

Occupational Stress among Government and Private School Teachers: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore and assess the level of occupational stress among senior secondary school teachers based on their gender, type of school and locale. The researcher collected the data from a sample of 250 senior secondary school teachers selected through Simple random sampling technique. The tool used for data collection was Teacher's Occupational Stress Scale, which was developed by Sharma and Kaur (2013). The statistical techniques employed to analyse the data were percentage analysis and t-Test. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the senior secondary school teachers experience a moderate level of occupational stress. This moderate stress level was consistent among government and private senior secondary school teachers. However, a significant difference in occupational stress was found between private and government senior secondary school teachers, with private school teachers experiencing significantly more occupational stress. Regarding gender differences, the study found that male teachers experience notably higher level of occupational stress compared to their counterparts. Furthermore, the study indicated that senior secondary school teachers in rural areas have significantly higher levels of occupational stress than school teachers in urban areas. This finding shed light on the impact of the school's locale on the stress experienced by teachers.

Overall, the research highlighted the importance of understanding and addressing occupational stress among senior secondary school teachers, particularly in relation to factors such as school type and locale, to create a conducive and supportive work environment for teachers.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Senior Secondary School Teachers, Government, Private*

INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is a widespread and serious problem that affects all professions across developed and developing nations. The definition of occupational stress given by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, USA, 1999) as, the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker". According to the World Labor Report (1993) by the World Health Organization (WHO), occupational stress was recognized as a major health concern of the twentieth century and was referred to as the "World Wide Epidemic". It is described as a situation where factors related to one's occupation interact with the individual, leading to either positive or negative effects on their psychological or physiological well-being, causing their mind and body to deviate from their usual state of functioning (Beehr & Newman, 1978). It is also defined as unpleasant emotions such as anxiety, frustration, tension and depression experienced by a teacher resulting from different aspects of work.

Indeed, various innovations and reforms have brought about significant changes in the teaching and learning process that affect not only students but also the roles and responsibilities of teachers. In the 21st century, teachers are not only considered as the experts who know everything, instead they are seen as lifelong learners, who are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They are also expected to help their students develop critical thinking, self-awareness, and responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, teachers are expected to foster creativity and innovation in their students, as these are essential skills for the 21st-century workforce. The necessity to adapt to the latest technologies, teaching methods and addressing the diverse needs of students requires professional development on the part of teachers. Teachers have to teach, mentor students, engage in administrative work and provide high-quality instructions. Trying to balance all of these things can be stressful. Additionally, the expectation to keep up with rapid changes in education can create a sense of inadequacy among teachers. Stress is a part of life, and we all know that a certain amount of stress is acceptable and even encouraged in most professions for productive and efficient work. However, it can become harmful when it reaches a certain level. Many Researchers have found that teachers in many cultures experience high-stress levels. (Cooper & Kelly, 1993; Reglin & Reitzammer, 1997; Chan, 1998; Mokdad, 2005). Teachers bear the responsibility to achieve the educational objectives of the country. However, the perceived high level of occupational stress creates a gap between what is desired and

the actual achievement. According to a study by Crossman and Harris (2006), teachers perform their jobs less effectively when they are under more stress. Ahmad (2017) conducted a comprehensive review of occupational stress among teachers and found that it is a significant problem in the present day. The review also investigated the causes of job-related stress, including high workloads, poor working conditions, age, job insecurity and insufficient salaries. A study by Klassen (2010) found that high levels of job stress can negatively affect teachers' and students' productivity, health and satisfaction in the job. The results of the research conducted by Naidoo et al. (2013) showed that factors such as a lack of discipline, the ineffective school system, large class sizes, diversity and specialization of students all play a role in causing stress among teachers. According to Mulholland (2013), the increased stress is due to increased workload, poor salaries, absence of opportunities for career development, lack of job satisfaction and absence of professional acknowledgment. A multivariate meta-analysis by Aloe et al. (2014) revealed that teachers experience stress at alarming rates due to increased student diversity, decreased parental participation, a higher workload and more duties. Comish and Swindle (1994) indicated that stress is a combination of mental and physical factors that significantly affect one's performance, effectiveness, personal health and the overall standard of their work. The study conducted in China by Yang (2009) reported that teachers' health is worse than the rest of the population. Female teachers have a poorer quality of life than male counterparts, and this decline continues with age. Teachers' physical and mental health decline due to occupational stress and strain. Teachers who experience significantly higher stress levels are more likely to have lower job satisfaction, increased total days missed from work, want to leave the profession and have a lower intention to pursue a teaching career in the future (McCarthy et al., 2010). A teacher's mood directly affects how well they teach and care for their students (Frank et al., 2013). A study by Aftab (2012) found that male teachers experience more occupational stress than female teachers and postgraduate teachers have lower stress levels than trained graduate teachers (TGTs)). Furthermore, teachers with less experience, especially those with 0-5 years of service, experience the least stress while those with 6-10 years of service experience higher stress levels. According to research conducted by Jeyaraj in 2013, revealed that teachers in aided schools have more stress than those in government schools. It was also found the stress levels were influenced by personal and social factors, teacher training, evaluation and the work environment. Teachers not satisfied with their profession exhibited higher stress levels, absenteeism and reluctance to continue teaching. Ganapa and Sreedevi (2015) conducted a comparative analysis of work-related stress

among government and private school teachers and revealed that private school teachers reported higher stress level than government school teachers. According to a study by Sunanda (2017) observed that government schools were overburdened by the work and tasks given to them by government officials and hence were prone to a high level of stress as compared to teachers employed by private higher secondary schools. Doss et al. (2018) found a significant difference in stress and burnout levels in teachers of government and private schools in India. The study by Kaur et al. in 2019 found that both public and private school personnel experienced higher stress levels. The study also identified several factors that contributed to increased teacher stress levels. These factors included socio-economic status (SES), promotional opportunities and teaching experience. Bhuvanewari et al. (2020) reported that private school teachers in Chennai exhibited significantly higher levels of occupational stress than their counterparts in government schools. It is evident from the review that increased stress level among school teacher is a serious issue that has an impact on the academic achievement of the students as well as the quality of education.

Significance of the Study

The nation's destiny is being shaped in the classroom and teachers are responsible for educating and nurturing the next generation of leaders and citizens. Unfortunately, the current stressful situation experienced by teachers has negatively impacted their health and well-being. Research findings have shown that perceived stress levels among teachers negatively influence their effectiveness as teachers, which is directly linked to the quality of school education. There have been instances of teachers leaving their jobs, leading to many problems. Reducing occupational stress is essential for enhancing teacher efficiency and effectiveness. It can lead to decreased absenteeism, increased school enrolment, reduced drop-out rates and improved teacher morale, ultimately leading to better educational standards and an improved future. In addition to many other factors, stress is closely related to working environmental conditions. One of the advantages of minimizing occupational stress is that it contributes to creating a more pleasant work environment for everyone involved. Broadly, there are two types of schools in India: the government and the private. Further, rural and urban differences in the environment are also quite obvious. The study will also address stress in different schools and localities. Thus, the present study aims to examine and compare the levels of occupational stress among senior secondary school teachers teaching in government and private schools of Aligarh. Understanding various causes of stress among teachers can provide valuable

insights to develop targeted interventions and support systems, ensuring teachers' well-being and professional satisfaction and, in turn, improving the overall quality of education.

Objectives of the Study: These are as follows:

1. To assess the levels of occupational stress of senior secondary school teachers, government and private school teachers.
2. To compare the occupational stress of male and female senior secondary school teachers.
3. To compare the occupational stress of government and private senior secondary school teachers.
4. To compare the occupational stress of urban and rural senior secondary school teachers.

Hypotheses of the Study: In order to achieve the stipulated objectives, the following hypotheses were framed.

H₁: The majority of senior secondary school teachers have moderate levels of occupational stress (Total Sample).

H_{1.1}: The majority of government senior secondary school teachers have moderate levels of occupational stress.

H_{1.2}: The majority of private senior secondary school teachers have moderate levels of occupational stress.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the occupational stress of male and female senior secondary school teachers.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the occupational stress of government and private senior secondary school teachers.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between the occupational stress of urban and rural senior secondary school teachers.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research method was applied to meet the objectives of the study.

Sample

In the present study, the target population was senior secondary school teachers teaching in both government and private schools of Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, India. A total of 250 teachers were randomly selected as the sample of the study. Out of these government school

teachers were 103 and 147 were private school teachers.

Tool for the Study

A standardized teacher's occupational stress scale prepared by Sharma and Kaur (2013) was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items which were divided into nine dimensions. The test-retest approach was applied to calculate the reliability of the scale, which was found to be 0.801. The correlation coefficient indicates that the test is highly reliable. According to the author the scale had content validity as determined by the opinions of 25 experts.

Statistical Techniques Used

The analysis of the data was carried out through SPSS (Version 22). To determine the different occupational stress levels of the teachers, the percentage analysis was used. However, t-test was used to compare and determine the differences between the means of two groups.

Classification of students into different stress level groups:

Based on obtained score on occupational stress scale all the respondents were classified into three groups by using $M \pm 1SD$ method (Mean=98.66 and SD= 16.725). Applying the method following categories were made based on the obtained scores mentioned against each category.

1. Low Stress	82 and below
2. Moderate Stress	83-114
3. Severe Stress	115 and Above

Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

The obtained data was analyzed by appropriate statistical techniques. The results are presented in the following tables in accordance with the hypotheses framed.

H₁: *The majority of senior secondary school teachers have a moderate level of stress.*

To test this hypothesis, the percentage-wise distribution of the total sample of senior secondary school teachers belonging to different stress levels was calculated using $M \pm SD$, (Mean= 98.66 and SD= 16.725). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage-wise distribution of senior secondary school teachers belonging to different levels of occupational stress (Total Sample)

Level of Stress	N	Total Sample (N=250)
Low Stress	38	15.2%
Moderate Stress	170	68%
Severe Stress	42	26.8%
Total	250	100%

Table 2 indicates that out of the total sample of 250 senior secondary school teachers, 15.2% of teachers belonged to low level of stress, the 68% of teachers possessed moderate level of stress and the rest 26.8% demonstrated severe levels of stress. It is evident from the findings that the majority of senior secondary school teachers had a moderate level of occupational stress. Thus, the hypothesis H_1 is accepted. The study is consistent with Reddy and Anuradha (2013) who discovered that among the majority of higher secondary teachers, about 88%, were encountering considerable levels of occupational stress, falling within the categories of moderate to high stress levels. The study also revealed that 26% of teachers were under severe stress level indicating the need to take corrective measures to curb this alarming trend.

$H_{1.1}$: *The Majority of government senior secondary school teachers have a moderate level of stress.*

To test this hypothesis, the percentage distribution of government teachers belonging to different levels of stress was calculated and grouped into three categories. The obtained results are as follows.

Table 3

Percentage-wise distribution of government senior secondary school teachers belonging to different levels of occupational stress

Level of Stress	N	Government Teachers (N=122)
Low Stress	21	17.21%
Moderate Stress	83	68.03%
Severe Stress	18	14.75%
Total	122	100%

Table 3 indicates that out of the total sample of 122 government senior secondary school teachers, the 17.21% of teachers experienced low level of occupational stress, the 68.03% of teachers showed moderate level of stress, and the 14.75% of teachers were exposed to severe levels of stress. Therefore, it is evident from the finding that the majority of the government senior secondary school teachers had a moderate level of stress. Thus, hypothesis $H_{1.1}$ is accepted.

$H_{1.2}$: *The Majority of private senior secondary school teachers have a moderate level of stress.*

To test this hypothesis, the percentage distribution of private senior secondary school teachers belonging to different levels of stress was calculated and classified into three categories of stress levels. The result of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Percentage-wise distribution of private senior secondary school teachers belonging to different levels of occupational stress

Level of Stress	N	Private Teachers (N=128)
Low Stress	21	16.4%
Moderate Stress	88	68.75%
Severe Stress	19	14.84%
Total	128	100 %

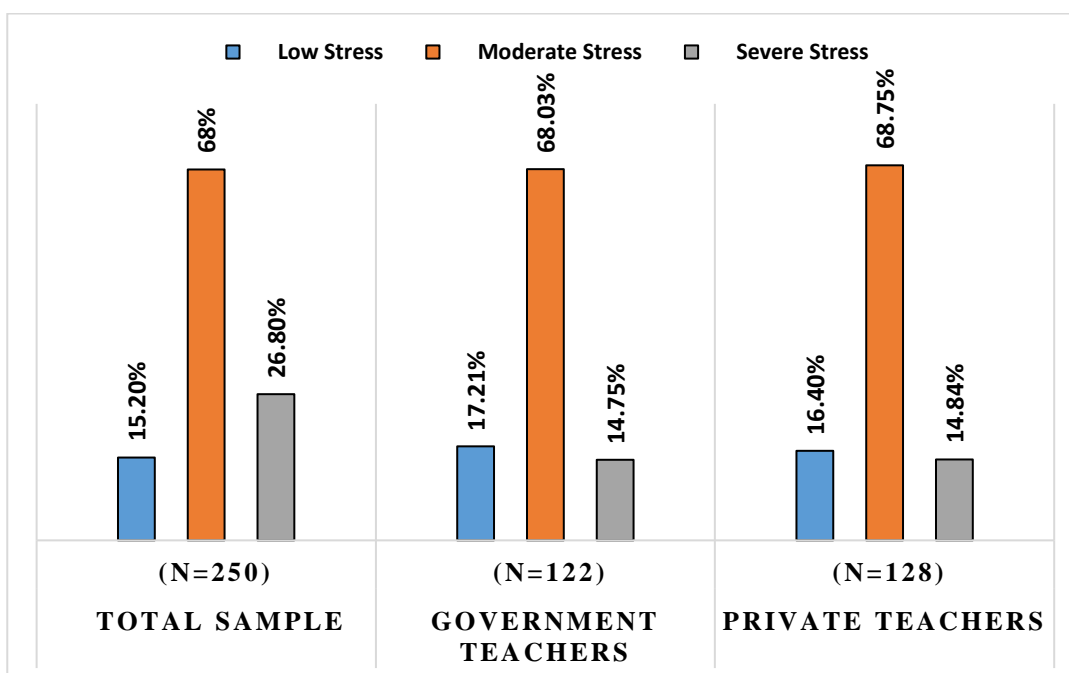
Table 4 indicates that out of the total sample of 128 private senior secondary school teachers, the 16.4% of teachers showed low level of stress, the 68.75% of teachers experienced moderate level of stress and the 14.84% of teachers were under severe level of occupational stress. Therefore, it is

clear that the majority of the private senior secondary school teachers had a moderate level of stress. Thus, hypothesis $H_{1.2}$ is accepted.

The graphical representation of different levels of occupational stress (total sample, government teachers and private teachers) is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1

Percentage-wise distribution of different levels of stress (total sample, government teachers and private teachers)



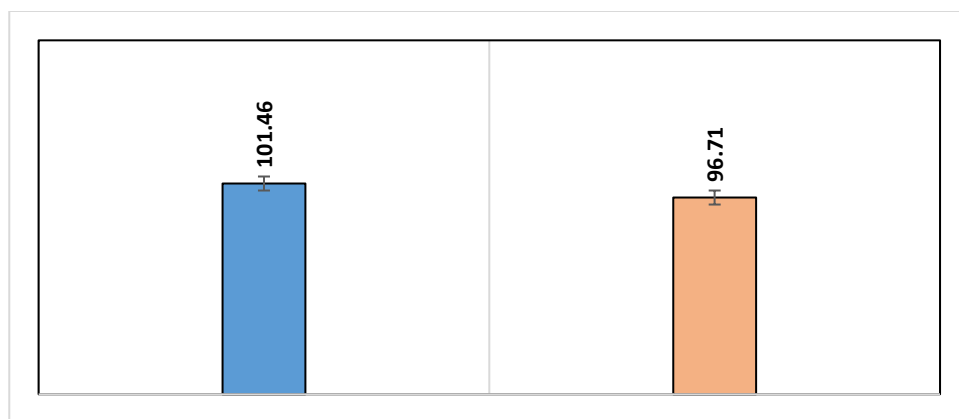
H_{02} : *There is no significant difference between the occupational stress of male and female senior secondary school teachers.*

To verify this hypothesis, the mean scores of occupational stress scores of male and female senior secondary school teachers were compared by applying the students't-test. The results of this analysis are given in Table 5 and a graphical comparison of mean values of male and female teachers is presented in figure 2.

Table 5:*Difference in occupational stress between male and female teachers*

Groups	Number of Teachers	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	P-value	Level of sig
Male	103	101.46	17.107	2.227	248	.027	0.05
Female	147	96.71	16.225				

Table 5 depicts that there is a significant difference in the occupational stress of the two groups, $t(248) = 2.227, p < 0.05$. Based on the mean value, it can be said that the male teachers ($M = 101.46$) were significantly higher in occupational stress than the female teachers ($M = 96.71$). Thus, H_{02} is rejected. The similar findings were also reported by the studies conducted by Aftab (2012) and McCormick (2000), indicating that male teachers experienced significantly higher levels of occupational stress as compared to female teachers. However, contradictory results were obtained by Ghosh (2020), where females felt more occupational stress than their male counterparts. The increased level of occupational stress experienced by male teachers could be that they are primary earners and providers for their families. They often face the additional pressure of managing their teaching responsibilities while fulfilling non-academic tasks at school and home. This balancing act can be demanding and challenging, leading to difficulties in effectively managing multiple responsibilities, which contributes to higher stress levels among male teachers compared to their female counterparts.

Figure 2*Comparison of Occupational Stress between male and female teachers*

H₀₃: *There is no significant difference between the occupational stress of government and private senior secondary school teachers.*

To verify this hypothesis, the occupational stress scores of government and private senior secondary school teachers were compared by applying the students’ t-test. The results of this analysis are given in Table-6 and a graphical comparison of mean values of government and private school teachers is presented in figure 3.

Table 6

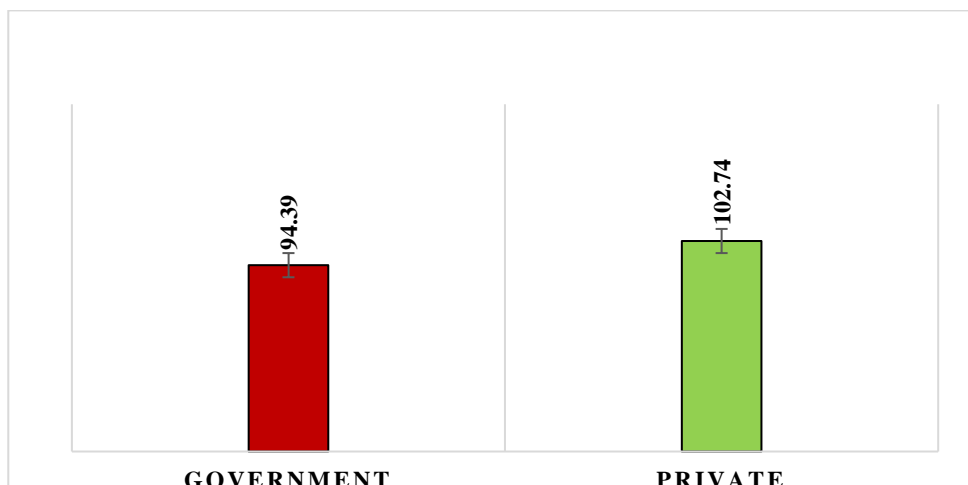
Difference in occupational stress between government and private school teachers

Groups	Number of Teachers	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	P-value	Level of sig
Government	122	94.39	14.232	4.071	248	.000	0.01
Private	128	102.74	17.920				

Table 6 depicts a significant difference in the occupational stress of the two groups, $t(248) = 4.071, p < 0.01$. The present result showed that the private school teachers ($M = 102.74$) were significantly higher in occupational stress than the government school teachers ($M = 94.39$). Thus, H₀₃ is rejected. The study aligns with Bhuvanewari et al. (2020), who revealed that private school teachers possessed higher occupational stress than government school teachers. The high levels of occupational stress experienced by private school teachers can be attributed to various factors, including low salaries, extra workload and job insecurity. Many teachers have to take on additional responsibilities and make extra efforts to ensure their students perform well on board exams. This additional workload and inadequate moral and psychological support from the school administration may lead to higher teacher stress levels, negatively impacting their job satisfaction and overall well-being.

Figure 3

Comparison of Occupational Stress between government and private school teachers



H₀₄: *There is no significant difference between the occupational stress of urban and rural senior secondary school teachers.*

To verify this hypothesis, the occupational stress scores of urban and rural senior secondary school teachers were compared using the students't-test. The results of this analysis are given in Table 7, and a graphical comparison of mean values of urban and rural school teachers is presented in figure 4.

Table 7

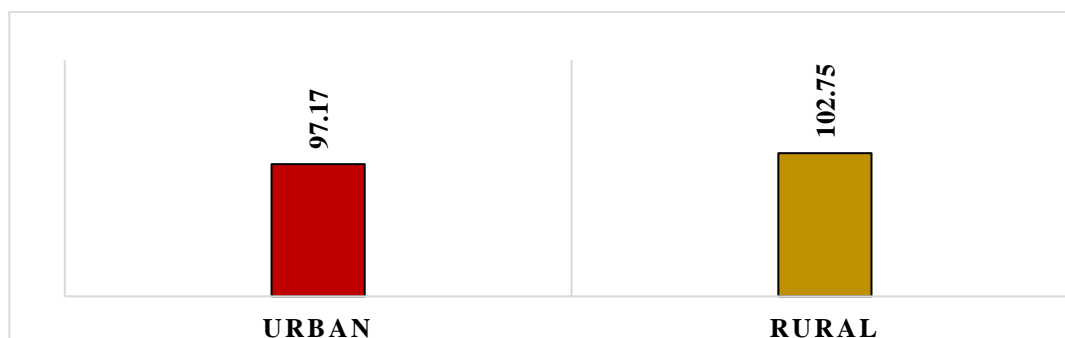
Difference in occupational stress between urban and rural school teachers

Groups	Number of Teachers	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	P-value	Level of sig
Urban	183	97.17	17.196	-2.356	248	.019	0.01
Rural	67	102.75	14.725				

Table 7 depicts a significant difference in the occupational stress of the two groups, $t(248) = -2.356$, $p < 0.01$. The present result shows that the rural senior secondary school teachers ($M = 102.75$) were significantly higher in occupational stress than the urban school teachers ($M = 97.17$). Thus, the above-stated hypothesis H_{04} is rejected. Present results are also corroborated by the finding of Pabla (2012), who discovered a significant difference between the occupational stress levels of professors working in colleges of urban and rural areas. The possible explanation could be that teachers in rural schools generally work under inadequate infrastructure, limited resources and fewer professional development opportunities. It may be the cause of under pressure to accomplish quality work.

Figure 4

Comparison of occupational stress between urban and rural school teachers.



CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study reveals that about fifteen percent of senior secondary school teachers experienced high levels of occupational stress, which may have a negative impact on their performance and teaching quality.

Teachers who demonstrated average levels of occupational stress are also quite large, being 68 percent. They are also in the risk zone and may lead to higher stress levels if adequate measures are not taken.

The research also highlights disparities in stress levels related to gender, types of school and locale among senior secondary school teachers. Male secondary school teachers were found to be more stressed than female teachers. Teachers were found working in more stressful conditions in private schools as compared to government schools. This study highlighted the need to address specific stress-inducing factors among teachers. Understanding the factors contributing to stress are crucial for implementing effective strategies to support and improve school teachers' well-being. The research findings carry significant implications for various stakeholders.

1. The first step would be to make the teachers aware of the signs and symptoms of stress so that they can take proactive measures to address it, ultimately leading to improved functional skills and effective classroom teaching.
2. Organizing group discussions with teachers to identify stressors, develop targeted strategies and implement them to support their teaching staff effectively. This approach will build a healthier and more productive work environment for teachers and students.

3. Examining the genuine workload of teachers, which encompasses teaching hours, administrative responsibilities, engagement, extracurricular activities and grading expectations, is crucial. By carefully assessing and finding a balance in these demands, schools can effectively implement this proactive approach to workload management to alleviate stress levels of teachers.
4. Promoting teachers' well-being by providing flexible working hours, allowing teachers to take time off when needed and promoting a conducive institutional environment are vital steps in ensuring teachers' mental health, better adjustment and overall effectiveness in delivering quality education to students.
5. Professional Development programmes on stress management strategies, time management and coping strategies to help teachers handle the challenges they face in their profession should be organised. Foster regularly a supportive and appreciated work culture where teachers feel valued and appreciated for their contributions, making them more motivated, engaged and interested in their work.
6. Recognizing and addressing gender-specific stressors, the schools can ensure that males and females receive the necessary support to effectively cope with their unique challenges.
7. Implementing support programs such as guidance and counselling services to assist teachers in managing stress and seeking help when needed.
8. Establishing a grievance redressal committee focused on addressing teacher difficulties and grievances can be instrumental in supporting teachers. There is a need to enhance the morale of rural school teachers by providing the necessary facilities and support as per their needs and requirements.

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