

JOB STRESSORS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC STAFF: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the kinds of stressors originating from academic work setting, the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff and to know how they overcame stress at work setting. A non-probability sample was used. 12 academic staff -six in Diest Campus and six in Heverlee Campus in KHLeuven University Teacher Education and Training College in Leuven in Belgium- were volunteers working in pre-school, primary school and secondary school programs. A qualitative approach with a multiple case study with embedded units was selected for this study. Semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, participant observations and document analysis of staff's weekly schedules were used to collect data. Findings showed that there were intensive and various kinds of stress originating from stressors in academic setting and the effects of stress might be either negative or positive. Thus, the outcome of the research addresses important implications for the professional work life of academic staff in understanding how stress influences academic staff's performance negatively and positively, identifying where negative and positive stress exist in academic setting and knowing how to overcome stressors originating from academic settings.

Key Words: Stressors, academic staff, teacher training college, case study.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is an inevitable part of our life. People face stressors every day. Events, people, circumstances, concerns, and a certain amount of stress are part of daily life (Koopsen & Young, 2009). Stress occurs when demands and stressors are made on us and our bodies respond with a series of changes leading to what is called the stress response. Definitions of stress are often based on various disciplines of study such as psychology, sociology and medicine: "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand placed upon it to adapt, whether that demand produces pleasure or pain (Selye, 1976)", "a state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping abilities (Lazarus, 1966)"; "the inability to cope with a perceived or real (or imagined) threat to one's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, which results in a series of physiological responses and adaptations (Allen, 1983)". As it can be understood from the definitions, there are many different definitions of stress as loss of emotional control, wear and tear on the body, an inability to cope, an absence of inner peace.

Stress in workplace is also one of the big issues. According to 2007-2008 government statistics in UK, around one in five workers say that they feel extremely stressed while at work, with about 14 percent saying that they feel that their work stress is making them ill, causing an estimated of 13.5 million lost working days in Britain in one year alone. The same trend can be seen in other countries, as well. Because even when people at work, stress can seriously affect the work they do, it is inevitable that employee dissatisfaction, lowered emotional and physical health of the employees, absenteeism and lost productivity occur (Middleton, 2009; Matterson & Ivancevich, 1987; Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1990).

As for stress in universities, until mid-1980's universities were not thought as places where much stress occurred amidst academic staff. However since then, universities have become places where sources of stress are indeed a cause for concern and stress have come from a wide variety of sources such as increasing workload, poor government policies in education, lack of autonomy and decrease in the quality of academic standards (Fisher, 1994).

Accordingly, during past two decades, many researches both quantitative and qualitative have been done on sources of stress in academic life, stressors at academic setting, the effects of stress on academic staff and the way they overcome stress (Abouserie, 1996; Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001; Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua, Hapuarachchi & Boyd 2003; Houston, Meyer & Paewai, 2006; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Gunbayi, 2009; Catano, Francis, Haines, Kirpalani, Shannon, Stringer & Lozanski, 2010; Adebiji, 2013).

In academic setting, stress originating from work setting and the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff can be of concern as it is likely to have significant personal implications through academic staff dissatisfaction, lowered motivation and lowered emotional and physical health of academic staff (Gunbayi, 2009). Thus a study to be done to understand the kinds of stressors originating from academic work setting, the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff and the ways to cope with stress at work in an academic setting will contribute us to realize the influences of those kinds of stressors and how to create a setting where academic staff can work effectively.

The purpose of this study was to understand what it was like to work amidst stressors originating from work setting, to understand the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff and to know the way they overcome stressors at work setting. Thus this study examined:

1. How do academic staff define stress?
2. What are academic staff's perceptions on stressors originating from work setting?
3. How do stressors affect academic staff?
4. How do academic staff overcome stress as a result of stressors in academic setting?
5. What do academic staff think job stress or stressors are like? A thing, a living thing, a machine, etc..? Why?

METHODS

Sampling

This study was conducted both in Diest Campus and in Heverlee Campus in KHLeuven University Teacher Education and Training College in Leuven in Belgium from 1st of February, 2012 through 30th of April, 2012. KHLeuven University Teacher Education and Training College had two campuses one in Heverlee Campus with three programs as pre-school with 231 students and 25 staff members, primary school with 395 students and 45 staff members and secondary with 898 students and 69 staff members and the other in Diest with two programs as pre-school with 194 students and 17 staff members members and primary school with 221 students and 24 staff members. A non-probability sample technique based on purposive sampling method was used because 'the sample derives from the researcher targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population, it simply represent itself. This is frequently the in small scale research, for example, as with one or two schools, two or three groups of students, or a particular group of teachers, where no attempt to generalize is desired; this is frequently the case for qualitative researches such as action ethnographic or case (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Table 1: Participants status and accompanying data collection

| Code | Position | Audiotape Interviews | | Classroom Observation | Document Analysis of Weekly Agenda |
|------|--|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Individual | Focus Group | | |
| PDA | Senior Lecturer | Yes (1) | Yes (1) | Yes (1) | Yes (1) |
| PDB | Senior Lecturer | Yes (1) | Yes (1) | | Yes (1) |
| PDC | Senior Lecturer | Yes (1) | Yes (1) | Yes (1) | Yes (1) |
| PDD | Lecturer | Yes (1) | Yes (1) | | Yes (1) |
| PDE | Senior Lecturer Manager of Campus | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |
| PDF | Senior Lecturer | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |
| PLA | Senior Lecturer and Head of Department | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |
| PLB | Senior Lecturer and Erasmus Coordinator | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---------|--|--|---------|
| PLC | Senior Lecturer | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |
| PLD | Lecturer | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |
| PLE | Lecturer | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |
| PLF | Lecturer | Yes (1) | | | Yes (1) |

As seen in Table 1, the informants in this study were academic staff members. I had contact with them via e-mail and some face to face of 180 staff members to invite to participate in my study and 12 accepted to participate in the study -six in Diest Campus and six in Heverlee Campus in KHLeuven University Teacher Education and Training College in Leuven in Belgium. The participants were volunteers working in pre-school, primary school and secondary school programs. There was no limitation to ages and seniority of academic staff members.

Method

A qualitative approach was selected for this study because this research was more concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world and seeking insights rather than statistical analysis (Silverman, 2005). Because investigation of academic staff's experiences related to stressors originating formal academic setting, college campuses were viewed as an instrumental case study. In qualitative research design, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, school performance, and interpersonal relations in real contexts (Cohen et al, 2007; Yin, 2012). Thus, the focus of this study was influences of job stressors on academic staff in college setting and their perceptions by informants. As this study was carried out both in Diest Campus with pre-school and primary programs and in Heverlee Campus with pre-school, primary and secondary programs in KHLeuven University Teacher Education and Training College in Leuven in Belgium, a qualitative approach with a multiple case study with embedded units was selected for this study. In a multiple case study with embedded units different sub-units may be involved in each of the different cases, and a range of instruments used for each sub-unit, and each is kept separate to each case (Yin, 2012).

Data Collection

In order to investigate academic staff' perceptions on stressors originating from work setting, to understand the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff and to know how they overcame stress at work setting, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were used because it would provide an in depth exploration of the topic, it would allow me the flexibility, for example, to change the order of questions, simplify the questions and to probe the interviews (Cohen et al, 2007). Data were collected from 1st February, 2012 through 30th April, 2012. This included about 45 minute recorded individual interviews and about one and half focus group interview with the informants with initial interview questions. I used face-to-face interviews. I recorded informants' experiences, thoughts and feelings in a taped diary. Additionally participant observations in classes and staff rooms and document analysis based on academic staff's weekly agenda were used to collect data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with repeated readings of interview transcripts from conversations with academic staff. The purpose was to determine the essence of the phenomenon and structures of experiences of academic staff amidst stressors originating from work setting, to understand the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff and to know the way they overcame stressors at work setting. During data analysis, the data were organized categorically and chronically, reviewed repeatedly and continually coded. Interview transcripts were regularly reviewed. In addition, data analysis process was aided by the use of a qualitative data analysis computer program called NVIVO 9.2. These kinds of computer programmes do not actually perform the analysis but facilitate and assist it. That is NVIVO 9.2 does not perform the analysis but only supports the researcher doing the analysis by organizing data and recodes and nodes etc. (Kelle, 1995; Cohen et al, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

Participants were briefed about the research aims, kept informed at all stages and be offered anonymity. A consent form was signed between researcher and each participant about the use of the data in terms of how its analysis would be reported and disseminated. It was also tried to be careful not to impose researcher's belief on others and researcher's beliefs were secondary and the participants thinking be what was required.

Interview Process and Mapping

The purpose of this study was to understand what it was like to work amidst stressors originating from work setting, to understand the influences of those kinds of stressors on academic staff and to know the way they overcame stress at work setting. Thus the mapping of interview questions was carried out in five levels. Firstly, academic staff were asked how they defined stress, secondly what their perceptions on stressors originating from academic work setting were, thirdly what the effects of stressors on academic staff were, fourthly what their views about how to overcome stress as a result of stressors in academic setting were and finally what and why they thought job stress or stressors were like.

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure reliability and validity of the study, some steps were followed: (i) data were collected from various sources such as interviews (individual and focus group), participant observations and documents in terms of triangulation (ii) data were used as direct quotations from the interviews without making any comments on them, (iii) a purposive sampling method based on voluntarism was used in order to get opinions and experiences of academic staff in Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven (iv) data were coded by two independent researchers and Cohen's kappa coefficient were calculated to determine inter-rater reliability of themes coded -0.814 perfect agreement- for inner reliability (Landis & Koach, 1977) and (v) records of interviews, documents and participant observations were kept for outer reliability.

FINDINGS

The findings are discussed under four main topics according to how data are collected: individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations and documents.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Definition of Stress

Lecturers were asked about what they understood with the word stress, what stress meant to them and how they could define stress. PDA defined stress as "something in her mind and something in her body causing loss of control", PDB "something very unpleasant and causing her feel nerved", PDC "feeling of not being able to organize his work due to expectations more than he can do", PDD "the feeling of not being able to finish work on time as indicated in deadlines due to lack of time he needs", PDE "the feeling of not being able to oversee something at work and not knowing what to do due to complexity", PDF "the feeling of not having enough control what he is supposed to do", PLA "something rather negative and complaining when her work overwhelming her due to workload", PLB "two kinds of stress : one is something good supplying adrenalin to go with and the other is something bad causing her inefficient due to lack of support", PLC "the feeling of not being able to control something due to work load and time pressure and thus causing her feeling nervous", PLD "the feeling of not being able to do things like in her head or according to standards in her head", PLE "an unpleasant feeling that makes her nervous and thus causing chaos and her less organized" and PLF "a feeling of not having enough time to do what she wants to do or she is supposed to do". As it can be understood from the participants definitions of stress, stress is mostly accepted something bad causing loss of control, making one feel nervous, restless, less organized and desperate. However as PLB stated, stress can sometimes be something good which supplies adrenalin or energy for someone to go with.

Stressors at Work

Lecturers were asked about what their perceptions on stressors originating from academic work setting were. The analyses of 12 academic staff's perceptions on stress as a result of stressors originating from academic work setting showed that 100% of academic staff complained about workload, 83% the intensity of e-mails to answer and to write, 67% the problems with ICT, 58% working with large number of students, insufficient physical conditions, 42% meetings without agenda and planning and changing profile of students and generation, 33% lack of time to do things due to deadlines and having to work extra at home, 25% lack of enough supporting personnel, lack of effective management and no job guarantee, 17 % combination of many different tasks, difficulty of cooperation with others, meetings of strategic and importance, teacher centered education, teaching students in their first year, impolite students, fewer staff for increasing volume of work , insufficient financial support for college, not knowing what to do for some duties and being observed by managers at lectures, having no authority on responsibilities and 8% the effect of problems out of work, badly arranged weekly schedule, the number of managers, no reward for extra work, language usage level of students, insufficient evaluation of lecturers, noise at crowded working areas, unpredictability of work, unable to keep up with changes in ICT, lack of teachers from different origins, low status of teachers, increase in the number of women staff, being indifferent to one's own ideas , being off work a long time due to disease, bullying by colleagues, education policies decided by top managers, lack of team for projects and teaching, being indifferent to one's ideas, having to work in two campuses and travel, lack of one's own desk, lots of formal procedures. As it can be understood from the frequency analysis of participants' perceptions on stressors at work in Table 2, the main sources of stressors at academic work could be those related to working conditions, salary and social facilities of college, work itself, management and supervision, formal and informal relations with colleagues and students and education policies of government and college.

Table 2: Stressors at work

| Stressors at work | PDA | PDB | PDC | PDD | PDE | PDF | PLA | PLB | PLC | PLD | PLE | PLF | f | % |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 1 Workload | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 12 | 100 |
| 2 e-mails to answer and to write | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10 | 83 |
| 3 The problems with ICT | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | 8 | 67 |
| 4 Working with large number of students | √ | | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | 7 | 58 |
| 5 Insufficient physical conditions | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | | 7 | 58 |
| 6 Meetings without agenda and planning | | √ | √ | | | √ | | | √ | | √ | | 5 | 42 |
| 7 Changing profile of students and generation | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | 5 | 42 |
| 8 Lack of time to do things due to deadlines | | √ | | | | √ | | √ | | √ | | | 4 | 33 |
| 9 Having to work extra at home | | | | √ | | | | | | √ | √ | √ | 4 | 33 |
| 10 Lack of enough supporting personnel | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | | 3 | 25 |
| 11 Lack of effective management | | √ | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | 3 | 25 |
| 12 No job guarantee | | | | √ | | | | | | | √ | √ | 3 | 25 |
| 13 Combination of many different tasks | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 14 Difficulty of cooperation with others | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 15 Meetings of strategic and importance | | | | | √ | | √ | | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 16 Teacher centered education | | | | | | √ | | | | √ | | | 2 | 17 |
| 17 Teaching students in their first year | | √ | | | | | | | | | √ | | 2 | 17 |
| 18 Impolite students | | | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 19 Fewer staff for increasing volume of work | | | | | | √ | | | | √ | | | 2 | 17 |
| 20 Insufficient financial support for college | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 21 Not knowing what to do for some duties | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | 2 | 17 |
| 22 Being observed by managers at lectures | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | 2 | 17 |
| 23 Having no authority on responsibilities | | | | | √ | | | √ | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 24 The effect of problems out of work | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 25 Badly arranged weekly schedule | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 26 The number of managers | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |

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| 27 | No reward for extra work | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 28 | Language usage level of students | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 29 | Insufficient evaluation of lecturers | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 30 | Noise at crowded working areas | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 31 | Unpredictability of work | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 32 | Unable to keep up with changes in ICT | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 33 | Lack of teachers from different origins | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 34 | Low status of teachers | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 35 | Increase in the number of women staff | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 36 | Being indifferent to one's own ideas | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 37 | Being off work a long time due to disease | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 38 | Bullying by colleagues | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 39 | Education policies decided by top managers | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 40 | Lack of team for projects and teaching | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 41 | Being indifferent to one's ideas | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 42 | Having to work in two campuses and travel | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 43 | Lack of one's own desk | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | 1 | 8 |
| 44 | Lots of formal procedures | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | 1 | 8 |

The effects of Stressors

Lecturers were also asked about how the stressors originating from academic work setting affected them. As a result of analyses of 12 academic staff's statements related to how the stressors originating from academic work setting, 25% of academic staff mentioned about having ache in a part of body and being calm or no communication with others, 17% feeling need for more social relations, heart beating, not being able to sleep, feeling restless due to less time for family, feeling restless due to less time for social relations and talks, being angry and arguing with people, complaining and questioning and being indifferent to others and 8% being productive, being bad-humored, feeling restless due to lack of time for academic studies, being addictive of something, being mentally absent, experiencing Monday morning syndrome, being unable to decide where to start, being burned out, using non-verbal communication, feeling need for going to toilet more, having cramps in muscles, having a stomachache as if vomiting, being sad, having difficulty in respiration, crying, neglecting doing sports and feeling haunted. As it can be understood from the frequency analysis of the effects of stressors on academic staff in Table 3, it could be commented that the stressors mainly affected academic staff psychologically, socially, mentally and physiologically mostly negatively but also positively.

Table 3: The effects of stressors

| Effects of stressors | | PDA | PDB | PDC | PDD | PDE | PDF | PLA | PLB | PLC | PLD | PLE | PLF | f | % | |
|----------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|----|
| 1 | Having ache in a part of body | | √ | | | | | | | | √ | | √ | 3 | 25 | |
| 2 | Being calm or no communication with others | | | | | | | √ | | | √ | √ | | 3 | 25 | |
| 3 | Feeling need for more social relations | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 4 | Heart beating | | √ | | | | | | | | √ | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 5 | Not being able to sleep | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 6 | Feeling restless due to less time for family | | | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 7 | Feeling restless due to less time for social relations and talks | | | | | | √ | | | √ | | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 8 | Being angry and arguing with people | | | | | | | | √ | | √ | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 9 | Complaining and questioning | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | | 2 | 17 | |
| 10 | Being indifferent to others | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | 2 | 17 |
| 11 | Being productive | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 12 | Being bad-humored | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 13 | Feeling restless due to lack of time for academic studies | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 14 | Being addictive of something | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |

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|----|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| 15 | Being mentally absent | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 16 | Experiencing Monday Morning syndrome | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 17 | Being unable to decide where to start | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 18 | Being burned out | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 19 | Using non-verbal communication | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 20 | Feeling need for going to toilet more | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 21 | Having cramps in muscles | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 22 | Having a stomachache as if vomiting | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 23 | Being sad | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 24 | Having difficulty in respiration | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 25 | Crying | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 26 | Neglecting doing sports | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | 1 | 8 |
| 27 | Feeling haunted | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | 1 | 8 |

The ways to cope with Stress

Additionally, lecturers were asked about how to overcome stress as a result of stressors in academic work setting. When analyzed how academic staff overcame stress as a result of stressors in academic work setting, it was understood that 50% of academic staff overcame stress as a result of stressors in academic work setting via warm social relations, 42% arranging work according to priorities and agenda, 33% running, cycling or walking in fresh air, 25% support by spouse or family and face to face communication with colleges, 17% thinking positively and stopping working, 8% seeing managers as mentor, knowing what to focus on, balancing payment in mind, using alternative teaching methods and material, not carrying work to home life, using smart phone to check mails anywhere, distinction between a friend and a colleague, giving more importance to family, managing meetings effectively, empathy with new generation, trusting in staff and giving responsibility by college management, playing an instrument, going to a concert with friends, having good sense of humor, confrontation and talking with colleagues, finding something interesting to work on, going to physiotherapist for a massage, escaping from stressors, going to sauna, meetings with friends out of work, getting medical treatment, resting at home, keeping on working and thinking about the times to work less after hardworking. As it can be understood from the frequency analysis of academic staff's way to overcome stress in Table 4, the main ways to overcome stress could be those of having informal social interaction, doing hobbies such as sports and music, getting medical support, being professional, realistic, reasonable or optimistic and avoiding stress.

Table 4: The ways to cope with stress

| The ways to cope with stress | PDA | PDB | PDC | PDD | PDE | PDF | PLA | PLB | PLC | PLD | PLE | PLF | F | % |
|------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|
| 1 | Warm social relations | | | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | 6 | 50 |
| 2 | Arranging work according to priorities and agenda | | | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | | | 5 | 42 |
| 3 | Running, cycling or walking in fresh air | | | | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | 4 | 33 |
| 4 | Support by spouse or family | | √ | | √ | | | √ | | | | | 3 | 25 |
| 5 | Face to face communication with colleges | | | | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | 3 | 25 |
| 6 | Thinking positively | √ | | | | | √ | | | | | | 2 | 17 |
| 7 | Stopping working | √ | | | | | | | | √ | | | 2 | 17 |
| 8 | Seeing managers as mentor | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 9 | Knowing what to focus on | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 10 | Balancing payment in mind | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 11 | Using alternative teaching methods and material | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 12 | Not carrying work to home life | | | | | √ | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 13 | Using smart phone to check mails anywhere | | | | | √ | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 14 | Distinction between a friend and a colleague | | | | | √ | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 15 | Giving more importance to family | | | | | √ | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |

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|----|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | Managing meetings effectively | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | | |
| 17 | Empathy with new generation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 18 | Trusting in staff and giving responsibility by college management | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 19 | Playing an instrument | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 20 | Going to a concert with friends | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 21 | Having good sense of humor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 22 | Confrontation and talking with colleagues | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 23 | Finding something interesting to work on | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 24 | Going to physiotherapist for a massage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 25 | Escaping from stressors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 26 | Going to sauna | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 27 | Meetings with friends out of work | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 28 | Getting medical treatment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 29 | Resting at home | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 30 | Keeping on working | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | 1 | 8 |
| 31 | Thinking about the times to work less after hardworking | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | 1 | 8 |

The metaphors for Stress

Metaphors formulated by 12 participants can be categorized under six themes as in Table 5: animals, things, vehicles, plants, nature and micro organisms. Four of the participants formulated thing metaphors in defining stress. PDC described stress as a balloon: *"It is a balloon because the thing with stress is that everything is getting bigger and bigger...You stop getting bigger, because you can fly with it. If you aren't careful, it takes you to Mars...there is somebody blowing the balloon, hmmm and it is two things: the expectations people have of you. So that's organization and colleagues ...a bit blowing the balloon and it is also yourself thinking what others expect of you and what you expect of yourself. So I think you blow the balloon as well. And sometimes you stop blowing and open the balloon and ...gets a bit smaller..."*. Similarly, PLE used balloon metaphor for describing stress: *"I think it is a sort of balloon. That's it is on a way to collapse and you can be yourself find away so you can open that you don't collapse. Air can go back out...Yes a balloon. And lots of stress the balloon inflates and explodes. If less stress it no more inflates. On the right with a good amount of air... If it is less you have no balloon like that."* As for PDD, he defined stress as a sponge describing the effect of workload: *"Sponge because you only have stress when you function at big efficiency, sponge is like sometimes. When you put sponge in water, it becomes heavy, when you don't put it in water, it is very light. And the moments when you have lots of stress in months like December and January, then this sponge being in water, it is very heavy. So there is a stress. Months like July and August when you practically you don't have to work, then it is very light. Something like that. But sponge is still there because we are still working for school."* Additionally, PLD used the term walls for defining stress: *"Walls coming and closing me... Like these rooms the walls are around me. Yeah, no space. That is everything...typical for me. Something like...If people don't give me space ...It gives me stress... Feeling you stuck in the corner. I feel stuck and breathless"*

Table 5: Metaphors for stress

| Metaphors | PDA | PDB | PDC | PDD | PDE | PDF | PLA | PLB | PLC | PLD | PLE | PLF | F | % |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|
| 1 Things | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 4 | 33 |
| 2 Animals | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 3 | 25 |
| 3 Vehicles | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | 7 |
| 4 Plants | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 5 Nature | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 8 |
| 6 Micro organisms | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 8 |

Three of the participants formulated animal metaphors in defining stress. For instance, PDA defined stress as a chicken without a head: *"I have one. I feel then like a chicken, because chickens are very nervous animals. And*

they can run all directions. We have an expression a chicken without a head. I am feeling like a chicken without a head, a chicken without a head, she can't see where she is going. When I have a stress, I have feeling that I don't know in which direction I move anymore and do this and this and this..." Besides, PDB defined stress a legendary animal dragon: "Maybe like a red dragon. It is monster with fire and it is not pleasant. When a dragon really gets bad, it is the fire that comes out... because it is unpleasant, as a monster dragon is unpleasant. I think stress is something that is unpleasant all the time. Some moments it gets worse. There is more stress when the dragon give out...its fire and it destroys maybe destroy something...in fire. Like stress for me, stress destroy my relations or with myself...". Additionally, PLA used the metaphor snake for defining stress: "A snake...It is poisoning and sweeping around and it is ...you are in the middle of it. You know big boas that circle around you and you get no longer air. Snake...yes, yes. I think that you know what I mean, the boa. But the poisoning the fact that it is in you before you are aware of it. That's why I think of a snake."

Two of the participants formulated vehicle metaphors in defining stress. PDE described stress as a submarine: "Sometimes I wake in the middle of night. This is like a submarine blocked on the soil of the sea, it can't go up and go down. We don't see anything. A submarine which had an engine default. Engine breaks down. So it lays there on the bottom of the sea. You don't hear anything. You don't see anything. But you know that it is much pressures all that water. It is pressing on your submarine. You don't see anything. You can't move. So submarine in the deep sea lost its way and blocked and can't move." Besides, PDF described stress as a train or car coming towards himself: "Maybe I can describe it like a train or a car I am standing and car or train is coming at you. You know that it is coming so you have to make sure that it doesn't hit you. And I think I am mostly good at that. To do something else to go running or go or do this or that. I think some people ...they are working so hard that they can't see train coming or the car coming. I think, one hits you and then it is too late. I think stress is something that makes you damaged."

Three other participants used different metaphors for stress. Participant PLB used a plant metaphor and she thought stress was like a thistle : "...good things and bad things and you have to find a kind of, you know, Scotland has a plant ...thistle. A plant to its historyso it is very hard with also hard leaves. And it has pins as well. And it has purple flower. I think the flower is good thing of it. It is nice. It is decorative and gives you energy. So that is eustress. On the other hand, stress is not so comfortable to handle. It is a little bit stingy, aching and makes me angry, nervous. So those are not nice feelings about it. This plant is nice with flowers but similar to cactus." On the other hand, participant PLC formulated a nature metaphor and she defined stress as volcano: "For me because I am extroverted person. More like a volcano...I am very extrovert person. All my emotions are outside. All emotions my inside are also my outside. So when I am very stressed, I can erupt... when you are volcano, you have lava all going and the lava is going to find ways the landscape and I think that's my way also I interrupt and I think OK. I am going I will handle with it. How am I going to search my way? To get it altogether, I think that's the lava who takes my way." Finally, PLF defined stress as a micro organism and defined it as a virus: "A virus like that and an impact on whole your system...how you can think, you feel and like that. Yes, a virus is OK. it makes you ill. Sometimes physically although I don't complain I think. In your head a feel like everything is going to have it too much. Yes it is like that." As it can be understood from the frequency analysis of metaphors defined by academic staff in Table 4, stress was perceived not only as a phenomenon which was negative but also positive.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

With participants PDA, PDB, PDC and PDD in addition to individual interviews, a focus group interview was also done at Demerstraat in Diest Campus at 13:30-15:00 on 26 March 2012. The focus group interview was done in PDC's own classroom in Diest Campus with the same questions except metaphor question: definition of stress, the stressors at work, the effect of stressors and the ways to cope with stress. All participants used nearly the same definition for the word stress. They all agreed on the definition of stress as "feeling of not being able to carry out her duties and responsibilities on time and sufficiently due to time pressure, deadline and combinations of lots of work at the same time". When asked the stressors at work, in addition to what they stated in individual interviews, PDB complained that her colleagues' wanting everything well arranged for the organization of coaching students by colleagues and new staff were more dependent on her support as she

was the responsible staff for this organization of practical training of the students in Diest campus, PDA told about the difficulty of putting all work in order according to their priorities as there were too many works with nearly the same deadlines, all participants complained that they had to work more and harder due to the increase in the number of students in recent years and PDC and PDD about difficulty of working in Diest and Heverlee at the same time due to different organizational cultures, PDD complained about the lack of teaching tools such as smart boards and added that they had to train teachers according to old fashioned instruments but those students were to work with modern instruments at schools and additionally PDD stated that he felt stress as he had to renew his contract with Khleuven Teacher Training Colleague every year as he was not senior lecture and he would have no job guarantee the following year. When asked about how they overcame stress, in addition to what they stated in individual interviews, PDC suggested that PDB should inform and organize students instead of organizing colleagues for coaching students during practical training at schools, PDD stated that sometimes whining relieved himself and mentioned about time management although it was not a solution due to high amount of work, PDA stated that she overcame stress with warm social relations with her colleagues and her family and by playing tennis, PDB stated that she overcame stress by looking for holidays and making plans for going somewhere and doing aerobic, PDD stated that he overcame stress by doing sports such as playing squash and PDB stated that he overcame stress by having dinner once a week with his old friends and PDA also added that she thought of working less percent the following year in order to decrease her workload. As for the effects of stressors in addition to what they stated in individual interviews, PDA told that stress caused an increase in her blood pressure and she did not feel well physically and PDB told that stress affected her social communication with colleagues and family members, she preferred keeping calm and she functioned less at home when she felt stress. PDD said that he functioned better when there was an optimum level of stress.

OBSERVATIONS

In the observation in International Week 2012 organized by Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven (Leuven University College) Department of Health and Technology, at 09:00-10:00 on March 20th 2012 just as the participants stated the problem of ICT in the interviews, I witnessed the breakdown of the projection during slide show in a big auditorium at international week. A staff was presenting a documentary film by power point called `Life in Namibia`. But suddenly the projection broke down. Many young boys from ICT department came but could not fix it. So he overcame this stressor originating from the breakdown of ICT by using an alternative material for the seminar, he just came in front of audience and played the guitar and sang a folk song of Namibia. He went on playing at least 30 minutes. In another observation in International Week 2012 organized by Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven (Leuven University College) Department of Health and Technology at 17:30-18:30 on March 20th 2012, just as participant PDF stated: "I also think that sometimes ICT is a bit of problem of my colleagues as well. Because they don't know how to use it or when there is a small problem, they don't know how to fix it", I witnessed a staff complaining about there was no computer in the class where she was going to give a lecture and called ICT officers to tell about and the officer came to help her, but it was funny that she did not notice that there was a computer attached just behind the monitor.

In Khleuven Teacher Training Colleague academic staff did not have their own rooms if they were not in an administrative position as stated by all participants. They all used the large staff rooms mutually. As the participants stated in interviews, they usually used the staff room before and after their courses, coffee and lunch breaks and social interaction. Staff rooms were observed four times in Heverlee at 09:00-10:00 and at 12:00-13:30 on 8th March 2012, at 10:00-10:45 on 14th March, 2012 and at 11:00-11:30 on 16th March, 2012. There were two main staff rooms in Heverlee side by side: one was a well-organized staff room for usage of basic canteen, resting facilities and preparing and getting ready for courses by academic staff and the other was the room with computers where staff could check their mails, prepare for their courses. The most crowded times of the room was at lunch time. For instance, at 12:00-13:30 on 8th March 2012 at lunch time forty-two staff used the room. Staff also met for social interaction and meetings in the rooms. For instance, at 11:00-11:30 on 16th March, 2014 thirty-two staff and I came together including principle and vice-principle for a minute silence for mourning of the 22 children and 6 adults from Saint Lambertus School in Heverlee and the Stekske School in Lommel who died in a devastating bus crash in Switzerland. In Diest I also observed the staff

rooms: the one in the new building at 12:00-13:30 on 23th February 2012 and the other one in the old building Demerstraat in at 11.00-11.30 on 24 April 2012. The staff room in the new building was smaller than the one both in Heverlee and in the old main building Demerstraat in Diest but the rooms had the same facilities for the staff. Staff rooms offered academic staff a setting where they could communicate with each other, which was good to overcome stress due to workload as stated by participants in interviews. Besides, to compare the facilities between the old building and the new building in Gebouw Flos Campi in Heverlee and to see in the context what the participants PDB, PDC, PDE, PDF, PLA, PLD and PLE mentioned about physical conditions of the buildings, I observed the classrooms, meeting room, auditorium and personnel room in the new building in Gebouw Flos Campi in Heverlee at 10:30-11:30 on 17 April 2012, in the classrooms the desks were movable the staff and students could arrange or design as they liked and in the auditorium the seats were large and comfortable and it was equipped with the new technology and the meeting room was large and bright with movable and comfortable chairs as PLC stated whereas in the old building in Gebouw Flos Campi in Heverlee where I stayed during my research from 1st February to 30 April 2014 and where I observed the classrooms at 13:30-14:30 on 22 March 2012, at 11:00-12:00 on 19 April 2012, at 14:00-15:00 on 25 April 2012, meeting room at 13:30-14:30 on 23 March 2014, auditorium at 17:00- 17:30 on 20 April 2012, auditorium and meeting room were smaller in size, chairs in meeting room were not as comfortable as the ones in the new building, desks were not movable in classrooms, not easy to rearrange or redesign and there were less places for students to study in groups as PLE mentioned.

In the observation of PDC's own classroom at 13:30 on 26 March 2012, just before the focus group interview, just opposite the board there were desks for students designed in U style but in double U designs one front and other was just back of it. In each U designs there were chairs for 22 students all together for 44 students. This design clearly showed that spaces in the classrooms did not meet the increasing number of students, which was a source of stress, as PDC stated in individual and focus group interviews. This design was also observed at PDA's lecture at 11.30-12.30 on 24 April 2012 at Demerstraat in Diest Campus. PDA stated that *"I use double U designs to overcome the difficulty of lecturing in crowded classes."*

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Weekly schedules of all participants were analyzed in terms of their workload and types of work in 2012 spring semester. Except PDB, PDD, PLB, PLD and PDF, all participants worked full time during the academic semester. PDA worked at Pre-School Education Program in Teacher Training College, PDB, PDC, PDD, PDE, PDF and PLA, PLC and PLD at Primary Education program, PLE both Primary and Pre-School programs and PLF both Primary and Secondary programs, PLB as a manager at international affairs department. PDA, PDB, PDE and PDF only worked in Diest Campus but attended meetings in Heverlee Campus in Leuven, PLA, PLB, PLC, PLD and PLF only worked in Heverlee Campus, PDC, PDD and PLE both in Diest Campus and in Heverlee Campus. PDA coached eight students, PDB twelve, PDC nineteen, PDD and PLE twelve, and PDF fourteen, PLC five, PLD seventeen and PLF thirty. PDA visited schools for observing practical teacher training of students two days a week, PDB, PDC and PLC one and half a day, PDD and PDF one, PLD and PLE half a day, PLF one and also PLA one but for checking practice in schools and dealing with the problems. PDA and PLD taught courses for six hours a week, PDB did not teach in autumn term, PDC eleven hours, PDD eight hours, PDF three, PLC four, PLE fourteen and PLF ten. PDA attended meetings one and half a day a week, PLE one day, PDB, PDC, PLC and PLD half a day, PDE and PLA four and half a day and PDF and PLB two days. Additionally, PLA managed educational sciences department and organized a staff meeting every week, PDE managed Diest campus, PLB managed and coordinated international exchanges for incoming and outgoing staff and students based on bilateral agreement with universities of other countries PDB coordinated practical teaching training of sixty students in Diest campus, PDF and PLC worked on a project one day a week both with staff and students, PLC worked as a Coordinator of Education for Flexible Routes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was done to understand how academic staff defined stress, what academic staff's perceptions on stress as a result of stressors originating from work setting were, how stressors affected academic staff, how

academic staff overcame stress as a result of stressors in academic setting and what and why academic staff thought job stress or stressors were like. Accordingly, data were collected through semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, participant observations and document analysis of staff's weekly schedules.

Findings related to the definition of stress showed that stress was not only a negative phenomenon affecting staff but also a positive phenomenon energizing people as stated by PDA. This finding is consistent with the definition of Selye's (1976) eustress which is called a positive, healthful and developmental stress response. Just as tension causes muscles to strengthen, some level of stress may lead to better performance and a more adjusted personality" (Tosi, Rizzo & Carroll, 1990).

As for analysis of participants' perceptions on stressors at work, they complained about stressors related to working conditions, salary and social facilities of college, work itself, management and supervision, formal and informal relations with colleagues and students and education policies of government and college. In the stressors participants complained about, workload was in the first rank, e-mails to answer second, working with large number of students third, insufficient physical conditions fourth, meetings without agenda and planning and changing profile of students and generation fifth. These findings are parallel with some studies done on stress in education sector. For instance, Corcoran, Walker, and White's (1988) found that overcrowded classrooms and heavy teacher workloads created stressful working conditions for teachers and caused absenteeism. Pithers and Soden (1998) also found that heavy workload, lack of resources and lack of time were certainly common sources of occupational stress for both the Scottish and Australian vocational teachers. Additionally, Gunbayi (2009) found that the things which were stressful for academic staff were workload, lack of administrative support and unpredictability. A more surprising finding was related to national education policy and the lack of teachers from different origins in Belgium which was another source of stress as PDE stated: "And especially education for instance we see that lots of people of foreign origin they become lawyers, they become politicians, they become economists but not teachers. Not teachers. That's something to do with language. Teacher training is very strict on the knowledge of Dutch Language because you have to learn the language." As PDE stated, that is not good when only Flemish origin boys and girls become teachers; they will have difficulty to teach students from different origins.

Although complained only by three junior academic staff PDD, PLE and PLF, one of the stressors worth mentioning was those of no job guarantee and being observed by managers at lectures. Three of the participants PDD, PLE and PLF were worried about their future at work due to agreement done every year although they knew it was typical on the education in Flanders area in Belgium. This finding is consistent with Catano et al.'s (2013) finding that that less secure employment status and work-life imbalance strongly predicted job dissatisfaction; work-life imbalance strongly predicted increased psychological distress. This finding is also consistent with Gillespie et al.'s (2001) finding in their research that two-thirds of academic staff described feeling anxious and stressed about the security of their jobs as a consequence of redundancy cycles. The management of the redundancy process was described as poor and often resulted in the ill-treatment of redundant staff, which further contributed to a climate of stress within the workplace.

Participants PDD, PLD, PLE and PLF complained about having to work extra at home as in education sector it was inevitable that one carry his or her work to home. This finding is consistent with Clark's (2000) view that *"Work and family systems, though different, are interconnected. Current theories assert that emotions spill over between the two systems or that the disappointment one may experience in one system may propel individuals to pursue fulfilling activities in the other"* (Clark, 2000, p. 748). It is also worth noting that five of the academic staff 42% mentioned about changing profile of students and generation. For example PDA criticized the students' being indifferent to studying and reading "The profile of students....they are more internet users and don't read books. They are not interested in studying... Additionally, PDB mentioned about students' being very familiar with ICT "The new generation have different mentality. Yes it is new generations who have grown up with computer and ICT. You don't know if they are listening to you or just surfing and checking e-mails." Similarly, PLA criticized the profiles of students who wanted to be teachers "When you go to teacher education, you should have kindness to and respect to other persons... you can ask at the beginning of course to turn off mobile phones but again you repeat this you have to take off. This is not evident for a person of twenty years".

On the other hand PLF stressed on the importance of classroom management of new generation: "For the young people now they say perfectly normal that they can check their mobile phones any time in the day that you want. So the students are really surprised that they couldn't do that during the lesson... classroom management, lecturers today I think they have to do it more and they have to be stricter about it." These findings are consistent with Glasser's (1990) and Mendler and Curwin's (1983) views on today's students that a great many of today's students have "low self-image" and "little interest" in school.

The findings related to the effects of stressors showed that the stressors had psychological, social, mental and physiological effect on academic staff. Among the effects of stressors participants mentioned about having ache in a part of body and being calm or no communication with others were in the first rank, need for more social relations, heart beating, not being able to sleep, less time for family, social relations and talks, being angry and arguing with people, complaining and questioning and being indifferent to others second. Those findings are supported by Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2008) with the findings in their study showing that stressors were important contributing factors to ill health of academics in higher education institutions. Besides, ill health could result in sickness, absenteeism and early retirements in higher education institutions. Besides, a study by Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) also showed that stress related to outcomes were those negative symptoms such as poor appetite, nervous tension, blood pressure, depression, cigarette use, heavy drinking and negative feelings at work.

When academic staff were asked how to overcome stress originating from academic work setting, they reported that they overcame stress by having informal social interaction, doing hobbies such as sports and music, getting medical support, being professional, realistic, reasonable or optimistic and avoiding stress. These findings are consistent with Gillespie et al.'s (2001) results in their study that learning to recognize and understand stress, managing expectations, planning and prioritizing, taking regular breaks from the work station, regularly exercising, and seeking alternative therapies for stress relief (e.g. yoga, massage), switching off from work, and focusing on non-work-related interests (e.g. gardening and sport) were reported as stress management techniques by three-quarters of all of the groups.

12 participants formulated metaphors related to animals, things, vehicles, plants, nature and micro organisms and they explained why they formulated those metaphors. All of the metaphors showed the negative sides of stress but only the metaphor thistle, formulated by PLB, showed both negative and positive sides of stress. One of the participants, PDA formulated animal metaphor as a chicken without head. Her metaphor is parallel with Middleton's (2009) definition of presenteeism: *"The term 'presenteeism' describes those who are at work but are not working effectively because of stress. We have all had likes that where you feel as if you have run around all day like a headless chicken but accomplished next to nothing."*

The findings of focus group, participant observation and document analysis also supported the findings based on individual interviews related to stressors as heavy workload, insufficient physical conditions, increasing number of students, combination of many different tasks and the problems with ICT and related to the ways to cope with stress as using staff room for resting and social interaction with colleagues and using alternative designs- e.g. double u design- in order to overcome the difficulties of crowded classrooms.

To sum up, these findings have important implications for the professional work life of academic staff working in universities. Findings showed that there were intensive and various kinds of stress originating from stressors in academic setting and the effects of stress might be either negative or positive. Thus, both academic staff and managers had better be aware of the stressors which are likely to affect academic work life negatively and positively in universities in order to set up an academic setting where academic staffs work happily and effectively.

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