

Occupational Stress and Wellbeing Among Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to assess the relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers. The study also assesses whether there are significant differences between occupational stress and wellbeing among novice and experienced teachers. A sample of 100 teachers (50- novice teachers with less than 5 years of experience, 50- experienced teachers with more than 5 years of experience) aged between 23 and 60 years who were teaching in different educational institutions across different parts of India participated in the study. The Occupational Stress Index by Dr. A. K. Srivastava and Dr. A. P. Singh (1984) and PGI General Well-being Measure by S. K. Verma and Amita Verma (1989) were used to measure the variables in the study. Pearson's correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test were used for statistical analysis of the data. The findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing. There was no significant difference in occupational stress and wellbeing among novice and experienced teachers. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Wellbeing, Teachers*

Teachers are regarded as having a noble and meaningful career as they play such a crucial role in determining the future of society. However, the teaching profession is also known for its high levels of occupational stress. Teachers all across the world, including those in India, are perceived to be working in an exceptionally demanding profession. It is often noticed that even after a multitude of massive and quick changes that have occurred in the education system over the years, the support provided to teachers to help cope with this has always been lacking. The government of India has introduced numerous educational policies throughout the years in order to ensure that all children regardless of their gender, caste or economic status are provided with an access to education. It is also aimed at emphasizing the significance of child-centered approach to learning. But, the lack of proper planning and inadequate support for the implementation of these policies has led to teachers being overworked, stressed and subjected to poor wellbeing. Consequently, majority of teachers today have discovered that they experience stress of some kind at some point in their careers (Cooper and Travers, 1995).

Hans Seyle (1950) described stress in his early research on the subject as the “the non-specific response of the body to any demand.” According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

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stress arises when people believe they are unable to handle the demands of their environment. Globalization and the economic crisis are causing an increase in stress that impacts practically every country in the globe as well as all professions, families, and society (Bharatai and Newman, 1978).

Occupational stress, sometimes also referred to as organizational stress, job stress or work stress is generally described to the negative physiological and psychological reactions that arise when a worker's resources, requirements, or abilities don't match with the demands of their job. "Workplace stress" is the result of unfavorable physiological and psychological responses to a tension between an employee's amount of control over meeting their requirements and the responsibilities of their position (Rao and Chandraiah, 2012).

Although it used to be thought of as a job with little stress, teaching is now one of the many professions where employees experience a lot of stress. Being a teacher involves more than just imparting knowledge; it also means keeping up with the technological advancements, managing students, parents, and the society at large (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009). They are also under a great deal of stress in order to help their pupils perform better on international exams (Boshoff et al., 2018). Immoderate demands from the job prevents teachers from managing their time effectively or to strike a balance between their personal and professional lives (Wong, 2020). They are most susceptible to psychological distress and less satisfied with their job than the general population (Schonfield, 1990). Teachers may experience a wide variety of stressors. Unsatisfactory working circumstances, workload, student conduct and attitudes, a lack of promotion opportunities, and poor coworker relationships are some of the frequently experienced stressors (Cooper and Travers, 1996). Long working hours, large class size, cramped classroom, excessive administrative work, low salaries, lack of autonomy and bureaucratic procedures are also some other contributing factors. These can result in psychological and physical difficulties, decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, decreased morale, raised interpersonal conflict, and a significant decrease in life satisfaction (Selokar et al., 2011). Living under a great deal of stress can jeopardize one's overall well-being. It negatively impacts one's psychological as well as physical well-being. It can result in certain detrimental effects, including sudden cardiac death, diabetes, tuberculosis, and mental illnesses like despair, hopelessness, and anxiety, along with behavioral effects like subpar professional and academic achievement (Suleman et al., 2018). It also limits one's ability to think rationally, work efficiently, and have fun in life. Organizational commitment, as well as people's physical and mental wellbeing, are all directly impacted by work-related stress (Mohajan, 2012).

Well-being is referred to as the state of being at ease, content, and healthy both physically and psychologically. It is how an individual is doing in their day-to-day life. Every facet of an individual's life has an impact on their well-being. People's emotional reactions, domain satisfactions, and overall assessments of life satisfaction all contribute to their general sense of well-being (Diener et al., 1999). According to World Health Organization, the key component of well-being is the ability of individuals and communities to make a meaningful contribution to the community. Since it enables people to overcome challenges and reach their life goals, a person's sense of well-being is crucial to their general health. A workplace that promotes well-being nurtures a happier, healthier and highly motivated and productive environment for its employees. This prevents burnout among employees and reduces the number of sick leaves the employee takes.

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Well-being of a teacher directly affects their teaching performance and the achievement of their students. It is found that the teacher's physical symptoms (physical health) are significantly impacted directly by occupational difficulties such as workload and attitude changes as well as indirectly by job satisfaction (De Simone et al., 2016). One must bear in mind, that it is important for a teacher to look after their own wellbeing in order to manage the wellbeing of their students. Providing support for teachers to manage their stress is likely to enhance instructional methods and results while decreasing teacher attrition. With fewer distractions from personal worries exacerbated by work-related stress, teachers will acquire a stronger sense of personal wellbeing. Students they serve as well as our communities and society as a whole in turn will gain from a system that helps teachers cope with the demands of their jobs (Romano & Wahlstrom, 2000). For schools and society, teacher well-being (TWB) is an important matter of concern. It is perceived as being connected to educational governance, student performance, and quality of teaching (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Teachers who experience low well-being at work may be less productive and are more likely to quit their jobs (Boyd et al., 2006) thus affecting the performance not only of the students but of the educational institution as well.

Teaching experience also play a major role in the level of stress and wellbeing experienced by teachers over the years. According to the results of a study conducted in India, stress levels among junior college professors were noticeably greater than those among senior teachers (Kumar & Deo, 2011). Statistics also showed that years of experience and teachers' job satisfaction were statistically significant indicators of lower stress (Konert, 1997). Additionally, it was discovered that the teachers' experience level and age were major facets that were significantly connected to their burnout measurements. (Zabel & Zabel, 1982). Female teachers over the age of 40, those teaching in elementary schools, those with low salaries, those with more experience, those with more education and those with greater workloads all had significantly higher occupational stress, anxiety and depression rates (Desouky & Allam, 2017).

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between occupational stress and general wellbeing among teachers?
2. Do novice teachers and experienced teachers differ in their occupational stress?
3. Do novice teachers and experienced teachers differ in their wellbeing?

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between occupational stress and general wellbeing among teachers.
2. To assess the difference in occupational stress between novice and experienced teachers.
3. To assess the difference in wellbeing between novice and experienced teachers.

Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in occupational stress between novice and experienced teachers.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in wellbeing between novice and experienced teachers.

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Sample

The study used a descriptive survey method of research for data collection to study the relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers. The sample consisted of 100 teachers (50 novice teachers and 50 experienced teachers) between the ages of 23 and 60. The sample consisted of teachers from different parts of India. Experienced teachers included those with more than 5 years of experience, while novice teachers were those with less than 5 years of experience. The data was collected using convenient sampling technique.

Tools Used

- **The Occupational Stress Index:** The Occupational Stress Index Scale which was constructed and standardized by Dr. A. K. Srivastava and Dr. A. P. Singh (1984) consists of 46 items, each to be rated on a five-point scale. Out of the 46 items, 28 are 'True-Keyed' and 18 are 'False-Keyed'. It is used to measure the twelve components that cause stress in some way or the other. This includes role over-load, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic, impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. Scores below 115 indicated low occupational stress, between 116-161 moderate level, and above 161 showed that the individual was highly stressed. The reliability of the tool was reported to be 0.935 using split-half method and Cronbach's alpha was .90.
- **PGI General Wellbeing Measure:** The PGI General Wellbeing Measure by S. K. Verma and Amita Verma (1989) consists of 20 items which indicates the overall well-being of the participant. The scores are counted by the number of ticks against the given item. High scores indicate higher level of wellbeing, while low scores indicate lower level of being. It is a reliable and valid tool to measure the positive mental health of Indian subjects. The Test-retest reliability of the English version is .91 ($p < .01$).

Statistical Analysis

The results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. IBM SPSS 2.0 software was used to analyze the collected data. Among descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used; among the inferential statistics independent sample t-test and Pearson's correlation method was used to test the hypothesis.

The results are discussed hypothesis-wise as follows:

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers.

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
1. Occupational Stress	100	139.71	7.56	-	-.15
2. Wellbeing	100	7.86	5.38	-.15	-

* $p > 0.05$

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An analysis of Table 1 shows that for a sample of 100 teachers, the mean score for occupational stress is 139.71 and for wellbeing is 7.86. In terms of standard deviation, the score for occupational stress is 7.56 and for wellbeing 5.38. It means that the spread of scores away from mean is apparently more for occupational stress, suggesting there is more variation in occupational stress among teachers. The scores were further subjected to Pearson's correlation method in order to determine whether there is a relationship between the two variables. The results presented a correlation (r) value of $-.15$ with a corresponding p value of $.14$, which is not significant ($p > 0.05$). Since, the significance value between occupational stress and wellbeing is more than 0.05 , the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers.

In contrary to the above results many studies have shown a negative association between occupational stress and wellbeing (Suleman et. al, 2018; Tyagi, 2021). A study on perception of wellbeing among childcare teachers by Kaiser et. al, (1993) indicated that the teacher's general wellbeing was unaffected by their education, experience or interactions related to children. Kyriacou (2001) reviewed a number of studies on teacher stress and wellbeing and discovered recurrent proof of an association between occupational stress and wellbeing that is negative. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016) in their study discovered that among the academics surveyed, occupational stress had a considerable negative impact in terms of job satisfaction as well as well-being. In particular, the researchers discovered that higher stress levels were linked to lower job satisfaction and substandard well-being outcomes, such as higher levels of despair and anxiousness.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in occupational stress between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

Table 2 Significance of difference in occupational stress between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

Occupational Stress	N	M	SD	t	p
Novice Teachers	50	140.36	6.31	.96	.34
Experienced Teachers	50	139.06	7.18		

An analysis of Table 2 shows that the mean score for occupational stress is 140.36 for novice teachers and 139.06 for experienced teachers, with corresponding standard deviation of 6.31 and 7.18, respectively. It means that the spread of scores away from mean is more among experienced teachers in comparison to novice teachers. To see whether the obtained mean difference is indicative of the population, the scores were subjected to "t" test. The calculated "t" value for occupational stress between the two groups is $.96$, with a corresponding "p" value of $.34$, which is statistically not found to differ significantly. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in occupational stress between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

The above results are consistent with the literature. According to a study conducted by Clark (1980), the teachers' attitudes towards occupational stress factors were not significantly affected by their years of teaching experience. Another study by Anbu (2015) reveals that their degree of professional stress component did not vary considerably according to their duration of teaching expertise. According to a different study by Dawn et al. (2016), sociodemographic variables of control such as religion, degree of education, and teaching experience has no significant impact on stress levels.

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In contrast to the above results, Wong (2020) revealed that there is a significant difference in stress and wellbeing in relation to the years of experience. Compared to other categories of teachers, those with over thirty years of teaching experience reported the highest levels of stress from "job demands" and "work-life balance." The highest levels of stress from "control over work" and "psychosocial work environment" were seen in teachers with about 11 to 20 years of expertise. The causes of the highest levels of stress among instructors with 6 to 10 years of experience were "health and well-being," "future and change," "relations at work," and "physical environment".

H₀3: There is no significant difference in wellbeing between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

Table 3 Significance of difference in wellbeing between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

Wellbeing	N	M	SD	t	p
Novice Teachers	50	7.40	4.65	.85	.39
Experienced Teachers	50	8.32	6.04		

An analysis of Table 3 shows that the mean score for wellbeing is 7.40 for novice teachers and 8.32 for experienced teachers, with corresponding standard deviation of 4.65 and 6.04, respectively. It means that the spread of scores away from mean is more among experienced teachers in comparison to novice teachers. To see whether the obtained mean difference is indicative of the population, the scores were subjected to "t" test. The calculated "t" value for occupational stress between the two groups is .85, with a corresponding "p" value of .39, which is statistically not found to differ significantly. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in wellbeing between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

In consistent with the above results, a study by Huang et al. (2020), showed that empathy had an impact on preschool instructors' psychological well-being in both protective and risky ways, and these effects were influenced by their prior experience as educators. Sadeghi and Khezrlou (2016) found that there is no association between a teacher's number of years of experience and their level of burnout, which can be linked to the development of the educational field as a whole.

In contrast to the above results, Van Petegem et al. (2005) observed that with experience the level of wellbeing among teachers was raised. Akram (2019) found that based on where they attended the university- be it a public or private university, and how long they had been teaching, there were no significant differences in the educators' psychological wellbeing.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn based on the research questions raised.

1. There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers.
2. There is no significant difference in occupational stress between novice teachers and experienced teachers.
3. There is no significant difference in wellbeing between novice teachers and experienced teachers.

Implications

The present study has important implications for understanding the potential negative impacts of occupational stress that can occur on the wellbeing of teachers. The findings of the study do not show any significant relationship between the occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers. But since teachers play a crucial role in the functioning of the institution as well as the development of its students, certain steps can be implemented and adopted to prevent any further occupational stress and wellbeing among the teachers in the future. These include encouraging a functional and productive teaching community connection for schools, colleges, and other institutes in order for teachers to have a positive attitude towards their career. The educational institutions can also play a significant role in increasing and improving the wellbeing of the teachers while reducing stress by implementing interventions and initiatives such as peer support groups, mindfulness training, and flexible work schedules which are aimed at lowering stress and enhancing teachers' wellbeing. Moreover, a larger sample size is required for future research in order to generalize the results and draw conclusive evidence. Comparative research studies can also be conducted on teachers from different states.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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