

SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

**ANALYSIS OF COPING STRATEGIES IN THE FACE OF OCCUPATIONAL
HAZARDS - A STUDY OF WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES OF
EDUCATION SECTOR IN WEST BENGAL (INDIA)**

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1. Introduction

Education Scenario in West Bengal is in news always for reasons which are highly unacceptable to the culture and belief of the education sector of West Bengal. West Bengal is always considered as the cradle of Indian renaissance and national freedom movement. It is also considered as a land of intellectual awakening.

It is common knowledge that the province of Bengal, undivided till 1947, and then the state of West Bengal, have played a leading role in the country in spreading education at all levels, beginning with mass education and culminating in higher, professional and specialised education.

The academic atmosphere in Bengal was conducive for intellectual pursuit, scientific quest and original ideas. Unfortunately, this is fast vanishing in the twilight and we are left with stories of migrating talents, political interference, mediocrity regimes, falling standards, dilapidated laboratories and classrooms as well as financial crunch in the education sector. Bengal has gone down in rank among all states in India in terms of the overall literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, drop-out rates etc (Sarkar, 2004).

The recent events of recurrence of student's confrontation in colleges and universities, often quite disrespectful to even teachers, add insult to injuries. Overall, education in Bengal is suffocating for lack of fresh thinking how to rejuvenate the sagging morale and spirit of the teaching community, students and their worried parents.

2. Motivation and Problem statement

We all are aware that every occupation has its own perils and dangers and teaching profession is no exception. But the hazards in the teaching profession are quite peculiar in nature as few are overt and few are covert. The overt hazards are those which are quite visible like disease transmission, physical injury due to violence, voice problem etc. The covert hazards are more of psychological than

physical. Also the hazards are mostly of cumulative character than immediate. The effect of these hazards is very slow in developing and takes a time period to make them felt. Since they do not impact immediately hence most of the time they are imperceptible.

Being a teacher has rewards that no other jobs can boast. Due to these rewards there is a frequent migration of personnel to teaching profession from other jobs. Teachers take the pleasure of helping their students to discover their skills and ability, which will in turn take the students to the peak of success. But this joy of teaching comes with the hazards. Data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labour statistics have found out that there were 169 fatalities in the year 2010 among employees belonging to teaching sector. (Morgan, 2016).

The communities of Teachers, Researchers and administrators of the education sector have been considered as white collar professions. Research and discussion on occupational hazards in India started from 1965-66 by the establishment of National Institute of occupational Health (1966) and Industrial Toxicology research centre (1965) and is rapidly increasing. A considerable number of articles have been written on the topic of occupational hazard in agricultural sector, chemical sector, coal sector etc. Very few have focused on the education sector. The current research is aimed to identify the factors affecting the coping strategies adapted by the personnel of the education sector to cope with the occupational hazards. Initially qualitative study is done to identify the factors affecting the coping strategy. Then based on these factors questionnaire is designed to establish the hypothesis.

3. Literature Review

Personnel working in education sector has traditionally regarded as low hazardous occupation. In historical point of view it could be true but it is not so at Modern Age. (Teichmann, 2010). Most of the studies in this area are focused on the Occupational Stress. Drawing on a considerable body of empirical evidence, it is argued that during the past decade stress among university academics has

tendency to increase in all continents. The education sector in most developing countries is large growing and includes employers with widely varying Organisation cultures and involves high risk exposures. (Venebles & Allender, 2006) . Despite its risk and complexity, little has been written about the occupational health needs of this employment sector. The occupational health needs means not only information about the hazards, but also other information for planning for provision for occupational health for this sector.

Only limited number of relevant guidance documents has been published. The United Kingdom Health and Safety Commission published guidance on occupational health services in universities in 1991. (HMSO, 1991). The Department for Education and Employment in the UK has published guidance on fitness to teach, which although focused on primary and secondary education has relevance to higher education.

Computerized searches were carried out for published papers with key words like “Occupational Hazard”, “Hazards in Education Sector”, “Coping Strategies”, “Sources of Occupational Hazards”, “Occupational Health in universities”, “Problems faced in Teaching profession”, “Problems faced by university professors”, “White Collar Jobs”, Hazards in White Collar Professions”, “Universities”, “Education Sector” and “Problems in Schools and Colleges in West Bengal”. On in-depth reading of the article relevant articles to the topic were retained. Of the 1045 papers identified in initial search only 48 were retained for the final review. The literature review is then divided into the 3 sections i.e. Occupational Hazards in Education Sector, Sources of Occupational Hazards, Overview of West Bengal Education Sector, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument (MBTI), and Coping Strategy Inventory Instrument (CSI).

4. Objectives and Scope

Research objective has been developed from the Research Problem statement after an in-depth study of the domain and review of literature detailed in Chapter 3. In finalization of the objective due considerations have been taken with respect

to the impacts of the Occupational hazards on the personnel and also the various sources of these Hazards. The research objective has been developed accordingly as follow:-

1. To provide the general background to the discussion on occupational hazards faced by the Employee working in White Collar Jobs in the Educational sector in West Bengal.
2. To review and summarize the impacts of these occupational hazards on the Employee's working in the Education sector of West Bengal.
3. To identify the factors causing Occupational Hazards to the employees in the Education Sector.
4. To identify and prioritize the sources of these occupational hazards,
5. To analyse the coping strategies adopted to cope with the occupational hazards of the Education sector.
6. To analyse the factors influencing the coping strategies of the employees facing the occupational hazards in the education sector.

5. Hypotheses

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives a set of 24 hypothesis have been formulated, which have been tested and conclusions drawn on the basis of test results. The research hypothesis is categorised as 3 groups. The **First group** deals with the impact of occupational hazard among different age groups, gender, marital status, educational level, earning status, working modes, working experience, different organizations, different funding agencies, personnel occupying different positions in the organization and different personality traits. The **Second Group** tries to investigate the significant predictors of the impact of occupational hazards. The **Third group** deals with variables influencing the different coping strategies.

6. Research Methodology

Mixed research design in terms of both qualitative and quantitative research design approach has been adopted for achieving the objective of the research. The research design is divided into two phases. Initially the qualitative research method is adopted to identify the hazards, sources of hazards, coping strategies and factors influencing the coping strategies amongst the personnel working in the education sector of West Bengal with the help of “the public voice”. This method was applied by TEICHMANN, MARE, ILVEST, JÜRI Jr. in their paper **“Sources of occupational stress in technical university academics”**. (TEICHMANN & MARE, 2010). This phase has been utilized to identify the concepts to develop a conceptual framework. The qualitative research is used as a precursor to quantitative method used in phase – 2. The concepts evolved from the phase – 1 were utilized in developing a questionnaire for testing the conceptual framework so evolved. The questionnaire consists of eight sections. These eight sections are to capture data of demographic details of the respondent, occupational information of the respondent, personality trait identification, impact of occupational hazard, sources of occupational hazard, stakeholder related information, task related information and coping strategy questionnaire.

Data that is used for this research is collected in two phases. First phase is the qualitative data is collected with the help of unstructured interview of personnel who faced and agreed to participate in this research, provided their identity is not disclosed. The second phase of data was collected from the population of the academicians in whole of West Bengal consisting of 15 universities, 10 colleges, 5 professional institutes and 10 schools. A total of 1664 respondents were approached by sending them the questionnaire through online method using online tool (survey monkey), out of which 567 people have responded. Among them 286 respondents have responded the questionnaire in full. The rest responded in partial and has to be eliminated from analysis. The researcher has personally administered to 80 respondents and collected the data by convenient sampling. Hence the total sample size is 358.

7. Data Analysis

The primary data collected from respondents was edited, coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS 20.0 software. Pilot survey data is analysed for corrections and modifications of the questionnaire. The Final Data analysis is presented in detail in Section – II of this chapter. Data Analysis is presented in two sections. Section – I deals with Qualitative Data Analysis and Section – II deals with Quantitative Data Analysis.

Out of the total 22 hypotheses, 11 were tested using ANOVA test while the remaining 11 were tested through linear regression analysis. Out of the 11 hypothesis 7 hypotheses were retained since their significant value was below the cutoff value of 0.05. 3 exploratory factor analyses was performed on the 13 scale items of the sources of occupational hazards, 24 scale items of stakeholder related concepts and 7 scale items of task related concepts. 2 linear equations were obtained for predicting the impact of occupational hazard. The first linear equation is to predict the impact of occupational hazard with the demographic and organizational variables. The second linear equation to predict the impact of occupational hazard with the factors of sources of occupational hazards, stakeholder concepts and task concepts.

Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on 13 scale items of the sources of occupational hazards since multi-collinearity existed in the 13 scale items. Accordingly 4 factors like entity interface, work structure, campus work environment and the policies. Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on 24 scale items of the stakeholder concept. Since multi-collinearity existed in the 24 scale items. Accordingly 6 factors like transparency in organization, stakeholder administrative issues, and stakeholder interface, stakeholder policies, student control and parent control. Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on 7 scale items of the task concept. Since multi collinearity existed in the 7 scale items. Accordingly 3 factors like task control, task density and task conflict.

8. Findings

The findings of this research are divided into qualitative data analysis findings and quantitative data analysis findings.

8.1. Qualitative data analysis Findings:

The first research question was about the existence to the hazard among the employees of the education sector. On the basis of the in-depth interview it is very clear that the employees working in the education sector of West Bengal are not free from the perils of dangers in the occupation.

The second research question was to know what could be the factors of the hazards. The sources of these hazards as perceived by the employees working in the education sector are due to no proper organizational or governmental policies. The management culture or the work culture is also not very amicable and comfortable. These factors also aggravate the hazards.

To the question how these hazards have impacted the majority of the respondents answered that they had to take the help of medication due to the stress that incurred in their jobs.

The next research question was to how to cope with these hazards. To this the respondents had a view of adopting multiple coping strategies based on the phases of the hazards.

The final research question was to analyse the factors that influence the employees to adopt a coping strategy. To this all the respondents answered that their personality and their experience helped them to adopt any particular strategy.

8.2. Quantitative data analysis Findings:

The theories formed from the findings of the qualitative phase are tested through the help of a questionnaire and collecting primary data with his questionnaire. The findings that emerged from the quantitative data analysis are as follows:

Initially the impact of occupational hazard was analysed with the demographic variables like gender, age group, marital status, educational level and earning status. On analysis with these variables it was found that gender, age group, education level and earning status does influence the impact of the occupational hazard on employees.

The impact of the occupational hazard after being analysed with the demographic variable were analysed with organizational variables like academic experience, mode of working, type or category of the organization in which the respondents are working, the type of funding mode of the organization, and also the position held by the respondents in their organization. The analysis showed that the impact of the hazard was also influenced by academic experience, working mode, organisation type, funding bodies and the positions held by the employees in the organisations.

One more important finding that was observed from this study is that the personality trait that emerged as maximum number among the respondents is ESTJ. As per the definition of the personality traits ESTJ means Extraverted Thinking Sensing and Judging.

On analysis of the demographic variables and organization variable the analysis focuses on the sources of the hazards. Three groups of sources were identified. They are individual and organizational sources, stakeholder related sources and task related sources.

The research started with 13 variables of individual and organizational sources, 24 variables of stakeholder related sources and 7 variables of task related sources. On applying correlation among these variables it was found that there was multi-collinearity problem among the variables. So to reduce the factors factor analysis was done. The factor analysis reduced individual and organizational variables into 4 factors, stakeholder related variables into 6 factors and task related variables into 3 factors. So the research identified $7 + 4 + 3 = 14$ factors as sources of the hazards in the education sector of West Bengal. These 14 factors are entity

interface, work structure, work environment, policies, and transparency in organization, stakeholder administrative issues, stakeholder interface, stakeholder policies, student control, parent control, task control, task density and task conflict.

These 14 factors were then analysed using a linear regression model. The model derived the significant sources for the hazards as Task Conflict, Task Control, Student Control, Stakeholder Interface, Transparency in Organization and Work Environment. Hence these sources have a great role to play in either escalation or de-escalation of the hazards.

After the analysis of occupational hazard and the sources of the occupational hazard we now focus on the coping strategies adopted by the personnel to cope with the hazards. A very interesting finding in this case is that the coping strategies that are adopted by the individual to cope with the occupational hazard are a combination of multiple coping strategies. As per the descriptive statistics the coping strategies with the highest to the lowest means are in the order of Problem solving, Cognitive restructuring, Social support, Express emotion, Wishful thinking, Social withdrawal, Problem avoidance, Political and Self Criticism respectively. Coping strategies are basically a conscious effort to solve problems of both personal and inter-personal nature to overcome, minimize or tolerate any hazards like stress or conflict. As per various researches the two main types of coping strategies are emotion focused and problem focused coping.

After understanding the coping strategies adopted by the individuals the next analysis was to find the demographic and organizational factors which are influencing the employee to adopt the particular coping strategy.

On analysis of the demographic variables with the coping strategies it was found that the variables like gender, age group and educational level of the employees are significantly associated with the coping strategies. To analyse individually gender is significantly associated with the coping strategy of self criticism only. Age group of the employees is significantly associated with coping strategies like

problem solving, cognitive restructuring, express emotion, problem avoidance and self criticism. Educational level is significantly associated with all the nine coping strategies. Hence we can say that the factors which enable an individual to adopt a particular coping strategy are employee's age and their educational level. Many relations between personality and coping were stronger in older samples.

On analysis of Organisational variable with coping strategies it was found that the variables like organization type, the funding agency of the organization and the position held by the employees are significantly associated with the coping strategy adopted by them. Out of these three variables the organization type is significantly associated with only one coping strategy that is wishful thinking. The other two variables like funding agency of the organization and the position held by the individual is significantly associated with all the nine coping strategies.

The study also revealed that the personality trait of an individual has a greater influence in the adoption of the coping strategy by the individual. Personality influences coping in many ways. Even prior to coping, personality influences the frequency of exposure to hazards and also the type of hazards experiences. We have from theories that neuroticism predicts exposure to interpersonal stress and tendencies to appraise events as highly threatening.

9. Conclusions

The research can be concluded by revisiting the objectives of the research and finding out whether the research has fulfilled these objectives.

The first objective of the research was to provide the discussion on occupational hazards faced by the employees working in white collar jobs in the educational sector in West Bengal. To this there was in-depth interview taken with ten different employees working in different positions in different organizations. The discussion resulted in highlighting few of the hazards like burnouts, campus violence, stress and false accusations. Among them majority spoke of burnout. According to the respondents the cause for the burnouts was due to job overload,

meeting expectations of management and peers, students and their guardian's etc. The respondents working in schools spoke of musculo-skeletal disorders (MSD) due to the board work and furniture's used in the schools.

The second objective was to review and summarize the impacts of these occupational hazards on the employees. The research results showed that the highest impact was on health and they had to take medicines for hypertensions etc. Most of the people complained of sleeplessness, exhaustion, and boredom and losing interest in the job. Few of them also complained that such unpleasant situations have damaged their relationships with their colleagues. According to self reporting the employees spoke of difficulties in maintaining work – home balance.

The third objective was to identify the factors causing occupational hazards to the employees working in education sector. According to the in-depth interview of the respondents and their perception of the factors causing the hazards are grouped into three categories. They are general factors, stakeholder related concepts and task related concepts. The factors belonging to the group of general categories are organizational policies, management issues, job profile, job security, organizational politics, and student handling, parents and outsiders interactions. The outsiders are political parties, community etc. The factors belonging to the stakeholder concepts are stakeholder multiplicity, interface, complexity, administration and operating paradigm. The task related concepts involve factors like task ambiguity, task complexity, task description and task control.

The fourth objective is to identify and prioritise the sources of these hazards. According to the study result it was found that the most significant sources of the hazards are task conflict, task control, and student control, stakeholder interface and campus culture. Among these the highest in priority is in the order is stakeholder interface, task conflict, student control, task control and campus culture.

The fifth objective was to analyse the coping strategies adopted by the employees of education sector. The study showed that the major and common coping strategies that are adopted by the employees of education sector were problem solving, cognitive restructuring, social support and express emotion. Though it was found from the study that an individual uses a combination of coping strategies to cope with unpleasant situations in their work , but few strategies that were mentioned above were commonly used by most of the employees to cope with their problems.

The sixth objective was to analyse the factors influencing the coping strategy. The qualitative analysis revealed that personality trait and experience in this sector has a major influence on the coping strategies. The quantitative analysis revealed that personality trait if the employee, funding agency of the organization, position held by the employee in the current organization and education level of the employee are the important and major factors influencing the employees selection of coping strategies to cope with any unpleasant situation.

These findings may have some important implications regarding the interventions in the hazards at work. Accordingly, the organization as a whole needs to be aware of the consequences of occupational hazards and confronting these hazards within a problem-focused framework. Therefore training managers, supervisors and employees should identify the pattern of the hazards and help to stop the destructive behavior of the respondents being the stakeholders of these hazards.

Furthermore, by developing preventive programmes at the organizational level and by establishing effective and safe grievance procedure organizations can intervene to prevent or mitigate the impact of occupational hazards.

The results point to the need of Government policies targeting specifically to towards the employees working in the education sector if there has to be tangible improvements in the quality of education in West Bengal.

10. Recommendations

On the basis of my research results the following recommendations are given below:

- a. The research report highlights the major personality type the employees possess in the education sector. This information can be used to recruit the employees in this sector.
- b. The report also investigates the different occupational hazards and its impacts on the employees facing them. This information can be used in induction training programmes to make the new recruits aware of the problems and consecutive solutions.
- c. The research report also priorities the different sources which could predict the occupational hazards. This information can be used to de-escalate the impacts of the occupational hazard.
- d. The knowledge of health hazards mentioned in this report could help the policy makers to focus on the health and safety issues of the employees working in this sector.

11. Contributions

To sum up the contributions to the occupational hazard in education sector researches by describing the process of occupational hazards in which the employees coping strategies to these hazards are analysed. This research reports the existence of different hazards in the education sector and also its impacts on different employees are different. The research also identifies that the variable which influence the adoptions of coping strategies. Employees can be trained in adopting specific coping strategies for specific hazards to become successful in their career. This research report also contributes the knowledge of important sources of the identified hazards. This knowledge will help the policy makers to make policies for the well being of the academic employees. Education sector being one of the service sectors, this research can give direction to analyse the

othe hazards of the service industry and what could be the possible coping strategies to make the employees successful in their jobs.

12. Limitations

The limitations of this research are including problems like. Self-reporting of the respondents, willingness of interviewees to share truthful information, sample size, the respondent belonging to West Bengal poses several difficulties with the language of the questionnaire,

13. Scope for Future Research

The quest for knowledge, solutions to problems and research questions leading to improved quality of life is synonymous with progress of human civilization. Whereas the current research provided answers to the research questions, it also highlighted its limitations in the previous section. This section provides brief directions for future researchers to pursue, in the domain of occupational hazards and coping strategies of the personnel working in the service sector. Future studies can be done by increasing the sample size of all the other categories of organizations belonging to the education sector to have an extensive understanding of the coping strategies and the occupational hazards, Should explore joint and interactive impacts of multiple coping responses, can improve generalisability of the findings of this research by extending this study to other geographic regions, can including other instruments for measuring personality and coping strategies , can be extended to other service sectors like: Hospitals, Hotels, Banks, IT services etc.

14. Thesis Layout

The research thesis has 7 chapters starting with Chapter 1 introducing the concepts used in the research along with the current scenario of the employees of the education sector. The definition of the terms like occupational hazard, coping strategy, education sector and white collar jobs are also explained with their

references in this chapter. Chapter 2 gives the detailed information of the West Bengal Education Sector. Chapter 3 presents the survey of literature and the description of the tools utilized for this research. Chapter 4 describes the objective and hypothesis of the research. Chapter 5 elaborates on the research methodology, giving detailed information about the population of the research along with the sample studied. Description of the various tools like MBTI and CSI that are used for the purpose of fulfilling the objective of the research is given in this chapter. This chapter also presents the reliability and validity information of the tools used in this research. Chapter 6 focuses on analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in this research along with the statistical tools used to test the hypotheses formulated for the purpose of fulfilling the objectives of the research. Chapter 7 presents the findings, conclusions, recommendations, limitations and the scope of the research.