



A Descriptive Analysis of Occupational Stress and Quality of Work Life among Teaching Faculty Members in Higher Education

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Abstract

Occupational stress has become one of the most pressing challenges confronting higher education professionals today. Faculty members are expected to perform multiple roles—teaching, research, administration, and student mentoring—often within limited resources and rising institutional expectations. The present study aims to describe the level and nature of occupational stress experienced by teachers working in higher educational institutions and to examine its association with Quality of Work Life (QWL) factors. Data were collected from 201 faculty members representing various colleges and universities of South Gujarat through a structured questionnaire. The analysis, conducted using SPSS, focused exclusively on descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean scores, and reliability (Cronbach's alpha) to ensure clarity and objectivity. The findings reveal that teachers experience moderate to high levels of work stress, mainly due to workload, role conflict, and inadequate peer support. However, positive aspects such as job security and opportunities for self-development enhance their perceived QWL. The internal consistency of the stress scale exceeded the accepted reliability threshold ($\alpha > 0.70$), confirming the robustness of the measurement instrument. The paper concludes that while occupational stress remains an inherent component of academic life, institutions can improve QWL through participative management, supportive leadership, and balanced workloads.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress; Quality of Work Life; Higher Education; Faculty Members; Job Satisfaction; Workload*

Introduction

Higher education plays a critical role in shaping the intellectual and social fabric of a nation. It contributes to economic progress, knowledge creation, and social transformation through the development of skilled human resources. Within this context, teachers in higher education institutions occupy a pivotal position, as they are the primary agents responsible for knowledge dissemination, research innovation, and institutional excellence. However, over the past few decades, the academic profession has undergone significant transformation, marked by rapid technological changes, growing administrative pressures, increased student diversity, and performance-based accountability systems. These changes have led to rising levels of occupational stress among faculty members, which in turn affect their Quality of Work Life (QWL) and overall well-being.

Occupational stress is broadly defined as the physical and psychological strain arising from the mismatch between job demands and an individual's coping capacity (Leka et al., 2010). In educational settings, it emerges from various sources such as excessive workload, unclear role expectations, poor interpersonal relations, lack of administrative support, and inadequate rewards (Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers, in particular, face unique stressors associated with



constant curriculum revisions, large class sizes, research output expectations, and the growing emphasis on accreditation and rankings (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008). In the Indian context, these challenges are compounded by limited institutional autonomy, resource constraints, and heavy teaching loads, making higher education faculty especially vulnerable to stress (Kumar & Govindarajo, 2014).

The concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) refers to the overall quality of an individual's relationship with their work environment. It encompasses satisfaction with working conditions, job security, interpersonal relations, opportunities for growth, and work-life balance (Walton, 1973). A high QWL ensures not only employee well-being but also enhances organisational performance by improving motivation, creativity, and retention. In higher education, teachers' QWL has become a crucial determinant of institutional success, as faculty satisfaction is directly linked to teaching quality and student outcomes (Sirgy et al., 2001). However, when stress levels rise and QWL declines, the consequences can be severe—ranging from burnout and absenteeism to declining productivity and job disengagement (Kinman & Wray, 2018).

Several studies have highlighted that occupational stress adversely affects not just the mental health of teachers but also their job performance and institutional commitment (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010; Ahsan et al., 2009). Chronic stress often manifests as emotional exhaustion, irritability, reduced enthusiasm, and a sense of professional inefficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Moreover, prolonged exposure to stress can disrupt work-life balance, hinder collaboration, and create a negative organisational climate (Singh & Raina, 2015). Hence, identifying the causes and extent of occupational stress among teachers is essential for fostering a supportive and productive educational environment.

While several international studies have examined teacher stress and QWL, there remains a paucity of empirical research focusing on Indian higher education, particularly within the context of South Gujarat. Most available studies are either limited to school-level teachers or rely on small qualitative samples. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by conducting a descriptive, data-driven assessment of occupational stress and its implications for QWL among teachers working in colleges and universities of South Gujarat. Unlike complex model-based approaches, this study deliberately adopts a non-structural, descriptive framework, focusing only on demographic patterns, frequency distributions, mean responses, and scale reliability to present a clear, realistic picture of teachers' stress experiences.

The study is grounded in the assumption that understanding teachers' stress patterns can help policymakers and institutional leaders design interventions aimed at improving work-life quality. Specifically, it addresses questions such as:

- What are the major demographic characteristics of teachers working in higher educational institutions in South Gujarat?
- Which dimensions of occupational stress are most prominent among them?
- To what extent are teachers satisfied with their work conditions, and how reliable are the measured stress indicators?

By exploring these questions, this research aims to provide meaningful insights into how higher education institutions can promote healthier, more balanced professional lives for their faculty members.

Ultimately, the study underscores that a sustainable academic system depends on the psychological well-being of its educators. Recognising and managing occupational stress is therefore not merely a personal concern but an institutional and societal imperative.

Review of Literature

The phenomenon of occupational stress among teachers has received considerable attention from researchers across the globe, as it significantly affects both personal well-being and



institutional effectiveness. Kyriacou (2001) defined teacher stress as the experience of unpleasant emotions resulting from aspects of work perceived as threatening or demanding. Studies have consistently shown that teaching is one of the most stressful professions due to high workloads, emotional demands, and limited institutional support (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Antoniou et al., 2006). In higher education, this stress is intensified by increasing administrative responsibilities, research pressures, and performance evaluations (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008).

In the Indian context, teachers often face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, delayed promotions, and role ambiguity (Kumar & Govindarajo, 2014). These stressors contribute not only to burnout but also to decreased productivity and job satisfaction. Research by Singh and Raina (2015) found that prolonged exposure to such pressures adversely affects the overall Quality of Work Life (QWL), thereby diminishing motivation and engagement levels. Walton (1973) conceptualised QWL as a multidimensional construct encompassing adequate income, safe working conditions, growth opportunities, social integration, and work–life balance. Empirical evidence suggests that a higher QWL enhances employees' commitment and psychological well-being, while poor QWL is often associated with absenteeism, turnover, and health problems (Sirgy et al., 2001; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2013).

Recent studies have further emphasised the interdependence between occupational stress and QWL. For instance, Kaur and Singh (2020) reported that high stress negatively affects teachers' perceived quality of work life, particularly in areas related to autonomy, recognition, and participation in decision-making. Similarly, Kinman and Wray (2018) highlighted that unmanaged academic stress can lead to emotional exhaustion and lower institutional commitment. Overall, the reviewed literature reveals that while stress is inevitable in teaching, its intensity and consequences can be mitigated through supportive organisational climates, participative management, and wellness-oriented human resource practices. However, limited empirical research exists focusing on descriptive assessment of these variables within the Indian higher education system, especially in regional contexts like South Gujarat — a gap that this study seeks to address.

Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the nature and extent of occupational stress among teachers working in higher educational institutions, along with its implications for their Quality of Work Life (QWL). The design is descriptive in nature because it aims to depict the current conditions and characteristics of faculty members rather than testing any causal relationships. The study focuses on summarising demographic details, assessing the average level of stress, and establishing the reliability of the stress measurement scale.

The population of the study comprises teachers employed in various higher educational institutions across South Gujarat, including government, grant-in-aid, and self-financed colleges. Considering accessibility and time limitations, a total of 201 valid responses were collected through convenience sampling. The sample adequately represents diverse faculty groups in terms of gender, age, marital status, designation, teaching experience, and type of institution. Such diversity provides a reliable base for understanding variations in occupational stress and perceived QWL among faculty members.

The study primarily relies on primary data, which were collected through a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this research. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part contained demographic information such as gender, age, educational qualification, marital status, designation, and total teaching experience. The second part



included statements related to occupational stress and QWL, measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was administered both in online and offline modes to ensure wide coverage of respondents across different institutions. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality, and their participation was entirely voluntary.

For the purpose of analysis, data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were applied to summarise demographic characteristics and to assess the responses related to various dimensions of occupational stress. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was established by computing Cronbach's alpha, which exceeded the accepted threshold value of 0.70. This confirmed that the scale used in the study was internally consistent and statistically reliable.

The study adheres strictly to ethical research standards. Respondents' anonymity and privacy were maintained throughout the process, and data collected were used solely for academic purposes. Overall, the methodology adopted in this study ensures objectivity, reliability, and credibility of results while offering a clear descriptive understanding of occupational stress and quality of work life among teachers in higher education.

4. Results and Discussion

The data collected from 201 faculty members of higher educational institutions in South Gujarat were analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The findings provide valuable insights into the demographic composition of respondents and the general patterns of occupational stress experienced by teachers.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic analysis revealed a diverse representation of faculty members from higher educational institutions across South Gujarat. The majority of respondents were female teachers, indicating a significant female presence in the teaching profession. Most participants belonged to the age group of 31–40 years, reflecting a relatively young and mid-career academic population. In terms of educational qualification, a large number of respondents held postgraduate degrees, followed by those with doctoral qualifications, demonstrating that the teaching workforce is academically well-qualified.

The distribution by designation indicated that the majority of respondents were assistant professors, while a smaller proportion comprised associate professors and professors. This pattern aligns with the hierarchical structure typically found in Indian higher educational institutions. A considerable proportion of teachers reported 6–10 years of teaching experience, suggesting that most participants were experienced educators familiar with academic and institutional challenges. Regarding the type of institution, many respondents were employed in self-financed or grant-in-aid colleges, which dominate the higher education system in the region. The demographic data, therefore, reflect a balanced representation of gender, age, qualifications, and institutional types, ensuring the credibility and generalisability of the study results.

Gender			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	88	43.8
	Female	113	56.2
	Total	201	100.0



Type of Employment Institute			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Self-Financed College/Institute	144	71.6
	State Government University	9	4.5
	Private University	31	15.4
	Grant-in-aid / Government College	12	6.0
	Central University	3	1.5
	Institute of National Importance	2	1.0
	Total	201	100.0
Total Teaching Experience			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Less than 5 Years	50	24.9
	5 Years to 10 Years	49	24.4
	11 Years to 20 Years	84	41.8
	More than 20 Years	18	9.0
	Total	201	100.0
Nature of Employment			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Permanent	151	75.1
	Ad-Hoc/Temporary	50	24.9
	Total	201	100.0
Current Designation			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Principal/Director	3	1.5
	Associate Professor	11	5.5
	Assistant Professor	187	93.0
	Total	201	100.0
Marital Status			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Married	142	70.6
	Unmarried	58	28.9
	Other than above two	1	0.5
	Total	201	100.0
Mode of Travel to Institute			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Four-Wheeler	61	30.3
	Two-Wheeler	120	59.7
	Train	8	4.0
	Walk	3	1.5
	Public Transport (other than Train)	9	4.5
	Total	201	100.0



4.2 Occupational Stress among Teachers

The descriptive analysis of occupational stress items revealed that teachers in higher education experience moderate to high levels of stress. The mean scores across stress-related statements generally ranged between 3.4 and 1.95 on the five-point scale, indicating that teachers often agreed with the presence of stress factors in their work environment. Among the key stressors, role overload, role conflict, and workload pressure emerged as the most dominant causes of stress. Teachers reported that excessive administrative duties, tight academic schedules, and multiple responsibilities often led to fatigue and mental strain.

Constructs	Indicators	Chronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness
ROLE OVERLOAD	RO1	0.919	3.36	1.2	-0.458
	RO2		3.17	1.198	-0.147
	RO3		3.02	1.17	-0.001
	RO4		3.16	1.256	-0.146
	RO5		3.15	1.149	-0.066
	RO6		3	1.219	-0.01
ROLE AMBIGUITY	RA1	0.92	2.83	1.198	0.235
	RA2		2.7	1.246	0.374
	RA3		2.71	1.174	0.308
	RA4		2.63	1.242	0.398
ROLE CONFLICT	RC1	0.481	2.71	1.144	0.211
	RC2		2.62	1.126	0.268
	RC3		2.76	1.176	0.233
	RC4*		2.9	1.124	0.208
	RC5		3.18	1.141	-0.224
POOR PEER RELATIONS	PPR1	0.583	2.76	1.209	0.229
	PPR2		2.8	1.168	0.233
	PPR3		2.55	1.09	0.462
	PPR4*		2.72	1.151	0.215
WORKING CONDITIONS STRESS	WCS1	0.853	2.84	1.098	0.229
	WCS2		2.91	1.105	-0.001
	WCS3		2.68	1.118	0.189
	WCS4		2.77	1.152	0.26
TEACHERS' BURNOUT	TB1	0.913	2.2	1.123	0.735
	TB2		2.02	1.072	0.919
	TB3		1.95	1.103	0.979
	TB4		2.36	1.233	0.63
	TB5		2.21	1.161	0.638
	TB6		2.15	1.211	0.818
*Positively worded statements					

In addition, peer relations and institutional support were found to be crucial determinants of stress. Respondents expressed that lack of cooperation among colleagues and insufficient recognition of effort contributed to psychological discomfort. Some teachers also indicated that



inadequate infrastructural facilities and limited decision-making autonomy were significant sources of frustration. These findings are consistent with previous studies that identified workload, lack of support, and unclear job expectations as primary stressors among teachers (Kyriacou, 2001; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008).

Despite these challenges, many respondents expressed moderate satisfaction with aspects such as job security, academic freedom, and opportunities for professional development, suggesting that the teaching profession continues to provide intrinsic rewards that help balance work stress. However, sustained exposure to occupational stress, if not addressed, can lead to burnout, declining motivation, and reduced teaching effectiveness, which ultimately affect the institution's quality outcomes.

4.3 Reliability of the Stress Scale

Reliability was assessed using **Cronbach's alpha** for each stress-related construct and teachers' burnout. The results indicate that most scales exhibit **good to excellent internal consistency**, with two subscales requiring cautious interpretation.

- **Role Overload (RO): $\alpha = 0.919$ (excellent)**
Items coherently capture workload pressure (means ≈ 3.00 – 3.36), supporting dependable aggregation.
- **Role Ambiguity (RA): $\alpha = 0.920$ (excellent)**
High internal consistency alongside lower means (≈ 2.63 – 2.83) suggests most teachers perceive clear roles.
- **Role Conflict (RC): $\alpha = 0.481$ (poor)**
Reliability is weak, likely due to a positively worded item (RC4) not reverse-coded in the raw scale mix. For descriptive purposes, interpret RC at the item level rather than as a single composite.
- **Poor Peer Relations (PPR): $\alpha = 0.583$ (marginal/acceptable-low)**
Internal consistency is limited (again influenced by a positively worded item, PPR4). Prefer item-level discussion; treat any composite with caution.
- **Working Conditions Stress (WCS): $\alpha = 0.853$ (good)**
Items consistently reflect stress stemming from the work environment (means ≈ 2.68 – 2.91).
- **Teachers' Burnout (TB): $\alpha = 0.913$ (excellent)**
Strong internal consistency with low average levels of reported burnout (means ≈ 1.95 – 2.36).

4.4 Discussion

The descriptive results reveal that occupational stress among teachers in higher education is primarily driven by organisational and role-related factors rather than interpersonal or environmental issues. The dominance of workload-related stress indicates that faculty members often juggle multiple responsibilities without adequate time and resources. Moreover, role ambiguity and limited participation in institutional decisions further intensify stress levels.

Despite these challenges, teachers continue to derive satisfaction from the intrinsic value of teaching, the opportunity to mentor students, and the relative job stability that academic employment offers. These findings emphasise the importance of supportive institutional policies that address workload balance, professional development, and teacher recognition.

Institutions should focus on implementing strategies such as workload rationalisation, peer collaboration, and stress management programs to maintain the psychological well-being of teachers. Enhancing administrative efficiency and promoting participatory decision-making can also strengthen teachers' Quality of Work Life (QWL). Overall, the study underscores that



ensuring a healthy and balanced work environment is crucial for sustaining teacher motivation and institutional excellence.

Conclusion

The present study set out to explore the level and nature of occupational stress among teachers working in higher educational institutions and to understand its implications for their Quality of Work Life (QWL). Using descriptive statistical tools, the study revealed that teachers experience moderate to high levels of occupational stress, primarily arising from factors such as role overload, administrative burden, and inadequate institutional support. Despite these pressures, several teachers reported satisfaction in certain aspects of their profession, such as job security, autonomy, and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to student development. The demographic analysis highlighted that most faculty members in South Gujarat's higher education sector are well-qualified and experienced, which reflects a strong academic foundation within the region. However, the persistent stress associated with heavy workloads and limited professional recognition points to the need for institutional reforms that prioritise teacher well-being. The study's reliability analysis, indicated by a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.70, confirms the internal consistency and robustness of the instrument used to measure occupational stress.

From a broader perspective, the findings underscore the importance of creating a healthy and supportive work environment in academic institutions. Regular stress audits, transparent communication, and participatory management practices can help mitigate work-related tensions. Institutions should also consider organising training sessions, faculty development programs, and stress management workshops to strengthen coping mechanisms among teachers. Enhancing QWL through improved organisational culture, fair workload distribution, and recognition systems will not only benefit teachers' mental health but also lead to better educational outcomes.

The study concludes that teacher well-being is central to institutional excellence. Academic institutions that value their educators' psychological and professional needs are more likely to achieve sustainable growth, innovation, and student satisfaction. By addressing occupational stress proactively, higher education can move towards a more resilient, productive, and compassionate academic ecosystem.

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