

A Study on the Current Situation of School Teachers' Occupational Stress and Mental Health

Zang Qian*, Jiang Hongying

Krirk University, Bangkok, 10220, Thailand

**Corresponding author: 811752675@qq.com*

Keywords: Teachers; Occupational stress; Mental health

Abstract: The present study aims to examine the relationship between occupational stress and psychological well-being among school teachers. Occupational stress among school teachers arises from various factors, including job tasks and workload, student issues and parental pressure, as well as educational policies and institutional pressures. This type of occupational stress has adverse effects on the psychological well-being of school teachers, leading to increased levels of professional burnout and depression. However, individual support systems can also have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of school teachers. This study employs a quantitative research approach, collecting data on occupational stress and psychological well-being of school teachers through survey questionnaires and conducting statistical analyses. The results of the study demonstrate that school teachers face high levels of occupational stress, and their psychological well-being is generally poor. Additionally, there is a significant association between occupational stress and psychological well-being, whereby higher levels of stress correspond to poorer psychological well-being. Based on the findings, it is recommended that schools and governments prioritize the issue of occupational stress among teachers and provide better working environments and support systems to promote their psychological well-being. Future research can further explore the mechanisms through which occupational stress affects teachers and identify more effective intervention measures to enhance their psychological well-being.

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, school educators bear an important responsibility and mission in nurturing the next generation. However, with the increasingly complex and evolving educational environment, teachers face mounting professional pressures. The advancement of educational reforms, the increase in teaching tasks, the growing number of student issues, and the ever-rising expectations from parents all contribute to immense work stress for school educators. These pressures not only impact their work efficiency but also profoundly affect their psychological well-being. The professional pressures and psychological health of school teachers have garnered attention from researchers and educational practitioners. Understanding the current status and relationship between professional pressures and psychological well-being among school teachers holds significant theoretical and practical implications for improving their working environment,

enhancing job satisfaction, and work performance. However, current research on professional pressures and psychological well-being of school teachers mostly remains limited to explorations of individual aspects, with a limited overall understanding. Therefore, this study aims to delve into the relationship between professional pressures and psychological well-being among school teachers, striving to provide targeted improvement and support strategies for schools and government departments, in order to promote the psychological well-being and job satisfaction of school educators. This study will employ a quantitative research approach, incorporating relevant theoretical models and measurement tools, to survey and analyze a representative sample of school teachers, aiming to comprehensively grasp the current status of professional pressures and psychological well-being among school educators, and further explore the relationship between the two.

2. Sources of occupational stress among schoolteachers

2.1. Tasks and workload

The professional stress faced by school teachers primarily originates from an increase in their workload and tasks. As educators, they are required to fulfill numerous responsibilities, including lesson preparation, teaching, administrative duties, and assessment. With the changing educational environment and the promotion of education reforms, the workload for teachers has become more burdensome and complex. Firstly, in terms of tasks, teachers need to constantly update their educational knowledge and teaching methods in order to adapt to diverse student needs and educational objectives [1]. They need to invest significant time and effort in lesson preparation, designing instructional activities, and evaluating student learning outcomes. Additionally, they are also expected to pay attention to students' overall development and actively participate in various school activities, such as clubs, extracurricular tutoring, and selection processes. These tasks require teachers not only to possess professional knowledge and skills but also excellent time management and organizational abilities. Secondly, in regard to workload, teachers frequently need to complete a substantial amount of work within limited timeframes. An increase in teaching responsibilities implies the need for more preparation time and time for grading assignments. Furthermore, teachers are also required to handle student issues, effectively communicate and engage with parents, and participate in various meetings and trainings. This increase in workload often leads teachers to face time constraints and overlapping tasks, frequently necessitating decision-making between work and personal life. To summarize, the professional stress experienced by school teachers originates from an increase in their workload and tasks. They must confront numerous teaching and management challenges, as well as address the diverse needs and expectations of students and parents. Therefore, understanding and resolving issues related to teacher professional stress necessitates better support and resources from schools and government agencies, ensuring that teachers can effectively meet job demands and improve their job satisfaction and mental well-being.

2.2. Student problems and parental pressure

With the changing social landscape and evolving attitudes towards education in the home, school teachers are increasingly faced with challenges in both the academic and behavioral arenas. When dealing with student problems, teachers are frequently tasked with addressing issues of behavior, academic difficulties, and emotional stresses among others. Such problems may include conflicts between students, classrooms with a large discrepancy in learning capabilities, or even struggles with self-management on the part of students. For teachers, resolving these issues requires not only professional knowledge and expertise, but also patience, a compassionate understanding, and a

positive attitude. When facing the pressures of student issues, teachers often require copious amounts of time and energy invested in guiding and counseling individual students. At the same time, they may also encounter emotional challenges [2]. Parents may experience stresses of their own, stemming from their personal expectations and educational goals for their children. Teachers often must uphold open and effective communication while collaborating with parents in order to strengthen relationships and understand their expectations. Given that each family holds unique educational values and expectations, teachers may encounter pressures from an array of parents with individual goals and objectives. Some parents may place excessive demands on their child's performance and comprehensive abilities and may interfere with the educational process. These types of parental pressures can add additional stresses to teachers, and can cause additional psychological burdens. The ability to effectively communicate and manage such scenarios is crucial for teachers. In conclusion, student problems and parental pressures exert a significant effect on school teachers, thus requiring educators not only to be highly skilled and capable, but also to possess strong interpersonal communication and emotional management abilities. Accordingly, schools and society must prioritize communication and collaboration between teachers, students, and parents alike. Concomitant efforts to provide relevant training and support for teachers is essential to promoting good relationships between students, parents, and teachers. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen parental education awareness and guidance in order to reduce unnecessary stress and to create a better environment and healthy psychological condition for teachers.

2.3. Educational policies and institutional pressures

Education policies and institutional pressures are significant sources of occupational stress for school teachers. Changes in policies and systems are common in the field of education, often requiring teachers to adapt and implement them with increased effort and time. Additionally, these changes may have important effects on teachers' work methods and curriculum arrangements. Firstly, policy and institutional changes can impact teachers' implementation of curriculum and teaching plans. Governments or school leaders may develop new curriculum standards and assessment methods, or introduce new educational activities and projects, which may require teachers to make significant adjustments and preparations within a short period of time, thereby increasing their workload and stress. Secondly, policy and institutional changes can affect teachers' job opportunities and positions. Policy changes may result in the reorganization or merging of teaching positions, potentially leading to unemployment pressure or the need for teachers to readjust to new positions. Moreover, policy changes can also influence teachers' obligations and responsibilities. Governments or school leaders may require teachers to fulfill new professional requirements, such as engaging in public service activities and involvement in clubs and organizations. This additional workload can also contribute to significant pressure on teachers. In conclusion, changes in education policies and systems can create occupational stress for school teachers. In response to this pressure, it is crucial for governments and schools to provide support and resources to teachers, enabling them to maintain stability and adapt to changes. Additionally, better training and communication opportunities should be provided to teachers, allowing them to enhance their understanding of policy changes and institutional dynamics, and continually upgrade their educational skills and professional knowledge.

3. The current situation of school teachers' mental health and the factors affecting it

3.1. Effects of stress on mental health

The occupational pressure faced by school teachers may have a detrimental effect on their mental well-being, resulting in varying degrees of psychological issues. Prolonged work stress can give rise to negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, tension, fatigue, and insomnia. Additionally, excessive pressure may also lead to physical ailments including stomach problems, headaches, muscle soreness, and high blood pressure. The impact of work-related stress on the mental health of teachers primarily manifests in the following aspects: Firstly, when confronted with a large volume of tedious and repetitive tasks, teachers often lack emotional engagement and self-motivation, ultimately leading to physical and mental exhaustion. This can result in experiences such as difficulty concentrating, fatigue, and a lack of energy when faced with work challenges. Secondly, teachers frequently have to meet the expectations of both the school and parents, while also adapting to rapidly evolving educational policies and curriculum requirements. This type of work pressure may cause teachers to develop self-doubt, self-blame, heightened insecurity, and a fear of underperforming. Lastly, teachers may need to invest a significant amount of time and energy into addressing student behavioral and family issues, which can also have long-term effects on their well-being. Confronted with a large amount of repetitive work, teachers often experience high levels of stress and physiological regression. The presence of these student issues may also lead to negative assessments, leaving teachers with a lack of achievement and satisfaction, ultimately leading to self-denial and further psychological pressure. In conclusion, the occupational pressure faced by school teachers may have a negative impact on their mental well-being. This pressure not only pertains to the teachers' personal physical and mental health but may also influence their teaching effectiveness, work quality, and students' academic performance. Therefore, it is imperative for the government and schools to address the issue of teachers' mental well-being and provide necessary support and resources such as counseling services, training, and career development. At the same time, teachers themselves should actively employ effective coping strategies, such as seeking support, embracing positive emotions, and actively participating in personal hobbies, to alleviate work-related stress and maintain their mental health [3].

3.2. Relationship between burnout and depression

Teacher burnout and depression are common mental health issues in the teaching profession. Burnout refers to a sense of helplessness and inadequacy that teachers experience after prolonged exposure to work stress, resulting in a gradual loss of enthusiasm and motivation towards their work and a negative attitude towards it. Depression is a common mental illness, manifested through symptoms such as low mood, loss of interest and pleasure, sleep disturbance, weight changes, and psychomotor retardation. These two psychological issues are closely related. Burnout is often a precursor to depression, as prolonged work pressure and psychological burden can cause teachers to enter a state of chronic fatigue, which may ultimately affect the quality and efficiency of their work and exacerbate existing issues. At the same time, burnout may cause teachers to lose interest and goals in their work, leading to negative attitudes and emotions, which in turn increase the risk of depression. Depression can also lead to burnout. Under the influence of mental illness, teachers may feel physically exhausted and mentally disheartened, ultimately leading to negative attitudes and emotions. This psychological burden may also affect the quality and efficiency of their daily work and increase the risk of burnout. In summary, burnout and depression are closely related. Teachers can prevent and alleviate these negative effects by enhancing their psychological resilience and establishing a good emotional support system. Governments and schools should pay closer attention

to teachers' mental health and care, create a positive working atmosphere and a humane working system, support teachers in responding positively to work pressure and psychological burdens, and alleviate the pressure caused by burnout and depression.

3.3. Relationship between support system and mental health

The support system plays a vital role in the psychological well-being of educators. They receive support and assistance from various sources such as family, colleagues, school leaders, and students, which in turn provides emotional fulfillment and psychological support, positively influencing their mental health. Firstly, maintaining a good relationship with their family is one of the key factors in ensuring the psychological well-being of educators. Family represents a source of emotional support, and their care and support can help educators alleviate work-related stress and eliminate negative emotions. Facing long-term pressures such as exam preparation, lesson planning, and student behavior issues, the support and understanding from family members can help educators find emotional fulfillment and alleviate psychological fatigue and tension. Secondly, the support of colleagues and leaders is also crucial in safeguarding the psychological well-being of educators. Schools or educational institutions should encourage and support the establishment of close collaborative relationships among educators when it comes to managing and formulating educational policies. By collectively facing the challenges of teaching and offering mutual encouragement, assistance, and sharing best practices, colleagues can develop long-term constructive partnerships. Furthermore, support from higher levels, such as school leadership, can enhance educators' self-confidence, enabling them to experience greater fulfillment and a sense of achievement. In addition to interpersonal support, students and their families also contribute to the psychological well-being of educators. The recognition from students and the trust from parents can provide educators with spiritual and emotional enrichment, enabling them to better cope with challenges and work-related stress. In conclusion, educational institutions and school leaders should create a conducive work environment and establish a social support system that promotes the psychological well-being of educators. Meanwhile, educators themselves should actively engage in the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships and enhance their awareness and capacity for self-protection and supporting others. Only within a supportive psychological system can educators experience sufficient joy and fulfillment, continuously improve work efficiency and quality, and promote the long-term development of the educational profession [4].

4. Research Methods

4.1. Research design and sample selection

The research exploration into the psychological well-being of school teachers and the factors influencing it heavily relies on the pivotal components of research design and sample selection. These two aspects directly contribute to the reliability and effectiveness of the study. Firstly, regarding the research design, one can opt for either a cross-sectional design or a longitudinal tracking design. The cross-sectional design allows for a swift understanding of the relationship between teachers' psychological well-being and related factors through one-time data collection. On the other hand, the longitudinal tracking design enables the observation of dynamic changes in psychological well-being issues and the long-term effects of influencing factors by comparing data at different points in time. Secondly, the aspect of sample selection emphasizes the importance of choosing a representative sample. This implies the need to recruit teachers from various regions and schools to ensure the broad applicability of the research findings. Additionally, the sample size should be sufficiently large to enhance the statistical power and generalizability of the study.

Random sampling methods could be considered to ensure the representativeness and reliability of the sample. Furthermore, specific criteria such as teaching experience, educational background, gender, and age should be taken into account in the sample selection process. These criteria may hold relevance to teachers' psychological well-being and consequently impact the study outcomes. Thus, it is crucial to thoroughly consider these aspects during the sample selection process to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research findings. In summary, a well-crafted research design and a representative sample selection are paramount in exploring the psychological well-being of school teachers and the factors influencing it. By employing sound research design and representative sample selection, reliable and effective research results can be obtained, providing targeted references and recommendations for educational institutions and decision-makers.

4.2. Scales and measurement tools

When studying the psychological well-being of educators, it is crucial to select appropriate scales and assessment instruments. Presented below are several commonly used scales and assessment tools: The Occupational Burnout Scale can be utilized to measure the degree of burnout among teachers, including emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and diminished enjoyment of work. This scale aids in uncovering the emotional and psychological fatigue experienced by teachers in their profession. The Self-rating Depression Scale is employed to assess the presence and severity of depressive symptoms among teachers, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and somatic symptoms. Through this scale, it becomes possible to ascertain the likelihood and severity of depression among educators. The Self-rating Anxiety Scale can gauge the anxiety symptoms and severity among teachers, including internal distress, worry, and physiological symptoms. This allows for an understanding of whether teachers experience anxiety issues and an evaluation of its degree. The Life Events Scale can be used to evaluate the types and quantity of life events experienced by teachers within a recent timeframe, such as work-related changes and family conflicts. This assists in identifying the sources and impact of stress on teachers. Personality questionnaires help measure the psychological traits and characteristics of teachers, such as introversion, extroversion, optimism, or pessimism. By understanding the personality traits of teachers, their coping strategies in relation to work and stress can be better comprehended. The Social Support Assessment Scale can be employed to evaluate the level of social support received by teachers, including emotional support, informational support, and tangible support. This aids in understanding the extent to which teachers receive support in their work and personal lives. Through the utilization of appropriate scales and assessment tools, researchers are able to objectively comprehend the psychological well-being of educators and further explore potential influencing factors. Such assessments can provide strong evidence for developing corresponding support measures and psychological interventions, thereby facilitating the mental health and job satisfaction of teachers.

4.3. Data collection and analysis methods

In studying issues related to the psychological well-being of teachers, the methods of data collection and analysis are crucial steps. To obtain reliable research findings, the following methods can be used for data collection and analysis: Firstly, data collection can be done through methods such as questionnaires, interviews, or observations. Among others. Questionnaires are the most commonly used method of data collection, and can be used to gather the subjective feelings and perspectives of teachers. Interviews can provide in-depth understanding of teachers' psychological states and experiences, by interactively obtaining more information from respondents. Observation methods can observe the behavioral performance and emotional changes of teachers in their work

environment. Secondly, the collected data can be processed and interpreted through statistical analysis methods such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and factor analysis, among others. Descriptive statistics can summarize data characteristics through indicators such as mean, frequency distribution, and standard deviation. Correlation analysis can explore the relationship between variables, while regression analysis can study the causal relationship between multiple variables. Factor analysis can condense multiple variables into several latent factors to explain the structure of the data. Finally, through data collection and analysis, conclusions can be drawn about the state of teachers' psychological well-being and related factors, which can provide a basis for the development of interventions and policies aimed at improving teachers' psychological well-being. It is essential to note correct interpretation of data and appropriate expression of results to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings. In conclusion, methods of data collection and analysis play an important role in studying issues related to the psychological well-being of teachers. Through suitable data collection methods and scientific statistical analysis methods, accurate research results can be obtained, providing a scientific basis for safeguarding teachers' psychological well-being [5].

5. Recommendations and improvements for schools and government

In order to promote teachers' mental health and the overall development of the education system, the following are some suggestions and measures aimed at schools and governments. Firstly, schools can strengthen their attention and support for teachers' mental health. They can establish a mental health support team or institution to provide psychological counseling and support services, offering professional counseling and guidance to teachers. Additionally, by offering mental health training courses, teachers' awareness and skills in dealing with work and life stress can be improved. Secondly, governments can formulate relevant policies to address teachers' mental health issues. Governments can increase investment in mental health research in the education field, supporting relevant surveys and research to understand the current status and influencing factors of teachers' mental health issues. Moreover, governments can enhance teacher training and career development opportunities, raising job satisfaction and a sense of professional achievement, and reducing professional burnout and psychological stress. Furthermore, schools and governments can jointly create a positive work atmosphere and culture. Schools can establish a fair and impartial evaluation system, reducing pressure to overemphasize evaluation indicators. Governments can encourage schools to establish mechanisms for teacher team cooperation and support, promoting good interaction and support between teachers and students. Additionally, by strengthening school management and reducing administrative burdens, teachers can focus more on teaching work, thereby reducing unnecessary stress. Schools and governments can also provide appropriate resources and benefits to support teachers' mental health. Schools should optimize their work environment and teaching facilities, providing necessary teaching resources and support services. Governments can increase investment in education funds, improve teacher salary and welfare systems, and provide necessary support and protection measures to improve teachers' material conditions and living standards. Finally, schools and governments can carry out popular education and publicity activities, raising awareness and attention to teachers' mental health issues in society. Through various channels, such as bulletin boards, media reports, and training conferences, information regarding mental health can be disseminated, advocating society's attention and support for teachers' mental health. In summary, through the collaboration and efforts of schools and governments, better support and protection can be provided for teachers' mental health. Focusing on teachers' mental health not only helps to improve the quality of education but also acknowledges and rewards teachers for their dedicated and hardworking contributions. Moreover, this creates a

better education environment and atmosphere for students.

6. Conclusion

Through researching the occupational stress and mental health status of school teachers, we can gain a better understanding of the challenges and difficulties faced by this group and find effective ways to improve their psychological well-being. Teachers serve as the backbone of society, and their physical and mental health is crucial for the stability and development of the education system. However, the occupational stress experienced by teachers often leads to the emergence of mental health issues, which not only negatively impact individual teachers but also affect the quality of education and the development of students. Therefore, schools and governments should work together to take corresponding measures to focus on and improve the mental health of teachers. By establishing support mechanisms, providing training and resource support, improving working environments, and strengthening promotional and educational activities, better support and protection can be provided for teachers. Only by giving teachers sufficient attention and support can we ensure their continuous development in the field of education, enabling them to provide high-quality educational services to students and promoting the sustainable development of the education sector.

References

- [1] Sohni S, Imtiaz A, Preeta H. *Technostress: A catalyst to leave the teaching profession - A survey designed to measure technostress among teachers in Pakistan during COVID-19 pandemic*[J]. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 2023, 20(1):53-79.
- [2] Baruani H T, Li X, Binghai S. *Teachers' Resilience Against Stress: A Review on Ways and Its Impacts towards Teaching Profession*[J]. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 2021(1):28-41.
- [3] Lee S D. *Emotion regulation Strategies in Teaching Profession: Case Study of an International Primary School Teacher in Jakarta, Indonesia*[J]. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 2019, 10(9):182-189.
- [4] Kurebwa M, Phil D, Dzimiri W. *Perceptions of Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Student Teachers on the Teaching Profession: Evidence from Two Universities*[J]. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 2016, 6(7):632-643.
- [5] C. M M. *The Manifestation of Occupational Stress in the Teaching Profession: The Unheeded Voices of Teachers* [J]. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2014(1):22-24.