



An Analysis of Stress among Lecturers at the University of Danang, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Stress is inevitable in the modern life for people to make a living, however, prolonged stress will negatively affect their lives. This study, investigating impacts of stress on 986 university lecturers at The University of Danang, Viet Nam, used the PSS stress test to measure stress among participants. The results showed that there were a wide range of stressors for university lecturers, such as work-related problems, personal advancement, family relationships, work pressure, wages, and problems with friends. Our analysis showed that there were 176 lectures (39,9%) having signs of stress, of which 63 (15.1%) suffered high stress. Female lecturers suffered greater stress than their male colleagues. Based on our interview with those lecturers, we found that a better work policy such as increasing wages and reducing working hours can help reduce work-related stress. The paper highlighted the effects of stress on university lecturers' performance as well as proposing solutions to reduce stress among university lecturers in Viet Nam.

KEYWORDS: Stress Symptoms, Occupational Stress, Family Relationships, Work Pressure, University Lecturers.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is an essential condition in our life that motivates us to complete our work, satisfy our mental, physical, and physical life (Oloyede and Akinbile, 2010). This optimal level of stress is coined as Eustress (Kupriyanov & Zhdanov, 2014). However, if stress is prolonged, it will cause negative effects on people's life (Jeanne and Melinda, 2010). Therefore, a certain level of stress can help to increase productivity and increase performance, however, when prolonged, stress can harm individuals' quality of life significantly.

There are a variety of definitions of stress. From a species development perspective, Olivier et al. (2003) identified that stress is a response of both humans and animals to an emerging danger. According to the research team by Kikknos. (2007) and colleagues, stress is the limit of personal tolerance during the process of performing work and life tasks. Scott.,(2012) and Yusoff, et al., (2013) all said that stress has an excessive impact from the environment on people's mind, making them endure tiredly. Vietnamese researchers defined stress as a stressful neurological state, including such factors as physics, chemistry, and the reaction of an individual trying to adapt to a change or pressure whether internally or externally (Dang, 2004). Additionally, stress is the body's response to any request, pressure, or any

factor that threatens the healthy existence of humans physically and mentally (La et al., 2006). In addition, other authors (e.g., Pham, 2006; Nguyen, 2009) defined stress as a process including physiological, psychological, and behavioral responses of an individual when trying to adapt to changes or pressure internally or externally. These pressures are known as stressors.

Lecturer is one of the highly regarded professions in Viet Nam and around the world. While doing their job, lecturers also encounter certain pressures and stresses that affect their lives. Stress affects family life, teaching ability and lecturer-student relationships (Ihebereme, C. I., 2011). Recently, there have been some studies on stress in target groups such as primary school teachers (e.g., Trinh, T., 2014); university students (e.g., Nguyen, T., 2012); etc. yet, so far, the number of researches on faculty stress are limited, so we conducted this study to investigate stress among lecturers at the Danang University, thereby proposing stress reduction measures for lecturers.

Researching on characteristics and stress expressions of faculty lecturers, Kyriacou, C. and Sutcliff, J. (1978), Russel, J. (2000a). suggested that faculty lecturers' stress is expressed physically and emotionally as a response to job requirements

which are inconsistent with their abilities, resources, and needs. Colangelo., (2004) et al. observed that when lecturers experienced overload at work, they would feel anxious and their body would suffer from muscle tension. As a result, they need to relax intellectually and physically. Archibong et al., (2010) and Salami.,(2011) said that faculty lecturers’ stress comes from their efforts to satisfy their teaching job at a level too high compared to the required one. According to Masuku, S., & Muchemwa, S. (2015), in terms of expressions, lecturers’ stress is prolonged fatigue, affecting their health and emotion. Pigott, Teresa A. (1999) argued that there is a difference between male and female teachers’ work-related stress. In the same stressful situation, women are twice as likely to suffer from stress as men. A research on occupational stress by Yurtkorub, S. (2013) showed a link between work performance with emotional intelligence.

A research by Joseph, R. (2004) found that high expectations and aspirations to achieve job goals are causes of stress among teachers. Ihua-Jonathan, N. (2013) argued that routine tasks of lecturers namely resolving student disputes, timing, and other teaching-related activities, did add certain level of stress to these lecturers. Masuku, S., & Muchemwa, S. (2015) argued that faculty lecturers’ stress is a causal phenomenon, connecting the intrinsic of teaching and lecturers’ vulnerability which eventually causes stress among lecturers. Up to now, the current situation and causes of occupational stress among lecturers have still attracted researchers’ interest. Bui, V. (2019), show that there are 5 factor systems that make lecturers stressed: (1) factors related to oneself; (2) family involvement (spouse, children); (3) factors related to income, finance; (4) factors related to work; and (5) factors related to health.

Discussing stress reduction measures for lecturers, Matt, J. (2002) recommended such options as relaxing programs, working time changes, etc. Ihebereme, CI (2011) analyzed lecturers' situation in Nigeria and made 10 recommendations

to reduce faculty stress levels. Salami, S. O. (2011); Orluwere, G. W. (2013) recommended teachers not to fall into a state of exhaustion so that they can manage the stress that comes to themselves and avoid its consequences. Yoshitaka Konno (2016) studied supportive psychotherapy for stressful situations and proposed the application of Dousha-hou (Japan) therapy in stress reduction for them. A research on stress by Bui, V. (2019) also pointed out expressions and consequences of lecturers’s stress and proposed measures to help lecturers such as improving their mental life and improving their income.

Based on literature review, this study is aimed at analysing stress among lecturers in terms of levels, expressions, causes and proposing solutions to reduce stress. The research hypothesis is that university lecturers has a high degree of stress (1), and one of the causes of their stress is income and work pressure (2). We believe that it is possible to find ways to reduce the stress among lecturers by psychotherapy (3).

METHOD

Participants

A sample of 986 lecturers participated and completed the questionnaires. There were 452 male lecturers (accounted for 45.8%) and 534 female lecturers (accounted for 54.2%). The mean age of the sample was $M = 37.81$ years ($SD = 5.76$), ranging from 25 to 61 years of age.

Demographic characteristics

Demographic information of participants: Age: Under 30 years: 0.3%; 30-39 years: 70.7%; 40-49 years: 22%; 50-59 years: 3.3% and more than 60 years. Education status: Bachelor: 5.3%; Master: 60.1%; Doctor: 31.2% and Assoc. Professor/ Professor: 3.4%. Marital status: Single: 17.3%; Married: 82.7%.

Table 1. Describe lecturers’s stress research

	N	%		N	%
1.Occupational Stress			5. Incoms		
Low stress	243	24.7	<216,80\$	101	10.2
Moderate stress	583	59.1	217-433\$	821	83.3
High perceived stress	160	16.2	434-650\$	52	5.3
2.Gender			651-867\$	9	.9
Male	452	45.8	>867\$	3	.3
Woman	534	54.2	6. Education level		
3.Age			Bachelor	52	5.3
Under 30 years	30	3.0	Master	593	60.1
30-39 years	697	70.7	Doctor	307	31.1
40-49 years	217	22.0	Ass.Professor/ Professor	34	3.4
50-59 years	33	3.3	7. Workplace		
> 60 years	9	.9	Lecturers	498	50.5
4.Time for working			Departmental staff	393	39.9

<5 years	234	23.7	Managers	95	9.6
5-9 years	649	65.8	8.Marital status		
10-14 years	86	8.7	Single	171	17.3
15-19 years	14	1.4	Married	815	82.7
>20 years	3	.3	9.Children		
			Haven't baby	361	36.6
			Have children	625	63.4

Stress and the impacts of stress

We used the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10, Cohen et al., 1983) to measure participants' state of stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a classic stress assessment instrument. The tool, though originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for identifying how different situations affect feelings and perceived stress. The questions in this scale are about lecturers feelings and thoughts in the previous month. In each case, lecturers will be asked to indicate how often they felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions look similar, there are differences among them, and lecturers should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, we did not try to count up the number of times lecturers felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

The PSS-10 is a self-report question containing 10 items. The 10 items are rated on a 5-point scale from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). After reversing the scores for questions 4, 5, 7, and 8, we change the scores into: 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0. Then we add up the scores for each item to get a total number. Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.

- Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.
- Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.
- Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress.

We also designed a scale, which contains 28 items, with 5 factor systems: (1) factors related to oneself; (2) family involvement (spouse, children); (3) factors related to income, finance; (4) factors related to work; (5) factors related to health; to measure participants' overall stress level, stressors and impacts of stress on their well-being. Items were rated on a 4-point scale from 0 (stress free) to 3 (very stressful). The higher the point was, the more stressful the participant suffered.

Statistical planning

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 18.0 software. In this section of the study, we calculate the average score, the percentage, and analyze and compare the stress

level of the lecturers with each group (age / gender / education status, marital status; number of children; working time, etc.).

RESULTS

Stress situation of lecturers on PSS scale

The research results of 986 lecturers at the University of Da Nang by PSS test, with the reliability of Cronbach Alpha test of 0.84, showed that 59.1% teachers had moderate stress while 16.2% of them had high stress.

In terms of gender, among 160 lecturers under stress, there were 85 female lecturers (53.1%) and 75 male lecturers (46.9%). Thus, the rate of female stress is higher than that of men, which is consistent with previous domestic and foreign studies, in terms of gender, female suffered from more stress than male (Nguyen and all, 2011).

In terms of age, (we divided the 5-year level/group), the age group with the most stress is in the age group 30-39, accounting for 71.3%. Followed by the 40-49 years old, accounting for 22%. This showed that mid-career group is also the most stressful age. Mrs. P.S, Department of Preschool, said in our interview: "I think that 30-39 years old is the major working age in life, is the time to decide the future, so people must always try hard, do the most, so I suffer from stress the most".

From a marital perspective, the married group (125 lecturers) had a high-stress level of 78.1%, while the single group accounted for 21.9% (35 lecturers). In a group with children, the stress level is 53.1%; group without children accounts for only 46.9%.

Therefore, married people suffer more stress, but the group without children is more stressful. Mr. T.T.L said in an interview: "When a person is married, there are many things to worry about, like money, education, and relationships with the in-laws, etc. Married people must try dozens of times more than single ones. For example, getting married with no children is a big concern, and people with children also worry about childbearing, rearing, and education".

Regarding the number of years working at the University of Da Nang, those who work 1-5 years suffer the most stress, with 28.7%; followed by the group working from 5-10 years, accounting for 59.4%. The group with 15 years of work experience suffer the least stress, accounting for only 2.5%. Thus, it can be seen that the percentage of lecturers who feel stress is the highest in their first years of career.

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The number of people who work for longer periods of time is less stressful, especially those with over 20 years of work experience even seem to be stress-free. Explaining this, Mr. B.V, Faculty of Educational Psychology said: “The young people who just started their career as a lecturer have a lot of things to worry about, for example job stability, job hop, personal development, etc. ”

In terms of qualification level, the group of Master's degree holders is the most stressful, with 58.8%. The group of Phd-degree holders is ranked the second, accounting for 30%. The group with university degrees and Associate Professor/ Professor both have 4.4% of stress. Mrs. T.L.N, a lecturer with a Master’s degree, shared her thoughts in our interview: “My task now is to further my studies. For now, studying PhD abroad is not easy, but a PhD program in Viet Nam is not my preference. The school gives me only a few more years to complete my PhD program, I have family, children and other stuff to take care of, etc. I'm really stressed out”.

In terms of working positions, the group of lecturers are only performing the most stressful teaching tasks, with 55%. The group of lecturers cum stress department staff accounts for 35.6%; group of lecturers and stress management staff 9.4%.

Causes of lecturers’ stress

Survey results show that in the 5 groups of factors, factors related to family involvement (spouse, children) made lecturers stressed the most with 2.38. Among them, female lecturers suffered more stress than their male colleagues (with 2.40 and 2.37 respectively). Followed by factors related to oneself with 2.02. In this factor group, male lecturers felt more stressful than their female counterparts (with 2.03 and 2.01 respectively). Similarly, the factors related to work (averaging at 2.06) saw more male suffering from stress than female (2.09 and 2.04 respectively). Factors related to health and income, finance were ranked the 4th and 5th causes of stress among lecturers.

Table 2: Causes of stress among lecturers

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	Order
Stress level	Male	2.03	.468	.234	
	Famle	2.01	.452		
1. Factors related to oneself	Male	2.19	.498	.499	2
	Famle	2.19	.488		
2. Family involvement (spouse, children)	Male	2.37	.486	.414	1
	Famle	2.40	.458		
3. Factors Related to income, finance	Male	1.60	.562	.277	5
	Famle	1.55	.566		
4. Factors Related to work	Male	2.09	.543	.044	3
	Famle	2.04	.507		
5. Factors Related to health	Male	1.88	.545	.389	4
	Famle	1.86	.550		

Solution to reduce stress for lecturers

As a result of the research on stress reduction solutions, lecturers deal with their problems by (1) accepting the situation; (2) going to pray at Church or Temple ; (3) joining sports and entertainment clubs and (4) joining activities of a psychological support organization.

Considering from a gender perspective, in stressful situations, more male lecturers choose to join sports and entertainment clubs than female lecturers. As for female lecturers, they prefer to talk to someone about their problems, to wish for miracles to happen as a stress reduction solution; and to pray at Church / Temple. In fact, all lecturers expect a working hour reduction (teaching) and salary increase.

DISCUSSION

The study aims to find out the stress level of lecturers, the causes of stress, thereby offering solutions to reduce stress for lecturers. The hypothesis of the study is that the stress level

of lecturers is at an average level (between 15-20%). Famle are more stressed than male. Causes of stress are related to family relationships, work, and income.

Through the PSS stress test, we can identify the first 10 characteristics of stress of the University of Danang. There are 16.2% lecturers with high stress, which is also the worldwide rate. *This has been proven, consistent with the hypothesis originally above proposed (1). There were more women with stress than men (with 53.1%).* The groups of lecturers having income of 217-433\$/month had stress the most (78.8%). Regarding marital status, married lecturers suffered more stress than single ones (with 78.1%) and 53.1% lecturers have children stress. In terms of age differences, 71.3% lecturers from 30-39 years old suffered from stress while 59.4% of those working from 5-9 years had more stress than other groups. In terms of qualifications, lecturers with master's degree felt more stressfull (with 58.8%).

Regarding causes of stress, 986 lecturers at Danang University said that the most stressful factor is income,

followed by health and work. It seems that family factors (spouse/children) and personal problems cause very little stress for them. *This has been proven, consistent with the hypothesis originally proposed, However, lecturers still felt stress about health-related problems (2).*

Regarding solutions to reduce stress levels, those lecturers have chosen a variety of solutions namely: Praying at Pagoda and Church; Looking for someone to talk to; Traveling; Joining entertainment and sports club; or wishing for a miracle; In addition, lecturers are also looking forward to reducing teaching hours and increasing salaries. Based on the above opinions, we design activities from a psychological - social perspective to reduce stress such as organizing sharing sessions on maintaining psychological well-being. This is also the basis for us to organize mental care activities for teachers with Dohsahou Psychotherapy, (a Japanese psychotherapy) to help them relax. *This is also consistent with the hypothesis (3)*

Research has shown the stress level of lecturers, the cause of stress, and has also suggested the Dohsahou psychotherapy method to reduce stress for lecturers. However, research has not yet shown the effectiveness of Dohsahou psychotherapy for lecturers. This is also an issue that needs further research in the future.

Research shows that 16.2% of teachers are stressed. Causes of stress are related to family relationships, work, health, personal problems and income. One of solutions to reduce stress for lecturers is Praying at Pagoda and Church; Looking for someone to talk to; and another solution is Dohsahou psychotherapy. In the near future, we will deploy this psychotherapy for lecturers

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Chart 1: The lectures’s characteristics of stress of the University of Danang

