STRESS COPING STRATEGIES AMONG MANAGEMENT TEACHERS: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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Stress can be termed as any event or circumstance that strains or exceeds an individual's ability to cope. It is a non-specific, often global, response by an organism to real or imagined demands made on it. Stress whether stimulated externally or internally can be a threat to the integrity of an individual leading to disorganization of his personality. An individual viewing an event as challenging is likely (within given individual differences) to cope through direct action or problem focused strategy to change the situation, similarly an individual viewing the situation as threatening is likely to cope through the use of intra psychic process such as avoidance, wishful thinking or minimization of threat. Present research paper attempts to identify the coping strategies of management teachers to find out which strategies are preferred by management teachers and which styles they often resort to while coping with organizational stress. It is concluded that among the styles most dominant style was the defensive style, which was followed by intropersistive coping style. This style was followed by defensive style.

Keywords: Stress Coping Strategies, Organizational Stress, Management Teachers, Dominant Coping Style, Backup Coping Style

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INTRODUCTION

Stress can be termed as any event or circumstance that strains or exceeds an individual's ability to cope. It is a non-specific, often global, response by an organism to real or imagined demands made on it. Plotnik (1999) has defined stress as the anxious or threatening feeling that comes while interpreting or appraising the situation as being more than a psychological resource can handle. According to Selye (1956) any external event or any internal drive, which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium is stress. Some researchers have claimed that stress can be best understood in terms of the ways people perceive and describe stress producing situations, the values that attribute top action and the way they interact with events. Ivancevich and Matteson (1983) defined stress as an adaptive response mediated by individual characteristics and / or psychological processes, that is consequence of any external action, situation, or event and places special physical or psychological demands upon a person. Stress whether stimulated externally or internally can be a threat to the integrity of an individual leading to disorganisation of his personality.

Coping is defined as the process of managing demands (external and internal) that an individual appraises as taking or exceeding his or her available resources (Lazarus, 1981). An individual viewing an event as challenging is likely (within given individual differences) to cope through direct action or problem focused strategy to change the situation, similarly an individual viewing the situation as threatening is likely to cope through the use of intra psychic process such as avoidance, wishful thinking or minimization of threat. Problem solving involves changing the situation for better, if possible, either by altering the action one is responsible for or by altering the damaging or threatening environment. The emotional function involves managing the somatic and subjective component of stress related to emotions themselves (Lazarus, 1981). Avoidance strategies involve individuals attending to insulate and distance themselves from the problem source. This is essentially evident in correction work, since the source of so many of the problems lie at the organisational and societal level.

Aditya and Sen (1993) found that the male executives who were predominately masculine in their sex orientation faced greater stress and anxiety in their job situation than female executives who predominantly antagonized their sex orientation. They also found that male and females

differ in terms of role ambiguity, inter role distance, future prospects and human relations at work. Goklaney (1993) found that low stress groups differed insignificantly from moderate and high stress groups. Adaptation, anxiety, reactivity and stress variables are positively related to creativity. Shrivastava (1994) while comparing organisation's role stress and job anxiety concluded that middle level managers perceived greater role stress and anxiety in comparison to top-level managers and workers. Singh and Singh (1997) found that managers who have high level organisation role stress are higher on environmental frustration, anger reactions but low on job satisfaction in comparison to managers who have low organisational role stress.

Joshi and Singhvi (1997) concluded that maximum role stress is experienced on dimensions of role erosion among teachers irrespective of universities they are working in. Even alienation was found to be positively correlated with all the role stress dimensions and total role stress. Machiavellianism and externality were found to be positively correlated with all the dimensions of role stress. Ahmed et al., (1991) while investigating the relationship between role stress and job satisfaction found it to be negatively related with role stress. Higher the stress, lower was the job satisfaction. Tharakan (1992) hypothesized that professional and non-professional women differ in their job related stress and level of job satisfaction. Sekhar (1996) found that stress for women managers was office politics, conflict between work and home and travel to work place, lack of opportunity and challenge and childcare problem.

Major stressors experienced by women were found to be anxiety, tension, fatigue, irritation, and physical health problem. The most frequently used coping strategies were talking with spouse, friends, superiors, colleagues about the problem followed by the efforts to increase knowledge, information, physical withdrawal from the situation for a while, engage in socio – cultural religious activities and engage in physical exercise and yoga meditation. Suresh and Anthamanan (2001) found that stress is more due to psychological factors than due to physical hazards. Bhatia and Poonam (2002) found that medical male professionals had low satisfaction and high occupational stress as compared to medical female professionals. Heallemsy and Mckasy (2000) found that there is a significant negative relationship between stress and job satisfaction among nurse.

It can be said that individual and organizations cannot afford to live in the continuous state of stress and anxiety there is a need to call into play a mechanism of perception selection defence and vigilance. There are wide reactions to stress and capacity to relate it between persons and in the same individuals on different occasions. The most basic fact about stress is that feeling of stress is an experience. The feeling of stress is an act where there is reference not a casual relation to an object that is intended or intentionally present. The researchers have therefore, tried to find out the ways and means to counter stress. Sharma (1983) has given different strategies of coping that is avoider and coper. The avoider avoids the stress problem simply by denying it, diverting attention taking time of routine, pre occupation and contrary to it coper seeks out stress situation so as to learn how to cope with it. Pareek (1983) has suggested that effective coping strategies are approach strategies to confront the problem of stress as a challenge and to enhance the capability of dealing with it and ineffective and unpleasant strategies are avoidance or escape strategies to reduce the feeling of stress by resorting to escapism, denying the reality of stress through the use of alcohol or drugs.

Sultana (1995) while investigating the level of organisational role stress among male and female teachers of professional and non-professional courses found that there was significant difference between professionals and non-professionals both male and females on role stress dimensions of role stagnation, role expectation conflict and role isolation, inter-role distance, role stagnation and role overload. Jai Prakash and Bhogle (1994) found that females used significantly more emotion oriented coping strategies as compared to males. Psychological distress had a significant relationship with the use of emotion-oriented coping. The dysfunctional modes of coping may be damaging when they prevent essential direct action but may be extremely useful in helping a person maintain a sense of well being. Integration or hope under conditions otherwise will encourage psychological disintegration. Different approaches have been used in various investigations. Some have emphasized general coping traits, styles or dispositions while others have focused on ongoing coping strategies in particular stress situations. They assume that an individual will utilize the same type of coping in most stressful situations. Pareek (1983) has suggested that stress may be either in the form of avoiding the situation i.e. reactive strategy or confronting or approaching the problem (proactive strategy). Under these two broad categories, Pareek has identified eight styles namely, Impunitive (M) which has a combination of low

internality, low externality and avoidance. Accepting stress is unavoidable and nothing can be done about it; Intropunitive (I) is characterized by high internality, low externality and avoidance. Blame and aggression is directed by the respondent to himself; Extrapunitive (E) is characterized by low internality, high externality and avoidance. Here the blame and hostility are turned against some person or thing in the environment. Both initiation with the situation and aggression are directed towards external factors; Defensive (D) is characterized by high internality, high externality and avoidance. With involvement of both self and others, but having avoidance mode, the respondent avoids aggression or blame by use of defence mechanisms. With high involvement of the self and of others in the stress, the superego becomes more active and therefore defensive behavior is stimulated; Impersistive (m) is characterized by low internality, low externality and approach. It is an expression given to the hope that time or normally expected circumstances will bring about the solution of a problem. Patience and conformity are characterized; Intropersistive (i) is characterized by high internality, low externality and approach. In this, the individual himself will take action in relation to stress; Extrapersistive (e) is characterized by low internality, high externality and approach. It is an expectation that the solution will come from others and Interpersistive (n) which is characterized by high internality, high externality and approach. It is opposite of defensive (D) style. The individual and some others take joint action to deal with stress.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Present research paper attempts to identify the coping strategies of management teachers to find out which strategies are preferred by management teachers and which styles they often resort to while coping with organisational stress.

METHODOLOGY

The Study: The present research is exploratory in nature and attempts to identify coping strategies of management teachers. It was conducted on 60 faculty members of management institutes. The sample constituted of 18 females and 42 males in the age range of 23-55 years with an average experience of 8.32 years.

Tools for Data Collection: Role PICS (Projective Instrument for Measuring Coping Styles, Pareek, 1983) was used for data collection. This is a semi-projective instrument for assessment of styles or strategies used by the respondents to cope with role stress. It consisted of 24 situations represented by pictures. In this self-administered scale, the subjects were asked to write a response which comes first to their mind after reading the comment made by another person in the stimulus situations. Reliability and validity of the scale as reported by the author is very high.

Tools for Data Analysis: The collected data was analysed with the help of percentage analysis.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The results show that 60percent (36 out of 60) members used avoidance strategy, whereas 47 percent (28 out of 60) used approach strategy. Among the styles most dominant style was the defensive style used by 47 percent (28 out of 60) members whereas intropersistive coping style was shown by 43percent (26 out of 60) members as there backup style followed by defensive style shown by 27 percent people (16 out of 60). Extrapunitive, impersistive were not exhibited by the respondents. Interpersistive and intropunitive were not shown as dominant style though they were exhibited by a few in the backup style (7percent, 4 in each) Extrapersistive was shown as a dominant style by 7 percent (4) whereas it was shown as a backup style by 13 percent respondents (8 out of 60). Impunitive style was dominant in 17 percent (10) whereas it was also the backup in 17 percent (10) (Table 1).

The findings revealed that faculty members of management institutes mostly exhibit defensive style in coping stress. This style calls for avoidance of aggression or blame by use of defense mechanisms. The high involvement of the self and of others in the stress makes superego more active and therefore, defensive behavior is stimulated. The faculty members try to rationalize the stressful situation, avoid the aggression because their job demands more of patience, tolerance, as they have to deal with students with whom they have to be more tactful and convincing. It has been found that professional women most often adopted the defensive style to cope with stress than functional or approach-oriented styles. In contrast, women entrepreneurs, however, used the approach-oriented style more than professional women (Pestonjee, 1999).

Srivastava (1991), while exploring the mediating effects of avoidance and approach modes of coping found that approach coping strategy contribute to immediate perceived stress but in the long run reduces tension and anxiety. Avoidance coping strategy however, may relieve immediate stress but in the long run contribute to greater tension and anxiety. Suls and Fletcher (1985) contended that avoidance minimizes the significance of stress and it appears to cope effectively with short-term threats. In occasional stress as compared to consistent stress, avoider can easily cope up with stress (Pennebaker et al., 1988).

Intropersistive coping style has emerged as the most preferred backup style among the teachers, which is because the teachers feel that they should take action to deal with stress themselves rather than rely on somebody else. Their profession being such where everybody identifies them with the problem solver, adviser, they cannot afford to be extrapersistive, where an individual seeks solution from the others. Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) found that supervisors who adopted the avoidance coping strategy scored significantly higher on mental health dimension as compared to those who used to approach coping strategy. Schonfield (1990) found that the movement towards more openness and self evaluations actually protected school teachers from occupational stress and develop positive coping strategies at work than other professionals.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that faculty members of management institutes mostly exhibit defensive style (as dominant coping style) in coping stress. This style calls for avoidance of aggression or blame by use of defence mechanisms. The high involvement of the self and of others in the stress makes superego more active and therefore, defensive behavior is stimulated. The faculty members try to rationalize the stressful situation, avoid the aggression because their job demands more of patience, tolerance, as they have to deal with students with whom they have to be more tactful and convincing. An individual nor an organization can remain in a continuous state of tension. Even if a deliberate and conscious strategy is not utilized to deal with the stress some strategy is adopted. It is useful for individual and organization to examine what strategies they are using for coping. If no coping strategy is adopted lack of effectiveness may result. The act of coping itself as opposed to non-coping is related to satisfaction and is more important than any other coping strategy.

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Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Dominant and Backup Coping Styles Among Management Teachers

Coping Styles	Dominant	Backup
Impunitive	10 (17percent)	10 (17percent)
Intropunitive	00	04 (7percent)
Extrapunitive	00	00
Defensive	28 (47percent)	16 (27percent)
Impersistive	00	00
Intropersistive	14 (23percent)	26 (43percent)
Extrapersistive	00	08 (13percent)
Interpersistive	00	04 (7percent)