OPEN ACCESS

Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

Abbreviated Key Title: Saudi J Humanities Soc Sci
ISSN 2415-6256 (Print) | ISSN 2415-6248 (Online)
Scholars Middle East Publishers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Journal homepage: https://saudijournals.com/sjhss

Original Research Article

Job Stress during COVID – 19 Pandemic among Teaching and Non – Teaching Employees Working in Constituent Colleges of L. N. Mithila University, India

Nikhat Naaz[1*], Prof. (Dr.) Anis Ahmad[2]

[1]PhD Scholar, University Department of Psychology, L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga – 846004 India
[2]University Department of Psychology, L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga – 846 004 India

DOI: 10.36348/sjhss.2020.v05i08.008 | **Received:** 17.08.2020 | **Accepted:** 25.08.2020 | **Published:** 29.08.2020

***Corresponding author:** Nikhat Naaz

Abstract

The present inquiry was aimed at studying the job stress and its stressors during COVID – 19 pandemic among teaching and non-teaching employees working in constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, India. For the present study total sample consisted of one hundred fifty employees (N=150) comprising teaching (n=75) and non-teaching (n=75) which were selected by contacting online on mobile, whats App, facebook and Google mail during COVID – 19 pandemic. Data collected through questionnaire schedules using Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Singh and Srivastava (1981). Having collected the data on each item of the index, data were tabulated according to procedures and norms of the OSI for giving statistical treatment. Results revealed the fact that significant difference have been found in terms of total occupational stress between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees during pandemic, whereas, seven dimensions / stressors of occupational stress out of twelve, namely, Role overload, Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Unreasonable group and political pressure, Responsibility for persons, Under participation and Strenuous working conditions have also been emerged as the predictors of occupational stress between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees during COVID – 19 pandemic. It is interestingly to note that non-teaching employees were found more prone to job stress during COVID – 19 pandemic than the teaching employees while working in constituent colleges of LNMU. The discrepancy of results obtained has been discussed in detail by highlighting the probable reasons.

Keywords: Job Stress, COVID – 19, Constituent Colleges, Employees and L. N. Mithila University.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 disease has now achieved epidemic to pandemic status throughout the world. It is too important to mention that still COVID -19 has not identified by the scientist whether it is man – made or natural. Consequently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued guidelines for managing the problem from both biomedical and psychological points of view. While preventive, medical action is the most important at this stage, emergency psychological crisis interventions for people affected by COVID-19 are also critical. This includes direct interventions for patients, and indirect for relatives, caregivers, and health care professionals.

Having experienced in China, clinical institutions and universities internationally have opened online platforms to provide psychological counseling services for affected people. Nevertheless, some research has underlined that the mental health of COVID-19 patients (including confirmed patients, patients with suspected infection, quarantined family members, and health care workers) has been poorly considered and handled. Moreover, in order to develop psychological interventions for all or specific (e.g., more vulnerable) groups, important issues to address include the adverse psychological impacts and psychopathological symptoms in the general population during the pandemic. The exact nature of the risks to worker well-being varies according to personal circumstances and work arrangements. It is important for employers and policy makers to recognize the spectrum of stressors that workers face during novel pandemic. Some have had to care for or have lost loved ones. Economic insecurity is affecting the millions who have lost their jobs or have seen their income decrease

drastically due to reduced work hours or demand for their services. And those whose jobs are temporarily discontinued may worry about being laid-off and not re-hired, which further impacts emotional health [1, 2]. Physical distancing while working at home and avoiding in-person meetings or social gatherings can help reduce disease transmission – but also affects access to social support and can result in feelings of isolation and stress as well [3].

In addition to above mentioned context, it is viewed by Van Bavel JJ, et al, [3] and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [4] that experiencing an infectious disease outbreak can cause fear, anxiety, and stress. Along with overwhelming uncertainty and new behavioral 'norms' (e.g., cloth face covering or mask wearing, physical distancing), the COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we meet our daily needs, how we socially interact, and whether, how, and where we work [3, 5]. Millions of workers have lost their jobs [6]. Some workers have continued to report to a physical workplace, while others have transitioned to full-time tele - work, and for many, the demands of work have changed or intensified. The nature of each situation is unique, but undoubtedly some of these changes are contributing to increasing levels of economic insecurity and occupational stress [5, 7].

Thus, the main goal of this research endeavor is to study the job stress during COVID – 19 pandemic among teaching and non – teaching employees working in different constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga. It is important to mention here that as per the guidelines of Govt. of Bihar 50% of the employees started their work at workplace randomly at every alternate working days by taking precautions as per same guidelines of WHO and MHA (India). Hence, the novel investigations and theoretical perspectives on how people are psychologically affected by and coping with job stress while working during COVID-19 pandemic. The present specific study aims include reducing the risk of developing distress, improving well-being, as well as promoting preventive behaviors. Further, this piece of research work aims to offer governments and policymaker's evidence-based strategies to improve public and clinical intervention systems. Finally, we aim to elucidate strategies to effectively manage job stress in the times of COVID-19 pandemic.

In the present novel COVID – 19 pandemic stresses has become a part of our life, thus, the present era is considered as the era of COVID – 19 pandemic stresses and consequently these days research interest in job stress, coping and health grown considerably. It is because of the fact that job related stress is inevitable in working life today. It occurs whenever a person has inadequate stress management and need frustrating work environment. It is indeed that in many job situations, particularly in human services, high levels of stress are an integral and largely unavoidable component of the work [8]. The literature on occupational stress has revealed many different classes of job related stressors and related them to such issues as job satisfaction and worker productivity [9].

'Job life' in the present day world especially during COVID – 19 pandemic has become probably the most significant aspect of one's life because people keep themselves engaged in some job where they spend more time than in any activity but sleeping. Those who are working in any industry or organization may develop apprehensions and vague as a result of various unpleasant stressful and threatening work situations. Therefore, the phenomenon of stress, in general, and job stress in particular, is more important to be studied, especially in the times of COVID – 19 outbreaks to identify stressors.

The term 'Stress' emanated from Latin literature. It was first used in English during 17th century. The term means distress, oppressions, and hardships. During the 18th and 19th century the meaning of stress shifted to natural sciences and engineering to represent force, pressure or strain, and or strong influence acting on a physical object or person which an individual resists in an attempt to maintain his original state. Bridge Water and Sherwood [10] have indicated in the Columbia Encyclopedia, stress is the internal force exerted by one part of a body upon the adjoining part, while strain is the deformation or change in dimension occasioned by stress. When body is subjected to pull it is said to be under tension, and when it is being pushed, i.e., is supporting a weight, it is under compressive stress. Sharing stress results from a force tending to make part of the body or one side of a plane slide past the other. Tensional stress occurs when external forces tend to twist a body around an axis.

Change in work life during COVID – 19 pandemic causes stress. Hence, nowadays, everyone seems to be talking about stress which is leading fear, insecurity, anxiety and mental health problems. We also hear it not only in daily conversation but also through television, radio, the news papers, national and international Webinar, stress centers, and university courses also devoted to the topic. Remarkably, few people define the concept the same way and hardly bother to attempt for a clear-cut definition. In general, stress occurs when biological and physiological needs, as well as external demands and pressures are greater than the ability of the individual to adapt. According to Basowitz, *et al.* [11] stressful situations do not always produce responses in individuals. In the light of this view Panchanathan and Shanmugaganesan [12] have inferred that stress is a reaction to something that is happening to an individual. Moreover, it is one's way of coping with environment and threatening situations that he faces daily.

Selye [13] in his pioneering work used the concept of stress in a manner relevant in social sciences. Selye expounded his biological concept of stress as the 'General Adaptation Syndrome" (GAS):- a three phase response to stress that begins with an alarm, continues with resistance, and terminates with exhaustion. This three phase response to stress incorporates the orchestrated set of physical and chemical changes which prepare an individual to fight or flee. This fight or flight label grows out of an evolutionary analysis of the origins of the stress response when our cave dwelling ancestors had only two options for dealing with the stress or "fight or flight response". The major concerns of our ancestors were found protecting themselves from environmental hazards and wild animals. It is a centuries old programmed-response to threat that is a master piece of survival engineering, and yet is tragically flawed in the sense that while the human nervous system is still responding the same way to environmental stressors, the stressors are not the same and the environment is radically different. In the present pandemic of COVID - 19 worlds abounds with uncertainties, which include natural disaster as well as unpredictable events and incidents.

It has been, in all times, a universal truth that the world is changing which is very much evident in the present era. Thus, the change and its effects have become the dominant features as the various authors have written on the Age of discontinuity [14], the Age of Uncertainty [15] and the Age of Anxiety [16]. However, the change is a continuous process which in itself is a great stressor in human life. In view of Lazarus [17] stress is a universal human and animal phenomenon. A review of definition on stress reveals that stress has been one of the important aspects that everyone has experienced but few could define, Lazarus stated that stress results in intense and distressing experience that appears to have tremendous influence on behavior.

Thus, stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confirmed with an opportunity, demands or resources related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important [18]. Most of the studies demonstrated the effects of stressors in relation to job anxiety and satisfaction [19, 20]. Although, it is often observed that excessive workload, feeling, undervalued and communication issues are common and bullying some sources of stress in the time of COVID – 19 pandemic.

Objective of the present study

Various studies on job / occupational stress and its stressors in relation to different psycho- social and organizational aspects have been studied [21-26] but the present investigation during novel COVID – 19 pandemic is of utmost value and it is because of the fact that the proposed phenomenon has still not been studied in relation to job stress with special reference to employees working in constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University (LNMU), India. Thus, the present study was undertaken with the broad objectives to see the significance of difference between teaching and non-teaching employees working in constituent colleges of LNMU, India in terms of their perceived job stress and its stressors. No doubt, the present study will fill the void of knowledge in the area chosen by present investigators and the whole study will help in making congenial environment to stress free life during and after novel COVID – 19 pandemic.

HYPOTHESES

On the basis of broad objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be no significance of difference between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees working in different constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, India with regard to the job stress during COVID – 19 pandemic.
2. None of the dimensions of job / occupational stress will predict employees' perceived reactions on job stress in the time of COVID – 19 outbreaks.
3. Teaching employees will have higher degree of occupational stress than Non-teaching employees working in constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, India during COVID outbreaks.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

During the period of COVID – 19, data collection is not an easy job but we had tried to contact the subjects to get information online and most of the respondents agreed to participate in the present inquiry. For the present piece of research work, due to the hardship, total sample consisted of one hundred fifty employees only (N=150) those who were working in constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga and total sample comprises teaching (n=75) and non-teaching (n=75), randomly selected by contacting on Mobile, WhatsApp, facebook and Google mail, etc. Total subjects' age were ranged between 35 to 61years.

Tools Used

Occupational stress index

For measuring levels of job stress and its dimensions or stressors, an occupational stress index, developed by Srivastava and Singh [27] was used. Index consisted of 46 items covering 12 dimensions of occupational stress. These dimensions have been stated by the authors as sub-scales (or occupational stressors) are - (1) role overload, (2) role ambiguity, (3) role conflict, (4) unreasonable group and political pressures, (5) responsibility for persons, (6) under participation, (7) powerlessness, (8) poor peer-relations, (9) intrinsic impoverishment , (10) low status, (11) strenuous working conditions, and (12) un profitability. Covering above stated 12 – sub-dimensions as stressors , in all,

occupational stress index consisted of 46 items as stated above which had to be rated on a 5-point scale "ranging from" strongly agree to strongly disagree out of 46 items, 28 are true-keyed items and the remaining 18 items are false-keyed items . The reported split-half reliability of the scale is .94; hence, it confirms the efficacy of the scale. The brief description of the stressors of occupational stress used by the present investigator in the context of present study is stated below:

Role Overload: A state in which the work responsibility given to a person needs more time and resources than is available to him.

Role Ambiguity: A state in which the person has inadequate information to perform his role (information about work objectives, scope and responsibility of the job, expectation of significant others and scope of jurisdiction and authorities.

Role Conflict: A situation where the demands made on a person are contradictory or are in conflict with his own expectations and working style.

Unreasonable Group and Political Pressure: A situation in which one is required to take a lot of decisions against his will or against formal rules and procedures under pressure.

Responsibility for Persons: A person has the responsibility for the work, productivity and development of many employees.

Under participation: Lack of one's influence on decision making process of the organization

Powerlessness: A situation in which authority given does not commensurate with the responsibilities of the Job.

Poor Peer-Relations: A situation in which relationships coworkers are characterized by low trust, low supportiveness and low interest in listening to and trying to deal with the problems confronting the other .

Intrinsic Impoverishment: Lack of opportunity to realize one's potential abilities and develop one's aptitude.

Low Status: A state of insignificance in the organizational network as well as in the social system.

Strenuous Working Conditions: Lack of comfort and safety on the job.

Unprofitability: Poor compensation and reward for the work done.

Biographical information blank (bib)

For taping information regarding the respondents' biographies, a 'Biographical Information Blank' (BIB) was also prepared that included age, marital status, salary (basic and gross), qualification, designation, department, total experience (in years), present experience (in years) and number of dependents and the respondents were requested to furnish these information.

Procedure

The above two test materials viz., job / occupational stress index and, biographical information blank were in printed form and were administered individually online and were provided to all the employees (teaching and non – teaching) working in different constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, India. All the employees were assured by taking them in to confidence that provided information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Having collected the responses to the items of the scales, they were scored according to the procedure and the individual scores were obtained. Finally scores were given statistical treatment and presented in tables. The obtained results were discussed and the formulated hypotheses were tested.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table- 1 Showing Significant Difference between Teaching and Non – Teaching Employees Working in Constituent Colleges of L. N. Mithila University on their Degree of Perceived Reactions on Total Occupational Stress during COVID – 19 Pandemic

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Teaching Employees	75	110.67	30.07	2.48*	0.05*
Non – Teaching Employees	75	123.65	33.6		

* Indicates significant at 0.05 level.

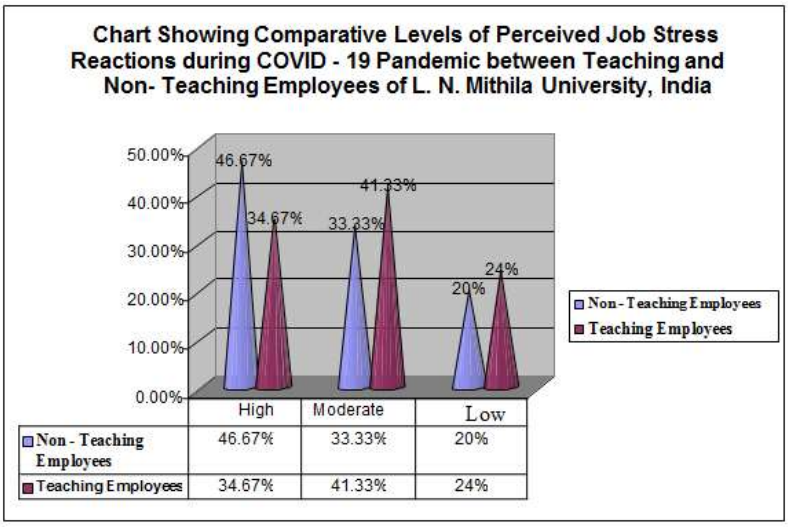
In quest of presenting the results obtained in terms of perceived job stress table-1 reveals the clear cut picture regarding the significance of difference between the group of teaching and non – teaching employees working in different constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, India as t- value 2.48 has been found significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence the proposed hypothesis i.e. there will be no significance of difference between the group of teaching and non – teaching in terms of their

perceived job stress during the COVID – 19 pandemic stands rejected. It can also be observed from the table – 1 that teaching group during COVID – 19 pandemic has been found to have less job stress in comparison to their non-teaching group which is witnessed from the mean values i.e. X = 110.67 and X = 123.65 respectively. The present trends of results seems to be logical in the sense that teaching group are more aware about the consequences of COVID – 19 and what types of precautions should be taken during COVID – 19 pandemic . It is because of the fact that they are all getting higher salary benefits from their employer even during the period of pandemic. Although, non – teaching group are also getting as per their salary structure but they are afraid and feel anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental health problems that's why they had shown higher degree of job stress. Moreover, teaching group of employees reported during the present enquiry about the job stress without having any feeling of shyness and worthiness that stress is not the matter that can be managed while doing work from home but regular work from home is not the good sign which leads uncomfirtability and later on it may turn in to mental health problems. Thus, the formulated hypothesis i.e. teaching employees will have higher degree of occupational stress than non-teaching employees working in constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University, India, stands rejected. The present findings support the studies which has been conducted recently on different psychological dimensions, viz., stress, anxiety and mental health during COVID – 19 pandemic by Wang, *et al.* [28]; Sahu P. [29]; and Shigemura J. *et al.* [30], as they viewed that the current COVID – 19 outbreak has prompted most countries, hence, social distancing measures as a way to control the spread of the virus. However, the current pandemic has already shown significant psychological symptoms related to anxiety, stress and depression. Moreover, the development of new guidelines for counseling , psychological interventions online or those designed for specific groups such as health workers or older adults be identified for giving necessary measures in this situation [11, 6, 31].

Table-2: Showing Comparative Levels of Perceived Occupational Stress Reactions Between the Group of Non-Teaching and Teaching Working in Constituent Colleges of L. N. Mithila University Employees during COVID – 19 Pandemic

Levels	Non-Teaching		Teaching	
	n=75	Percentage	n=75	Percentage
High	35	46.67 %	26	34.67 %
Moderate	25	33.33 %	31	41.33 %
Low	15	20.00 %	18	24.00 %

Extending the table -1 of the results, table – 2 highlights the percentages of teaching and non - teaching's perceived reactions on job stress. It is witnessed from the table - 1 that 34.67 percent of teaching employees have shown higher degree of perceived reactions on job stress in comparison to non – teaching employees who reported 46.67 percent which is higher than teaching employees. While 41.33 percent of teaching employees have indicated moderate level of perceived reactions to job stress, 33.33 percent of non – teaching employees have shown moderate level of perceived reactions on job stress in comparison to teaching employees which is comparatively low when compared to teaching employees i.e. 41.33 percent. Moreover, 24 percent of teaching employees indicated low level of job stress in comparison to non – teaching employees i.e. 20 percent which is relatively lower than teaching group of employees. The above results mentioned can also be observed by the chart as given below:



Elaborating the table -1& 2, table – 3 depicts the clear picture pertaining to significance of difference between the groups of teaching and non-teaching employees working in different constituent colleges of L.N. Mithila University (LNMU), Darbhanga in terms of the certain dimensions of job stress reactions. Thus, in quest of obtaining the results regarding the study of job stressors among the teaching and non-teaching employees working in different constituent colleges of L. N. Mithila University (LNMU), India table – 3 revealed that only seven dimensions out of twelve dimensions of job stress as stressors namely 'role overload', 'role ambiguity', 'role conflict', 'unreasonable group and political pressure',

Table-3 Showing Means, SDs and t-values on different dimensions of Occupational Stress Index (OSI) between the group of Non-Teaching and Teaching Employees Working in Different Constituent Colleges of L.N. Mithila University, India

Sl. No.	Job Stress and its stressors / Dimensions	Non-Teaching (n=75)		Teaching (n=75)		t-values
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Role overload	17.23	4.67	14.38	3.17	4.38*
2	Role ambiguity	11.12	2.04	9.21	2.86	2.90*
3	Role conflict	8.28	2.73	7.01	2.71	6.68*
4	Unreasonable group and political pressure	8.02	2.64	6.16	2.13	3.71*
5	Responsibility for persons	10.52	3.12	8.24	2.14	5.30*
6	Under participation	11.35	2.39	10.27	2.37	2.84*
7	Powerlessness	7.13	2.23	7.41	2.30	0.75^{NS}
8	Poor peer-relations	8.12	2.13	8.14	2.12	0.06^{NS}
9	Intrinsic impoverishment	11.27	2.74	11.34	2.76	0.15^{NS}
10	Low status	8.23	2.31	8.22	2.28	0.03^{NS}
11	Strenuous working conditions	17.32	4.59	15.12	3.11	3.44*
12	Unprofitability	5.06	2.01	5.03	2.12	0.09^{NS}

* Indicates significance level at .01 Level, NS indicates not significant

'Responsibility for persons', under participation and 'strenuous working conditions' have been found significant statistically as obtained t-values are 4.38, 2.90, 6.68, 3.71, 5.30, 2.84 and 3.44 respectively between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees working in LNMU. Hence, the hypothesis formulated that none of the dimensions of job stress will predict as the significant difference between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees working in constituent colleges LNMU stand rejected. Moreover, the formulated hypothesis i.e. there will not be significant difference between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees in terms of total job stress also stands rejected as the t – value 2.48 has been found statistically significant at .05 level of confidence which can be observed from the table – 1.

The results presented above on the basis of analyses seem to be logical that higher stress was found among non-teaching employees of L. N. Mithila University during the COVID – 19 pandemic (Mean value = 123.65 with an SD 33.6) as compared to teaching group of employees (mean value=110.67 with an SD 30.07) which can be observed from the table – 1and 2. The present trend of results can be interpreted in the sense that non-teaching's occupations are more likely to suffer from job stress and its countering stressors during the COVID – 19 pandemic than other professional groups i.e. teaching employees group although, teaching employees group have more responsibility for students, institutions / organizations and society as well. It is because of these reasons role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation and strenuous working conditions have emerged as the significant predictors for the present piece of research endeavor. It is generally observed that job / occupational stress is especially common and severe among employees either non-teaching or teaching who deliver directs care and assistance to emotionally distress in public institutions or agencies.

Extending the discussion, it is important to mention that the present novel COVID - 19 eras is the era of stress. As we are aware that the changes if comes within the working environment causes stress. Stress is prevalent in the life and at the workplace as well but still both the group of employees working in L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga have a perceived control, which is a powerful mediator of stress providing a sense of being able to cope effectively and predict events. They believe that outcomes in a particular COVID -19 outbreaks are contingent upon their own behavior, showing that they can control the events/happenings they experience in their not only in lives but in professions with whom they are associated. In today's world, changes and challenges are inevitable. This notable difference is that they can handle the stress during this COVID – 19 pandemic because of their capacity to take control over the factors that cause stress. It is crystal clear that challenge is an orientation that welcomes changes as a natural part of life as a source of opportunity rather as a great showing that

both the group of employees working in L. N. Mithila University view life changes during and after COVID – 19 outbreaks as an exciting challenges for further growth and developing nation at large.

Discussing the results obtained with regard to the non-teaching group of L.N. Mithila University (L.N.M.U), Darbhanga, it is important to point out that this group of employees has completely shown higher degree of stress on occupational stress index than their teaching group which can be observed from the table- 1 & 2. In obtaining such a discrepancy of results, it is significant to throw light on some of the observations, experienced by the present investigators, i.e. lack of organizational resources such as delay in salary, inadequate amount of salary, political uncertainty prevailing in the L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga regarding the policies, lack of proper care and cooperation from the side of authority in general and state government in particular and lack of other benefits, etc. these are basic reasons as have been observed during COVID – 19 pandemic by which non-teaching group especially of L.N. Mithila University and its constituent colleges are being affected. Non-teaching group also reported that they feel lack of social support and unhappiness of their family members due to inevitable delay in payment along with all perks and benefits, although, they are ready to contribute a lot to the betterment of higher education in all respect to uplift hygienic society.

In addition to the above discussion, it is important to mention here that to attain this sense of achievement non-teaching employees of L.N. Mithila University willingly sacrifice leisure, family life, love and that comfortable social preservative, the conventions. Therefore, it is indeed that no significant differences have been found between the group of non-teaching and teaching employees in terms of total occupational stress especially in LNMU from where the present piece of research work has been carried out.

CONCLUSIONS

Having discussed the obtained results in detail the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Seven dimensions/stressors of Job Stress out of twelve dimensions namely, "Role Overload", "Role Ambiguity", "Role conflict", Unreasonable group and political pressure", "Responsibility for Persons", "Under participation" and "Strenuous Working Conditions" have been found significant predictor between the group of Teaching and Non-Teaching employees working in constituent colleges of L.N. Mithila University, India
2. Significance of difference has been found between the group of teaching and non-teaching employees in terms of total occupational stress.
3. Non-teaching employees are more prone to occupational stress as they scored higher degree of "mean" in comparison to teaching employees hence, significance of difference has been found between the group (table- 1& 2)
4. Observations have revealed the fact that both the group of employees working in L.N. Mithila University experienced and perceived stress more or less equally. It is because of that individuals vary greatly in their personality and the capacity to undergo stressful situations especially in the time of COVID – 19 outbreaks, and there is, indisputably, self-selection in the kinds of jobs and stressors that individuals choose. It is important to advocate that sources of stress may vary from individual to individual, providing a solution for one individual may create stress for another. For instance, an example can be cited that if the organization provides more opportunity for influencing over the work process, the change in control may be experienced positively by some but negatively by others. A partial solution to this problem may involve intervening with group of employees that are formed based on person-environment relationships, and which contribute to the reduction of stress.
5. It is generally believed during COVID – 19 pandemic talking with a trusted friend or relative and keeping up social connections is important as many researchers reported. Furthermore, caring for family and loved ones is also important, but everyone should also take care of their own mental health. Keeping in touch of friends and family with phone calls and video chats can also help to get better stress and anxiety. It is also important to take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news about the pandemic on television and social media.
6. Improving physical and mental fitness is important in everyday of life even in the times of COVID – 19, hence, it is suggested that deep breathing exercises, daily physical exercise, a balanced diet and good sleep habits can go a long way in helping many to cope with the mental stress of the pandemic.

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