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Stress and coping among physical education directors: A comparative study of physical education directors working in government, unaided and aided colleges

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Abstract

Physical education (PE) directors, like other educators, face a range of challenges in their daily roles that can lead to significant levels of stress. However, PE directors experience unique stressors due to the physical demands of their work, student behaviour management, and the nature of physical education itself. In the present study an attempt is made to compare stress and coping among PE directors working in government, unaided, and aided institutes (N=411). They were administered stress and coping mechanisms questionnaires. The data were collected through emails and Google forms. The data were analysed through one-way ANOVA followed by Scheffe's post hoc test to find out the difference in the mean scorers of physical education directors working in government, unaided and aided colleges. Results revealed that Stress was found to be significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction a significant difference was found in family stress, where physical education directors in unaided institutes reported the highest stress, followed by those in aided institutes, while directors in government institutes had the lowest family stress. A significant difference was found in work environment stress, with government institute directors reporting the highest stress, followed by aided, while unaided institute directors had the lowest. There was no significant difference in overload stress, support stress and total stress across institutes and the mean scores were almost the same for government, unaided, and aided institutes. A significant difference was found in physical coping, with government institute directors showing the highest coping ability, followed by unaided, while aided institute directors had the lowest. A significant difference was found in spiritual coping, where aided institute directors used the highest level of spiritual coping, followed by government, while unaided institute directors used the least. There was no significant difference in psychological coping, manage coping and in total coping as the mean scores were nearly the same across all institutes. Strategies for reducing stress and improving mental health have been delineated.

Keywords: Physical education directors, stress, job satisfaction, mental health

Introduction

Stress among physical education directors is an increasingly important area of focus due to its profound impact on their well-being, job satisfaction, and performance. Physical education directors face multifaceted stressors including workload demands, administrative responsibilities, family obligations, and work environment challenges that are unique to their institutional context (Rubilar & Oros, 2021) ^[13]. Prior research has shown that educators in physical education frequently report moderate to high levels of stress stemming from work overload and environmental pressures, which can detrimentally affect their psychological health and professional efficacy (Pels *et al.*, 2022; Haq, Khan, & Mehmood, 2020) ^[10, 16, 2]. Coping mechanisms, including physical activity, psychological strategies, and spiritual practices, are critical in mediating the effects of stress to promote resilience (Schäfer, Pels, & Kleinert, 2020) ^[14]. The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified stressors in education, necessitating adaptive coping to manage unprecedented challenges (Jans, 2021) ^[4]. Notably, physical activity has been validated as an effective coping method, mitigating symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression through bolstered psychological resilience and increased use of positive coping strategies (Liu *et al.*, 2024) ^[6].

Despite growing evidence on stress and coping in educators, there remains limited understanding of how these experiences differ among physical education directors working in diverse institutional types such as government, unaided, and aided institutes. Considering that institutional policies, resources, and cultural contexts influence stressors and coping options (Nuetzel *et al.*, 2023) [8], examining these distinctions is vital. This study seeks to fill that gap by assessing the variations in specific stress dimensions (overload, family, support, work environment) and coping styles (physical, psychological, spiritual) across these settings, thereby contributing to targeted interventions and support mechanisms for enhancing directors' occupational well-being. In the present study an attempt is made to compare stress and coping among PE directors working in government, unaided, and aided institutes. It is hypothesized that PE directors working in government, unaided, and aided institutes differ significantly in their experience of stress and extent of coping.

Method

Sample

In the present study, 411 physical education directors were selected from throughout the state using email and Google forms. They were selected randomly from the state of the Karnataka with varied socio-demographic background.

Tools employed

a. Stress questionnaire: This questionnaire consisted of 38 statements measuring stress experienced by the PE directors on the following components-stress overload, support stress, family stress and work environment stress and total stress. The respondents had to answer each statement by ticking one of the options-Strongly agree, agree, Can't say, disagree and strongly disagree. The scorings were given for positive statements 5 to 1 from strongly agree to strongly disagree and vice-versa for negative statements. The reliability coefficients varied from .630 to .812 for individual components of stress and 0.864 for the total questionnaire.

b. coping mechanisms

The questionnaire on coping mechanisms consisted of 25 statements measuring coping mechanisms employed by the PE directors on the following components-physical coping, psychological coping. Manage coping, spiritual coping including total coping. The respondents had to answer each statement by ticking one of the options-always, regularly, occasionally, rarely and not at all. The scorings were given for positive statements 5 to 1 from strongly agree to strongly disagree and vice-versa for negative statements. The reliability coefficients varied from .682 to .843 for individual components of stress and 0.804 for the total questionnaire.

Procedure

Through the mail/Google forms the questionnaires were sent to the physical educational directors who are working in the Degree Colleges affiliated to various universities of selected districts of Karnataka state. Physical education directors of degree colleges of affiliated to various university in Karnataka constituted as sample for the study. The investigator briefed about aim and objectives of the study before answering the questionnaire. For filling the questionnaires, the researcher gave the time duration of five days. Once the data collection will over, they will verify for completeness, clarity, etc. The completed answer sheets were scored and coded according to the manuals provided, and finally a master chart was prepared

for all the respondents and feed to the computer. To find out the difference between PE directors working in government, aided and unaided colleges, one way ANOVA followed by Scheffe's post hoc test were employed using SPSS for windows (version 20.0)

Table 1 presents Mean scores on components of stress by institute of physical education directors and results of one-way ANOVA. Table 2 presents Mean scores on components of coping patterns by institute of physical education directors and results of one-way ANOVA

Results

Table 1: Mean scores on components of stress by institute of physical education directors and results of one-way ANOVA

Variable	Institute	N	Mean	S.D	F value	p value
Overload stress	Government	204	11.84	5.68	.361	.697
	Unaided	167	12.26	5.30		
	Aided	169	11.79	5.96		
	Total	540	11.96	5.65		
Support stress	Government	204	6.71	4.96	1.350	.260
	Unaided	167	7.13	5.14		
	Aided	169	7.69	7.03		
	Total	540	7.14	5.74		
Family stress	Government	204	7.35	5.99	9.741	.001
	Unaided	167	10.31	6.62		
	Aided	169	8.72	6.73		
	Total	540	8.70	6.53		
Work environment stress	Government	204	11.96	5.98	8.926	.001
	Unaided	167	8.96	5.86		
	Aided	169	10.46	8.39		
	Total	540	10.56	6.90		
Total stress	Government	204	37.85	18.57	.105	.901
	Unaided	167	38.67	17.43		
	Aided	169	38.66	23.80		
	Total	540	38.36	20.00		

Overload stress: One-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant mean difference between the institutes and overload stress ($F=.361$; $p=.697$). The mean overload stress scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 11.84, 12.26 and 11.79 respectively. The obtained mean overload stress scores of the physical education directors working in varied institutes were almost similar.

Support stress: One-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant mean difference between the institutes and support stress ($F=1.350$; $p=.260$). The mean support stress scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 6.71, 7.13 and 7.69 respectively. The obtained mean support stress scores of the physical education directors working in varied institutes were almost similar.

Family stress: One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference between the institutes and family stress ($F=9.741$; $p=.001$). The mean family stress scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 7.35, 10.31 and 8.72 respectively. There is a statistically significant difference between the obtained mean family stress scores and the institutes. Those who were working in unaided institute had highest family stress scores and those who were working in government institute had least family stress scores. Scheffe's post hoc test revealed that physical education directors who were working in unaided institute had high family stress scores, followed by physical education directors who were working in aided institute and physical education directors

who were working in government institute had least family stress scores.

Work environment stress: One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference between the institutes and work environment stress ($F=8.926$; $p=.001$). The mean work environment stress scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 11.96, 8.96 and 10.46 respectively. There is a statistically significant difference between the obtained mean work environment stress scores and the institutes. Those who were working in government institute had highest work environment stress scores and those who were working in unaided institute had least family stress scores. Scheffe test revealed that physical education directors who were working in government institute had high work environment stress scores, followed by physical education directors who were working in aided institute and physical education directors who were working in unaided institute had least work environment stress scores.

Total stress: One-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant mean difference between the institutes and total stress ($F=.105$; $p=.901$). The mean total stress scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 37.85, 38.67 and 38.66 respectively. The obtained mean total stress scores of the physical education directors working in varied institutes were almost similar.

Table 2: Mean scores on components of coping patterns by institute of physical education directors and results of one-way ANOVA

Variable	Institute	N	Mean	S.D	F value	p value
Physical coping	Government	204	82.99	10.83	8.791	.001
	Unaided	167	81.77	3.84		
	Aided	169	78.08	16.42		
	Total	540	81.07	11.71		
Psychological coping	Government	204	21.04	4.01	2.683	.069
	Unaided	167	20.90	2.15		
	Aided	169	21.65	2.85		
	Total	540	21.19	3.18		
Manage coping	Government	204	21.87	5.95	2.492	.084
	Unaided	167	23.03	4.32		
	Aided	169	21.98	5.54		
	Total	540	22.26	5.38		
Spiritual coping	Government	204	5.82	3.23	7.077	.001
	Unaided	167	5.56	1.30		
	Aided	169	8.82	15.55		
	Total	540	6.68	9.05		
Total coping	Government	204	128.90	13.52	1.960	.142
	Unaided	167	131.26	6.99		
	Aided	169	129.66	12.61		
	Total	540	129.87	11.59		

Physical coping: One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference between the institutes and physical coping ($F=8.791$; $p=.001$). The mean physical coping scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 82.99, 81.77 and 78.08 respectively. There is a statistically significant difference between the obtained mean physical coping scores and the institutes. Those who were working in government institute had highest physical coping scores and those who were working in aided institute had least physical coping scores. Scheffe's post hoc test revealed that physical education directors who were working in government institute had high physical coping scores, followed by physical education directors who were working in unaided institute and physical education directors who were working in aided

institute had least physical coping scores.

Psychological coping: One-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant mean difference between the institutes and psychological coping ($F=2.683$; $p=.069$). The mean psychological coping scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 21.04, 20.90 and 21.65 respectively. The obtained mean psychological coping scores of the physical education directors working in varied institutes were almost similar.

Manage coping: One-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant mean difference between the institutes and manage coping ($F=2.492$; $p=.084$). The mean manage coping scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 21.87, 23.03 and 21.98 respectively. The obtained mean manage coping scores of the physical education directors working in varied institutes were almost similar.

Spiritual coping: One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference between the institutes and spiritual coping ($F=7.077$; $p=.001$). The mean spiritual coping scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 5.82, 5.56 and 8.82 respectively. There is a statistically significant difference between the obtained mean spiritual coping scores and the institutes. Those who were working in aided institute had highest spiritual coping scores and those who were working in unaided institute had least spiritual coping scores. Scheffe test revealed that physical education directors who were working in aided institute had high spiritual coping scores, followed by physical education directors who were working in government institute and physical education directors who were working in unaided institute had least spiritual coping scores.

Total coping: One-way ANOVA revealed a non-significant mean difference between the institutes and total coping ($F=1.960$; $p=.142$). The mean total coping scores for institutes: government, unaided and aided were 128.90, 131.26 and 129.66 respectively. The obtained mean total coping scores of the physical education directors working in varied institutes were almost similar.

Discussion

Major findings of the study

- A significant difference was found in family stress, where physical education directors in unaided institutes reported the highest stress, followed by those in aided institutes, while directors in government institutes had the lowest family stress.
- A significant difference was found in work environment stress, with government institute directors reporting the highest stress, followed by aided, while unaided institute directors had the lowest.
- There was no significant difference in overload stress, support stress and total stress across institutes, and the mean scores were almost the same for government, unaided, and aided institutes.
- A significant difference was found in physical coping, with government institute directors showing the highest coping ability, followed by unaided, while aided institute directors had the lowest.
- A significant difference was found in spiritual coping, where aided institute directors used the highest level of spiritual coping, followed by government, while unaided

institute directors used the least.

- There was no significant difference in psychological coping, manage coping and in total coping as the mean scores were nearly the same across all institutes.

The present study elucidates how institutional context shapes the stress experiences and coping profiles of physical education directors. Consistent with existing research demonstrating heterogeneous stress patterns in educators (Rubilar & Oros, 2021; Pels *et al.*, 2022) ^[13, 10, 16], total stress levels did not differ significantly across government, unaided, and aided institutes, yet distinct domains such as family stress and work environment stress showed sizable variation. Directors in unaided institutes reported the highest family stress, potentially attributable to lesser job security and increased personal financial strain often associated with privately managed educational setups (Ozamiz *et al.*, 2021) ^[9]. Conversely, government institute directors exhibited greater work environment stress, which corroborates findings pointing to bureaucratic complexity, rigid administrative procedures, and constrained resources in public institutional environments (Haq *et al.*, 2020) ^[2].

Significant differences in coping mechanisms further highlight institutional influences. Government institute directors' higher physical coping aligns with literature underscoring the beneficial role of regular physical activity in stress amelioration and psychological flexibility (Schäfer *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2024) ^[14, 6]. The prominence of spiritual coping among aided institute directors suggests that cultural and institutional ethos may foster reliance on spiritual resources to buffer occupational stress, consistent with findings that spirituality enhances emotional regulation and resilience in educators (Rayan & Ahmad, 2017; Jans, 2021) ^[12, 4]. Non-significant differences in psychological and manage coping suggest these strategies are universally utilized across settings, likely reflecting fundamental coping processes less influenced by organizational context.

These differential patterns substantiate theoretical models positing that coping selection is context-dependent, influenced by stressor type and availability of coping resources (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000) ^[1]. Practically, interventions should address family-related stress support, for instance, by facilitating work-life balance and counselling resources in unaided institutes, while improving work environment quality and administrative support in government institutes. Moreover, promoting physical activity and spiritual well-being can be vital components of comprehensive stress management programs for physical education directors. Future research could explore longitudinal coping trajectories and intervention efficacy using mixed-method approaches to deepen understanding of coping evolution in varying institutional climates.

Effective stress reduction strategies for physical education directors include regular physical activity, which releases mood-enhancing endorphins and reduces stress hormones, thereby improving mental health and sleep quality. Incorporating mindfulness practices such as meditation and deep breathing calms the nervous system and helps regulate emotional responses. Good time management by organizing tasks and prioritizing reduces overwhelm and improves control over workload. Building strong social support networks with colleagues, friends, and family provides emotional buffering against stress. Relaxation techniques like progressive muscle relaxation and yoga relieve physical tension and promote mental calm. Additionally, maintaining a

healthy lifestyle with balanced nutrition, sufficient sleep, and minimizing caffeine and alcohol intake enhances resilience. Engaging in enjoyable hobbies and integrating mind-body activities, such as Tai Chi or yoga, can further optimize stress management by combining physical movement with mental focus (HelpGuide, 2025; Medanta, 2025) ^[3, 7]. These combined approaches support holistic well-being and enable physical education directors to manage occupational stress more effectively.

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