



Relationship Between Work Environments with Occupational Stress Among Teachers of Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores the relationship between the work environment and occupational stress among secondary school teachers in the Meerut District of Uttar Pradesh. Using a descriptive research design and a sample of 385 respondents selected through simple random sampling, the study assesses how various workplace factors contribute to teacher stress. Key findings reveal that physical classroom conditions, lack of collegial support, inadequate administrative backing, limited resources, poor school maintenance, frequent interruptions, lack of recognition, and ineffective communication significantly elevate stress levels among teachers. The analysis indicates that over 70% of respondents are affected by these environmental stressors, with lack of acknowledgment and administrative support ranking as the most prominent contributors. These findings underscore the need for school authorities to create a more supportive, resource-equipped, and communicative work environment. Addressing these issues is crucial for reducing stress, enhancing teacher satisfaction, and ensuring better educational outcomes for students.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Work Environment, Secondary School Teachers, Administrative Support

INTRODUCTION

Teachers should embrace a nation-centric mindset to cultivate a sense of national identity and orientation among their students. This responsibility is particularly significant for educators at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels, as these early stages are critical in shaping young minds and forming lasting impressions. To fulfill this role effectively, it is important to provide teachers with comprehensive training in instructional methods and learning strategies. According to Glass (2011), students' expectations are strongly linked to the presence of effective teachers, who are instrumental in promoting academic success and positive social development, ultimately contributing to the betterment of society. Parihar (2011) similarly stressed that a teacher's effectiveness is measured by their ability to achieve student learning objectives, either directly or indirectly. The strength of a nation is determined not just by the quality of its teachers, but also by the character of its citizens. Hence, it is essential to modernize teacher education and place a strong emphasis on the continuous training and professional development of educators. In the current educational environment, teachers are expected to promote the all-round development of students, rather than focusing on just a few specific areas. A teacher should serve as a philosopher, guiding students toward intellectual and spiritual growth, and as a mentor, providing moral encouragement and nurturing their aesthetic sensibilities. The success of students is largely influenced by the skill, dedication, and commitment of teachers who prioritize students' overall well-being and interests. Schools play a vital role in developing students' moral values, with teachers acting as the primary influencers in this process. A teacher's own ethical behavior significantly shapes a child's moral development. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to lead by example and embody the qualities they wish to instill in their students. The concept of "school climate" pertains to the overall atmosphere or environment in which school-related activities are conducted, and this can differ widely between schools. A school can be understood as a socio-psychological system, where the organizational climate is shaped by its operational environment. This psycho-emotional context in which teaching and learning take place significantly influences the overall school climate. It is a key factor in establishing a supportive setting that enables teachers to teach effectively and students to participate actively in the learning process. The workplace environment can be a source of organizational stress, stemming from internal factors that place pressure on individual employees and ultimately affect the organization's overall performance. Nair (2004) described stress as "a result of or a general reaction to an action or situation that imposes specific physical or psychological demands, or both, on an individual." The impact of stress can be either beneficial or harmful, depending on its nature and the circumstances under which it occurs. In essence, stress is the body's innate response system aimed at self-protection. Work-related stress can present itself through various signs, including physical symptoms like exhaustion and headaches, as well as mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. Extended exposure to these stressors frequently results in burnout, increased absenteeism, and higher employee turnover. Additionally, occupational stress negatively affects workplace relationships, diminishing teamwork and lowering overall staff morale. Desouky and Allam (2017) noted that occupational stress greatly reduces job satisfaction. When employees face overwhelming workloads, unreasonable demands or insufficient support, their sense of fulfillment and motivation decreases. This decline subsequently impacts their performance and level of engagement, leading to a continuous cycle of reduced productivity and job satisfaction.

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Occupational stress is the continuous strain linked to the workplace, arising when the job demands exceed an individual's capacity to handle them efficiently. If left unaddressed, this stress can negatively impact a person's physical and emotional well-being. The relationship between the work environment and occupational stress among secondary school teachers is a significant area of study because it directly influences teachers' performance, mental well-being, and overall job satisfaction. The work environment encompasses physical, psychological, and social factors that affect an individual's capacity to carry out their duties effectively. For teachers, key aspects of this environment include classroom conditions, support from administration, relationships with coworkers, workload, and availability of resources. A positive and supportive work environment boosts teachers' motivation and productivity, whereas a stressful environment can impair their ability to deliver quality education. It is essential to understand teachers' perceptions and beliefs since they are actively involved in teaching and learning processes and apply educational theories and principles in practice; Jia et al. (2006). Occupational stress is a significant challenge for teachers throughout their careers, especially as they work toward ensuring academic success for their students. One major source of this stress is academic pressure, which may cause teachers to feel inadequate or unsuccessful. Occupational stress occurs when individuals perceive a gap between their skills and the resources needed to fulfill their job demands. It stems from work conditions and is marked by an inability to cope with job-related pressures. This stress affects both mental and physical health, reducing productivity, effectiveness, personal well-being, and the overall quality of work. Occupational stress arises when job demands exceed the resources available to address them. For secondary school teachers, this stress is often heightened by challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching materials, unrealistic demands from school management, and insufficient time for preparing lessons. A poor work environment can worsen these stress factors, leading to issues like burnout, emotional fatigue, and decreased job satisfaction. Furthermore, limited support from school administrators and difficult relationships with colleagues or students can intensify the stress experienced by teachers. Research consistently indicates that a negative work environment adversely impacts teachers' physical and mental health. Prolonged exposure to occupational stress can result in health problems like anxiety, depression, and heart-related conditions. Additionally, elevated stress levels hinder teachers' classroom management skills, which negatively influences students' academic achievement. Teachers under considerable stress are also more prone to reduced engagement and may consider leaving the profession, contributing to high turnover rates in education. Conversely, a supportive and well-structured work environment can help protect against occupational stress. Educational institutions that emphasize clear communication, provide opportunities for professional growth, acknowledge teachers' contributions, and promote a collaborative culture create a positive and encouraging setting for educators. This type of environment enhances teachers' job satisfaction and reinforces their dedication to the profession. When teachers feel appreciated and supported, they tend to stay more motivated and engaged in their work. Gaining a clear understanding of the complex connection between the work environment and occupational stress is essential for designing effective solutions to these issues. By addressing stress-inducing factors like heavy workloads, inadequate resources, and poor interpersonal relationships, schools can foster a more positive and supportive workplace. Implementing initiatives such as stress management programs, mentorship opportunities, and strengthened administrative support can improve teachers' well-being, leading to healthier and more effective educators. This, in turn, benefits students by enabling teachers to better manage classrooms, engage learners, and provide high-quality instruction. Therefore, improving the work environment is vital for enhancing both teacher well-being and the overall success of schools.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

George and Bishop (1971) stressed that school climate is crucial in connecting the school's structural framework with teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Their research demonstrated that the formal organizational aspects of a school such as administrative policies, hierarchy, and procedures play a significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions of the school's overall climate. These structural components help create an environment that directly influences teachers' mindset and level of engagement. Amaranth (1980) studied the organizational climate in government and private high schools and found that teachers in government schools viewed their school climate more positively, which played a significant role in their higher job satisfaction compared to teachers in private schools. The research emphasized that teachers who were satisfied with their organizational climate tended to experience greater job satisfaction. Dollard & Winefield (1998) conducted research highlighting that employees frequently face considerable psychological distress stemming from the pressure to achieve high performance. The study identified three key contributors to workplace stress: excessive job demands, a lack of autonomy in decision-making, and inadequate support from supervisors or peers. These elements combine to create a demanding work environment where employees may feel overwhelmed, unappreciated, and isolated, leading to emotional and mental exhaustion. Dollard & Winefield (2000) explored sources of stress within public sector welfare organizations, specifically examining the dynamic between supervisors and employees. Their research revealed that a lack of support from supervisors is a major contributor to employee stress. On the other hand, overly intensive supervision was shown to worsen the situation, often resulting in health issues and burnout. The study emphasizes the need for balanced supervisory approaches that offer sufficient support and guidance without imposing excessive pressure, thereby fostering a healthier and more effective work environment for public sector welfare employees. Firth-Cozens (2001) examined job-related stressors, including concerns about job security and the effects of technological advancements, particularly within the healthcare profession. The study explored how these factors affect the well-being and performance of healthcare workers, emphasizing the importance of implementing strategies to manage these stressors and enhance working conditions in the healthcare environment. Abbas and Abbasi (2004) identified organizational climate as a vital factor affecting teachers' job satisfaction. Their research showed that a school environment characterized by openness and support greatly increases satisfaction levels. Important elements contributing to this include competitive pay, a healthy and low-stress workplace, and clearly defined professional responsibilities. Furthermore, access to teaching resources and modern, well-equipped classrooms was found to significantly enhance teachers' work experiences. Oliver et al. (2005) tested two main hypotheses: the effect of working conditions on employees and the role of personal characteristics in work stress. Their results showed that, contrary to expectations, personal traits did not significantly influence employees' stress levels. Instead, the study found that work-related factors such as the work environment, workload, and organizational support had a greater impact on stress. This indicates that although

individual differences may affect how stress is handled, workplace conditions are the primary contributors to the stress employees experience. The research underscores the importance for organizations to focus on improving working conditions to reduce stress and promote employee well-being. Dhar&Bhagat (2008) conducted a survey to investigate work-related challenges experienced by software professionals. The study was carried out in three software firms in Pune, involving 26 participants. Using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the researchers gathered detailed information about the participants' experiences and difficulties. The results highlighted several factors affecting the work environment, including workload, job stress, and workplace interactions. Karthik (2013) explored the dual aspects of stress, highlighting both its positive and negative effects on employees. The study emphasized that workplace performance is strongly influenced by stress levels, with employees performing optimally under low stress, while excessive stress negatively impacts productivity and job satisfaction. Mehta (2016) highlighted that in the modern era of science and technology, teachers experience significant stress due to the growing complexity of their roles and the varied demands they face. The study emphasized the importance of organizational climate in helping both teachers and students perform optimally. A positive and supportive organizational environment enables teachers to enjoy their work, reduce occupational stress, and give their best in the classroom. Duxbury et al. (2018) describe role overload as a condition where employees are overwhelmed by excessive workloads and stringent deadlines, resulting in considerable stress. Role ambiguity happens when job duties are not clearly defined, causing employees to feel uncertain about their responsibilities. This lack of clarity leads to dissatisfaction and restricts their creativity. Additionally, role conflict emerges when employees encounter conflicting expectations that contradict their social roles, further increasing stress. Naaz (2020) conducted a study to evaluate the institutional climate in educational institutions across the Delhi and NCR region, covering both public and private sectors. The research focused on how employees from government and private organizations perceive the organizational climate in their workplaces. The results indicated that respondents generally rated the institutional atmosphere as moderately positive, suggesting that while there are commendable aspects, certain areas require improvement. Tesfaye et al. (2023) carried out a study in Gimbi town that included all 672 primary school teachers in western Ethiopia. Using the standardized Teacher Occupational Stress Scale to assess stress over the previous four months, the research found a high rate of occupational stress among teachers during the second wave of COVID-19. Key factors contributing to this stress were job dissatisfaction and an increased perception of the risk of contracting COVID-19. The study suggested improving stress management abilities and prioritizing the prevention of these risk factors to help lower stress levels among teachers.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- To analyse the relationship between work environment with occupational stress among teachers of secondary schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The descriptive research design has been adopted for the study to examine the prevalence of occupational stress among teachers of secondary schools.

Population: The present research has been conducted on secondary school teachers in Meerut District of Uttar Pradesh.

Method of Sampling: In the present study, simple random sampling has been considered so as to collect the data.

Sample size: 385 Respondents

Primary Data: The study has conducted brief primary data collection on selected secondary school teachers in Meerut District of Uttar Pradesh.

ANALYSIS RELATED TO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT WITH OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG TEACHERS

Table 1: Table showing the response related to relationship between work environment with occupational stress among teachers

S. No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Poor classroom conditions (such as overcrowding and lack of ventilation) increase my work-related stress.	105 (27.27%)	173 (44.95%)	31 (8.05%)	47 (12.2%)	29 (7.53%)
2	A lack of cooperation among colleagues makes my work environment more stressful.	97 (25.2%)	171 (44.41%)	31 (8.05%)	57 (14.8%)	29 (7.54%)
3	Inadequate support from school administration worsens my occupational stress.	127 (32.98%)	165 (42.85%)	28 (7.27%)	40 (10.4%)	25 (6.5%)
4	Limited access to teaching aids and technology increases my frustration and stress at work.	109 (28.31%)	141 (36.63%)	32 (8.32%)	53 (13.76%)	50 (12.98%)
5	A poorly maintained school environment	143	137	26	39	40

	heightens my work-related stress.	(37.15%)	(35.58%)	(6.75%)	(10.12%)	(10.4%)
6	Frequent disruptions in the school environment add to my stress.	128 (33.25%)	162 (42.07%)	25 (6.5%)	36 (9.35%)	34 (8.83%)
7	Lack of recognition from the school management increases my occupational stress.	139 (36.10)	158 (41.03%)	24 (6.23%)	32 (8.32%)	32 (8.32%)
8	Poor communication from school leadership creates confusion and raises my stress levels.	130 (33.76%)	147 (38.18%)	25 (6.5%)	48 (12.46%)	35 (9.1%)

ANALYSIS

1. Physical Classroom Conditions: 72.22% of teachers perceive overcrowding and poor ventilation as significant stress contributors, indicating that physical classroom conditions are an important stressor. 19.73% of respondents do not find classroom conditions to be a major stressor.

2. Collegial Relationships: Nearly 70% of teachers report that lack of collaboration and support from colleagues contributes to their stress levels, highlighting the importance of a cooperative work environment. 22.34% of teachers do not view poor collegial relationships as a significant stressor.

3. Administrative Support: 75.83% of teachers feel that inadequate leadership and support from the administration exacerbate occupational stress. Only 16.77% of teachers do not see administrative support as a major stress factor.

4. Inadequate Resources: 64.94% of teachers feel that limited access to resources and technology increases their stress. 26.74% of teachers do not perceive resource limitations as a significant stressor.

5. School Environment Maintenance: 72.73% of teachers report that an unkempt or poorly maintained school environment significantly affects their stress levels. 20.52% of teachers do not consider school maintenance a significant contributor to stress.

6. Interruptions in the School Environment: 75.32% of teachers find that disruptions like noise and unscheduled activities contribute significantly to their stress. 18.18% of teachers do not view interruptions as a major stressor.

7. Lack of Recognition: 77.13% of teachers feel that lack of acknowledgment from school authorities contributes notably to their stress, emphasizing the importance of recognition in teacher well-being. 16.64% of teachers do not perceive lack of recognition as a significant stressor.

8. Poor Communication from Leadership: 71.94% of teachers report that unclear communication from school leadership increases stress levels by causing confusion and misinterpretation of responsibilities. 21.56% of teachers do not see communication issues as a major stress factor.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there is a strong relationship between various aspects of the work environment and the occupational stress experienced by secondary school teachers. Poor physical classroom conditions, such as overcrowding and inadequate ventilation, contribute significantly to teacher stress, indicating the need for better infrastructural planning. The lack of collegial support and collaboration creates a sense of isolation and amplifies stress, emphasizing the importance of a supportive peer network. Inadequate administrative support and unclear communication from leadership further compound stress by fostering confusion and a lack of direction. Limited access to essential resources and technology also hampers teachers' efficiency and adds to their workload-related stress. Moreover, a poorly maintained school environment and frequent interruptions disrupt the teaching process, contributing to a chaotic and stressful atmosphere. The absence of recognition and appreciation from school authorities adds an emotional burden, undermining morale and job satisfaction. Overall, the work environment plays a critical role in shaping the stress levels of teachers, highlighting the need for systemic improvements in school infrastructure, leadership practices, and support systems.

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