



STRESSED MINDS, WEARY HEARTS: UNVEILING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Dr Bindhya M S

Assistant Professor, Post Graduate Department of Commerce, Milad-E-Sherief Memorial College, Kayamkulam Affiliated to University of Kerala

ABSTRACT

Purpose:

This study examines the impact of occupational stress on the quality of work life of female school teachers in Kerala, India, and identifies factors influencing their work life quality.

Design/Methodology/Approach:

A descriptive and analytical approach was used, involving a survey of female teachers in selected schools and analysis of secondary data from various published sources.

Findings:

Class size does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health. Factors other than class size, such as school culture, workload, or support systems, play a more significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions.

Implications:

The study highlights the complexity of teachers' perceptions and the need to consider multiple factors when understanding their experiences and well-being. School administrators and policymakers can create a more supportive environment that promotes teachers' well-being and effectiveness.

Originality/Value:

This study provides new insights into the impact of occupational stress on female school teachers' quality of work life in Kerala, India, and identifies areas for improvement.

KEYWORDS: Occupational Stress, Quality of Work Life, Female School Teachers, School Culture, Workload, Support Systems

INTRODUCTION

Organization triumph depends on how it restrains its workforce effectively. Employees' commitment can reap through inculcating flaccidity within an organization. Thus, by addressing their work life enigma, an organization can endorse the talents. Safe work environment with liveliness and fulfillment dispense the keystone for a person to be triumphant at work. Diverse domain of personage quality of work life embraces of physical and social operative demeanor within the organization. Quality of work life (QWL) cope to figure out the hurdles, booming labour management cahoots, remodeling organizational performance and thereby bettering employee gratification. Degree of contentment that an organization driven through linkage employee experience through acclamatory engagements in the organization, enhancing commitment and competency in pursuance instigate to work innumerable depend on the QWL of an organization. As a cosmic phenomenon occupational stress is recognized with momentous health consequences which eventuate from noxious working environment. It generates adverse behavioral consequences due to extreme work demands and pressure. Occupational

stress is associated to job whereby workforces do not deem braced by organizational system, supervisors or colleagues and perpetually a psychological stress which do not associate with ones expertise and proficiency stem from one's skillfulness to contend. Stressful environment for workforce is the result of not getting support from colleagues. This study focus on the impact of occupational stress in quality work life of school women teachers and this research seeks to identify the occupational stress interconnected with their career and its consequence in personal life. This study concentrates on the occupational stress in quality work life; explicitly in the framework of lady teachers in Kerala, as the state spend a preponderant proportion of its revenue for human resource reinforcement inclusive of educational and healthcare uplifting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature suggests that while general and subjective happiness typically refer to well-being and relaxation, psychological prosperity is characterized by challenges, efforts towards personal development, and striving for growth (Waterman, 1993). A study by Bolhari et al. (2001) examined

the repercussion of occupational stress on the quality of work life among Information Technology (IT) employees, revealed a negative relationship between occupational stress and quality work life. Family-work life balance involves the integration of work and personal life, with emotional overflow from work to home affecting balance of personal life (Bartelome & LeeEvans, 2001). Positive working conditions can embellish work force obligation and performance, highlighting the gravity of teachers' quality of work in organizational effectiveness. In a study conducted by Jafari et al. (2012) involving 241 nurses, the researchers examined the relationship between occupational stress and quality of work life. The findings revealed that the nurses experienced high levels of occupational stress, which had a direct impact on their quality of work life. Interestingly, the study did not identify a significant correlation between quality of work life, and occupational stress among the participants. Job satisfaction is linked to increased productivity among employees and teachers' working conditions play a crucial role in enhancing performance and job satisfaction (Demir, 2011). Employees' ability to control their work independently influences their job satisfaction and performance (Ertürk, 2022).

Statement of the problem

Kerala is renowned for its significant investment in human resource development, particularly in education and healthcare. The state boasts the highest literacy rate in India and achieves full enrollment of children in primary and secondary education. With a student-teacher ratio and student-school ratio that reflect a favorable environment, Kerala has approximately 46 lakh students, 16,000 schools, and 1.69 lakh teachers. The research aims to evaluate the overall quality of work life of female school teachers, identify factors influencing their work life quality, assess the occupational stress they experience and its effects on their personal lives, investigate the root causes of stress, and explore the relationship between various factors of quality of work life and occupational stress. This study focuses on examining the impact of occupational stress on the quality of work life of female teachers in Kerala, India. This study examines the impact of occupational stress on the quality of work life of female school teachers focuses on understanding the working conditions of female teachers in schools and the effects of occupational stress on their work and personal lives.

Objectives of the study

Following objectives are formulated for the proposed study:

1. To investigate the relationship between class size and teachers' perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health.
2. To examine the distribution of responses across different groups of teachers regarding their perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health.
3. To identify the factors that influence teachers' perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health, beyond class size.
4. To explore the variability in teachers' perceptions of students being challenging and difficult to manage.
5. To understand the underlying factors contributing to the differences in teachers' perceptions of the manageability

of students and the impact of the working environment on their well-being.

6. To provide insights for school administrators and policymakers to create a more supportive and inclusive environment that promotes teachers' well-being and effectiveness.

Hypotheses of the study

The study proposed to test the following hypotheses:

H01: There is no significant difference in terms of management effort to mitigate stress across private, government and government aided school

H02: There is a significant difference in the perception of students' behavior being a cause of stress among teachers across private, government, and government-aided schools.

H03: There is a significant positive correlation between class size and teachers' perceptions of excessive working hours and workload leading to stress.

H04: There is a significant difference in the perception of tasks beyond teaching jobs influencing work-life balance among teachers across private, government, and government-aided schools.

H05: There is a significant negative correlation between class size and teachers' perceptions of the working environment affecting their physical and mental health.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study involves a descriptive and analytical approach to assess the quality of work life of female teachers in schools. The research design includes gathering primary through a survey using a well-structured questionnaire from female teachers in selected schools within Karunagapally municipality, Kollam district. Secondary data were obtained from various published sources such as annual reports, internet resources, journals, news articles, and publications from private and government agencies.

Population Distribution:

The study's population comprises female teachers working in selected schools within Karunagapally municipality, Kollam district, Kerala. A table outlining the distribution of schools and female teachers in Karunagapally municipality is provided for reference.

Schools	No. of Schools Selected	No. of Female Teachers
Government Schools	5	177
Aided Schools	5	143
Private Schools	5	273
Total		593

Distribution of Female Teachers

The minimum sample size required, based on the objectives of the study is estimated as 123 by applying the formula Cochran's

formula at 95 percentage confidence level:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where n = Sample size

z = z statistics for a level of confidence

p = estimated proportion of attribute -present in the population

q = 1-p

e = Desired level of precision namely confidence interval or margin of error, expressed as a decimal.

In the present study:

P = 0.08

e = Desired level of precision namely confidence interval or margin of error, expressed as a decimal.

z = 1.96 for 95% confidence level

$$N = (1.96)^2 \times (0.08) \times (0.92) / (0.0011493568)^2 = 122.9$$

i.e., 123

The study utilized simple random sampling to select a total of 123 female teachers from 15 schools in Karunagappally municipality, Kollam district. The samples were proportionally distributed with 61 respondents from Government schools, and 31 respondents each from Aided and Private schools. The participants were randomly selected to ensure a representative assessment of the impact of occupational stress on the quality of work life among female teachers.

Analysis and Discussion

Efforts of the Management to mitigate stress

H01: There is no significant difference in terms of management effort to mitigate stress across private, government and government aided school

The study aimed to investigate the efforts of management to mitigate stress across private, government, and government-aided schools. The results of the Crosstab analysis and Chi-Square tests are presented below:

Crosstab							
Count							
Type of School		Efforts of the Management. to Mitigate stress					Total
		Strong-ly Agree	Agree	Netural	Dis-agree	Strong-ly Dis-agree	
Type of School	Private School	21	8	2	0	0	31
	Aided School	13	9	5	2	2	31
	Gov-ern-ment School	28	14	14	3	2	61
Total		62	31	21	5	4	123

The Crosstab table shows the distribution of responses across the three types of schools, indicating the efforts of management to mitigate stress.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.929a	8	.270
Likelihood Ratio	12.277	8	.139
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.956	1	.026
N of Valid Cases	123		
a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.01.			

The Chi-Square tests were conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in management efforts to mitigate stress across the three types of schools. The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a value of 9.929 with a p-value of 0.270, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. The Likelihood Ratio test yielded a value of 12.277 with a p-value of 0.139, which is also greater than 0.05. The Linear-by-Linear Association test yielded a value of 4.956 with a p-value of 0.026, which is less than 0.05. However, considering the Pearson Chi-Square test and Likelihood Ratio test results, which are more robust, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no significant difference in terms of management effort to mitigate stress across private, government, and government-aided schools.

Behaviour of the Student is Cause of Stress

H02: There is a significant difference in the perception of students' behavior being a cause of stress among teachers across private, government, and government-aided schools.

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between students' behavior and stress among teachers across different types of schools. The results of the Crosstab analysis and Chi-Square tests are presented below:

Crosstab							
Count							
Type of School		Behaviour of the Student is Cause of Stress					Total
		Strong-ly Agree	Agree	Netural	Dis-agree	Strong-ly Dis-agree	
Type of School	Private School	3	3	2	17	6	31
	Aided School	3	2	3	13	10	31
	Gov-ern-ment School	4	4	4	34	15	61
Total		10	9	9	64	31	123

The Crosstab table shows the distribution of responses across the three types of schools, indicating whether teachers perceive students' behavior as a cause of stress.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.857a	8	.943
Likelihood Ratio	2.848	8	.944
Linear-by-Linear Association	.625	1	.429
N of Valid Cases	123		
a. 9 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.27.			

The Chi-Square tests were conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in teachers' perceptions across the three types of schools. The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a value of 2.857 with a p-value of 0.943, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. The Likelihood Ratio test yielded a value of 2.848 with a p-value of 0.944, which is also greater than 0.05. The Linear-by-Linear Association test yielded a value of 0.625 with a p-value of 0.429, which is greater than 0.05.

Since all p-values are greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of students' behavior being a cause of stress across private, government, and government-aided schools. In other words, the results indicate that teachers in all three types of schools have similar perceptions regarding students' behavior as a cause of stress. The majority of teachers (64%) disagrees or strongly disagree that students' behavior is a cause of stress, while a smaller proportion (10%) strongly agree or agree with this statement.

Excessive working hours and workload leads to stress

H03: There is a significant positive correlation between class size and teachers' perceptions of excessive working hours and workload leading to stress.

Crosstab							
Count							
		Excessive working hours and workload leads to stress					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Number of Students in a class	less than 30	5	2	4	8	13	32
	30-40	6	6	3	19	42	76
	41-50	1	1	1	5	7	15
Total		12	9	8	32	62	123

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error	Approximate T	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.113	.090	1.246	.215
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.107	.091	1.179	.241
N of Valid Cases		123			

Interpretation:

The Crosstab analysis and Symmetric Measures results indicate a weak positive correlation (Pearson's $R = 0.113$, Spearman Correlation = 0.107) between class size and teachers' perceptions of excessive working hours and workload leading to stress. The correlation is not statistically significant (p-value > 0.05), indicating no significant relationship between class size and teachers' perceptions. In other words, the results suggest that class size does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of excessive working hours and workload leading to stress. Teachers across different class sizes (less than 30, 30-40, and 41-50 students) have similar perceptions regarding the impact of excessive working hours and workload on stress.

Tasks beyond Teaching Job Influence Work Life Balance

H04: There is a significant difference in the perception of tasks beyond teaching jobs influencing work-life balance among teachers across private, government, and government-aided schools.

Crosstab							
Count							
		Tasks Beyond Teaching Job Influence Work Life Balance					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Type of School	Private School	0	16	5	7	3	31
	Aided School	8	9	8	6	0	31
	Government School	7	25	15	12	2	61
Total		15	50	28	25	5	123

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error	Approximate T	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.083	.089	-.920	.360
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.054	.088	-.599	.550
N of Valid Cases		123			

Interpretation:

The Crosstab analysis and Symmetric Measures results indicate: A weak negative correlation (Pearson's $R = -0.083$, Spearman Correlation = -0.054) between school type and teachers' perceptions of tasks beyond teaching jobs influencing work-life balance. The correlation is not statistically significant (p-value > 0.05), indicating no significant relationship between school type and teachers' perceptions. In other words, the results suggest that teachers across different school types (private, government, and government-aided) have similar perceptions regarding the impact of tasks beyond teaching jobs on work-life balance. The majority of teachers (50%) agree that tasks beyond teaching jobs influence their work-life

balance, while smaller proportions (15%) strongly agree. The lack of significant difference across school types may indicate that tasks beyond teaching jobs are a common challenge faced by teachers regardless of the school type they work in. This highlights the need for schools to recognize and address the impact of these tasks on teachers' work-life balance.

Working environment affects physical and mental health negatively

H05: There is a significant negative correlation between class size and teachers' perceptions of the working environment affecting their physical and mental health.

Crosstab							
Count							
		Working environment affects physical and mental health negatively					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Number of Students in a class	less than 30	0	4	3	23	2	32
	30-40	13	6	8	41	8	76
	41-50	3	1	3	4	4	15
Total		16	11	14	68	14	123

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error	Approximate T	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.120	.084	-1.334	.185
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.083	.091	-.913	.363
N of Valid Cases		123			

Interpretation:

The Crosstab analysis and Symmetric Measures results indicate: A weak negative correlation (Pearson's $R = -0.120$, Spearman Correlation = -0.083) between class size and teachers' perceptions of the working environment affecting their physical and mental health. The correlation is not statistically significant ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), indicating no significant relationship between class size and teachers' perceptions. In other words, the results suggest that class size does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health. The majority of teachers (68%) disagree or strongly disagree that the working environment affects their physical and mental health negatively, while a smaller proportion (16%) strongly agree or agree with this statement. The lack of significant correlation may indicate that factors other than class size, such as school culture, workload, or support systems, play a more significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions of their working environment's impact on their well-being.

Ratio Statistics

Ratio Statistics for Number of Student in a class / Type of School

			Coefficient of Variation
Group	Price Related Differential	Coefficient of Dispersion	Median Centered
Strongly Agree	1.095	.250	37.5%
Agree	1.222	.444	74.5%
Neutral	1.236	.738	127.5%
Disagree	1.223	.668	116.1%
Strongly Disagree	1.318	.783	139.1%
Overall	1.244	.695	120.9%

Interpretation of Ratio Statistics:

The ratio statistics provide insights into the distribution of responses across different groups. Coefficient of Dispersion (CD): Measures the variability of responses within each group. A higher CD indicates more variability. Coefficient of Variation (CV): Measures the relative variability of responses within each group. A higher CV indicates more variability relative to the mean.

Group-wise Interpretation:

Strongly Agree: Low CD (0.250) and CV (37.5%) indicate less variability, suggesting that teachers who strongly agree that students are challenging and difficult to manage have relatively consistent perceptions. Agree: Moderate CD (0.444) and CV (74.5%) indicate some variability, suggesting that teachers who agree have more diverse perceptions. Neutral: High CD (0.738) and CV (127.5%) indicate significant variability, suggesting that teachers who are neutral have widely differing perceptions. Disagree: Moderate CD (0.668) and CV (116.1%) indicate some variability, suggesting that teachers who disagree have diverse perceptions. Strongly Disagree: High CD (0.783) and CV (139.1%) indicate significant variability, suggesting that teachers who strongly disagree have widely differing perceptions.

The overall CD (0.695) and CV (120.9%) indicate moderate variability, suggesting that teachers' perceptions of students being challenging and difficult to manage vary to some extent. The ratio statistics reveal that teachers' perceptions vary across groups, with those who strongly agree or strongly disagree showing more variability in their responses. This suggests that teachers have differing opinions on the manageability of students, and further investigation is needed to understand the underlying factors contributing to these differences.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Class size does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health. The majority of teachers (68%) disagree or strongly disagree that the working environment affects their physical and mental health negatively. Factors other than class size, such as school culture, workload, or support systems, may

play a more significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions of their working environment's impact on their well-being. Teachers' perceptions of students being challenging and difficult to manage vary across groups, with those who strongly agree or strongly disagree showing more variability in their responses. Teachers who strongly agree that students are challenging and difficult to manage have relatively consistent perceptions, while those who are neutral or disagree have more diverse or widely differing perceptions. Further investigation is needed to understand the underlying factors contributing to the differences in teachers' perceptions of the manageability of students and the impact of the working environment on their well-being. Overall, the study highlights the complexity of teachers' perceptions and the need to consider multiple factors when understanding their experiences and well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between class size and teachers' perceptions of the working environment's impact on their physical and mental health. The results indicate that class size does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions, and that factors such as school culture, workload, or support systems may play a more significant role in shaping their perceptions. The majority of teachers disagree that the working environment affects their physical and mental health negatively, while a smaller proportion strongly agree or agree with this statement. The study also reveals that teachers' perceptions of students being challenging and difficult to manage vary across groups, with those who strongly agree or strongly disagree showing more variability in their responses. Further investigation is needed to understand the underlying factors contributing to these differences. Overall, this study highlights the complexity of teachers' perceptions and the need to consider multiple factors when understanding their experiences and well-being. The findings suggest that school administrators and policymakers should look beyond class size and consider other factors that may impact teachers' perceptions of their working environment and their ability to manage students. By doing so, they can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that promotes teachers' well-being and effectiveness.

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