

Original Research Article

Effect of stress among school teachers

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ABSTRACT

Background: Teachers are increasingly experiencing occupational stress, which may affect their psychological functioning and general health. In recent years, this concern has grown particularly among private school teachers, who face continuous academic, emotional, and administrative pressures. Understanding the nature and extent of stress in this population is crucial for identifying associated mental health patterns and guiding relevant psychological assessment. Aim was to evaluate the level of stress among private school teachers and examine its correlation with general health, personality traits, depression, anxiety, and psychological well-being. It was a cross-sectional study conducted in private schools in Ghaziabad, India.

Methods: The study included 375 full-time school teachers selected through purposive sampling. Standardized psychological tools used were the general health questionnaire (GHQ-12), Eysenck personality questionnaire (EPQ), depression anxiety stress scale (DASS-42), and Ryff psychological wellbeing scale. Data analysis was performed using SPSS-23. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess associations between general health, personality traits, psychological well-being, and psychopathologies.

Results: Over 75% of teachers exhibited extremely severe levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. Approximately 67.6% showed moderate to severe general health concerns. High psychoticism (60.8%) and neuroticism (39.7%) scores were observed, with neuroticism significantly correlated with depression ($r=0.160$), anxiety ($r=0.142$), and stress ($r=0.193$), all at $p<0.01$. Only 32.8% of participants demonstrated high levels of psychological well-being.

Conclusions: The study reveals a substantial presence of psychological distress among private school teachers and significant associations with specific personality dimensions. These findings underline the importance of continued psychological evaluation and consideration of personality patterns when addressing teacher well-being.

Keywords: Teacher stress, Private school teachers, Personality traits, Depression, Anxiety, Psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play an important role in shaping the future of students, but they often face several challenges in their professional lives. Their daily routine includes preparing lessons, managing classrooms, handling student behaviour, interacting with parents, and fulfilling administrative responsibilities. Over time, these duties can become overwhelming, especially when teachers do not receive adequate support from their institutions. These

pressures can affect their physical and mental health, leading to increased levels of stress.

Stress in the teaching profession is not new, but it has been gaining more attention in recent years. Many teachers report emotional fatigue, lack of motivation, and difficulty maintaining work-life balance. Unchecked stress can cause symptoms like tiredness, anxiety, sleep problems, headaches, and poor concentration. If stress continues over a long time, it can result in serious mental health problems

such as depression and anxiety disorders.^{1,2} In many cases, teachers are expected to manage their stress without proper support systems in place.

Research has shown that teaching is one of the most stressful occupations globally. Studies have found that high job demands, low autonomy, and lack of recognition are key stressors for teachers.^{3,4} In India, this situation can be more severe due to overcrowded classrooms, rigid administrative policies, and a lack of resources. Teachers in private schools may also face job insecurity, performance pressure, and limited access to mental health services. These factors create an environment where stress can become chronic and damaging.

Personality traits influence how individuals respond to stress. Teachers with high levels of neuroticism tend to worry more and may have difficulty handling pressure. Such individuals are more prone to emotional disturbances like anxiety and depression.^{5,6} Psychoticism, another personality trait, may be linked to rigid thinking or difficulty in adapting to challenges. These traits, if present in teachers, may make it harder for them to cope with stressful environments.

Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are often found alongside high stress levels. Teachers who face constant pressure may experience mood swings, loss of interest in work, and reduced job satisfaction. These symptoms not only affect the teachers themselves but can also impact the learning environment for students. In a study by Reddy and Anuradha it was found that high school teachers experienced significant stress and that this was linked to poor mental health outcomes.⁷ Similarly, Verma and Gupta reported that teachers who faced high stress levels were more likely to show symptoms of depression and anxiety.⁸

Psychological well-being refers to a person's ability to maintain a positive outlook on life, engage in meaningful activities, and build healthy relationships. Teachers with low well-being may feel disconnected, lack confidence, or find it difficult to handle daily responsibilities. Studies have shown that psychological well-being can be reduced when stress and personality challenges are not addressed. Psychological well-being is generally described in terms of purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy, and self-acceptance. When teachers experience high stress, these areas may be negatively affected.

In Indian school settings, particularly in private institutions, there is often limited attention paid to the mental health of teachers. A study by Yadav et al highlighted the connection between occupational stress and poor psychological well-being among school teachers.¹⁰ Kaur et al observed that increased workload and lack of role clarity contributed significantly to teacher burnout.¹¹ Another study by Kumar and Sehrawat showed that ongoing psychological stress in teachers reduced their professional effectiveness and emotional stability.¹²

The issue of teacher stress is not only a personal problem but also a professional one. Teachers under stress may struggle to manage classrooms, engage with students, or complete their teaching duties effectively. When teachers are not mentally healthy, it can affect the overall quality of education provided in schools. Therefore, understanding the causes and impact of stress on teachers is crucial for creating a supportive teaching environment.

This study aims to explore the link between stress, personality traits, mental health symptoms, and overall well-being among school teachers. By using validated tools, the research seeks to understand how stress is related to depression, anxiety, and personality traits like neuroticism and psychoticism. Goal is to provide data that can help in designing better support programs for teachers.

METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted over a period of three months among school teachers working in private schools located in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India. The data was collected using a self-administered survey format, and the responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Ethical clearance for study was obtained from institutional ethics committee prior to data collection.

Exact study period was from January 2025 to June 2025 and place of study was at Santosh hospital.

Study procedure and selection criteria

A total of 375 full-time school teachers participated in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and written informed consent was obtained before inclusion in the study. Teachers aged 21 years and above, currently working as full-time faculty members, were included. Those with a known history of psychiatric illness or who were undergoing psychiatric treatment at the time of data collection were excluded.

Questionnaires

GHQ-12

A 12-item screening tool for general mental health developed by David Goldberg the GHQ-12 assesses depression, anxiety, and social dysfunction. It uses either binary scoring (0-0-1-1) or Likert-type scoring (0-1-2-3), with higher scores indicating greater distress. It is validated across cultures and typically takes around 5 minutes to complete.¹³

EPQ

The EPQ, developed by H. J. Eysenck and S.B.G. Eysenck is a self-report personality measure designed to assess three key personality traits: psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism, along with a lie scale. It consists of 90

items answered in a yes/no format. The questionnaire is widely used in psychological research and has shown good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha generally exceeding 0.70.¹⁴

DASS-42

The DASS-42, created by Lovibond and Lovibond is a self-report scale that measures negative emotional states. It consists of 42 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 0 ("did not apply to me at all") to 3 ("applied to me very much or most of the time"). It has high internal consistency with reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.97 for depression, 0.92 for anxiety, and 0.95 for stress.¹⁵

Psychological well-being scale (adapted version)

Developed by Carol Ryff this scale measures six core dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

The 42-item version was used in this study, with responses recorded on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." It demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha values for subscales typically exceeding 0.80.¹⁶

RESULTS

The study sample consisted of 375 school teachers. Among them, 51.2% were female and 48.8% male. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to above 50 years, with the majority (28%) falling in the 41-50 years age group. Most participants were postgraduates (83.7%) and a large proportion (61.9%) had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Marital status varied, with widowers (21.6%) and divorced individuals (17.9%) being the largest groups. Teachers came from diverse family structures, including joint (37.1%), nuclear (35.5%), and extended families (27.5%) (Table 1).

Interpretation of test measures

The assessment of general health using the GHQ-12 revealed that 37.1% of teachers experienced mild health issues, 30.4% had moderate issues, and 32.5% faced severe concerns, indicating that nearly all participants had some level of psychological distress. On the EPQ, 61% of teachers scored high on psychoticism, suggesting traits such as aggressiveness or interpersonal difficulties. Around 33.3% scored high on extraversion, while 39.7% scored high on neuroticism, indicating vulnerability to stress and emotional instability. The lie scale showed that 57% scored high, suggesting a tendency toward socially desirable responding or denial of problems. In terms of psychopathology, the DASS-42 results showed alarmingly high rates of severe symptoms: 78% of participants had extremely severe depression, 88% had extremely severe anxiety, and 56.8% had extremely severe stress, with average scores well above the normal range. Finally, assessment of psychological well-being showed that 34% of teachers had low levels of well-being, while only one-third reported high well-being. These results highlight a concerning mental health profile in this population and underscore the need for targeted psychological support and intervention programs (Table 2).

Interpretation of correlation table

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between neuroticism and the psychological variables of depression ($r=0.160$, $p<0.01$), anxiety ($r=0.142$, $p<0.01$), and stress ($r=0.193$, $p<0.01$), indicating that teachers with higher neuroticism traits tend to report elevated symptoms of emotional distress. Similarly, psychoticism was positively correlated with depression ($r=0.171$, $p<0.01$) and also showed a significant link with anxiety ($p<0.10$), though not statistically significant. Other correlations, including those involving extraversion and psychological well-being (Ryff), were found to be weak and non-significant. These findings highlight that specific personality traits, particularly neuroticism and psychoticism, are meaningfully related to negative emotional states in the teaching population (Table 3).

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants (n=375).

Demographic profile		N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	192	51.2
	Male	183	48.8
Age (in years)	21-30	85	22.7
	31-40	92	24.5
	41-50	105	28.0
	>50	93	24.8
Marital status	Divorced	67	17.9
	Married	60	16.0
	Separated	60	16.0
	Unmarried	40	10.7
	Widow	67	17.9
	Widower	81	21.6

Continued.

Demographic profile		N	Percentage (%)
Educational qualification	PG	314	83.7
	UG	61	16.3
Teaching experience (in years)	No experience	18	4.8
	1-5	59	15.7
	5-10	66	17.6
	10-20	118	31.5
	≥20	114	30.4
Family type	Extended	103	27.5
	Joint	139	37.1
	Nuclear	133	35.5

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of test measures scores.

Test measures							
GHQ	Mild	37.10%	Mean			SD	
			18.01			±10.7	
	Moderate	30.40%					
	Severe	32.50%					
EPQ							
Category	Low	Moderate	High	Mean		SD	
Psychoticism	6.70%	33%	61%	5.84		±2.64	
Extraversion	39%	28%	33.30%	5.13		±2.45	
Neuroticism	38%	22.40%	39.70%	7.05		±1.56	
Lie scale	22%	21%	57%	6.98		±2.49	
DASS -42							
Category	Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extremely severe	Mean	SD
Depression	6%	3%	7%	8%	78%	32.17	±10.3
Anxiety	4.30%	1.60%	3%	4%	88%	32.28	±9.94
Stress	10.70%	2.70%	6%	24%	56.80%	31.53	±10.53
Ryff psychological wellbeing							
Category	Low wellbeing	Average	High	Mean		SD	
	34%	33%	33%	62.63		±36.63	

Table 3: Correlation between tests.

Correlation	R value	P value	Interpretation
GHQ vs extraversion	0.023	0.664	Not significant (p>0.05)
GHQ vs neuroticism	-0.063	0.223	Not significant (p>0.05)
GHQ vs psychoticism	-0.054	0.3	Not significant (p>0.05)
Depression vs extraversion	0.008	0.872	Not significant (p>0.05)
Depression vs neuroticism	0.160	0.002	Significant at 0.01 level (p<0.01)
Depression vs psychoticism	0.171	0.001	Significant at 0.01 level (p<0.01)
Anxiety vs extraversion	0.014	0.784	Not significant (p>0.05)
Anxiety vs neuroticism	0.142	0.006	Significant at 0.01 level (p<0.01)
Anxiety vs psychoticism	0.085	0.102	Not significant (p>0.05)
Stress vs extraversion	-0.074	0.152	Not significant (p>0.05)
Stress vs neuroticism	0.193	0	Significant at 0.01 level (p<0.01)
Stress vs psychoticism	0.1	0.054	Not significant (p>0.05)
Ryff vs extraversion	0.016	0.756	Not significant (p>0.05)
Ryff vs neuroticism	-0.077	0.136	Not significant (p>0.05)
Ryff vs psychoticism	-0.01	0.84	Not significant (p>0.05)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight serious psychological concerns among private school teachers. A majority of the

participants reported extremely severe levels of depression (78%), anxiety (88%), and stress (57%). Among personality traits, neuroticism showed significant positive correlations with all three psychological variables,

indicating its strong association with distress. While extraversion and psychoticism had weaker links, psychoticism was notably correlated with depression. Psychological well-being results revealed that only one-third of teachers experienced high well-being, while the rest had average or low levels. These mental health concerns were observed across various demographic groups, including gender, marital status, and teaching experience, with seasoned teachers and those in nuclear or joint families showing higher stress. Overall, the data emphasize how prolonged job-related stress, along with certain personality traits, can negatively impact teachers' well-being-highlighting the urgent need for psychological support and interventions within school systems.

Maheswari and Vasanthi identified a strong association between personality traits and stress levels, supporting our finding that neuroticism significantly correlates with depression, anxiety, and stress among teachers.¹⁷

Iqbal and Singh compared stress levels between public and private school teachers using DASS-42. The results revealed significantly higher stress among private school teachers due to workload, administrative pressure, and limited institutional support. This aligns with the study, which focuses on private CBSE teachers facing similar challenges.¹⁸

Joseph and Narayan studied the relationship between psychological wellbeing and job burnout in school teachers using Ryff's scale. The study reported that low levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, and purpose in life were strongly associated with high emotional exhaustion. Their findings validate the current research outcome that lower psychological wellbeing among teachers is linked to increased mental stress and emotional fatigue.¹⁹

Solomon, Robinson and Catherine aimed to examine the level of stress among the school teachers in Vellore. The results indicated that most teachers experienced average levels of stress. Further, the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the level of education, years of teaching experience and the level of stress experienced by the teachers was reported.²⁰

Limitations

This study is based on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal bias or the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner. As a cross-sectional study, it captures data at one point in time and therefore cannot establish cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Additionally, external factors such as personal life stressors or health issues were not controlled for, which may have influenced the results. Finally, the findings are specific to private CBSE school teachers and may not be generalizable to teachers in government or non-CBSE institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals significant psychological distress among private school teachers, with a majority experiencing extremely severe levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. The results highlight that such distress is not only common but also strongly associated with specific personality traits-particularly neuroticism-which significantly correlates with emotional difficulties. While some individuals demonstrated resilience, many showed signs of poor psychological well-being, indicating vulnerability to long-term mental health challenges. The demographic profile further suggests that stress affects teachers regardless of age, gender, or experience, though those with more years of service and certain family structures may face greater risks. These findings emphasize the urgent need for regular mental health screening, school-based psychological support, and stress management programs tailored to the needs of educators. Promoting emotional well-being and addressing personality-linked vulnerabilities may enhance teachers' overall functioning and, in turn, benefit the learning environment.

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