

Original article:

A cross sectional study on job anxiety among medical college teachers

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Abstract

Introduction: Job stress is inevitable, but it is mismanaged stress that is damaging in its consequences. Working as a doctor may entail higher levels of stress and it is shown that teaching in addition to their clinical role, may increase their levels of stress. Nevertheless, studies on job anxiety are scarce with teachers working in medical colleges. In the present study, job anxiety levels were analyzed among groups of medical teachers belonging to different departments and colleges.

Methods: A pre-tested, structured questionnaire on job anxiety was administered to teachers each in government and private medical college, through an independent person. Job anxiety scores were calculated and analyzed by non-parametric Mann-Whitney 'U' test.

Results: Job anxiety levels were significantly higher ($P=0.002$) among teachers working in private medical college compared to those in government college. It was found that job anxiety levels were more ($P<0.001$) in clinicians compared to basic science teachers and also in female teachers compared to male teachers ($P=0.016$).

Conclusions: The findings of the study point towards the need for job-related interventions aimed at preventing burn-out among medical teachers, probably through more meaningful faculty development programs.

Key words: job anxiety, burn out, medical college teachers

Introduction:

Job stress is inevitable and teaching is considered a highly stressful occupation, especially medical teaching, which demands very high standards. Burnout syndrome is a negative affective response occurring as a result of chronic work stress. Burnout is characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion, apathy, cynical attitude, low personal accomplishment and reduced self-control. Several studies on occupational stress have demonstrated that burnout has a strong impact on certain professions, teachers in particular.¹ There is a reasonably large body of published research evidence available which indicates that teaching is a

'highly' or 'extremely highly' stressful occupation for up to one-third of its professionals.²

While the early theories of burnout syndrome focused exclusively on work-related stressors, recent research adopts a more integrative approach where both environmental and individual factors are studied. Nevertheless, such studies are scarce with teacher samples, especially working in medical colleges. In the present study, a comparison is made on job anxiety levels in two different groups, ie, medical teachers of Government College and private medical colleges.³ Furthermore we evaluated the job anxiety among clinical and nonclinical; male and female teachers.

The different occupational groups will have varied demands in their profession. They influence on the psychological state, which in turn affects their performance and achievements.⁴ The implication of the study has its impact in medical education and warrants counseling to develop positive personality growth. To best of our knowledge, there is no study available to assess the level of job stress among medical college teachers. We also aimed to compare these variables to identify the differences among male and female teachers as well as clinical and non-clinical teachers.

Material and methods:

This is a cross-sectional study of a psychological survey among medical teachers working in private and government institutions. A pre-tested, structured questionnaire (Annexure -I) was given to the

teaching staff through a neutral person after obtaining approval of Institutional Ethics Committee. A written consent was taken from respondents and they were given assurance of confidentiality. A detailed proform of participants also taken to rule out confounding variables such as age, diseases and so on (Annexure -II). Study sample included Government and Private medical college teachers between the age ranges 26 to 60 years. The obtained results were expressed as mean \pm SE. Job anxiety scores were calculated and analyzed by non-parametric Mann-Whitney 'U' test.

Results

Job anxiety levels were significantly higher ($P=0.002$) among teachers working in private medical college compared to those in government college (Fig 1).

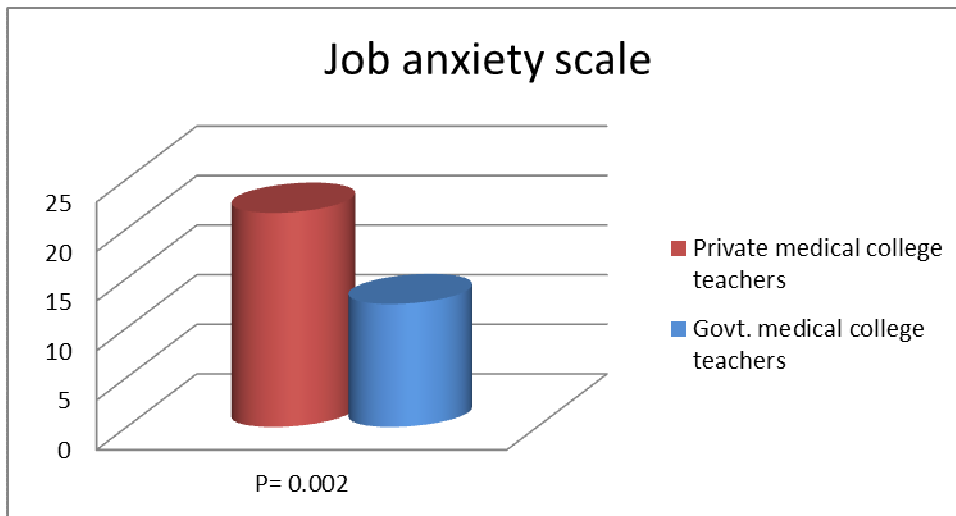


Fig 1. Job anxiety among private and govt. medical college teachers

It was found that job anxiety levels were significantly more ($P<0.001$) in clinicians compared to basic science teachers (Fig 2).

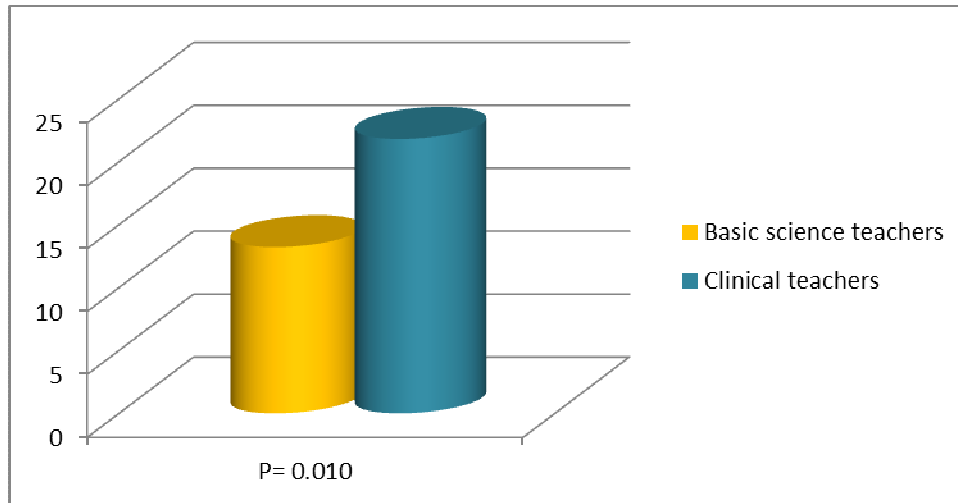


Fig 2. Job anxiety among basic science and clinical teachers

A significant increase ($P<0.001$) was observed among the teachers who were involved in research activities compared to teachers involved only in teaching (Fig. 3).

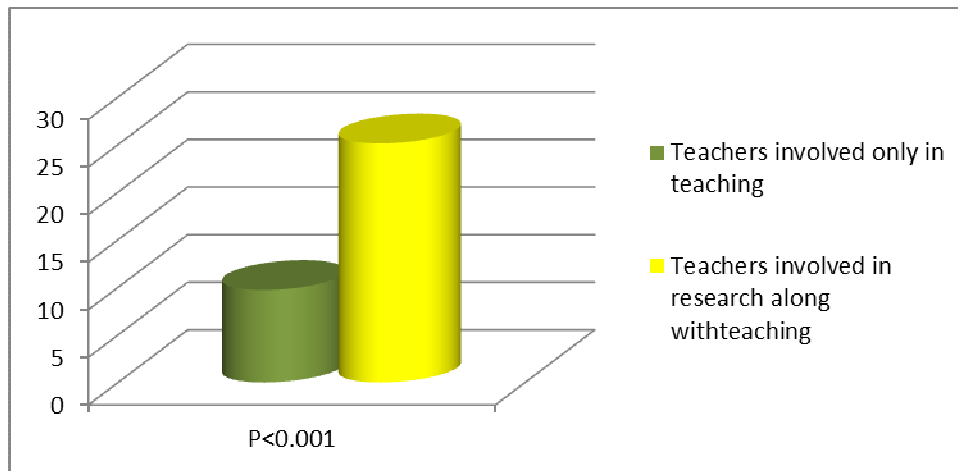


Fig 3. Job anxiety among teachers involved only in teaching and in both teaching and research

Furthermore, we found that job anxiety levels were significantly more ($P=0.016$) in female teachers compared to male teachers (Fig 4).

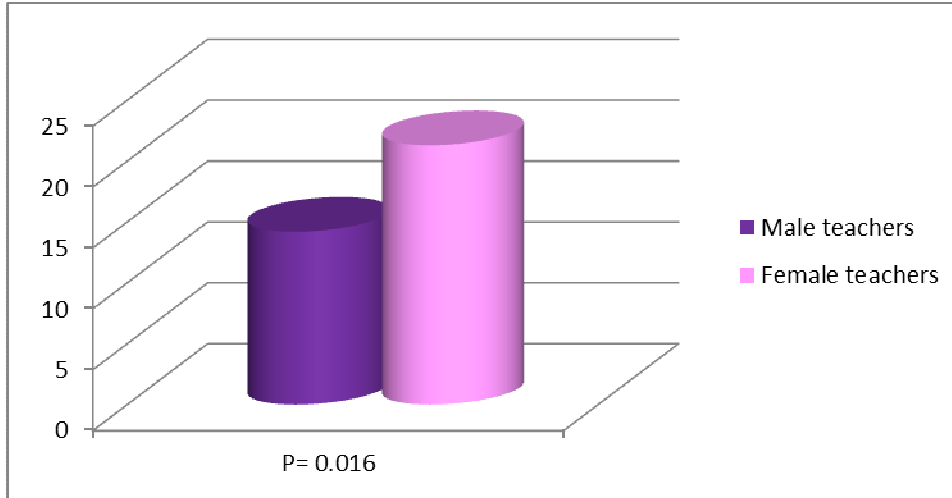


Fig 4. Job anxiety among female and male medical college teachers

However, no significant difference was observed ($P=0.15$) among different group of teachers in their inferiority complex.

Discussion:

In the present study, job anxiety among medical college teaching staff, who are working in the government and private colleges was analyzed. We found that anxiety levels were higher in teachers working private medical colleges, involved in research and administrative work along with their teaching responsibilities. More anxiety is also observed in female teachers and clinicians.

Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Stress is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressure of the situation.⁵ Job stress leads to poor performance at work and negatively affects the health of an individual. Stress is inherent in medical career and leads to poor quality of care, affects career longevity, and causes personal distress.^{6,7}

Working as a doctor or teacher may entail higher levels of stress than are experienced by the general population. Many studies have shown high levels of stress in doctors, dentists, teachers, and lecturers. A large number of factors are implicated, including low autonomy, work overload, and lack of congruence between power and responsibility. However, some interesting studies also have shown that doctors and dentists who take on a teaching role in addition to their clinical role may increase their levels of stress, but there is also evidence that this dual role may reduce job-related stress, but more research is needed to explain this finding.⁸

Job strain is negatively correlated with the perception of symptoms both in women and men. The many results evidence differences in the occupational stress of men and women; in particular, job insecurity may enhance anxiety in men.⁹ Women had significantly higher empathy scores than men; however, men had higher scores than male normative groups. Age related negatively to

depersonalization and emotional exhaustion for women, whereas percentage of work time spent in direct practice correlated with depersonalization for men. The possibility that empathy and burnout might represent opposite poles of the same underlying construct was examined but not found. Instead, emotional empathy was significantly positively correlated with both emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, whereas emotional exhaustion was also positively related to depersonalization.¹⁰

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Generally, aggressive behaviour more often occurs among school youth. It mainly includes verbal aggression, disrespectful attitude towards a teacher and refusal to follow his instructions. Other kinds of aggressive behaviour were observed rarely. More than half of the investigated persons did not feel distress at school, some of them only a little. The majority of subjects noticed the growing problem of negative behaviour among school youth during the last few years. Especially women defined their job as stressful and associated stress level with psychosomatic disorders (most often the increasing nervous stress and headache) they suffered from. Therefore, some teachers had to use tranquillizers to reduce stress level at work.¹¹

The increased prevalence of psychiatric disorders among teachers that was detected in the cohort of state employees applying for a disability pension is striking and warrants further investigation. This finding points to the need for job-related interventions aimed at preventing teachers' psychiatric disorders, a multidimensional issue which requires active debate among institutions, unions, school authorities, the scientific community, professional associations and, last but not least, students and their families.¹²

Relevance and scope:

Stress is inevitable, but it is mismanaged stress that is damaging in its consequences. Teaching is regarded as a stressful occupation, but the perception of the job as stressful may be influenced by coping responses and social support. High job stress was associated with low social support at work and greater use of coping by disengagement and suppression of competing activities. Studies have suggested that behavioural disengagement and suppression of competing activities are maladaptive

responses in a teaching environment and may actually contribute to job stress. Coping and social support not only moderates the impact of stressors on well-being but influence the appraisal of environmental demands as stressful.¹²

Hence, the present study may contribute to the acknowledged need for further research to explore

sources of stress among medical college teachers, their possible solutions and preventive measures and also to determine the effects of any change secondary to implementation of preventive strategies at different levels.

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