

## Humour Styles as Predictors of Occupational Stress among School Teachers

Antara Nandi<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rooprekha Baksi<sup>2\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The present research attempts to investigate how different humor styles operate with respect to occupational stress among the teachers in the eastern part of India. Humor has been said to combat stress. The central purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of various styles of humor: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating-on teachers' occupational stress. In addition, the research will test gender differences in humor and examination on this relationship to stress. A hypothesis was formulated that affiliative humor would help teachers with occupational stress. A sample of 198 government and private school teachers in urban and rural locations in Eastern India aged 25-55 years was withdrawn. Stratified random sampling was used to give differential representation. Measurement tools used in the research were the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) (Thorson & Powell, 1993) and the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) (Srivastava & Singh, 1984). The findings may help to formulate stress management techniques for teachers, thereby enhancing well-being and job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** *Occupational Stress, Humor Styles, Stress Management, Eastern India*

In the present social situation of growing complexities, teachers are more in direct contact with their professional stress. The quality and effectiveness of education systems depend on the abilities, productivity, regulation and devotion of teachers. Studies also show that teachers experience a higher level of tension and pressure than many other professionals (Charlton, Moulton, Sabey & West, 2021); (Skinner, Leavey & Rothi, 2021); (Zemanova & Knight, 2021); (Oducado, Rabacal, Moralista & Tamdang, 2021). Occupational stress can be defined as the physical and emotional responses posed when the requirements of the job stand contrary to the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker (Leka et al., 2004).

Humor has been proposed to be an important coping strategy for dealing with stress because it enables us to shift our perceptions of problems and helps us manage our feelings (Martin, 2007). Therefore, when we deal with stressful events or situations, humor acts as a useful coping strategy which reduces stress and thereby increases positive affect. In a general basis, Humor is considered as an adaptive coping strategy (Carver & Scheier, 1989), that is, a strategy which is a proven one to be effective in reducing the experienced stress in presence

<sup>1</sup>Student, Amity Institute of Psychology & Allied Sciences, Amity University Kolkata

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor III, Amity Institute of Psychology & Allied Sciences, Amity University Kolkata

\*Corresponding Author

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of stressful events. Humor is also helpful in expanding psychological wellbeing and lessening psychological symptoms. In general, the helpful effect of humor is considered in light of its capability to relieve stress, anxiety, depression, and psychological distress, while at the meantime increasing optimism, social relationships, and life satisfaction. Humor also increases positive mental state and helps to maintain them over time.

A widely used and accepted theory of humor (Martin, 2003) divides humor into four broad styles which is based on joining of the two dimensions of being friendly vs. harmful and determining to increase one's self-worth vs. the worth one has to others: (i) affiliative, (ii) self-enhancing, (iii) aggressive and (iv) self-defeating. Previous research studies have shown that these humor styles have different effects on psychological well-being and psychological adjustment or adaptations (Jiang, 2020; Schneider, 2018). *Affiliative humor* usage includes all sorts of funny comments to improve relationships, reduce stress, and put everyone in a happy mood. Humor is used to enhance social interaction and maintain goodwill with a relationship partner. *Self-enhancing humor* refers to laughter and fun ways of looking at life to cope with stressors and challenges life throws our way. Having a laid-back approach to life, particularly in the difficult moments of life, one provides humor for oneself. *Aggressive Humor* style is generally used in the form of sarcasm, mockery, ridicule, or put-downs on other people. *Self-Defeating Humor* indicates making oneself the target of jokes or deliberately deprecating oneself in the gain of approval or in order to avoid conflict. The current research thus aimed to examine the relationship between humor styles and occupational stress in teachers in Eastern India.

### ***Theoretical Background***

According to the idea of how Nomita Punia and Shanti Balda (2016) was carried out, the larger population of the teacher working at the Central School Education Council (CBSE) was of partial uncertainty, and they are found to experience moderate level of stress due to their overloaded work for given role, conflict in the role, poor relations among peers, and hectic working conditions. It was found that the teachers and nurses are facing a direct level of stretching in their job load according to job role. The study conducted among job professionals concluded that teachers and medical caretakers go through more stress due to excessive overwhelming requests for other work and other tasks (Chan et al., 1998). Ahghar (2008) studied the effects of organizational climates among Tehran's assistant school teachers, and explained in detail that the overall stress level among teachers working in closed climate is higher than the teachers working in the open climate.

Karthikeyan and Babu (2016) highlighted on professional stress and coping strategies which was conducted on teachers from registered Matriculation schools working in Thanjabul, Tamil Nadu. The authors stated that respondents ages 25 and 35 are mostly occupationally stressed. Later, when research was conducted between male and female teachers, it was revealed that teachers were exposed to more specialized stress than male teachers. Married teachers have been observed to have the greatest professional stress for their families compared to unmarried teachers. It was found that most teachers in this category use stress promotion methods at the maximum level with less than 3 years of occupational experience (Karthikeyan & Babu 2016). There are no significant differences in the professional stress of teacher trainers based on gender or professional flow, but we found significant differences in the nature of the work (Nagra, 2013). Mariya Aftab and Tahira Khatoon (2012) mentioned that demographic differences and professional stress among teachers of 608 teachers in 42 schools in Uttar Pradesh (India). Another finding in this study shows that almost half of secondary school teachers suffer from less professional stress related to work. Furthermore,

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teachers were affected by professional stress compared to male teachers. Research depicted that trained doctoral students suffer from more professional stress, while untrained teachers suffer from less professional stress related to their work. Teachers belonging to the 6-10-year domain experienced the highest professional stress with the least stress in the 0–5-year category. The remaining two groups are between these two ranks. Furthermore, there were no significant differences in monthly salary, lessons, marriage status, or professional stress among secondary school teachers.

Gebre Kirstos and H.A (2015) from Ethiopia, reported that that secondary school teachers experienced high levels of professional stress. Research in Ghana shows problems with teachers' working situation, which creates job related stress and reduces job satisfaction and motivation (Asimeng - Boahene, 2012). There are some issues underlying that makes the African work environment unfavourable, teachers discouraged and annoy the teachers repeatedly their work which includes lack of educational material, large classes, inadequate vocational training, and few opportunities to develop professionally. In Kenya, Ngari et al. (2013) proclaimed that teachers experienced high levels of stress due to their workload. In southwestern Uganda, secondary school teachers taught stressful workplace difficulties and pressure emotions (Senyonga & Hecker, 2021). Therefore, this background formed the basis for assessing differences in professional stress on social demographic characteristics in both teachers in the larger Tuhenyi public and private secondary schools in Greater Bushenyi of Uganda. Therefore, this background formed the basis for assessing differences in job related stress on social demographic characteristics in both teachers in the larger Tuhenyi public and private secondary schools in Greater Bushenyi of Uganda.

Evidence from Martin et al. (2003) indicates that there exist four different humor styles for the daily use of humor by individuals. This also refers to individual differences in the use of humor. Two of the humor styles are positive and healthy, while the other two are negative and unhealthy in the context of a psychological well, while an “Affiliative” and “Self-Enhancing” style of humor which reflects the positive and adaptive traits of personality, aggressive, aggressive, aggressive and "self-destructed" humor style. The first two positive styles correlate negatively with fear and depression, and positively with self-esteem, extra version, openness, and validity. The last two correlate negatively with agreeableness and conscientiousness and positively correlated with neuroticism, hostility and aggression.

Findings from Martin et al. (2003) suggested that there are four different styles of humour the individuals use in daily life. It may even be referring to individual differences in the humour even. Two of them have positive and healthier aspects, while the other two are negative and unhealthy concerning psychological well-being; the positive adjectives were attached with the Affiliative and Self-Enhancing Humour Styles while negative, maladaptive with Aggressive and Self - Defeating styles. First two positive styles were negatively correlated with anxiety and depression but showed positive correlation with self - esteem, extraversion openness, and agreeableness. Last two were negatively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness but positively correlated with neuroticism, hostility and aggression.

Humor styles seem to have been related to personality in rather indifferent fashions (Saroglou & Scariot, 2002). Self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor were positively correlated to agreeableness, openness, and self-esteem. Aggressive humor was negatively correlated to agreeableness and conscientiousness. There was a negative correlation between emotional stability with emotional stability, conscientiousness, attachment security, and self

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- esteem. These results indicate that personality may best predict which humor styles are used in individuals.

Gorham and Christophel (1990), highlighted that students do not learn better through humor but some other cognitive factor which is called immediacy. It is defined as the kinds of verbal and non-verbal behaviors that teachers use to close the psychological distance between them and students, facilitating a more positive, engaging, and comfortable environment of learning. It was exclaimed that we cannot talk about the impact of a teacher's humor on performance of students performance alone. We would also have to consider how such teacher appeared to those students in terms of being approachable and immediate. Therefore, while humor alone might not always enhance learning, when combined with immediacy behaviors, it could develop a relaxed, interactive, and most effective learning environment. Their results indicated that humor is one of the immediacy behaviors that teachers can effectively and purposely apply to narrow the psychological distance of the classroom. Good-natured humor links teachers and students and gives meaning to life while learning; hence, it paves the way to a firm foundation through exploring how humor functions as a hedonic and psychological - learning tool. It activates students' emotional and cognitive engagement in the learning process.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### *Aim*

This study investigates how different humor styles contribute to occupational stress levels among teachers in the Eastern region of India by including affiliative humor, fostering connections; self-enhancing humor, which helps manage stress; aggressive humor, which may involve criticizing others; and self-defeating humor, which involves making fun of oneself. The research also looks at how personal factors such as gender, might alter the impact of humor on stress. This approach guides how data is collected and analyzed, aiming to understand both the direct effects of humor on stress and how teachers' individual differences play a role in this dynamic.

#### *Objectives*

Firstly, the major objectives were to study the properties of the sample secondly, to assess the relationship between different humor styles and the degree of occupational stress experienced by teachers and finally to find out the difference between male and female in terms of humor styles.

#### *Problem Statement*

Teaching is a very demanding profession and one that involves immense working stress. Humor can be an effective tool for stress management; however, the influence of various humor styles on occupational stress among teachers in Eastern India is still unexplored. This research intends to bridge the identified gap and investigate how different styles of humor contribute to the stress levels of teachers in this region.

#### *Hypothesis*

There is a significant negative influence of affiliative humor styles on occupational stress on teachers residing in eastern part of India.

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### *Description of the Sample*

The sample includes 198 Teachers from both (government) Public and Private Institutions in urban and rural areas of Eastern region of India. Demographic details are given under Table 1.

**Table 1: Table represents the demographic details of the present sample (n= 198)**

Demographic Details	Specifications	Number	Percentage
Age	25 - 35	69	34.85%
	35 - 45	70	35.35%
	45 - 55	59	29.80%
Gender	Male	102	51.52%
	Female	96	48.48%
Educational Qualification	Graduate	79	39.90%
	Postgraduate	79	39.90%
	Phd	37	18.69%
	Other Courses	3	1.52%
Working Profession (Salary)	Below 30,000	20	10.10%
	30,000-40,000	39	19.70%
	40,000-50,000	62	31.31%
	50,000-above	77	38.89%
Working Profession (Job Role)	Teacher	126	63.64%
	Professor	72	36.36%
Family Type	Nuclear	106	53.54%
	Joint	92	46.46%
Marital Status	Unmarried	54	27.27%
	Married	137	69.19%
	Divorce	7	3.54%
Location	Rural	41	20.71%
	Urban	157	79.29%

### *Participants*

A sample of 198 teachers from both (government) public and private educational institutions in urban and rural areas of Eastern India of age group 25 - 55 years are selected using stratified random sampling to ensure a diverse representation.

### *Tools Implemented*

The following tools were implemented for the current research

- **The Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS):** Developed by Thorson and Powell (1993), the MSHS is designed to assess various aspects of an individual's sense of humor. It measures **multiple dimensions**, including **Humor Production**, which evaluates the ability to create humor; **Social Uses of Humor or humor appreciation**, which examines how humor is utilized in social interactions; **Coping Humor**, which assesses the use of humor as a coping mechanism; and **Attitudes Towards Humor**, which reflects an individual's general attitude towards humor and laughter. The Reliability of the scale is 0.77 and 0.91 and validity of MSHS was determined by the Exploratory Factor Analysis which showed three-dimensional factor solution which accounted for 63.0% of the explained variance of the construct.
- **Occupational Stress Index (OSI):** Developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984), the OSI assesses the occupational stress experienced by individuals in various

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professions. It is designed to assess 12 sub-scales - Role Overload, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Unreasonable Group & Pol. Pressure, Responsibility for persons, under participation, Powerlessness, Poor peer relations, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Law status, Strenuous working conditions, Unprofitability. The Reliability of the scale is 0.935 and 0.90. The Validity of (OSI) was determined by computing coefficients of correlation between the scales on the (OSI) and the various measure of job attitudes and job behaviour.

### **Procedure**

The Scales were finalized and the questions were entered to make the google forms. Consent was collected from all the participants for whom data has been collected. Data collection was implemented followed by data analysis.

### **Statistical Analysis**

*Descriptive Statistics* which included Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation will be calculated for demographic variables and main study variables. *Correlation Analysis* of Pearson correlation coefficients to assess the relationships between humour styles and occupational stress. *T-Test* was implemented to compare the means between the two variables, and it will test if there is a real difference in stress levels or is it just random. Jamovi software was utilized for performance of descriptive statistics, t-tests and Pearson correlation. Descriptive statistics were used to obtain summaries of participants' humor styles and occupational stress. Pearson correlation and t-tests were used to research relationships, as well as group differences, regarding occupational stress endured among teachers.

## **RESULT ANALYSIS**

### *Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) - Scoring and Interpretation*

The MSHS, or Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale, is a 22-item tool or instrument designed to evaluate an individual's general sense of humor and its manifest application in ordinary life. Each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale, where response options are 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The MSHS scales measure four major dimensions of humor: Humor Creativity & Social Uses; Coping Humor; Social Humor; and Attitude to Humor. Scoring is essentially a summation of item responses for each sub-scale. Items negative in wording require reverse scoring.

*Sub – Scales- Humor Creativity & Social Uses-* This sub-scale consists of 12 items: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 23, and 24. It concerns the individual's capacity for production and appreciation of humor in both solitary and social contexts. A high score indicates a person who is usually creative about humor, enjoys humorous exchanges, and is mostly considered witty and entertaining in group settings. The overall score for this sub-scale can range from 12 to 60. The midpoint is 36. Scores above 36 are indicative of a vibrant expression style of humor that is socially oriented, while scores below tend to imply that the person is somewhat inhibited or not very engaged in providing humorous expression.

*Coping Humor-* This sub-scale has four items: 2, 16, 19, and 22. These items assess the use of humor as a defense mechanism during stressful and difficult times. Individuals who score high on this sub-scale have an attitude of keeping the pressures of life at bay by being lighthearted and using humor against stress and hardships. Scores range from 4 to 20, and an average score is 12. Scores above 12 indicate that the person on the average is using humor

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productively as an emotional coping mechanism, whereas scores lower than that might indicate difficulty making use of humor as a means of coping with stress.

**Social Humor-** This very brief sub-scale has two items: 10 and 14. These refer to occasions when individuals may use humor as a social interaction and to develop social relations. While it is only two items, it provides valuable insights into interpersonal humor abilities. The scoring ranges from 2 to 10, with 6 as a midpoint. Scores above 6 indicate frequent humor to support social bonding, while scores below indicate limited use of humor in social communication.

**Attitude to Humor-** The sub-scale has four reverse-scored items: 11, 13, 17, and 20. These are negative items that must be reverse coded prior to the total score (that is, for this sub-scale, a score of 1 would be re-coded as a 5, 2 would be re-coded as a 4, etc.). This sub-scale shows the general tendency of a person or the individual's emotional orientation to humor. The scoring ranges from 4 to 20 and has an average scale of 12. Above 12 shows a positive tendency toward humor, while under 12 may reflect a lack of interest or discomfort with humor experiences.

For the grand score, do reverse scoring for the indicated items (11, 13, 17, 20), and then sum all items from 1 to 22. Thus, a total raw score can range from 22 to 110, an average score being 66. A higher score indicates a well-rounded humor profile.

### *Occupational Stress Index (OSI)*

The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) created by Srivastava and Singh is a standardized scale for measuring the extent of stress that a person experiences in an occupational role. The OSI contains 46 items and 12 sub-scale. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale to measure agreement from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). There are both positively worded (true-keyed) and negatively worded (false-keyed) items in which reverse scoring is required. Overall score indicates the total amount of occupational stress a person experiences, but the sub-scale scores identify which dimensions of stress are more or less harming. To arrive at a total score, a numeric value equal to 1 through 5 is assigned to each response. True keyed or positively worded items score from Strongly Agree = 5 down to Strongly Disagree = 1. False keyed or negatively worded items (marked with \*) score in reverse Strongly Agree = 1 up to Strongly Disagree = 5. Each sub-scale will have its own item set, and the sub-scale score will be the sum of the item scores. To arrive at the sub-scale midpoint, the sub-scale number of items will be multiplied by 3 (3 is the midpoint value in a 5-point scale). Therefore, any score above the midpoint suggests that the specific sub-scale dimension is experienced with more stress and any score below the midpoint indicates lower levels of stress in that dimension.

*Sub – Scales: Role Overload* (Items: 1, 13, 25, 34, 44, 46): This subscale includes a total of 6 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 6 to 30 points and a midpoint of 18 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain.

*Role Ambiguity* (Items: 2, 14, 26, 37): This subscale consists of 4 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 4 to 20 points and a midpoint of 12 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain.

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Role Conflict (Items: 3, 15\*, 27, 38\*, 45): This subscale consists of 5 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 5 to 25 points and a midpoint of 15 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain. The following items are reverse scored: 15, 38.

Unreasonable Group and Political Pressure (Items: 4, 16, 28, 39): This subscale consists of 4 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 4 to 20 points and a midpoint of 12 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain.

Responsibility for Persons (Items: 5, 17, 29): This subscale consists of 3 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 3 to 15 points and a midpoint of 9 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain.

Under participation (Items: 6\*, 18\*, 30\*, 40\*): This subscale consists of 4 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 4 to 20 points and a midpoint of 12 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain. The following items are reverse scored: 6, 18, 30, 40.

Powerlessness (Items: 7\*, 19\*, 31\*): This subscale consists of 3 items. It can be scored within a possible range of 3 to 15 points and a midpoint of 9 points. Higher scores suggest elevated stress in this domain. The following items are reverse scored: 7, 19, 31.

Peer Group Relations\_ (Items: 8\*, 20, 32\*, 41\*): This subscale contains 4 items. The possible score range is 4 to 20, with a midpoint of 12. Higher scores reflect higher stress related to peer group relations. The items below are reverse scored: 8, 32, 41.

Intrinsic Impoverishment (Items: 9, 21\*, 33, 42): This subscale contains 4 items. The possible score range is 4 to 20, with a midpoint of 12. Higher scores reflect higher stress related to feelings of intrinsic impoverishment. The item below is reverse scored: 21.

Low Status (Items: 10, 22\*, 34): This subscale contains 3 items. The possible score range is 3 to 15, with a midpoint of 9. High scores reflect higher stress due to low status. The item below is reverse scored: 22.

Strenuous Working Conditions\_ (Items: 12, 24, 35, 43\*): This subscale contains 4 items. The possible score range is 4 to 20, with a midpoint of 12. A higher score indicates higher stress associated with strenuous working conditions. The statement below is reverse scored: 43.

Unprofitability (Items: 11, 23): This subscale contains 2 items. There is a possible score range of 2 to 10, with a midpoint of 6. A higher score indicates higher stress associated with unprofitability.

The total score on the OSI is the summed value of all 46 items (scores for all false-keyed items are to be reversed). The overall score on the OSI ranges from a minimum of 46 to a maximum of 230, with a midpoint of 138. Accordingly, a score at or below 138 would signal moderate to low occupational stress, while a score above 138 indicates significant occupational stress. This scoring would allow practitioners to assess the degree and nature of occupational stress, as well as to plan to intervene or organize interventions at the organizational level.

Table mentions the descriptive analysis of the current sample under study (Table 2).

*Table 2: Table illustrates the descriptive analysis of the sample*

	MEAN	MEDIAN	MODE	S.D.
OSI	138	137	134	6.57
MSHS	54	55	62	10.75

## DISCUSSION

The study investigated the effects of various forms of humor on occupational stress with a sample of 198 teachers in Eastern India using the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS: Thorson & Powell, 1993). Overall findings from the four sub scales suggest that teachers exhibited a low level of humor involvement and use of humor in coping and social settings.

*Humor Creativity & Social Uses (HCP)* - Average Score: 29.94 (Below midpoint 36). The results indicated that teachers expressed and created humor overall at a below average level of use, indicating limited use of humor in social and professional interactions with others.

*Coping Humor (CH)* - Average Score: 10.38 (Below midpoint 12). The teachers reported below average in Coping Humor that reflects that teachers need awareness for using humor as a coping for their mental wellbeing. Teachers tended to not use humor as a strategy to manage stress, which indicates a need for educator awareness, and potentially, professional learning of adaptive coping strategies that involve humor as a strategy for coping.

*Social Humor (SUH)* - Average Score: 5.36 (Near midpoint 6). The teachers reported slightly below average in Social Humor While there was some indication teachers perceived some use of humor to connect with others socially, the more generalized view tended to be limited to others and individual social contexts.

*Attitude to Humor (ATH)* - Average Score: 8.37 (Below midpoint 12). Overall, the attitude towards humor from this sample of teachers tended to be low as it was not widely perceived as a mechanism of value personally and professionally.

### *Gender Comparison Across Subscales*

Notable trends were evident when comparing genders on the sub scales

*Humor Creativity & Social Uses (HCP)*: Males reported above average humor on humor expression, and creativity. Whereas Females reported below average in humor-on-humor expression, and creativity. This implies that Females might not be as willing to embrace humor, which could be cultural or professional expectations.

*Coping Humor (CH)*: Males reported an above average in coping humor. Males use humor as a way to manage stress as compared to females, who were less likely to use humor for stress relief. Thus, male teachers reported above average attitudes towards humor. Whereas females reported below average indicating they do not use humor to cope with stress.

*Social Humor (SUH)*: Both genders used social humor an average amount means moderately, although males engaged slightly higher than the female teachers thus reflecting more extroverted social roles. Males reported an average in social humor reflecting that they use humor to build social relationships. Whereas females reported a below average in social humor reflecting that they don't use humor to build social relationships.

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*Attitude to Humor (ATH)*: Females and males reported below average attitudes towards humor overall, although females indicated a more cautious or low in humor overall.

These patterns may indicate the existence of gendered social conditioning, whereby males feel more licensed to use humor, while females believe that humor is precarious with respect to authority or professionalism.

The present investigation explored occupational stress levels of school teachers in Eastern India using the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) (Srivastava & Singh, 1984) to better understand the variances in stress levels across the twelve subdomain levels. The analysis showed that Role Overload, Unreasonable Group and Political Pressure, and Strenuous Working Conditions were classified as High Stress levels, which was interpreted as school teachers experience excessive work burden, bureaucratic burdens, and stressful mental and physical conditions of work.

The stressors identified which can be classified as moderate stress levels were Role Conflict, Responsibility for Persons, Peer Group Relations, and Unprofitability indicating moderate stress and that some tension arose for teachers due to conflicting expectations, emotional responsibility to their students, and some sense of incompatibility between effort and reward. In contrast, Role Ambiguity, under participation, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Low Status, and Powerlessness indicate low stress, meaning teachers are demonstrating higher clarity about their roles, participate in decision making, and find value in their work. Overall, the occupational stress profile is demonstrative of a moderate to high stress environment which is largely driven by systemic and workload stressors. Given these findings, the study emphasizes the possibility of adaptive humor styles being emotional buffers which engender a psychological safeguard against high stress domains but also aid in promoting resilience and well-being in the educational ecosystem.

A very weak, non-significant negative correlation was found between humor styles and occupational stress ( $r = -0.015$ ,  $p = 0.832$ ), suggesting of no discernible relationship as it is a weaker correlation, and thus, humor does not appear to decrease stress for this group of teachers. This shows that Humor does not influence the Occupational Stress in reducing factors like work overload, job security, policy and administrations. Thus, even if Humor is present, it is not at all strong or consistent to reduce the occupational Stress. There was no significant difference in stress levels based on teachers' gender ( $t = 0.979$ ,  $p = 0.330$ ). Gender appears to have no significant effect on occupational stress amongst teachers in this sample. Here, the p-value is 0.330 and is much greater than 0.05 level of significance which finally confirms this. Thus, it is proved here that gender doesn't act as a determining factor here in Occupational Stress. Both genders face some level or the other extents of stress.

### ***Implications and Future Scope***

Notably, there was a negligible negative correlation between humor styles and occupational stress, indicating that for teachers in Eastern India, humor on its own, is not a strong stress relief factor. The teachers fell below average for Coping Humor and Attitude to Humor, which signifies that there is a need for an intervention to educate teachers about adaptive humor styles, and for them to use humor in their personal and professional lives as a tool for coping stress.

The lack of gender differences in their use of humor style and their stress profile suggest that the overall experience of occupational stress is the same for male and female teachers. In

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other words, stress intervention programs can be conducted without much additional modifications based on gender. Stress is mostly driven by role overload, political pressure, and challenging working conditions requiring that multidimensional approaches at two levels needed, addressing personal coping strategies (such as humor) and addressing systemic level structures within educational institutions.

Future research could leverage interviews or focus groups to explore how and by whom humor is under-utilized as a coping strategy if it is so effective. A sample outside of Eastern India to other areas would help to find differences in humor and occupational stress based on region or culture. A longitudinal study could explore if humor styles change over time dependent on years of experience or the changing landscape of teaching environments. Future studies can integrate other variables such as personality characteristics, school type, government versus private, school climate, and/or support systems within the educational system to generate a more comprehensive model of stress management. Creating and measuring programs that are solely humor-based interventions to measure occupational stress would provide applied utility to existing literature.

### *Limitations*

The design of this study lacks causal inference; it cannot definitively assess whether humor leads to decreased stress or vice versa. Data from self-report tools such as Google Forms could be impacted by social desirability bias or inaccurate self-perception. While stratified random sampling was employed, the sample could still be lacking a representation of extremely rural/tribal areas impacting the results' generalizability. The Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) may not allow for culturally relevant or unique humor styles with respect to Indian and/or specific regional teacher samples. Even though tools were standardized in English, it is possible that comprehension varied among participants, particularly those who were less fluent in English and/or more fluent in regional languages.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, we can say that this investigation suggests that, while humor is officially regarded as a reservable stress-buffer, it is not a crucial component of teachers' distress in Eastern India. Teachers exhibit a moderate to high level of distress, which appears to be a cumulative effect of structural factors such as workload and administrative responsibilities.

The frequency of the humor styles assessed (e.g., the use of humor) revealed low to moderate levels of usage, especially for humor styles that are typically relied on in interpersonal contexts, affiliations, coping, and to connect with students; this indicates that there may be room for wide-spread and adaptive humor.

The results indicate that teachers in Eastern India are not utilizing humor as often as possible, with differences in gender shaping humor use. Evidence-based interventions that foster humor awareness and are inclusive of all school members could promote enhanced coping skills, reduce stress, and contribute to a healthier teaching culture for all teachers. The outcomes suggest that educators from Eastern India are not applying humor maximally, and the expression of humor is influenced by the gender of the teacher. A focus on raising awareness of humor for teachers and nurturing inclusive school cultures could foster coping skills, relieve stress, and improve health in the teaching and learning experiences of educators and students.

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In summary, it seems that humor is not a protective factor in this context currently, but there is an opportunity for training and organizational change in the future to promote well-being and reduce distress through greater adaptability and culturally appropriate interventions that include education on how to use humor.

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