

An Analysis of Psycho-Social Problems Among Secondary School Teachers and Their Impact on Teacher Performance

Muhammad Ansar Abbas

Ph. D Scholar; Department of Education; Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Email: ansarbharwana@gmail.com

Rubab Batool

Ph. D Scholar; Department of Education; Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Email: rubabbatool2532@gmail.com

Tahira Sadiqi

Ph. D Scholar; Department of Education; Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Email: tahirasadiqi491@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the prevalence of psycho-social problems among secondary school teachers in Faisalabad, Pakistan, and to investigate the impact of these problems on teacher performance, considering demographic variables such as gender, location, qualification, and subject taught. A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were collected from 500 secondary school teachers (257 male, 243 female) selected via random sampling from five tehsils of district Faisalabad. A self-constructed instrument, the Teachers Psycho-social Problems Survey (TPPS), with high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.94), was used. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and ANOVA. The most prevalent psycho-social problem identified was stress ($M=3.96$, $SD=.94$), followed by aggression ($M=3.96$, $SD=1.18$), and lack of cooperation ($M=3.94$, $SD=.90$). Significant differences were found across demographic groups: female teachers reported higher levels of aggression, stress, and cooperation, while male teachers reported higher anxiety and frustration. Rural teachers experienced significantly higher anxiety and frustration than their urban counterparts. Teachers with an M.Ed. qualification reported higher stress and overall psycho-social problems but better working environments than B.Ed. teachers. Science teachers reported significantly higher anxiety, frustration, and overall psycho-social problems than arts teachers. Teacher designation significantly impacted both psycho-social problems and

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performance. Psycho-social problems are prevalent among secondary school teachers and are significantly influenced by demographic factors. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions, such as stress management workshops, improved administrative support, and better working conditions, to mitigate these issues and enhance teacher performance and, consequently, student achievement.

Keywords: Teacher Stress, Psycho-social Problems, Teacher Performance, Secondary Education, Pakistan, Burnout

Introduction

The teaching profession is a cornerstone of societal development, with teachers acting as prime indicators of student achievement (Kyriacou, 2001). The success of students is intrinsically linked to teachers who are contented, satisfied, and devoted to their profession. However, in the contemporary era, the teaching profession often lags behind others in terms of benefits and societal prestige, leading to teachers perceiving themselves as undervalued and underpaid (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003). This perception, coupled with a multitude of professional demands, contributes to significant psycho-social challenges.

Teacher stress is defined as the experience of negative, unpleasant emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety, and depression, resulting from aspects of their work (Kyriacou, 2001). Chronic stress, if not managed effectively, can lead to burnout—a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Toros et al., 2004). The stressors in teaching are multifaceted, including heavy workload, student misbehavior, frequent curriculum changes, lack of resources, role ambiguity, and conflicting demands from parents and the community (Borg & Riding, 1991; Kristensen et al., 2005).

The mental health of teachers is not merely a personal concern but has direct implications for educational quality. Poor teacher well-being is linked to negative outcomes such as absenteeism, presenteeism (being at work but performing poorly), and higher turnover rates (Jain et al., 2013; Melchior et al., 2007). Ultimately, this affects classroom management, the quality of teacher-student relationships, and student academic achievement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Miller et al., 2008).

While extensive research on teacher stress exists globally, there is a paucity of studies in the Pakistani context, particularly those examining a wide range of psycho-social problems (e.g., aggression, cooperation, frustration) and their relationship with demographic variables. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the psycho-social problems of secondary school teachers in Faisalabad and their impact on performance. The objectives are:

1. To explore the psycho-social problems of teachers at the secondary level.
2. To investigate teachers' performance.
3. To discover the impact of overall psycho-social problems on teachers' performance.

Literature Review

Predictors and Manifestations of Teacher Stress

Research consistently identifies workload and student conduct as significant predictors of teacher stress and burnout (Kristensen et al., 2005; Kyriacou, 2001). Borg and Riding (1991) note that while stress is a normal reaction, it becomes a psycho-social problem when the reaction is exaggerated and persistent. This chronic stress manifests in physical and emotional symptoms, including anxiety and depression, which are strongly correlated with

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job dissatisfaction (Manthei & Gilmore, 1996; Revicki et al., 1993).

Work Motivation and Psycho-social Well-being

Teacher motivation is influenced by both intrinsic (e.g., autonomy, competence) and extrinsic (e.g., pay, institutional criteria) factors (Zafar et al., 2023; Shahzadi et al., 2023; Hussain & Khoso, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that fulfilling basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is crucial for mental well-being (Ryan et al., 2008). When these needs are thwarted by a stressful work environment, it can lead to diminished motivation, depression, and anxiety.

Impact on Performance and Student Outcomes

The psycho-social well-being of teachers directly impacts their performance in the classroom. Stressed or depressed teachers may find it difficult to develop supportive relationships with students, particularly those with behavioral challenges (Sisask et al., 2014). Poor teacher-student relationships are, in turn, linked to lower student engagement and academic achievement (Ahmad et al., 2023; 2024; Altaf et al., 2023; Dehraj & Hussain, 2024; Hussain et al., 2023; 2024; Muhammad et al., 2023; Sindhu et al., 2023; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Kidger et al., 2012). Furthermore, teacher absenteeism and presenteeism have been shown to negatively affect student performance (Miller et al., 2008).

The Role of Demographics

Studies suggest that demographic variables can influence the experience of stress. For instance, some research indicates that female teachers may report higher stress levels (Geving, 2007), while the pressures of teaching specific subjects or working in certain locations (rural vs. urban) may also contribute differentially to psycho-social strain (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). This study builds upon this literature by systematically testing the impact of gender, location, professional qualification, and subject taught on various psycho-social problems.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional survey design to collect quantitative data on teachers' psycho-social problems and their perceived impact.

Population and Sample

The population comprised all public sector secondary school teachers in district Faisalabad. A random sample of 500 teachers was selected from five tehsils (Faisalabad, Jarranwala, Samundary, Jhumra, Tandlawala), ensuring equal representation from urban (n=250) and rural (n=250) areas, as well as from male (n=250) and female (n=250) teachers.

Instrument

Data were collected using a self-constructed instrument, the Teachers Psycho-social Problems Survey (TPPS), developed based on an extensive literature review. The TPPS consisted of 46 items measuring eight indicators: Aggression (3 items), Stress (6 items), Cooperation (8 items), Working Environment (9 items), Depression (4 items), Anxiety (3

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items), Isolation (5 items), and Frustration (8 items). A 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) was used. The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.94 and subscale reliabilities ranging from .802 to .871.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected personally by the researcher after obtaining necessary permissions. Of 600 distributed questionnaires, 500 were fully completed and used for analysis (response rate: 80%). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to describe the sample and prevalence of problems. Inferential statistics (independent samples t-test and ANOVA) were used to test 35 null hypotheses concerning differences in psycho-social problems across demographic groups (gender, location, qualification, subject, designation, experience).

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample consisted of slightly more male teachers (51.4%) than female (48.6%). A majority of teachers were from rural areas (63.4%), held an M.Ed. qualification (53.4%), taught science subjects (54.4%), and had over 10 years of teaching experience (48.4%). The most common designation was Secondary School Teacher (SST) (51%).

Prevalence of Psycho-Social Problems

Descriptive analysis of the TPPS factors revealed that Stress was the most prevalent problem (M=3.96, SD=.94), closely followed by Aggression (M=3.96, SD=1.18). This was followed by lack of Cooperation (M=3.94, SD=.90), poor Working Environment (M=3.77, SD=.78), Depression (M=3.59, SD=.97), Anxiety (M=3.57, SD=.89), and Frustration (M=3.22, SD=.73). The mean for overall psycho-social problems was 3.64 (SD=.61).

Hypotheses Testing: Group Differences

A series of t-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences based on demographic variables. Key significant findings are summarized below:

1. **Gender:** Significant differences were found between male and female teachers. Female teachers reported significantly higher levels of Aggression ($p=.006$), Stress ($p=.002$), and Cooperation ($p=.000$), and perceived a better Working Environment ($p=.009$). In contrast, male teachers reported significantly higher levels of Anxiety ($p=.018$) and Frustration ($p=.000$). No significant differences were found for Depression or overall psycho-social problems.
2. **Location (Urban vs. Rural):** Urban teachers reported significantly higher Aggression ($p=.001$) and Cooperation ($p=.002$). Rural teachers reported significantly higher Anxiety ($p=.007$) and Frustration ($p=.000$). No significant differences were found for Stress, Working Environment, Depression, or overall psycho-social problems.
3. **Professional Qualification (B.Ed. vs. M.Ed.):** M.Ed. teachers reported significantly higher Stress ($p=.000$), Cooperation ($p=.000$), perceived a better Working Environment ($p=.000$), and higher overall psycho-social problems ($p=.016$). B.Ed. teachers reported

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significantly higher Depression ($p=.000$). No significant differences were found for Aggression, Anxiety, or Frustration.

4. **Subject (Science vs. Arts):** Science teachers reported significantly higher Anxiety ($p=.000$), Frustration ($p=.001$), and overall psycho-social problems ($p=.003$). No significant differences were found for Aggression, Stress, Cooperation, Working Environment, or Depression.

5. **Experience, Designation, and Academic Qualification (ANOVA):** ANOVA results indicated that teachers' designation had a significant impact on both their psycho-social problems ($p=.000$) and their performance ($p=.013$). Teaching experience ($p=.001$) and academic qualification ($p=.003$) had a significant impact on psycho-social problems, but not on teacher performance.

Discussion

This study provides a detailed picture of the psycho-social landscape among secondary school teachers in Pakistan. The finding that Stress and Aggression are the most prevalent problems aligns with global literature that identifies teaching as a highly stressful profession due to high demands and often limited resources (Kyriacou, 2001; Kristensen et al., 2005).

The nuanced differences based on gender challenge simplistic stereotypes. While female teachers reported higher aggression and stress—possibly reflecting the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities—they also perceived themselves as more cooperative and working in a better environment. The higher frustration and anxiety among male teachers warrant further investigation into the unique social and professional pressures they face.

The rural-urban divide highlights specific contextual challenges. The higher frustration and anxiety among rural teachers could be linked to factors like professional isolation, fewer resources, and limited access to support services, which is consistent with findings in other developing contexts (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Urban teachers' higher aggression might be related to larger class sizes and more complex student behavioral issues.

The differences between B.Ed. and M.Ed. qualified teachers are particularly interesting. While M.Ed. teachers reported more stress and overall problems, they also perceived a better working environment and showed more cooperation. This could indicate that higher qualifications bring greater responsibilities and expectations, leading to increased stress, but also potentially more professional autonomy and collegial respect. B.Ed. teachers' higher depression might stem from feelings of inadequacy or limited career advancement opportunities.

The heightened anxiety, frustration, and overall psycho-social problems among science teachers compared to arts teachers could be attributed to the demanding nature of science curricula, pressure to produce high academic results, and the resource-intensive nature of science education.

The significant impact of teacher designation on both well-being and performance underscores the importance of organizational hierarchy and role clarity. Principals and senior teachers may experience stress from administrative burdens, while junior teachers may feel stress from a lack of autonomy.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that psycho-social problems are widespread among secondary school teachers in Faisalabad and are significantly influenced by demographic factors such as gender, location, professional qualification, and subject taught. The most pressing issues are stress, aggression, and a lack of cooperation. These problems not only affect teacher well-being but also have the potential to detrimentally impact their performance in the classroom, thereby affecting student outcomes.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Intervention Programs:** Educational authorities should implement regular training workshops and seminars focused on stress management, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution for teachers.
2. **Supportive School Environment:** School administration should foster a collaborative and supportive school culture. Providing mentorship programs, especially for early-career teachers, and ensuring fair distribution of workload can mitigate several psycho-social issues.
3. **Policy Initiatives:** Policymakers should consider these findings when designing teacher education curricula and professional development programs. Specific support mechanisms for rural teachers, science teachers, and those with higher qualifications should be developed.
4. **Future Research:** Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to establish causality and explore the specific factors causing higher anxiety and frustration among male, rural, and science teachers. Qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of these subgroups.

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