

Mental health of Secondary School Teachers in Sikkim

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I. INTRODUCTION

The teachers are the backbone of our society. Since time immemorial, they occupy great respect in the society not only in our country but across the globe as they shape the future citizens. As one of the important builders of the society, they can make the pillars of a nation deep and lift them high to the sky. This is more so as school is the second important institution after home which founds and develops sense of morality and sociability to children. Working in education is both exciting and demanding due to social respect it commands and the responsibility the profession demands. Teachers and school staff take all of the demands placed upon them with an exceptional sense of personal commitment and responsibility that can exacerbate any problems they may be having. Teachers work under different management systems and working conditions which affect their psychological state. There is a widespread belief that work-related stress among teachers has serious implication for the teacher's mental health and performance. The working conditions account for stress and burnout feeling in the life of teachers (Mishra & Panda, 1996).



Teachers' mental health plays an important role in the teaching-learning process. If the teachers are of unsound mind, they can harm nation in terms of poor teaching and guidance to the students. They cannot do justice to their job. Their maladjustment will not adversely affect their personality but will produce maladjustment tendency in children. This research work is an attempt to discuss the meaning and concept of the mental health of teachers, factors responsible for poor mental health and would attempt to assess the mental health problem of secondary school teachers of Sikkim in particular and the teachers in general.

1.1 Mental Health: Concept and Definitions

Mental health is a term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. From perspectives of the discipline of positive psychology or holism mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and procure a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Mental health is the capacity to express our emotions and adapt to a range of demands. The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". The term 'mental' usually implies something which is purely related to the cerebral functioning of a person, and it also stands for one's emotional affective states, the relationships one establishes with others, and a general quality that might be called one's equilibrium in the socio-culture context. The term 'health' refers to more than physical health; it also connotes the individual's intra-psyche balance, the fit of his psychic structure with the external environment, and the individual's social functioning. Health is not merely absence of illness; rather it is a physical, social, mental and spiritual well-being, a state which has been identified as an attribute of positive mental health (Berg, 1975; Jahoda, 1958). The Vedantic approach to mental health has been a subject of serious study with many eminent scholars (Akhilananda, 1952; Dalai, 1991). They have especially taken into account the writings of Sri Aurobindo for developing the study of mental health into a system of psychotherapy in the past few decades.

Two standard approaches to mental health research reflect the operation of content validity norms (Dohrenwend, 1994), which are: (a) the dimensional, which seeks to develop scales measuring concepts relevant to mental health, such as dissociation or anxiety, and (b) the diagnostic, which seeks to develop instruments for identifying symptoms and combining them to infer disorders such as schizophrenia or major depression. Verma, Nehra and Puri (1998) proposed a dual theory of mental health. This theory regards mental health as an absence of mental illness and a presence of certain factors of positive mental health. The positive mental health factors include a sense of wellbeing, satisfaction, hope, adjustment, ego-strength, super ego, creativity, ability to enjoy, happiness, honor, quality of life, self-realization, social support and such. Mental health is a very ambiguous term because it is difficult to agree on its general application in a single context. Mental health is not a very precise term and the field of mental health is striving for scientific status while also serving as an ideological label. Before discussing programs to improve the mental health of teachers, this article will briefly touch upon the factors affecting a teacher's mental health. Being a member of a larger society, a teacher also may face problems of maladjustment as part of a developing society in modern times. There are many factors and conditions which can affect mental health in teachers. The concept of mental health has been explained in different perspectives, one of which is psychoanalytic. The psychoanalytic viewpoint that mental health is a property of individuals and a function of intra-psychic development and dynamics is still dominant. It maintains that an individual acquires good mental health as a consequence of fortunate early socialization. Psychoanalysis or some other form of psychotherapy is a corrective method for unfortunate early development. Thus, the individual remains the unit of analysis and psychological health is seen as a function of the individual's unique, private intrapsychic development and life history. Subsequently, the unit of analysis was extended to include the patterning of an individual's interpersonal relations.

Mental Health is thus the balance between all aspects of life - social, physical, spiritual and emotional. It is far more than the absence of mental illness and has to do with many aspects of our lives including how we feel about ourselves; how we feel about others; and how we are able to meet the demands of life.

1.2 Factors responsible for mental health of teachers

The importance of teacher in the educational process is unquestionable. The quality, competence, character, and effectiveness of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant factors influencing the quality of education. The performance of teachers is however affected if they are not mentally fit as it causes the feeling of shame, guilt, rejection, isolation and tension etc. and makes them perceive that the world and life is dangerous. At times, they are forced to adopt maladaptive behaviour. Common mental health problems arise from life events as well as the pressure of work and this is as true for teachers as it is for anyone else. Bereavements, divorces, financial difficulties, family history and personal characteristics can trigger mental health problems. Factors responsible for Teacher's mental health can be categorised under two broad headings viz; professional and social as detailed below:

(i) Professional factors

The professional factors include absence of professional aptitude, occupational hazards, poor Salaries, excessive work load, insecurity of service, inadequate facilities at work place, strenuous relationship between the administrator and teachers, etc. Individuals usually choose teaching as their career only when he or she is not able to secure any other suitable job and thus do not possess the professional aptitude and spirit. It is more so as they take up teaching profession only on compulsion to find some means of livelihood and not because they wanted to take up teaching profession. Teaching profession at times has frustrating conditions, such as dealing with students' indiscipline, posting to remote and inaccessible places, frequent transfers especially to teachers belonging to Government institute, which result in maladjustment and stress. In spite of high cost of living and increased responsibilities of teachers towards the total personality development of children, the salaries of teachers have not increased in the same proportion. This is more acute in private run institutes where teachers are exploited by the management as they are given miniscule salary as compared to the services rendered by them. Even the regulatory authorities such University Grants Commission, National Council of Teacher Education and also the concerned the State Government have not been able to make much headway in containing this menace. The teaching workload is very heavy in most of the schools as they are required to take 6 out of 8 periods in a day. This overload most often cause emotional tensions and mental fatigue especially if it is continued for a long period and can lead to stress. Conflicts among peer for promotions, unequal treatment by the Head of the institution, uneven work load to teachers- some may get many periods whereas others may get less period due to their inability, proximity to the head of the institutions, etc also disturbs harmony, cooperation and good will among teachers and can cause stress and affect mental health of teachers. This is coupled by the autocratic behaviour of some of the principals, directors, administrators etc who behave only in an official manner and impose their orders on teachers without demonstrating appreciation of services rendered. This is more so in private schools. Insecurity of service is another cause of concern affecting teachers mental health as

some of the teachers are appointed on a temporary basis and not made regular even after rendering a considerable length of services. This lead to anxiety, depression or stress among the teachers. Many institutions do not have adequate facilities such as a well equipped library, audiovisual aids and science laboratories. Lack of facilities can cause frustration and stress among teachers.

Social factors

; the social factors encompasses lack of social prestige, high moral expectations, inter-personal relationship among teachers, etc. as detailed below:

- (i) Lack of Social Prestige: Many leaders and educationists give lip service to the importance of teachers. All agree that teachers are the builders of a nation's future. The slogan sounds very sweet to the ears, but what is of importance is the teacher in the eyes of society.
- (ii) High Moral Expectations: Society expects that a teacher should be a saint. No doubt, the teacher must present a model of ideal behavior before the students. But in actual practice how many students imitate or identify with the model or ideals of the teacher? A teacher is a member of society and it is possible that the evils of the social environment may affect a teacher's personality.
- (iii) Lack of Professional Aptitude and Spirit: Individuals usually choose teaching as their career only when an individual is not able to secure any other suitable job. Thus, the teachers usually lack professional aptitude and spirit especially because they enter into teaching profession not because they wanted to take up teaching profession but they were forced to take up teaching profession in absence of any other job opportunities.
- (iv) Occupational hazards: The teaching profession at times has frustrating conditions, such as dealing with students' indiscipline, to remote and inaccessible places, frequent transfers especially to teachers belonging to Government institute, required to serve that could result in maladjustment and stress, .
- (v) Lack of Social Prestige: Many leaders and educationists give lip service to the importance of teachers. All agree that teachers are the builders of a nation's future. The slogan sounds very sweet to the ears, but what is of importance is the teacher in the eyes of society.
- (vi) Poor Salaries: In spite of a high cost of living and increasing responsibilities of teachers towards the total personality development of children, the salaries of teachers have not increased in the same proportion.
- (vii) High Moral Expectations: Society expects that a teacher should be a saint. No doubt, the teacher must present a model of ideal behavior before the students. But in actual practice how many students imitate or identify with the model or ideals of the teacher? A teacher is a member of society and it is possible that the evils of the social environment may affect a teacher's personality.
- (viii) Workload: In schools, the teaching workload can be heavy. The teacher may have to teach 6 out of 8 periods in a day. This overload can cause emotional tensions and mental fatigue if continued for a long period, and can lead to stress.
- (ix) Relationship among Teachers: Conflicts among peers, such as job promotions, may disturb harmony, cooperation and good will among teachers.
- (x) Relationship between the Administrator and Teachers: Some administrators (managers or principals) are autocrats especially in private schools. They behave only in an official manner and impose their orders on teachers without demonstrating appreciation of services rendered.
- (xi) Insecurity of Service: This factor refers to the job tenure. Some teachers may be appointed on a temporary basis. This may develop a number of problems such as anxiety, depression or stress.
- (xii) Lack of Facilities: Many institutions do not have adequate facilities such as a well equipped library, audiovisual aids and science laboratories. Lack of facilities can cause frustration and stress among teachers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mental health can be defined as the adjustment of human beings to the world and to each other with a maximum of effectiveness and happiness. It is the ability to maintain an even temper, an alert intelligence, socially considerate behavior and a happy disposition (Menninger (1945). Maslow and Mittelmann (1951) have suggested (i) adequate feeling of security, (ii) adequate self-evaluation, (iii) adequate spontaneity and emotionality, (iv) efficient contact with reality, (v) adequate bodily desires and the ability to gratify them, (vi) adequate self-knowledge, integration and consistency of personality, (vii) adequate life goals, ability to learn from experience, (viii) ability to satisfy the requirements of the group and (ix) adequate emancipation from the group or culture as the criteria for normal psychological health. Jahoda (1958) on the other hand has identified the following aspects of positive mental health, viz; attitude of an individual toward his own self, growth, development, or self-actualization, integration, autonomy, perception of reality, and environmental mastery.

According to Clausen, Merton, and Nirbert (1966), a mentally healthy individual maintains good adjustment with the social situation, and is engaged in some or other project intended to benefit society. Mental health for teachers is a state in which they are effective in their work, take satisfaction and pride in the activities they pursue, manifest cheer in the performance of their duties and are humanly considerate of their co-workers (Bernard (1961). It follows that to achieve the aims and objectives of school education, organization climate in schools by nature are needed that facilitates teachers to maintain their sound mental health and help the students in its development effectively. In the words of Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson (1971), a mentally healthy person is a productive person. He has a philosophy which gives direction to his life while keeping in view the demands of the changed situations and circumstances. Sawrey and Telford (1971) state that a person with a mature mind is constantly engaged in increasing knowledge, behaves responsibly, expresses thoughts, feelings and viewpoints. Schultz (1977) has noted the following seven criteria of the healthy personality: extension of the sense of self, warm relation of self to others, emotional security, realistic perception, skills and assignments, self-objectification, and unifying philosophy of life. Bhatia (1982) views a person as a healthy individual when he is sound in body and mind. He considers mental health as the ability to balance feelings, desires, ambitions, and ideals in one's daily living. It means the ability to face and accept the realities of life. The studies have revealed that the male teachers possessed better mental health than their female counterparts (Srivastava, 1987; Prasad, 1990; and Sahu and Mishra, 1995). A sound mental health which may be sought after by all of us carries a homogenous structure of desirable attitudes, health values, righteous self concept, and a scientific perception of the world as a whole. Since the criterion for judging a teacher is the improvement of education of millions of learners and the teachers factors affect teacher behaviour / teaching strategies (Kamau, 1992) it is desirable to study the teacher's mental health in the context of ensuring quality in education. Kamau (1992) has examined burnout and mental health among the teachers. Male teachers were found to be emotionally over extended, exhausted, internally controlled, anxiety ridden, callous toward students, more personally accomplished and less capable of establishing constructive coping with ordinary demands and stress of life as compared to females. According to Gazieli (1993) individuals affected by stress may experience feelings of fatigue, loss of sleep, anxiousness and even burnout (exhaustion). In serious cases hypertension and ulcers may also occur. Stress has an effect on a person's physical, emotional and psychological well being, "Stress is typically defined in terms of (i) external environmental characteristics; (ii) individuals emotional states; or (iii) an interaction with variable emphasizing the relationship between individual and their environment. Hence, the highest degree of mental health might therefore be described as that which permits an individual to realize the greatest success which his capabilities will permit with maximum satisfaction of himself and to social order and a minimum of fiction and tension (Bernard, 1961, reported in Anand, 1992).

Sharma (1995) attempted to study changes brought about by the influence of recent life experiences on mental health of school teachers and found that male teachers have greater tendency for mental illness. According to Boyle, Borg, Falon and Baglioni (1995), a teacher is seen as a counselor to students and parents, a social worker, and even to some degree, a parent for the students that are under his or her guidance. With the increasing number of roles that students and parents ask from teachers, as well as the requirements from the local Boards of Education and State Departments of Education, it is no wonder that teacher stress and burnout are on a steady increase. Nayak (2005) conducted a study on Mental Health and Adjustment of Secondary School Teachers influencing development of self concept in teachers. The findings of the study revealed sex, qualification, academic stream differences in self concept and a sound mental health was an important predictor of self concept. Studies conducted by Ravichandan & Rajendran (2007) and Nagi and others (2007) also reported significant relationship between gender and the mental health of teachers. Batool (2008) examined the relationship between Mental Health and Job satisfaction among High School principals and Teachers in Iran. Results indicated that global job satisfaction and its five components viz; satisfaction with work, Co-workers, Pay, Promotion and supervision have negative correlation with the nine mental disorders viz; somatization, obsessive compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, Phobic anxiety, Paranoid ideation and psychoticism.

1.2 Major findings of the review

A synoptic review of the earlier researches conducted in this area revealed that Mental health is difficult to define since the concept is both multidimensional and value-laden. It differs in different cultures; however, it includes self-esteem, tolerance of frustration, growth and learning from new experiences, reality orientation and some degree of success in various pursuits. It also revealed that there existed significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to sex variation, qualification variation, marital status, teacher's self concept. The teachers were subjected to occupational stress and burnout owing to school climate, salary and negligence of the society.

III. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The study was undertaken with the primary objective of assessing the mental health problem of secondary school teachers of Sikkim in particular and the teachers in general. Besides, the study also attempted to address the following objectives:

- To prepare a profile on the competent and total mental health of teachers of secondary school in relation to both sex and management type of variation.
- To study the significant difference in mental health both component wise and totally in relation to sex variation.
- To find out differences if any in the components and total mental health of teachers in relation to management type variation.
- To find out significant difference if any in the components and total mental health of the teachers in relation to teaching experience variation.
- To study and assess the difference in the component and total mental health of the teachers in relation to educational qualification variation.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

The study was conducted with the following premise:

- There exists no significant difference in the mental health of teachers in relation to sex variation.
- There exists no significant difference in mental health of Government Secondary school in relation to management variation.
- There exists no significant difference in mental health of teachers due to teaching experience variation.
- There exists no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to educational qualification variation

V. SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The study was carried out based on mental health assessment scale developed by Anand (1992) to assess the mental health component wise in relation to sex, management type, teaching experience, marital status, educational qualification variation, etc. The study was delimited to the eastern part of Sikkim owing to the fact that almost all advanced and sophisticated schools are situated in and around Gangtok having urbanized atmosphere which affect the mental health of teachers.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The focus of the present study was to study the position of mental health of secondary school teachers of Sikkim in relation to some demographic and institutional variables. Therefore the conceptual framework of the study simply consisted of one variable in relation to the intra variable of sex, marital status, teaching experience and school type. It is a normative survey method of investigation which was employed to study the mental health of secondary school teachers and was an ex-post facto type as the current status of phenomena what existed at that moment was considered.

VII. TOOLS USED

Mental Health Scale (Anand, 1992), a 60 item five point likert instrument which measures six dimension of mental health viz; (i) self concept; (ii) concept of life; (iii) perception of self amongst others; (iv) perception of others; (v) personal adjustment; and (vi) record of achievement were used to categorize teachers as mentally healthy and mentally unhealthy.

VIII. DATA COLLECTION

Techniques of data collection and analysis included techniques for collection of data, scoring, interpretation of scores in relation to the objectives stated and hypothesis formulated. Questionnaire technique was adopted for collection of data. Scoring was done manually. For interpretation of scores both descriptive and inferential statistic have been used. Descriptive statistics have been used to determine the respondent's mental health status where as inferential statistics have been used to find out intra variables effects.

IX. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The study showed significant differences in mental health of teachers in relation to sex factors; no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to marital status; no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to marital status; significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to educational qualification; no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to general

and professional qualification; significant difference in mental health in relation to school management as can be seen from the table below:

Sub-sample Analysis

Particulars		Number	Mean	SD	SED	t-value	Significance
Sex	Female	51	82.3	20.6	3.97	4.1	P<0.1
	Male	49	67.8	22.9			
Marital Status	Married	55	73.36	14.41	2.83	0.08	NS
	Unmarried	45	73.61	13.67			
Experience	Experienced	65	70.75	11.77	2.41	0.34	NS
	Inexperienced	35	69.92	11.26			
Qualification	Post graduates	46	77.16	9.71	2.42	2.40	P<.05
	Graduates	54	71.35	14.34			
	General qualification	55	72.72	13.19	2.66	0.53	NS
	Professional qualification	45	74.13	12.40			
School type	Government schools teachers	50	79.7	13.63	2.88	4.09	P<.01
	Private Schools teachers	50	67.9	15.15			

The analysis of the data to the responses of the questionnaire revealed the following:

- Significant difference in the mental health of teachers owing to gender factor: One of the objectives of the study was to find out if there were any significant differences in the mental health of teachers due to gender factors. The analysis revealed that there were significant differences owing to sex variation as the female teachers having higher mean value has been considered to be having better mental health compared to their male counterparts. Accordingly, the null hypothesis that 'There exists no significant difference in the mental health of teachers in relation to sex variation' is rejected.
- No significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to marital status: In the case of marital status, the null hypothesis that there exists no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to marital status is accepted. As the difference in the mean score is very less it shows that the married and unmarried teachers are similar in their mental health status.
- Significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to educational qualification: In the case of qualification wise, the null hypothesis that there exists no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to educational qualification variation is not accepted. The result shows that the post graduates teachers have better mental health than the graduate teachers.
- No significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to general and professional qualification: In the case of general and professional qualification wise, the null hypothesis that 'there exists no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to general and professional qualification' is accepted. The result shows that the teachers with professional qualification have better mental health than the teachers with general qualification in respect of their mean scores but it was no significant.
- Significant difference in mental health in relation to school management: In case of school type, the null hypothesis that 'there exists no significant difference in mental health in relation to school management type is rejected. The result shows that government school teachers have better mental health as compared to private school teachers.
- No significant role of teaching experience in mental health: The hypothesis 'teaching experience does not play any role in shaping the mental health of teachers' as the factor was not significant considering the 't' value of 0.34 which is less than the table value of 2.63 as per the results of the study. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

X. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY

With a view to ascertain the mental health of secondary school teachers in the context of teachers of Sikkim, the present study was attempted and carried out in schools of Gangtok covering both private and government run schools. The study showed significant differences in mental health of teachers in relation to sex

factors; no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to marital status; no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to marital status; significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to educational qualification; no significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to general and professional qualification; significant difference in mental health in relation to school management as can be seen from the table below:

XI. CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

In consideration of the results of the study as highlighted in the preceding paragraph, following findings have emerged:

- There is significant difference in mental health of teachers dimension wise and as a whole in relation to sex variation;
- There is significant difference in mental health of teachers dimension wise and as a whole due to management variation;
- The teaching experience does not play any role in shaping the mental health of teachers as per the results of the study;
- There is significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to educational qualification.
- No significant difference in mental health of teachers in relation to general and professional qualification

XII. RECOMMENDATION

An attempt has been made to come out with some meaningful suggestions that can contribute towards improving the mental health of teachers:

- (i) Improving teacher-teacher relations: A school's success depends upon the willingness and ability of its members to work together. The school should provide better environment for creating goodwill among the teaching staff. Frequent meetings should be held to discuss the problems and to remove misunderstanding among staff members. Educational tours and excursions should be arranged to develop necessary skills.
- (ii) Improving teacher-principal relations: There is a tendency to blame each other in most school systems. The administrator blames the teachers for any failure in school functioning and teachers blame the administrator for his or her authoritarian attitude and partial treatment. There is a need to improve this relations by dispelling any such misgivings, decide and implement major changes only after due deliberation with the staff members, work as a true leader of the team and encourage team spirit. The teachers also at the same time render their best of services for winning the confidence of both Principal and the students.
- (iii) Professional growth: The schools/ education board should arrange for in-service programs for teachers to refresh their knowledge of content and teaching method, provide good library facilities and teaching materials, encourage teachers to experiment with innovative teaching methods and should work as a friend and guide to them.
- (iv) Seminars, workshops and conferences: Teachers from different schools / board / universities should be invited to discuss problems of education and evaluate alternative viewpoints in seminars and workshops to keep up with trends and technology improvements in education.
- (v) Teacher-community relations: A close relationship should be established between teachers and the community. The school can adopt a local community and help improve sanitary conditions, roads, and drinking water for the people. If the students, under teacher guidance, volunteer for village improvement projects, a close rapport could be established between the school and the local community. This will enhance teachers' prestige.
- (vi) Spiritual Exercise: According to Husain, there are certain inward meditation exercises such as: (i) clearing the air, taking deep breaths and relaxing, (ii) focusing on the goodness in oneself, (iii) breathing in with palms facing each other, then moving hands slowly apart slightly and bringing palms together without touching when breathing out, (iv) feel that one is not alone in one's goodness, and (v) expanding one's goodness within and then outwards to loved ones, to other places, and finally upwards. These few meditation exercises are believed to promote spiritual (mental) health. Programs such as those discussed above can be organized to help uplift the mental wellbeing of teachers and make positive changes in their lives.

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