

# Management of Occupational Stress and Mental Health through Complementary Therapies

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**Abstract** – The present study was carried out on 50 college teachers including 25 male and 25 female teachers. Occupational stress and mental health status of college teachers were assessed. stress and improvement of mental health. Interview schedule was developed to gather information on socio-personal variables. Occupational Stress Index developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984) was used to assess stress among college teachers. An inventory was used to assess mental health status. Mean scores were computed for different aspects of occupational stress and overall stress. Mean scores were also computed for different components of mental health and overall mental health. Intervention booklet was prepared on complementary therapies for reducing stress and promoting mental health. It was personally given to college teachers. Only ten teachers participated in the intervention programme. Results revealed that complementary therapies results in reducing occupational stress and promoting mental health of respondents.

**The research findings have a scope of reducing mental health problems of teachers by reducing their occupational stress through complementary therapies.**

**Key Words** – Occupational Stress, Mental Health, College Teachers, Complementary Therapies.

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## INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is a stress related to individual's occupation. The causes of occupational stress could be expectations and pressures that do not match with an individual's knowledge and skills; and the person is unable to cope (WHO 2015). Devi and Davjar (2001) reported that stress can become a serious health problem and 75% of diseases are mainly caused by stress. Rao and Chandraiah (2012) mentioned that the combination of high demands in a job and a low amount of control over the situation can lead to stress. Employees who start to feel the "pressure to perform" can get caught in a downward spiral of increasing effort to meet rising expectations with no increase in job satisfaction. The relentless requirement to work at optimum performance takes its toll in job dissatisfaction, employee turnover, reduced efficiency, illness and even death. In Europe, one fifth of workers experience stress in the work environment. Psychosocial stressors in the workplace are associated with adverse physical and mental health outcomes, including symptoms of anxiety and depression (Gigantesco & Lega, 2013). Teaching profession also comes under the array of stress and hence making it more demanding and challenging everyday (Hepburn and Brown, 2001; Johnson et al. 2005).

World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) described 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".

Keyes (2006) identified three components of mental health: emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being. Emotional well-being includes happiness, interest in life, and satisfaction; psychological well-being includes being good at managing the responsibilities of daily life, having good relationships with others, and being satisfied with one's own life; social well-being refers to being a contributing member to society (social contribution), feeling part of a community (social integration), believing that society is a better place for all living people (social actualization).

Mental health is a very positive thing. It is something that we all aim to have. However, at some stage of life, we all go through times in our lives where we may experience mental illness. Mental illness is opposite of mental health that affect our mental well-being. It covers a range of symptoms, experiences and psychological problems.

There are a number of ways to deal with mental health problems. Some of these are medication, counseling, psychotherapy, behavior therapy, hospitalization, peer support, social support; and complementary and alternative approaches. Complementary approaches include mediation, yoga, massage, and chanting mantras

In the present study occupational stress and mental health of college teachers was assessed. Intervention programme in the form of complementary therapeutic strategies was provided to teachers to manage their stress and promote mental health. Teachers practiced these therapies daily for 30-45 minutes for a period of one month.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Locale of the study and sample selection**

The present study was carried out in Haryana state. Fifty college teachers, including 25 male and 25 female teachers, working in Govt. and Private Colleges in Haryana state were selected through personal contacts. Hence, sample selection was purposive. Age of respondents ranged from 35 years to 55 years, with mean 42.1 years. For intervention only ten college teachers participated in complementary therapeutic programme. Hence, post-testing data could be gathered from only ten college teachers (four male and six female).

**Measures and Method for Data Collection**

A questionnaire was prepared to collect information on personal variables. Occupational Stress Index developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984) was used to assess stress of college teachers. This scale has 46 items, each to be rated on five point scale (never, seldom, sometimes, mostly and always), out of which 28 items were true keyed and 18 items were false keyed. For true keyed items scores were 1 to 5 and for false keyed items, scores were 5 to 1. Mean scores were computed for different components of occupational stress. Total scores were computed for stress.

An inventory was prepared to assess the mental health of teachers. This inventory consisted of 15 items to be rated on five point scale (never, seldom, sometimes, mostly and always), out of which 9 items were true keyed and 6 items were false keyed. For true keyed items scores were 1 to 5 and for false keyed items, scores were 5 to 1. Mean scores were computed for different components of mental health. Total scores were also computed for overall mental health status.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Occupational stress among college teachers at pre-testing stage**

Means and SDs were computed for occupational stress among college teachers. As shown in the Table 1, means for role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict stress were 15.07, 10.35 and 12.09 respectively. Means for stress due to pressure from others, responsibility for person and under-participation were 10.29, 9.13 and 10.28 respectively. Mean scores of stress due to powerlessness, poor peer relations and intrinsic improvement were 10.27, 11.19 and 10.27 respectively. Mean scores of stress due to low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability were 9.22, 10.19 and 6.34 respectively. Mean score for total occupational stress among college teachers was 124.89.

**Table 1: Occupational stress among college teachers at pre-testing stage (n=50)**

Sub-scales of occupational stress	Mean	SD
Role overload	15.07	4.18
Role ambiguity	10.35	3.41
Role conflict	12.09	3.55
Pressure from others	10.29	3.22
Responsibility for person	9.13	2.30
Under participation	10.28	3.42
Powerlessness	10.27	2.12
Poor peer relations	11.19	3.16
Intrinsic impoverishment	10.27	3.02
Low status	9.22	2.03
Strenuous working conditions	10.19	3.11
Unprofitability	6.34	1.80
Overall occupational stress	124.89	29.01

**Mental health status of college teachers at pre-testing stage**

Means and SDs were computed for mental health status of college teachers. As shown in the Table 2, mean for state of mind was 17.05; for resilience aspect mean was 16.84; and for confidence mean score was 13.56. Mean score for overall mental health status of teachers was 47.45.

**Table 2: Mental health status of college teachers at pre-testing stage (n=50)**

Aspects of mental health	Mean	SD
State of mind	17.05	3.17
Resilience	16.84	2.38
Confidence	13.56	2.58
Overall mental health status	47.45	3.10

**Impact of complementary therapies on occupational stress and mental health status of college teachers**

Awareness was created among college teachers about use of complementary therapeutic approaches to manage stress and to promote their mental health status. An intervention booklet was

prepared about different complementary therapeutic approaches and were personally given to teachers. Teachers were requested to use combination of different methods daily for about 30-45 minutes for a period of one month so that it can become part of their daily routine in long-term. Different complementary therapies included yoga, medication, balanced diet, massage, recitation of mantras, listening to music and bhajans etc. After a gap of one month selected teachers were again contacted. Only ten teachers participated at experimental level and post-testing data hence could be gathered only from ten college teachers (four male and six female teachers). Paired-t test was used to examine impact of complementary therapeutic strategies on stress and mental health status of teachers.

**Pre and post-testing comparison of occupational stress among college teachers**

Paired-t test was used to compare mean scores of occupational stress among college teachers at pre and post-testing stages. As presented in Table 3, there were significant differences in occupational stress of college teachers at pre- and post-testing stages. At post-testing stage there was significant reduction in occupational stress among college teachers. The reduction in level of stress was the impact of complementary therapeutic strategies used by teachers for management of stress.

**Table 3: Comparison of occupational stress among college teachers at pre- and post-testing stages**

Sub-scales of occupational stress	Pre-testing Mean	Post-testing Mean	Difference
Role overload	18.01	15.01	3.00*
Role ambiguity	13.05	10.71	2.34
Role conflict	16.09	11.59	4.50*
Pressure from others	13.15	10.52	2.63*
Responsibility for person	11.56	9.10	2.46*
Under participation	14.23	11.06	3.17*
Powerlessness	12.21	10.03	2.18*
Poor peer relations	13.56	10.83	2.73*
Intrinsic impoverishment	13.54	10.05	3.49*
Low status	11.92	9.10	2.82*
Strenuous working conditions	13.98	10.04	2.94*
Unprofitability	8.64	6.14	2.28*
Overall occupational stress	159.94	124.18	35.76**

Note: \*Pre and post-testing means differ significantly at 5% level of significance.

It can be inferred from these findings that complementary therapeutic strategies play significant role in management of stress.

**Pre and post-testing comparison of mental health status of college teachers**

Paired-t test was used to compare mean scores of mental health status of college teachers at pre and post-testing stages. As presented in Table 4, there were significant differences in mental health status of college teachers at pre- and post-testing stages. At post-testing stage there was significant increase in

mental health status of college teachers. The improvement in mental health status was the impact of complementary therapeutic strategies used by teachers for promoting their mental health.

It can be inferred from these findings that complementary therapeutic strategies play significant role in promoting mental health status.

**Table 4: Comparison of mental health status of college teachers at pre- and post-testing stages**

Aspects of mental health	Pre-testing Mean	Post-testing Mean	Difference
State of mind	15.53	19.16	3.63*
Resilience	15.84	19.31	3.47*
Confidence	11.31	13.88	2.57*
Overall mental health status	42.68	52.35	9.67*

Note: \*Pre and post-testing means differ significantly at 5% level of significance.

**DISCUSSION**

*Results of the present study revealed that after exposure to intervention programme in the form of complementary therapeutic approach, there was significant reduction in occupational stress and significant improvement in mental health of college teachers.*

Complementary therapies typically take a holistic approach to our physical and mental health and consider all aspects of our physical and emotional wellbeing as a whole. Complementary therapies focus on the mind, body and spirit or on the flow of energy through our body. As a result we feel relaxed. These therapies are particularly important for those who do not take medicines due to any reason. These therapies also protect us from side effects of allopathic medicines. Managing a mental health problem can be really difficult, especially when a person is not feeling well. But, if used in a correct manner on regular basis with determination that he or she wants to overcome stress and promote his or her mental health, complementary therapies are one of the best options.

There is huge literature on importance of complementary therapies in our life. The findings of the present research study get support from previous literature. Onishi et al. (2016) conducted a study on hospital nurses in Japan. The results revealed that complementary therapies were found to relieve tension, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, fatigue, confusion, and vigor in high-stress nurses. The authors mentioned that complementary therapies could be used when suffering from stress as a form of self-management and to develop skills to reduce stress.

Ravalier et al. (2016) performed a systematic literature review research on complementary



therapies and employee well-being. These authors reported that mindfulness and meditation based interventions were most effective in improving psychosocial health and work performance.

In the present study one of the respondent reported that when she was suffering from depression and severe stress, chanting mantras helped her to come out of depression and overcome stress. Although in the beginning doctor prescribed her allopathic medicines and counseled her to indulge in meditation. She stated doing meditation and also stated chanting God's name. These therapies helped her to change outlook for her life. She reported that these therapies have magical effect.

Sanatan Sanstha (2014) reported that there are spiritual benefits of chanting God's name and helps in alleviating physical and psychological ailments, increasing concentration and reducing sorrow. Psychosomatic diseases, which take place due to mental stress, do not take place because of chanting. While chanting one has to concentrate and if minds wanders, individual has to bring the mind back to chanting. In this process, the individual learns to control assess the good and bad thoughts and become introspective. This helps in management of negative thoughts and relieve stress.

Sharma and Singh (2014) conducted a study on management of educational stress in adolescents by chanting mantras. Results revealed that chanting of mantras offers a relaxed outlook in life. Meditation helps in conquering the neurotic tendencies and makes the mind peaceful and happy. Chanting of OM and Gayatri mantra stimulates the brain cells resulting in their activation and ultimately leading to better concentration and happy life.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

College teachers in the present research study experienced occupational stress and mental health problems. Complementary therapeutic strategies helped the respondents to reduce their occupational stress and promote their mental health. Hence, it can be concluded that complementary therapies have significant contribution in management of stress and mental health.

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