

Research Paper

Comparative Study of Occupational Stress Levels Between Male and Female College Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress is a widespread issue in higher education, impacting faculty members' well-being and professional performance. While much research has been conducted on occupational stress in general, its gendered dimensions remain insufficiently explored in academic settings. This study investigates how occupational stress differs between male and female faculty members in higher education institutions, focusing on their unique experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies. The sample of 103 College teachers (both male and female teachers) were selected through purposive sampling method. The findings reveal notable gender disparities in occupational stress. These results underscore the importance of addressing gender-specific stressors in higher education through targeted interventions and policies. By fostering an equitable and supportive environment, institutions can promote the well-being and career satisfaction of all faculty members.

Keywords: Occupational stress, gender differences, higher education, faculty well-being, Career advancement

Teaching is a demanding profession that requires significant time, effort, and dedication. Educators often encounter excessive workloads, research publication pressures, resource constraints, and shifting educational expectations, leading to substantial occupational stress. The concept of stress, introduced by Hans Selye in 1936, refers to the human body's adaptive response to external stimuli, leading to physical, psychological, and behavioral changes. Occupational stress is a pervasive and unavoidable phenomenon that affects working individuals globally. It arises from dynamic workplace conditions where individuals face uncertain and important demands, opportunities, or resource constraints. Specifically, in educational settings, factors such as the college environment, lack of professionalism, heavy workloads, inadequate benefits, and time pressures contribute significantly to occupational stress.

This study focused on the differences in stress levels between male and female college teachers. These differences should be understood for the following reasons: First, they highlight the areas where gender differences exist within the academic realm, including but not limited to who does more work or who supports more. Second, high stress can lead to

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various health problems in the faculty like chronic fatigue, reduced satisfaction at work, and leaving the profession entirely. Eventually, this will have a negative effect on students as they will learn from stressed teachers who are not able to perform well in class. The variance of occupational stress based on sex in tertiary institution educators can be understood as the physical, psychological, and emotional effort exerted by these married professionals or working women according to their work-related circumstances. The approach encompasses various constructs, such as interpersonal conflict, role ambiguity, organizational culture, and individual traits. Recognition of the variance in the occupational stress of college teachers in relation to their sex is essential for the planning of specific measures and programs to improve the mental state of educators, increase their job satisfaction experience, and improve the quality of the education system as a whole. It is noteworthy that the occupational stress of male and female college teachers is very scarce, which underpins the purpose of this study.

The well-being and job satisfaction of college teachers have been identified as critical concerns, with prior research indicating that occupational stress is a pervasive issue in this demographic. Studies examining stress levels across genders have yielded inconsistent findings, suggesting that female academics may experience heightened stress due to factors such as gender discrimination, work-life balance challenges, and excessive teaching workloads, which can lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction. Conversely, male academics face unique stressors, including the pressure to maintain robust research profiles and conform to traditional masculinity norms, potentially precipitating anxiety and depression. A comprehensive review of the literature reveals that academic work is inherently stressful, with multifaceted factors such as substantial teaching responsibilities, inadequate research support, lack of recognition, and negative emotions contributing to stress among male and female academics. Moreover, the pressure to publish in reputable journals and navigate an increasingly competitive academic landscape intensifies stress levels, creating a complex and challenging environment for educators. Despite the extensive literature on occupational stress among college teachers, very little scientific research has compared the levels of occupational stress between male and female college teachers.

In particular, no known studies have compared differences in levels of stress, stressors, and coping between male and female college teachers, which hinders our understanding of gender-specific experiences of occupational stress among this population. Moreover, evidence from existing studies suggests that the relationship between gender and occupational stress may differ depending on how stressful conditions are assessed or measured (i.e., objective vs. subjective levels). Therefore, an integrated comparative study on this issue is necessary. This research investigates and compares the occupational stress levels exerted on male and female teachers, the factors that cause stress, and, lastly, how stress is dealt with by gender. The purpose of this study is to add to the existing literature regarding the gendered nature of college teachers' occupational stress and how such stress can be prevented and enhanced in this group of teachers.

Occupational stress is a pervasive issue affecting professionals in various industries, including education. This issue among college teachers has become a major concern, affecting how much they like their job and how well they teach. Several studies have investigated the prevalence and impact of occupational stress on teachers, providing valuable insights into the complexities of this issue. Even though it is important, we do not have much research comparing how male and female college teachers deal with job stress.

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KDV Prasad, Rajesh Vaidya, and V Anil Kumar's (2016) study on occupational stress and coping strategies among CBSE-affiliated school teachers in Hyderabad revealed that effective coping mechanisms can significantly reduce stress. This finding underscores the importance of incorporating stress management and coping strategies into teacher training programs to promote teacher well-being. Syed Sajid Husain Kazmi, Jyotsana Shukla, Rakesh Kumar Tripathi and SZH Zaidi's (2023) "Occupational Stress Among Middle-aged Professionals in India" revealed that marketing professionals experience higher levels of occupational stress compared to banking and teaching professionals. Specifically, the study found that marketing professionals reported greater role overload, role conflict, powerlessness, poor peer relations, low status, strenuous working conditions, and unprofitability, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to mitigate occupational stress in this profession.

This has implications for understanding the occupational stress experienced by college teachers, who may face similar challenges in their roles, such as high workload and limited resources. Dr. Sarika Mohta and Ruchi Sharma's (2018) study on "Occupational Stress among Teachers Working in Private Universities" found that university teachers experience relatively low levels of occupational stress. Notably, the study revealed no significant difference in stress levels between male and female teachers, regardless of the type of institution they worked in, suggesting that occupational stress affects teachers uniformly across gender and institutional lines. However, further research is needed to explore whether these findings hold true for college teachers, who may face distinct stressors and challenges compared to university teachers.

Andrew B Mcgee, Erika M Manczak, Samantha R Scott and Sarah E Watamura's (2023) study on "Associations between the Psychophysiological Impacts of Teacher Occupational Stress and Stress Biomarkers" revealed that high levels of acute and chronic stress among teachers, particularly occupational stress, have detrimental effects on teacher health. Specifically, the study found that burnout, perceived stress, and job strain negatively impact teacher well-being, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to mitigate the harmful consequences of occupational stress on teacher health. These studies emphasize the importance of prioritizing teacher well-being and developing effective stress management strategies to promote healthy and supportive educational environments. Maya Kurniawati, Choirul Saleh, and M.R Khairul's (2021) comparative study on "Career Advancement of University Lecturers" in the USA and Australia revealed similarities in academic career advancement systems between the two developed countries. Both countries prioritize human capital and talent management, demonstrating a serious commitment to academic career development.

This study provides valuable insights for developing countries in integrating the strengths of developed countries into their systems. Understanding these career advancement systems can also provide context for exploring the occupational stress experiences of male and female college teachers, as career development opportunities and challenges may contribute to variations in stress levels between these groups. Dipak Mahat and P S Aithal's (2022) study, "Women's Articulates toward Career advancement," investigated the career advancement experiences of women in public organizations. The findings revealed that women face significant barriers to career advancement, including the need to outperform their male counterparts and navigate male-dominated networks. These findings suggest that female college teachers face similar challenges and barriers, potentially contributing to higher levels of occupational stress. Therefore, it is essential to develop and implement

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targeted support systems and policies to address these barriers and promote gender equity in career advancement opportunities for female college teachers. Laurel Fick, Michelle Solik, Todd Foster, Yogitha Potini and Katherine Axon's (2019) study, "Improving Overall Resident and Faculty Wellbeing Through Program-Sponsored Innovations," investigated the impact of a quality improvement initiative on reducing distress and promoting well-being among inpatient teaching faculty and residents.

The study's initial findings revealed alarmingly high levels of distress, with 44% of faculty members and 43% of residents experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or low personal accomplishment. However, following the intervention, there was a statistically significant increase in positive ratings of well-being, with "high" and "very high" ratings rising from 47.2% to 62.9% ($p=0.01$), indicating that targeted programs can effectively promote well-being. This study's findings have significant implications for the development of similar interventions aimed at promoting the well-being of college teachers, who may also experience high levels of occupational stress and burnout.

Tariq Ahmad Wani and Naila Nadeem's (2016) study on "Social Awareness Among Higher Education Teachers" revealed that the majority of higher education teachers (73.57%) exhibited an average level of social awareness, while 15.47% demonstrated a high level and 10.95% showed a low level. Notably, the study found no significant difference in social awareness between university and college teachers, suggesting that both groups possess similar levels of awareness regarding social systems and evil. Additionally, the study revealed no significant differences between university and college teachers in the knowledge, diagnosis, and attitude dimensions of social awareness, highlighting a consistent level of social awareness among higher education teachers.

This consistency in social awareness levels among higher education teachers is a promising finding, as it suggests that both university and college teachers can serve as effective role models and advocates for social awareness and change, potentially mitigating the impact of occupational stress on their well-being. Dr. Supriya Desai's (2023) study, "Correlating Job Satisfaction with Job Stress and Work-Family Conflict among Higher Education Teachers", explored the relationships between job stress, work-family conflict, and job satisfaction among higher education teachers. The findings revealed that job stress is positively linked to work-family conflict and negatively associated with job satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of addressing job stress and work-family conflict in higher education institutions, where understanding the intersections between job stress, work-family conflict, and job satisfaction can inform targeted interventions to promote teacher well-being.

Amanda Eng, Soo Cheng, Andrea 'T Mannelje, Neil Pearce, Dave Mclean, and Lis Ellison-Loschmann's (2011) study on "Gender differences in occupational exposure Patterns" revealed significant disparities in occupational exposure to disease risk factors between men and women in New Zealand. Despite the country's relatively good gender equality, the study found that men were more heavily exposed to dust, chemicals and physically demanding tasks, which can increase their risk of developing work-related illnesses. In contrast, women had higher exposure to repetitive tasks, high-speed work, and certain chemicals like disinfectants and hair dyes, which can also have adverse health effects. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender-specific occupational exposures and health risks in workplace health and safety policies.

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Dhingra and Vishal Kumar P's (2016) found that armed and unarmed police officers in Gujarat State experience similar levels of occupational stress, indicating no significant difference between the two groups. This finding suggests that occupational stress among police officers may be more closely related to organizational and environmental factors, rather than the specific duties or responsibilities associated with armed or unarmed roles. Dr. Md. Ansari's (2024) study revealed a significant difference in perceived occupational stress between male and female teachers in +2 private schools in Darbhanga district, India. The findings suggest that female teachers may be more vulnerable to occupational stress than male teachers, particularly in terms of role overload and role ambiguity. Despite this, both groups reported moderate levels of occupational stress. These findings underscore the need for school administrators and policymakers to develop targeted interventions and support systems to mitigate occupational stress among female teachers, addressing the unique challenges they face in the educational workplace.

These studies provide a foundation for understanding the complexities of occupational stress. Some studies hint that men and women might have different stress levels, reasons for stress, and ways to handle it, but are not sure about these differences. This study aims to fill this gap by looking at job stress in male and female college teachers side by side. This research adds to current studies by comparing how male and female college teachers deal with stress. The results will help create specific plans to reduce job-related stress and boost the well-being of college instructors.

Need and Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of gender differences in occupational stress among college teachers, a critical issue that affects both the well-being of educators and the quality of education provided to students. Teachers face high levels of occupational stress due to factors like heavy workloads, lack of resources, and changing educational demands. However, research comparing the stress levels, stressors, and coping strategies between male and female teachers remains scarce. By investigating this gap, the study aims to better understand how stress manifests differently for male and female college teachers, contributing to the body of knowledge on gender-specific occupational stress. Recognizing these differences is essential for designing targeted interventions that support educators in managing stress effectively. Moreover, addressing these issues will ultimately improve job satisfaction, mental health, and teaching performance, benefiting both educators and students alike. This research thus serves to inform policies and strategies that enhance the work environment for teachers and foster a healthier, more productive educational system.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

1. To compare the levels of occupational stress between male and female college teachers.
2. To study how occupational stress varies among college teachers of different age groups.

Hypotheses:

1. Gender-based Hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant difference in the levels of occupational stress between male and female college teachers, with female teachers experiencing higher stress.

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2. Age-based Hypothesis:

H_2 : There is a significant difference in occupational stress levels across different age groups, with younger college teachers experiencing higher stress than older teachers.

Research design

This comparative study investigates occupational stress among male and female college teachers using a quantitative approach and survey method. The Occupational Stress Scale (OSST) and demographic questionnaire will be used to collect data, which will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and ANOVA analysis to compare occupational stress levels and identify contributing demographic factors.

Sample

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select a sample of 103 college teachers (comprising both males 28 and females 75) from diverse departments. The sample size of 103 was deemed adequate to provide a representative snapshot of occupational stress experiences among male and female college teachers. Participants were selected based on their teaching experience, age, and departmental affiliation to ensure a diverse and representative sample.

Population

The population for this study consisted of college teachers employed in various departments of college from Malappuram district. The target population comprised both male and female college teachers, providing a comprehensive understanding of occupational stress experiences. The accessible population was limited to 103 college teachers (both male and female) who voluntarily participated in the study.

Inclusion Criteria

College teachers who were employed full-time, had at least one year of teaching experience, and were willing to participate voluntarily were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Teachers on probation, contractual, or part-time employees, as well as those with less than one year of teaching experience, were excluded from the study.

Tool Details

For measuring occupational stress, the study will utilize the **Occupational Stress Scale (OSST)** developed by Sarla Rani and Suman Dalai. The OSST is a widely used tool specifically designed to assess the level of stress experienced by professionals in various occupational settings, including education. It includes multiple dimensions of occupational stress such as workload, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflicts, and work-life balance. The scale is designed to capture both the subjective experience of stress and its potential impact on teachers' physical and mental health.

Reliability and Validity:

The OSST has demonstrated strong reliability and validity in previous studies. The internal consistency of the tool is measured through Cronbach's alpha, which has been found to be high, indicating that the scale consistently measures the intended constructs of occupational stress. In terms of validity, the OSST has been validated through both content and construct validity, ensuring that the items reflect the core aspects of occupational stress and are relevant to the professional context. These psychometric properties make the OSST a

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reliable and valid tool for measuring occupational stress among college teachers in this study.

Statistical Techniques

Independent t-tests and ANOVA were used to compare the mean scores of occupational stress and examine the relationship between demographic variables and occupational stress.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns, relationships, and differences between male and female college teachers.

Gender-based Hypothesis:

H_1 : There is a significant difference in the levels of occupational stress between male and female college teachers, with female teachers experiencing higher stress.

Table 1: The table shows that Comparison of Occupational stress by Sex: Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	28	107.34	44.66	9.22**	.000
Male	75	79.65	38.18		

The results of the t-test provide strong support for the gender-based hypothesis (H_1) that there is a significant difference in occupational stress levels between male and female college teachers, with female teachers experiencing higher stress. The data shows that the mean stress level for male teachers (79.65) is notably lower than that for female teachers (107.34), with a significant t-value of 9.22 ($p = .000$), indicating that this difference is statistically significant. This suggests that gender may play a crucial role in the perception and experience of stress in the workplace, with female teachers possibly facing unique stressors or challenges compared to their male counterparts. So the hypothesis is accepted.

Age-based Hypothesis:

H_2 : There is a significant difference in occupational stress levels across different age groups, with younger college teachers experiencing higher stress than older teachers.

Table 2: The Duncan test table shows that occupational stress by Age

Age groups	N	Mean	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
			1	2
45 – 49	11	64.77	..	()
40 – 44	31	72.34	..	()
34 – 39	14	67.22	..	()
20 – 24	16	125.45*	()	..
25 – 29	19	115.12*	()	..
30 - 34	9	107.33	..	()
50 - 55	3	87.11	..	()

The results from the One-Way ANOVA provide strong support for the hypothesis (H_2) that there is a significant difference in occupational stress levels across different age groups, with younger college teachers experiencing higher stress levels than their older counterparts. The data reveals that the younger age groups, specifically those in the 20-24 (Mean = 125.45)

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and 25-29 (Mean = 115.12) categories, report notably higher stress levels than the older groups, such as those in the 45-49 (Mean = 64.77) and 50-55 (Mean = 87.11) age groups. The significant F-value (9.097, $p = .000$) indicates that these differences are statistically significant. These results suggest that younger teachers may face more challenges or pressure in their work environments, potentially due to factors such as career uncertainty, workload, or work-life balance.

The post-hoc Duncan test further supports this finding, as it shows that the younger teachers aged 20-24 and 25-29 have significantly higher occupational stress levels than those in the 34-39, 40-44, and 45-49 age groups, with no significant difference between the older groups themselves. This pattern aligns with previous research suggesting that younger employees often experience higher stress levels in their careers due to factors like less job experience, fewer coping mechanisms, and greater expectations placed on them by supervisors (Hobfoll, 2001). Overall, the findings highlight the importance of considering age when addressing occupational stress, with younger teachers possibly needing more support and resources to manage their stress levels effectively. So, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: The table shows that Occupational stress levels among college teachers

Occupational stress levels	N
Average	20
Above average	46
High	14
Extremely high	10
Below average	8

The OSST tool describe another interpretation based on the score. The distribution of occupational stress levels among the total sample reveals a notable prevalence of above-average stress levels, with 46 teachers reporting above-average stress and 14 experiencing high stress, while 10 teachers indicated extremely high stress. The largest group is those with above-average stress, comprising nearly half of the sample, suggesting that a significant portion of the teachers in the study are experiencing heightened levels of stress. On the other hand, a smaller number of teachers report average (20) or below-average (8) stress levels, indicating that occupational stress is a common issue among the majority of the sample. This pattern highlights the need for targeted interventions and support systems to manage stress, as a substantial portion of the sample is dealing with stress levels that could potentially impact their wellbeing and professional performance.

Findings

The findings of the current study reveal a clear pattern regarding occupational stress levels across various categories, offering a comprehensive understanding of stress distribution among college teachers. The t-test results strongly support the hypothesis (H_1) that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress compared to their male counterparts. The mean stress level for female teachers (107.34) was lower than that for males (79.65) and with a significant t-value of 9.22 ($p = .000$), it is evident that gender plays a significant role in determining stress levels. This suggests that female teachers may encounter unique stressors that could be related to both professional and societal expectations.

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When considering the overall stress distribution among the sample, the results show that the majority of teachers report above-average (46) or high (14) levels of stress, with only a smaller portion experiencing average (20) or below-average (8) stress levels. This emphasizes that occupational stress is a prevalent concern across both genders, but the greater intensity of stress among female teachers highlights the need for gender-specific support interventions. Combined with the age group analysis, it is apparent that younger teachers, particularly females, may require additional resources to manage stress effectively and maintain their well-being in high-pressure work environments.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that female college teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress compared to their male counterparts, with a notable t-value of 9.22 ($p = .000$). While stress is prevalent across both genders, the higher stress levels among female teachers suggest the need for gender-specific support. Younger teachers, especially females, may require targeted interventions to better manage stress and maintain well-being in the high-pressure environment of academia.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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