

Full Length Research Paper

Emotional competence and stressors of female school teachers

Holeyannavar, P. G* and Itagi, S. K.

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Rural Home Science College, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, 580 005, Karnataka, India.

Accepted 12 November, 2011

A study on emotional competence and stressors of 105 primary school teachers was conducted in Dharwad in 2009. Emotional competence was assessed using EC- scale and stressors by stress inventory for teachers (SIT). Results revealed that majority of the teachers (89.5%) showed average to competent levels of emotional competence, followed by 6.7 and 3.8% in incompetent and highly competent levels respectively. Most of them (64.7%) indicated average to high levels of stress and 35.2% with low stress. Age and work experience showed positive and highly significant relationship with the emotional competence of teachers. The stress of teachers showed negative and highly significant relationship with age and work experience. Negative and highly significant relationship was observed between the stressors and emotional competence of the teachers. Thus, the study concluded that increase in the emotional competence reduced the stressors of the primary school teachers significantly.

Key words: Stressors, emotional competence, primary school teachers.

INTRODUCTION

In modern society the status of women revealed that socio-cultural values hold considerable importance in their inner-world. Along with socio-cultural changes, women's participation and contribution to family life has also changed. The increase in the number of women at work may not only result in paucity of time of association with family members but also mark a change in the behavioral characteristics of women. Therefore the working woman is needed to have more competence to carry out her job effectively as a wife, a daughter-in-law, and as a mother in the family, and a good worker on the professional front to acquire a balance in the society.

Emotional competence as efficiency to deal effectively in several situations is a blend of many competencies (Coleman, 1970). The need for competence or effectance, is considered innate part of human nature. The person functioning competently is characterized by the capacity to enjoy successes and suffering failures

and building from both. They encompass mastery, maintenance and protective activities. An emotionally competent teacher learns and applies skills to manage stress, improve self-esteem, confidence, personal change, decision making, leadership, assertion, comfort and commitment which raise the quality of teaching along with health and well-being (Nelson et al., 2005). But unfortunately many teachers often experience negative emotions than positive ones. Negative emotions, such as, anxiety interferes in cognitive capacity for processing information, while positive emotions increase creative capacity for generating new ideas and ability to handle difficulties (Frederickson, 2001). So the teachers need to be emotionally competent to balance both positive and negative emotions.

Teaching is a demanding profession in which majority of women are employed. The effectiveness of the educational system largely depends on active, resourceful and competent teachers. The teachers are involved in moulding the life of children effectively, but face stress in dealing with young children who are difficult to handle along with handling their own family life. The multiple roles that they are expected to perform leads to

*Corresponding author. E-mail: poojagsh@gmail.com. Tel: +918088202534.

stress. Stress is defined as a condition where in job related factors such as physical and personal, occupational, familial and social, and psychological and emotional factors interact with the individual to change his or her psychological or physiological conditions in such a way that the individual is forced to deviate from the normal functioning. The teachers should be able to deal with these stressors effectively in order to maintain normal physical and mental functioning and success in their careers. It is necessary to develop the capacity to identify, understand and regulate both positive and negative emotions and generate emotions to favor well-being in teaching profession. Hunt and Evans (2003) reported that individuals with higher emotional intelligence reported fewer psychological symptoms related to traumatic experiences. Therefore, stress is a negative attribute, while emotional competence is a positive personality factor which can act upon and reduce the harmful effects of stress. Very few studies deal with the interrelation between stressors and emotional competence of teachers. Hence the present study is an attempt to focus on "emotional competence and stressors of female school teachers" with the following objectives:

- 1) To examine the emotional competence and stressors of female primary teachers.
- 2) To determine the relation between emotional competence and stress along with age and work experience of teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Out of 352 married female teachers working in 50 Government primary schools of Dharwad, 105 teachers were selected randomly. The teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience were considered for the study. The teachers had a mean age of 39 years, income Rs.20, 800, and experience of 22 years.

Emotional competence (EC- scale) developed by Bharadwaj and Sharma (1995) was used to assess the emotional competence of female school teachers. This scale consists of 30 statements divided into five components with 6 items in each component. It is a five point scale having five alternatives to each and scoring of 1,2,3,4, and 5 from upper to lower end. The components of emotional competence are adequate depth of feeling (ADF), adequate expression and control of emotions (AEC), ability to function with emotions (AFE), ability to cope with problems emotions (ACPE), and encouragement of positive emotions (EPE). The total score of each component ranges from 6 to 30 and total score of the scale ranges from 30 to 150. The raw score of all the components are converted into 'Z' scores with the help of the 'Z' table. Based on the 'Z' scores the components as well as the overall emotional competence can be classified as highly incompetent, incompetent, average, competent and highly competent.

Stress Inventory for teachers (SIT) developed by Sheeja (1999) was used to assess the stress levels of the teachers. This scale consists of 63 items divided into 4 stressors viz., physical and personal, occupational, familial and social, psychological and emotional stressors. It is a 3 point scale. For each statement a score of 2, 1 and 0 is to be given for responses always, sometimes and never respectively. The scores obtained for each of the

statements will be added together to get the component score as well as the total score for stress. The total score of stress ranges from 0-126. Based on the stress score, the stressors as well as overall stress can be categorized into low, average and high levels.

The teachers were contacted personally, requested to spare some time for filling the questionnaires individually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of emotional competence of the teachers in five components as well as overall emotional competence are presented in Table 1. It is interesting to note that only one teacher showed highly incompetent and highly competent level with adequate depth of feeling, whereas 46.7% had average, followed by 44.8 and 6.7% with competent and incompetent levels respectively. With respect to adequate expression and control of emotions (AEC), 77.1% of the teachers showed average levels, followed by 9.5% in incompetent as well as competent levels and only 3.8% in highly incompetent level. But none showed highly competent level in the second component of emotional competence. In case of ability to function with emotions (AFE), more than three-fourth of the teachers (77.1%) expressed average level, whereas 16.2% showed competent level, followed by 4.8 and 1.9% incompetent and highly competent levels respectively. Regarding the ability to cope with problem emotions (ACPE), 1 to 2% of teachers showed highly incompetent and highly competent levels. Whereas 59.0% of teachers had average ability to cope with problem emotions, followed by 35.2 and 2.9% competent and incompetent levels, respectively. With respect to fifth component of emotional competence, viz., encouragement of positive emotions (EPE), none of the teachers were highly competent and only one per cent fell in highly incompetent level. 70.5% of the teachers showed average level towards EPE, followed by 15.2 and 13.3% competent and incompetent levels, respectively. On the whole, with regard to overall emotional competence, 93% indicated average to highly competent level of emotional competence while only 7.1% indicated incompetent level and none in the highly incompetent category. This indicated that majority of the teachers possessed at least average emotional competence which may be due to change in the social scenario, exposure of women to various situations, socio-economic empowerment, and independent decision making capacity regarding family and health matters. The knowledge, education and work experience of teachers helped to develop the ability to cope with problems, have adequate depth, expression and control of emotions, ability to function with and encourage positive emotions. Similar findings were reported by Ramganes and Johnson (2008) that the teacher educators in Pondicherry and Karaikal regions had average emotional quotient.

Types of stressors and overall stress were judged on the basis of frequency and percentage scores obtained

Table 1. Emotional competence of the primary school teachers.

S/No.	Component	Categories				
		Highly incompetent	Incompetent	Average	Competent	Highly competent
1	ADF	01 (1.0)	07 (6.7)	49 (46.7)	47 (44.8)	01 (1.0)
2	AEC	04 (3.8)	10 (9.5)	81 (77.1)	10 (9.5)	-
3	AFE	-	05 (4.8)	81 (77.1)	17 (16.2)	02 (1.9)
4	ACPE	02 (1.9)	03 (2.9)	62 (59.0)	37 (35.2)	01 (1.0)
5	EPE	01 (1.0)	14 (13.3)	74 (70.5)	16 (15.2)	-
	Overall emotional competence	-	07 (6.7)	41 (39.0)	53 (50.5)	04 (3.8)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages. ADF-Adequate depth of feeling; AEC-Adequate expression and control of emotions; AFE-Ability to function with emotions; ACPE- Ability to cope with problem emotions; EPE- Encouragement of positive emotions.

Table 2. Stressors of the primary school teachers.

S/No.	Types of stressors	Low	Average	High
1	Physical and personal	42 (40.0)	42 (40.0)	21 (20.0)
2	Occupational	37 (35.2)	36 (34.3)	32 (30.5)
3	Familial and social	47 (44.8)	40 (38.1)	18 (17.1)
4	Psychological and emotional	43 (41.0)	41 (39.0)	21 (20.0)
	Overall stress	37 (35.2)	33 (31.4)	35 (33.3)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

by the teachers and presented in Table 2. It was clearly indicated that 40% of teachers had average and low stress, while 20% showed high physical and personal stress. It is interesting to note that as high as 30.5% of teachers expressed high stress, while 34.3 and 35.2% indicated average and low occupational stress, respectively. In case of familial and social stressors, 44.8% of teachers showed low level, whereas 38.1 and 17.1% average and high stress levels, respectively. With respect to psychological and emotional stressors, 41.0% of teachers had low stress, followed by 39.0 and 20.0% indicating average and high stress levels, respectively.

The results of Table 2 clearly pointed out that 35.2% of teachers had low stress, followed by 33.3 and 31.4% indicated high and average overall stress, respectively. On the whole one-third of the teachers suffered from stress and 65% indicated average to high level of stress. This highlighted the teachers' difficulty to cope up with physical and personal, occupational, psychological and emotional and familial and social stressors. Bharati and Reddy (2002) observed that 79.0% of teachers showed average to high levels and only 22.0% had low levels of job stress. There was no significant difference between the government and missionary school teachers with respect to overall job stress. Devi (2002) observed that 72.0% of primary and high school teachers from Tirupati expressed physical and mental exhaustion due to difficulty in balancing work at home and school.

The relationship between age with stress and emotional competence of teachers is presented in Table 3. With regard to stress, 68.4% of teachers belonging to 25 to 34

years age group showed high, followed by 15.8% each in low and average categories of stress, respectively. 38.9 and 66.7% of teachers from 35 to 44 years and above 55 years age group indicated low, followed by 33.3 and 25.0% average and 27.8 and 8.3% high stress levels respectively. On the other hand, 42.1 teachers of 45 to 54 years age group expressed average stress, followed by 34.2 and 23.7% with low and high stress levels respectively. There was negative and highly significant relationship between age and stress of the teachers indicating that increased age reduced the stress. It was also interesting to note that teachers less than 35 years of age showed high occupational stressors than older teachers, thus indicating higher level of adaptability and adjustability to the occupation by senior teachers (35 to 60 years). The younger teachers experiencing more stress may be because of young children in the family. Rastogi and Kashyap (2003) observed that matured and experienced working women ignore the stress and maintain smooth adjustment in the organization. Alka and Asthana (2004) observed that older teachers showed higher job satisfaction compared to middle and younger age groups.

With respect to emotional competence, 47.4% teachers with age range of 25 to 34 years fell in average level, followed by 26.3% both in competent and incompetent levels. Among the teachers of 35 to 44 years age group, 58.3% showed competent, followed by 36.1% average and 2.8% highly competent as well as incompetent levels. Among the teachers from 45 to 54 years age group, 47.4% indicated average level, followed by 39.5%

Table 3. Relationship between age with stress and emotional competence of teachers.

S/No.	Particulars	Category	Age range (years)				'r' value
			25 to 34 (n=19)	35 to 44 (n=45)	45 to 54 (n=31)	>55 (n=10)	
I	Stress	Low	03 (15.8)	14 (38.9)	13 (34.2)	08 (66.7)	-0.362**
		Average	03 (15.8)	12 (33.3)	16 (42.1)	03 (25.0)	
		High	13 (68.4)	10 (27.8)	09 (23.7)	01 (8.3)	
II	Emotional competence	Incompetent	05 (26.3)	01 (2.8)	02 (5.3)	-	0.290**
		Average	09 (47.4)	13 (36.1)	18 (47.4)	02 (16.7)	
		Competent	05 (26.3)	21 (58.3)	15 (39.5)	10 (83.3)	
		Highly competent	-	01 (2.8)	03 (7.9)	-	

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages, ** - Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 4. Relationship between work experience with stress and emotional competence of teachers.

S/No.	Particulars	Category	Work experience (years)				'r' value
			<10 (n=19)	11 to 20 (n=45)	21 to 30 (n=31)	>31 (n=10)	
I	Stress	Low	03 (15.8)	15 (33.3)	13 (41.9)	07 (70.0)	-0.391**
		Average	04 (21.1)	14 (31.1)	13 (41.9)	03 (30.0)	
		High	12 (63.2)	16 (35.6)	05 (16.1)	-	
II	Emotional competence	Incompetent	05 (26.3)	02 (4.4)	01 (3.2)	-	0.275**
		Average	08 (42.1)	18 (40.0)	14 (45.2)	02 (20.0)	
		Competent	05 (26.3)	25 (55.6)	14 (45.2)	07 (70.0)	
		Highly competent	01 (5.3)	-	02 (6.5)	01 (10.0)	

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages, ** - Significant at 0.01 level.

competent, 7.9% highly competent and only 5.3% incompetent level of emotional competence. Lastly, with respect to above 55 years age group, 83.3% of teachers were competent, while 16.7% showed average emotional competence. The correlation coefficient between age and emotional competence of teachers was positive and highly significant (0.29) indicating that with the increase in age the emotional competence of the teachers also increased. The senior teachers handled the emotions competently compared to the young teachers. The incompetence level was also observed upto 26.3% among young teachers (25 to 34 years). Sridhar and Badiel (2007) reported that senior teachers (41 to 50 years) had more emotional intelligence compared to the young ones (below 30 years). Nelson et al. (2005) found that emotional monitoring called as emotional intelligence is a learned ability to identify and express human emotions in a healthy and productive way that increases with age among the teachers. Bansi et al. (2004) observed that emotional quotient can be developed and increased through learning and experience in life span of teachers, higher EQ is linked with higher age.

Table 4 reveals the relationship between work experience with stress and emotional competence of teachers. 63.2% of the teachers having less than 10

years experience indicated high stress, followed by 21.1 and 15.8% average and low stress, respectively. In case of teachers having 11 to 20 years experience, 35.6% possessed high levels of stress, 33.3% low and 31.1% average stress. 41.9% of teachers having 21 to 30 years experience fell in both average and low levels of stress and only 16.1% in high stress level. Lastly, 70.0% of teachers having an experience of more than 31 years documented low stress with remaining 30.0% average level. None of them had high levels of stress. The coefficient of correlation between experience and stress of teachers was -0.391, indicating negative and highly significant relationship. It was interesting to note that increase in experience decreased the percentage of teachers with high stress in physical and personal, occupational, familial and social and psychological and emotional stressors. With increase in the experience, the teachers learn to tackle all the stressors effectively. Hence, 70 to 80% of the teachers with more than 31 years of work experience indicated low stress with respect to all the stressors. Ravichandran and Rajendran (2007) reported that experience of higher secondary teachers was found significant with personal stress, lack of support from parents, organizational policy and parental expectations.

Table 5. Correlation coefficient between stressors and emotional competence of teachers.

Types of stressors	Components of emotional competence					Overall emotional competence
	ADF	AEC	AFE	ACPE	EPE	
Physical and personal	-0.302**	-0.395**	-0.347**	-0.465**	-0.177	-0.431**
Occupational	-0.241*	-0.345**	-0.333**	-0.371**	-0.195*	-0.379**
Familial and social	-0.379**	-0.256**	-0.180	-0.393**	-0.168	-0.357**
Psychological and emotional	-0.410**	-0.536**	-0.351**	-0.516**	-0.225*	-0.522**
Overall stress	-0.350**	-0.428**	-0.364**	-0.484**	-0.222*	-0.473**

* - Significant at 0.05 level; ** - Significant at 0.01 level; ADF– Adequate depth of feeling; AEC–Adequate expression and control of emotions; AFE–Ability to function with emotions; ACPE–Ability to cope with problem emotions; EPE–Encouragement of positive emotions.

In case of emotional competence, among the teachers possessing less than 10 years work experience, 42.1% showed average competence, followed by 26.3% both competent and incompetent levels and only 5.3% highly competent level of emotional competence. 55.6% of teachers having 11 to 20 years work experience showed competent level, 40.0% average and only 4.4% incompetent level. Among the teachers of 21 to 30 years work experience, 45.2% indicated average as well as competent level, followed by 6.5 and 3.2% highly competent and incompetent levels respectively. Most of the teachers (70.0%) having more than 31 years work experience documented competent level, 20.0% average and 10.0% highly competent level of emotional competence. There was positive and highly significant relationship between work experience and emotional competence of the teachers (0.275) indicating that as the experience increased the emotional competence also increased. All the experienced teachers indicated more than average emotional competence. The percentage of teachers having incompetent level of emotional competence decreased considerably with increase in work experience (from 26.0 to 3.0%). This may be because of initial adjustment time required for inexperienced teachers. As experience increases, the teachers learn to cope up with the school as well as familial problems. Bansi et al. (2004) reported that emotional intelligence developed and increased with the increase in experience of the teachers. The higher emotional quotient linked with higher job experience.

The correlation coefficient between the types of stressors and emotional competence of the teachers has been depicted in Table 5. Coefficient of correlation between physical and personal stressors and adequate depth of feeling, adequate expression and control of emotions, ability to function with emotions, ability to cope with problem emotions and encouragement of positive emotions as well as overall emotional competence was -0.302, -0.395, -0.347, -0.465, -0.177 and -0.431 respectively. These results indicated that there was significant negative relationship between physical and personal stressors and all components of emotional competence and overall emotional competence except encouragement of positive emotions which was found to

be non-significant. This indicated that with increase in the emotional competence the physical and personal stressors faced by the teachers can be reduced significantly.

Coefficient of correlation between occupational stressors and adequate depth of feelings, adequate expression and control of emotions, ability to function with emotions, ability to cope with problem emotions, encouragement of positive emotions as well as overall emotional competence was -0.241, -0.345, -0.333, -0.371, -0.195 and -0.379 respectively. This revealed that there was significant negative relationship between occupational stress and components as well as overall emotional competence of teachers. Gaur and Dhawan (2000) reported that work related stress of women professionals was negatively and significantly related to adaptation pattern of having internal locus of control of emotions. Thus increase in the emotional competence decreases occupational stressors to a greater extent.

Coefficient of correlation between familial and social stressors and five components as well as overall emotional competence of teachers was -0.379, -0.256, -0.180, -0.393, -0.168 and -0.357 respectively. It was highlighted that there was significant negative relationship between familial and social stressors and 3 components of emotional competence (ADF, AEC and ACPE) and overall emotional competence. But the ability to function with emotions (AFE) and encouragement of positive emotions (EPE) showed negative but non-significant relationship. This depicted that teachers with adequate expression and depth of feeling, and those who can cope up well with problematic emotions faced fewer familial and social stressors.

Coefficient of correlation between psychological and emotional stressors and five components as well as overall emotional competence of teachers was -0.410, -0.536, -0.351, -0.516, -0.225 and -0.522 respectively. There was significant negative relationship between psychological and emotional stressors and five components as well as overall emotional competence of teachers. The higher the psychological and emotional stressors faced by the teachers lesser will be the emotional competence and vice versa.

Correlation coefficient between overall stress of

teachers and overall emotional competence along with its five components was -0.473, -0.350, -0.428, -0.364, -0.484 and -0.222 respectively, indicating negative and significant relationship. All the stressors were negatively and significantly related to the five components and overall emotional competence of teachers. This indicated that increase in the adequate depth of feeling, expression and control of emotions, ability to function and cope with emotions and encouragement of positive emotions, decreased the stressors such as physical and personal, occupational, familial and social, and psychological and emotional significantly. Similar findings were reported by Khan et al. (2006) that male and female teachers considered all coping strategies effective to cope with job strain, irrespective of type of coping (active or passive). So the teachers should develop emotional competence which is an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence their ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures emanating from these multiple stressors.

Conclusion

On the whole majority of the teachers showed average to competent level of emotional competence and most of them indicated average to high levels of stressors. The emotional competence of teachers showed positive and highly significant relationship with age and work experience. Age and work experience were negatively and highly significantly related to stress. There was negative and highly significant relationship between the stressors and emotional competence of teachers. Thus increase in the emotional competence reduced the stressors of teachers significantly.

REFERENCES

- Bansi B, Pandit P, Yunus G (2004). Emotional intelligence of secondary teachers. *Edutracks*, 17(2): 65-70.
- Bharadwaj R, Sharma HC (1995). *Manual for the Scale of Emotional Competencies*. Mapan Bal Nivas, Agra.
- Bharati T, Reddy NV (2002). Sources of job stress among primary school teachers. *J Com. Gui. Res.*, 19(2): 247-253.
- Coleman JC (1970). *Abnormal psychology and modern life*. Taraposevaa DB Sons and Co. Pvt. Ltd. Bombay, pp. 75-80.
- Devi NG (2000). The dual role of married women in the changing scenario of Indian society. *J. Com. Gui. Res.*, 17(3): 325-333.
- Frederickson BL (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broadening and build theory of positive emotions. *Am. Psychol.*, 56: 218-226.
- Gaur SP, Dhawan N (2000). Work-related stress and adaptation pattern among women professionals. *J. Com. Gui. Res.*, 45(1&2): 58-64.
- Hunt N, Evans D (2003). Predicting traumatic stress using emotional intelligence. *Behav. Res. Ther.*, 42(7): 791-798.
- Khan MI, Khan S (2006). Coping strategies among male and female teachers with high and low job strain. *Recent Trends in Human Stress Management*, Ed. Hussain A, Khan MI. Global Vision Publishing House, pp. 181-189.
- Ramganes E, Johnson N (2008). EQ of teacher educators: A survey. *Edutracks*, 7(9): 34-37.
- Rastogi R, Kashyap K (2003). Study of occupational stress and work adjustment among working women. *J. Com. Guid. Res.*, 20(3): 245-251.
- Ravichandran R, Rajendran R (2007). Perceived sources of stress among the teachers. *J. Ind. Acad. Appl. Psychol.*, 33(1): 133-136.
- Sheeja K (1999). *Stress inventory for teachers. A study of teachers' stress in secondary schools of Hubli-Dharwad corporation area*. M.Ed. Dissertation, pp. 225-230.
- Sridhar YN, Badiei HR (2007). Teacher efficacy and emotional intelligence of primary school teachers. *Edutracks*, 7(3): 25-31.