



# Occupational Stress Among Secondary School Teachers In Nagaland: A Cross Sectional Study

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the current cross-sectional survey study was to examine the occupational stress experienced by secondary school teachers in one of India's North-Eastern States, as well as determine whether there were any differences in occupational stress according to certain demographic variables like gender, type of school, and area of school. In order to select the sample (367), the entire state of Nagaland was divided into four clusters, north, east, west, and south, and one district from each cluster was chosen using simple random sampling. Data was collected using a standardized questionnaire, the Occupational Stress Index. An independent sample t- test was used to analyze the data that was gathered. The findings of the study revealed, more than half of the participants (55.1 %) were experiencing occupational stress. There was a significant difference ( $t(365) = 4.899, p = <.001$ ) on the occupational stress between private and government school participants. However, there was no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female participants, and between urban and rural. These results suggest that it is crucial to draw attention to teachers' concerns and address them in every way possible given their responsibility in helping shape the future generations.

**Keywords:** Occupational Stress, Teachers, Secondary school

## INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, occupational stress is increasingly becoming a pressing issue, leading to significant negative impacts on both individuals and the organizations they work for (Cotton and Hart, 2003). Occupational stress, often referred to as job-related stress, is a widespread occurrence that, when excessive, can lead to intense and distressing experiences (Sing and Katoch, 2017). Kyriacou (2001) characterizes occupational stress as the occurrence of unfavorable emotional states like frustration, anger, anxiety, worry, and depression which are attributed to factors related to one's job. The teaching profession holds a significant position in society, as teachers are the primary agents responsible for executing educational initiatives within educational institutions. Nevertheless, teaching is considered as one of the top jobs facing occupational stress (Johnson et al., 2005) and elevated levels of occupational stress experienced by secondary school teachers have detrimental effects on both individuals (physical, mental, or emotional) and society as a whole (Lueng et al., 2011). The repercussions of teachers' occupational stress encompass heightened occurrences of burnout, adverse effects on teacher-student relationships, and a significant decline in teacher retention rates (Manubhai

and Vaghela, 2013). As such job-related stress has been identified as a contributing factor to organizational inefficiency (Arnetz, 2004), high staff turn-over (Avey, Luthan, and Jensen, 2009), absenteeism (Darr and Johns, 2008), and decreased job satisfaction (Flanagan and Flanagan, 2002) as cited in (Nowrouzi et al., 2016).

Teachers attribute their work-related stress to various elements within their work environment, including students, school administrations, and the educational system (MacCornick, 2000). The sources of occupational stress experienced by secondary teachers can be linked to their extensive responsibilities, including tasks such as lesson planning, curriculum development, overseeing extracurricular activities, classroom management, discipline maintenance, filling in for teacher absences, and the encouragement of students through both words and actions (Mehta, 2013). Additionally the teachers' often experience confusion and stress due to overwhelming demands from educational institutions, students, parents, community expectations, excessive workload, disruptive student behavior (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010), complexities of their tasks (role overload), uncertainty of their job responsibilities (role ambiguity), conflicting job expectations, a lack of control over their work environment, strained relationships with their colleagues and students, and inadequate support from school authorities (Chadha, Sood, and Malhotra, 2012).

Occupational stress is inherently a subjective experience, given that individuals do not uniformly respond to external stimuli and events (Chadha, Sood, and Malhotra, 2012). Numerous research investigations have demonstrated variations and conflicting results in stress levels among teachers based on gender (Nagra and Arora, 2013; Singh and Katoch, 2017), the type of school in which they are employed (Deusouky and Allam, 2017; Hasan and Azad, 2014), and the geographical location of the school (Reddy and Anuradha, 2013).

Considering the absence of published data regarding occupational stress among teachers in Nagaland, and recognizing the detrimental consequences of such stress on teachers mental, emotional and physical aspects, and instructional effectiveness for student learning and academic achievements (Ransford et al., 2009), it is imperative to investigate the occupational stress experienced by Nagaland teachers. This inquiry is particularly crucial due to the existing disparities in findings across diverse research studies concerning the influence of demographic factors on teacher stress. Hence the following objectives were formulated for this study:

1. To study the significant difference on occupational stress of secondary school teachers based on gender.
2. To study the significant difference on occupational stress of secondary school teachers based on type of school.
3. To study the significant difference on occupational stress of secondary school teachers based on area of school located.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Population and sample:** This research study focusses on secondary school teachers of Nagaland, employed in both government of recognized private secondary schools. Cluster sampling method was used to select the schools for the sample of this study, whereby the whole of Nagaland was divided into four clusters such as East, West, North, and South. One district each were chosen from each cluster that is Dimapur, Mokokchung, Kohima, and Mon from Nagaland using simple random sampling method. Approval was sought from the selected clusters school heads through phone communication. Schools granting permission were sent a Google Form link via WhatsApp. Hence, a total of 367 participants were recorded in the google form.

**Data collection procedure:** To collect data for this study, the lists of schools and contact information of the head of schools were obtained from the Nagaland Board of School Education, Kohima. A Google Form was generated which included research details, the voluntary participation aspect, researcher's contact information, and the measure (Occupational Stress Index by Srivastava and Singh, 1984). The school heads were contacted via telephone communication, seeking consent for secondary teachers' participation. Confidentiality of participation was assured and schools granting permission were sent the Google Form through WhatsApp.

**Data analysis:** The data collected was analysed using IBM SPSS 28. A preliminary assessment of the data's normality was conducted using skewness and kurtosis. Although the data did not exhibit a normal distribution, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) propose that when the sample size is sufficiently large, non-normality due to skewness has minimal impact on analysis, and the underestimation effects of positive or negative kurtosis on variance diminish when the sample size exceeds 100 or more cases, respectively. Given that the present study's dataset comprises more than 300 cases, parametric tests were employed for analysis. Descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and ANOVA were utilized for the analysis. Subsequently, Cohen's index test was applied to evaluate the actual effect size (ES). The statistical significance level was set at 0.05. Results with significance levels of 0.05 or lower are denoted by an asterisk in the results section.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research study focused on to study the occupational stress of secondary school teachers and its significant differences based on gender, type of school, area of school located, and the different teaching experience groups. In this this study, a total of 367 respondents participated. Among which there were 168 (45.8%) males and 199 (54.2%) females. The participants were categorized based on the type of school they work and it was found that 253 (68.9%) participants were teaching in private schools, whereas 114 (31.1%) respondents were teaching in government schools. When analyzing the frequency of the area of the schools, it was found that 203 (55.3%) were from urban area whereas 164 (44.7%) were from rural area. Furthermore, the study examined the teaching experience of the participants. It was observed that that 171 (46.6%) had less than 5 years of teaching experience, 118 (32.2%) had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience, and 78 (21.3%) had more

than 11 years of teaching experience. Table 1 presents the 't' value that was calculated to investigate the significant difference on occupational stress scores of male and female secondary school teachers.

**Table 1:** Mean, SD and t-value of male and female secondary school teachers

| Gender | N   | Mean   | SD    | df  | t-value | Sig   |
|--------|-----|--------|-------|-----|---------|-------|
| Male   | 168 | 127.53 | 18.48 | 365 | 0.88    | 0.379 |
| Female | 199 | 125.79 | 19.08 |     |         |       |

Table 1 above presents the results of an independent samples t-test that was conducted to compare the occupational stress scores between Male (n = 168) and Female (n = 199) secondary school teachers. Though the mean score of male participants (127.53) was slightly higher than the female participants mean score (125.79), the t value obtained was greater than the significant value .05. Furthermore, the effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to be 0.18, indicating a small effect size. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female.

The findings of this study contradict the results of numerous other studies. Some studies have suggested that male teachers experience higher levels of occupational stress compared to their female counterparts (Reddy and Anuradha, 2013; Aftab and Khatoun, 2012; Singh and Katoch, 2017). Conversely, other studies have indicated that female teachers tend to experience more occupational stress than male teachers (Rana, 2014; Rao, 2016; Nagra and Arora, 2013). Nevertheless, a limited number of studies have found no significant difference in the occupational stress levels between male and female teachers (Wider, 2016; Hülya et al., 2018), which aligns with the findings of our present study. One possible explanation for this result could be attributed to the varying years of teaching experience among the participants. In our demographic analysis, it was observed that out of the 367 participants, only 78 had more than 11 years of teaching experience, while the rest had less experience in teaching. Wider (2016) claims that teachers with less teaching experience may lack the necessary skills and abilities required for their job responsibilities within the school setting. Therefore, years of teaching experience enable teachers to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage their roles. However, teachers with limited teaching experience might find themselves lacking these essential skills, leading to work-related stress irrespective of their gender (Wider, 2016).

**Table 2:** Mean, SD and t-value of private and government secondary school teachers

| Type of school | N   | Mean   | SD    | df  | t-value | Sig    |
|----------------|-----|--------|-------|-----|---------|--------|
| Private        | 253 | 129.72 | 18.68 | 365 | 4.90    | <.001* |
| Government     | 114 | 119.64 | 17.22 |     |         |        |

Table 2 presents the results of an independent samples t-test on the occupational stress scores between participants working in government and private schools. A significant difference in scores was found between participants working in private schools (129.72) and government schools (119.64), with obtained t value (4.90) significant at 0.001 level. The effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to be 0.55, indicating a moderate effect. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teachers working in private schools are experiencing more occupational stress their counterparts working in government schools.

The results of this research are consistent with previous studies (Jeyaraj, 2013; Hasan 2014; Mustafa and Shafeeq, 2022), that have also observed a higher level of occupational stress among private school teachers compared to their counterparts in government schools. One potential rationale for this observed difference could be attributed to variations in their instructional approaches, the expectations set by school administrators, or the increased workload (Mustafa and Shafeeq, 2022) and job insecurity experienced by private school teachers (Desouky and Allam, 2017).

**Table 3:** Mean, SD and t-value of secondary school teachers working in urban and rural areas

| Area of school | N   | Mean   | SD    | df  | t-value | Sig  |
|----------------|-----|--------|-------|-----|---------|------|
| Urban          | 203 | 127.90 | 19.80 | 365 | 1.94    | 0.14 |
| Rural          | 164 | 124.97 | 17.42 |     |         |      |

Table 3 presents the results of an independent samples t-test on the occupational stress scores between participants working in secondary schools located in urban and rural areas. Though the mean score for participants working in urban areas (127.90) was slightly higher than the mean score of participants working in secondary schools located in rural areas (124.97), the t value (1.94) obtained was greater than the significant value .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that participants employed in secondary schools, whether located both in urban and rural areas, exhibit an equivalent level of occupational stress. This finding aligns with prior research (Reddy and Anuradha, 2013; Jahan and Sharma, 2017) that also reported a lack of statistically significant differences in this regard. One possible explanation for the lack of a significant difference in occupational stress scores between participants working in urban and rural areas could be related to the changing nature of teaching in modern education systems (Thompson, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this research was to examine variations in occupational stress scores among secondary school teachers concerning several demographic factors, specifically gender, type of school, and area of school located. While previous studies have identified noteworthy distinctions in occupational stress levels between male and female participants, as well as between participants employed in urban and rural secondary schools, our current investigation yielded no significant differences in this regard. However, a significant difference was evident between participants working in private and government schools. These

findings suggest that external contextual factors may exert a more substantial influence than individual characteristics in shaping occupational stress levels. Consequently, it can be inferred that school administrators may yield a critical role in regulating working conditions, thereby impacting the extent of occupational stress experienced by teachers. This study underscores the need for school authorities to implement appropriate interventions aimed at preventing or mitigating teachers' occupational stress, given their pivotal role in shaping future generations.

In conclusion, teachers serve as the found bedrock of a strong nation, and their psychological and physical well-being should not be overlooked but regarded as a crucial factor benefiting both teachers themselves and the overall progress of the nation.

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