

STRESSORS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF FACULTY, IN SELECTED STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN REGION III, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to assess the perception of the faculty towards the stressors and the stress coping mechanisms. The descriptive method of research was used with the questionnaire as the main instrument. Informal interviews were conducted to validate the data gathered. A total of two hundred twenty-eight (228) faculty members from seven (7) state universities and colleges in Region III served as respondents. The 5-point Likert-type scale was used to describe the perception of the respondents.

A typical faculty is a female, 30.77 years old, married, either a baccalaureate degree holder or a baccalaureate degree holder with MA/MS units, has been in the service for 17.69 years with an average monthly income of Php 13,981.96.

The faculty perceived that role ambiguity, role conflict and physical environment seldom (2.33) contribute to stress. The faculty moderately agree (3.39) on the different stressors.

There is no significant difference in the perception of the faculty towards the coping mechanisms. There is no significant difference in the perception on the role conflict as source of stress as to age, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, and monthly income of the faculty. There is a significant difference in the perception on the role ambiguity and physical environment as sources of stress as to the age of the faculty. There is no significant difference in the perception on the coping mechanisms when grouped according to sex, age, educational attainment, length of service, and monthly income of the faculty.

This study has suggested that task assignments and responsibilities should be well defined. A health maintenance program and a social support system to deal with stress should be provided. Coaching and mentoring should be a part of the social support system. Work schedules should be planned. The higher authorities should provide a nurturing environment that builds self-esteem and makes employees less susceptible to stress. The university should organize workshops and activities on stress management. Furthermore, another related study should be conducted to explore the stress level and the coping mechanisms of the faculty.

KEYWORDS: *Stressors, Coping Mechanisms, Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, Physical Environment*

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INTRODUCTION

An organization like the university operates on a wide range of disciplines and functions. The faculty members are expected to perform other roles in addition to the traditional roles of teaching and research. A number of changes in the higher education sector have changed the conditions under which the faculty or university administrator performs the job (Teichler, 2007). In carrying out their functions at work, stress among faculty and administrators is inevitable in many state universities and colleges in the country as a result of the interactions of people or groups with different expectations, interests, backgrounds, and roles in the society. Work-related stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the demands of the job and the resources and capabilities of the individual worker to meet those demands (Blaug, Kenyon, & Lekhi, 2007). If left unchecked and unmanaged, stress will undermine the quality, productivity and creativity of employees' work, and employees' well-being (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001).

Because stress is unavoidable, natural and normal part of any complex organization like the university, the study on the Stressors and Coping Mechanisms of Faculty in Selected State Universities and Colleges in Region III was conducted to describe the perception of the faculty on role conflict, role ambiguity, and physical environment as sources of stress, and on the coping mechanisms.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study answered the following questions:

- What is the profile of the faculty in terms of: (1.1) Age; (1.2) Sex; (1.3) Civil status; (1.4) Highest educational attainment; (1.5) Length of service; and (1.6) Monthly family income?
- How may the perception of the faculty be described in terms of the following stressors: (2.1) Role conflict; (2.2) Role ambiguity; and (2.3) Physical environment?
- How may the perception of the faculty be described towards the following coping mechanisms: (3.1) Enhancing spirituality; (3.2) Enhancing self-awareness; (3.3) Stress debriefing; (3.4) Scheduling; (3.5) Socializing; (3.6) Speaking with others; (3.7) Smiling with others; (3.8) Listening to sound and music; (3.9) Enjoying siesta; (3.10) Stretching; and (3.11) Engaging in sports?
- Is there a significant difference in the perception of the faculty on the sources of stress when grouped according to the profile variables?
- Is there a significant difference in the perception of the faculty on the coping mechanisms when grouped according to the profile variables?

NULL HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested: (1) There is no significant difference in the perception of the faculty on the sources of stress when grouped according to the profile variables; (2) There is no significant difference in the perception of the faculty on the stress management practices when grouped according to the profile variables.

METHODOLOGY

The study followed the descriptive design, and was conducted in seven state colleges and universities in Region III namely: (1) Aurora State College of Technology (ASCOT), Baler, Aurora; (2) Bataan Polytechnic State College (BPSC), Balanga, Bataan; (3) Bulacan State University (BSU), Malolos City, Bulacan; (4) Don Honorio Ventura College of Arts and Trades (DHVCAT), San Fernando, Pampanga; (5) Nueva Ecija State University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Cabanatuan City; (6) Ramon Magsaysay Technological University (RMTU), Iba, Zambales; and (7) Tarlac State University (TSU), Tarlac City, Tarlac. A total of two hundred and twenty-eight (228) faculty members included as respondents, computed as ten percent of the group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Profile of the Faculty

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the faculty and administrators in selected state colleges and universities in Region III

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Faculty in Selected State Colleges and Universities in Region III

| | Faculty | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Age Group (Years) | | |
| 45 and above | 11 | 4.82 |
| 40-44 | 18 | 7.89 |
| 35-39 | 44 | 19.30 |
| 30-34 | 52 | 22.81 |
| 25-29 | 37 | 16.23 |
| Total | 228 | 100.00 |
| Mean Age (Years) | 30.77 | |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 98 | 42.98 |
| Female | 130 | 57.02 |
| Total | 228 | 100.00 |
| Civil Status | | |
| Single | 52 | 22.81 |
| Married | 168 | 73.68 |
| Widow | 7 | 3.07 |
| Separated | 1 | 0.44 |
| Total | 228 | 100.00 |
| Highest Educational Attainment | | |
| Doctoral Degree Holder | 10 | 4.39 |
| MA/MS Degree Holder with Doctorial units | 33 | 14.47 |
| Baccalaureate Degree Holder with MA/MS units | 99 | 43.42 |
| Baccalaureate Degree Holder | 86 | 37.72 |
| Total | 228 | 100.00 |
| Length of Service (Years) | | |
| 31 and above | 15 | 6.58 |
| 26 – 30 years | 18 | 7.89 |
| 21 – 25 years | 29 | 12.72 |
| 16 – 20 years | 42 | 18.42 |
| 15 and below | 124 | 54.39 |
| Total | 228 | 100.00 |
| Mean Length of Service (Years) | 17.69 | |
| Monthly Income (Php) | | |
| 31,000 and above | 1 | 0.44 |

| | Faculty | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Age Group (Years) | | |
| 26,000 to 30,999 | 2 | 0.88 |
| 21,000 to 25,999 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 16,000 to 20,999 | 26 | 11.40 |
| 11,000 to 15,999 | 185 | 81.14 |
| 10,999 and below | 14 | 6.14 |
| Total | 228 | 100.00 |
| Mean Monthly Income (Php) | 13981.96 | |

Most of the two hundred twenty-eight faculty respondents (66 or 28.95 %) belong to the age group 24 and below with 30.77 years as mean age. In terms of sex, 130 (57.02 %) are female and majority (168 or 73.68 %) are married. Only 99 (43.42 %) have completed the Baccalaureate degree with MA/MS units. In terms of length of service, 124 (54.39 %) have rendered up to 15 years of service, with a mean of 17.69 years. The monthly income of 185 (81.14 %) faculty ranged from Php 11,000-15,999, with a mean of Php 13,981.96.

The data indicate that there were more female than male faculty members. The faculty in the state universities and colleges possessed the minimum educational qualifications as required in the qualifications standards set by the Civil Service Commission and other government accrediting agencies.

Perception of the Faculty on the Sources of Stress

The data on the perception of the faculty on the sources of stress is presented in Table 2. Two of the aspects of role conflict namely having a boss who keeps assigning different tasks allowing too little time to complete them, and receiving too many incomplete pressures from many people were seldom the sources of stress (both rated 2.40, rank 1.5th). The faculty perceived that role conflict was seldom the source of stress (2.33).

Table 2: Perception of the Faculty on the Sources of Stress in Selected State Universities and Colleges in Region III

| | Weighted Mean | Qualitative Interpretation | Rank |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Role Conflict | | | |
| Feeling you must do things you personally feel to be unethical. | 2.18 | Seldom | 3 rd |
| Having a boss who keeps assigning different tasks allowing too little time to complete them. | 2.40 | Seldom | 1.5 th |
| Receiving too many incomplete pressures from many people. | 2.40 | Seldom | 1.5 th |
| Overall Mean | 2.33 | Seldom | |
| Role Ambiguity | | | |
| Not knowing what kind of people you work with. | 2.49 | Seldom | 2 nd |
| Being unclear about how you are to perform the task in your job | 2.48 | Seldom | 3 rd |
| Not knowing how your superior evaluates your performance | 2.46 | Seldom | 4 th |
| Work overload or assigning new schedule of classes. | 2.95 | Sometimes | 1 st |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.60 | Seldom | |
| Physical Environment | | | |
| Feeling too hot or too cold | 2.43 | Seldom | 2 nd |
| Thinking there is a chance of being seriously injured on the job. | 2.47 | Seldom | 1 st |
| Thinking there is real possibility of getting some disease from the job. | 2.39 | Seldom | 3 rd |
| Overall Weighted Mean | 2.43 | Seldom | |

Among the aspects on role ambiguity, it was perceived that the work overload or assigning new schedule of classes (with a rating of 2.95, rank 1st) was sometimes the source of stress. The faculty perceived that role ambiguity was

seldom the source of stress (2.60). Among the physical environment components, thinking there is a chance of being seriously injured was perceived to be seldom the source of stress with a rating of 2.47. It was perceived that the physical environment was seldom the source of stress (2.43).

In the past, the faculty members were only responsible for transmitting knowledge and information to students. At present, the faculty member's role has changed (Daun, 2004). The demands and the need to handle demands and pressures from society, media, pupils, parents, university officials, and colleagues, may cause role conflict for the faculty. The constant change in educational policies is also a major source of stress, as it requires the faculty to acquire new skills and responsibilities at an unrealistic speed (Dollard, Winefield & Winefield, 2003).

Perception on the Coping Mechanisms of the Faculty

The data on the perception of the faculty on the stress management strategies across eleven aspects is presented in Table 4. Scheduling, which ranked first (4.43), followed by stress debriefing (4.32, rank 2nd), and listening to sound and music (4.26, 3rd) were among the stress +management strategies which the faculty described to be in the strongly agree category. Smiling with others was ranked 11th (2.25) and was described by the faculty to be in the disagree category. The faculty moderately agreed, on the identified stress coping mechanisms.

Many workers express that their job is a prominent source of stress in their life but reduced workload, improved management and supervision, better pay, benefits, and vacation times can reduce the stress among employees ((Fredrickson, 2004). Promoting activities like exercise, relaxation activities, and other healthy practices can contribute significantly to improved work climate and personal stress management through effective coping (Khoshaba & Maddi, 2005).

Table 4: Perception on the Coping Mechanisms among Faculty of Selected State Universities and Colleges in Region III

| Stress Management Strategies | | Faculty | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| | | Weighted Mean | Qualitative Interpretation | Rank |
| 1 | Enhancing Spiritually | 3.51 | Agree | 6 th |
| 2 | Enhancing Self-awareness | 4.00 | Agree | 4 th |
| 3 | Stress Debriefing | 4.32 | Strongly Agree | 2 nd |
| 4 | Scheduling | 4.43 | Strongly Agree | 1 st |
| 5 | Socializing | 2.82 | Moderately Agree | 8 th |
| 6 | Speaking with others | 2.41 | Disagree | 10 th |
| 7 | Smiling with others | 2.25 | Disagree | 11 th |
| 8 | Listening to Sound and Music | 4.26 | Strongly Agree | 3 rd |
| 9 | Enjoying Siesta | 3.68 | Agree | 5 th |
| 10 | Stretching | 2.88 | Moderately Agree | 7 th |
| 11 | Engaging in Sports | 2.69 | Moderately Agree | 9 th |
| Overall Mean | | 3.39 | Moderately Agree | |

Analysis of Variance on the Perception of the Faculty on the Sources of Stress as Affected by the Profile Variables

The summary of the analysis of variance on the perception of the faculty on the sources of stress as affected by the profile variables is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance on the Perception of the Faculty on the Sources of Stress as Affected by the Profile Variables

| Profile Variable of the Faculty | Degree of Freedom | | Role Conflict | | | Role Ambiguity | | | Physical Environment | | F critical $\alpha=0.05$ | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|--------|----------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------|-----------------------------|------|
| | BG ^a | WG ^b | Mean Square | | F comp | Mean Square | | F comp | Mean Square | | | |
| | | | BG | WG | BG | WG | BG | WG | | | | |
| Age | 5 | 222 | 0.03 | 0.001 | 23.91* | 0.17 | 0.003 | 57.18* | 0.04 | 0.001 | 66.60* | 2.12 |
| Civil status | 3 | 224 | 0.02 | 0.003 | 8.71* | 0.03 | 0.001 | 29.87* | 0.02 | 0.001 | 40.21* | 2.58 |
| Highest Educational attainment | 3 | 224 | 0.01 | 0.001 | 11.49* | 0.03 | 0.003 | 9.88* | 0.02 | 0.001 | 40.73* | 2.58 |
| Length of service | 4 | 223 | 0.03 | 0.001 | 41.81* | 0.06 | 0.004 | 15.38* | 0.02 | 0.000 | 43.36* | 2.34 |
| Monthly income | 5 | 222 | 0.01 | 0.001 | 7.01* | 0.02 | 0.002 | 11.58* | 0.03 | 0.001 | 30.27* | 2.12 |

*- significant; ^a-between groups; ^b-within groups

There is a significant difference in the perception on role conflict as to age (23.91>2.12), civil status (8.71>2.58), highest educational attainment (11.49>2.58), length of service (41.81>2.34), and monthly income (7.01>2.12). The age (57.18>2.12), civil status (29.87>2.58), highest educational attainment (9.88>2.58), length of service (15.38>2.34), and monthly income (11.58>2.12) caused a significant difference in the perception of the faculty on role ambiguity. There is significant difference in the perception on physical environment as to age (66.60>2.12), civil status (40.21>2.58), highest educational attainment (40.73>2.58), length of service (43.36>2.34), and monthly income (30.27>2.12).

Age can influence the type of workplace stress experienced, but it tends to be specific to certain aspects of the job. With respect to work experience, research has shown that people with more working experience tend to cope or manage stress well compared to novices on the job (Wichert, 2002).

Analysis of Variance on the Perception of the Faculty

The summary of the analysis of variance on the perception of the faculty on the coping mechanisms as affected by the profile variables is presented in Table 6. There is significant difference in the perception of the faculty on coping mechanisms as to civil status (35.09>2.70), highest educational attainment (6.47>2.70), and length of service (7.25>2.46). Teachers have adopted a range of coping mechanisms most tend to be functional or active and some are dysfunctional or passive (i.e. self-distraction and use of humor) (Khan, Khan, & Khan, 2005).

Table 6: Analysis of Variance on the Perception on Stress Coping Mechanisms of Faculty According to the Profile Variables

| Profile Variables | Faculty | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Degree of Freedom | | Mean Square | | F Comp | F Critical $\alpha=0.05$ |
| | BG ^a | WG ^b | BG | WG | | |
| Age | 5 | 222 | 0.02 | 0.173 | 0.10 ^{ns} | 2.30 |
| Civil status | 3 | 224 | 2.42 | 0.069 | 35.09* | 2.70 |
| Highest educational attainment | 3 | 224 | 0.24 | 0.038 | 6.47* | 2.70 |
| Length of service | 4 | 223 | 0.90 | 0.124 | 7.25* | 2.46 |
| Monthly income | 5 | 222 | 0.04 | 0.062 | 0.71 ^{ns} | 2.30 |

*- significant; ns-not significant; ^a-between groups; ^b-within groups

CONCLUSIONS

The faculty in the selected State Universities and Colleges in Region III is a married, adult female, who has a baccalaureate degree with MA/MS units, has rendered more than a decade of service, and whose monthly income is not more than Php 15,000.00. The faculty perceived that stress is seldom caused by role conflict, role ambiguity, and the physical environment. There is a significant difference in the perception of the faculty on the coping mechanisms as to the civil status, highest educational attainment, and length of service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends:

- Task assignments and responsibilities should be well defined.
- A health maintenance program and a social support system to deal with stress should be provided for faculty welfare.
- Coaching and mentoring to faculty as part of social support system to deal with stress should be provided.
- Work schedules should be well planned.
- The higher authorities should provide nurturing environment that builds self-esteem and help them predisposed to stress.
- The university or the college should initiate activities and workshops in stress management.
- Another related study should be conducted to explore the stress level and the coping mechanisms of the faculty.

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