

Perceived Stress, Resilience and Hope among Special Educators

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The burgeoning demand for special educators within Indian educational institutions contrasts starkly with a notable scarcity attributed to various stressors leading to avoidance, burnout, and attrition in this profession. Hence, there is a pressing need to identify and relate the driving factors contributing to thriving in this field. Previous studies have suggested that Resilience and Hope are acquired traits helpful in dealing with stress and reducing the occurrence of burnout in various professions. Therefore, this study aimed to understand how Perceived stress, Resilience and Hope interact among special educators. Further, it focused on determining the effect of Perceived stress on Resilience and Hope. Around 70 special educators across India participated online and offline in this correlational study. The results indicated a moderate negative correlation between Perceived stress and Resilience, a weak negative correlation between Perceived stress and Hope and a moderate positive correlation between Resilience and Hope. The findings also indicated a statistically significant multivariate impact of Perceived stress on Resilience and Hope. The study implies promoting individual initiatives that encourage self-care and reflecting activities. It also implies Organizational changes that enhance professional development by providing Resilience training and Mental health workshops to ensure the well-being of this population and advocate work-life balance. While this study focused on the general role of Perceived stress in Resilience and Hope, further studies can be conducted to identify precisely the influence of work-related stress on the level of Resilience and Hope experienced by this population.

Keywords: special educators, perceived stress, resilience, hope, burnout, attrition

The varying demands of an educational setting contribute to stress being the most commonly used term among education stakeholders. Students, teachers, staff members and higher authorities often anticipate difficult situations and challenges in an educational setting. These difficult situations cause a type of worry or tension among the stakeholders, and this experience is termed stress. The difficult situation that causes stress is known as stressors. Negative stressors lead to extreme stress, which takes a toll on the physical and mental health of the person. However, each person perceives and experiences stress at varying levels that often contribute to their different ways of coping (WHO, 2023). Since the students are primary stakeholders, studies are conducted to examine the prevalence of stress among students and suggest several intervention strategies to monitor their well-being (Chhetri et al., 2021). Apart from students, teachers play a vital role in the setting by providing an engaging teaching-learning environment to the students whilst

maintaining a positive relationship with the students, parents, and other stakeholders of the school (Luan & Bakar, 2008). Therefore, teaching as a profession has significant responsibilities and challenges.

The stress in teaching professions is high compared to other occupations and is escalating worldwide (Iriarte Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020). The prevalence of stress among teachers is very high across different countries. In India, several studies have adopted different methodologies to measure stress levels and the factors contributing to stress among teachers across different regions. Collectively, these studies provide evidence of higher stress levels among the teacher population (Bhattacharjee et al., 2021; Dawn et al., 2021; Parashar et al., 2019). Severe stress experienced by individuals in this profession has led to detrimental consequences in several ways. Extreme stress experienced by teachers at work is known to cause loss of motivation and burnout and eventually reduces job satisfaction, impacts an Individual's quality of work, productivity and affects their physical and mental health drastically (Angreni & Ardana, 2020; Bakker & Vries, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021). Recently, the pandemic was another exacerbating factor for teachers in distress, increasing attrition in the profession (Diliberti et al., 2021). Moreover, teacher-perceived stress has an impact on students' academic outcomes and students' well-being. Therefore, work stress has a spillover effect on the personal as well as the professional life of an Individual. It is essential to look after the well-being of teachers due to the detrimental effects of stress on the Individual and its impact on the students and the overall work environment.

Among the teacher population, special education teachers experience a variety of demands in their work setting. A special

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educator is certified to work with students with disabilities and assist them in their education by practising a range of teaching techniques that accommodate the needs of these children (Francisco et al., 2020). According to Robinson et al. (2019), the reasons for burnout among teachers working in a special education setting are broadly categorized into three variables: student-related, school-related, and teacher-related variables. Several other studies have also revealed that these variables collectively contribute to the higher attrition rates among special educators (Brunsting et al., 2014; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Shen et al., 2015). To understand the stressful components involved in this profession, a study conducted by Hester et al. (2020) mentions that these components include the Individual conducting screening, taking care of the legal mandates that are involved in the job, collaborating with the administrators, attending to Students' behaviour which is at times problematic, meeting their educational and social needs and communicating with the parents. Although people willingly enter this profession with passion and determination, due to an inability to meet the profession's demands, most of them are either experiencing burnout or are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Therefore, it directly affects the quality of special education and leads to a shortage of qualified professionals in this field (Pazim & Al, 2021). The significant consequences of stress on special educators are a cause of concern due to its repercussions on the Individual and other school stakeholders. Teachers adopt various coping mechanisms to deal with work-related stress. However, it is essential to identify the ways of coping as it influences their quality of life. Hastings and Brown (2002) suggested that using maladaptive coping strategies contributes to teacher burnout. However, the well-being of the teachers is often ignored by the organization and the Individuals themselves. Therefore, there is a pressing need to recognize the coping styles and protective factors within special educators and to relate these factors with their perceived stress to understand their functioning in personal and professional environments.

Recent studies have emphasized identifying teachers' socio-emotional capacity and their impact on students' learning experiences. Teachers' socio-emotional capacity is susceptible to their existing psychological state and coping ability, including various cognitive, emotional, and behavioural strategies (Buettner et al., 2016). Cancio et al. (2018) conducted a study to understand the occupational stress experienced by special education teachers in four U.S. states and their different coping strategies. One widely used coping strategy they adopted was spending time with family and friends and support from close relationships. Several other studies also emphasized the high preference of special educators to seek social support during stress. However, only some individuals might have a healthy support system, and very often, people experience social stressors rather than support (Antonioni et al., 2009). Studies also reported that time management and taking leave are also a few coping strategies they employ (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Therefore, special educators adopt specific coping strategies considered protective but not necessarily sustainable enough to stay in the field for a long duration. Identifying individual resources that are effective for special educators to deal with long-term stress would be beneficial in preventing burnout and attrition. However, very few studies have been conducted to examine the individual characteristics that contribute to dealing with stress experienced by them.

Brittle (2020) distinguishes coping styles related to individual

characteristics into adaptive and maladaptive. Adaptive coping styles include rational and detached components, and Maladaptive coping styles include avoidant and detached components. The study suggested that special education teachers who adopted maladaptive coping styles, such as regulation of emotional distress and escaping stressful situations, contributed to decreased psychological well-being and personal commitment towards work. A study by Boujut et al. (2017) identified that emotion-focused coping styles significantly mediated perceived stress. Therefore, maladaptive coping styles eventually predicted higher levels of burnout among special educators. However, few studies highlight the need to identify, relate and enhance adaptive coping strategies to deal with perceived stress, especially among special education teachers.

Since problem-solving, rational and adaptive coping styles are suggested to be effective in dealing with perceived stress, resilience and hope can be considered as some of the long-term individual resources that facilitate individuals' utilization of adaptive coping strategies. Both these are considered not as an inherent trait but rather are learned by individuals as a cognitive ability that can be acquired over time through training and practice (Lazarus, 1999; Benjamin & Black, 2012). According to Folkman (2010), hope is a resource that facilitates adaptive coping as an outcome of an individual's cognitive appraisal of the situation. An individual with high Hope has an enhanced cognitive ability to adopt positive coping strategies to deal with stressors in life. Folkman (2010) also suggested that hope and coping are dynamic and reciprocal. Several research studies have attempted to define resilience and its role as an adaptive quality in adversity. Bobek (2002) defined resilience as the ability to develop competence in dealing with stressful situations. Shirazizadeh et al. (2019) explain the recent shift of research interest towards resilience and suggest that these studies view resilience as an interpersonal quality that aids teachers in dealing with stressors and contributes to their overall well-being. Moreover, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has emphasized strengthening transversal competencies among teachers (Jardim et al., 2022). A systematic review conducted by Fernandes et al. (2021) emphasized that special educators with enhanced soft skills such as effective communication and collaboration, reflectivity and resilience, and technical expertise are more equipped and successful in combating challenging situations in their profession. The study also mentions the lack of descriptive, correlational and causal research studies conducted, especially among the special education population.

Several research studies have been conducted in clinical populations to understand the relationship between perceived stress, resilience, and hope. Studies investigated this relationship among patients, nurses, caregivers, physicians and students pursuing medicine who continuously deal with adverse and traumatic situations in their day-to-day lives (Duncan & Hellman, 2020; Rushton et al., 2015; Wilks & Croom, 2009; Zhang et al., 2021). These studies collectively suggest that resilient and hopeful individuals thrive in their respective professions and are better at dealing with adverse situations in their work lives. Although the stress encountered in clinical settings is highly different compared to other professions and is predominantly a matter of life and death, evidence suggests that resilience and hope are considered essential soft skills for special educators (Fernandes et al., 2021). Some studies have been conducted among the teacher population to understand the role of resilience and hope in Individuals' work-life

and well-being. MacIntyre et al. (2022) investigated the role of hope in Language teachers' changing stress, coping and well-being during the pandemic. The results revealed that hope was significantly correlated with well-being and successful coping with stress. However, very few studies have been conducted in special education to associate the role of resilience, hope, and perceived stress with the individuals who belong in the field of special education, including students, teachers and parents. A qualitative study by Sadziak et al. (2018) compared the resiliency of mainstream and special education teachers and suggested that the physical education teachers who belong to special education have the highest resiliency and contribute to reducing the negative impact of working conditions, such as burnout and lack of motivation. Moreover, a qualitative study by Hussin and Al (2021) indicated that teachers' resilience increased while working in a special education setting. Overall, it increased their willingness to stay and work in this setting for a long duration. Shenaar-Golan (2017) conducted a study to understand the relationship between Hope and the subjective well-being of parents of children with special needs. Results revealed that the level of Hope significantly contributes to positive well-being among parents of children with special needs. Resilience and Hope, despite being of high significance in dealing with stress, so far in the field of special education, there are no studies conducted to examine the relationship between perceived stress, resilience and hope. The lack of studies presented here suggests the essentiality of examining the relationship among special educators due to the detrimental effects of perceived stress on special educators' professional and personal lives.

Considering the importance of the role of resilience and hope in dealing with stress in the special education population, it is also necessary to understand the effects of perceived stress on the hope and resilience of special education teachers. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between perceived stress, resilience and hope among special educators and investigate whether Perceived stress affects Resilience and Hope.

Method

Participants

The sample population consisted of special educators in India, as this study reports data on the relationship between three variables: perceived stress, resilience and hope among the population. Through purposive sampling, the data was collected from the participants who met the following criteria: a) A special educator currently working in a school/organization related to children with special needs in India, and b) They have a certification or a degree in special education.

The data were collected using demographic forms, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and the Adult State Hope Scale. The demographic information form includes Initials, Age, Sex, Socioeconomic status, Annual income, current Working location, Qualifications and Number of years of experience as a special educator. There is a lack of Professionally trained Special educators in India (Elton-Chalcraft et al., 2016). Therefore, finding participants who met the inclusion criteria for the study was challenging. However, a total of 70 participants from across India participated in the study. The questionnaires were shared both online and offline. Data was collected offline by sharing the questionnaires across special schools and intervention centres located in Bengaluru. Out of 70 participants, 19 special educators participated through the offline data collection.

Online data collection was carried out by sharing the questionnaires through Google Forms across multiple digital platforms such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp, E-mails, and Telegram, in which 51 special educators participated.

Measures

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): It is a tool developed by Cohen et al. (1994) to measure the different situations that affect an individual's appraisal and intends to measure the perception of stress among individuals. The scale consists of 10 items. The Cronbach's alpha of the PSS-10 scale ranges from .71 to .91, and the test-retest reliability has been reported to be $r > .70$ among different populations (Mozumder, 2022). There is adequate internal consistency in the original PSS-10 and the translated versions (Lee, 2012). In India, the validation of the scale has been carried out for different languages. All the translated versions have shown good psychometric properties (Pangtey et al., 2020; Jaiswal et al., 2021). The concurrent validity of the PSS-10 ranges from moderate to strong correlation. Every item of all the 10 items is presented with a five-point option. The scoring is done by scoring 0-4 for each item. Six items (1,2,3,6,9, & 10) are scored in the forward direction, and the remaining four (4,5,7, & 8) are scored in the backward direction. The range of scores would be from 0 to 40, and a high score indicates higher perceived stress (Mozumder, 2022).

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10): This scale intends to measure the level of resilience in an Individual. CD-RISC is the most reliable and valid scale compared to other resilience scales (Connor & Davison, 2003). Within the general population, Cronbach's alpha is .85 for this scale, indicating good reliability (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007). The scale has been validated across different cultural populations, including Asian countries, and has good psychometric properties. The CD-RISC 10-item scale has been validated in the Indian student population as well (Singh & Yu, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha is 0.91, depicting high internal consistency, and the test-retest reliability is $r = 0.90$ (Wang et al., 2010; Pretorius & Padmanabhanunni, 2022). The scale consists of 10 items. Each item on the scale has a five-point option. The scores range from 0-4 in the forward direction, and high scores represent high resilience in Individuals.

Snyder's' Adult State Hope Scale: It is developed by Snyder et al. (1996) intends to measure a person's hope in the current state. The internal reliability of the scale is 0.90-.95 for overall scales and has strong concurrent and discriminant validity. The measure consists of six items and assesses goal-directed thinking. Each item is rated using an eight-point format and distributed between agency and pathway subscales. The total is calculated by aggregating the pathway and agency subscales. The scores on the pathway subscale range from 3 to 24, and the agency subscale ranges from 3 to 24. By adding the total scores of both the pathway and agency subscales, scores between 6 and 24 are obtained. A high score indicates high pathway and agency thinking (Snyder, 2002). However, this scale has yet to be used widely across different populations.

Procedure

The data collection proceeded with the approval of the Ethics committee of Christ University, Bengaluru. During the data collection procedure, a brief description of the study, including the study objectives, was shared with the participants, the school principal, and the respective authorities of the intervention centres.

Along with this, informed consent was shared with the participants to seek their willingness to participate in the study. The informed consent mentions the measures taken to maintain the confidentiality of the information collected and their voluntariness to discontinue their participation in the study at any point of time during the research. The brief description of the research and the informed consent were shared with the participants in both the online and offline data collection process.

Statistical Analysis

This study intends to examine the relationship between Perceived stress, Resilience and Hope among Special educators and the effect of perceived stress on the Resilience and Hope of Special Educators and adopts a correlational research design. To analyze the data, Jamovi software was used. The normality of the data was determined using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Correlational analysis was conducted using Spearman's correlation and along with it, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to analyze the effects of perceived stress on the hope and resilience of special educators.

Results

The present study examined the relationship between perceived stress, resilience, and hope among special educators and the effect of Perceived stress on the resilience and hope of special educators. The results are presented for the reliability and distribution characteristics of the three instruments assessing perceived stress, resilience and hope in the context of a Special education setting. The data was analysed to investigate the internal consistency, normality, and central tendency. The key findings suggested that the scales indicate good internal consistency as they obtain Cronbach's α values of 0.738, 0.761 and 0.716 for the Perceived stress scale (PSS-10), Connor-Davison Resilience scale (CD-RISC-10), and State Hope scale (SHS-6) respectively.

The descriptive statistics provide a comprehensive overview of the central tendencies and the variability of the constructs among the Special educator population. The mean and standard deviation for each variable are as follows: Perceived stress ($M=16.0$, $S.D. = 5.2$), Resilience ($M=29.1$, $S.D. = 4.89$) and Hope ($M=39.0$, $S.D. = 5.71$).

Further, the normality of the data, assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test, is of values Perceived stress scale ($p = .220$, $w = .977$), Connor-Davidson Resilience ($p = .543$, $w = .985$) and Snyder's State Hope Scale (SHS) ($p = .002$, $w = .938$). A significant p-value of .002 for the State Hope Scale indicates that the data is not normally distributed for this scale. The results suggest the use of a non-parametric statistical approach for further analysis of the data.

Table 1 presents the correlational analysis of the variables

Perceived stress, Resilience and Hope. The study assumes a null hypothesis that there is no relationship between Perceived Stress, Resilience and Hope. The study's first objective is to investigate the relationship between Perceived Stress and Resilience. Spearman's correlation suggests a moderate negative monotonic correlation between Perceived stress and Resilience $r(70) = -.50$, $p < .001$. The study's second objective is to investigate the relationship between Perceived Stress and Hope. Spearman's correlation suggests a weak negative monotonic correlation between Perceived stress and Hope $r(70) = -.36$, $p < .005$. The study's third objective is to investigate the relationship between Resilience and Hope. Spearman's correlation suggests a moderate positive monotonic correlation between Resilience and Hope $r(70) = .42$, $p < .001$. The obtained results suggest a moderate correlation between the three variables. The current findings show evidence of a correlation between Perceived Stress, Resilience and Hope. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Further, the study's objective is to examine the effect of Perceived Stress on Resilience and Hope among Special educators. Perceived Stress is considered the independent variable, and Resilience and Hope are the dependent variables. The study posits a null hypothesis stating that Perceived Stress has no effect on Resilience and Hope among Special educators. The statistical approach of Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted using Jamovi software to understand the relationship between multiple dependent and independent variables. Using MANCOVA, the study assessed the impact of the independent variable (Perceived stress) on two correlated dependent variables (Resilience & Hope) and further examined the between-group differences.

Table 1

Correlation between Perceived Stress, Resilience and Hope

Variables	$r(70)$	p
Perceived Stress & Resilience	-.50	<.001
Perceived Stress & Hope	-.36	<.001
Resilience & Hope	.42	<.005

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents the results for the effects of the independent variable (Perceived stress) on each dependent variable (Resilience & Hope) separately. Between Perceived Stress and Resilience, the F-statistic $F(1, 1) = 32.7$, $p < .001$ suggests a significant effect of Perceived Stress on Resilience. Besides that, the F-statistic $F(1, 1) = 10.6$, $p < .005$, suggests a significant effect of perceived stress on hope. It can be inferred that perceived stress has a significant effect on the dependent variables resilience and hope separately.

Table 2

Univariate Analysis of Perceived Stress, Resilience and Hope

	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Perceived Stress	Resilience	536	1	536.3	32.7	<.001
	Hope	303	1	303.1	10.6	<.005
Residuals	Resilience	1114	68	16.4		
	Hope	1948	68	28.6		

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 3 presents the results of the Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) wherein Wilk's Lambda = .653, $F(2, 67) = 17.8$, $p < .001$. The results suggest a statistically significant multivariate impact of Perceived stress on Resilience and Hope, indicating significant differences between the group means. It can be inferred

that perceived stress has an effect on both resilience and hope simultaneously and has a significant multivariate effect. The study's null hypothesis posits that Perceived Stress has no effect on the resilience and hope of special educators. However, the results provide evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3

Multivariate Analysis of Co-variance between Perceived Stress Resilience and Hope

	Value	F	df1	df2	p
Perceived Stress					
Wilk's Lambda	0.653	17.8	2	67	<.001

Note. The multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived stress, resilience, and hope. Perceived Stress was assessed using Wilk's Lambda test, indicating a significant multivariate effect.

Discussion

The present study's findings suggest a moderate negative correlation between Perceived Stress and Resilience, a weak negative correlation between Perceived Stress and Hope and a moderate positive correlation between Resilience and Hope. The findings also imply a significant effect of Perceived Stress on the Resilience and Hope of special educators.

The study's results indicate that if there is an increase in the level of Perceived Stress experienced by the Special educator, the individual's Resilience will likely decrease. According to the transactional theory of Stress proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the perception of Stress by an individual affects the individual's cognitive appraisal and coping strategies. Resilience and Optimism are individual resources that accommodate appraising the intensity of the stressful situation and help them navigate their coping strategies. However, an individual who appraises a situation to be stressful, challenging, and threatening and who does not effectively use their individual resources optimally is provoked with negative emotions and has a higher chance of engaging in maladaptive coping strategies that usually involve avoidance of the situation (Biggs et al., 2017). Therefore, depending on the level of perceived stress experienced by the special educators, their individual resources, such as Resilience and Hope, are affected, which also influences their coping styles. The study's findings are in coherence with a study conducted by Chakradhar et al. (2022) wherein results suggest an inverse correlation between perceived Stress and resilience among the social work student population. Additionally, a study conducted among professional counsellors suggests that individuals with higher perceived stress are more likely to experience burnout and have lower resilience levels (Litam et al., 2021). Since special educators are considered a helping profession, the results of these studies are coherent with the studies conducted across different populations of the social sciences domain.

Likewise, the findings suggest that if there is an increase in the level of perceived stress experienced by special educators, the individual's hope will likely decrease. So far, no studies have examined the relationship between hope and perceived stress among special educators. However, the findings of this study are in coherence with the various studies conducted across the clinical

population. A study by Sucan (2019) revealed a negative correlation between the two variables among the teacher-candidate population. Another study by Mouse et al. (2017) revealed a negative correlation between hope and perceived Stress among nursing students. Individuals in the nursing population who also deal with various patients in their professions are bound to perceive stress at higher levels. Cognitive appraisal and coping are two stages of dealing with stress. An individual's internal resources, such as resilience, hope, optimism and self-efficacy or external resources, such as material or social support, play an essential role in navigating stressful situations during appraisal and coping (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Therefore, a weak negative correlation between Perceived Stress and Hope among special educators might be due to a negative outlook towards work or situations, lower levels of resources within the Individual or a lower ability to use the Individual resources within them effectively to deal with Stress.

Besides, the study's outcome suggests that if there is an increase in resilience among special educators, they are likely to be more hopeful. The findings also suggested a moderate positive correlation between resilience and hope. Resilience and Hope share certain commonalities. Both traits in an individual facilitate optimistic thinking, flexibility and adaptability and are effective resources that provide the path to effective coping strategies while dealing with Stress and adversity (Duggal et al., 2016). Evidence suggests that hope in an individual is a predictor of various positive outcomes in an individual. Resilience is found to be one of the outcomes of hope (Senger, 2023). Thus, hope and resilience are protective factors for each other in an Individual. Even one of these traits in an Individual can alleviate the levels of the other variable. Therefore, the interconnection between resilience and hope can be attributed to their positive correlation. A special educator with high hopes tends to become more resilient while dealing with challenging situations.

Furthermore, the results indicate that when special educators feel stressed, it affects the ability of the individual to show Resilience in times of adversity and their ability to be Hopeful about the future. According to Mróz (2015), people with higher perceived stress are more likely to engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as self-blame and denial, which affects their ability to adopt problem-solving strategies. From a neurobiological perspective, studies indicate the role of the prefrontal cortex and amygdala in the human

brain while dealing with stressful situations. Some studies connect the ability to control stress from an evolutionary perspective. It is mentioned that organisms have a pre-programmed set of behavioural responses to stress, mainly activated in the primitive regions of the brain. Wang et al. (2014) conducted a study among rats, which revealed that a dysfunction in the neurons of the prefrontal cortex is linked to maladaptive behavioural responses to stress. However, humans are much more evolved and flexible in finding typical ways to deal with challenging situations. To tap into this flexibility, however, humans need to inhibit the evolutionary responses that are purely physiological. It is also suggested that their past experiences influence how an individual responds to a stressor or a stressful situation, implying that increased stress in individuals affects their ability to respond effectively (Maier & Watkins, 2010; McEwen & Morrison, 2013). This shows that a higher perception of stress among special educators hinders their ability to use adaptive coping strategies and decreases their resilience and hope. Special educators experience stress or are likely to perceive it in their professional and personal lives, which may influence their resilience and hope at various levels.

Working with children with special needs is a daunting profession that requires rigorous training. Especially because teachers' stress related to their personal and professional lives would impact the quality of their work (Mark & Shin, 2020). Moreover, studies suggest that using maladaptive behavioural strategies to deal with stress predicts burnout and attrition among the special educator population (Hastings & Brown, 2022). The findings of this study suggest that an Individual's perception of stress, resilience and hope are related to each other. Therefore, special educators require the ability to utilize individual resources such as resilience and hope to deal with stress effectively in their work setting. Developing resilience and hope requires sufficient training and regular self-care. The study implies that schools and organizations employing special educators must consider the well-being of these educators. In order to increase hope and resilience in an Individual, conducting resilience training workshops and planning group therapeutic interventions for special education teachers in the school have been influential in the past (Fernandes et al., 2021). In addition, organizations must promote work-life balance through mentorship programmes and professional development workshops and provide other adequate resources for managing stress.

Apart from that, special educators must recognize the importance of self-care as a part of their professional development, as poor mental health and well-being will likely lead to burnout (Lesh, 2020). Moreover, Special educators feel the most resilient when they have a higher perception of social support and develop reflective skills regarding their work (Belknap & Taynams, 2015). This study implies that at an individual level, a special educator can identify support systems and become a part of communities that share the same ideas, beliefs, thoughts and issues. This would be helpful for them to get alternative perspectives on various problems and make them feel less alone. Special educators are also recommended to engage in self-reflective activities such as journaling and meditation to improve mindfulness that facilitates adaptive coping strategies.

A notable limitation of the study is the absence of standardized qualification criteria for the accreditation of special educators in India. The sample considered for the study includes special educators with various qualifications and certifications and may not conform to a standardized set of criteria for qualification. This introduces a

potential limitation for the generalizability of the study's findings. In addition, the study did not distinguish the stressors originating from the work setting and those stemming from personal lives, potentially inhibiting the understanding of professional and personal stressors' contribution to influencing resilience and hope separately. Furthermore, the study did not control the influence of external factors such as the special educators' socioeconomic backgrounds, age, marital status, and existing medical conditions, which can significantly impact an individual's perceived stress.

Further studies can be conducted by controlling the influence of external factors contributing to the perception of stress experienced among special educators. Moreover, studies can examine the independent influence of work-related and personal life stressors as it will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics between perceived stress, resilience and hope within the context of special education.

The present study shows a significant relationship between perceived Stress, Resilience and Hope among Special educators. It is also inferred that Perceived Stress has a significant effect on Resilience and Hope. This study is coherent with other studies conducted across different populations closely related to clinical and caring professions. The study emphasizes that Perceived Stress has detrimental effects on Resilience and Hope. However, developing Resilience and Hope facilitates effective coping. Depending upon the perception of stress experienced by the special educators and their ability to use resources such as resilience and hope, special educators continue dealing with it effectively or ineffectively, thus forming a vicious cycle. Therefore, the study reiterates the importance of recognizing Stress experienced by special educators and implies promoting the well-being of stakeholders in an educational setting.

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