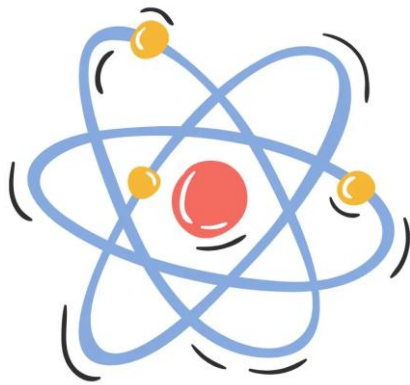




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ABSTRACT: *Teaching is a stressful profession that can expose individuals to various occupational stresses, psychological strains, and challenges to their coping resources. The aim of this study was to compare the differences in occupational stress, psychological strain, and personal resources between public and private school teachers. A comparative study design was used, and a total of 80 participants (40 public and 40 private school teachers) were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using the Occupational Stress Inventory developed by Osipow and Spokane (1987). The data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and independent samples *t*-tests. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between public and private school teachers in terms of occupational stress, $t(78) = -.976, p = .332$. However, there was a significant difference in the level of psychological strain reported by both teachers with private school teachers reporting higher levels of psychological strain than their public counterparts, $t(78) = -2.795, p = .007$, with a moderate effect size ($d = 0.63$). On the other hand, public school teachers reported higher levels of personal resources than private school teachers, $t(78) = 3.806, p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 0.85$). The results suggest that while both forms of teachers experience similar levels of occupational stress, personal resources significantly contribute to psychological strain in private school teachers. Therefore, there is a need to increase personal resources such as organizational support to help teachers cope effectively with stress.*

KEYWORDS: *occupational stress, psychological strain, personal resources, public school teachers, private school teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely recognised as one of the most demanding helping professions because teachers are expected to simultaneously fulfil instructional, administrative, emotional, and mentoring responsibilities. Rapid educational reforms, digital transformation, increasing accountability, inclusive education practices, and growing parental expectations have considerably intensified teachers' workload and professional responsibilities. Consequently,

occupational stress among teachers has emerged as a major concern affecting not only educators' well-being but also students' learning outcomes and the overall quality of education (Ghasemi, 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

Occupational stress is a phenomenon that emerges when job demands surpass personal resources and coping mechanisms leading to adverse psychological and physical outcomes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It should be noted that teachers are among the most stressed professionals due to increased workloads, ambiguity in professional roles, classroom disruptions, misbehaviour, insufficient administrative support, curricular changes, time constraints, and a growing need to document progress. According to recent systematic reviews, occupational stressors in teaching originate from individual, classroom, organizational, policy, and societal sources and contribute to teachers' distress (Karasek, 1979).

Psychological strain refers to emotional and psychological stress resulting from work-related stress, and it generally manifests through such symptoms as emotional exhaustion, anxiety, irritability, depression, fatigue, cognitive performance deterioration, and lack of pleasure. Although the terms occupational stress and psychological strain are often used interchangeably, the former tends to be an underlying phenomenon that precipitates the latter. Thus, psychological strain is the individual's response to ongoing occupational stress. There is a strong link between teachers' occupational stress and a heightened risk of burnout, mental health issues, absences, and poor performance. (Kyriacou, 2001a).

Personal resources refer to the psychological, social, and behavioral capacities that enable individuals to cope effectively with occupational demands and reduce the negative consequences of work-related stress. These resources include effective coping strategies, social support, self-care practices, and adaptive cognitive skills, all of which enhance resilience and facilitate successful adaptation to challenging work environments (Hobfoll, 1989; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In the teaching profession, personal resources have been shown to buffer the adverse effects of occupational stress, promote psychological well-being, and improve job performance and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Teaching is a profession that is highly demanding in terms of constant emotional regulation, decision-making, and interaction with children, parents, authorities, and colleagues. These factors contribute to the increased risk of emotional exhaustion among teachers. At the same time, the modern scientific opinion states that the impact of occupational stress on the physical body is also significant, as stress levels affect stress hormones, heart rhythm, and the immune system. Therefore, it can be concluded that teaching is associated with an elevated risk of psychical and physical stress (Ghasemi, 2025).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model “posits that high job demands in combination with low levels of job resources lead to job stress, burnout, and related individual consequences” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 739). On the other hand, Lazarus and Folkman’s Transactional Theory of Stress describes the mechanism of stress development as transactional, meaning that it depends on individuals’ appraisal of demands in relation to resources available to cope with these demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, in the case of teachers, such demands as increased workloads, reduced decision-making responsibilities, fewer resources, and higher accountability may lead to stress.

There are two major types of variables known to affect teachers’ occupational stress and subsequent levels of burnout and job satisfaction. Organizational variables encompass a broad range of areas, including workload, leadership, organizational culture, role conflict and ambiguity, limited resources, performance appraisal, administrative support, and work-family balance. On the other hand, individual variables include such areas as resiliency, coping mechanisms, emotional stability, self-confidence, personality type, and teaching experience. In particular, Zhou et al. (2024) found that leadership, autonomy, organizational culture, and perceived social support were significant predictors of teacher satisfaction.

The organizational environment of public and private schools is different; therefore, their professional working environments vary significantly. A teacher working in a public institution has a stable job with predictable working conditions, whereas those employed in private organizations experience performance pressure, increased parental participation in education, extended working hours, contract-based employment, and greater accountability. Such differences as job security, administrative burdens, parent participation, and workloads may account for variations in teachers’ mental health between the two employment settings (Ladd, 2011).

The professional working conditions in India include language barriers, student load, the new National Educational Policy, technology, assessments, and increased administrative procedures. Consequently, the working conditions of teachers in India are associated with increased occupational stress levels and poor mental health status (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2023; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023).

Occupational stress has negative effects on other variables apart from individual well-being. Chronic stress impacts teaching effectiveness, engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intentions, and student performance. Recent studies have shown that teacher well-being has a positive effect on learning outcomes, school culture, and

organizational effectiveness. Thus, there is a need to develop intervention strategies to improve teachers' well-being in the workplace(Collie et al., 2012).

Although there is a significant amount of research on teachers' stress, few studies explored the differences of occupational stress, psychological strains, and personal resources between public and private school teachers. Prior studies mainly focused on understanding the sources of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' well-being. However, little research has investigated the role of personal resources in teachers' occupational stress processes. Therefore, the current study aimed to compare teachers' occupational stress, psychological strain, and personal resources in public and private schools. The results of the study may contribute to policy makers and educational authorities by providing an insight into the phenomenon of teachers' occupational stress and supporting the development of appropriate actions for reducing teachers' stress and increasing personal resources in both school settings.

Methodology

Research Design

The present research used a quantitative, cross sectional, comparative research design to compare the differences in occupational stress and psychological strain of public and private school teachers. A between-groups comparative design was used with the independent variable being type of school (public and private) and with the dependent variables being occupational stress, psychological strain, and personal resource quotient.

Participants

The study covered 80 school teachers from Jaipur district, Rajasthan comprising 40 school teachers from public and 40 school teachers from private schools. Purposive sampling was done in selecting the participants because they were available and willing to participate in the study. The study included teachers who worked full-time in public or private schools and who were fluent in English and who gave informed consent.

Measures

The occupational stress, psychological strain, and personal resources of the participants were assessed using the Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI) developed by Osipow and Spokane in 1987. This inventory consists of three subscales: the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ), which was designed to assess six sources of occupational stress; the Personal Strain Questionnaire (PSQ), which was intended to measure various forms of vocational, psychological, interpersonal, and physical strain caused by occupational stress; and the

Personal Resources Questionnaire (PRQ), which was developed to evaluate personal resources, such as recreation and self-care, social support, and rational and cognitive coping mechanisms. Each item is scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Rarely or Never) to 5 (Most of the Time). Accordingly, high scores on the ORQ and PSQ items indicate that participants experience high levels of occupational stress and psychological strain, whereas high scores on PRQ items signify that participants cope well with occupational stress.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the principals of the selected schools before beginning the data collection process. Individual meetings were scheduled with the teachers who met the inclusion criteria for the study, during which the purpose of the research was explained to them. The teachers signed informed consent forms before proceeding to the next step of the study. The participants were required to fill out a demographics sheet and the Occupational Stress Inventory in their respective schools in the presence of the researcher. Instructions regarding filling the questionnaires were provided and participants reminded about the confidentiality of the data before they began. The teacher participants took around 25-30 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Teachers were reminded that their responses would remain anonymous, and they had the right to discontinue participating if at any point they felt uncomfortable.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics (Version XX). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of all the variables were generated. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference between the occupational stress and psychological strain of public and private school teachers. The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Occupational Stress, Psychological Strain, and Personal Resource Quotient Among Public and Private School Teachers

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
ORQ	Public	40	150.9	153.5	22.4	3.64
	Private	40	155	159.0	18.8	2.91
PSQ	Public	40	85.7	77.5	30.6	4.96
	Private	40	102	99.0	20.3	3.14
PRQ	Public	40	144.5	145.0	25.6	4.15
	Private	40	124	126.0	22.9	3.54

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the variables occupational stress (ORQ), psychological strain (PSQ), and personal resource quotient (PRQ). For the ORQ score of the public and private teachers, the mean score of the public school teachers was 150.90 (SD= 22.40), whereas the private school teachers had a higher mean score, that is, 155.0 (SD= 18.8). Thus, the public and private school teachers reported having approximately the same level of occupational stress.

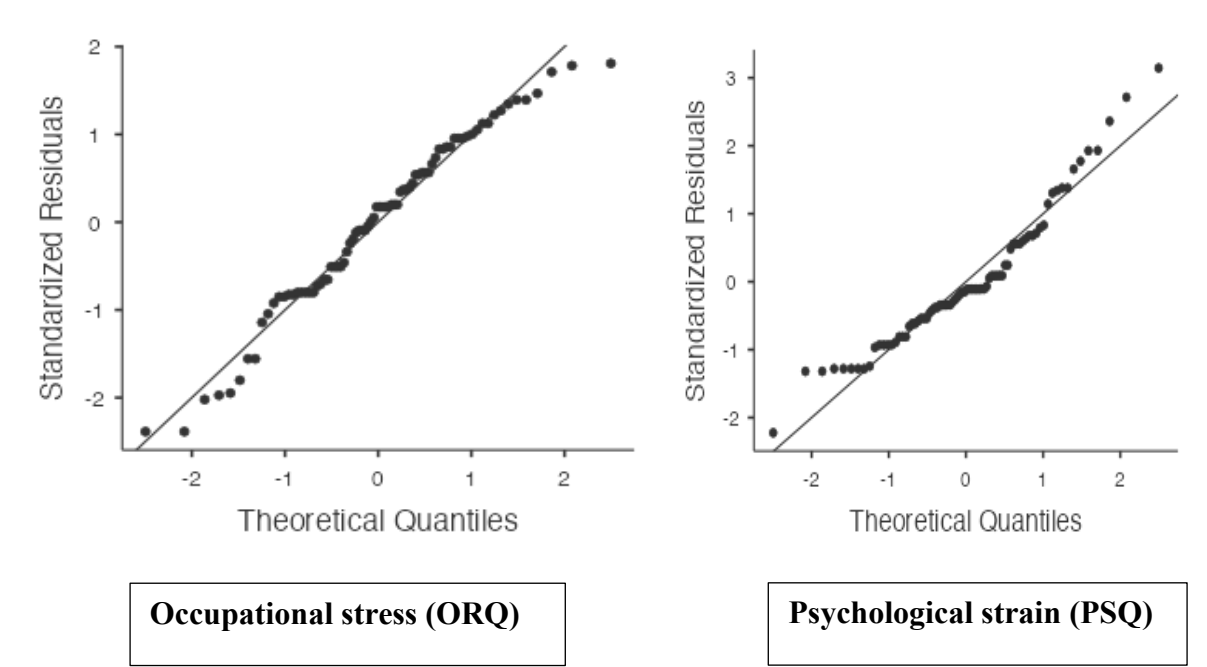
For PSQ, the mean score of the public school teachers was 85.70 (SD= 30.60), whereas the private school teachers had a much higher mean score, that is, 102.0 (SD= 20.3). Thus, from the PSQ mean scores, one would expect that the private school teachers have higher levels of psychological strain than their public school counterparts.

On the other hand, for the PRQ, the public school teachers had a higher mean score (M= 144.5, SD= 25.6) than the private school teachers (M= 124.0, SD= 22.9). Thus, the public school teachers have higher personal resources than the private school teachers. In summary, the descriptive statistics indicate that the public and private school teachers reported similar levels of occupational stress, but the private school teachers had higher psychological strains, whereas the public school teachers had higher personal resources. These differences were evident from

the descriptive statistics; hence, inferential statistics need to be conducted to determine whether the differences reported are statistically significant.

Table 2
Independent Samples *t*-Test Comparing Occupational Stress, Psychological Strain, and Personal Resource Quotient Between Public and Private School Teachers

Independent variable	Statistical test	t	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference	Cohen's d
Occupational stress (ORQ)	Student's t	-0.976	78.0	.332	-4.51	4.62	-0.219
Psychological strain (PSQ)	Student's t	-2.795	78.0	.007	-16.08	5.75	-0.626
Personal resource quotient (PRQ)	Student's t	3.806	78.0	<.001	<.001	5.42	0.852



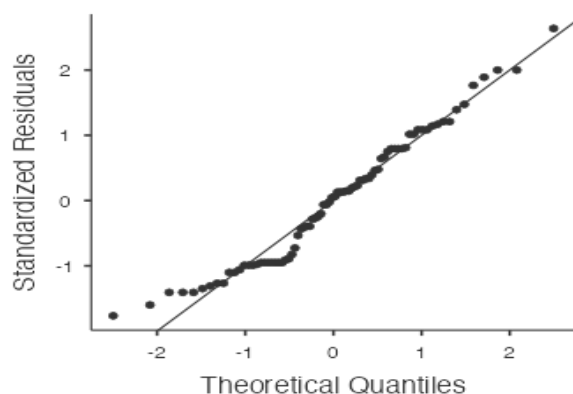
**Personal resource quotient PRQ**

Table 2 below presents the results of an independent samples t-test investigating the differences in occupational stress, psychological strain, and personal resource quotient between the two groups of teachers. The results of the test indicate that the difference in occupational stress levels between the two groups of teachers was not statistically significant, $t(78) = -0.976$, $p = .332$. The mean of the two independent samples was different by -4.51 ($SE = 4.62$), which is a small effect size (Cohen's $d = -0.219$). This suggests that the two groups of teachers experience similar levels of occupational stress.

A statistically significant difference was found in the levels of psychological strain experienced by the two groups of teachers, $t(78) = -2.795$, $p = .007$. The mean of the two independent samples was different by -16.08 ($SE = 5.75$). This is a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = -0.626$). This indicates that the two groups of teachers experience different levels of psychological strain with private school teachers experiencing higher levels of psychological strain than their public school counterparts. Lastly, a statistically significant difference was found in the personal resource quotient of the two groups of teachers, $t(78) = 3.806$, $p < .001$. The mean of the two independent samples was different by 20.63 ($SE = 5.42$). This is a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.852$). This indicates that the two groups of teachers differ significantly in personal resource quotient with public school teachers having higher personal resources than private school teachers.

In summary, the results of this study indicate that there is no significant difference in occupational stress levels between the two groups of teachers. However, there is a significant difference in the levels of psychological strain and personal resource quotient experienced by the two groups of teachers. The results indicate that private school teachers experience higher

levels of psychological strain while public school teachers have higher personal resources than private school teachers. The effect sizes of the differences found in the study indicate that the differences found in the study are both medium and large effect sizes.

DISCUSSION

The present study compared the occupational stress, psychological strain and personal resource quotient of public and private school teachers. The teaching profession has been recognized as one of the most challenging professions in human services because teachers must perform a variety of roles—educational, administrative, interpersonal, and emotional—in addition to being subject to constant changes in the education system and to growing accountability requirements (Kyriacou, 2001b; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Thus, identifying the distinct nature of occupational stressors and associated psychological responses by educational sector is crucial for ensuring teachers' wellbeing and the quality of education.

The first aim of the study was to make a comparison between the occupational stress of public and private school teachers. Results of the findings showed that there was no statistically significant difference in occupational stress levels between both the groups. The mean scores for the teachers in private schools were slightly higher, but the difference was not significant and the effect size was small. It has been found that teachers with different organizational structure and management in both sectors face similar level of occupational stress.

This may be because there is not enough of a difference, as teachers in both school types face a similar set of demands at work. The teachers of public and private schools are in charge of classroom management, lesson planning, execution of curriculum, evaluation of students, co-curriculum activities, communication with parents, and administrative tasks. The demands of these professional roles involve constant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of work, and may cause comparable levels of occupational stress in educational environments. The studies conducted in the past have always identified workload, time pressure, classroom discipline, too much paperwork, role ambiguity, and growing accountability as the major causes of teacher stress, irrespective of the school affiliation (Andrews et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

The current results are in line with the literature reporting that the nature of teaching has a greater impact on teachers' responses to occupational stress than the organizational sector.

According to Nwoko et al. (2023), job demands, lack of professional autonomy and emotional labour are significant sources of teacher stress in the context of various educational settings. Likewise, Creagh et al. (2025) proposed that workload, student behaviour and organisational expectations are key factors affecting occupational stress of teachers, and ownership of a school is not a major driver of occupational stress. The results in the present study that there is no significant difference in occupational stress found is in line with the evidence that there are occupational stressors that are common for all teachers in general.

However, the findings contrast with studies suggesting that private school teachers experience substantially greater occupational stress because of stricter performance monitoring, contractual employment, and greater pressure to satisfy parents and school management (Borg & Riding, 1991; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Differences across studies may be attributable to contextual variations in educational systems, institutional policies, geographical regions, school resources, and teacher characteristics. Such inconsistencies indicate that occupational stress is a multidimensional construct influenced by organizational, personal, and contextual factors rather than school type alone.

The second aim was to make a comparison between the public school and private school teachers with regard to their psychological strain. The results showed a significant difference between private and public school teachers with private school teachers having higher PS index results. Additionally, the medium effect size observed suggests that this difference is statistically significant and has an applied significance.

Psychological strain is a state of emotional and psychological dysfunction as a result of long-term exposure to the demands of the job, and it consists of fatigue, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, irritability, decreased concentration, and psychological distress (Osipow & Spokane, 1987). While the overall level of occupational stress was similar between the two groups, the higher level of occupational stress found among private school teachers indicate that similar demands may occur differently depending on the resources available for coping, organizational support, and work conditions.

This is consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, which suggests that the psychological exhaustion is caused when demands at work are high but there are insufficient personal or organizational resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This approach suggests that two people may be in the same situation with similar demands at work but have different levels

of psychological stress because of the different resources available to them to cope with the demands. Thus, the increased level of psychological strain among teachers from private schools could represent increased susceptibility to the negative psychological impact of occupational stress, but not necessarily increased exposure to stress.

This result also aligns with past studies showing that teachers who experience high levels of occupational demands over time can become emotionally exhausted, experience burnout, and suffer psychological distress (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Herman et al., 2020). This is echoed in recent reviews, which have found that stress from the chronic demands of their jobs negatively impact teachers' emotional wellness and happiness, as well as their professional satisfaction and working capacity. Increased psychological strain can thus impact on teachers' motivation, effectiveness in the classroom, interpersonal relationships and teaching effectiveness.

The third aim of the present study was to compare Personal Resource Quotient (PRQ) of public and private school teachers. The findings indicated that there was a significant difference between the two groups, with the personal resource scores of the public school teachers being significantly higher than those of private school teachers. Moreover, we observed that the effect size was very large (Cohen's $d = 0.852$), suggesting a statistically significant difference in addition to being practically meaningful. This discovery implies that personal resources among public school teachers are higher which can help them adapt better to occupational demands.

Personal resources – refers to an individual's positive psychological abilities that help to manage work demands and stress situations. These resources include resilience, optimism, self-confidence, problem-solving ability, emotional stability, and adaptive coping strategies, which increase an individual's ability to keep their psychological health in check in the face of negative conditions (Phetmisay & King, 2021). Osipow and Spokane (1987) created the Occupational Stress Inventory that assesses how much the person believes he or she has the internal resources to handle the demands of the job successfully.

The present finding may be interpreted within the framework of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989). COR theory posits that individuals strive to obtain, preserve, and protect valuable personal, social, and organizational resources. Psychological strain occurs when these resources are threatened, depleted, or insufficient to meet environmental demands. Conversely, individuals possessing greater personal resources are

more capable of coping with occupational demands, thereby reducing the likelihood of adverse psychological outcomes. The significantly higher PRQ scores observed among public school teachers suggest that they may have greater access to psychological and occupational resources that enhance their ability to manage workplace challenges effectively.

The findings are also consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, which proposes that personal resources buffer the detrimental effects of job demands on employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Within this framework, personal resources function as protective factors that promote work engagement, psychological resilience, and occupational adjustment. Consequently, teachers possessing stronger personal resources are generally better equipped to cope with workload pressures and maintain psychological well-being despite experiencing occupational stress.

An important observation emerging from the present study is that although occupational stress did not differ significantly between public and private school teachers, significant differences were evident in psychological strain and personal resources. This pattern suggests that exposure to occupational stress alone may not fully explain variations in teachers' psychological health. Rather, the availability of personal coping resources appears to influence how occupational stress is experienced and managed. This interpretation is consistent with transactional models of stress, which emphasize that stress outcomes are determined not only by external demands but also by individuals' cognitive appraisal and coping capabilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The findings also align with previous research demonstrating that personal resources such as resilience, self-efficacy, optimism, and emotional competence are negatively associated with psychological distress and positively associated with occupational well-being among teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). Teachers with stronger psychological resources tend to report greater job satisfaction, higher professional commitment, lower burnout, and better mental health outcomes. These positive psychological characteristics enable educators to respond more effectively to occupational demands while maintaining motivation and professional effectiveness.

Taken together, the findings of the present study indicate that occupational stress and psychological strain should not be considered synonymous constructs. Although teachers across both educational sectors reported comparable levels of occupational stress, private school teachers experienced significantly greater psychological strain, whereas public school

teachers demonstrated significantly stronger personal coping resources. These findings support the conceptual distinction proposed by Osipow and Spokane (1987), who argued that occupational stress represents exposure to workplace demands, psychological strain reflects the emotional consequences of those demands, and personal resources determine an individual's capacity to cope with stressful work environments.

The results therefore suggest that interventions aimed solely at reducing occupational stress may not be sufficient to enhance teachers' psychological well-being. Simultaneously strengthening personal resources through resilience-building programmes, stress management training, coping-skills development, mindfulness-based interventions, and institutional support mechanisms may be equally important in reducing psychological strain and promoting occupational adjustment among teachers.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the differences between public and private school teachers in occupational stress, psychological strain and personal resource quotient were studied. The results showed no significant difference of the occupational stress between both groups, indicating that teachers working in both sectors are subjected to similar occupational demands. Significant differences, however, were found with regards to psychological strain and personal resource quotient. The public school teachers had significantly higher scores for personal resource quotient, while the private school teachers had significantly higher scores for psychological strain. Even though the effect size of psychological strain, as well as personal resource quotient, are moderate and large respectively, they still represent statistically and practically significant differences.

The results indicate the need for a broader understanding of the phenomenon of occupational stress as the only explanation for the differences in teachers' psychological well-being. Instead, having personal coping resources seems to affect the way and extent to which occupational stress is experienced and dealt with. The personal resources of teachers may affect their ability to deal with the stress at work, which can explain the psychological impacts of occupational stress. Therefore, programmatic efforts to enhance teacher well-being should go beyond reducing occupational stressors to enhancing personal resources such as resilience and coping.

In general, the study offers comparative data on occupational stress and psychological well-being of public school and private school teachers and adds to the body of knowledge on the

subject. The results highlight the need to design holistic teacher well-being interventions, which would involve building professional capacity in addition to creating organizational support for a healthier and more effective teacher workforce.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

For future research, the use of longitudinal research designs is suggested to explore changes in occupational stress, psychological strain and personal resources over time as well as to determine cause and effect relationship between the above mentioned variables. Findings from larger and more representative samples from a variety of geographical areas, educational boards and school settings would strengthen the generalizability of the results.

Further studies are also required on other psychological and organizational factors such as resilience, emotional intelligence, psychological capital, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, work engagement, burnout, job satisfaction, and work–life balance to gain a holistic perspective on teachers' occupational health. Qualitative (interviews or focus group discussions) and quantitative assessments, combined with mixed-methods approaches, would give a better understanding of teachers' lived experience of occupational stress.

Stress management programmes, resilience training and mindfulness-based interventions are also recommended for evaluation via intervention-based research to determine effectiveness of such programmes and organizational support initiatives. The comparison studies of teachers in rural-urban schools, among educational boards and different cultural context would further help in understanding the occupational stress in the educational setting. Such studies would also suggest evidence-based recommendations for the design of targeted interventions to alleviate psychological problems among teachers, enhance their personal coping mechanisms, and create a positive work climate for teachers.

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