

# A Study on the Impact of Occupational Stress on the Performance of School Teachers in the State of Kerala

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**Abstract:** *This research was conducted to understand the influence of work related stress on the performance of school teachers in the state of Kerala. Data were collected from a sample of 308 teachers working in various Government, Aided and Unaided schools, affiliated to the State Board or CBSE or ICSE. Teachers from Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Sections were included in the survey. Survey was conducted using questionnaires, seeking information on the socio educational background, job details, opinion on the current organization, self assessment of their personality, work ethics, expectation on work life balance, compensation, job satisfaction, Student teacher relationship, teaching style etc. The study reveals that stress has an adverse role on the performance of teachers. Researchers believe that the study would help the authorities concerned, in understanding the working conditions, job expectations and preferences of the teachers and the various factors that contribute to their occupational stress and the impact of stress on their performance.*

**Keywords:** *Occupational Stress, Performance, Work Environment, Work Culture, Up-Skill, Quality of Teaching*

## INTRODUCTION

It is often said that the teachers are the backbone of any society as they guide and help the future generations in realizing their full potential. All children have the potential to become future leaders and it is the responsibility of the teachers to make the children ready for their future. Children carry what they learn and experience in their formative years throughout their lives and hence teachers play a very important role in shaping their views and attitude towards life. As Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam mentioned, no profession in the world is more important to the society than that of a teacher. Hence, it is very important for the society in general and the school authorities (Management and Parent Teacher Associations) in particular to ensure the well being and job satisfaction of the teachers.

However, keeping up with the demands of a constantly evolving society leads to high levels of job stress for the Teachers. Teachers should continuously up-skill and reinvent themselves in accordance with the changing nature of the society in order to excel in their chosen profession. This continuous pursuit of excellence, along with day to day work responsibilities and the personal obligations may result in high levels of burn out. Gitonga and Ndagi (2016) state that occupational stress among teachers lead to undesirable work practices such as mistakes during work, absenteeism and violence at work.

Besides teaching, teachers are expected to take care of several other responsibilities like

conducting internal examinations, evaluating answer sheets, on boarding new students, writing teaching notes and reports, maintaining discipline among students, organizing extra-curricular activities etc. Gitonga and Ndagi (2016) further state that teachers often deal with time pressure and heavy work load. Lack of teaching resources, poor relationship with management and peers, deteriorated school buildings also add to their woes. So, school Authorities, on their part, should be cognizant of the varying levels of occupational stress among teachers, understand the reasons for the stress and address them.

## **2.Literature Review**

Saravanan and Lakshmi (2017), based on a study conducted among the teachers of higher secondary schools in Nagappattinam District in Tamil Nadu, report that occupational stress of private school teachers are less compared to government school teachers. They also state that the policy makers should analyse the teacher training and assessment system, assuming that personal and social characteristics and working conditions may have an effect on the stress levels of teachers. However, a study conducted by Dr.Hasan, in the Tehsil Laksar, Haridwar District reveals that private primary school teachers are more stressed than their counterparts in Government Primary School Teachers. He opines that the reasons for higher levels of stress among the private school teachers may be low salary and higher burden of work in private schools.

Dr. Jeyaraj, (2013), who conducted extensive research on the occupational stress among the higher secondary teachers in Madurai District in Tamil Nadu reveals that aided school teachers are more stressed compared to government teachers. He also mentions that teachers who experience higher levels of stress are less satisfied with the profession and they are more inclined to leave the teaching profession and may never take up teaching as a career again.

According to Kyriacou and Chien (2004), changing educational policies of the government are one of the main sources of occupational stress among primary school teachers. Schools and Governments can help teachers reduce their stress levels by decreasing the work load. Their findings are in agreement with those reported in western countries where the main reasons for the occupational stress among teachers are identified as heavy work load and educational reforms.

Sing and Katoch (2017) in their article, “Study of occupational Stress of Secondary School Teachers” report that school authorities should ensure a supportive and collaborative culture, provide stress and time management training and also leisure facilities to the faculties to prevent occupational stress. They also opine that teachers’ involvement in decision making should be encouraged. Schools should also provide a pleasant working environment, job security, less work load, trainings to manage the behaviours of disruptive people, maximum facilities etc, to the teachers. Heads of the departments should report inadequate staff and lack of equipments to the school authorities.

Kaur and Kumar (2019) state that occupational stress is a major concern among urban school teachers in India. They further suggest that by constantly evaluating the stress levels and proving proper counseling, stress levels of teachers can be considerably reduced and their quality of life can be improved. Kumar et.al (2019) in their study “Organizational Commitment and Hardiness personality in relation to occupational stress of Primary School Teachers” reveal that both men and women in the teaching profession have the same amount of occupational stress. They further add that organizational commitment and hardiness personality, combined together, play a very important role in managing job stress. They also

suggest that future research should focus on finding the regional, cultural and occupational factors for predicting and managing job stress.

Rosenholtz and Simpson(1990), in their article “ Workplace Conditions and the Rise and Fall of Teachers’ Commitment” differentiates between the novice teachers and experienced teachers. They opine that while Organizational support for the management of boundary issues is a major factor that influence the commitment of novice teachers, experienced teachers are more influenced by the organizational qualities that affect the core institutional tasks. They further state that mid career teachers have lower job commitment and place a lot of emphasis on task autonomy compared to novices or experienced teachers.

Harmsen et. Al (2018) are of the opinion that teacher student relationships are very important for teachers and hence any efforts in future to reduce the stress of teachers should be directed towards improving the relationships between teachers and students. Good teacher students relationships can take away a great amount of pressure from teachers.

Kabito and Wami (2020) report that work related stress among teachers is associated with Teaching experience, educational level, high job demand and poor relationships. In order to reduce stress levels among teacher, they recommend that action need to be taken to balance work demand and experience. Further, teachers should be given opportunities to enhance their skills by upgrading their educational qualifications. Good relationships among teachers also help them reduce the stress related to work.

According to Bhui (2017), unfair political pressure in the group, Role Ambiguity and Role Overload are the three major stressor for the faculty members and administrative staff of Business Schools in West Bengal. Researcher recommends that job enrichment and greater sense of control should be provided to employees to mitigate occupational stress. Trainings should be also given on educational psychology and teaching methodology.

Antoniou et. al (2013) in their article “Occupational Stress and Professional Burnout in Teachers of Primary and Secondary Education: The Role of Coping Strategies” state that primary school teachers are more stressed compared to secondary school teachers and female teachers have higher stress and lower personal accomplishment compared to male teachers. They also mention that coping strategies help teachers overcome job stress and burn out and achieve positive outcomes with students. A Study conducted by Durlak et. al in 2011 also reveal that compared to controls, students in classrooms with positive atmosphere showed substantially higher social and emotional skills, positive social behaviours and lower conduct problems and lower levels of emotional distress. Further, the academic performance of these children also improved consequent to positive classroom atmosphere. Teacher Student relationship plays a significant role in influencing the learning behavior of the students. Roodra et.al (2011) who have done extensive research in Teacher Student Relationships, state that the relationship between teacher and students are highly important for older students into late adolescence, Children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities.

**Research Gap:** Though plenty of research has been done on the occupational stress among teachers, not much attention has been given to the impact of job stress on the performance of teachers especially in the context of Kerala. As the socio cultural environment of Kerala is very different from other states in India, the researcher believes that a focused study is required to understand the influence of occupational stress on the Performance of Teachers in the state. The paper is an attempt of the researcher to understand the influence of job stress on the performance of school teachers in the state of Kerala with particular reference to the metropolitan city of Cochin.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The reputation of a school largely depends on the academic and extracurricular achievements of the students in the school. Teachers play a vital role in the curricular and extracurricular performance of the students and hence it is extremely important for the schools to ensure their well being. Occupational Stress among teachers has the potential to affect the performance and it is the responsibility of the School Management to address this problem and take corrective action.

### **Objective of the Study**

To understand the impact of occupational stress on the performance of School Teachers.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **Data**

Data required for the study is primary in nature. The data has been collected by making use of questionnaire.

### **Area of Study**

This study has been confined to Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Cochin City.

### **Sample Design**

By adopting proportionate stratified random sampling method, survey was conducted among 308 schools teachers from 25 schools in Cochin City. Likert scale was used to elicit answers from the respondents to the questions.

### **Framework of Analysis**

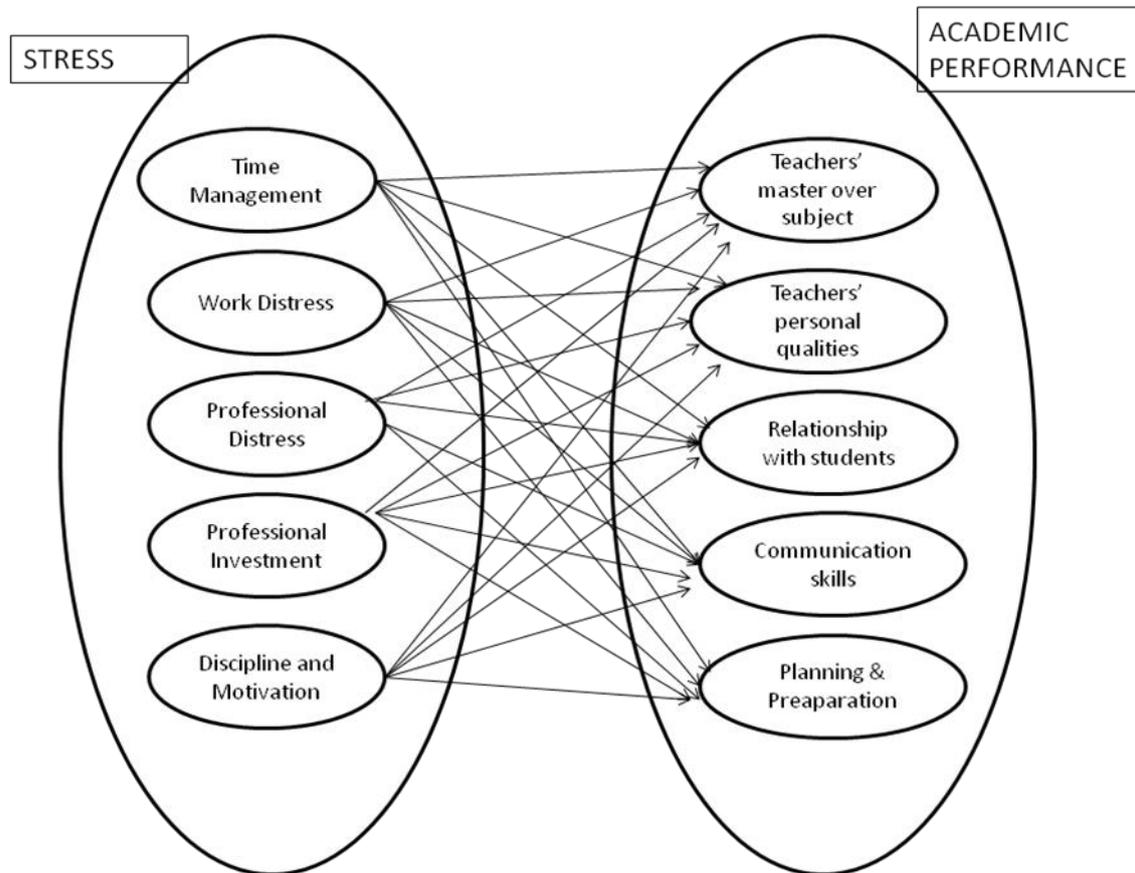
The Collected data has been analyzed by employing the statistical techniques Correlation and Regression.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The data were primarily collected from teachers in and around Cochin and hence the findings of the survey may not be generalized.

## **4. Analysis and Interpretation.**

Occupational of stress of teachers was measured with dimensions such as ‘time management’, ‘work related stress’, ‘professional distress’, ‘professional investment’ and ‘discipline & motivation’ and their performance was measured with the help of ‘teachers’ personal qualities’, ‘relationship with students’, ‘communication skills’ and ‘planning & preparation’. The below diagram illustrates the model and hypotheses are stated accordingly.



H1a: There is a significant influence of time management on teachers' mastery over subject

H1b: There is a significant influence of time management on teachers' personal qualities

H1c: There is a significant influence of time management on relationship with students

H1d: There is a significant influence of time management on communication skills

H1e: There is a significant influence of time management on planning and preparation

H2a: There is a significant influence of work stress on teachers' master over subject

H2b: There is a significant influence of work stress on teachers' personal qualities

H2c: There is a significant influence of work stress on relationship with students

H2d: There is a significant influence of work stress on communication skills

H2e: There is a significant influence of work stress on planning and preparation

H3a: There is a significant influence of professional distress on teachers' master over subject

H3b: There is a significant influence of professional distress on teachers' personal qualities

H3c: There is a significant influence of professional distress on relationship with students

H3d: There is a significant influence of professional distress on communication skills

H3e: There is a significant influence of professional distress on planning and preparation

H4a: There is a significant influence of professional investment on teachers' master over subject

H4b: There is a significant influence of professional investment on teachers' personal qualities

H4c: There is a significant influence of professional investment on relationship with students

H4d: There is a significant influence of professional investment on communication skills

H4e: There is a significant influence of professional investment on planning and preparation

H5a: There is a significant influence of discipline and motivation on teachers' master over subject

H5b: There is a significant influence of discipline and motivation on teachers' personal qualities

H5c: There is a significant influence of discipline and motivation on relationship with students

H5d: There is a significant influence of discipline and motivation on communication skills

H5e: There is a significant influence of discipline and motivation on planning and preparation

Warp PLS was used to analyse the relationship. The significant values and the path coefficients are as follows:

P-values

	TM S	TP S	R WS	CS	PP R
T	<0. 001	<0. 001	<0. 001	<0. 001	<0. 001
W DS	0.0 2	0.3 26	0.3 59	0.0 33	0.0 1
PR D	0.3 45	0.0 55	<0. 001	0.0 57	0.0 09
PRI	0.0 05	0.0 5	0.1 75	0.3 24	0.0 02
DA M	0.0 05	<0. 001	0.0 64	<0. 001	0.0 39

Path coefficients

	TM S	TP S	R WS	CS	PP R
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T	TM	0.3 64	0.2 48	0.2 73	0.2 1	0.1 89
DS	W	- 0.115	- 0.026	- 0.021	- 0.103	- 0.13
D	PR	- 0.023	- 0.09	- 0.231	0.0 89	- 0.133
	PRI	- 0.144	- 0.093	- 0.053	- 0.026	- 0.164
M	DA	0.1 45	0.1 82	0.0 86	0.1 91	0.0 99

Based on the values given in the table for P-values, the hypotheses h2b,h2c,h2d,h3a,h3b,h3d,h4c,h4d, h5c stand rejected while all other hypotheses are accepted.

The model results are given in the below table:

	T MS	TP S	R WS	CS	PP R
<b>R-squared</b>	0.1 39	0.1 23	0.1 41	0.0 8	0.0 9
<b>Adj. R-squared</b>	0.1 25	0.1 09	0.1 26	0.0 65	0.0 74
<b>Composite reliability</b>	0.7 8	0.8 5	0.7 52	0.7 71	0.7 29
<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	0.7 15	0.7 92	0.6 56	0.6 59	0.5 55

The reliability values are all greater than 0.70 and the cronbach's alpha values are also in the acceptable level (Nunnally JC, 1978). It can be seen that the R-square value for RWS (Relationship with students) is higher compared to other factors such as TMS (Teachers' Mastery over Subject), TPS (Peracher's Personal Qualities), CS (Communication Skills) and PPR (Planning and Preparation). Ie 14% variation in RWS is explained by the factors such as (TMT) Time Management, (WDS) Work Distress,(PRD) Professional Distress,(PRI) Professional Investment and (DAM) Discipline and Motivation. Similarly 13.9% variation in TMS (Teachers' mastery over subject) and 12.3% variation in TPS (Teachers' personal qualities) are also explained by the above mentioned factors.

Since stress has an adverse role on the performance, the path coefficients of some dimensions are negative. It can be seen that time management has positive coefficients and all the paths are significant. ie, this factor positively influences the academic performance. Similarly, for discipline and motivation, the path coefficients for paths which are significant are positive. The path coefficients of the other three factors are seen to be negative, which

indicates that for the significant relations, there is a negative influence on academic performance dimensions.

### **Suggestions to the Authorities for lessening the occupational stress among School Teachers**

As occupational stress can influence various aspects of the performance of teachers, school authorities should give high priority to reduce the stress levels among teachers. School Managements have the responsibility to create teacher friendly work policies and a positive work environment that help in fostering amiable working relationship among teachers and between students and teachers. A supportive work culture enables the teachers to reduce their anxiety levels and focus more on their work and thereby help the students in realizing their full potential.

As part of research, researchers make the following suggestions to the school authorities to help the teachers over come and reduce stress levels and improve their performance.

1. Encourage teachers to up skill themselves and enhance their knowledge in the subject. Tying up with skill development agencies, providing scholarships or grants or interest free loans for higher education etc a few ways by which schools can help teachers to enhance their skill and knowledge.
2. Encourage teachers to get to know their students well by spending time with kids outside their classrooms and after school hours. Teachers should actively listen to the students, engage them in classroom discussions and provide one on one support as and when required.
3. Students should also be encouraged to discuss their personal problems and learning challenges with the teachers. This will lead to better teacher student relationships and in turn in the academic performance of the students.
4. As teacher well being and professional distress have strong influence on their quality of teaching schools should promote a healthy life and fitness culture among teachers. Two way conversations and mutual trust between the school management and teachers play a major role in creating a positive work environment and culture and thereby reducing teachers' professional distress.
5. While hiring candidates for teaching jobs, their aptitude for and attitude towards teaching should be carefully and properly evaluated. Self- discipline and motivation are very critical for effective teaching and hence the Management should ensure that only candidates who possess these attributes are hired for teaching jobs.
6. Management should also ensure that the various departments are adequately staffed and teachers are not demoralized and stressed due to excessive work.

### **5. Conclusion**

This paper is an attempt to understand the influence of occupational stress on the performance of teachers and the study reveals that stress has an undesirable influence on teacher's performance. This can have significant implications for the teachers, students and the society as a whole as future generations are shaped by teachers. So, while teachers have the responsibility to ensure that they possess the required professional skills, experience, qualifications and the right attitude to impart knowledge to future citizens of the world, it is

the responsibility of the parent teacher associations, School Managements, Governments and the society at large to ensure the well being of the teachers and their personal and professional needs are taken care of.

The paper also gives a few suggestions to the authorities to help the teachers overcome and reduce their stress levels. However, further research is required to understand how the schools and teachers are adapting themselves to the needs of the fast changing world and the continually changing demands of the teaching profession and whether the need to constantly upskill, learn, unlearn and relearn and also the other demands of the new world are making teachers even more stressed and how it affects their performance. Research is also required to understand how the above mentioned challenges affect the work life balance of teachers and how they cope with it.

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