



Stress Management for Professionals of Differently-abled

* Ms. Amala Daisy A. ** Dr. A.turin Martina

* Research Scholar, Dept. of Rehabilitation science, Holy cross College Trichy-2

** Research Supervisor & Asst. Professor, Dept. of Rehabilitation science, Holy cross College Trichy-2

ABSTRACT

Summary

Stress become a part of almost all the professionals, here the researcher has taken professionals who work for the differently-abled. A survey was conducted to identify the stressors causing stress among professionals, working with the differently-abled. A questionnaire was used for data collection among professionals serving in various organizations served as the sample of the study. The variables selected for the study were age, gender and type of disability. The different type of the stressors were identified among the sample in aspects such as physical environment, social, relational and financial areas among Professionals of the differently-abled. The collected data has been statistically analyzed and presented with interpretations. Appropriate Stress management strategies and relaxation programs have been outlined and suggested to reduce the impact of the stressor and the level of stress experienced by Professionals of differently-abled.

Keywords : Professionals, Stress management techniques, Differently-abled, relaxation technique, stressor.

INTRODUCTION

Stress in the work place and the consequent physical and psychological health of the work place is a prominent area rehabilitation centers and schools. The study of stress is of importance both for the differently-abled children and also for the trainers and the staffs. Stress refers to an internal state of individual who perceives threat to physical and/ or psychic well-being.

Ilgem(1990) stated that the health of the workforce is one of the most significant issues of our time and yet is an issue that has been for the most part ignored. Similar concerns have been expressed by others (Bheer and Newman, 1978; Terborg, 1988; offermann and Gowing, 1990). Identifying stressors that lead to strain is one of the important part ameliorating stress. Understanding coping strategies that reduce stress and strain is the second. If the individuals cope effectively with the problems they face, they may be able to reduce the harmful consequences of stress.

In addition, learning tools to counteract the body's "fight or flight" response associated with the unhealthy type of stress should be implemented.

Stress symptoms

Stress symptoms may be affecting our health, even though we might not realize it. We may think illness is to blame for that nagging headache, our frequent insomnia or our decreased productivity at work. But stress may actually be the culprit. Indeed, stress symptoms can affect our body, our thoughts and feelings, and our behavior. Being able to recognize common stress symptoms can give us a jump on managing them. Stress that's left unchecked can contribute to health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Stress may refer to a perceived demand which taxes or exceeds the physical and/or psychological resources of the

individuals, coping refers to the cognitive/behavioral efforts to deal with, reduce or tolerate excess demand.(Folkman 1984).

Although stress researchers have defined coping in a variety of ways, there appears to be general agreement that copying refers to the 'overt behavioral and cognitive responses made by individuals to masters, reduce, manage or tolerate stressful environmental and internal demands and conflicts that tax or exceeds the individuals' resources(Greenhaus and Parasuram, 1987).

Objectives

- To study the socio-demographic characteristics of professionals serving the children and adults with special needs.
- To study the stressors among the professionals who work with differently-abled children schools and rehabilitation centers.
- To study the stressors present in the professionals serving the children and adults with special needs with regard to age.
- To study the stressors present in the professionals serving the children and adults with special needs with regard to gender.
- To study the stressors present in the professionals serving the children and adults with special needs with regard to the category of differently-abled.
- To suggest stress management strategies for the professionals who work with differently-abled children and adults.

Methodology:

A survey was conducted to identify the stressors causing stress among professionals, working with the differently-abled. 'Survey research' is a procedure in which information is systematically collected from a population through some form of direct solicitation. A questionnaire was used for data collection among professionals serving the differently-abled in

various organizations who served as the sample of the study. The content validity was established in consultation with academic experts in the field of Rehabilitation and Disability management. The variables selected for the study were age, gender and type of disability served by the Professionals selected for the study. The different type of stressors was identified among the sample in aspects such as physical environment, social, relational and financial areas. The collected data has been statistically analyzed and presented with interpretations.

Sample

The researcher has used a stratified random sampling technique for selecting the samples from the population. The stratification has been done on the basis of age, gender and type of disability. The different type of the stressors were identified among the sample in aspects such as physical environment, social, relational and financial areas among Professionals of the differently abled. The sample consisted of 120 professionals in the field of Rehabilitation and special education in Tiruchirappalli. The samples were selected using the random sampling technique.

Tools Used for data collection

The researcher used a structured questionnaire to collect necessary data from the respondents mainly to identify the type of stressor among the sample. The respondents were briefed about the significance of the study and information regarding their socio-demographic characteristics was collected initially. The questionnaire to identify the type of stressor contained 20 items 5 in each area (physical, social, relational, financial) and the responses and the scores for the items were as follows,

Never – 1 Sometimes – 2 Always – 3

The total score was calculated by adding all points scored for the 20 items and the responses were converted into percentages scores for statistical analysis and interpretation of results.

Results and Discussion:

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1

S. No	Variable	No. of Respondents in % (n=120)
1	Age	
	25 – 40 yrs	37
	41 – 55 yrs	63
2	Gender	
	Male	33
	Female	67
3	Type of Disability Served	
	Visually impaired	20
	Hearing impaired	35
	Mentally retarded	37
	Physically Disabled	8

Among the 120 respondents 37% were in the age group of 25 – 40 yrs and 63 % were in the age group of 41 – 55 yrs. The majority of the respondents i.e. 67% were females and the remaining33% were males. The respondents who work with the visually impaired were about 20%,respondents who work with Hearing impaired were 35%, respondents who works with Mentally retarded are 37% and the respondents who work with Physically Disabled were 8%.

Table 2

S. No	{Age & Type of stressor} A Types of stressor	Variable Age in years n=120			
		Physical	25 – 40 yrs 21%		41 – 55 yrs 79%
1	Relational				
2		43.4%		56.6%	
3		45.8%		54.2%	
4	Financial	65%		35%	
S. No	{Gender and Type of stressor} B Types of stressor	Variable Gender n=120			
		Physical	Male 20.5%		Female 79.5%
1	Social				
2	Relational	33.4%		66.6%	
3	Financial	55.6%		44.4%	
4		35%		65%	
S. No	{Category of Disability Served & Types of Stressors} C Types of stressor	Variable Category of Disability Served (n=120)			
		Visually impaired 15% 34.55	Hearing impaired	Mentally retarded	Physically Disabled
1	Physical	54.7%	15%	55%	5%
2	Social	15%	26.5%	30%	9%
3	Relational		23.3%	15.4%	6.6%
4	Financial		45%	35%	5%

A- The type of stressors were basically categorized into physical, social, relational, financial aspects. The types of stressors of the respondents in relation to age of the respondents was found that among the professionals of the age group 25 – 40 yrs physical stressors was 21%, Social 43.4%, Relational 45.8% and Financial aspects accounted to 65%.The professionals of the other of age group ,namely those belonging to 41 – 55 yrs revealed that physical stressors was 79%, Social56.6%, Relational 54.25% and Financial reason of stressors was 35%.

B- In this regard among the Male professionals the physical stressors was20.5%, Social 33.4%, Relational 55.8% and Financial aspects contributed to 35%.With regard to the female category of Professionals serving children and adults with disabilities the physical stressors amounted to79.55, Social 66.6%, Relational aspects 44.2% and Financial stressors accounted to 65%.

C-The data revealed that the area of physical reasons for stress was 15%,social 34.5%,relational aspects 54.7% and financial reasons contributed to 15% among those working with the Visually Impaired. The other set of professionals serving the Hearing impaired expressed 15% in physical aspects, 26.5% in Social areas,23.3% in Relational issues and 45% in Financial aspects of stress. The third category of disability group served by the respondents were children and adults with Mental retardation and it was found that physical attributes to stress was 55%, Social 30%, Relational 15.4% and Financial causes of stress was 35%. The fourth group of professionals worked with children and adults with Physical Disability and the results reveal that physical stressors was 5%, Social 9%, Relational-6.6% and Financial aspects accounted to 5%.

Thus the various types of stressors identified among profes-

sionals serving the children and adults with special needs need to be given adequate attention with related stress management and coping mechanisms.

Stress management strategies:

Stress management strategies for professionals in the field of rehabilitation and special education can be as follows.

Happily many providers in these fields are not expensive and bring great calm to people in a wide variety of stressful jobs.

Increased anger and loss of humor amongst people in the workplace are just two of the knock-on effects that organization now have to deal with due to poor workplace health, according to new research. The Quality of Working Life is an area of great concern and there is a need to reduce the high number of physical and psychological symptoms that lead to stress and has an impact on their performance.

Coping with Stress

The best way to manage our stress is to learn healthy coping strategies. A person under stress can start practicing these tips right away:

Relaxation techniques and meditation

There are many ways to use structured relaxation techniques to help control stress and improve our physical and mental well-being. While some types of meditation and relaxation therapies are best learned in a class, it's also possible to learn meditation techniques on our own. There are literally hundreds of different types of relaxation methods ranging from audio CDs to group martial arts and fitness classes.

Diet

Processed foods are not as good for us as fresh natural foods. Look at all the chemicals listed on the packaging to see what we are putting into our body.

- Generally speaking, and contrary to popular opinion, butter is better for us than margarine. This is because the fat in butter is natural and can be converted by the body more easily than the hydrogenated fat that occurs commonly in margarines.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables are good for us. Simple and true.
- Fish is good for us, especially oily fish like mackerel. Battered fish from the chip shop, cooked in hydrogenated cooking oil is not so good for us.
- Canned baked beans often have extremely high salt and sugar content. The beans are good for us, but the sauce isn't if it contains too much salt and sugar. Look at the contents on the label.
- Canned and bottled fizzy 'pop' drinks are generally very bad for us. They contain various chemicals, including aspartame, which has been linked in several studies with nervous system disorders. Many squashes and cordials also contain aspartame.
- Too much coffee is bad for us. Interestingly express coffee contains less caffeine than filter and instant coffee, because it passes through the coffee grounds more quickly.
- Tea is good for us. Especially green tea.

Exercise

Exercise can be a key, central method to compensate for

stressors. Physical exercise not only promotes overall fitness, but it helps us to manage emotional stress and tension as well. Exercise can also aid in relaxation and improve sleep. For one thing, exercise can emotionally remove one temporarily from a stressful environment or situation. Being fit and healthy also increases our ability to deal with stress as it arises.

Sleep and rest

Sleep and rest are essential for a healthy life-balance. Having a good night's sleep is vital for a healthy mind and body.

Limitations

- This study is limited to the professionals working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education institutions and hospitals in and around the district of Tiruchirapalli.
- The data collection process was very much time consuming depending on the availability of the professionals.

Recommendations

- More support and interaction from colleagues and administrators within the same organization is recommended to assist in reducing stress and burnout for professionals who work with persons with disabilities
- Stress management professional development workshops are recommended for organizations to assist in reducing stress and burn-out.

Suggestions for further Research

- A study of the occupational stress perceived by the professional who work with disabled may go beyond the self-reported questionnaire. Depth interviews may be conducted on professionals who have left the field to find out underlying hidden causes for the stress.
- A study of individuals in other professions to compare their level of stress with other organizations may undertake.

Conclusion

The rehabilitation professionals serving children and adults with special needs are performing their work at satisfactory level. Physically they are suffering by handling and lifting the older children and adolescents so, they need additional support and care takers to handle the older children and adolescents. The respondents feel that socially, they are not recognized and encouraged by public. So they should be recognized and awarded by the institution and also by the government. At relational, the female respondents feel that they have good social status and but the male respondents are not so satisfied they should be recognized and appreciated and they should develop their self-esteem and meditation and physical exercise can be recommended regularly. Financial stressors are comparatively more than other stressors for the professionals of rehabilitation and special education especially among male respondents who have more family financial commitments. Appropriate Stress management strategies and relaxation programs have been outlined and suggested to reduce the impact of the stressor and the level of stress experienced by Professionals of differently abled to facilitate their work performance in creating meaning in the lives of children and adults with disability.

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