



RESEARCH ARTICLE

STRESS VULNERABILITY AMONG STUDENT TEACHERS IN COLLEGES OF
EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at identifying the level of stress vulnerability prevalent among student teachers in colleges of education. The researcher followed phenomenological approach to generate data for the dependent variable by adopting a semi-structured interview. She also availed the services of the faculty dealing with the students to provide data for their teaching competence and interactive skills. Statistical techniques such as correlation, multiple regression analysis, and percentile analysis were employed to test the stated hypotheses. The major findings revealed that the student teachers are experiencing a moderate level of stress vulnerability and both teaching competence and interactive skills have emerged as the predictors of their stress vulnerability.

INTRODUCTION

Vulnerability to stress is a psychological problem, started in the early stages in physical, mental, emotional, and social domains. It is often considered as genetic but several researches have shown that it is an aftermath of several problems accrued over time in the life of an individual. As it is known stress is caused by several factors. The stress causing factors termed as stressors keep on changing in individuals depending on the stage of the individual and also the type of environment in which he is acting. The sources of stress though are of different categories the result of such stressors on the individual may always be around the emotional life of that individual. That is, the emotionality is the core feature resultant of stress of the vulnerable individual. This is the reason why vulnerability to the stress is considered as the psychological disorder, and at the extreme level becomes a psychiatric problem arising in feeble minded individuals. Several studies have shown that certain factors such as the use of alcohol, use of drugs, coping skills, nature of social support, etc., are capable of neutralizing the vulnerable tendency in such a way to enable the individual to get relieved from stress vulnerability.

Background: Stress vulnerability is a common problem found among professionals of different category.

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Owing to several responsibilities many of the professionals become so hectic, they could not sort out which of the problems to be solved first or which of the pending ones to be taken up for physical and mental clearance. In the case of teachers, apart from teaching one is expected to execute several activities to fulfill the role of a teacher in a school. Moreover, the tendency on the part of the teachers to be considerate towards the younger ones, because of the flourishing parental tendency in them, they are drawn into the hold of stress. Similarly, the highly authoritative dealings of the superiors in extracting work from the teachers, force many of them to develop a fear for the authorities, and inconsistent feeling of comfort and happiness in the place of working. While the functioning teachers suffer like this, the young ones, that is, the budding teachers undergoing the B.Ed. degree course in the colleges of education are tossed between faculty to faculty in fulfilling the works allotted to them. During the period of professional training, though it is common for all occupations, for the people in apprenticeship to be threatened by the seniors, in the case of student teachers the outward outburst and yellings from the senior teacher may not be so harsh as in other professions. But, mildly, and noiselessly, the budding ones are subjected to emotional cruelty like waiting before the chambers of the seniors for hours together to get a word of reply or a bit of information or for getting an oral permission to do something will curb all the tendency to learn or do something usefully to satisfy one's ingenious attitudes, the spirit of doing a good job get to spurned and forcibly drawn

into mental agony to lose all confidence in oneself. The net outcome of all these is becoming vulnerable to even a small reprimand or a direction in a raised voice or even a small negligence of senior teachers which may look normal to several others excepting for the one already affected, and on the hold of vulnerability. This is the reason why many of the student teachers who join the teacher education programmes so enthusiastically to become a resourceful teacher of their dream become psychologically ruined persons losing all interest needed for a professional. To look into the researches done on this area one could find that only a scant attention is given to this problem area stress vulnerability.

Review

Russell, Alissa *et al* (2012) undertook a study to find how different types of social exchanges affect daily wellbeing of aged lonely people. The results indicated differences between events involving family, and those involving friends. Moreover, lonelier individuals benefited more from positive events than less lonely adults. The results suggested that older adults' affect is more independent of both positive and negative social events. It has the implication for the importance of daily social exchanges and self care adopted by the lonely old people. Guinn, Bobby *et al* (2009) have published the report of the study aimed at identifying factors distinguishing Mexican American women living near the US - Mexican border who are resilient to the stress. The results of the study indicated that higher educational attainment, greater acculturation, better health status, and marriage differentiated between those women reporting themselves resilient to the effects of stress and those reporting being vulnerable. These studies indicate the use of self care ability in providing resistance to vulnerability to stress. Davidson (1999) has reported increasing coping skills or altering environmental factors (family, work, finance, etc) and judicious use of anti-psychiatric medication can reduce vulnerability and build resilience. He has pointed out that agencies such as hearing voices group help individuals to build self efficacy, self esteem and self acceptance which serve as protective factors forming a buffer to reduce stress vulnerability.

Margarida, P and Maria, Regina, C (2009) have carried out a research on teachers to determine their vulnerability to stress to identify with the main sources of stress and the coping strategies and to establish whether the self efficacy perceived can be used to predict work stress. The finding reveals that 20.4% of teachers are vulnerable to stress. The main sources of stress are found to be students lack of discipline, or improper behaviour, and the control strategies along with symptom management. Teachers not vulnerable to stress seem to display higher self efficiency levels under adversity. Similarly Calvete, Esther *et al* (2013) have found depressive symptoms as a factor of vulnerability as Strange Jonathan *et al* (2013) who has reported emotional abuse in early adolescence as a major source of vulnerability. From the studies cited above it may be understood that the vulnerability towards psychological stress may be due to the factors such as physical ailments, depressive symptoms, emotional abuse, lack of self efficacy, and lack of self care. The researcher having identified these factors, she would like to adopt them as constituents of vulnerability, that is the score obtained on such constituents would give a measure of the core vulnerability. On the basis of this dimensions, the researcher structured questions to be used for interviewing the select few from the population identified for

the purpose of the present study. In addition to the semi-structured interview the researcher has worked out strategies for observing the psychological manifestations revealing stress vulnerability in student teachers.

Objectives

- To find the level of *Stress Vulnerability* in student teachers in colleges of education in Trichy district.
- To find the level of the constituents of vulnerability – *physical ailments, depressive symptoms, emotional abuse, self efficacy, and self care* in student teachers.
- To find the significance of correlation between *Stress Vulnerability* and its constituents, and the independent variables *Teaching competence, and Interactive skills* of student teachers.
- To find the significance of the independent variables in predicting the *Stress Vulnerability* and its constituents of student teachers.

Hypotheses

- The level of *Stress Vulnerability* in student teachers in colleges of education in Trichy district is *moderate*.
- The level of the constituents of vulnerability – *physical ailments, depressive symptoms, emotional abuse, self efficacy, and self care* in student teachers is *moderate*.
- There is no significant correlation between *Stress Vulnerability* and its constituents, and the independent variables *Teaching competence, and Interactive skills* of student teachers.
- There is no independent variable among the chosen ones significantly predicting *Stress Vulnerability* and its constituents of student teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The stated problem generates qualitative data by means of Phenomenological Interview method of research, suitable for percentage, correlative, and predictive analysis.

Population and Sample

Population of the present study comprises all the Student Teachers doing the B.Ed degree programme in Colleges of education, located in Trichy District. The sample of the study consists of 40 Student Teachers randomly chosen from the target population.

Research Tool

- *Semi Structured interview* – prepared by the Researcher.
- *Teaching competence* –Data provided by the concerned teacher educator in-charge of the optional subject.
- *Interactive skills* –Data provided by the concerned teacher educator in-charge of the option subject.

Analysis of Data

Hypothesis 1: *The level of stress vulnerability in student teachers in colleges of education in Trichy district is moderate.*
Table – 1

Level of stress vulnerability in student teachers in colleges of education in Trichy district

Variable	N	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Stress Vulnerability	40	12	30.0	18	45.0*	10	25.0

* indicates the level of stress vulnerability

Hypothesis 2: The level of the constituents of vulnerability – physical ailments, depressive symptoms, emotional abuse, self efficacy, and self care in student teachers is moderate.

Table 2. Level of the constituents of vulnerability – physical ailments, depressive symptoms, emotional abuse, self efficacy, and self care in student teachers

Dimension	N	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Ailments	40	10	25.0	17	42.5*	13	32.5
Depressive Symptoms	40	13	32.5	15	37.5*	12	30.0
Emotional Abuse	40	11	27.5	18	45.0*	11	27.5
Self Efficacy	40	11	27.5	16	40.0*	13	32.5
Self Care	40	12	30.0	13	32.5	15	37.5*

* indicates the level of constituents of stress vulnerability

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant correlation between stress vulnerability and its constituents, and the independent variables teaching competence, and interactive skills of student teachers.

Table 3. Correlation between stress vulnerability and its constituents, and the independent variables teaching competence, and interactive skills of student teachers

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	'r' value	'p' value
Physical Ailments	Teaching Competency	- 0.21	0.14
	Interactive Skill	- 0.19	0.18
Depressive Symptoms	Teaching Competency	- 0.37	0.03*
	Interactive Skill	- 0.64	0.00**
Emotional Abuse	Teaching Competency	- 0.14	0.29
	Interactive Skill	- 0.09	0.64
Self Efficacy	Teaching Competency	0.55	0.00**
	Interactive Skill	0.32	0.04*
Self Care	Teaching Competency	0.48	0.00**
	Interactive Skill	0.62	0.00**
Overall Stress Vulnerability	Teaching Competency	- 0.54	0.00**
	Interactive Skill	- 0.49	0.00**

* significant at 5% level ** significant at 1% level

Table 4. Nature of prediction of teaching competence and interactive skills of student teachers on stress vulnerability and its constituents

Dependent Variable	Equation	R ² Value	Variable	Coefficient	'p' Value
Physical Ailments	14.62+ (0.05*TC) + (0.02*IS)	0.03	TC	0.12	0.24
			IS	0.10	0.29
Depressive Symptoms	13.07+ (0.10*TC) + (0.01*IS)	0.07	TC	0.39	0.00*
			IS	0.44	0.00*
Emotional Abuse	12.14+ (0.05*TC) + (0.010*IS)	0.03	TC	0.08	0.37
			IS	0.11	0.27
Self Efficacy	12.10+ (0.06*TC) + (0.011*IS)	0.02	TC	0.38	0.00*
			IS	0.48	0.00*
Self Care	12.19+ (0.04*TC) + (0.01*IS)	0.02	TC	0.38	0.00*
			IS	0.46	0.00*
Overall Stress Vulnerability	64.84+ (0.25*TC) + (0.14*IS)	0.09	TC	0.38	0.00*
			IS	0.62	0.00*

* significant

Hypothesis 4: There is no independent variable among the chosen ones significantly predicting stress vulnerability and its constituents of student teachers.

FINDINGS

The following are the findings deduced from statistical analysis of the data:

- Student teachers doing B.Ed in Colleges of education in Trichy District are found to be moderate in their Stress Vulnerability.
- Student teachers doing B.Ed in colleges of education are found to be moderate in their physical ailments, depressive symptoms, emotional abuse, and self efficacy; whereas they are found to be high in their self care.
- The correlative analysis of the data generated reveals that the independent variables Teaching Competence, and Interactive Skills are the significant negative correlates of overall stress vulnerability and its dimension depressive symptoms; whereas they are found to be positively significant correlates of the dimensions self efficacy and self care.
- On computing multiple regression analysis treating Stress vulnerability and its dimensions as the dependent, and Teaching competence and Interactive skills as independent variables, it is found that both Teaching competence and Interactive skills are significant predictors of Stress Vulnerability and its dimensions depressive symptoms, self efficacy, and self care.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Student teachers in colleges are drawn to stress vulnerability. It is mainly because of the work overload heaped on them by

each and every one of the faculty member unmindful of the time availability. However best the student teachers may work they find it at the end there are deficiencies in fulfilling the undertook responsibilities. It leads to stress and the process of similar occurrences day in and day out for weeks and months together make them prone to stress. That is, they become stress vulnerable. However in the present study, the student teachers in colleges of education in Trichy district are shown to be only moderate in this regard. Though it is not a bright scenario as for as the emotional life is concern, certainly it is not glooming. Therefore, the researcher is of the opinion that still more efforts may be taken by the head and faculty members to plan out in detail all possible activities pertaining to different departments so as not to bounce on them at the same time. The physical ailments and the emotional abuse the factors considered as the constituents of stress vulnerability have not emerged as correlates of the cognitive and social characteristics of the target population. It may be attributed to lack of reliable data available about the target population in this regard. Moreover, the teaching competence, and the interactive skills of the student teachers are found to be the predictors of their stress vulnerability and the constituting elements – depressive symptoms, self efficacy, and self care. This may be contrary to the previous findings of researches in this area, but in the prevailing situation in colleges of Tamilnadu this may be the fact in respect of the nature of stress vulnerability being manifested by the target population. Therefore, the researcher concludes by stating that necessary steps may be taken by the college authorities and Teacher

Education Universities to analyse the nature of work extracted from student teachers and accordingly provide activities in accordance with the time available for them.

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