THE ROLE OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TEHRAN

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper aims at studying the influence of the organizational climate of a school on the occupational stress of the teachers.

Material and Methods: The study population were all secondary schools teachers in Tehran in 2007. Using a multi-stage random sampling method, a sample volume of 220 people was determined using the Cochran formula. Two main instruments were used to measure the study variables: a 27-item questionnaire on organizational climate (four scales: open, engaged, disengaged and closed organizational climate, and a 53-item occupational stress questionnaire by Vingerhoets, employing 11 scales: Skill Discretion, Decision Authority, Task Control, Work and Time Pressure, Role Ambiguity, Physical Exertion, Hazardous Exposure, Job Insecurity, Lack of Meaningfulness, Social Support from Supervisor and Social Support from Coworkers. The frequency, percentage, and mean values were calculated and a stepwise regression analysis was performed to evaluate the statistical significance of the findings.

Results and Conclusions: The study results revealed that: (a) 40.02% of secondary school teachers experience occupational stress at a moderate or higher level; (b) the rate of occupational stress among teachers can be predicted using the scores on the school organizational climate; this predictability is highest for the open climate and gradually decreases through the engaged, and disengaged to the closed climate; (c) among the teachers working in the disengaged and closed climate, the rate of occupational stress significantly exceeds that recorded among the teachers working in the open climate.

Key words: Organizational climate, Occupational stress, Teachers

INTRODUCTION

The rapid technological development in recent decades has had impact on the foundations of the social systems and has led to many challenges. The school as the heart of the education and training system, and an operational line of training in every country, plays an important role in the activities for improving and developing the educational system. What distinguishes the educational organizations with regard to the success, efficiency and finally productivity of the training, is not only the school building, the number of classes, students, and teachers and the other quantitative features, but the fact that every school has its own specific climate and characteristics. The organizational climate of a school is the output of the efforts, communication, and interactions between the school’s internal groups, namely the headmaster, the assistants, the teachers, the administration and technical staff, and the students. While performing their services, they attempt to create a balance between the structural, personal, group and cultural systems of the school [1].

In one school, the teachers and students are comfortable, they communicate well and seem competent. In another school, tension, conflict and stress are dominant, which is reflected in the teachers’ behavior and in their communication with other teachers, the headmaster and the students. In yet another school, the headmaster is a powerful leader and the inner relationships within the school are very formal and serious. In contrast, there are schools where the headmaster’s and assistants’ relationships with the teachers and students are rather informal but neither party neglects its main duties. These differences describing

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the psychosocial environment of the school are related to its organizational culture and climate [1].

Working in a closed and unhealthy organizational climate brings about negative emotions and feelings on the part of the teachers and students, these including dissatisfaction, psychological pressure, shirking, indifference, and finally job alienation leading to occupational stress which can be called the catastrophe of the present century.

When the organizational climate of the school is deficient, the following factors of occupational stress appear: (1) insecurity, (2) work overload, (3) inadequate use of the worker’s skills, (4) obstacles to intra- and inter-group progress and competition [2].

Geese and Moss [3] define the occupational stress as a mutual action between the working conditions and individual features of a worker. It is defined as a result of imbalance between job demands and workers’ capabilities.

Jackson and Schuler [4] distinguish the following categories of occupational stressors: (1) role characteristics, (2) job characteristics, (3) social interactions, (4) organizational climate, (5) human resource management, (6) technology and physical characteristics.

Bendell, Culbertson, Shelton, and Carter [5] regard work tension as a tormenting and potential reaction that the worker shows in response to stressful factors. Callahan [6] mentions three groups of signs appearing under conditions of occupational stress:

1. Mental symptoms — these are emotional and cognitive problems which appear as a consequence of occupational stress. Job dissatisfaction is one of the most prevailing consequences of occupational stress. Other signs are depression, anxiety and frustration.

2. Physical symptoms of stress such as vertigo, headache, heartbeat, stomachache, cancer, skin diseases, and sleep disorders [7].

3. Behavioral signs — these symptoms are divided into two groups:
   a) the signs directly related to the worker himself, such as work refusal, increased daily alcohol drinking or drug use, and bulimia or anorexia,
   b) the signs whose consequences refer to organizations or administrative bodies; these including absence from work, job quitting, increasing rate of work accidents, and lack of productivity [7].

The results of Cameron and Orr [8] study show that occupational stress increases the risk of cardiac diseases and cerebral apoplexy.

The findings of previous studies confirm that occupational stress has destructive effects on mental health [9], physical health [10] and occupational function [11]. The work-related stress is not only a hazard to the worker’s health and organization’s productivity but it also imposes high expenses on the individual, organization and society.

The present research is an attempt to address a range of important mental and educational problems in relation to the role of the organizational climate of the school in the occupational stress of secondary school teachers in Tehran.

**STUDY OBJECTIVES**


Specific objective: to determine the rate of occupational stress in the population of secondary school teachers.

**Research questions**

1. What is the rate of occupational stress among secondary school teachers?

2. To what extent does the organizational climate in the school have influence on the occupational stress of the teachers?

**Variables**

Classification of variables

Independent variables — four types of school climate: (1) open, (2) engaged, (3) disengaged, and (4) closed climate.

Dependent variable — occupational stress.

Controlled variables — from further classification of the study group: (1) public schools, (2) girl schools (theoretical science field), (3) female teachers with bachelor’s de-
gree or higher in the age group of 32–52 years, with 10–30 years of job record.
Intervention variable: income rate.

Definition of variables

The organizational climate in the school is a relatively stable quality of the school's inner environment which is under the influence of the headmaster’s leadership. It has impact on the teachers' behavior and is based on collective perception. Four types can be distinguished: open, engaged, disengaged, and closed climate.

1. Open organizational climate — the headmaster listens to the teachers’ suggestions and advice and uses their constructive criticism. He appreciates the teachers' activities and supports them in their actions but does not exert an overt control over their work or put them under pressure. He also does not entangle teachers in the activities of the different bodies within the school. The teachers help and support one another; they respect the professional competence of their colleagues and perform their job with interest and pleasure. The teachers socialize with one another. They are friendly and sincere. Their meetings are useful.

2. Engaged organizational climate — the headmaster does not pay attention to the teachers’ suggestions and ideas. He does not give them a chance to express their opinions or criticism. He takes no heed of the academic and training activities of the teachers and does not support them. He controls the teachers’ actions carefully. The teachers are under pressure of a tiresome job and are entangled in different committees of the school, which disturbs them in their teaching activity. In contrast to the headmaster’s attitude, the teachers help and support one another and respect the competence of their colleagues. The teachers socialize with one another. They are friendly and sincere and their meetings are useful.

3. Disengaged organizational climate — the headmaster pays attention to the teachers’ suggestions and advice, and accepts and uses their constructive criticism. The headmaster praises the teachers' achievements and supports them, but he does not control or supervise their work. He does not entangle teachers in additional jobs and does not put them under pressure. In contrast to this attitude are the relations between the teachers - they do not help or support one another and do not respect the professional competence of their colleagues. They also perform their job without interest or pleasure. They keep a distance from other teachers and their meetings are futile.

4. Closed organizational climate — the headmaster does not care about the teachers' suggestions and advice. He does not give them a chance to criticize or express opinions. He takes no heed of the teachers’ academic and training activities and does not support them. However, he thoroughly examines and controls the teachers' actions. The teachers are under pressure of a tiresome job, and they are engaged in a number of additional activities in the school. This significantly hinders their normal teaching function. Also the teachers do not help or support one another. They do not respect the occupational competence of their co-workers. They perform their duties without any interest or pleasure. They are not intimate and their meetings are futile [1].

5. Occupational stress — it can be defined as harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker [12].

6. Secondary school (new system) — it is a school program lasting for three years. The first grade is common for all the students. In the second grade, the students attend specific programs within the following educational fields: (1) theoretical field (sciences: mathematics and physics, empirical sciences, and human sciences), (2) technical and professional field, (3) work and knowledge field. After completing this three-year course, the student obtains the secondary school diploma [13].

Operational definition of variables

The organizational climate was assessed using Hoy and Clover questionnaire on the School Organizational Climate...
for secondary schools [14]. This questionnaire comprises 27 questions in six dimensions. Three of the dimensions describe the different aspects of the headmaster’s behavior (supportive, directive and restrictive [preventive]). The other three dimensions describe different aspects of the teacher’s behavior (professional, intimate, disengaged behavior). The responses are ranked on a four-degree scale (rarely, sometimes, frequently, and always).

Occupational stress was measured using Vingerhoets and Marcelissen questionnaire [15] including 53 questions divided into 11 subscales. The responses are ranked on a five-degree scale (very high, high, mean, little, very little). Every subscale score is classified either as a higher than mean (high occupational stress) or lower than mean level (low occupational stress).

**Measurement instruments**

Two main instruments were used: the School Organizational Climate and occupational stress questionnaires.

The School Organizational Climate questionnaire [14] contains 27 four-choice questions (rarely, sometimes, frequently, always) in six dimensions, three of which describe different aspects of the headmaster’s behavior (supportive, directive, restrictive) in 14 questions. The other three dimensions describe different aspects of the teacher’s behavior (professional, intimate, disengaged) in 13 questions.

**Headmaster’s behavior**

One of the important aspects of the school climate is the headmaster interaction with the teachers. It significantly contributes to the school organizational climate. The three dimensions of the headmaster’s behavior include:

1. Supportive behavior — it is reflected in the headmaster’s real interest, care and support for the teachers. The headmaster not only respects the professional competence of the teachers but also treats them fairly.
2. Directive behavior — the headmaster’s behavior is entirely duty-oriented and he/she does not care much about the personal needs of the teachers.
3. Restrictive behavior — instead of fostering the teachers’ work, the headmaster threatens them and piles up difficulties and obstacles.

**Teachers’ behavior**

Another important aspect of the school climate is the behavior of the teachers. The teachers work and react as team members. When they begin teaching in the school, they review the behavior and interaction patterns, which has important consequences not only for themselves but also for their relations with the headmaster. It is thought that the following three dimensions have a strong impact on the school climate:

1. Collegial behavior: it refers to the interactions between the teachers and to the supportive vocational behavior.
2. Intimate behavior: it refers to the personal relationships between the teachers not only within the school but also out of it.
3. Disengaged behavior: it refers to the feeling of alienation and separation. This behavior reflects the lack of support and solidarity on the part of other teachers. Two general and independent factors were identified: (a) the open or close teachers’ behavior, and (b) the open or closed headmaster’s behavior. This structure makes it possible to distinguish four categories of the organizational climate. Two of them characterize a mutual agreement between the headmaster’s and the teachers’ behavior, and the other two, a mutual disagreement in this respect. These categories are as follows:
1. Both the factors are open.
2. Both the factors are closed.
3. The headmaster’s attitude towards the teachers is open, but the relationship between the teachers is closed.
4. The headmaster’s relationship with the teachers is open but the relationship between the teachers is closed.

Every school has an organizational climate resembling one of the four categories. In our study, the subscale scores for questionnaire responses were divided, based on the mean value, into the high and low score groups, which yielded four types of the organizational climate: open, closed, engaged, and disengaged. The following table shows the scale for the different behaviors of the teachers and headmaster with respect to the four climates.

Occupational stress questionnaire
According to the NIOSH definition, occupational 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” [12]. Geese and Moss [3] refer to occupational stress as an interrelation between the working conditions and the individual characteristics of the worker, when the job demands exceed the worker’s capabilities. Bendell, Carter, Shelton and Culbertson [5] state that occupational stress is a potential tormenting reaction which the worker shows towards a stressogenic factor.

The occupational stress questionnaire based on the Karizak and Mishigan theory was developed in the Netherlands [15]. The questionnaire comprises 53 questions in 11 dimensions: (1) Skill Discretion, (2) Decision Authority, (3) Task Control, (4) Work and Time Pressure, (5) Role Ambiguity, (6) Physical Exertion, (7) Hazardous Exposure, (8) Job Insecurity, (9) Lack of Meaningfulness, (10) Social Support from Supervisor (11) Social Support from Coworkers. The responses are marked on a five-degree scale (very high, high, mean, low, very low) ranked respectively as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. Every subscale score can be divided into a high or low score category using the mean value as the criterion of distribution. The cut-off point of the percentile ranks amounts to 146.

The psychometric proprieties of the questionnaire are satisfactory [15,17].

Data analysis
At first, the descriptive statistics were performed. Then a multivariate regression analysis using a stepwise method [18] was applied to study the effect of organizational climate on the occupational stress of the teachers. The cut-off points of 0.1 and 0.05 were used when entering and removing variables from the model.

Study results
The study population were all secondary schools teachers in Tehran in 2007. Using a multi-stage random sampling method, a sample volume of 220 people was determined according to the Cochran formula.

The rate of occupational stress among secondary school teachers, by different dimensions of occupational stress, was calculated in five categories ranging from “very weak” to “very good” (Table 2). As displayed in the table above, 40.2% of the teachers showed occupational stress at levels below the mean value, 26.6% at the mean level and 13.4% at the level higher than the mean. Comparing the means for the different dimensions of occupational stress, one can note clear differences in the rate of occupational stress among the teachers. The highest rates were found for the Task Control dimension and the lowest one for the Lack of Meaningfulness.
Table 2. Frequency distribution and percentage rate of occupational stress among secondary school teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Very high (5)</th>
<th>High (4)</th>
<th>Mean (3)</th>
<th>Low (2)</th>
<th>Very low (1)</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fre-</td>
<td>Per-</td>
<td>Fre-</td>
<td>Per-</td>
<td>Fre-</td>
<td>Per-</td>
<td>Fre-</td>
<td>Per-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Meaningfulness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support from Supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous Exposure</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support from Coworkers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Authority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Exertion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Discretion</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Ambiguity</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and Time Pressure</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Insecurity</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Control</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean rate of occupational stress</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. The rate of occupational stress, by the type of school organizational climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Closed climate</th>
<th>Disengaged climate</th>
<th>Engaged climate</th>
<th>Open climate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational stress at levels higher than mean</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational stress at levels lower than mean</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
by an open organizational climate, 12.1% of the teachers showed high and 45.5% low levels of occupational stress. We can conclude that the rate of occupational stress among the teachers who worked in the closed and disengaged organizational climates was higher than the respective rate for the teachers working in the open and engaged organizational climates.

As revealed by the data in Table 3, as much as 43.4% of teachers in the schools with a closed organizational climate showed high levels and 13.2% low levels of occupational stress. In the schools with the disengaged organizational climate, the occupational stress was high for 29.3% and low for 10.7% of the teachers. As regards the schools with engaged organizational climate, the level of occupational stress was high for 15.2% of teachers, and low for 30.6%. In the schools characterized by an open organizational climate, 12.1% of the teachers showed high and 45.5% low levels of occupational stress. We can conclude that the rate of occupational stress among the teachers who worked in the closed and disengaged organizational climates was higher than the respective rate for the teachers working in the open and engaged organizational climates.

For the purpose of studying the effect of the school climate on occupational stress among teachers, a stepwise regression analysis was conducted using occupational stress as the dependent variable and organizational climate as the independent variable. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 6.

### Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the organizational climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Organizational climate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5. Variables included in regression analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R square (%)</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>Total square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>0.73 (a)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>248.69</td>
<td>26.720</td>
<td>26.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>First-stage analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>22.24</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48.96</td>
<td>27.57</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>0.74 (b)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>132.28</td>
<td>13.760</td>
<td>27.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>Second-stage analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) predictors: (constant), open organizational climate.
(b) predictors: (constant), open and engaged organizational climates.
(c) dependent variable: occupational stress.

Table 6. Regression of the organizational climate on occupational stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step &amp; independent variable</th>
<th>Non-standardized coefficients β</th>
<th>Standardized coefficients Beta</th>
<th>R square R² (%)</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open organizational climate</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged organizational climate</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.005**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged organizational climate</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed organizational climate</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open organizational climate</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged organizational climate</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged organizational climate</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed organizational climate</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Regression weights (β) are non-standardized coefficients obtained at Step 2, and individual T values are those obtained at Step 2.
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001
multivariate regression analysis was performed. The results are presented in Tables 5–6.

As presented in Table 5, out of the four categories of the organizational climate, the open climate showed the highest correlation with the dependent variable (occupational stress). It explained 54.5% of occupational stress variance. The open climate in the first-stage analysis and the engaged climate in the second-stage most closely correlated with the dependent variable (occupational stress). Altogether they explained 56.2% of the occupational stress variance, which is significant with respect to the F-test at P < 0.001 (both stages).

The regression coefficients of the variables presented in Table 6 indicate a significant role of these variables in predicting occupational stress: the open climate with $\beta = -0.32$ and the engaged climate with $\beta = -0.09$ were found to have the strongest predictive value. An inverse relationship was noted between the open or engaged climate and teachers' occupational stress, meaning that an increase in the level of the open or engaged climate would bring about a decrease in occupational stress. In other words, the rate of occupational stress among teachers can be predicted using the scores on the organizational climate in the school. This predictability is highest for the open climate and gradually decreases through the engaged and disengaged to the closed climate.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Occupational stress is a universal phenomenon and its main feature is to challenge the psychological, familial and social dimensions of an individual. It is considered an illness of the advanced and industrialized societies.

Gadzella, Stacks and Stephens [19] believe that as a part of every human's life, the occupational stress refers to some extent to all individuals, and consider it a normal response to external or internal demands. However, if such a response becomes chronic, it can be a source of defeat, inadaptability and extensive desperation, thus causing cognitive and behavioral disorders.

The findings of the present study revealed that 40.02% of secondary school teachers in Tehran showed mean or higher than mean levels of occupational stress. Comparing the mean scores for the different subscales of occupational stress, one can note clear and tangible differences in the level of occupational stress experienced in relation to specific psychosocial demands. It was highest for the Task Control subscale, and lowest for the Lack of Meaningfulness. Moreover, the rate of occupational stress among the teachers who worked in the closed and disengaged organizational climates was higher than in the group of teachers whose workplace was characterized by the open and engaged climates.

Gadzella, Stacks and Stephens [19] regard occupational stress as an interaction between the conditions of work and individual characteristics of the worker when the job demands exceed the worker's capabilities. Most specialists are unanimous in that an occupational stress causes disorders in the psychological, physical, familial and social domains and consequently lead to job dissatisfaction, decreased productivity and increased rate of errors at work [20]. The results of these studies are consistent with our previous findings.

Shafi Abadi [21] presumes that some characteristics such as mental and physical health, flexibility, secrecy and teachers' awareness have influence on the efficiency of the teachers' job.

Samari [22] found out that most of the public school teachers in the Khorasan province showed occupational stress at levels higher than the mean value. Similar findings pertain to the present study as well.

The results of the study by Quick, Murphy and Harrell [23] indicated that occupational stress can cause behavioral, psychological, and physiological disturbances among the teachers. Therefore, it is essential to have a preventive program and to undertake actions to develop an effective, dynamic and professional system for guidance and consultation on occupational stress as well as include this problem in the general education program and training process.

The findings of the present study indicate that the rate of occupational stress among secondary school teachers can be predicted using the scores on the organizational climate in the school. This predictability is highest for the open
organizational climate and gradually decreases through the engaged and disengaged to the closed organizational climate.

Hoy and Clover [24] demonstrated that school development depends on the openness of the organizational climate, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the school employees, the teachers and the headmaster. Cheng [25] presumes that in the schools with an open organizational climate, compared to those with a closed climate, the school employees and the teachers and students are more satisfied, happy and highly confident. The rates of occupational stress among the teachers who work in the closed organizational climate are significantly higher than among those working in the open climate. Cheng’s findings are concordant with our own results. The study by Cooper and Sloan [26] revealed a significant relationship between the organizational climate and the health hazards related to occupational stress. In a literature review, Freiberg [27] found that such factors as the work process, monotonous work, strict discipline, formal and unemotional communication, and discrimination in workplace result in occupational stress. The results of this study are consistent with the present findings. The results of the studies by Hirokawa, Yagi, and Miyata [28] confirm that we must seek the origins of the failure or success of the teacher’s function in the school organizational climate. Alagheband [1] presumes that the openness of the organizational climate correlates with (a) a lower sense of alienation among the students, (b) fewer educational falls, and (c) more satisfaction on the part of the students, the teachers and school employees.

Brantley, Cocke, Jones, and Goreczny [29] express an opinion that a closed organizational climate is characterized by a low level of group mentality, consideration fluency and stability and a high level of interruption, disinterestedness, spacing and emphasizing production, which results in work-related tension. The state of a chronic tension or stress may in turn lead to depression, anxiety, and finally to job fatigue.

The study conducted by Hamidi [30] revealed that the rates of absence, disinterestedness towards work and job dissatisfaction of individuals who work in a closed organizational climate is significantly higher than the respective rates for persons working in an open organizational climate.

The results of the project undertaken by Heidarzadegan [31] show that the closed organizational climate brings about job alienation, job dissatisfaction, and mental and occupational strain and stress. These findings are also consistent with our own results. After reviewing a number of studies on the school organizational climate, Hoy and Miskel [32] concluded that in the schools with a closed organizational climate, the headmaster does not care about the opinions, needs and initiatives of the teachers, employees and students. He does not give them an opportunity to express their criticism. The headmaster controls the behavior of the teachers and school employees. They perform their job with no interest or enthusiasm. They are not friendly towards one another and their meetings are futile.

De Longis, Folkman, and Lazarus [33] believe that the more closed and disengaged the school climate, the higher the rate of negative mental reactions (anger, depression, anxiety), physical reactions (headache, heart disease) and behavioral reactions (drug and cigarette use). The results of the study by Elahi [34] demonstrate that an individual perception of the organizational climate has influence on job alienation. Considering all the findings described above, it is necessary to take up actions to create an open organizational climate to prevent the development of occupational stress. The open organizational climate with genuine and proper interpersonal communication probably helps develop the working conditions in which the teacher’s function can be successful. The teachers working in a school where such a climate prevails are more self-confident and efficient in their job. Moreover, the open organizational climate in the school brings forth positive results with regard to the school management and surveillance. This results in a higher efficiency of the teachers. In contrast, the closed organizational climate produces an environment full of suspicion and hostility. This destroys any efforts towards productivity, engagement and cooperation.
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS
BASED ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. The assessment of the organizational climate in the school should be a part of its training curriculum. Schools with closed and disengaged organizational climates should be singled out and encouraged to introduce organizational changes. Then through a number of workshops and short-time training at work as well as meetings for the headmasters, teachers and school employees, the open organizational climate should be promoted by discussing its characteristics, advantages and effectiveness. It should be the role of the headmaster to initiate the changes and reforms aimed at developing a healthy organizational climate in the school.

2. The rate of occupational stress among the teachers should be assessed using reliable tests. The teachers who show moderate and high levels of occupational stress should be identified. Special training courses and workshops should be organized to teach them how to cope with occupational stress.

REFERENCES


