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# A study of occupational stress of school teachers at secondary level

**Pranay Pandey[1], Shauli Mukherjee[2]**
[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Education, School of Education, Adamas University, West Bengal, India
[2] Professor and Director-School of Education, Adamas University, West Bengal, India

**Abstract**
The quality of teaching is profoundly impacted by the occupational stress experienced by teachers. When teachers contend with stress in their professional lives, their ability to fully focus on their teaching tasks is compromised. Adaptation, in this context, emerges as a crucial predictor of a teacher's effectiveness within the classroom. The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the levels of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. Also, it examines variations in occupational stress among these teachers based on various demographic factors, such as Gender, Location of School and Types of School. To accomplish the study's objectives, the researchers employed a quantitative descriptive research approach. Two hundred and fifty secondary school teachers of North 24 Pgs, South 24 Pgs and Kolkata districts of West Bengal were taken up on the basis stratified random sampling techniques. Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale (TOSS) was used for the study and it is developed by M. Sharma and S. Kaur. In the present study, the level of Occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers of West Bengal has been found more than Average. Additionally, the findings revealed that (i) No significant difference was found between Male and Female Secondary School Teachers on Occupational Stress; (ii) No significant difference was found between teachers from Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers on Occupational Stress; and (iii) Occupational Stress of Private school teachers was slightly higher than Government school teachers.

**Keywords:** Occupational stress, adaptation, effectiveness, gender, location of school, quantitative, survey

## Introduction

Occupational stress can be characterized as the cumulative toll on one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being arising from a misalignment between the demands of the job and an employee's ability to manage those demands in terms of their resources and personal needs. It is essentially the body's adaptive reaction to external circumstances, leading to observable deviations in physical, psychological, or behavioral aspects among those engaged in organizational roles. Okebukola and Jegede (1989) [1] further articulate occupational stress as the outcome of mental and physical strain brought about by distressing incidents, dissatisfying factors, or common aspects of the work environment.

Occupational stress encompasses the pressures associated with one's job. More specifically, it arises from the inability to effectively manage the demands of a job, often due to an incongruity between an individual's abilities and the requirements and conditions of their work (Rees, 1997) [3], as highlighted by Rytkonen and Strandvik (2005) [4]. According to the present definition from the World Health Organization, occupational or work-related stress represents the reaction individuals may experience when confronted with job demands and pressures that surpass their knowledge and skills, challenging their capacity to cope. The experience of occupational stress can vary from one person to another even within similar work environments, potentially influenced by demographic factors, as suggested by Kyriacou (2001) [5], particularly in the context of teachers and other staff.

Occupational stress represents a health concern that can manifest as either physical or psychological disorders stemming from one's work environment. It materializes in a range of distressing symptoms such as heightened anxiety, persistent tension, muscular cramps, and digestive issues.

Occupational stress can be defined as the unfavorable response individuals experience when subjected to excessive pressure or other demanding circumstances. The exploration of occupational stress and its ramifications ranks among the most prominent themes in contemporary research literature. It can be considered a form of occupational ailment, characterized by elevated anxiety levels, mental exhaustion, and various associated symptoms. Specific professions and job roles may inherently entail higher stress levels than others. Additionally, certain workplace events or situations can act as catalysts for occupational stress, including instances of harassment, perilous working conditions, incidents of discrimination, and the presence of inappropriate or unwelcoming work environments.

Occupational stress can sometimes escalate to the extent that it also elicits severe physical symptoms, such as hyperventilation, trembling, nausea, gastrointestinal discomfort, dizziness, and symptoms reminiscent of panic and anxiety. This condition encompasses both mental and physical aspects, profoundly impacting an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal well-being, and overall work quality, as suggested by Comish and Swindle (1994) [6].

Occupational stress pertains to the persistent stress linked to one's work environment. It materializes when there's a disconnect between the demands placed upon an individual by their workplace and their capacity to effectively fulfill these requirements. Failing to manage occupational stress can eventually have detrimental effects on both an individual's physical and emotional well-being.

Although the literature on occupational stress within educational settings has traditionally centered on teachers, it's worth noting that other academic management staff also experience these stressors. Defining occupational stress is a

complex endeavor. At its core, it refers to stress encountered in the workplace, which, in turn, is experienced by individuals. Several sources of occupational stress have been identified. Some of these stressors are inherent to the nature of the job, while others are tied to an employee's role within the organization, career development, and the overall structure and atmosphere of the workplace.

Occupational stress has been characterized as the emotional burden arising from work-related factors, leading to negative feelings like frustration, worry, and anxiety, as outlined by Kyriacou (2001) [5]. The literature suggests that four variables may significantly interact with occupational stress: gender, age, job experience, and position, as noted by Antoniou (2003) [7]. Demographic factors that have been shown to influence the relationship between an individual and their job-related stressors include gender, age, marital status, job tenure, job title, and hierarchical level, based on findings by Murphy (1995) [8]. Regarding the connection between age and occupational stress, research indicates that the ability to handle job and organization-related stress tends to increase with age and experience, as suggested by Sager (1990) [9].

**Objectives of the Study**

Following objectives were identified for this particular study–

**$O_1$:** To study the level of Occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers.

**$O_2$:** To compare Occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers under different demographical variables like Gender (Male and Female), Location of School (Rural and Urban) and Types of School (Government and Private).

**Research Question & Hypotheses**

Building upon the insights acquired from an extensive review of relevant literature on both Indian and Foreign studies, the researcher has developed the following research questions and hypotheses, aligning with the specified research objectives:

**For Objective $O_1$ following research question has been formed –**

**$RQ_1$:** What is the level of Occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers.?

**For Objective $O_2$ following research hypotheses have been formed –**

**$H_O1$:** There is no significant difference in Occupational Stress between Male and Female teachers at Secondary Level.

**$H_O2$:** There is no significant difference in Occupational Stress between the teachers of Rural school and Urban school at Secondary Level.

**$H_O3$:** There is no significant difference in Occupational Stress between the teachers of Government school and Private school at Secondary Level.

**Methodology of the Study**

**Population**

The researchers included all secondary school teachers in West Bengal as the population of the study.

**Sample**

The sample were selected randomly from the different schools of North 24 Pgs, South 24 Pgs and Kolkata districts. The sample was comprise from 25 randomly selected schools and total 250 teachers of secondary schools were selected as sample for this study.

**Sample Structure**

A sample of 250 secondary school teachers was selected for this research. Among 250 teachers, the number of male teachers is 130 (52%) and the number of female teachers is 120 (48%). Among 250 teachers, the number of teachers from Urban School is 180 (72%) and the number of teachers from Rural school is 70 (28%). Among 250 teachers, the number of Government School teachers is 90 (36%) and the number of Private School teachers is 160 (64%).

**Table 1:** Sample Structure_Type of School wise

| Government School Teachers (90) | | Private School Teachers (160) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Female | Male | Female | 250 |
| 61 | 29 | 69 | 91 | |

**Table 2:** Sample Structure-Location of School-wise

| Rural School Teachers (70) | | Urban School Teachers (180) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Female | Male | Female | 250 |
| 41 | 29 | 89 | 91 | |

**Variables**

The present researchers had identified two types of variables for this research –

**A. Major Variable:** Occupational Stress

**B. Demographical Variables**

- **Gender:** Male and Female
- **Location of School:** Urban and Rural
- **Types of School:** Government and Private

**Tool Used**

Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale (TOSS) is used for the study. This scale was developed by M. Sharma and S. Kaur. This scale was published in 2014. This scale consists 30 items divided into nine Dimensions— (I) Workload, (II) Role Ambiguity, (III) Groupism and External Pressure, (IV) Responsibility for Others, (V) Powerlessness, (VI) Work Relationships, (VII) Working Conditions, (VIII) Personal Inadequacy and (IX) Lack of Motivation. The scale was personally administered on 1800 teachers working in all types of educational institutions (both government and private) including primary schools, elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges.) The investigators adopted the test-retest method to find out the reliability of the scale. The test-retest reliability coefficient was worked out of be 0.801 with N = 80 and a time interval of 21 days. The scale was adequately validated with specific criteria. Content validity of the scale was tested against the judgment of 25 experts. The selection of the items was carried out on the basis of opinions of the experts as well as value of discriminative indices. The content validity is ensured as the items for which there has been 100 percent agreement amongst judges regarding their relevance to occupational stress and purpose of the scale were included. The face validity of the scale is found to be fairly high.

**Data Collection Procedure**

For conducting the research, data had been collected through survey technique. Twenty five schools from North 24 Pgs, South 24 Pgs and Kolkata districts were selected. Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale (TOSS) was administered upon 250 teachers from those schools chosen under study and asked to response according to their own beliefs and thoughts without consulting with another teacher.

**Descriptive Statistics of raw data collected:**

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics

| Statistics | Occupational Stress |
|---|---|
| Minimum | 98 |
| Maximum | 131 |
| Mean | 105.57 |
| Median | 104.00 |
| Mode | 102 |
| Standard Error of Mean | 1.124 |
| Std. Deviation | 20.916 |
| Variance | 437.469 |
| Skewness | .283 |
| Kurtosis | -.516 |

**Research Question and Hypotheses-wise Analysis of Data**

**1. Analysis of Data with respect to Objective 1**

**$O_1$:** To study the level of Occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers.

For fulfillment of the above mentioned objective, one research question was formulated and tested which was as follows:

**$RQ_1$:** What is the level of Occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers?

**Table 4:** Level of Occupational Stress-Entire Sample

| Variable | Mean | SD | Minimum Score | Maximum Score | No. of sample above Mean | No. of sample below Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupational stress | 105.57 | 20.91 | 98 | 131 | 132 | 118 |

**Interpretation**

From the Table 4, it is shown that mean score of Occupational Stress of 250 teachers was found 105.57 and Standard Deviation (SD) was 20.91. The minimum score of Occupational Stress Scale was 98 and maximum score of this scale was 131. The number of teachers above means score was found 132 and the number of teachers below means score was found 118.

**2. Analysis of Data with respect to Objective 2**

**$O_2$:** To compare Occupational Stress of secondary school teachers under different demographical variables like Gender (Male and Female), Location of School (Rural and Urban) and Types of School (Government and Private).

For fulfillment of the above mentioned objective, three null hypotheses were formulated and tested which were as follows:

**$H_O1$:** There is no significant difference in Occupational Stress between Male and Female teachers at Secondary Level.

**$H_O2$:** There is no significant difference in Occupational Stress between the teachers of Rural school and Urban school at Secondary Level.

**$H_O3$:** There is no significant difference in Occupational Stress between the teachers of Government school and Private school at Secondary Level.

**A: Testing of $H_0$1**

**Groups:** Male and Female Teachers

**Table 5:** Group Statistics TOSS-Gender

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupational stress** | Male | 130 | 105.21 | 20.832 | 1.405 |
| | Female | 120 | 103.45 | 21.097 | 1.880 |

(TOSS = Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale)

**Table 6:** Independent Samples Test of TOSS-Gender

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | t | DF | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Occupational stress | .221 | .638 | -1.906** | 248 | 0.058 |

(**not significant at 0.05 level of significance)

**Interpretation**

From the analysis in Table 6, it is seen that in case of Levene's Test for equality of variances the calculated p value is 0.638 (p>.05). So, equal variance can be assumed. Table 6, also shows that in case of comparison of mean scores of Occupational Stress between Male and Female teachers the calculated $\mathbf{t}_{(248)}$ value is 1.906 and 'p' value is 0.058 (p>.05). Hence, t is not significant at 0.05 level. So,

**$H_0$1** is not rejected and it can be inferred that mean scores of male teachers are not significantly different from female teachers in respect to Occupational Stress.

**B: Testing of $H_0$2:**
**Groups:** Rural and Urban School Teachers.

**Table 7:** Group Statistics TOSS-Location of the School

| | Locality | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupational Stress** | RURAL | 70 | 107.65 | 20.818 | 1.355 |
| | URBAN | 180 | 109.54 | 14.102 | 1.345 |

(TOSS = Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale)

**Table 8:** Independent Samples Test of TOSS_ Location of the School

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | t | DF | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| **Occupational Stress** | 1.781 | .183 | 1.008** | 248 | 0.314 |

(**not significant at 0.05 level of significance)

**Interpretation**
From the analysis in Table 8, it is seen that in case of Levene's Test for equality of variances the calculated p value is 0.183 (p>.05). So, equal variance can be assumed. Table 8 also shows that in case of comparison of mean scores of Occupational Stress between teachers of Rural and Urban school the calculated $\mathbf{t}_{(248)}$ value is 1.008 and 'p' value is 0.314 (p>.05). Hence, t is not significant at 0.05 level. So, $H_0$2 is not rejected and it can be inferred that that mean scores of rural teachers and urban school teachers do not differ significantly in respect to Occupational Stress.

**C: Testing of $H_0$3**
**Groups:** Government School and Private School Teachers

**Table 9:** Group Statistics TOSS_Type of School

| | Type of school | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupational stress** | Government | 90 | 105.55 | 20.985 | 1.372 |
| | Private | 160 | 110.53 | 20.715 | 1.957 |

(TOSS = Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale)

**Table 10:** Independent Samples Test of TOSS-Type of School

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | t | DF | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Occupational Stress | .745 | .389 | -1.035* | 248 | 0.002 |

(* significant at 0.05 level of significance)

**Interpretation**
From the analysis in Table 10, it is seen that in case of Levene's Test for equality of variances the calculated p value is 0.389 (p>.05). So, equal variance can be assumed. Table 10, also shows that in case of comparison of mean scores of Occupational stress between Government and Private school teachers the calculated $t_{(248)}$ value is 1.035 and 'p' value is 0.002 (p<.05). Hence, t is significant at 0.05 level. So, $H_0$3 is not rejected and it can be inferred that the mean scores of private school teachers significantly different from Government school teachers in respect to Occupational Stress.

**Major Findings**
Based on the data analysis presented above, the findings are organized systematically in alignment with the following objectives -

**Finding related to Objective 1**
The mean score of Teacher Occupational Stress Scale (TOSS) among 250 teachers was found 105.57. The range of this scale was from 98 to 131. So, the mean score is more than the average of this range.

**Finding related to Objective 2**
The second objective was to compare Occupational Stress of secondary school teachers under different demographical variables like Gender (Male and Female), Location of School (Rural and Urban) and Types of School (Government and Private).

1. The mean score of Male teachers are not significantly different from Female teachers in respect to Occupational Stress. But, Male teachers' mean score (105.21) was higher than Female teachers' mean score (103.45). It means that Occupational Stress of Male teachers is insignificantly better than Female teachers.
2. The mean score of Rural school teachers are significantly different from Urban school teachers in respect to Occupational Stress. But, Urban teachers' mean score (109.54) was higher than Rural school teachers' mean score (107.65). It means that Occupational Stress of Urban school teachers is insignificantly better than Rural school teachers.
3. The mean score of Government school teachers are significantly different from Private school teachers in respect to Occupational Stress. Private school teachers' mean score (110.53) was slightly higher than Government school teachers' mean score (105.55). It means that Occupational Stress of Private school teachers is significantly better than Government school teachers.

**Conclusion**
The issue of Occupational Stress among secondary school teachers is a pressing concern that warrants attention and action. The demands of teaching at the secondary level,

which includes managing diverse classrooms, meeting rigorous academic standards, and addressing the developmental challenges of adolescent students, place a significant strain on educators. The consequences of this stress are far-reaching, affecting both the mental and physical well-being of teachers and, subsequently, the quality of education they provide to their students. Recognizing the importance of addressing and mitigating occupational stress among secondary school teachers is essential. Educational institutions and authorities should prioritize the well-being of teachers by implementing supportive measures, professional development opportunities, and creating a positive work environment. This not only helps in alleviating the burden of stress on educators but also contributes to improved student outcomes. By addressing the occupational stress of secondary school teachers, we invest in the success of both teachers and the students they guide through this crucial stage of their educational journey.

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