

# Challenges and Job Satisfaction of Higher Secondary School Teachers in Kerala

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## Abstract:

Higher secondary teachers play a significant role in shaping the careers of students. The higher secondary course serves as the bridge between general education and higher education. The development and success of an educational institution, as well as the students, depend on the performance and satisfaction of the teachers. This study aims to examine the job satisfaction of higher secondary school teachers in Kerala. This research is qualitative in nature and a structured interview schedule is used for collecting the data. The study is important because only satisfied teachers can produce healthy and high-quality students for the nation's development. When a teacher is dissatisfied, it can directly or indirectly affect their job performance. The study's findings indicate that the majority of teachers are dissatisfied with various aspects of job satisfaction, including promotion, physical facilities, workload, transfer norms, and the lack of clerical staff, among other factors.

**Keywords:** Job-Satisfaction, Principal, Higher secondary, Workload, etc.

## Introduction:

In line with the National Policy on Education, the Government of Kerala initiated Higher Secondary Education in 1990. The separation of pre-degree courses from university education was completed by 2001. The responsibility for higher secondary education in Kerala lies with the Directorate of Higher Secondary Education, which is under the jurisdiction of the Government of Kerala. At its inception, the lack of adequate infrastructure and staff posed significant challenges. However, today, the department functions as a fully operational entity overseeing higher secondary education in Kerala. Initially, higher secondary education was introduced in 31 government schools, with one in each educational district. Presently, there are a total of 2,077 higher secondary schools in Kerala. These include 852 in the government sector, 846 in the aided sector, and 362 in the unaided sector. Additionally, there are 17 technical schools. Malappuram district boasts the highest number of schools, with 248 in its region. In terms of teachers, there are 27,222 higher secondary school educators in Kerala, with 12,893 in government schools and 14,329 in aided schools. However, there are only 2,864 non-teaching staff members in the form of lab assistants in higher secondary schools. Notably, there are no dedicated clerical and attender staff for higher secondary schools, which places a significant burden on teachers and

principals. They are compelled to handle administrative tasks in addition to their teaching duties, leading to increased stress and tension.

Higher secondary school teachers in Kerala typically hold one of three designations: HSST, HSST Junior, or Principal. The principal in the higher secondary system has a dual role, as they are responsible for both the institution's administration and teaching. HSST teachers are expected to teach 24 periods a week, while HSST Junior teachers are required to conduct a maximum of 14 periods a week. A persistent issue in Kerala's higher secondary institutions has been the absence of dedicated office staff. Consequently, teachers and principals are burdened with extensive clerical responsibilities, with only Lab Assistants appointed for ministerial tasks. Presently, the Principal carries the full weight of responsibility for the institution, including the high school, and is answerable to higher authorities. Teachers in higher secondary schools assist the principal with admissions and various administrative tasks. One of the primary sources of dissatisfaction among higher secondary teachers in Kerala is the limited scope for career advancement. They do not receive additional incentives or increments for obtaining advanced qualifications such as a Ph.D. Due to the substantial clerical workload and the coordination of various activities, teachers find it challenging to focus entirely on teaching. Moreover, the Principal's position in higher secondary schools is also a teaching role, leaving government higher secondary teachers vulnerable to potential displacement when a new Principal arrives. Class sizes of 65 students further compound the difficulties faced by teachers in maintaining discipline, particularly with teenagers, who can be challenging to manage given the emotional transitions they undergo during this stage.

The admission process for higher secondary schools is protracted and demands the full attention of both teachers and the principal. This process begins in June and continues for several months. Throughout the year, there are four types of exams, including two public exams, plus one and plus two public exams, supplementary exams (SAY), and improvement exams, in addition to class tests, quarterly assessments, and half-yearly exams. The primary exams occur in March, preceded by practical exams. Following invigilation duties, teachers engage in the evaluation process, which, for subjects like Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics, includes a double valuation. This process consumes a significant portion of their vacation time.

Teachers may also face disciplinary action for minor issues related to their examination duties. The extensive syllabus further contributes to the pressure on teachers, while an inadequate number of working days can make it challenging to cover the syllabus in a timely manner. Controlling teenagers in the classroom poses an enduring challenge, as students in this age group are susceptible to various emotional fluctuations, creating additional difficulties for teachers.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the job satisfaction of teachers in the government and aided sectors of higher secondary schools in Kerala. Higher secondary education holds particular importance as it serves as a bridge between general education and advanced academic pursuits, allowing students to make crucial career choices after completing their plus-two education. The well-being and performance of teachers within the higher secondary education system are of paramount significance since they directly impact the achievements of both students and the institution as a whole.

### **Objective of the study:**

1. To Observe the factors affecting the job satisfaction of higher secondary teachers
2. To examine the challenges and problems faced by higher secondary teachers.
3. To make suggestions and recommendations for improving satisfaction

**Research Methodology:**

The study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Primary data is collected from 90 higher secondary teachers from Kerala. Out of these 50 teachers are from Government schools and the rest are from aided schools. Secondary data is also collected from websites. The period of the study is 2 months. A structured interview schedule was used for this purpose. Simple random sampling is used for the selection of teachers.

**Review of Literature:**

1. Dr. A. C. Lal Kumar (2016) The research examined the job satisfaction levels of teachers in higher secondary schools and emphasized the notable variations in job satisfaction based on factors such as gender, school location, management type, language of instruction, and teaching specialization. The study concludes that, on average, teachers experience a similar overall level of job satisfaction, with a significant difference identified concerning gender. However, no significant differences were observed in job satisfaction based on the school's location, management type, language of instruction, or teaching specialization.
2. Pallavi kumari (2018) The study investigated the correlation between job satisfaction and five specific aspects of the school environment: excessive workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, powerlessness, and a lack of motivation. The research emphasized that a noteworthy connection existed between a teacher's job satisfaction and each of these five components of their job environment
3. Karma Sangay , Choki Dorji (2021)The study investigated the correlation between job satisfaction and five specific aspects of the school environment: excessive workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, powerlessness, and a lack of motivation. The research emphasized that a noteworthy connection existed between a teacher's job satisfaction and each of these five components of their job environment..
4. Anitha Mangad, Dr. Baiju K Nath (2015), The research focused on the issues and obstacles encountered by principals of upper secondary schools in Kerala. The findings indicated that a significant number of these principals encounter challenges when juggling both teaching and administrative responsibilities. The study also noted that a majority of the principals grapple with issues related to timely curriculum coverage, student evaluation, regular interactions with higher authorities, and the administrative process of maintaining records.
5. (Shrestha, 2019)The study uncovered that the satisfaction of teachers in their jobs is affected by factors such as the type of school they work in and their years of service. Additionally, job characteristics and educational qualifications were identified as contributors to their overall job satisfaction, with pay and work environment being specific areas of influence. Furthermore, the study revealed that school-related factors were positively influenced by social connections and acted as motivating factors for teachers to find satisfaction in their work. Ultimately, the research suggests that teachers who are content with their jobs tend to exhibit high levels of organizational citizenship behavior, job performance, commitment, and retention within their schools.
6. (Yao et al., 2015), The results showed that how teachers perceived the school environment had a detrimental impact on their surface acting but a positive influence on their deep acting. Surface acting was found to be a predictor of emotional exhaustion, while deep acting did not have a significant effect on emotional exhaustion. Additionally, emotional labor was identified as a mediator in the connection between teachers' perceptions of the school climate and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, it is

recommended that programs designed to enhance the school climate and encourage the use of effective emotional labor strategies among teachers should be implemented in Mainland China's schools.

### **Results and Discussions.**

Based on feedback gathered from teachers, a significant consensus exists regarding the excessive workload in higher secondary education, leaving them with insufficient quality time for their families. Teachers often find themselves under considerable stress due to the demanding workload. With long working hours extending from 9 am to 4.45 pm each day and minimal leisure time, this situation intensifies the stress experienced by both teachers and students. Additionally, teachers are burdened with various extracurricular responsibilities such as managing NSS, SPC, scout and guide programs, Souhrida clubs, ASAP initiatives, and career guidance activities. Furthermore, organizing study tours and farewell events for students can sometimes add to the tension, particularly when students display disruptive behavior. Another prominent issue highlighted by teachers is the presence of two administrative heads within the same institution: a principal, who lacks ministerial staff, and a headmaster with a fully staffed office. Despite this, the principal is tasked with ultimate responsibility and is answerable to higher authorities. The teachers have observed a shift in student behavior, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students appear to be more restless, with their attention frequently diverted to various other activities. The increased use of mobile phones among students after the COVID-19 period has also emerged as a significant concern for teachers.

Higher secondary teachers do not receive any advance increments or monetary benefits for higher qualifications like a Ph.D. The opportunities for promotion in higher secondary education are quite limited, which has left the majority of teachers dissatisfied with the matter of promotion. Additionally, many teachers express dissatisfaction with their workload, which includes an extra burden of duties.

The majority of teachers also report having limited time to spend with their families and feel that opportunities for career advancement are also very restricted. Teachers in Government higher secondary schools are not content with the transfer norms, as there is no effective mechanism for addressing their work-related issues. Furthermore, the number of exams and invigilation duties is significantly high, putting additional stress on the teachers.

Although most teachers are content with their salaries, their satisfaction levels with respect to DA (Dearness Allowance) and HRA (House Rent Allowance) are below average. The majority of teachers have 10-15 years of teaching experience, and some possess higher qualifications like Ph.D., M.Phil, NET, M.Ed., but they have limited opportunities for promotion .

Most of the teachers are HSSTs (Higher Secondary School Teachers), but 25% of them hold the designation of HSST Juniors. Both types of teachers possess the same qualifications, but the difference in their designation and pay is based on the number of hours they handle. This classification based on teaching hours leads to dissatisfaction among junior teachers and can result in ego clashes between senior and junior teachers. Government teachers are also subject to transfers, and compulsory outstation service has been introduced in higher secondary education recently, which further adds to the dissatisfaction of teachers with the transfer norms.

The majority of teachers note that they have a substantial amount of clerical work to handle in addition to teaching. This is mainly due to the lack of clerical staff in higher secondary schools. Many teachers express their dissatisfaction with the inadequate infrastructure facilities, including the lack of a proper library and lab facilities. However, higher secondary teachers are known for maintaining good interpersonal

relationships. They find strong support from their colleagues and principals. The PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) and management also provide substantial support to teachers. The work-life balance of teachers is rated as above average, and the majority of teachers express that they enjoy both their personal and professional lives. Nonetheless, their leisure time for other activities is limited due to their heavy workload. Despite the challenges, most teachers demonstrate a high level of commitment to their students and institutions. Their organizational commitment is highly commendable, and they are willing to take on additional responsibilities.

### **Suggestions:**

Urgent steps should be taken by the authorities to appoint enough office staff in higher secondary education then only the teachers can devote their entire energy for teaching. Their workload should be reduced to a great extent when enough ministerial staff is appointed in higher secondary schools. The principals of the institution may be relieved from the duty of teaching then only they can concentrate on administrative activities. The dual role of the principals increases their burden. The teachers possessing higher qualifications like Ph.D., M Phil, and other professional qualifications should be compensated by providing attractive monetary benefits. This will increase their motivation and also leads to the urge for acquiring higher qualifications. Teachers possessing higher qualifications should also be given promotions to collegiate education. The government and management should also try to improve the infrastructure facilities in higher secondary schools.

### **Conclusion:**

The study concludes that numerous dissatisfying elements have persisted in higher secondary schools from the very beginning. However, a definitive solution to these problems has yet to be achieved. Both principals and teachers encounter significant practical challenges in managing the schools. Authorities should take the necessary steps to address these issues. Teachers' job satisfaction is of utmost importance, as it directly impacts their performance and organizational commitment.

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