

Occupational Stress and Mental Health of School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This review article examines in depth the psycho-social factors that affect the mental health of teachers in India. Despite working for a crucial role in shaping the future of society, teachers' mental health often goes unrecognized and remains unaddressed. Literature results available, key factors—workload, socio-economic conditions, societal expectations, and institutional support—are considered the main reasons for mental health issues within the teaching profession. This section examines how these factors impact teaching effectiveness and the subsequent student achievement. Indeed, the article has a call for action in policy, institutional, and societal attitude changes toward mental health to foster a better working environment for teachers. Therefore, looking to the solution of these issues is likely to improve the general efficiency of the educational system to the best results for students and society.

Keywords: *Mental Health, School Teacher, Teachers*

Mental health forms an integral part of good health; yet, it is one area that remains invisible and gets the least attention. The same holds true for professionals like teachers who, in fact, form the backbone of society and shape civilization. The mental health of teachers has become an issue of priority concern in India as a result of the psycho-social challenges uniquely thrown up by this occupation. This review article goes on to describe various psycho-social factors that affect the mental health of Indian teachers, grounded in extant literature, bringing in certain prominent factors that include workload, socio-economic conditions, expectations from society, and institutional support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workload and Stress

Excessive workloads have been shown in quite a number of studies to be major sources of stress among practicing teachers. Kyriacou, in 2001, was able to underline how high job demands and low control over the work contributed to burnout. In the Indian scenario, Sundar, in 2017, showed big class sizes and other additional non-teaching duties added to high-stress levels for teachers, consequentially resulting in anxiety and depression.

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Socio-Economic Conditions

The socio-economic status of teachers has a significant bearing on their mental health. According to Varkey, 2016, low salary, especially in rural areas, leads to financial strain and subsequently stress. A study by Reddy and Poornima, 2012, shows insecurity in teaching jobs, especially in the case of contract teachers, exacerbates the mental health problem through increased anxiety and reduced job satisfaction.

Societal Expectations and Cultural Factors

There is immense pressure from society on teachers in India to uphold moral and ethical values. As noted by Rao, this pressure may be a key source of stress, especially when the teachers feel that they cannot meet such expectations. Furthermore, as noted by Patel and Prince in 2010, since mental health issues carry a negative stigma in India, most teachers tend to keep off from seeking help.

Institutional Support and Professional Development

This calls for the need for the institutional support that is very essential to teachers' mental health. Day and Gu in 2010 indicated that this would reduce stress levels amongst practicing teachers while improving their capacity to manage class entrants. However, in India, little access to such opportunities is available, hence observed by Chopra and Sharma in 2015.

Availability of Mental Health Resources

Access to school-based mental health resources is one of the factors in supporting teacher wellbeing. Most schools in India, according to Desai, 2018, are not well-resourced to offer any substantial help for mental health. It is common to find reluctance on the part of teachers to seek help because of associated stigma, hence most cases of mental health problems go unattended.

Impact on Teaching and Student Outcomes

Teachers' mental health is completely affecting their teaching effectiveness and in turn students' outcomes. According to Jennings and Greenberg, 2009, talks about the results that have indicated on mentally fit teachers are more dedicated and successful in their practice and their students attain better results. In addition, those teachers whose mental health is not stable lose interest and fail to attend school more often and this negatively impacts on the student's results.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Positive teacher-student relationships are central to conceptions of effective learning. According to Roorda et al. (2011), teachers who are under much stress or disordered mentally could not hold a friendly relationship with students, which may further affect the learning atmosphere. The discovery is supported by Singh and Sarkar in 2012, where research has shown positive relationships between teacher and student to be related to better performance and engagement in school.

Classroom Environment

It also states that the mental health of a teacher reflects in the class atmosphere. According to one research study carried out by Kothari and Sharma in 2014, a teacher with problem-related mental health may find it very difficult to have a supportive and well-managed classroom, which in turn leads to an increased amount of disruptions and, correspondingly, less engagement by students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Interview and questionnaire based

*Findings***Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Category	Subcategory	Count
Age Range	25 to 60 years	-
Highest Level of Education	Post-Graduate degree	30
	University degree	10
	Diploma	10
Field of Study	Arts / Humanities	23
	Health Sciences	9
	Business & Commerce	9
	Education	9
Marital Status	Married	40
	Unmarried	10
Occupation of Head of Family	Professional (e.g., doctor, engineer)	27
	Semi-professional (e.g., teacher, nurse)	17
	Skilled worker	6
Income Bracket	₹75,000 and above	33
	₹50,000 - ₹74,999	12
	₹25,000 - ₹49,999	5
Type of School	Government	21
	Private/Semi-Private/Public	29

Table 2: Job Satisfaction and Job Characteristics

Statement	Satisfaction Level	Frequency
Ample opportunity to utilize abilities and experience independently (Statements 21, 33)	High	12
Higher authorities care for their self-respect (Statement 10)	High	12
Contradictory instructions and adjustment issues (Statements 3, 4)	Low	10
Vague information on job-role and outcomes (Statement 2)	Low	9
Excessive workload and insufficient resources (Statements 13, 25)	Low	11

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Table 3: Age and Job Satisfaction

Name	Age Range	Satisfaction with New Procedures	Workload Satisfaction
Sangeeta Chawla	50-55	2 (Dissatisfied), 2 (Neutral)	3 (Dissatisfied)
Vidisha	45-50	2 (Neutral), 2 (Dissatisfied)	3 (Dissatisfied)
Others	Various	Varied (e.g., 3 Neutral, 2 Dissatisfied)	Varied (e.g., 4 Neutral, 3 Dissatisfied)

Table 4: Education Level and Job Satisfaction

Education Level	Job Clarity Satisfaction	Workload Satisfaction
Post-Graduate degree	5 (Satisfied), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Dissatisfied)	4 (Satisfied), 4 (Neutral), 2 (Dissatisfied)
University degree	1 (Neutral), 1 (Dissatisfied)	1 (Neutral), 1 (Dissatisfied)
Diploma	2 (Neutral), 1 (Dissatisfied)	2 (Neutral), 1 (Dissatisfied)

Table 5: Income Bracket and Job Satisfaction

Income Bracket	Job Clarity Satisfaction	Workload Satisfaction
₹75,000 and above	6 (Satisfied), 2 (Neutral)	5 (Satisfied), 3 (Neutral)
₹50,000 - ₹74,999	2 (Neutral), 1 (Dissatisfied)	2 (Neutral), 1 (Dissatisfied)
₹25,000 - ₹49,999	1 (Dissatisfied)	1 (Dissatisfied)

1. Job Characteristics and Overall Satisfaction

1.1 High Satisfaction

- Large numbers of respondents concur or strongly concur that they have sufficient opportunities to apply their abilities and experience independently (15 respondents – Statements 21, 33).
- Large numbers of respondents also believe that higher authorities respect their self-worth (14 respondents – Statement 10).

1.2 Job Satisfaction Challenges

- Inconsistent instructions and difficulty in adapting to political/group pressures were experienced by 10 respondents (Statements 3, 4).
- Inadequate or unclear job role details were a problem for 8 respondents (Statement 2).
- Overload of work and few resources were major issues for 11 respondents (Statements 13, 25).
- Although these problems do not impact the majority, they point to areas where dissatisfaction is localized.

2. Patterns and Trends

2.1 Age and Satisfaction

- Aged participants display diverse levels of support for statements about job satisfaction.
- Most displayed ambivalence or discontent towards new processes and handling the workload.

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2.2 Education and Job Satisfaction

- Education at a higher level moderately correlates with improved satisfaction concerning job clarity but with persistent dissatisfaction, especially for workload.
- Out of post-graduate degree holders (30 respondents), although 6 were satisfied, 3 were neutral, and 3 were dissatisfied, indicating that a higher education qualification does not automatically translate into job satisfaction.
- Respondents who had diplomas registered lower level of satisfaction, especially concerning job clarity and workload.

2.3 Income and Job Satisfaction

- Though higher-income respondents (₹75,000+) are likely to express more satisfaction, they also have work-related issues.
- Poorer respondents (₹25,000 - ₹49,999) showed higher dissatisfaction, mainly with job clarity and workload expectations.
- Income levels, more than direct correlation, affect job satisfaction, but other conditions in the workplace also contribute significantly.

3. Challenges to Job Satisfaction

The most prevalent factors of dissatisfaction are:

- Contradictory instructions and lack of job clarity
- Overburden of workload and lack of resources
- Job clarity and policy compliance continue to be issues for many respondents.

4. Demographic Influence

- Education and compensation affect job satisfaction but not absolutely—highly educated and compensated workers continue to report workload and job role discontent.
- Age and tenure appear to be a factor- older responders report more doubt and discontent concerning workplace changes.

5. Positive Aspects as a Whole

- Independent work possibilities and decision latitude were highly regarded by many interviewees.
- Appreciation by higher authorities was mentioned as an asset, facilitating job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

THE INDIAN EDUCATION CONTEXT

The Indian education system has a hierarchical system, large class sizes, limited resources, and a curriculum that mostly emphasizes rote over critical thinking. In this system, teachers function, reeling against the deluge of various challenges that target their mental health from all sides.

- **Work Pressure and Stress**

The heavy workload of teachers in India includes teaching large classes, preparation of lesson plans, grading of assignments, and extra-curricular activities. Added to this is the administrative workload and, in many cases, other additional responsibilities like midday meal supervision and election duties. As various studies have shown, such excessive

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workloads can lead to chronic continuous stress, burnout, and mental health problems like anxiety and depression.

- **Socio-Economic Conditions**

The socio-economic status of teachers in India varies widely, with the majority of them, particularly in rural areas, falling into the middle class by salary, which may not be adequate to meet their needs. This financial pressure can cause stress and anxiety that will further deteriorate mental health. Moreover, job insecurity, particularly for temporary or contract teachers, is added to another level of stress and uncertainty.

- **Societal Expectations and Cultural Factors**

In India, much respect is given to teachers, who in turn should act as role models in morality and ethical conduct within the class and outside. The societal pressure could create in them a sense of responsibility and thereby related stress, more so when they feel that they cannot live up to such expectations. Cultural pointers like stigma associated with mental health issues may further create more issues for teachers from seeking help, which may lead to aggravating their conditions.

- **Institutional Support and Professional Development**

The role of educational institutional support is very important for the mental health of teachers. Unfortunately, in India, most educational institutions lack facilities or resources to adequately support this. Little or no professional development opportunities are available for them to seek help, along with mental health resources and counseling.

- **Professional Role in Development**

Professional development is another way to provide teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with the demands of their job effectively, hence managing stress. Training in classroom management, life skills, financial planning, student psychology, and self-care strategies empowers a teacher, enhancing good mental health. Access to such opportunities in most cases is restricted, more so to those schools in rural setups or who are underfunded.

- **Availability of Mental Health Resources**

Mental health resources, such as counseling services, peer support groups, or stress management workshops/seminars/programs, are needed for the welfare of teachers. Most schools in India, however, are not that focused or concerned about teachers' mental health; hence, the availability of resources is lacking in most of them. The stigma that comes with having mental health issues might also have the impact of holding teachers back from reaching out for help, which might lead to a lack of treatment for the same mental health problems.

- **Impact on Teaching and Student Outcomes**

Teachers' mental health immensely affects their teaching effectiveness, pedagogy and, subsequently, student achievement. A mentally healthy teacher is more likely to show greater interest and motivation in teaching. Conversely, the ones experiencing mental health issues may show reduced motivation, increased absenteeism, lower job satisfaction, and diminished quality teaching affecting their students.

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- **Teacher–Student Relationships**

The relationship between the teacher and his students forms part of the learning process. Stressed or mentally unwell teachers may not be in a good position to develop positive relations with their students, leading to an impact on the classroom environment. Positive teacher-student relationships have been associated with higher student achievement, better student behavior, and greater student engagement.

- **Classroom Environment**

This extends into the classroom environment, too, since good mental health among teachers impacts the whole atmosphere within the classroom. A supportive, positive, and well-managed classroom lies at the very bedrock of any effective learning. When a teacher is in poor mental health, creating such an environment becomes difficult; instead, classroom disruption increases, students' engagement decreases, and the atmosphere for learning becomes less conducive.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHER MENTAL HEALTH

This requires a multi-dimensional approach to meeting the mental health needs of teachers: policy changes at the top, institutional support, and societal attitude shifts toward mental health.

1) Policy Interventions

There is much that governments and educational authorities can do to protect the mental health of teachers through policies aimed at reducing workload, providing job security, and ensuring fair remuneration. Policies to promote professional development and facilitate access to mental health resources are equally important.

2) Institutional Support

Educational settings should take their staff members' mental health issues seriously by ensuring a supportive work environment. This can be accomplished through access to counseling services, promotion of healthy work-life balance, and enhancement of openness and supportiveness around mental health issues at work.

3) Societal Attitudes

Changing societal attitudes towards mental health is hence important for making teachers comfortable in seeking help. Public awareness campaigns, education about mental health, efforts to reduce stigma can encourage and motivate teachers to take care of their mental health and seek support when required.

CONCLUSION

The mental health of teachers in India is influenced by a complex interplay of psycho-social factors which are interwoven with issues related to workload, socio-economic conditions, societal expectations and institutional support. These are issues which need a much more holistic approach that brings about policy alterations, institutional support, and societal attitude shifts toward mental health. For increasing teachers' mental well-being first and foremost, we can enhance not only the teachers' quality of life but also the whole educational system's effectiveness, ultimately leading to students and society achieving better outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest

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