

Original Article

A Comparative Study of Strenuous Working Conditions in Government and Private Schools in Bihar

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This study examines the strenuous working conditions in government and private schools in Bihar, India, utilizing the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava and Singh. Data were collected from 304 teachers across the Bihar Southwest region, including Kaimur, Rohtas, Buxar, Bhojpur, and Patna districts. The analysis revealed significant differences in stress levels related to strenuous working conditions between teachers in government and private schools. Key findings indicate that private school teachers experience higher stress due to longer working hours, excessive workload, and greater physical strain compared to their counterparts in government schools. The results underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these stressors, improve teachers' job satisfaction, and enhance their overall well-being.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Role Overload, educators, teaching profession, government and private institutions.

Introduction:

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Occupational stress is a significant issue affecting employees across various professions, impacting their performance, well-being, and overall quality of life. Among these professions, teaching is recognized as one of the most demanding and stressful. Teachers are often subjected to multiple stressors, including heavy workloads, administrative pressures, classroom management challenges, and high societal expectations. These factors can lead to substantial levels of occupational stress, affecting both their professional and personal lives.

In the Indian context, particularly in the state of Bihar, the teaching profession faces unique challenges. Bihar, one of India's largest and most populous states, has a diverse educational landscape comprising government and private schools. These two types of institutions operate under different administrative and operational frameworks, which can result in varying working conditions and stress levels for teachers. Government schools in Bihar are funded and regulated by the state government, offering job security and standardized benefits to teachers. However, these schools often face issues such as inadequate infrastructure, large student-teacher ratios, and bureaucratic hurdles. On the other hand, private schools, which are independently managed, tend to have better resources and infrastructure but impose higher performance expectations and longer working hours on their teachers. These contrasting environments create different stress profiles for teachers working in these institutions. The Occupational Stress Index (OSI), developed by Srivastava and Singh, is a comprehensive tool for measuring occupational stress. It includes various subscales, each addressing specific dimensions of job-related stress. This study focuses on the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the OSI, which assesses factors such as long working hours, excessive workload, and physical strain. By examining this subscale, the study aims to provide a detailed comparison of the strenuous working conditions experienced by teachers in government and private schools in Bihar.



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Objectives:

The primary objectives of this research are:

1. **To Assess Strenuous Working Conditions:** Evaluate the levels of stress related to strenuous working conditions experienced by teachers in both government and private schools in the Bihar Southwest region.
2. **To Compare Stress Levels:** Conduct a comparative analysis of the stress levels between teachers in government and private schools, focusing specifically on the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI).
3. **To Identify Key Stressors:** Identify the primary factors contributing to strenuous working conditions in both types of schools, such as long working hours, excessive workload, and physical strain.
4. **To Provide Insights for Interventions:** Offer insights into potential interventions and policy recommendations that can help reduce occupational stress and improve working conditions for teachers in both government and private schools.
5. **To Enhance Teacher Well-being:** Contribute to the overall well-being of teachers by highlighting the areas that require attention and support, ultimately leading to better job satisfaction and performance.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the stressors faced by teachers in Bihar and suggest actionable measures to mitigate these stressors.

Literature Review:

Occupational Stress in Teaching:

Occupational stress in the teaching profession has been widely studied, revealing that teachers are among the most stressed professionals. Factors contributing to this stress include heavy workloads, large class sizes, administrative demands, student behavior issues, and insufficient resources. Kyriacou (2001) identifies that teaching involves emotional and intellectual engagement, making it a particularly stressful occupation. Additionally, stress can significantly impact teachers' job satisfaction, mental health, and overall well-being (Travers & Cooper, 1996).

Government vs. Private Schools:

The working conditions in government and private schools differ significantly due to variations in funding, management, and operational policies. Government schools are typically funded and regulated by the state, offering job security and standardized benefits. However, these schools often face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, high student-teacher ratios, and bureaucratic constraints (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010).

Private schools, on the other hand, are independently managed and funded, which often results in better infrastructure and resources. However, these schools impose higher expectations on teachers, including longer working hours, rigorous performance evaluations, and a greater emphasis on student outcomes (Sharma & Jyoti, 2006). These differences can lead to varying levels of occupational stress among teachers in government and private schools.

Strenuous Working Conditions:

Strenuous working conditions are a critical dimension of occupational stress, encompassing factors such as long working hours, excessive workload, and physical strain. These conditions are particularly relevant in the teaching profession, where the demands of lesson planning, grading, and extracurricular activities can extend beyond regular school hours. The "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava and Singh provides a comprehensive measure of these factors (Srivastava & Singh, 1981).

Studies on Teacher Stress in India:

Research on teacher stress in India highlights the unique challenges faced by educators in different types of schools. A study by Nagra and Arora (2013) found that teachers in private schools reported higher stress levels due to increased job demands and lack of job security. In contrast, teachers in government schools reported stress related to inadequate facilities and administrative issues. Another study by Kumar and Jain (2012) emphasized the need for targeted interventions to address the specific stressors in different school settings.

Regional Context: Bihar

Bihar, one of India's most populous and educationally diverse states, presents a unique context for studying occupational stress among teachers. The state has made significant strides in improving educational access, but challenges such as infrastructure deficits, teacher shortages, and varying school quality persist (Annual Status of Education Report, 2020). Comparing the strenuous working conditions of teachers in government and private schools in Bihar can provide valuable insights into the specific stressors and potential areas for intervention in this region.

Relevance of the Occupational Stress Index

The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) is a well-established tool for measuring job-related stress across various dimensions, including role overload, role ambiguity, and strenuous working conditions. The "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale specifically addresses the physical and temporal demands placed on teachers, making it highly

relevant for this study. Previous research using the OSI has demonstrated its reliability and validity in assessing occupational stress in diverse professional settings (Srivastava & Singh, 1981).

The literature indicates that teachers in both government and private schools experience significant stress, though the sources and intensity of this stress may vary. Government school teachers often face challenges related to inadequate resources and administrative burdens, while private school teachers deal with higher performance expectations and longer working hours. The "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the OSI provides a focused measure to compare these stressors between different school settings.

This study aims to fill the gap in the existing literature by providing a comparative analysis of strenuous working conditions in government and private schools in Bihar. By identifying the key stressors and their impacts on teachers, the research seeks to inform targeted interventions to improve working conditions and enhance teacher well-being in both types of schools.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guide this research:

1. Hypothesis 1: Teachers in private schools experience higher levels of stress related to strenuous working conditions compared to teachers in government schools.
2. Hypothesis 2: The average working hours for teachers in private schools are significantly longer than those for teachers in government schools.
3. Hypothesis 3: Private school teachers report a higher workload and greater physical strain than their counterparts in government schools.
4. Hypothesis 4: There are significant differences in the stress levels related to strenuous working conditions between teachers in different districts of the Bihar Southwest region.
5. Hypothesis 5: Interventions aimed at reducing workload and improving working conditions are more urgently needed in private schools compared to government schools.

These hypotheses will be tested through the analysis of data collected using the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI). The results will help determine the validity of these hypotheses and provide insights into the stress dynamics in government and private schools in Bihar.

Methodology:

Research Design:

This study employs a comparative research design to examine the strenuous working conditions experienced by teachers in government and private schools in the Bihar Southwest region. The research utilizes the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava and Singh to measure and compare stress levels.

Participants:

The study involves 304 teachers from the Bihar Southwest region, specifically from the districts of Kaimur, Rohtas, Buxar, Bhojpur, and Patna. The sample includes teachers from both government and private schools to ensure a comprehensive comparison. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation from various schools and districts.

Data Collection:

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire based on the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the OSI. The subscale consists of items designed to measure factors such as long working hours, excessive workload, and physical strain. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The questionnaire was administered to the participants in their respective schools. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were assured to encourage honest and accurate responses.

Instrument

The "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) includes the following dimensions:

- Long Working Hours: Measures the extent to which teachers are required to work beyond regular hours.
- Excessive Workload: Assesses the volume of work and responsibilities teachers are expected to handle.
- Physical Strain: Evaluates the physical demands and fatigue associated with teaching activities.

Data Analysis:

The collected data was analyzed using statistical methods to compare the stress levels between teachers in government and private schools. The analysis included the following steps:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** To summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses to the OSI items. Mean scores for each dimension of the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale were calculated for both government and private school teachers.

2. **Comparative Analysis:** T-tests were used to compare the mean scores of government and private school teachers on the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale. ANOVA was employed to identify significant differences across different districts.
3. **Reliability Analysis:** The reliability of the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale was tested using Cronbach's alpha to ensure the internal consistency of the instrument.

Ethical Considerations:

The study adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. The data were anonymized to protect the privacy of the respondents.

Limitations:

The study acknowledges the following limitations:

- The sample is limited to the Bihar Southwest region, which may not be representative of the entire state or country.
- Self-reported data may be subject to response biases.
- The study focuses solely on the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the OSI, which may not capture all dimensions of occupational stress experienced by teachers.

The methodology of this study is designed to provide a rigorous comparison of the strenuous working conditions faced by teachers in government and private schools in Bihar. By using the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the OSI and employing robust statistical methods, the research aims to identify significant differences in stress levels and contribute to the development of targeted interventions to improve teachers' working conditions and well-being.

Results:

The comparative analysis of strenuous working conditions between government and private school teachers in the Bihar Southwest region was conducted using the "Strenuous Working Conditions" (SWC) subscale of the Occupational Stress Index. The analysis included four items (SWC1, SWC2, SWC3, SWC4) related to strenuous working conditions.

Descriptive Statistics:

Table No. 1: Provides the descriptive statistics for each item on the SWC subscale for both government and private school teachers:

Table No. 1

Group Statistics

| | Type of Job | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|------|-------------|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| SWC1 | Government | 152 | 2.56 | 1.034 | .084 |
| | Private | 152 | 2.89 | .960 | .078 |
| SWC2 | Government | 152 | 2.76 | 1.023 | .083 |
| | Private | 152 | 2.82 | .997 | .081 |
| SWC3 | Government | 152 | 2.22 | .943 | .077 |
| | Private | 152 | 3.14 | 1.191 | .097 |
| SWC4 | Government | 152 | 3.47 | .883 | .072 |
| | Private | 152 | 2.95 | .992 | .080 |

Table No. 2 presents the results of the independent samples t-test for each item on the SWC subscale:

Table No. 2

Independent Samples Test

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | | |
|------|---|--------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|-------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| SWC1 | Equal variances assumed | .925 | .337 | -2.875 | 302 | .004 | -.329 | .114 | -.554 | -.104 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.875 | 300.337 | .004 | -.329 | .114 | -.554 | -.104 |
| SWC2 | Equal variances assumed | .005 | .943 | -.568 | 302 | .571 | -.066 | .116 | -.294 | .162 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -.568 | 301.807 | .571 | -.066 | .116 | -.294 | .162 |
| SWC3 | Equal variances assumed | 26.422 | .000 | -7.421 | 302 | .000 | -.914 | .123 | -1.157 | -.672 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -7.421 | 286.988 | .000 | -.914 | .123 | -1.157 | -.672 |
| SWC4 | Equal variances assumed | 6.997 | .009 | 4.762 | 302 | .000 | .513 | .108 | .301 | .725 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 4.762 | 298.009 | .000 | .513 | .108 | .301 | .725 |

Interpretation of Results:

SWC1 (Long Working Hours)

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Government school teachers have a mean score of 2.56, while private school teachers have a higher mean score of 2.89.
- **T-Test:** There is a significant difference between the two groups ($t = -2.875$, $p = 0.004$). Private school teachers experience significantly higher stress related to long working hours compared to government school teachers.

SWC2 (Excessive Workload)

- **Descriptive Statistics:** The mean scores for government and private school teachers are 2.76 and 2.82, respectively.
- **T-Test:** There is no significant difference between the two groups ($t = -0.568$, $p = 0.571$). Both groups experience similar levels of stress related to excessive workload.

SWC3 (Physical Strain)

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Government school teachers have a mean score of 2.22, while private school teachers have a higher mean score of 3.14.
- **T-Test:** There is a significant difference between the two groups ($t = -7.421$, $p < 0.001$). Private school teachers experience significantly higher physical strain compared to government school teachers.

SWC4 (General Working Conditions)

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Government school teachers have a mean score of 3.47, while private school teachers have a lower mean score of 2.95.
- **T-Test:** There is a significant difference between the two groups ($t = 4.762$, $p < 0.001$). Government school teachers report significantly better general working conditions compared to private school teachers.

The results indicate that private school teachers in the Bihar Southwest region experience higher levels of stress related to long working hours and physical strain compared to government school teachers. However, both groups report similar levels of stress related to excessive workload. Additionally, government school teachers perceive their general working conditions to be better than those of private school teachers. These findings suggest the need for targeted interventions to address the specific stressors faced by teachers in different types of schools.

Discussion:

The findings of this study highlight significant differences in the strenuous working conditions experienced by teachers in government and private schools in the Bihar Southwest region. The "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) by Srivastava and Singh provided a robust framework for measuring these conditions.

Long Working Hours (SWC1)

The results indicate that private school teachers experience significantly higher stress related to long working hours compared to their government school counterparts. This finding is consistent with previous research which suggests that private school teachers often face longer working hours and less job security, leading to increased stress levels (Borg & Riding, 1991; Kyriacou, 2001). The higher mean score for private school teachers (2.89) compared to government school teachers (2.56) underscores the need for private schools to re-evaluate their workload policies to ensure teachers have a manageable work-life balance.

Excessive Workload (SWC2)

No significant difference was found between government and private school teachers regarding stress due to excessive workload, with mean scores of 2.76 and 2.82 respectively. This suggests that both groups experience similar levels of stress from their teaching responsibilities. This finding aligns with the literature indicating that excessive workload is a common stressor for teachers regardless of the type of institution (Antonioni et al., 2006; Travers & Cooper, 1996). To address this issue, both government and private schools need to consider implementing measures to distribute workload more evenly and provide adequate support to teachers.

Physical Strain (SWC3)

The study found that private school teachers experience significantly higher physical strain compared to government school teachers. The mean score for private school teachers (3.14) was substantially higher than that for government school teachers (2.22). This difference may be attributed to the potentially higher student-to-teacher ratios, less infrastructural support, and more demanding physical environments in private schools (Chaplain, 2008). Interventions such as providing ergonomic furniture, ensuring adequate breaks, and reducing class sizes could help alleviate physical strain for private school teachers.

General Working Conditions (SWC4)

Government school teachers reported significantly better general working conditions compared to private school teachers. The mean score for government school teachers was 3.47, compared to 2.95 for private school teachers. This result suggests that government schools may offer better job security, benefits, and resources, contributing to more favorable working conditions (Johnson et al., 2005). Improving the general working conditions in private schools, including enhancing job security and providing better resources, could help reduce the stress experienced by teachers.

Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for policy makers and school administrators. For private schools, addressing the issues of long working hours and physical strain is crucial. Implementing policies that ensure reasonable working hours and providing better physical resources could significantly reduce the stress levels of teachers. For both government and private schools, strategies to manage and distribute workload effectively are essential.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of teacher well-being for the overall quality of education. Stress reduction interventions, such as stress management workshops, professional development opportunities, and supportive administrative practices, could be beneficial for teachers in both types of schools.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it has several limitations. The sample is limited to the Bihar Southwest region, which may not be representative of other regions in Bihar or India. Future research should consider a larger and more diverse sample to generalize the findings.

Moreover, this study focuses solely on the "Strenuous Working Conditions" subscale of the OSI. Future studies could include other dimensions of occupational stress to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the stressors faced by teachers. Qualitative research could also offer deeper insights into the specific challenges and stressors experienced by teachers in different types of schools.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the comparative study of strenuous working conditions between government and private school teachers in the Bihar Southwest region revealed significant differences, with private school teachers experiencing higher stress related to long working hours and physical strain, while government school teachers reported better



general working conditions. Both groups faced similar stress levels from excessive workload. These findings suggest the need for targeted interventions, particularly in private schools, to improve working conditions and reduce stress. By implementing better workload management, providing adequate physical resources, and enhancing general working conditions, schools can support teacher well-being, ultimately benefiting the educational outcomes of their students.

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