation i.e.- 0.213 between occupational stress and emotional intelligence for the selected sample that indicates with increase in emotional intelligence the special educators are able to cope with their occupational stress and vice-versa.
- For the fourth objective through personal interview by the investigators it was identified that special educators can combat stress
 1. Through interpersonal interactions i.e. developing social skills.
 2. Developing self awareness of the feelings and emotions.
 3. Learning to integrate thought and emotion, heart and mind.
 4. Providing more time and effort for developing affective skills as it leads to the development of emotional intelligence.
 5. Adopting measures for proper development of social skills for better communication and inter-personal relationship with others.

Implications:

1. While designing the curriculum for the Teacher educators/special educators, the Emotional Intelligence Components should be included.
2. The Principal/Head teachers should give due recognition to the teachers working under them in order to facilitate good inter personal skills.
3. They should be given due opportunity while making important decisions.

4. The school management should assess the actual school needs; the competencies to be handle these needs and also should assess the teachers' strengths and weaknesses by providing adequate feedback.
5. The head teachers should encourage teachers to use emotional intelligence skills in their job and they should provide feasible environment that enhance teachers' insight. This facilitates them to utilize the dimensions of emotional intelligence more effectively in the workplace and to deal effectively with the negative emotions that arise from their work situations.
6. There is a need for strengthening the organizational structure and climate of the special education schools, providing opportunities for professional enhancement in the form of participation in professional meetings and seminars, promoting situations for healthy professional interactions and making the working environment more flexible to work.
7. Teachers should be given training in stress management skills.
8. The correlation studies revealed that there is significant negative relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress. Thus there is a need to inculcate Emotional Intelligence Skills in Special education teachers to reduce the severity of Occupational Stress in them.

Limitations :

There were some limitations of this study, including (a) generalization (b) measurement tool.

1. Firstly, participants of this study were from a single city, and this may limit generalization of the findings.
2. The other limitation is with respect to the tool used for measuring occupational stress, which was non-standardized.

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