

Stress of Student Teachers at Secondary Level Prior to Teaching Practice

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Abstract: This paper intends to study the level of Stress, student teachers of secondary level experience during their pre teaching practice period. It also compares the levels of Stress experienced by student teachers at secondary level prior to the teaching practice; based on gender, region they belong, type of management of the teacher education institution and qualification. The study revealed that about one sixth of the student teachers experienced high level of Stress before teaching practice. The study also showed that the student teachers of government colleges experienced more Stress than student teachers of aided colleges, unaided colleges, and university colleges of teacher education (UCTEs) while student teachers of aided colleges had lower levels of Stress than student teachers of the other three types of teacher education institutions mentioned.

Key words: Stress, Coping, Student teachers, Pre teaching practice period, Secondary level

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I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is the general term describing the psychological and physical response to a stimulus that alters the body's equilibrium (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is a multi-faceted process that occurs as a result of an individual's reaction to events or situations in the environment, termed as stressors. Stress can be positive or negative. Stress is positive when it forces one to adapt or reminds that one is not coping well.

Teacher Stress has been a major concern of research since the previous century. Researchers like Clarke and O'Connor (1990) and Gold and Roth (1993) put teaching as one of the most potentially stressful professions. In the twenty first century, teachers have to deal with a number of academic, personal, emotional and social problems in classrooms which make the profession even more stressful than in the previous century.

Need and Significance of the Study

Scores of researches have been undertaken on teacher stress in India. But student teacher stress is almost an unexplored area which needs thorough investigation. Student teachers of the B. Ed course experience much stress before the commencement of the teaching practice. Teacher education programmes concentrate mainly on methodology and do very little in preparing student teachers mentally to cope with the stress and anxiety associated with student Vs teacher roles, relationship with students and mentor teachers; and responsibilities of teaching.

Elkerton (1984), MacDonald (1993), D'Rozario & Wong (1996), Campbell-Evans & Maloney (1997), and Morton et.al (1997) in their studies found that student teachers consider practice teaching the most stressful period of the teacher education programme. D'Rozario & Wong (1996) in the study conducted among student teachers of Singapore and Morton et al. (1997) also reported that females experienced more Stress than males during this period.

Teacher education curriculum in different universities in Kerala does not offer any provision to address such a grave problem. Hence the present study was undertaken to investigate about the student teachers' stress before the commencement of the teaching practice.

Objectives

1. To study the levels of Stress experienced by student teachers at secondary level prior to teaching practice.
2. To compare levels of Stress experienced by student teachers at secondary level prior to teaching practice; based on gender, region, type of management of the institution and qualification.

Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the levels of Stress experienced by student teachers at secondary level prior to teaching practice; based on gender, region, type of management of the institution and qualification.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using survey method among student teachers of secondary level in the previous week of teaching practice, taking 795 student teachers of Kerala based on gender, region they belong, qualification and the type of management of the teacher education institution.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Stress of Student Teachers

Student teachers were classified into High, Average and Low groups based on their Stress scores to identify the level of their Stress. Assuming a normal distribution of Stress scores, sigma distances were used for classifying the sample. Thus, student teachers whose Stress scores fell between ($M + \sigma$ and $M - \sigma$) were classified as 'Average Stress Group' (ASG), student teachers whose Stress scores were below ($M - \sigma$) were classified as 'Low Stress Group' (LSG) and student teachers whose Stress scores were above ($M + \sigma$) were classified as 'High Stress Group' (HSG). Mean for the distribution of Stress scores, was 180.04 and Standard Deviation was 33.46. Therefore, student teachers whose Stress scores were 213.5 or more (rounded value of $M + \sigma$) were considered to have 'High Stress', whose Stress scores were less than 146.58 (rounded value of $M - \sigma$) were considered to have 'Low Stress', and the remaining were classified as of 'Average Stress'.

Table No. 1
Number and Percentages of Student Teachers with respect to the Levels of Stress

Categories	High Stress Group (HSG)	Average Stress Group (ASG)	Low Stress Group (LSG)
Norms	$M + \sigma$ and above	$M + \sigma$ to $M - \sigma$	$M - \sigma$ and below
Number	134	544	117
Percentage	16.87	68.38	14.60

Table 1 reveals that the proportion of student teachers in the High and Low Stress groups are 16.87% and 14.60 % respectively and 68.38% of the student teachers have average level of Stress before practice teaching. Graphical representation of the level of Stress of student teachers is given below. (Figure 1)

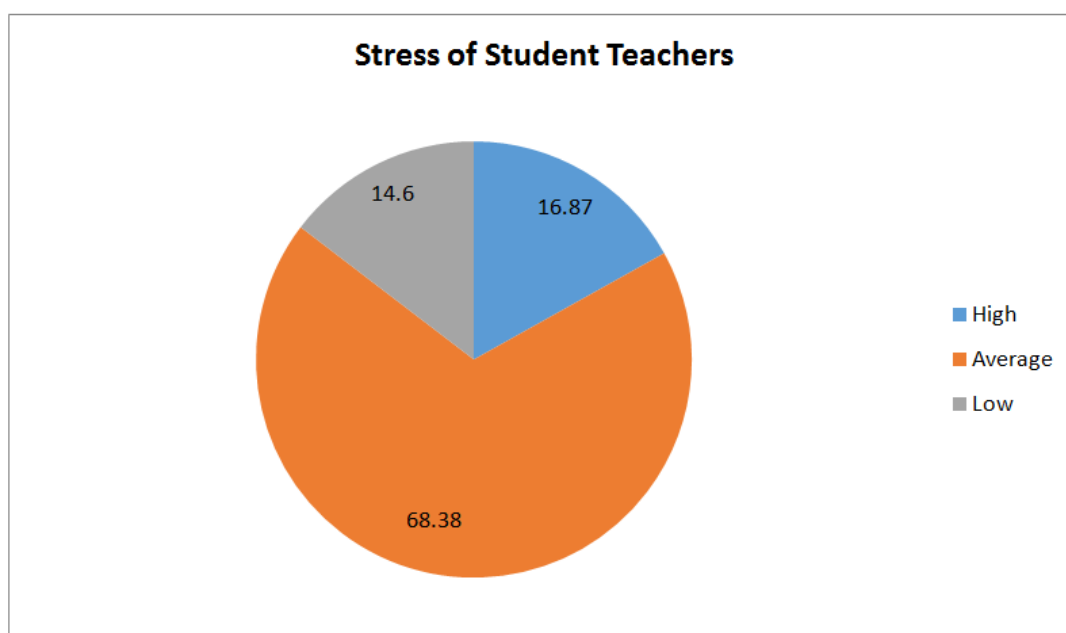


Figure 1
Comparison of the Levels of Stress of Student Teachers

Though majority of the student teachers (68.38%) had average level of stress, one in six student teachers were highly stressed before the teaching practice. This fact is to be taken seriously and the student teachers should be given sufficient training to manage stress effectively before and during their teaching practice.

Table 2
Data and Results of Test of Significant Difference in the Mean Scores of Stress of Student Teachers on the basis of Gender, Region and Qualification

Variables		Number	Male	Standard Deviation	Critical Ratio
Gender	Male	123	180.80	32.2	0.29
	Female	672	179.86	33.7	
Region	South Kerala	449	177.87	32.11	2.01**
	North Kerala	346	182.89	35.00	
Qualification	Basic Qualification	309	178.64	33.34	0.97
	Higher Qualification	486	181.00	33.59	

***Significant at 0.01 level*

The critical ratio obtained for Stress with respect to gender is 0.29 which is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. That means male and female student teachers do not significantly differ in their Stress before teaching practice.

The critical ratio obtained for Stress with respect to the region they belong is 2.01 which is greater than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, which means that there exists a significant difference between student teachers south and north Kerala in their Stress before teaching practice. The mean obtained for student teachers of north Kerala (182.89) is greater than the mean score of student teachers of south Kerala (177.87). Hence it is inferred that student teachers of north Kerala have higher Stress compared to student teachers of south Kerala.

The critical ratio obtained for Stress with respect to academic qualification is 0.97 which is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. That means there exists no significant difference between student teachers with basic qualification and student teachers with higher qualifications in their Stress.

Table 3
Data and Results of Test of Significant Difference between the Mean Scores of Stress of Student Teachers on the basis of the Type of Management of the Institution

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Stress	Between Groups	11603.17	3	3867.72	3.49
	Within Groups	876421.92	791	1109.4	
	Total	888025.08	794	-	

***Significant at 0.01 level*

The 'F' value obtained for Stress with respect to the type of management of the institution is 3.49 which is greater than the table value 3.00 at 0.05 level of significance. That means there exist significant difference in the level of Stress of student teachers based on the type of management of the institutions. In order to find out the difference, Scheff Post hoc test was used.

Table 4
Data and Result of Sheff Post Hoc Test for Stress of Student Teachers of Different Type of Teacher Education Institutions

Type of Management	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Aided	229	176.61	
U C TE	184	178.4	178.4
Unaided	168	178.73	178.73
Government	213		186.22

Mean scores of Stress of the student teachers studying in different types of teacher education colleges are given in the Table 4. The mean score of Stress of the government college student teachers is 186.21, which is higher than that of the student teachers of aided colleges (176.61), unaided colleges (178.73) and university

colleges of teacher education (UCTEs, 1178.4). Hence it is inferred that government college student teachers have higher Stress compared to that of student teachers of aided colleges, unaided colleges and UCTEs.

Graphical representation of the mean scores of Stress of student teachers studying in different types of teacher education institutions are given below in the form of mean plot (Figure 2).

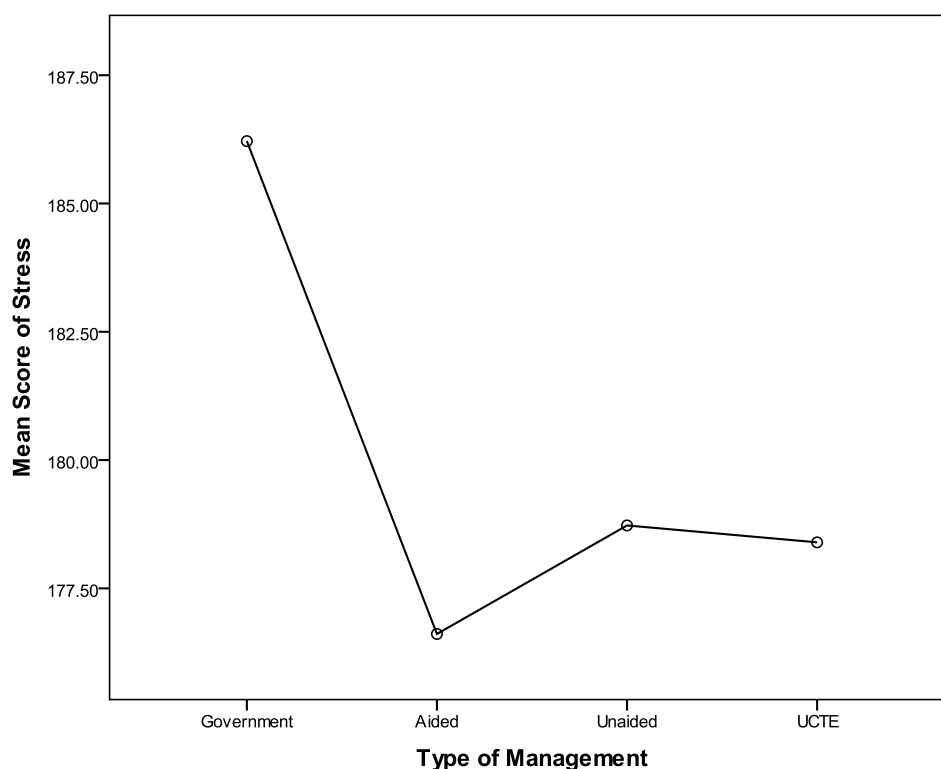


Figure 2

Mean Plot of Stress of Student Teachers with respect to the Type of Management of the Institution

Post Hoc analysis of the Stress data related to the type of management of the institution reveals that student teachers of government colleges have higher Stress, when compared to the same of student teachers of aided colleges, unaided colleges and university colleges of teacher education (UCTEs). Also, student teachers of aided colleges have less Stress compared to that of student teachers among the four kinds of teacher education institutions studied. This indicates that the type of management of the aided colleges of teacher education helps student teachers to cope with Stress more effectively than that of Government colleges of teacher education, unaided colleges of teacher education and university colleges of teacher education (UCTEs).

Student teachers of government colleges have high stress when compared to student teachers of aided colleges, unaided colleges and university colleges of teacher education (UCTEs). Merit in the qualifying examination is the only criteria for the admission of student teachers in government colleges other than the allotment of stipulated number of seats to the students in the reservation category. Since the student teachers are admitted to the course on the basis of merit; they are supposed to cope with Stress in a better way. But it was not found to be so. That means, academic achievement alone will not enable a person to cope with stress. Also, student teachers of aided colleges were found to have lower Stress. Hence the management of the college and the academic atmosphere prevailing in the institution are important factors in making a student teacher capable of managing Stress.

IV CONCLUSIONS

1. About one sixth of the student teachers have high Stress before teaching practice while majority of the student teachers have average level of Stress.
2. Male and female student teachers do not significantly differ in their levels of Stress before teaching practice.
3. Government college student teachers have higher levels of Stress compared to that of student teachers of aided colleges, unaided colleges and UCTEs. Mean while aided college student teachers are found to have less Stress compared to that of student teachers of government colleges, unaided colleges and university colleges of teacher education (UCTEs).

4. Student teachers of north Kerala have higher levels of Stress compared to student teachers of south Kerala, before the teaching practice.
5. Student teachers with basic and higher qualifications do not differ significantly in their levels of Stress before the teaching practice.

Educational Implications

1. Stress that originates out of academic, personal and social aspects of student teachers is usually little addressed by the teacher education curriculum, teacher educators and the teacher education institutions. Hence teacher educators as well as the teacher education institutions should take care of the academic as well as personal and social aspects of the student teachers more to help them deal with the stressors positively, with confidence. The mental readiness of the student teacher is very important in completing the teaching practice successfully.
2. Teacher educators shall be given training in Stress management measures to enable them to train student teachers in their institutions, in managing Stress.
3. Though certain reference about Stress is there in the teacher education syllabus; practicing Stress management is alien to the teacher education curriculum. Hence curriculum planners and teacher educators shall take steps to include practical aspects of Stress management in teacher education and make its practice mandatory, as a part of the curriculum.
4. Stress management programmes like meditation, yoga, art of living etc. can be given to student teachers before the teaching practice to help them manage Stress to become efficient and effective teachers.

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