

A Study of the Professional Commitment and Occupational Stress among Teacher Educators in COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

In contemporary competitive professional society, professional commitment is an indispensable factor associated with a professional. The outcomes of an organization are almost dependent on the professional commitment of its workers. Professional commitment is an attitude which an individual has towards his/her profession. The commitment is indispensable for any profession and teaching is not an exception to this. Professional commitment refers to the socio-psychological association of an individual to his/her profession and its vision and mission. It is the extent to which an individual identifies him/her self with the profession and accepts its values (Mowday et al, 1979 and Morrow & Goetz, 1988). It is an attitude which an individual has towards his/her profession and it helps in discriminating between those who are devoted to their profession from those who are not so. The outcomes of an organization are dependent on the professional commitment of its workers. Professional commitment is vital for organizational quality, performance, and productivity. A teacher's work is not confined within the classrooms only but it is extended beyond that and is up to the school, organization and education system also. The professional commitment of the teachers is essential for the education sector to grow (Huberman, 1993). The professional commitment of teachers includes efficacy and occupational competency. A professionally committed teacher shows a willingness to execute determined efforts for the profession, has belief and accepts the goals & values of the profession and has will to continue to do so in the future also. As a professional, a teacher shows commitment to learners, society, attain basic human values and achieve excellence.

Another variable associated with any job or occupation is stress and is known as occupational stress. It is a worldwide growing problem (Cotton & Hart, 2003) and leads to substantial resourceful loss for an organization. Occupational stress is the collapse of the emotional stability of the employees ultimately leading to a state of disorganization in their behaviour (Nwadiani, 2006). Besides a source of income and social identity, any job or profession also exerts pressure on the employees. In this global world, no occupation is stress free and that stress differs in intensity or the degree. In the teaching profession, enhanced expectations, the disparity between the designation and task performed (Mohamed, 2018), overload (Morgan & Craith, 2015), working conditions, etc. lead to occupational stress among the teachers (Cooper & Marshall, 1976). Occupational stress as a negative feeling may lead to depression, rejection, anger, frustration among the teachers (Kyriacou, 2001).

Present day world is in the deadliest grip of deadliest Corona virus and the resultant pandemic has brought the world to a standstill. In India, there has been a complete lockdown since March, 2020 which continued up

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to June, 2020 and after that unlock process by the Government was initiated. Teachers and teacher educators had to take classes, examinations and evaluation in online mode but they had to be physically present in the institutions for administrative work and other assigned Departmental duties thus compelling them to face this double challenge that is ensuring quality teaching in online mode and keeping themselves Corona free while working in offline mode. So, how does the professional commitment of teacher educators still stand in COVID-19 pandemic? What is the status of occupational stress among teacher educators in COVID-19 pandemic? How does the occupational stress among teacher educators in COVID-19 pandemic influence the discharge of duties on their part? How are the professional commitment and occupational stress correlated with each other? To address these aspects the present study was conducted by the investigator to explore the professional commitment and occupational stress, their levels and correlation between professional commitment and occupational stress among the teacher educators during COVID-19 pandemic.

Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature revealed that in comparison to male teachers, the female teachers had a significantly higher level of professional commitment (**Kauts, 2013; Shukla & Waris, 2016; Bala, 2017** and **Habib, 2019**) but some studies have reported that female and male secondary school teachers do not differ significantly with respect to professional commitment (**Bashir, 2017**). Gender and teaching experience have no significant effect on the professional commitment of school teachers (**Malik & Sharma, 2013; Gill & Kaur, 2017** and **Raja, 2017**). No significant difference between the professional commitment of urban and rural secondary school teachers has also been reported (**Shukla & Waris, 2016**). The Government and Government aided school teachers do not significantly differ with respect to professional commitment (**Raja, 2017**). Co-relational studies have found a significantly positive correlation of professional commitment with job satisfaction (**Bashir, 2017**) and self-efficacy of secondary school teachers (**Habib, 2019**). The professional commitment of teachers teaching at secondary school level is influenced by salary, motivation, respect in the society and attitude towards the teaching profession (**Hussen et al, 2016**). The professional commitment of the teachers is a reliable predictor of their teaching effectiveness (**Bashir, 2019**).

In the domain of occupational stress, studies have reported that in comparison to female secondary school teachers, the male secondary teachers have a higher occupational stress (**Kaur, 2017; Sing & Katoch, 2017** and **Davismani & Grace, 2020**) but some studies have reported that the female secondary school teachers have significantly higher occupational stress than male secondary school teachers (**Harish & Jayaprabha, 2018; Chitra, 2020** and **Joshi, 2020**). It was also found that in comparison to Government school teachers, private school teachers have higher occupational stress (**Harish & Jayaprabha, 2018**). Heavy workload, number of students in class, sub-standard professional development opportunities, lack of healthy interaction among the colleagues, short academic session and lengthy syllabus, financial problems at home, low salary, low autonomy, high professional expectations, job insecurity, etc. are some of the causes for professional stress amongst the secondary school teachers (**Kaur, 2017** and **Harish & Jayaprabha, 2018**). The nature of work is the major cause of occupational stress (**Mohamed, 2018**).

To address the issue, that is, professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators in COVID-19 pandemic, with the help of review of related literature, following research questions were formulated:

Research Questions

- (i) How does professional commitment keep teacher educators motivated for their job in COVID-19 pandemic?
- (ii) How does occupational stress influence the professional commitment of teacher educators in COVID-19 pandemic?
- (iii) What are the plausible reasons for the occupational stress among teacher educators in COVID-19 pandemic?
- (iv) How are professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators correlated with each other?

To explore the above research questions, following research objectives were framed:

Research Objectives

- (i) To study the level of professional commitment among teacher educators of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha (GGSIP) University in COVID-19 pandemic.
- (ii) To study the factors responsible for professional commitment among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.
- (iii) To study the levels of occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.
- (iv) To study the reasons for occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.
- (v) To explore the correlation between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

Hypothesis

For research objective (v), following null hypothesis was formulated by the investigator-

H₀₁: There is no significant correlation between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

The investigator intended to explore the current status of professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic so, a descriptive survey research design was employed.

Definition of Key Terms

Professional Commitment: It is a multidimensional construct and amalgamation of working relationships with the students, parents, colleagues, and administrators (Bala, 2017).

Occupational Stress: It is an unpleasant situation in which occupational associated factors affect and interact with the employees and disrupt their psychological well beingness and cause them to deviate from usual functioning (Jarvis, 2002).

Teacher Educators: The teachers teaching in B.Ed. institutions affiliated to GGSIP University.

Sample and Sampling

Due to administrative, academic, time and COVID-19 related constraints, 8 B.Ed. institutions of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIP University), Delhi were randomly selected as the sample of the study. From each of these 8 institutions, the research tools were administered on 5 teacher educators of these institutions which were also randomly selected. So, in total 40 teacher educators of these 8 B.Ed. institutions were the final sample of the study.

Tools for Data Collection

Following research tools were used and developed by the investigator for data collection:

- A standardized test that is Professional Commitment Scale for Teachers (2011) developed by Kaur, Ranu, and Brar was administered to measure the professional commitment among the teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. The scale consisted of 45 items and all of these items were equally (that is nine items for each commitment type) distributed into 5 areas of commitment that is commitment to (i) learner, (ii) society, (iii) profession, (iv) attain excellence and (v) basic human values. The test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the test. As per the manual of the test, it was administered on the selected sample and the scoring of response sheets was done.
- A standardized test that is Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale (2012) by Jamal & Rahim was administered to measure the occupational stress among the teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. The scale consisted of 30 items. The items were classified into different dimensions leading to stress amongst the teachers like poor colleague relations, students' behaviour, substandard professional recognition, poor classroom resources and workload. The validity of this scale was established by correlating it with standardized scales and ranged from 0.71 – 0.89. The Cronbach Alpha reliability value was 0.89. As per the manual of the test, it was administered on the selected sample and the scoring of response sheets was done.
- Structured interview was conducted to explore the factors responsible for professional commitment among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. Its content validity was established by consultation with other research experts. Their valid suggestions were incorporated in drawing the final draft of interview schedule.
- Another structured interview was conducted to explore the reasons for occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. Its content validity was also established by consultation with other research experts. Their valid suggestions were incorporated in drawing the final draft of interview schedule.

These qualitative research tools developed by the investigator were used for the data collection after establishing their content validity and reliability.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Relevant qualitative and quantitative approaches for the data analysis were used for data analysis. t-test, and the frequency counting were employed as quantitative approach for data analysis. Content analysis as the qualitative approach was used for the analysis of the obtained data. Hence, a mixed research method was employed for data analysis.

Data analysis

(i) To study the levels of professional commitment among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

The educational test for exploring the levels of professional commitment among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic was administered by the investigator on the randomly selected sample, that is, 40 teacher educators. Table 1 shows the corresponding statistics after data analysis:

Table 1 Levels of professional commitment of teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.			
Levels of Professional Commitment	N	Mean (M)	S.D. (σ)
High Level	09 (22.5%)	152.59	14.89
Moderate Level	26 (65%)		
Low Level	05 (12.5%)		
Total	40		

The obtained mean value (M) is 152.59 and standard deviation (σ) is 14.89. The inferential statistics shows that $M \pm \sigma$ range marks the levels of professional commitment of teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. The range of $M \pm \sigma$ is 167.48 – 137.7 that means a teacher educator with professional commitment score beyond 167.48 will have high level of professional commitment, a teacher educator with professional commitment score between 167.48 – 137.7 will have moderate level of professional commitment and a teacher educator with professional commitment score below 137.7 will have low level of professional commitment. So, table 1 shows that there are 09 teacher educators (22.5%) having high level of professional commitment, 26 teacher educators (65%) who are moderately professionally committed and 05 teacher educators (12.5%) with low level of professional commitment.

(ii) To study the factors responsible for professional commitment among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis: Structured interview was conducted to explore the factors responsible for the professional commitment among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. The content analysis of the responses of teacher educators was done. It was found that for 55% respondents their passion for teaching profession was the main reason for their professional commitment as they chose teaching profession

deliberately. For rest of the 45% respondents, their desire to be lifelong learners motivated them to join this teaching profession and thus in this way it keeps them professionally committed.

Interpretation: The different views expressed by the teacher educators reflect that serving the society through teaching by shaping future generations keeps them enthusiastic and hence professionally committed.

(iii) To study the levels of occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

The educational test for exploring the levels of occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic was administered by the investigator on the randomly selected sample, that is, 40 teacher educators. Table 2 shows the corresponding statistics after data analysis:

Table 2 Levels of occupational stress of teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.			
Levels of Occupational Stress	N	M	σ
High Level	08 (20%)	83.29	3.73
Moderate Level	30 (75%)		
Low Level	02 (5%)		
Total	40		

The obtained mean value (M) is 83.29 and standard deviation (σ) is 3.73. The inferential statistics shows that $M \pm \sigma$ range marks the levels of occupational stress of teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. The range of $M \pm \sigma$ is 87.02 – 79.56, that means a teacher educator with occupational stress score greater than 87.02 will have high level of occupational stress, a teacher educator with occupational stress score between 87.02 – 79.56 will have moderate level of occupational stress and a teacher educator with occupational stress score below 79.56 will have low level of occupational stress. Table 2 shows that there are 08 teacher educators (20%) having high level of occupational stress, 30 teacher educators (75%) who have moderate occupational stress and 02 teacher educators (5%) with low level of occupational stress.

(iv) To study the reasons for occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis: Another structured interview was conducted to explore the reasons for the occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. The content analysis of the responses of teacher educators was done. It was found that 35% respondents were allotted the class periods without any time break. 25% respondents were assigned institution associated administrative responsibilities and it used to exhaust them. For rest of the respondents that is 40% teacher educators, low salary, less promotional & research opportunities and mild professional growth were the plausible reason(s) for occupational stress among them.

Interpretation: The different views expressed by the teacher educators reflect that occupation associated financial aspects and professional growth are the major factors that lead to occupational stress among them.

(v) **To explore the correlation between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.**

Table 3 shows the t value for the coefficient of correlation (r) between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3	
Coefficient of Correlation (r) between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic.	
r value	t value
- 0.43	- 2.93 [#]

[#].01 level of significance

* .05 level of significance

The t value – 2.93 is significant at 0.01 level of significance. There is a significant negative correlation between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic. So, the null hypothesis that is H_{01} : There is no significant correlation between the professional commitment and occupational stress among teacher educators of GGSIP University in COVID-19 pandemic, is rejected.

(vi) **Project outcome**

The project outcomes of this study are reflected as the educational implications for the following stakeholders:

Educational Implications for teacher educators: On the part of the teacher educators, a good rapport with the colleagues and students can minimize occupational stress among them. The teacher educators should be given academic freedom for research and teaching. As far as possible, any non-academic and administrative job should not be assigned to them.

Educational Implications for educational administrators: The **educational administrators** that is the principals as a family head, should intervene whenever the relationship between the teacher educators of that institution are spoiled which is necessary to restore social and professional bonding between them. The principals should judiciously assign the academic work load to the teacher educators with equal distribution of classes. Due administrative efforts should be exercised to upgrade the physical and academic infrastructure of the institution as it demotivates the teacher educators to work and give their best.

Educational Implications for curriculum planners: The curriculum planners of secondary teacher education course should frame the curriculum with latest technological updates. Merely, compelling the students and teacher educators to complete a syllabus in length and breadth should not be the aim. However, enhancing the employability of teacher education curriculum may be an innovative approach to minimize occupational stress and motivate the professional commitment of teacher educators.

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