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The Nature and Impact of Teacher Stress in the Private Schools of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

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Abstract

The study explored the nature and impact of teacher stress in the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan. Over the last decade or so there has been mushroom growth of the privately-run English-medium schools almost in all districts of Gilgit-Baltistan and, hence, a phenomenal increase in the number of teachers serving in these schools. Analysis of the stress factors showed that they were inextricably connected with the professional, personal and financial dimensions of teacher life. Also, it is noteworthy that the numerous factors were interconnected; i.e. a stress factor falling in a certain dimension (e.g. professional) has implications for the factors falling in the other two dimensions (e.g. personal and financial), and vice versa. The data categorically delineated that the stress factors left various marks on teachers, influencing (often negatively) their morale and motivation and, therefore, impacted their sense of professionalism and classroom performance.

Keywords: Teacher Stress, Private Schools, Impact (or effects) of Stress

Introduction

This study aims at gaining knowledge about the nature and impact of teacher stress in the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan. During the last few decades there has been mushroom growth of private schools in Gilgit-Baltistan. Two reasons contributed to this situation: first, communities were and remain to be dissatisfied and increasingly unhappy with the quality of education provided by the schools run by both government education department and other education providers. Second, there were children not having access to a school and private schools were established to cater to the needs of the out of school children. Hence, private schools have become a compelling reality in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. The growing number of private schools also reflects the increasing number of teachers in these schools. Irrefutably, teachers' turnover in the private schools is much higher than in the government schools. Likewise, the private school teachers seem to work under very demanding circumstances which often erode their motivation and contribute to their anxiety and tension. Therefore, it is important to gain insights on the nature and scale of challenges which make teachers in private schools stressful.

Education in Gilgit-Baltistan

At present Gilgit-Baltistan has a system of education with schools setup by the Federal Government, community-based schools and other NGO schools. There are three education providing systems in Gilgit-Baltistan: the Government Education Department, Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan (AKESP) and the Private schools system. A brief description of the three systems follows:

Government Education Department, Gilgit-Baltistan

Government Education Department is the largest education provider in Gilgit- Baltistan. There are 1008 government schools in Gilgit-Baltistan, where 115176 students get education from 4946 teachers. For the closer and effective monitoring of schools, offices have been established in each district led by the deputy directors of education (DDEs). There are four directors of education to supervise and monitor the DDEs, they are: (i) the director education (academics), Gilgit, the director education, Baltistan, the director education, planning and development and the directress for the girls schools in GB. The directors of education are accountable to the secretary education who provides the overall leadership to the institution.

Private Sector

Private sector has emerged as the second largest education provider in Gilgit-Baltistan. The need for private schools was felt as a result of people's dissatisfaction with the quality of education in the government schools. Some private schools were also opened to provide children the much-needed access to education. However, the private sector is mainly focusing on the quality education. There has been significant growth in the share of education in the private sector during the last few decades. There has been visible increase in the number of schools, as well as the proportion of children enrolled in these schools. Private sector operates schools in all districts of Gilgit-Baltistan. The current statistics show that there are 429 private schools with a population of 43066 students and 2133 teachers in these schools in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan (AKESP)

There are 126 AKESP schools and eight hundred and twenty two teachers to teach 22141 students in these schools. AKESP's mission is to "enable many generations of students to acquire both knowledge and essential spiritual wisdom needed to balance that knowledge and enable their lives to attain the highest fulfillment." AKESP is mainly focusing girls' education with some enrolment of boys in the co-education classes. AKESP continues to work with the government and communities to develop the models of public/private partnership that play a vital role towards implementing the Education Sector Reforms of the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan.

Background of the Study

Teachers have very important roles and responsibilities in teaching and learning processes and in achieving the overall goals of education. Amongst the numerous factors having direct and serious implications for teachers success in achieving the goals of education, the overall school milieu emerges as one of the key facilitating or hindering factors. Even the best teacher fails to

do well under inconvenient and unsupportive conditions. However, the teacher has numerous responsibilities including, but not confined to, continuously upgrading their professional knowledge, motivating students, planning class activities, providing knowledge and skills to students, maintaining discipline in the class and keeping parents informed on their children's progress. The multiplicity of roles confronts teachers with numerous challenges including insufficient resources, overcrowded classes, lack of professional development opportunities, lack of parents cooperation, and low financial packages and professional status, to name a few.

By its nature, teaching is one of the noblest professions as usually it is the teacher who shapes the future of a child and unleashes and actualizes his or her potentials. As a result, teaching is a very fulfilling and rewarding profession. Students' success in their lives can also become tremendous sources of dignity, reverence and satisfaction for teachers. However, because of the huge responsibilities and the deep-rooted sense of accountability, teaching is also a very stressful and demanding profession. It is challenging in both its intellectual and physical dimensions: intellectually, because the profession requires teachers to constantly enhance and reshape their knowledge; and physically, because it requires them to be always dynamic, proactive and smart. Since our professional life characterizes the most important part of our daily life, the effects of the professional life, therefore, have important implications for our social life. The stress factors, as a result, immensely influence and shape our personal and professional life in numerous ways.

Rationale for the Study

In the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan teachers face a variety of challenges (Shafa, 2011). For examples, in most of these schools there is an acute shortage of resources like laboratories, furniture and sport facilities, computer labs and other instructional resources. The scarcity of resources confronts teachers with many problems. In addition, an overwhelming majority of the parents are illiterate and hence unable to prepare their children for learning; they only depend on teachers for their children's education. Likewise, in certain cases parents also expect teachers to provide the best quality education to their children but remain oblivious and least motivated to contribute their share in ensuring the quality education.

Moreover, there are strict rules and regulation in private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan for teachers to adhere to. For example, in these schools teachers are expected to prepare lesson plans, and show punctuality and regularity in their duty. In many schools students come from different regions representing different cultures and languages. Or, in other cases, the classes are overcrowded facing teachers with different challenges of discipline and classroom management. Children in a significant number of private schools also suffer for not having the basic facilities such as clean drinking water, toiletry facilities and compound walls to provide comfort and safety especially to the grown up female students. In addition, some students come from the Urdu-medium schools and find it very difficult to adjust in English-medium classes; hence, pose a serious challenge to teachers. Furthermore, the analysis of number of professionally trained teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan schools reflected the fact that the teachers in the private schools are the least trained and therefore employ traditional ways of teaching and learning failing to ignite the desire for learning and to develop children's critical thinking skills.

The increasing demands of the district managements and growing expectations of the community, with negligible or no support at all pose serious challenges to teachers (Shafa, 2003). Often, these demands are such that the teachers have to ignore their personal life. Naylor (2001) corroborates with this argument by saying that teachers are sacrificing their physical and mental health and relationships (in some cases) to fulfill their responsibilities. This creates a severe imbalance in most teachers' life to the extent that some opt for an early retirement and some eventually leave the job. It is these and many other expectations and demands that make the job of a teacher difficult to manage and stressful.

The need to explore the factors causing teacher stress has been repeatedly identified by different scholars. Authors like Easthope and Easthope (1990), Berry (1998) and Naylor (2001) claim that teaching is a stressful profession all over the world due to changing compositions of classes, quantity of work, challenges of the time, seasonal pressures, curriculum changes, expectations, lack of resources and so on (Naylor, 2001). The researchers of this study, therefore, wanted to see how far the insights emanating from elsewhere relate to and resonate with the situation in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Therefore, the issue of teacher stress in the private schools of GB was selected as it has serious implications for teachers' professional well-being as well as for students' academic achievements. Furthermore, teachers' stress has implications for the district management and the other schools operating systems as in case of too much stress, teachers' morale and motivation decline and the education system as a whole fails to deliver.

Methodological Decisions Taken

In order to gain a deeper understanding on teachers stress in private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan, the qualitative research methodology was used for data collection. The qualitative research involves collecting data on the processes of participants acting, speaking, and showing non-verbal behaviors in an actual setting. The qualitative research made the research process a mutually beneficial undertaking. In the research process the researchers gained new insights about the topic whereas the research participants got opportunity to read data reflecting their thought processes and actions. Based on our field experiences we endorse the assertion made by Beattie (2000) that the qualitative research also contributes to leadership development of the research participants.

In order to gain in-depth understanding of the action, feelings and expressions of research participants, we conducted interviews which generated very valuable data related to the study and clarified our understanding on the various issues that cause teacher stress. We conducted four semi-structured interviews of the research participants. These interviews were conducted individually with each participant. In all four interviews we met with each research participant twice: first, to conduct interview and second, to share the data with them and seek their consensus on the validity of the data. In certain cases we again collected data during the second round of discussion with research participants. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1998), "The semi structured interview is a much more flexible version of interview; it allows depth to be

achieved by providing opportunity to the interviewer to probe and explore the interviewees' responses" (p.83). Therefore, interviews proved to be a very important source of data collection.

Observations were also used as a data collection tool. Observations helped in gaining a deeper understanding of the actions, feelings and expressions of the research participant. The research participants were observed in schools as well as in their classes at least for a week. According to Darlington (2002), "observation is a very effective way of finding out what people do in a particular context, the routines and interaction patterns of their everyday lives" (p.74).

Selecting Participants and Negotiating Access

There are 2248 schools providing education in Gilgit-Baltistan. Of these 555 are private schools managed by individuals or private associations. Ideally, we should have worked with all private schools to know the nature and impact of factors contributing to teachers stress in these schools; however, in view of the time and resource constraints, we worked with four schools. The sample of our research included four teachers, one from each of the four sample schools. Of the four participants we intended to include two female and two male participants. The following criteria were used to select the participants:

- The participants should have at least eight years experience in their profession;
- Be willing and motivated to take part in the research project.

One of the sample schools belonged to a very well-established education providing system called the Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan (AKESP) whereas the other three of the sample schools belonged to individuals or groups of people managing these schools mostly on commercial basis. A brief description of AKESP and the private groups of people, managing the four sample schools, follows:

AKESP-Managed School

D. J. Community High School Farmanabad¹ is situated in Gilgit. It is part of the Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan. This school primarily serves the people of the lower and middle socio-economic backgrounds. Currently, there are 500 students in this school which reflects a great cultural and ethnic diversity. There are total nineteen teachers: nine are the school management committee (SMC)-appointed teachers whereas the rest are AKESP teachers. This school has an active and professional SMC managing the school issues related to the community. The community-run classes include 9th and 10th providing science and Arts education, and the nursery class for early year's education. AKESP-run classes include classes 1 to class 8th. The school has done increasingly well over the years. During 2010, the school got the first position in SSC Part I and third position in SSC Part II.

Currently, there are fifteen classrooms in D.J Community High School Farmanabad. This school has always faced the issue of increasing demands for admissions. Therefore, it was in 1997 that

¹ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of the schools and localities

AKESP and the school community decided to upgrade the school to secondary level. However, the agreement said that AKESP would be responsible for technical assistance (i.e. teacher training and examinations) while the community would pay the cost of running secondary classes.

Privately Owned and Managed Schools

North Star High School and College

North Star High School and College was established in 2006. This school is run by a board of governors which works hard to improve the performance of the school and college. The school provides education from grade 3 to degree level classes. The enrolment has increased over the last years and now there are more than 307 students in the school. Of the 14 teachers in the school seven teachers are male and seven are female. The school has no proper playground and no sport facilities for students. There are two portions of the school building; first portion is a rented building and the second portion is owned by the BoG. The school has a library and a laboratory, where students study and perform practical work. The classes are overcrowded because of the limited space available for students in the school. The classrooms are too small to accommodate 40 to 42 students in each class. Thus, teachers face serious challenge of classroom management. Most of the school teachers are well qualified but not professionally trained.

Bright Future School and College

Bright Future School is managed by a board of governors. The School has two campuses: one is in Hunza and the other is in Gilgit. Similar to the Bright Future campus in Hunza, the Gilgit campus was also started for grades 6th to 10th in 2009. Initially, 65 students took admission in classes 6th to 9th. In the management committee there are four members: chairman, vice chairman, general secretary and finance secretary. The position of the members changes after every two years. There are twelve permanent and five visiting teachers in the Bright Future School, however, only a few of them are trained. This school provides a unique educational learning environment to students, and the faculty of the school is energetic and committed to the cause of education.

Children's Academy, Gilgit

Children's Academy is run by a board of governors selected from the local community. The Academy was established in 1997. At that time, there was no proper building and classes were run in D.J High School Farmanabad. However, the school was shifted to a rented building in 1998. In 2000, the construction of the Academy started with the financial assistance from Japan. In 2001, the Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP) was launched by AKU-PDCN, and five teachers participated in this program.

The upper story of the building was completed in 2007 and the School was upgraded to secondary level. In 2008-09, the laboratory and ECD sections were added to the school. Likewise, the computer lab and library were added to the school during 2009. Currently, there are total 16 teachers; most of them are well trained while some teachers are newly appointed. Currently, there are 300 students and 13 classrooms in the Academy.

Stress: The Numerous Faces

The study revealed significant findings on the various factors contributing to stress of teachers working in the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan. The stress factors related to teachers' professional, personal and financial dimensions of life, and could also be broadly categorized as the 'inside-school' and the 'outside-school' sources of stress. The data also portrayed the fact that the stress factors came in different forms and degrees. A brief description on each of the three dimensions (i.e. professional, personal and financial) of teachers stress is presented in the following:

Professional Stress

Teaching is a Highly Complex and Challenging Profession

The data repeatedly reflected the fact that many of the teacher stress factors related to the complex and challenging nature of the teaching profession. Commenting on the demanding nature of teaching, teachers said that teaching is a very difficult profession. It needs a lot of time for preparation. It is not easy to face a class without having full preparation and clear understanding of the content and methodology to teach a topic successfully.

As a profession, teaching has high level of stress due to the factors like the amount of time spent in class, preparing for class, counseling students, working with a large number of students having various needs, abilities, disabilities, and cognitive levels. Moreover, learning new technology, changes in administrative leadership, lack of financial and personnel support, and time pressure generated by deadlines, are other forms of challenges faced by teachers in their day-to-day work. While trying to deal with these and numerous other issues teachers also have to deal with different personal problems.

Here is what one of the teachers said as he discussed the challenges related to his job: "Teaching is a very complicated profession as compared to other professions. It takes a lot of time for preparation and lesson planning. A teacher also has to work for preparing his lessons at home after duty hours" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

What we heard from our research participants was quite in line with what Dunham and Varma (1998) say: "Teaching is widely considered to be a demanding profession with a high risk for stress." Ingersoll (2001) also made a similar comment when argued that teacher shortages are the result of "revolving door" in which many teachers leave for reasons other than the retirement. For Ingersoll (2001) professional stress of teachers is a dominant factor contributing to teacher turn-over. Therefore, understanding the stress factors and providing teacher-friendly conditions in schools is significant to achieve educational goals. Hughes (2001) suggests that preventing the potential negative effects of stress on both the teacher and the learning environment is critical.

The data also endorsed the fact that teachers face challenges in classroom when students do not understand lessons clearly, and/or when students ask them difficult questions. Likewise, it was also revealed that when teachers fail to satisfy students with their performance then students

make complaints against teachers. In worst cases students start becoming casual and rough with teachers; some of them even make jokes of teachers. This situation makes teachers very stressful.

Students' Individual Differences

Students' individual differences are one of the most critical factors that adds to the challenge and complexity of teacher; which, in turn, makes teachers anxious and stressful. The research participants said that in the class they have to interact with both slow and fast learners, highly motivated versus the less motivated and reluctant students, students coming from well-off and poor families. This diverse nature of students within the same class makes it highly difficult for teachers to achieve their teaching goals. Commenting on issues related to students individual differences and how they challenge them in the teaching process, one of the teachers said: "students thinking level is different from each other, fast learners easily understand the lessons while slow learners face many problems to understand the lesson. We find it difficult to give individual attention to all students and therefore it emerges as a huge challenge to understand the individual differences of students" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). Another teacher said, "Due to the individual differences of students we face many challenges during teaching because it is very challenging to understand students' individual capabilities" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

Todd Lubart (2004) argues that the quality of education cannot be understood without examining what happens in the classroom. How students learn is to a great extent determined by classroom interaction, both between teachers and their students as well as amongst students. Students' cognitive development, furthermore, is dependent on a complex set of individual differences (also see Dana Goetz, 2010).

There are different types of students and every student has his/her own ways of seeing the world and understand things, which makes it very difficult to teach all students using a single uniform approach. Therefore, if a student could not get the environment according to his/her natural talents then it creates negative factors in that student, which, in turn, creates problems for teachers to cope with students' individual differences.

Lack of Resources

Resources are important for any educational institution to fulfill their requirements. Instructional resources help in achieving teaching and learning goals. The data reflected the fact that the teachers suffered for not having the required resources in their schools. The shortage of resources included lack of instructional resources, libraries, laboratories, computer laboratories, resource rooms and lack of financial resources to purchase the much required resources. Due to lack of instructional resources teachers could not teach according to their plans. Libraries are needed for students and teachers to improve their study skills. Laboratories are also required for students to do practical work and experiments. In some private schools computer subject is included in curriculum but the laboratory is not available. The lack of resources faced teachers and students with challenging and frustrating situations.

One of teachers said: "In private schools there is an acute shortage of resources which makes teachers' life very difficult. That is why teachers discontinue their services in private schools more frequently" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). The forgoing comment from teachers endorses what Professor William Ibukun (2003) said: "It is not that government is not giving money but there is a gap. The demand for education is growing higher everyday but the available resources are not keeping pace in terms of the development" (p.3).

Lack of Student Interest

Students' motivation and interest play an important and decisive role in the process of their learning. Teachers become effective in their teaching when students are interested in their studies. However, teachers often complain about the lack of students interest in their studies; "they don't listen carefully to their teachers and also disturb other students in their classes", are often-heard complaints. One of the teachers shared with us: "Mostly students do not take interest in their studies and as a result we face numerous problems in the teaching process" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). The data also endorsed the fact that lack of students' interest in studies is a source of teachers stress. It wasn't difficult at all to see that many students did not take interest in their studies and that it was very difficult for their teachers to motivate those students to take interest in their lessons. Due to this the class discipline was disturbed and teachers were stressful.

Students were also asked as to why they lacked interest in their studies. It was interesting to note that some students thought that their teachers were not capable enough to stimulate them in their learning process. On asking additional questions, students said that their teachers' content knowledge was weak and that they did not prepare their lessons before coming to class to teach those lessons. Teachers, on the other hand, pointed their fingers at students and their parents for lack of students' interest in their studies.

Students' lack of motivation and interest emerged as an important cause that contributes to the stress level of private school teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan. When students do not take interest in studies, teachers become less interested and bored in their teaching.

Teacher Appraisal

The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKESP) has the teachers' performance appraisal system implemented for the last several decades. Although the performance appraisal is to recognize and honor merit and use it as a motivating factor for teachers, the data repeatedly revealed the fact that the appraisal system was a source of frustration and stress rather than being the source of inspiration and motivation for the teachers. Teachers' salary increases and promotions are tied with their annual performance rating determined through their appraisal system and that is why teachers take the appraisal system very seriously. Our discussions with the teachers reflected the fact that teachers were highly dissatisfied with the issues of transparency and fairness with which the appraisal is conducted. Most of the teachers complained that there is no justice done by the supervisors in the appraisals. They also shared that the supervisors decide on teacher rating only based on one or two classroom observations

during the entire year. Teachers consider this kind of decisions very unfair. In addition, the school heads have a role in teacher appraisal. However, they told us that in most cases heads themselves lack the capacity and are less skilled and knowledgeable than the teachers they assessed.

It is based on all the evidence coming from schools that the appraisal system is a source of stress in private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan. Here is what one of the teachers said: “we are very unhappy with the teacher appraisal system. It only pleases a few teachers while demotivates majority of the teachers and makes them unhappy.” Whenever the appraisal takes place, it increases teachers’ tension and makes them highly stressful.

Personal Stress

Family Problems

The sense of tribalism and the extended family system are some of the contextual realities of Gilgit-Baltistan. The family life style poses several challenges to the working individuals and these challenges are more severe for female teachers than for their male counterparts. Teacher in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan play multiple roles: they have to work in the farms, cater to the needs of animals at home, attend to the numerous needs of extended family members and contribute their time and knowledge to the welfare of the wider society. This multiplicity of roles creates numerous challenges for the teachers. Furthermore, catering to the needs of extended families with meager salaries becomes a huge challenge and, therefore, a constant source of frustration for teachers.

One of the teachers shared with us: “The pressure from the family to meet their financial needs becomes the most challenging issue. Family members have their increasing expectations and it is so frustrating to struggle to meet their needs with a meager salary. It is very stressful and at times we feel exhausted and tired of our own life” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview).

The data reflected other challenges which emerged as sources of personal stress for teachers. Some of these challenges included: the broken homes, the social status of teachers, poverty, divorced families, crowded homes, sibling rivalry problems, family educational background, inferiority complexes, harsh discipline at homes and schools. Likewise, the demands of marital life with the added burden of household chores, child rearing and the mental and physical pressures, emerge as other sources of stress.

Lack of Interest in Teaching

It was interesting to note that some teachers shared with us that they were not interested in teaching. They did not enjoy working as teachers as it is very challenging. They became teachers because their family wanted them to do so. One male teacher told that teaching is best suited for females as it is a half-day job allowing them to also manage their families.

One of the teachers stated: “We are in teaching because there are not many job opportunities elsewhere. To become a teacher is like doing a half-day job. Likewise, in teaching you have more

than six month's holidays during the year. Despite all these, I would willingly go if I get another job opportunity" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

Financial Stress

Issues related to finances emerged as another but more important source of stress for teacher. The data reflected various kinds of financial stresses.

Low Salary Packages

In private schools teacher are given low salary packages, making it very hard to meet their household requirements. Due to this reason teachers do not take interest in teaching and their family is always unhappy with the salaries packages. Therefore, the low salary package is a source of stress for teachers. One of the teachers stated: "As teachers we work very hard but what we get in return is not enough to meet our basic family needs" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, had once said that if we want to improve the quality of our schools, a major part of that is to make sure that attract the best and the brightest and you're not going to do that without increasing salaries.

Lack of Resources

Resources are necessary for teaching and learning as without resources teachers cannot teach in effective ways. But in the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan there are not enough resources for teachers which make their life very challenging. One of the teachers said: "private schools are managed through the income from the students' tuition fees. Therefore, the resources in these schools are never enough to run the schools effectively. If you increase fee to add to the school income, students drop out and the enrollment decreases. So, it is a big challenge to manage the private schools" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). Hence, lack of material and human resources is a source of ongoing challenge and frustration for teachers in the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Two Categories of Teacher Stress Factors

The data was reviewed to understand the nature of stress factors that caused frustration which, as a result, negatively affected teacher morale and motivation to work in schools. The different factors causing teacher stress could be grouped into the "inside-school stress factors" and the "outside-school stress factors." A review and discussion of factors falling under each category follows:

Inside-School Stress Factors

Overcrowded Classes

Overcrowded classes emerged as a source of teachers stress in the private schools in Gilgit-Baltistan. The teachers working in overcrowded classes faced several problems: they could not properly manage the classes and faced the issue of organizing their classes for activity-based teaching. The issue of classroom management also related to teachers lack of ability to control students. One teacher stated that often she feels like getting a nervous breakdown.

The trend of students seeking admissions in private schools is increasing day-by-day in Gilgit-Baltistan. The swelling enrolments in classrooms confront teachers with the challenges of attending to students' individual needs and make the task of assessing students work and providing them constructive feedback increasingly demanding and stressful. One of the teachers shared: "Students' strength creates a problem for us in school. We cannot concentrate on all students and face many problems during teaching" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). During classroom observations we found out that some teachers organized weekly or monthly tests. However, for several days they seemed unable to mark the tests and prepare results.

Lack of Student Interest

When students take interest and pay attention to the teacher there are better chances of teachers' success in their teaching. However, teachers told us that mostly students do not take interest in studies. This, teachers said, makes their life very difficult. They also told us that most students fail in their classes because they are not interested in their studies. However, when students fail, teachers have to face parents' criticism and that makes them very stressful. One of the teachers told us: "students' lack of motivation is the major reason for their failure. Their parents also do not take interest in their children studies. They only expect the teachers to do everything. This is frustrating" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

The data showed that lack of student interest is a big problem for teachers because teachers have to work hard to teach a class of demotivated students. When students do not take interest and their performance is not good then the teachers become stressful.

Pupils' Misbehavior

The data showed that in some cases students' behavior with their teachers was not appropriate. Students created problems for teachers; quite a few students misbehaved during school time and class time, while others were a source of irritation and disturbance for other students. When teachers punished students for their undesirable behavior some of them showed their disliking for such teachers. One of the teachers complained: "In most cases parents fail to teach their children how to behave themselves. There are children who do not obey; cheat in tests, damage school property and tell lies in most cases" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

The data revealed that students' misbehavior is a big source of stress in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. During observations we found out that mostly students' behavior was not good with teachers and they could not concentrate on their studies. Due to this reason teachers faced challenges, teachers left school because of students' misbehavior and it created stress for teachers.

Workload

In private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan teachers seldom get any relief periods as they have to take consecutive classes and they have no time to relax between lessons. Due to this reason teachers felt exhausted and got frustrated. According to a teacher, "We have no time to relax between lessons and take consecutive classes. Due to this reason we have no time to prepare lessons and

cannot teach in more effective way” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview). According to Polly Curtis (2004) “The myth about the cushy life of a private school teacher was today exploded as a survey revealed that 85% of them said excessive workloads were affecting their home life” (p.6).

Some 60% of the 300 independent school teachers questioned for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers' (ATL) survey worked more than 50 hours a week. About 35% of respondents said their excessive workload left them feeling exhausted and stressed on a daily basis and 30% stated that they had no time for a social life. Some 64% of respondents were expected to perform tasks they felt should not have to be carried out by a teacher. It means that due to lack of time for relaxation teachers face challenges, and become stressful in this situation.

During observation we also found that teachers were always busy taking classes. They had no time for relaxation and in spare time they were engaged in other activities of school. Teachers’ heavy workload included classroom instruction, meeting parents, preparing teaching resources, writing lesson plans, addressing students discipline issues, marking students’ home assignments and attending the staff meetings. Preparation must be at least one-sixth of the teacher's total instructional time and that is not enough for teachers.

Outside-School Stress Factors

Rules and Regulation

Every institution has certain rules and regulations which need to be followed by the employees. There are very strict rules in private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan, and these rules relate to teachers punctuality, availing leaves, developing lesson plans and avoiding students physical punishment. The data showed that teachers felt stressful because of the strict rules and regulations in schools. One of the teachers mentioned that “It is not an enjoyable experience to work in a private school. The rules here are very tough and it makes life very difficult” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview).

The data showed that rules and regulations were a cause of teachers stress. Sometimes teachers could not follow these rules and the head teacher reprimanded them. The rules are very hard for female teachers, because they have to manage their household chores with teaching. These conditions led female teachers to more to stress.

Lack of Parents’ Cooperation

Parents play important and irreplaceable roles in the development and upbringing of their children. It could be attributed to their low or no education that parents in Gilgit-Baltistan often exhibit lack of interest in their children’s education. Teachers told us that very few parents take interest in how their children do in schools. Even the educated parents show the behavior of no interest in educational development of their children. One teacher told us that because the parents are uneducated and are too busy in their household and field work, they show lack of interest in their children’s education.

Therefore, it can be safely said that less interested and demotivated parents in their children’s education are a source of stress for teachers. We also learnt that parents’ lack of respect for

teachers also emerges as a source of frustration and demotivation for teachers. When parents do not cooperate with teachers in schools, teachers face many problems regarding their performance in schools. Therefore, parents' lack of cooperation affects schools progress and it also emerges as an important source of stress for teachers.

Lack of or Inadequate Training Opportunities

It is noteworthy that teachers whose own passion for learning has withered away can never ignite the desire for learning in their children; hence, the need for continuous professional education of teachers in schools. Providing teachers ongoing professional development opportunities at schools and outside is getting increasing recognition. However, the private schools in Gilgit-Baltistan have no proper system of providing ongoing professional development opportunities to teachers. Here is what one teacher said: "There are no arrangements for our professional development. The school management expects better performance from us but they are not ready to spend money for our professional development. Without professional support, we will not be able to do a better job" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). The data showed that lack of teachers training is also a cause of teachers stress. Because mostly teachers are newly appointed and untrained they face many challenges during teaching and could not teach in more effective ways.

In most private schools in Gilgit-Baltistan there are usually fresh university graduates appointed as teachers. These teachers have no teaching experiences at all on how to teach. In certain cases these teachers are fine with their content knowledge but they have no ideas on pedagogical and classroom management related issues. Therefore, it becomes highly challenging for them to achieve the education goals. Teachers' lack of competence becomes a source of disappointment for students and their parents and a source of stress for the teachers.

Job Security

The data repeatedly reflected the fact that teachers in private schools remained under a lot of pressure for their job security. Teachers' job is not secured and permanent in private schools. No job security keeps teachers under tension and always stressful for their jobs. Teachers told us that if they demand for high salaries or disagree with school management on any issue, there is risk of losing the job. Therefore, job security issue haunts teachers almost every day and they keep on searching for more secured and better salaried jobs in the market. According to a group of teachers "There is no job security in private schools. Government schools are the best for job security. Because of this reason we feel frustrated and tired of this profession" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

It shows that due to the job security issue in private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan teachers always felt stressful. Some teachers argued that the salaries are very low, job is temporary and there is no bonus system, no insurance policy system, and no housing and other allowances system at private sector. These all matters make teachers stressful.

Management and Governance Issues

School management always plays a pivotal role in the development of schools. School management provides the required resources and arranges for school facilities. Since most of the private schools are managed by individual owners, these privately-owned schools have numerous issues of management and governance. One teacher complained that some of the school owners are like dictators, which is very frustrating for school principals and teachers. A teacher told us that: "Due to mismanagement of school we face many problems and some of these problems are lack of proper resources; and availability of teachers in schools. In addition, the school owners see themselves above the law and take decisions which suit them and not the teachers. These are the causes of teachers stress" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

Impact of Stress on Private School Teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan

We were curious to learn from teachers how the stress and anxiety affected them. We got various answers to the questions we asked teachers on the impact of stress. This impact seemed to be on teachers' personal and professional life. We discuss the impact of stress on teachers in the following:

Impact on Teachers' Personal Life

The data showed that the stress variously impacted teachers' personal life. Some teachers said that the stress from their professional work influenced their behavior and actions even after school hours. Analyses of data reflected various kinds of impact of stress on teachers' personal life.

Increased Anxiety

Teachers shared with us that when they felt stressed in school it increased their anxiety and made them tensed. The root causes of their anxiety were related to issues of insecurity of job, harsh attitude of principal and school owner, disruptive behavior of students and lack of content knowledge and pedagogical skills. One of the teachers said: "when we are in stress we are not able to perform well in class. When we feel anxiety and tension in school, we do not enjoy being let alone teaching in that school. In fact, the stress negatively impacts our work" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). Data showed that when teachers were stressed they were not able to teach well in class. Students did not enjoy their teaching methods and teachers were not able to transfer their ideas properly to students.

Lowered Confidence

Teachers told us that when they were in the state of stress they felt less confident to face new situations. One teacher shared: "when I am in tension, I feel anger and boredom. If someone visits my class during that situation, I do not feel confident to face the visitors" (Excerpt from teacher's interview). Another teacher said: "when I am in stress I feel like becoming sick. During stress my mind does not work properly. Honestly, I feel like my blood pressure goes high when I am stressed" (Excerpt from teacher's interview).

Lack of Patience

During our informal discussions with two teachers we learnt that teachers lose patience when they feel stressful. One of the two teachers told us that she felt like giving physical punishment to students whenever she was in a state of tension. The other teacher also agreed with her colleague and said “Teaching requires a lot of patience but when we feel stressed and tensed, we become aggressive” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview). During observations we noticed that teachers felt aggressive and emotional when they felt stressed. In this situation teachers gave punishment to students in class. We also found that when teachers were under stress their emotions appeared in their personality and they punished students unnecessarily. When they were stressed, teachers could not teach effectively.

Reduced Self-Respect

Our discussions with teachers repeatedly showed that during stress they experienced lower self-respect. They felt tired and down. One teacher told us that she felt less motivated and demoralized during stress. She further told us that whenever she would be in tension, she could not express ideas properly. In our informal discussions with a teacher we noted that she felt depressed and stressed when an education officer was expected to visit her class for her performance assessment; this teacher said:

I do not like being assessed; they come to search and identify our weaknesses and not our strengths. Performance appraisal makes most of the teachers’ stressful. We feel a big relief when the performance assessment is over. Working as a teacher in private schools is never an easy thing” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview).

Likewise, we also felt during our observations that when teachers felt demoralized they could not teach properly, and that they also suffered from forgetfulness.

Impact on Teachers Professional Life

Communication and Articulation Issues

The data showed that stress often faced teachers with the issue of articulating their ideas. When they were tensed and agitated, teachers either could not speak or spoke less in their classes. During lectures teachers felt hesitation and did not enjoy their oral communication in their classes. During an interview one of the teachers shared with us that when she would be stressed, she preferred keeping quiet. She added: “when I suffer from tension I feel it difficult to teach lessons properly” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview). The data repeatedly showed that when teachers were stressed they faced communication problems and they could not deliver lessons effectively. They felt hesitation in front of class and teachers couldn’t express their ideas effectively.

Challenges in Focusing Attention

When teachers suffer from stress it makes it difficult for them to focus their attention on specific professional aspects of teaching and learning. Teaching is about paying attention to specific classroom related issues such as the teaching objectives, individual differences of students,

maintaining classroom management and the effective use and impact of resources. But when a teacher is stressed and lacks the peace and tranquility of mind, attending to the details of teaching and learning becomes harder. Here is what a teacher said: “when I feel stressed I simply cannot concentrate on the teaching process in class” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview).

Poor Quality and Performance

When teachers feel stressed they cannot perform satisfactorily in their classes. As a result, they cannot give better ideas to their students. They cannot provide quality education to students and finally they fail to achieve their targets. We heard parents and students’ complaining about some teachers. They said that these teachers were not competent enough to provide quality education. However, our interaction with these teachers showed that they felt stressed and therefore failed to deliver results. The data repeatedly reflected that when felt stressed teachers performance suffered. Due to stress they could not use teaching techniques and effective ways to engage students in learning processes.

Poor Time Management

When teachers were stressed they could not manage their time effectively, they could not start and end lessons on time; they faced many difficulties in managing time. They could not come to class due to poor time keeping. The researchers also learnt from students that whenever they saw their teachers unhappy and tensioned, they either did not attend their classes or mostly did not teach even when they were in class. One of the students said; “when we noticed our teacher unhappy she could not manage her time properly” (Excerpt from teacher’s interview).

Issues of Regularity and Punctuality

We learnt from head teachers, teachers and student that stress affected the teachers’ attendance. Most of the time they felt not well and always thought that they were ill. It was mostly because of illness and household chores that they remained absent from their classes, and as a result, their yearly performance declined. According to Chadwick-Jones, Nichoison, and Bron (1982) “Teacher absenteeism is regarded as a vital problem in the education system today. The definition of absenteeism is as complicated and descriptive as human nature.”

This data showed that when teachers were in stress, they could not take their classes properly. Due to stress they lost their health and they did not feel good physically and mentally, therefore, they did not attend classes which directly affected students learning.

Conclusion

This article illustrates the findings of the study conducting on understanding the factors contributing to teachers stress in the private schools of Gilgit-Baltistan. The data collected from schools reflected a variety of findings that relate to the anxiety and stress of private schools teachers. The analysis of this findings resulted in categorizing them into three groups: personal stress, professional stress and financial stress. Within each group we identified several factors that caused teacher stress. It was overwhelming to note the multiplicity of factors which were related to and caused teacher stress. However, the impact of each one of the three groups of

teacher stress (i.e. personal, professional and financial) was different for different teachers. It looked like some teachers felt more stressed because of a variety of personal and domestic factors, whereas other teachers felt more constrained because of financial issues.

Furthermore, the data analysis also highlighted the sources of teacher stress, which could be easily identified as the “inside-school” and the “outside-school” sources of stress. The various findings related to each one of the two categories are revealing as they show the significance and degree of enormity of stress factors related to these groups.

The study also discusses the impact of various stress factors on the personal and professional aspects of teachers. The analysis of the conclusions drawn from the findings is revealing and informative. It shares the various dimensions of the causes and effects of numerous stress factors on teachers’ life in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan.

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