

Occupational Stress of Primary School Teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam

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Abstract:

The present study investigated the occupational stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam. The study employed descriptive survey method. The sample consists of 120 primary school teachers (60 male and 60 female) by using stratified random sampling technique. The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) by Srivastava and Singh was used for collection of data. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including Mean, Median, Standard Deviation along with the t-test to compare the variables. The findings revealed that the teachers experienced moderate level of occupational Stress with a Mean score 142.47 and Standard Deviation 20.06. The findings also found a significant difference in occupational stress between male and female teachers. It was observed that female teachers experience higher occupational stress than the male teachers. The study emphasizes the need for appropriate institutional support, stress-management programmes, and supportive working conditions to help teachers manage occupational demands effectively.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Primary School Teachers.

1.0 Introduction

Teachers play the most crucial role in shaping the nation's destiny. The success of any educational program depends on how effectively the teacher works. Teachers are the source of inspiration for the students who provide direction and guidance to all the activities of the school. The role of the teacher in modern society is multifaceted. Primary school teachers particularly hold a significant position in shaping academic, social and emotional development of children during their formative years. Despite their crucial role teachers constantly required to cope with a wide range of occupational demands and challenges including heavy workloads, administrative responsibilities, changing educational policies, increased societal expectations, classroom management challenges etc. These demands may influence teachers' psychological wellbeing and overall academic performance. In the teaching profession, if they feel dissatisfied, stressed, and unhappy these have a greater negative impact on the teacher's personal life and teaching also (Patel, 2014).

Occupational Stress

The initial meaning of the term "stress" was related to challenges or difficulties. It is commonly perceived as a sense of being inundated, anxious, or fatigued, impacting individuals across all demographics, and leading to various physical and mental health problems. Baum (1990) stated that "stress is any uncomfortable emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological, and behavioural changes." Stress that starts in one area of life can affect other areas as well. While stress is often viewed negatively, it can actually drive better performance in some situations, such as during exams

or tight work deadlines. In fact, striving for excellence in any field usually comes with some level of stress. When managed correctly, stress can enhance performance quality; (Awada et al., 2024; Brunner et al., 2019; Maddock, 2023). However, excessive stress can hinder effectiveness, disrupt relationships, and negatively impact the individual's physical health.

Occupational stress refers to stress arising from a person's job or work environment. It occurs when job demands exceed or conflict with an individual's abilities, resources, or needs, resulting in adverse physical and emotional responses (Kejriwal et al., 2024; Batista-Taran et al., 2013; Setiawan et al., 2022). It may also be understood as the emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physiological responses to adverse conditions related to work content, work organization, and the work environment (Narban et al., 2016; Akanji, 2013; Thong et al., 2000).

In numerous countries, teaching is frequently regarded as one of the most challenging professions. A 2005 survey published in the Journal of Managerial Psychology ranked teaching as the second most stressful occupation among the twenty-six that were evaluated, with only ambulance drivers reporting higher stress levels (Cooper, C. L., 2005).

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Previous studies have identified various factors associated with occupational stress among teachers. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) reported that students' poor attitudes towards learning, maintaining classroom standards, low teacher motivation, and additional teaching responsibilities were important sources of teacher stress. Upadhyay and Singh (1999) found that school instructors experienced higher occupational stress than administrators, mainly due to feelings of inadequacy and difficulties in achieving their career aspirations. Choudhary (2001) reported that work-related stress, psychological well-being, marital status, educational qualification, and living arrangements were associated with teacher burnout. John, Whatmore, and John (2007) also found that age, gender, and occupational position were related to work-related stress among primary school staff.

Other studies have reported differences in occupational stress based on gender, efficiency, and psychological factors. Anbuchelvan (2010) reported significant gender differences in occupational stress but found no significant differences based on educational qualification, marital status, location, or teaching experience. Aftab (2013) reported that most secondary school teachers experienced low occupational stress and found a negative relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction. Studies have also examined occupational stress in relation to coping strategies. Reddy (2014) found differences in occupational stress between language and non-language teachers and between male and female teachers. Ali (2014) reported significant relationships among occupational stress, coping mechanisms, job burnout, and psychological health. Kumar (2014) found moderate occupational stress among physical education teachers, while no significant gender differences were found in their coping strategies. Kapade (2017) reported that female police officers mainly used social support, whereas male officers more often used problem-focused coping strategies. Kumari (2019), however, found no significant relationship between occupational stress and coping strategies among teacher educators. Suryavanshi (2021) identified activities such as spending time in nature, social interaction, reading, listening to music, hobbies, and meditation as commonly used coping strategies among library professionals.

From the above discussion, it can be observed that occupational stress among teachers has been studied in relation to factors such as gender, teaching experience, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, burnout, and coping strategies. However, existing studies have largely focused on secondary school teachers, teacher

educators, college teachers, and other professional groups. Although some studies have examined occupational stress among primary school teachers in different settings, no study was found specifically addressing the occupational stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam. Thus, the present study attempts to address this geographical and contextual research gap by examining this variable among primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam.

1.2 Significance of the study

The progress of our nation depends on qualitative improvement of our education system. The all-round development of the students can be achieved only through the dedicated efforts by the teachers. The role primary school teachers are more crucial in this regard as they are responsible for laying the foundation stone of one's life. The current scenario of our education system has been changing and the responsibility of the teachers are increasing very rapidly. The primary teachers now a days not only responsible for imparting education to the children but also engage in lots of administrative work which includes organising various events, preparing themselves for Gunotsav annually, overseeing student's cocurricular activities, attending official meetings and training sessions regularly, performing election duties, and many more other responsibilities which turn to over burden and the teachers feel under extreme pressure while fulfilling the requirements of the organization as well of the administration. Several studies have reported that, in addition to teaching responsibilities, primary school teachers are increasingly burdened with administrative tasks, documentation, and school management duties. These additional responsibilities can increase their workload and contribute to heightened occupational pressure and stress (Tsubono & Ogawa, 2022; Arbia et al., 2023; Schmidt et al., 2024). Teachers who experience high levels of stress may not be able to manage their classrooms effectively, provide proper guidance to students, or maintain a conducive learning environment. Understanding the occupational stress of teachers and proving adequate support is crucial for improving their overall health and job satisfaction. The findings of the present study will be helpful for counsellors to understand the reasons behind teacher's stress and poor mental health. Knowing the reasons how teachers are stressed in the present study, the counsellor can provide guidance and direction for the teacher to help them cope with stress at work, home, and society to the best of their ability. It will also help raising awareness about the importance of teacher wellbeing and highlights the need for further research and action in this area.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The title of the present study may be stated as follows –

“Occupational Stress of Primary School Teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam.”

1.4 Research questions

1. What is the level of Occupational Stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam?
2. Is there any difference in occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam?

1.5 Objectives of the study

The following objectives have been formulated for present study are –

1. To study the level of Occupational Stress of Primary School Teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam.
2. To compare the occupational stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam in relation to gender.

1.6 Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for the present study is-

Ho2. There exists no difference in the occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers

in Tinsukia District, Assam.

1.7 Operational Definition

Occupational Stress: In the present study the Occupational Stress refers to the scores obtained by the primary school teachers of Tinsukia District in Occupational Stress Index constructed and standardised by Srivastava & Singh.

Primary School Teachers: For this study, a primary school teacher is referred to as any individual certified to teach class 1 to 5.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The present study is delimited in terms of the following aspect-

- The study is limited to only the government primary school teachers of Assam.
- The study is limited to only one district of Assam that is Tinsukia District.
- Due to time constraints, the investigator was able to collect data from only 120 teachers.

2.0 Methodology

Methodology guides the researcher to conduct their research studies in an organized way. It is the systematic application of the methods which are used in research.

2.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey method was used for the present study. The investigator has selected two variables: psychological wellbeing and occupational Stress of primary school teachers for the present study. The data was collected using stratified random sampling technique and collected data were analysed and interpreted using t test, and Pearson's product moment correlation.

2.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises of all the teachers working in the government primary schools. The present study was conducted on a purposively selected sample of teachers from government primary schools of Tinsukia District. In Tinsukia District, there are currently 1108 primary schools with a total of 3165 teachers (SSA, Assam). The investigator used purposive and random sampling for the present study. The investigator collected data from 120 primary school teachers (60 male and 60 female).

Source: District Elementary Office, Tinsukia District.

2.3 Tool Used for the Study

Occupational Stress Index: To measure the occupational stress of the sample the investigator will use Occupational Stress Index constructed and developed by Srivastava and Singh (1981). The Occupational Stress Index was developed by A.K Srivastava and A.P Singh in the year 1981 to measure the occupational stress. The scale comprised of 46 items rated on a five-point scale where 28 items are categorized as True-Keyed while 18 items are categorized as false keyed. The reliability Index which was calculated using the split half method was .93 while the overall Cronbach's alpha was .90. The validity of the scale was measured by correlation coefficients between O.S.I scores and various measures of job attitudes and behaviours.

2.4 Procedure for Data Collection

First, the investigator obtained permission from District Elementary Education Officer of Tinsukia District. After getting the proper authorization the investigator visited each selected primary school to collect of required data for the study. During these visit researchers briefly explained the purpose of the visit to the teachers and distribute questionnaires among them. The investigator then provided

instructions on how the teachers should put their responses based on their perception and understanding. After completion the investigator collected the questionnaires from the teachers.

2.5 Statistical Techniques to be used

Descriptive statistics viz. Mean, Median, Standard Deviation and Normality test was used for the present study. One of the Inferential statistics that is t-test was used to compare the variables.

3.0 Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Objective 1: To study the level of Occupational Stress of Primary School Teachers in Tinsukia District of Assam.

Table- 1: Level of occupational stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District.

Variable	No. of Teachers	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
OSI of Primary School Teachers	120	142.467	146.5	20.060	0.126	-0.584

From the above table 1 it can be observed that Mean was found to be 142.467, Median 146.5 and standard deviation 20.06. The skewness was .126 which was positively skewed. This suggests that the data is slightly positively skewed, meaning the tail on the right side of the distribution is slightly longer than the left. A slightly positive skew implies that a small proportion of respondents have higher psychological well-being scores compared to the majority. The value of kurtosis is -0.584. Negative kurtosis indicates a platykurtic distribution, which means the distribution is somewhat flatter than a normal distribution. It suggests fewer extreme values and more even distribution of scores around the mean.

Objective 2: To compare the occupational stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District of Assam in relation to gender.

To fulfil this objective the researcher formulated a hypothesis as –

Ho 1: There exists no difference in occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam.

Table 2: Comparison of the level of occupational stress of male and female teachers of Tinsukia District.

Variable	No. of Teachers	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical Ratio	Degrees of Freedom	Remarks
Male Teachers	60	136.91	17.31	-3.14	118	significant
Female Teachers	60	148	21.19			

The table indicate that the calculated Critical Ratio (CR) was found to be 3.14 which was greater than the tabulated value -1.98 at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates a statistically significant difference. Hence the Null hypothesis ‘There exists no difference in occupational stress of male and female primary

school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam' is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress compared to male teachers.

13.0 Findings of the Study:

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- Findings of objective 1 revealed that Mean, Median, and standard deviation of occupational stress of primary school teachers were found to be 142.467, 146.5 and 20.06 respectively. The value of skewness was 126. This suggests that the data is slightly positively skewed, meaning the tail on the right side of the distribution is slightly longer than the left. A slightly positive skew implies that a small proportion of respondents have higher occupational stress scores compared to the majority. The value of kurtosis is -0.584. Negative kurtosis indicates a platykurtic distribution, which means the distribution is somewhat flatter than a normal distribution. It suggests fewer extreme values and more even distribution of scores around the mean.
- The findings of Objective 2 revealed that calculated Critical Ratio (CR) was found to be 3.14 which was greater than the tabulated value -1.98 at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates a statistically significant difference. Hence the Null hypothesis 'There exists no difference in occupational stress of male and female primary school teachers in Tinsukia District, Assam' is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress compared to male teachers. Studies conducted by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978), Agyapong et al. (2022), and Corbett et al. (2023) observed higher occupational stress among female teachers than the male teachers.

Suggestions:

- Since the occupational stress was present among the primary school teachers of Tinsukia District educational authorities should organize various stress management programs on the practical techniques like effective time management, problem solving and use of adaptive coping strategies.
- As the result shows, a small portion of teachers have comparatively higher occupational stress. Therefore, the school authorities should provide timely support, counselling to overcome their occupational burden.
- School administration should provide a supportive and cooperative environment in which teachers can discuss their work-related difficulties with their coworkers and supervisors. This will help to identify the sources of their stress at workplace at an early age.
- The findings indicate that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress than male teachers. Initiatives such as flexible work schedules, child care facilities, and stress management workshops for women could be introduced to address their unique challenges.
- Further research should conduct to examine occupational stress in relation to other variables like psychological wellbeing, coping strategies to obtain more obtain more understanding of teacher's occupational stress.

Conclusion:

The present study was conducted to investigate the occupational stress of primary school teachers in Tinsukia District Assam. The findings revealed that primary school teachers experienced a moderate level of occupational stress. The result further showed a statistically significant difference in occupational stress

between male and female primary school teachers. Female teachers experience significantly higher occupational stress than the male teachers. This emphasizes the need for appropriate institutional support, effective workload management, stress-management programmes, and supportive working conditions to help teachers manage occupational demands effectively. Particular attention may be given to the work-related challenges experienced by female teachers. These may contribute to improved teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and overall academic performance.

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