

## Association between Socioeconomic Status and Occupational Stress among Female School Teachers in District Bhimbar, Azad Kashmir

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>ARTICLE HISTORY</b> Received: February 22, 2023 Accepted: March 24, 2023 Published: March 31, 2023	Occupational stress is a major problem among female school teachers that can affect their working capacity and students learning. This research investigated the association between socioeconomic status and occupational stress among female school teachers. This research was quantitative in nature and conducted in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). Data were collected from 150 school teachers using a convenient sampling technique. The data were analyzed by using SPSS version 24. The findings revealed that more than half (60.7%) of the female school teachers had high levels of occupational stress. The results of stepwise regression showed that the respondents' socioeconomic factors, such as job experience, qualification, personal income, age, and marital status had a positive relationship with occupational stress among the female teachers ( $R^2=.20$ , $p<0.001$ , $F=7.33$ ). The government should make and implement essential policies to address this issue. Psychologists can also be hired for the counseling sessions of the teachers.
<b>KEYWORDS</b> <i>Socioeconomic Status;</i> <i>Occupational Stress;</i> <i>Stepwise regression</i>	
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### INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is a disorder that develops from how people engage with their employment and is characterized by internal changes that make people feel negatively about their usual performance (Sing & Katoch, 2017). All professions are known to be impacted by occupational stress. Different industries and business divisions within an industry are regarded as having different types and levels of occupational stress. Among the various effects of occupational stress, research on its impact on both mental and physical well-being is vast (Damle, 2012).

Teachers in the education sector face intensive job pressure. Female instructors in private school settings face the most stress compared to the public sector. In private educational institutions, job stress is linked with job insecurity and high workload (Malik, 2011). Occupational stress is considered as a global issue. A psychological society in Australia revealed that one out of every four working females reported severe to extreme stress levels (Maurice, 2014). Out of a workforce of 23,530,000 people in France, 400,000 were afflicted by work-related stress in the year 2000. The stress in question gave rise to physiological issues and led to the demise of approximately 3,600 individuals as a consequence of the resultant illness. The experience of stress can lead to the manifestation of psychological and behavioral concerns in individuals. According to Béjean and Taieb (2005), a significant number of individuals began consuming alcohol and exhibiting a greater inclination towards risk-taking conduct. According to a report by World Health and TVI in 2017, it has been found that one out of every three employed women in Pakistan experiences stress, depression, and associated ailments. According to Sarfraz (2017) research, a significant portion of the Pakistani population, specifically 44%, experiences depression and stress. Furthermore, the female population is disproportionately affected, with 57.5% experiencing these mental health conditions.

In Pakistan, the number of available school systems, the current educational quality, and access to education are inadequate. Pakistan seems quite behind compared with other nations with similar economic development regarding its access to and quality of education (Barber, 2010). The reason is that teachers' especially female teachers working in the educational sector, feel occupational stress and lack of job satisfaction due to the insecurity regarding safety, job, and exertion from society and home (Ali et al., 2013; Jan et al., 2013). The presence of inadequate job satisfaction and work-related stress among school teachers has positively impacted their overall well-being and functioning within the educational institution (Saravanan & Lakshmi, 2017).

The state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) is widely regarded as an underdeveloped region characterized by low-income levels. The public education sector is a significant area of focus within this context. Despite allocating a significant proportion of 28% of the budget towards education, the territory is facing challenges in providing a

suitable physical infrastructure to ensure the delivery of quality education. In the context of the primary education sector in AJK, it is noted that the state department of education comprises 4202 government primary schools, which are staffed by a total of 9589 primary teachers. According to Shabbir et al., (2014) findings, a significant proportion of schools lack basic infrastructure. Specifically, 41% of schools do not have physical buildings, 87% do not have access to electricity, 73% do not have a reliable source of drinking water, and 82% do not have boundary walls.

The standard of education in public schools within the administrative region of Azad Kashmir has been scrutinized and censured by relevant stakeholders on multiple occasions (Shabbir et al., 2014). In contrast, the AJ&K teacher's organization expressed dissent towards government policies pertaining to the remuneration, benefits, and working conditions of primary school teachers in the administrative region of Kashmir. The organization posited that these policies fail to adequately address the anticipated stressors that teachers may encounter, particularly those who work in suboptimal conditions with limited infrastructure. As such, the organization called for further investigation into the stress levels experienced by teachers in such contexts. According to Rajendran and Veerasekaran (2013), teacher job satisfaction is a crucial factor in achieving improved performance from educators.

Ongoing debate concludes that occupational stress is a serious problem in Azad Kashmir. This research investigates the nexus between socioeconomic factors and occupational stress among school teachers in Azad Kashmir. In prior literature, limited pieces of evidence are available that cover this relationship. However, the findings of this research help wrap up this contextual gap in the literature.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A study has determined that female educators in government, semi-government, and private educational institutions experience comparable stress levels. In order to assist educators in coping with stress, it is recommended that governing bodies and policymakers promote a culture of support and collaboration. Additionally, they should offer training in stress and time management and specialized training to address disruptive behavior. Providing leisure facilities for faculty and encouraging participation in decision-making are also suggested measures (Bhriq et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that teachers encounter stress in various situations, such as classroom management, lesson planning, discipline overseeing extracurricular activities, managing classroom resources and demands (McCarthy et al., 2009), and dealing with challenging students and parental expectations (Geving, 2007). According to Chan et al. (2010), the most commonly cited causes of work-related stress among educators were a demanding workload, time constraints, educational policy changes, external evaluations of schools, personal pursuit of additional education, and student behavior and learning management. Additional reasons for teacher stress include insufficient support from school administrators (Lambert et al., 2006) and the overwhelming workload faced by novice instructors that have not yet developed effective abilities to manage various tasks (Brown, 2005).

Occupational stress among working women is a reality of social life. Previous literature depicts that many factors contribute to stress among women working in the education sector. For example, Nikhat's (2018) research found that secondary school teachers experience moderate stress. This study further depicted that teachers with extensive experience exhibited higher stress levels due to satisfaction with the pay scale, workload, and poor working conditions. Pokhrel's (2017) research findings showed no statistically significant distinction between occupational stress levels based on differences in locality or gender. According to Rani and Singh's (2012) study, primary school teachers experience average occupational stress.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study's research design was quantitative in nature and based on primary sources of data. Data were gathered from 150 female instructors working in the education sector of district Bhimber Azad Jammu and Kashmir using the convenient sampling technique. Data were collected from a well-structured close-ended questionnaire.

In this research, socioeconomic was considered an independent variable and measured with age, gender, qualification, marital status job experience. Similarly, occupational stress was operationalized by using the job stress inventory. This scale consisted of 16 items. Data were entered into the SPSS for assessment after being collected. Mean and standard deviation was drawn for the descriptive analysis, and bivariate analysis, such as stepwise regression, was used to find the relationship between this research's independent and dependent variables.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Table 1 shows that most (25.3%) of the respondents are 31-35 years old. Most (46%) of the respondents had education up to the B/BSC. More than half (52%) of the respondents were married. About 34% of the respondents

had 1 to 2 years of job experience. About 35.3% of the respondents had 26000-30000 PKR monthly personal income.

Table 1: Socioeconomic profile of the respondents

Variables	F (%)	
Age in Years	20-25	32(21.3)
	26-30	37(24.7)
	31-35	38(25.3)
	36-40	25(16.7)
	41-above	18(12)
Qualification	FA/FSC	16(10.7)
	BA/BSC	69(46)
	MA/MSC	55(36)
	M.Phil. or above	10(6.7)
Marital Status	Married	80(52)
	Unmarried	70(48)
Job Experience in Years	01-02	51(34)
	03-04	23(15)
	05-06	21(14)
	07-08	20(13.3)
	09-above	35(23.3)
Personal Income	10000-15000	11(7.3)
	16000-20000	17(11.3)
	21000-25000	31(20.7)
	26000-30000	53(35.3)
	31000-above	38(25.3)

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of the job satisfaction scale items. The findings depicts that the item, "I withdraw from the constant demands on my time and energy" has highest means value (M = 2.07, SD = 1.336) followed by the item, "I feel sense of dissatisfaction, of something wrong or missing" (M = 1.97, SD= 1.300), followed by the item, "I ask myself, why I go to work early, the only answer is my paycheck" (M =1.93, SD = 1.455), followed by the item, "The quality of my work is less than it should be" (M = 1.90, SD = 1.389), followed by the item, "I feel tired even with adequate sleep" (M = 1.90, SD = 1.110), followed by the item, "Communications with my boss, co-workers or family seems strained" (M = 1.89 , SD = 1.471), followed by the item, "I feel physically, emotionally, callous about the problem and needs of others" (M = 1.88, SD = 1.300), followed by the item, "I am easily board" (M = 1.85, SD = 1.309), followed by the item, "I feel myself moody, irritable over small inconveniences" (M = 1.85, SD = 1.437), followed by the item, "I think I am not efficient as I should be" (M = 1.81, SD = 1.355), followed by the item, "I feel emotionally callous about the problems and needs of others " (M = 1.79, SD = 1.348), followed by the item, "I feel frustrated in carrying out my responsibilities at work" (M = 1.77, SD = 1.333), followed by the item, "I feel negative, futile, or depressed about my job " (M = 1.75, SD = 1.395), followed by the item, "My decision-making ability seems less than usual" (M = 1.73, SD = 1.320), followed by the item, "I am having difficulty concentrating" (M = 1.54, SD = 1.369). Table 2 further depicts that the item "I feel a little enthusiasm for doing my job", has the lowest mean value (M = 1.21, SD = 1.412).

Table 2: Occupational Stress among the Secondary School Teachers

Items	Mean	SD
I withdraw from the constant demands on my time and energy.	2.07	1.336
I feel a sense of dissatisfaction, of something wrong or missing.	1.97	1.300
I ask myself why I go to work early. The only answer is my paycheck.	1.93	1.455
The quality of my work is less than it should be.	1.90	1.389
I feel tired even with adequate sleep	1.90	1.110
Communication with my boss, co-workers, or family seems strained.	1.89	1.471
I feel physically, emotionally, and callous about the problem and needs of others.	1.88	1.300
I am easily bored.	1.85	1.309
I feel moody and irritable over small inconveniences.	1.85	1.437
I think I am not efficient as I should be.	1.81	1.355
I feel emotionally callous about the problems and needs of others.	1.79	1.348
I feel frustrated in carrying out my responsibilities at work.	1.77	1.333
I feel negative, futile, or depressed about my job.	1.75	1.395
My decision-making ability seems less than usual.	1.73	1.320
I am having difficulty concentrating.	1.54	1.369
I feel a little enthusiasm for doing my job.	1.21	1.412

### Stress Level of Female School Teachers

Table 3 depicts the prevalence of stress among the participants of this research. The findings depict that 60.7% of the respondents had high, whereas 32.7% had a low level of occupational stress. However, only 6.7% of the respondents had no occupational stress during the survey.

Table 3: Level of Stress among Female School Teachers

Level of Occupational Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Never	10	6.7
Low	49	32.7
High	91	60.7

**Hypothesis Testing**

A bi-variate analysis was performed to examine the influence of the socioeconomic status of employed women on the development of occupational stress. According to the results presented in Table 4, the variables such as job experience, qualification, personal income, age, and marital status of the participants were found to positively contribute to occupational stress among female teachers ( $R^2=.20$ ,  $F=7.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The variables monthly household, nature of the job, income, residential area, and total family members were found to have no statistically significant impact on occupational stress.

Table 4: Socioeconomic Status and Occupational Stress

Predictors	STANDARD COEFFICIENTS ( $\beta$ )				
	1	2	3	4	5
Qualification	-.267***	-.327***	-.177*	-.188*	-.170***
Job experience	-	.199**	.389***	.498***	.396*
Personal Income	-	-	-.350***	-.349***	-.360**
Marital Status	-	-	-	.199*	.250**
Age	-	-	-	-	.205*
F-Test	11.33**	8.79***	8.74***	7.98***	7.33***
R <sup>2</sup>	.071	.10	.15	.18	.20
$\Delta R^2$		.036	.045	.028	.022

\*\*\* $P<0.00$ , \* $p<0.05$ , \*\*  $P<0.01$

VARIABLES ENTERED: job experience, qualification, personal income, age and marital status of the participants, monthly household, nature of the job, income, residential area, and the number of household members.

VARIABLES EXCLUDED: monthly household, nature of the job, income, residential area, and total family members.

**DISCUSSION**

Occupational stress among teachers is a limelight issue in Pakistan (Iqbal & Akhtar, 2012). The literature has demonstrated that several factors exert an influence on teachers' decisions to continue or quit the profession. These factors include job stress, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and resilience (Chan et al., 2008; Day et al., 2009). A research objective was developed to check the nexus between socioeconomic status and occupational stress among female school teachers. Socioeconomic status was measured with nine variables: job experience, qualification, personal income, age and marital status of the participants, monthly household, nature of the job, income, residential area, and total family members. The findings of this study revealed that socioeconomic factors such as qualification, age, job experience, marital status, and personal income of the female teachers had a significant relationship with occupational stress. The findings of this study agree with the prior research, such as Qusar (2011) revealed that age, qualification, experience, and marital status affect teachers' Occupational Stress. Similarly, Okeke & Dlamini (2013) also showed a weak association between the level of work-related stress and demographic variables such as, qualifications, marital status, and gender. Age moderately correlated with the school teachers' work-related stress levels. These findings fulfill the contextual gap and provide a sufficient glimpse into socioeconomic factors that may create occupational stress among school teachers in Azad Kashmir. In this context, the government should make policies to reduce occupational stress among school teachers. However, to overcome this issue, school management should conduct consoling sessions with the help of psychologists.

**CONCLUSION**

This research was conducted to know about the level of occupational stress among the women working in the educational sector in AJK. The data were collected from 150 respondents using a convenient sampling technique. The Findings revealed that most teachers had high levels of occupational stress. The respondents' socioeconomic factors, such as job experience, qualification, personal income, age, and marital status, were positively associated with occupational stress among the female teachers. Similarly, monthly household, nature of the job, income, residential area, and total family members of the respondents found no association with occupational stress. To overcome this issue, the government should make essential policies. Psychologists can also be hired for the counseling sessions of the teachers.

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