

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

## Work Stress among School Teachers: A Systematic Literature Review

### Estrés laboral entre profesores de escuela: una revisión sistemática de la literatura

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#### Abstract

Teachers at higher secondary schools work with teenagers as their students. Students' stress levels rise during adolescence, which can be a time of anxiety, tension, emotional storms, and conflict. Teachers experience excessive stress as a result, which impacts every part of their lives<sup>1</sup>. The goal of this review is to learn more about the level of stress that educators encounter, how it affects their performance at work, and the coping strategies that they use to manage it. The researcher thoroughly studied the previous research literature from journals, research articles, theses, and dissertations to identify 21 relevant studies, conducted in India and abroad. Purposive sampling was used and a modified checklist of CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programs) was used to analyze the extracted data. It was discovered through a review of earlier studies that secondary school teachers experience moderate to severe levels of work-related stress. Big class sizes, issues with controlling student behavior, a lack of professional development opportunities, a lack of staff interaction and time for curriculum discussions, inadequate pay, a lack of intrinsic satisfaction, and a shortage of useful teaching aids all emerged as sources of stress, which also affected their performance. To deal with their stress, teachers used the coping strategies of sleeping, watching TV, talking with friends, listening to music, shopping, and traveling to places of natural beauty. This systematic review highlights the need to reduce teacher stress, because stressed teachers are less able to instruct students effectively and to create an environment that makes learning challenging and engaging.

**Keywords:** Source of Stress; Depression; Anxiety; School teachers

#### Resumen

Las y los alumnos de las y los profesores de secundaria son adolescentes. Los niveles de estrés aumentan durante la adolescencia, que puede ser una época de ansiedad, tensión, tormentas emocionales y conflictos. Como consecuencia, las y los profesores experimentan también un estrés excesivo que repercute en todos los aspectos de su vida.<sup>1</sup> El objetivo de esta revisión es conocer mejor el nivel de estrés que sufren las y los educadores, también cómo afecta su rendimiento en el trabajo, así como las estrategias que utilizan para gestionarlo. En esta investigación se estudió a fondo la bibliografía de investigaciones anteriores en revistas, artículos de investigación, tesis y disertaciones doctorales, identificando 21 estudios pertinentes, realizados en India y en el extranjero. Se utilizó un muestreo intencional y una lista de comprobación modificada de la *Critical Appraisal Skills Programs* (CASP, Programas de Evaluación de Habilidades Críticas) para analizar los datos extraídos. La revisión puso de manifiesto que las y los profesores de secundaria experimentan niveles de estrés laboral entre moderados y graves. El gran número de estudiantes por clase, los problemas para controlar su comportamiento, la falta de oportunidades de desarrollo profesional y de interacción entre el personal, así como de tiempo para debatir el plan de estudios, de satisfacción intrínseca y de material didáctico útil, son fuentes de estrés; también afecta su rendimiento una remuneración inadecuada. Para hacer frente a su estrés, las y los profesores recurrieron a comportamientos compensatorios como dormir, ver la televisión, hablar con amigos, escuchar música, ir de compras y viajar a lugares de belleza natural. Esta revisión puso de manifiesto la necesidad de reducir el estrés de las y los profesores, ya que, estresados, son menos capaces de instruir al estudiantado con eficacia y de crear un entorno propicio para un logro de aprendizaje estimulante y atractivo.

**Palabras clave:** fuente de estrés; depresión; ansiedad; profesores de escuela



## Introduction.

Teachers are essential to the educational process and students' overall development.<sup>2</sup> Teachers are often said to be the backbone of any society, as they guide and assist future generations in realizing their full potential.<sup>3</sup> Many agree that a country's quality is determined by the standard of education its students receive, which is determined by the caliber of teachers.

It is imperative that teachers help students prepare for the future, because every child is a potential leader. Children retain the knowledge and experiences gained during their formative years, making teachers crucial in molding their perspectives and attitudes toward life.<sup>3</sup> Teenage pupils are a challenge for teachers. Students' stress levels are elevated during this period, because it is a chapter of life prone to increased strain, emotional storms, and conflict. Teachers working with this age group must pay particular attention to picking their students' interests, providing appropriate motivation and guidance, and presenting a friendly, supportive attitude, as well as providing care and affection in a setting that is conducive to learning. A teacher who is not stressed can instruct students more successfully and create an environment that makes schools an engaging and challenging place for them to learn.<sup>1</sup>

Teachers deal with many different kinds of students every day, which can be stressful. They are also responsible for providing these students with care and guidance. Teachers may feel a great deal of stress due to rules, regulations, guidelines, and performance expectations. The work is ongoing, and very demanding. Teachers face stress and overwork due to the increase in their responsibilities as time goes on.<sup>4</sup>

Teachers are expected to be agents of change. Simultaneously, the challenges encountered by educational establishments and educators have grown. The combination of these occurrences has made teaching a more difficult and complex job in recent times. Stress levels have risen, as the requirements of teaching have expanded and changed. Stress is prevalent in educators, employees, and administrators.

Given this criterion, the researcher sought to determine the level of work-related stress among these teachers and the coping strategies they use to manage it. This study aims to examine occupational stress and identify its sources among school teachers.

## Materials and Methods.

This systematic review study examined existing research to evaluate the degree of work-related stress, the source of the stress, how the stress affects job performance, and the coping mechanisms secondary school teachers use to deal with the stress at work. The current investigation was conducted according to the study protocol and registered on the PROSPERO website with the registration number CRD42023415408.

**Search strategy.** Bibliographic and citation databases were regarded as the primary data sources in this study to locate relevant studies. Regarding this, PUBMED, MEDLINE, GOOGLE SCHOLAR, PsycINFO, and CINAHL were the sources from which the articles published in the timeline spanning 2013 to 2023 were retrieved in the first search. MeSH terms, text terms, and thesaurus headings were employed. The English keywords included Work stress, teacher's stress, coping strategy, teacher well-being, teacher's burnout, and stress management. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) format was followed in the identification of the studies through the use of databases and manual searches.

**Exclusion criteria.** Only articles written in English were included in the study, and it was restricted to higher secondary school teachers' work-related stress. The study's focus is on senior secondary school teachers' levels of stress, its sources, how stress affects their performance, and techniques for managing stress in the classroom.

**Inclusion criteria.** Studies on job stress among senior secondary school teachers were included, as were all excellent English articles published between 2013 and 2023. Included were studies on job stress among higher secondary school teachers carried out both nationally and internationally in India. Retrospective, cross-sectional, and

longitudinal studies were all considered appropriate for inclusion. All measurement methods were considered appropriate, including questionnaires (validated and non-validated), interviews (unstructured, semi-structured, and structured), and observations.

**Excavating Information.** Initially, 3376 articles were imported into to end note. 3201 articles were determined to be potentially relevant to the research topic after duplicates had been eliminated and hand-searched articles (25 in total) were added. After conducting a thorough examination of the articles that could potentially be relevant, a total of 255 articles were chosen. After evaluating the abstracts and screening the titles, the total number was reduced to 235. The full texts were examined to determine eligibility, and a total of 21 studies were selected for the review. The PRISMA flowchart depicting the process of the literature search is demonstrated in Figure A.

**Quality Appraisal of the Reviewed Journal Articles.** The articles underwent independent review by two specialists, who assessed the title and abstract and applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Subsequently, the entire content of the articles underwent a thorough evaluation. If both reviewers rejected an article, the reason for rejection was provided. In the event of a disagreement between the reviewers, a third party was assigned to review the articles. The data were obtained using a pre-established checklist that encompassed the study's title, variables examined, findings, and outcomes. The articles in this study were critically assessed using the modified checklist for CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programs) for both quantitative and qualitative studies. The JAMA Group created the CASP checklist, a common instrument for assessing articles, in 1994.<sup>23</sup> The study employed a revised checklist consisting of 19 items. Following an examination of each article, the answers were assigned as follows: "Yes" if the desired option was met for each question, "No" if it wasn't, and "Can't say" if the question wasn't clear. Five categories comprised these items: four for the research topic, two for the research design, four for participant selection, six for data collection and analysis, and another category with three items. To establish the cut-off point, researchers

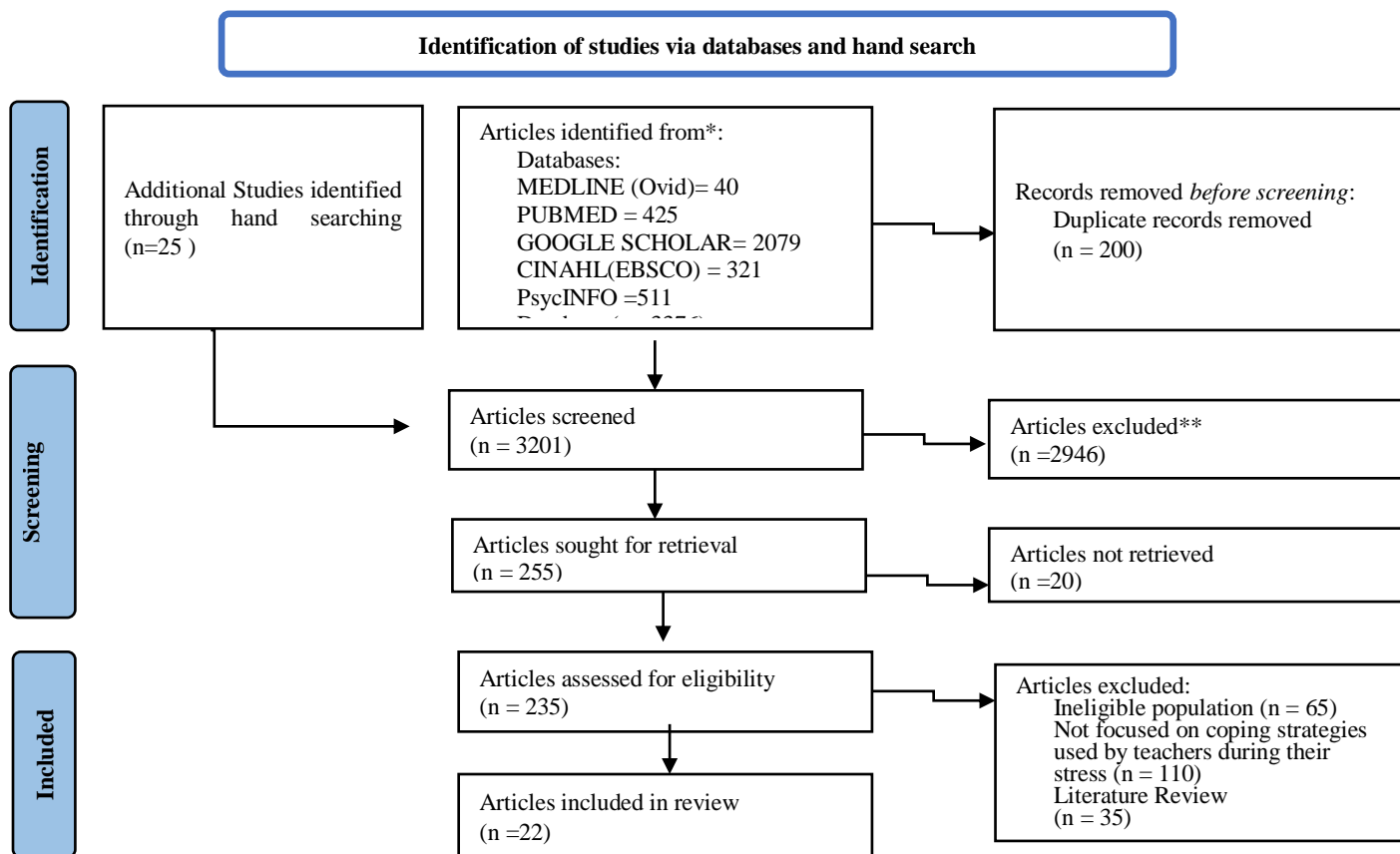
relied on comparable articles and sought input from experts. Articles that scored 75% or higher of the total score (13 and above) were considered to be of good quality. Articles that scored between 25% and 75% of the total score (6-12) were classified as average quality. Articles that scored less than 25% of the total score (5 and below) were considered to be of poor quality. For this study, research that exhibited low quality was excluded. Upon careful examination and comparison of the worksheets corresponding to each of the extracted articles, the collected data was consolidated and the final description and analysis were conducted following the project's objectives.

## Results.

Out of 21 articles collected, three of the studies were conducted abroad, respectively in Nigeria (John CA, Makinde AA, Duwa ST11, Nyitar RH and Elujekwute LA)<sup>16</sup> and Kenya (Wangui MF, Ombui K, Iravo M).<sup>17</sup> 18 studies were conducted in different parts of India, and 8 studies were conducted in the southern part of India, including Chidambaram Town, Tamilnadu (Elamparuthi. D),<sup>10</sup> Cuddalore district in Tamilnadu (Arockiasamy S, & Subramanian P),<sup>15</sup> Coimbatore (Selvi G.P, and Jothi. K.),<sup>18</sup> Chennai, Tamilnadu (Ophelia JM),<sup>20</sup> Hyderabad (Sunanda K),<sup>8</sup> Udupi, a coastal district in Southern India (Rajesh C & et al),<sup>19</sup> Kerala cochin and thalassey (Kurian JP & Varghese DR3, Raj K & et al).<sup>6</sup> 10 studies were conducted in the Northern and Eastern part of India, including Hoshiarpur District, Punjab (Nagra V & Kaur H),<sup>1</sup> Rewa District, Madhya Pradesh (Kamb DM),<sup>4</sup> New Delhi (Mamta Parashar & et al<sup>12</sup>, Jain G, Tyagi HK, & Kumar A<sup>14</sup>), Patan district, Gujarat (Mansurhussain I. Momin1 and Dr. Suresh chandra Joshi),<sup>13</sup> West Bengal, India, (Dawn S & et al5, Islam R),<sup>19</sup> Sikkim (Pokhrel A),<sup>7</sup> Tezpur town of Assam (Rabha RR)<sup>9</sup> and Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh (Sing N & Katoch).<sup>2</sup>

Of the 21 studies, participants include student-teachers and primary and secondary school teachers from K-12 schools. The number of participants in quantitative studies ranges between 76 and 1489 teachers.

**Figure A: A PRISMA flow diagram that shows how studies are chosen.**



## Discussion

The subsequent empirical discoveries were deliberated confidentially, with distinct thematic categories.

### *Level of stress among teachers:*

Teachers now face increased expectations and responsibilities in a range of educational settings due to the evolving nature of the educational landscape. Teachers are overworked and under stress due to the ongoing increase in these responsibilities. Sustained experience with stress, when maintained at an optimal level, has been linked to improved performance over time.<sup>2</sup>

Sumanta Dawn, Payel Talukdar, Subir Bhattacharjee & Om Prakash Singh revealed that 12.42% of senior secondary school teachers (n=42) were severely stressed, 37.57% of teachers were moderately stressed (n=127) and 26, 33% (n=89) of the teachers in his study were slightly stressed.<sup>5</sup>

Similar findings were made by VipinderNagra& Harpreet Kaur in a cross-sectional study, which showed respondents with high job stress (156-230), moderate stress (123-155), and minimal stress at work (46-122). The entire sample has an average of 138.88 and a standard deviation of 25.75. The data suggests that secondary school

teachers in the Hoshiarpur district experienced a medium/optimal level of job stress.<sup>1</sup>

A Cross-sectional study was done in the Thalassery block of Kannur district, Kerala to evaluate occupational stress. The study found that 35% of the sample experienced moderate stress, while 45 individuals (9%) reported severe occupational stress. Stress was associated with a comprehensive curriculum, limited time, external disruptions, student conduct, inadequate infrastructure, and preferential treatment by authorities. There was a significant correlation between an increase in teaching experience and a higher position in school with elevated levels of stress.<sup>6</sup>

Simultaneously, Anupam Pokhrel's research on job stress among high school teachers in Sikkim revealed that 7.5% of high school teachers experience severe job stress, while 36.25% face above-average job stress as a result of insufficient classroom resources. Therefore, a combined percentage of 29.37% exhibit a moderate level of work-related stress.<sup>7</sup>

In her research on stress among higher secondary school teachers at corporate schools in Hyderabad, K. Sunanda discovered that male teachers were significantly more stressed than female teachers in all areas of stress, including mental, physical, emotional, and social stress.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Sources of stress among school teachers***

Occupational stress, an unpleasant psychophysical condition, is prevalent in the modern world, where people struggle to manage the demands of their jobs. This impacts employees' personal health and productivity at work.<sup>9</sup> Globally, the teaching profession has grown more demanding in recent years.<sup>10</sup>

Manabete, John, Makinde, and Duwa<sup>11</sup> carried out a study on job stress among administrators as well as teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria. They discovered that the primary factors contributing to stress among teachers are role ambiguity, a strained relationship with superiors, and a demanding workload.

Rashmi Rekha Rabha also obtained comparable findings in her investigation of occupational stress among female educators in secondary schools in Tezpur, Assam. The primary causes of job stress, as reported by female teachers, include large class sizes (93.33%), behavioral issues related to coping with student behavior (83.33%), limited opportunities for professional development (73.33%), insufficient time to cover the curriculum (66.67%), a lack of healthy staff interactions, and an inadequate salary (60%). Additionally, female teachers cited a lack of internal satisfaction (55%) and a shortage of appropriate teaching aids (50%) as contributing factors to their job stress.<sup>9</sup>

Elamparuthi.D. found that the following factors contributed to job stress among teachers in higher secondary schools in Chidambaram, Tamilnadu: large class sizes (92%), inadequate salary and low internal satisfaction (66%), difficulty managing student behavior (84%), lack of professional development opportunities (88%), unhealthy staff interactions and an insufficient amount of time to cover the curriculum (80%), lack of family support for household chores (50%), financial difficulties at home (56%), and interference from family members with one's career (36%).<sup>10</sup>

Mamta Parashar and her colleagues demonstrated that discipline and motivation were major sources of stress among young teachers. Significant predictors for stress as a dependent variable include the joint family, gender, education, and family income.<sup>12</sup>

Mansurhussain I & et al pinpointed that Male teachers and Female teachers have demonstrated moderate stress levels regarding a 'lack of professional recognition' (LPR) for job stress.<sup>13</sup>

Jojo Kurian and Roshna Varghese conducted a study in Kerala state on the correlation between job stress and teacher performance. The outcomes of the research revealed that stress hurts teacher performance. The path coefficients of certain dimensions exhibit a negative value. Time management exhibits positive coefficients and all paths are statistically significant.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, a study conducted in the Cuddalore district of Tamilnadu examined the occupational stress levels among secondary school teachers. The findings indicated that 17% of higher secondary school teachers experienced low levels of occupational stress, 64% experienced average levels, and 19% experienced high levels. The calculated r-value indicates a significant correlation between teachers' stress levels and their performance.<sup>15</sup> Elujekwute, Edwin Chukwuaguzie, Nyitaret *al*<sup>16</sup> investigated the relationship between job stress and job performance among secondary school teachers in the Makurdi Education Zone, located in Benue State, Nigeria. The results indicated that the performance of secondary school teachers in the Makurdi Education Zone of Benue State is significantly impacted by factors such as delay or non-payment of salaries, unfavorable working conditions, and a lack of in-service training.

Within the Kikuyu District of Kenya, Muiga Felistus Wangui, Kepha Ombui, and Mike Iravo conducted a study to assess the influence of work-related stress on the performance of secondary school teachers. The study found a strong statistical correlation between the dependent variable and all independent variables, particularly when it came to stress related to management, family, politics, and the economy. According to multiple linear regression models, work-related stressors could account for as much as 53.3% of the variation in teacher performance in the study.<sup>17</sup>

According to Selvi G.P. and Jothi. K,<sup>1</sup> a significant proportion, specifically 88.80%, of teachers in both public and private schools are compelled to work on holidays and weekends, resulting in heightened levels of stress. Teachers of higher secondary classes consistently devote additional time to conduct special classes and provide extra coaching for the students, resulting in increased stress and fatigue. Teachers have consistently encountered this type of stress in their profession for many years, yet neither the school administrations nor the principals in these schools have regarded these concerns as highly significant<sup>8</sup>

Razekul Islam conducted research on job stress among school teachers in the Birbhum district of West Bengal and discovered that demographic factors have an impact on job stress. Female teachers experienced higher stress levels than male teachers. Work stress for private school teachers is thought to be primarily caused by social status, lack of interaction, social pressure to finish the syllabus on time, a heavy workload, and unfavorable working conditions.<sup>19</sup>

The work stress experienced by teachers can be attributed to several factors, such as a substantial workload, inadequate compensation, insufficient resources, large class sizes, limited prospects for professional development, and managing disruptive students, among others.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, female teachers reported that their job stress was caused by a lack of appropriate teaching aids and a lack of internal satisfaction.<sup>9,10,14</sup> Young teachers' main sources of stress were motivation and discipline.<sup>12</sup> Higher secondary teachers put in more time teaching special classes and giving students more coaching, particularly on weekends and holidays, which causes stress and exhaustion.<sup>18</sup>

Teachers may find it challenging to manage their classrooms calmly and efficiently if they work in stressful environments.<sup>2</sup> Stress at work can negatively impact teachers' health, students' learning environments, and the performance of both teachers and students.<sup>3,14,15</sup>

### **Stress management strategies/methods for teachers**

A teacher who is not stressed can instruct students more successfully and create an environment that makes schools an engaging and challenging place for them to learn.<sup>1</sup>

Rashmi Rekha Rabha conducted a research investigation on the phenomenon of job-related stress experienced by secondary school teachers in Tezpur town, Assam. The study revealed that inadequate salary, handling student behavior in the classroom, and having a large class size were identified as the primary causes of teacher stress. Additionally, female secondary school teachers

shared their perspectives on different stress management activities they engage in, including sleeping (100%), watching TV and listening to music (96.67%), talking with friends (63.33%), shopping (48.33%), and traveling to spend time in nature (40%).<sup>9</sup>

The outcomes of the previous study were in accordance with those of Elamparuthi.D, who examined job stress among female teachers in higher secondary schools in Chidambaram, Tamilnadu. Elamparuthi.D found that 96% of higher secondary school teachers use sleep as a means to alleviate work-related stress, while 90% of middle school teachers watch TV for stress management. Additionally, 96% of middle school teachers listen to music, 70% engage in conversations with friends, 58% go shopping, and 44% travel as stress management activities.<sup>10</sup>

The investigation's combined results further supported the findings of Malvi Kamboj's research, which examined the impact of work-related stress on female secondary school teachers in the Rewa district. Kamboj's study revealed that teachers turn to sleep as a means of alleviating stress. The data reveals that 96% of female teachers engage in watching TV, while the same percentage also listen to music. Additionally, 64% of them chat with friends, 48% engage in shopping, and 38% take trips as a means to alleviate stress.<sup>4</sup>

Ophelia Janifer, M., conducted a study on stress. The study discovered that female teachers experience more health issues than their male counterparts. School teachers also experience more health issues with a higher number of dependents in their homes. Lack of proper equipment also causes stress for educators. Stress at work affects educators in both public and private schools.<sup>20</sup>

Rajesh C. and his colleagues conducted a study on psychological well-being, as well as coping strategies, among secondary school teachers. The outcomes demonstrated that teachers exhibited moderate levels of coping skills across all domains. Secondary school teachers commonly

employ positive reframing, active coping, and planning as their preferred coping techniques. However, substance use is acknowledged as the most negative coping strategy.<sup>21</sup>

Teachers showed moderate levels of coping skills in all domains, according to the literature reviewed in this section. The most positive coping strategies are planning and positive reframing. Sleeping, watching TV, listening to music, conversing with friends, shopping, and visiting places of natural beauty are some of the stress-reduction techniques used by higher secondary school teachers, particularly female teachers.<sup>4,9,10</sup> Substance abuse, however, is recognized as the least preferred coping mechanism.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

The education sector plays a vital role in society, with teachers serving as its backbone. As highlighted in this literature review, teachers often face significant stress, which negatively impacts both their personal health and organizational productivity. Stress has been noted to be rising distressingly among teachers, reflecting more work and less reward for our teachers.

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