



# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IN TEACHERS HANDLING MALE VS FEMALE STUDENTS OF GRADES 5–8)

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**Abstract:** Teaching is widely recognised as a demanding profession that exposes teachers to different factors such as workload, administrative demands, classroom management and more, that often lead to high levels of stress. Such a stress when arising from an employee's workplace settings is known as occupational stress. This study examined the level of occupational stress experienced by middle school teachers and also explored factors within the school that may influence and lead to said stress. It also examined the influence of student gender composition on middle school teachers' stress. A comparative research design was adopted, involving a sample of 120 teachers from parts of Karnataka, who were divided based on teachers handling middle school boys and those handling girls. Occupational stress index was used to assess stress levels. Independent sample t-test was applied to analyse the data. The findings revealed that middle school teachers handling grade 5-8 experience moderate levels of stress in their jobs with no significant difference between the groups scores.

**Index Terms** – Occupational stress, Middle school, Workload, Gender Composition

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching has always been renounced as a noble and fulfilling profession. Yet it also true that behind the role of shaping and nurturing young minds into intellectuals, there are responsibilities and demands a teacher faces that are often a heavy burden to carry. Teachers are expected to juggle a multitude of tasks such as academic expectations, administrative demands, classroom management and heavy workloads that often overtake personal life demands, all while carrying a warm smile as they enter the classroom. When these workplace demands build up they often lead to a rising level of stress, known otherwise as occupational stress.

Occupational stress refers to the negative psychological and physical effects an employee experiences due to responsibilities, environment, or pressures at the workplace. It can occur when workers do not feel supported by supervisors or coworkers, feel they have little control over the work they perform, or feel that their efforts are not proportionate to the rewards they receive. Teachers are among the working class who are known to experience varying levels of such occupational stress throughout their careers. Such prolonged exposure to stress not only affects the teachers' wellbeing but also teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, and student academic outcomes.

Given the critical role teachers play in shaping society and education, it is important to examine sources and extent of stress experienced by educators at this level. There are many identified sources of

occupational stress in teachers which include work overload, administrative duties, classroom management and student behaviour.

At middle school levels, students navigate the fragile age of puberty and undergo changes physically, emotionally and mentally. This often leads to behaviour changes, identity issues, relationship problems are more such factors. These changes may differ in boys and girls making it difficult to handle both. Boys at such ages tend to be hyperactive, unfocused trouble -some and harder to manage, whereas girls are more emotional and required a different type of attention. The present study aims to evaluate the level of occupation stress middle school teachers undergo, with focus on comparison based on the gender composition of the students handled.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

McGrath (1970) defined stress as a perceived imbalance between demand and response capacity under conditions where failure to meet demand has important consequences.

Today, stress is among the most common psychological conditions effecting a majority of humans. Other issues such as anxiety, tension, depression and burnout are also on the rise, contributing to the increase in mental health issues and psychological difficulties.

Karasek (1979) in his Demand-Control Model proposed that occupational stress occurs when job demands are high but employee control over work is low.

Ghasemi's Systematic Narrative review of occupational stress in teachers (2024) highlights stressors at multiple levels such as individual, classrooms, school and leadership, policy and curriculum, and cultural demands- and links these to reduced performance, absenteeism and burnout. This multilevel framework explains that stressors do not act independently but are cumulative in nature.

When focusing on classroom factors, Xue et al (2024) found positive corelation between teacher stress, burnout, and student related stress, predicting it to be a major cause of emotional stress in teachers.

Research consistently finds behaviour differences between girls and boys in classrooms. A study by Shah and Bashir (2022) reported that male students tend to display more conduct problems whereas girls showed more emotional problems. Supporting this, Beaman, Wheldall, and Kemp (2007) found that boys receive more attention that girls in class due to higher levels of disruptive behaviours.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

The present study adopted a comparative descriptive research design, deemed appropriate for comparing occupational stress levels between teachers based on gender composition in grade 5-8. The study measured occupational stress using the Occupational stress index developed by Srivastava and Singh (1981), a 46-item questionnaire that assesses 12 stressors using 5-point Likert scale. The OSI checks strong psychometric qualities, including Cronbach's Alpha of 0.90 and split half reliability of 0.935.

### 3.2 Variables

- Gender composition of students handled
- Occupational stress of teachers teaching grades 5-8.

### 3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria : The participants included in the study were:

- Teachers handling classes 5-8
- Teachers handling only male or majority male or female students in their classrooms.
- Teachers situated in Uttar Karnataka, India.
- Teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria : The following were excluded from the study.

- Teachers handling higher or lower grades other than grade 5-8.
- University level educators.
- Teachers not directly involved in classroom teaching such as coordinators

- Teachers who did not complete the questionnaire fully.

### 3.4 Sample

The sample for the present study consisted of 120 teachers of grade 5-8 across multiple schools in Uttar Karnataka. They were divided into two groups based on gender composition of students they handled i.e. 60 teachers handling male students and 60 handling female students.

### 3.5 Procedure

Prior to data collections, Permissions from schools were obtained Teachers handling grades 5-8 across multiple schools were contacted and informed about the purpose of the study. Consent was obtained verbally and in written forms. . The questionnaire was administered and data was collected from participating teachers. Clear instructions were provided, and confidentiality of responses was assured. Participants were requested to respond honestly according to their genuine personal experiences. The study was conducted while keeping in mind and following ethical principles throughout.

### 3.6 Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Mean and standard deviation were calculated and the level of occupational stress among the teachers were determined according to the norms.

To compare teachers handling male students against those handling female students, independent samples t-test were used. The statistical analysis helped determine whether there was a significant difference in occupational stress between the two groups.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statics

Group	Samples	Mean	Std. deviation
Male students	60	143.18	17.11
Female students	60	144.59	16.01

Table 4.2: Independent t-test sample

Group	Mean	SD	t- value	p-value
Male Students	143.18	17.11	0.653	p > 0.05
Female Students	144.59	16.01		

The obtained p-value (0.653) was greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference.

According to the standard norms of the Occupational Stress Index, scores ranging between 120 and 150 indicate a moderate level of stress. The mean scored obtained through this study obtained by teachers handling male students (M= 143.18) and female students (M=144.59) both fall within this range. This indicates that both groups experience a moderate level of occupational stress.

Although the teachers handling female students have a slightly higher mean score, both groups fall under the same category suggesting the level of stress to be similar in nature, this is further strengthened by the inference from the independent sample t-test ( $t = 0.653$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) which indicate that there is no significant difference. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The study was initiated to gain a better understanding of Occupational stress and its various determinants, specifically how it is influenced by gender composition of students handled. The findings revealed that while teachers handling adolescent students were under moderate levels of stress, Gender composition of students handled, had no significant role in it. The results thus reinforced the perspective that Occupational stress in teaching is multifaceted and a complex matter that stems from multiple factors personal as well as

organizational. The study highlights the need to address teacher stress through interventions and quality programs aimed at elevating work-pressures within educational settings.

## VI. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study was limited to a sample size of only 120 teachers which restricted the generalization of findings. The research was confined to relatively small Urban areas of North Karnataka, limiting its wider applicability. Only one tool was used (Occupational Stress Index), which does not specifically cater to measuring stress in teachers but is made for general population of employees. The study only focused on middle school teachers handling students in grades 5-8. Other contributing variables such as teaching experience, socio-economic status of teachers, school type, socio-economic factors were not considered.

Based on the limitations and findings of the present study, the following suggestions are proposed: Future research should be conducted on larger and more diverse samples. Comparative studies across different school types (Private vs Government schools) can be conducted. Research should include role of factors such as teachers experience, age, subject specialization, marital status and more. Qualitative approaches involving interviews, case study should be employed for deeper insight into the study. studies focused on interventions to prevent and manage stress for teachers may also be investigated.

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