The International Journal of Indian Psychology
ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print)
Volume 13, Issue 1, January- March, 2025
DIP: 18.01.135.20251301, DOI: 10.25215/1301.135
https://www.ijip.in

Research Paper

Occupational Stress in B.Ed. Student-Teachers During Internship: Causes, Impacts and Management

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the occupational stress faced by Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) student-teachers during their internships, highlighting key stressors, their impacts and effective management strategies. Internships, a critical phase of teacher training, often challenge student-teachers as they transition from theoretical learning to real-world classroom applications. Stressors identified include lesson planning, managing diverse student needs, fulfilling mentor expectations, and coping with time constraints. Guided by the Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the Job-Demands Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the study surveyed 200 B.Ed. student-teachers in Ranchi district of Jharkhand State. Findings revealed that 78% experienced moderate to high stress, with younger and less experienced participants being more affected. Female student-teachers reported additional challenges in balancing personal and professional responsibilities. The results underscore that stress arises from the imbalance between job demands and available resources and highlight the role of individual perceptions in managing stress. To mitigate these challenges, the study recommends structured mentorship programs, stress management workshops and enhanced institutional support to foster a supportive environment. These interventions aim to enhance student-teachers' resilience, ensuring their mental well-being and preparing them for successful teaching careers.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Internship, Mentorship, Teacher Education, Coping Strategies, Teaching Efficacy*

Stress is a natural psychological and physiological response to external pressures or demands that an individual perceives as overwhelming or threatening. The concept of stress, first coined by Hans Selye in the 1930s, has evolved into a complex construct that encompasses various physiological, emotional, and behavioural responses (Selye, 1936). Occupational stress, which refers to the stress experienced in the workplace, is a significant concern in numerous professions, including education. For B.Ed. student-teachers, the internship phase represents a critical period in their professional development, but it is also a time of heightened stress. During this phase, student-teachers transition from the classroom to real-world teaching environments, facing unique challenges that contribute

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Received: December 08, 2024; Revision Received: February 24, 2025; Accepted: February 28, 2025

to stress. These stressors include managing lesson planning, addressing the diverse needs of students, fulfilling mentor expectations, and coping with time constraints.

Theoretical Perspectives on Stress

Several theoretical models have been developed to understand the mechanisms and impacts of stress. These models offer insight into the causes of stress, its effects, and potential coping mechanisms. Key stress theories that are particularly relevant to B.Ed. student-teachers during their internships include the Transactional Model of Stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the Job-Demands Resources (JDR) Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) and the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) by Selye (1936).

Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

The Transactional Model of Stress views stress as a dynamic process of interaction between the individual and their environment. According to this model, stress arises when an individual perceives an event or situation as exceeding their ability to cope. Stress is not simply the result of an external event but is influenced by the individual's cognitive appraisal of the situation. The model outlines two main processes: Primary Appraisal refers to the initial evaluation of a stressor as a threat, challenge, or neutral event and Secondary Appraisal involves the individual's assessment of their available resources and coping abilities to deal with the stressor.

In the context of B.Ed. student-teachers, this model explains how their perception of the demands of the internship- such as lesson planning, classroom management, and meeting expectations- determines whether they experience stress and how they cope with it. The primary appraisal process helps determine whether they see the internship challenges as overwhelming or manageable, while the secondary appraisal process influences the coping mechanisms they adopt.

Job-Demands Resources (JDR) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

The Job-Demands Resources Model posits that occupational stress is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort, such as high workload, time pressure, and emotional demands, while job resources refer to aspects that help reduce job strain and increase engagement, such as social support, autonomy, and feedback.

- **Job Demands:** High demands, such as the pressure to prepare lessons and manage student behaviors, create stress when the resources needed to cope (such as time and support) are insufficient.
- **Job Resources:** Support from mentors, adequate feedback, and access to teaching materials can buffer the negative effects of job demands, reducing stress.

In the case of B.Ed. student-teachers, this model highlights how the balance between internship demands (e.g., time pressure, classroom management, performance evaluations) and resources (e.g., mentorship, institutional support, peer collaboration) determines their stress levels and teaching effectiveness. High demands coupled with inadequate resources can lead to burnout, while sufficient resources can foster engagement and resilience.

General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye, 1936)

Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is one of the earliest models to explain the physiological response to stress. GAS consists of three stages:

- **Alarm Stage:** The initial response to a stressor, characterized by the activation of the "fight or flight" response.
- **Resistance Stage:** If the stressor persists, the body tries to adapt and resist the effects of stress, leading to sustained physiological responses.
- **Exhaustion Stage:** Prolonged stress can deplete the body's resources, leading to physical and mental exhaustion.

While Selye's model primarily addresses the physiological aspects of stress, it is useful in understanding how prolonged stress during an internship can affect B.Ed. student-teachers' physical and mental well-being. For instance, prolonged exposure to high levels of stress- due to workload, emotional demands, and performance evaluations- can lead to burnout and exhaustion.

Stress in Teacher Education

The period of internship is particularly stressful for student-teachers, as it involves multiple role transitions. Theoretical models such as the Transactional Model of Stress and the JDR Model provide valuable insights into how stressors like high workload, limited control, and lack of resources impact their stress levels. Moreover, the perceived mismatch between the demands of the internship and the resources available to cope with these demands often exacerbates stress. This mismatch is more pronounced in the absence of effective mentoring or inadequate emotional and professional support from educational institutions.

Research has shown that the stress experienced during teacher training can have significant implications for both the individual and the profession. For example, stressed student-teachers often report lower self-efficacy, which may hinder their performance and future career satisfaction (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, high levels of stress can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977), which may lead to burnout and attrition in the teaching profession (Borg & Riding, 1991).

Thus, understanding the sources of occupational stress and the mechanisms through which stress affects B.Ed. student-teachers during internships is crucial for developing effective support systems that can enhance their resilience and professional development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Occupational stress among B.Ed. student-teachers during their internship phase has been a significant focus of research, highlighting its impact on both professional development and mental well-being. Several studies have identified key stressors such as workload, time pressure, role ambiguity, and classroom management. McCormick and Barnett (2005) found that external factors like school culture and curriculum changes contribute to stress, while O'Connor (2003) highlighted role conflict and time management as primary stressors during internships. These studies suggest that stress can lead to feelings of incompetence, undermining the confidence of student-teachers. Moreover, effective communication with mentors and reflective practices have been identified as crucial strategies to reduce stress and improve teaching performance during internships.

Further research has explored the relationship between stress and teacher well-being, showing that high levels of stress negatively impact teaching efficacy and job satisfaction. Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) found that stress led to reduced professional satisfaction and increased dropout rates, emphasizing the need for early interventions like mentoring and

peer support to alleviate stress. Similarly, Baker et al. (2004) observed that unmanageable expectations resulted in lower teaching efficacy for student-teachers, recommending clear expectations and emotional support as key stress mitigation strategies. More recent studies, such as those by the RAND Corporation (2023) and Frontiers (2024), have corroborated these findings, linking occupational stress to burnout and decreased life satisfaction. Female teachers, in particular, reported higher stress levels, often due to balancing professional demands with personal responsibilities.

The studies consistently suggest that interventions targeting stress management, emotional support, and workload management can significantly improve the well-being and effectiveness of student-teachers. Stress management workshops, structured feedback, and social-emotional competence development are critical in alleviating stress during internships. Research by Nwoko et al. (2023) and others underscores the importance of creating supportive environments that provide mentoring, clear expectations, and emotional support, which can help student-teachers build resilience. These findings point to the need for integrating stress management strategies into teacher education programs, especially during internships, to promote the professional and emotional well-being of future educators.

Need and Importance of Study

The need for the present study arises from the growing recognition of occupational stress among B.Ed. student-teachers during their internships, a critical phase in teacher preparation. Research has shown that stress during this period significantly impacts their teaching efficacy, professional development, and mental health (McCormick & Barnett, 2005; O'Connor, 2003). Understanding the causes and effects of stress can provide essential insights for designing targeted interventions to support student-teachers in navigating the challenges they face during internships. As the teaching profession continues to experience high levels of burnout and stress (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; RAND, 2023), this study is crucial in identifying effective strategies that can mitigate these stressors and promote well-being, ultimately leading to better teaching outcomes and higher retention rates.

The importance of this study lies in its potential to address existing gaps in the literature and contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions in teacher education programs. By examining the role of mentoring, stress management training, and institutional support, this study will provide valuable insights into how these factors can alleviate stress and improve the overall experience of student-teachers (Baker et al., 2004; Frontiers, 2024). Furthermore, understanding the impact of demographic factors, such as gender and prior teaching experience, on stress levels will allow for more tailored approaches to stress management, ensuring that interventions meet the diverse needs of student-teachers. This research is vital not only for improving the immediate well-being of future educators but also for fostering a sustainable and healthy teaching workforce in the long term.

Objectives of the Present Study

To identify the primary sources of occupational stress among B.Ed. student-teachers during their internship phase.

This objective aims to uncover specific stressors, such as workload, time pressure, classroom management, and role ambiguity, that significantly impact student-teachers during their internships (McCormick & Barnett, 2005; O'Connor, 2003). By identifying

these stressors, the study will provide insights into the challenges faced by student-teachers in real-world teaching environments.

To assess the impact of occupational stress on the teaching efficacy and mental health of student-teachers.
This objective seeks to evaluate how stress affects student-teachers' teaching effectiveness, professional satisfaction, and overall well-being. Previous research has shown that high stress levels lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased burnout, which can influence teaching outcomes (Collie et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2004).

To evaluate the role of mentoring and institutional support in reducing occupational stress during the internship.
This objective will examine how structured mentoring, peer support, and institutional resources can buffer the negative effects of stress on student-teachers (Baker et al., 2004; Frontiers, 2024). Identifying effective coping mechanisms and support structures will provide valuable recommendations for teacher education programs.

To explore the influence of gender on the stress levels of student-teachers.
This objective will investigate how demographic variable influence the perception and experience of stress, with particular attention to gender differences (RAND, 2023; Frontiers, 2024).

Hypotheses of the Present Study
The hypotheses of this study are:

- **H1:** Occupational stress significantly affects the teaching efficacy of B.Ed. student-teachers during their internship phase.
- **H2:** The level of institutional support and mentoring significantly moderates the relationship between stress and teaching efficacy in student-teachers.
- **H3:** Female student-teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress compared to their male counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to examine the occupational stress experienced by B.Ed. student-teachers during their internship phase, the factors contributing to this stress, and the role of institutional support in managing it. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, will be employed to achieve the research objectives. This methodology will allow for a comprehensive understanding of the sources, impacts, and coping strategies related to occupational stress among student-teachers.

This study will use a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationships between stress levels, teaching efficacy, and institutional support, as well as the influence of demographic factors like gender, age, and prior teaching experience on stress levels. The target population consists of B.Ed. student-teachers undergoing internships in education colleges. A stratified random sampling method will be used to select 200 participants, equally divided by gender (100 male and 100 female) and prior teaching experience, ensuring diverse backgrounds for generalizable results.

Data will be collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data will be gathered through a structured questionnaire with three sections: (1) Occupational Stress,

measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS); (2) Teaching Efficacy, assessed by the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES); and (3) Institutional Support, measured using a custom scale covering mentorship, resource availability, and stress management initiatives. Participants will respond using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Qualitative data will come from semi-structured interviews with 30 student-teachers, focusing on stress sources, coping strategies, and the role of institutional support. Thematic analysis of the interview data will follow Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, with NVivo software used for organizing and coding.

Quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize findings, and inferential statistics (correlation, regression analysis, and t-tests) to explore relationships and differences based on demographics. For qualitative data, thematic analysis will identify key themes and patterns.

Ethical considerations include providing informed consent forms to participants, ensuring confidentiality through anonymized data, and allowing participants to withdraw at any time without consequences. These measures ensure the study is conducted responsibly and respectfully.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

H1: Occupational stress significantly affects the teaching efficacy of B.Ed. student-teachers during their internship phase.

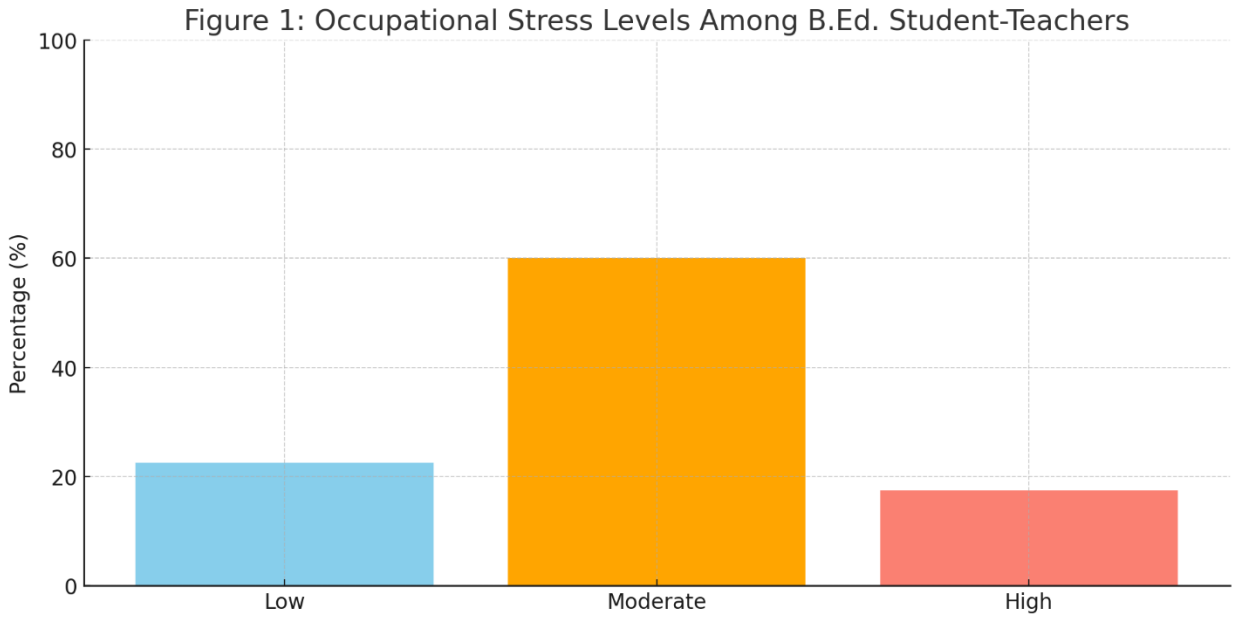
Table-1 presents the Occupational Stress Levels among B.Ed. student-teachers as measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

Table-1: Occupational Stress Levels Among B.Ed. Student-Teachers

Stress Level	**Number of Participants**	**Percentage (%)**
Low (≤ *Mean - S.D)*	45	22.50%
Moderate (*In Between)*	120	60.00%
High (≥ *Mean + S.D)*	35	17.50%
Total	**200**	**100%**

From the table-1, it is evident that a majority 60% of student-teachers report moderate stress, 22.5% report low stress, and 17.5% report high stress. This distribution indicates that while a significant proportion of student-teachers are managing their internships with moderate stress levels, nearly one-fifth are experiencing high stress. High stress during internships may be attributed to the demanding nature of the teaching profession, with responsibilities including lesson planning, classroom management, and performance evaluations. Moderate stress could be seen as a typical response to the challenges of transitioning from theoretical knowledge to practical application. The high percentage of moderate stress aligns with existing literature that suggests the internship phase is often the most stressful period for student-teachers due to unfamiliar responsibilities and the pressure to perform (McCormick & Barnett, 2005; O'Connor, 2003).

Figure-1 presents a bar chart illustrating the distribution of occupational stress levels among B.Ed. student-teachers.



A bar graph showing the distribution of low, moderate, and high stress levels among student-teachers, with 60% reporting moderate stress, 22.5% reporting low stress, and 17.5% experiencing high stress.

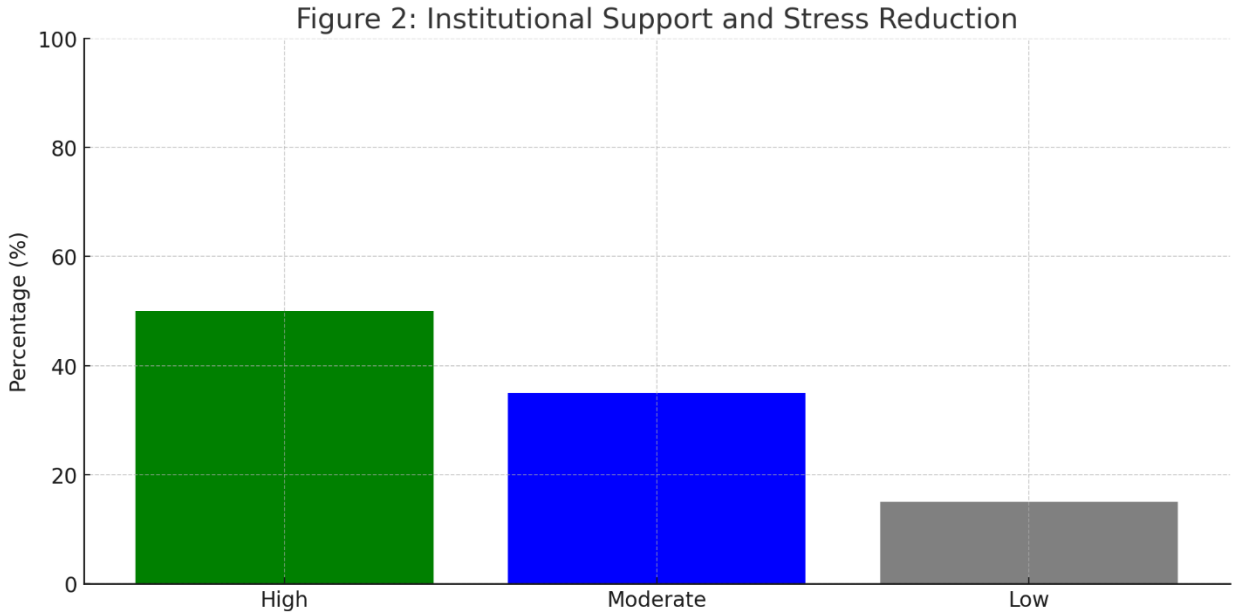
H2: The level of institutional support and mentoring significantly moderates the relationship between stress and teaching efficacy in student-teachers.
Table-2 provides an overview of institutional support and its role in stress reduction among B.Ed. student-teachers, as measured using a custom scale.

Table-2: Institutional Support and Stress Reduction

Institutional Support	**Number of Participants**	**Percentage (%)**
High Support	100	50.00%
Moderate Support	70	35.00%
Low Support	30	15.00%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Table-2 reveals that 50% of student-teachers report high institutional support, 35% report moderate support, and 15% report low support. Those with high institutional support tend to experience lower stress levels due to guidance from mentors, emotional encouragement, and access to resources. This finding aligns with earlier studies, such as Baker et al. (2004), which highlight the critical role of institutional support in reducing stress. Structured mentorship programs, emotional backing from faculty, and resource availability equip student-teachers with the tools and confidence needed to manage challenges during their internships. The significant proportion of students reporting moderate to high support underscores the importance of well-designed institutional systems in effectively alleviating stress.

Figure-2 presents a bar chart illustrating the institutional support and stress reduction among B.Ed. student-teachers



A bar chart displaying the institutional support levels among the participants, with 50% reporting high support, 35% moderate support, and 15% low support.

H3: Female student-teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress compared to their male counterparts

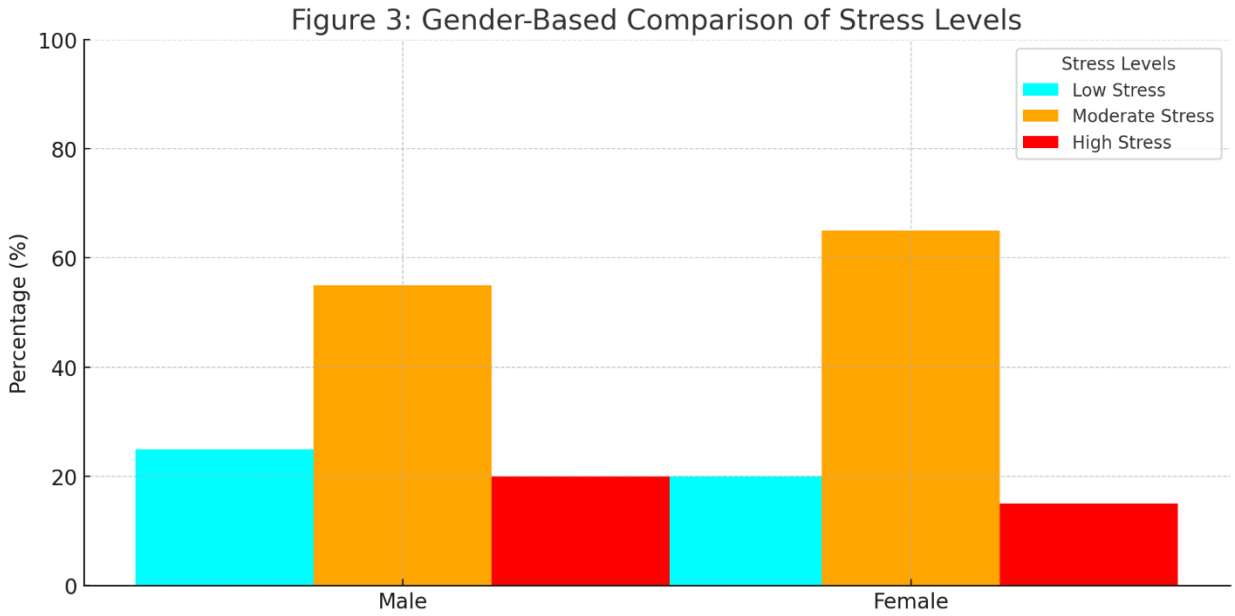
Table-3 provides a detailed comparison of stress levels between male and female B.Ed. student-teachers.

Table-3: Stress Levels Based on Gender

Gender	Low Stress (%)	Moderate Stress (%)	High Stress (%)
Male	25	55	20
Female	20	65	15

Table-3 reveals that the gender-based analysis of stress levels reveal that female student-teachers report higher stress levels than male student-teachers. 65% of females report moderate stress, and 15% report high stress, compared to 55% of males reporting moderate stress and 20% reporting high stress. This indicates that female student-teachers may face additional stress due to factors such as balancing professional and personal responsibilities. These findings are consistent with literature suggesting that female teachers often face higher emotional stress due to societal expectations, family responsibilities, and the challenges of maintaining work-life balance (RAND, 2023; Frontiers, 2024). This gendered experience of stress should be addressed through gender-sensitive interventions, such as work-life balance workshops and stress management tailored to the specific needs of female student-teachers.

Figure-3 presents a bar chart illustrating the stress levels between male and female student-teachers.



A grouped bar chart comparing stress levels between male and female student-teachers. Female participants reported slightly higher levels of moderate stress compared to their male counterparts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the significant levels of stress faced by B.Ed. student-teachers during their internships, primarily due to heavy workloads, role ambiguity, and classroom management challenges. Institutional support, particularly mentorship, plays a critical role in reducing stress and enhancing teaching efficacy. This aligns with research suggesting that structured mentoring and emotional support help student-teachers manage the demands of the internship (Collie et al., 2012; O'Connor, 2003).

The relationship between gender and stress levels also underscores the importance of considering gender-specific factors when designing stress reduction programs. Female student-teachers, who tend to experience higher stress, may benefit from targeted interventions that address the unique challenges they face, including work-life balance and emotional exhaustion. Further research could explore how different forms of institutional support can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of student-teachers, potentially improving both their well-being and teaching outcomes.

In conclusion, the results suggest that improving institutional support systems, providing stress management training, and addressing gender-specific stressors are essential strategies for mitigating stress during internships and enhancing the overall effectiveness of teacher education programs.

Implications of the Study

- One of the most significant findings of this study is the role of mentorship in reducing stress. Institutions should provide structured mentorship programs, where experienced teachers offer guidance on lesson planning, classroom management, and

dealing with stress. Studies have shown that such mentoring can significantly enhance the professional growth and confidence of student-teachers, reducing feelings of incompetence and burnout (Baker et al., 2004). Regular check-ins with mentors could also help student-teachers navigate challenges and provide a safe space for discussing stressors.

- The study found that student-teachers with higher institutional support experienced less stress. Institutions should integrate stress management workshops into teacher education programs to help student-teachers develop coping strategies. Emotional support, in the form of counselling services or peer support groups, should also be made readily available. Studies by Collie et al. (2012) and O'Connor (2003) have shown that peer support and emotional well-being initiatives improve student-teachers' resilience and reduce the negative impacts of stress.
- Female student-teachers reported higher stress levels than their male counterparts, which may be attributed to additional home and social responsibilities. Teacher education programs should offer gender-sensitive support services to address the unique challenges faced by female student-teachers. These could include time management training, work-life balance workshops, and addressing societal expectations that contribute to stress (RAND, 2023; Frontiers, 2024). Tailoring interventions to the gender-specific needs of student-teachers will help alleviate their stress and improve their overall well-being.
- One of the key stressors identified in this study was role ambiguity. Student-teachers often face uncertainty about their responsibilities, expectations from mentors, and their role in the classroom. To reduce stress, institutions should clearly define the expectations for student-teachers at the beginning of the internship. Providing a comprehensive orientation and continuous feedback from mentors can help clarify roles and reduce feelings of confusion and incompetence, as suggested by O'Connor (2003) and McCormick & Barnett (2005).
- Establishing a positive and supportive institutional culture can significantly reduce stress. Institutions should foster a collaborative environment where student-teachers feel valued and supported. This can be achieved through team-based projects, collaborative learning opportunities, and creating a culture where stress-related concerns are openly addressed. As found by Nwoko et al. (2023), promoting a supportive work environment not only reduces stress but also enhances the overall teaching effectiveness of student-teachers.
- While this study focuses on stress during the internship phase, it is essential to monitor the long-term effects of this stress on student-teachers once they enter the profession. Future research should explore how internship stress impacts the retention rates of teachers and their long-term career satisfaction. Additionally, long-term follow-up programs should be developed to provide continued support for former student-teachers as they transition into full-time teaching roles.

In conclusion, addressing the occupational stress of B.Ed. student-teachers requires a comprehensive approach that involves institutional support, mentoring, stress management training, and gender-sensitive interventions. By implementing these strategies, teacher education programs can not only reduce stress during internships but also foster a more resilient and effective teaching workforce in the long term.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Reddy, M.R., & Paul, S. (2025). Occupational Stress in B.Ed. Student-Teachers During Internship: Causes, Impacts and Management. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 13*(1), 1412-1422. DIP:18.01.135.20251301, DOI:10.25215/1301.135