RESEARCH PAPER

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND WORKING STYLE PREFERENCES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MEERUT DISTRICT: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT
Occupational stress is a critical issue in the teaching profession which can affect teachers' professional attitudes, satisfaction with their jobs and their working preferences. The present study is a correlational study which is titled as "Occupational Stress and Working Style Preferences among Secondary School Teachers of Meerut District". A hypothetical set of 350 secondary school teachers was taken up for illustrative analysis in this discussion. The proposed approach of analysis was demonstrated using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product–moment correlation, independent-samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the simulated analysis showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between the occupational stress and working style preference scores ($r = .390$, $p < .001$), with around 15.19% variance shared. There was no statistically significant difference between occupational stress and gender, school management type, years of teaching experience ($p > .05$) in the illustrative analysis. The findings are hypothetical and are used only to show the statistical analysis and reporting process and are not real findings of teachers in Meerut District. The study is an eye-opener on the need to consider occupational stress in conjunction with teachers' working preferences and recommends that future studies should be based on validated instruments and real field data for the validity of the conclusions.
Keywords: Occupational stress, working style preference, Secondary school teachers, Meerut district, correlation, teacher well-being.
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INTRODUCTION

The career of a teacher is not just one single work that relies on teaching itself but also on other elements such as subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management, emotional involvement and constant communication with students, parents, co-workers and school authorities (Diba et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2026; Fatima & Zafar, 2026; Ghasemi, 2026; Abdullah, 2026). Secondary school teachers are very influential in their students' academic, social, emotional and other development at a critical period in their learning (Kasemjitwat, 2026; Thompson & Hassan, 2026; Spotz, 2026; Migri, 2026; Moens et al., 2026). But the teacher's increasing professional responsibilities, administrative tasks, workload, time pressure, classroom diversity and high expectations for student academic achievement may lead to occupational stress for teachers.

Occupational stress is the psychological and physical tension that arises when an individual's resources, or ability to cope with demands, is less than those demands. Stress in the teaching profession can come from excessive workload, time pressure, student discipline, less institutional support, role ambiguity, and keeping up effective teaching practice. Teacher stress has been identified as a key research focus by Kyriacou (2001) and needs to be known in terms of its causes and effects. Likewise, Klassen and Chiu (2010) investigated the links between teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction and job stress, emphasizing the need to take into account teachers' professional experiences when exploring teachers' occupational well-being (Kılıç & Demirtay, 2026; Smee, 2026; Stanišauskienė et al., 2026; Biera & Ignacio, 2026; McIntyre et al., 2026).

Working style preferences are personal preferences for how teachers like to do their work, how they like to make decisions, how they like to communicate, how they like to manage their classrooms, how they like to collaborate with colleagues, and how they like to behave when it comes to their instruction (Shepley, 2026; Łukasik et al., 2026; Singh & Gautam, 2024; Maqsood et al., 2024; Shamo,

2023). Teachers have the choice of using structured and systematic, flexible and adaptive, independent or collaborative approaches. Multiple factors such as the individual, professional experience, institutional expectations, and school environment can shape these preferences. Awareness of teachers' working style preferences could assist in developing supportive working conditions and effective working practices in educational institutions.

There may be relationships between occupational stress and working style preferences due to the demands of the teaching profession interacting with teachers' preferred ways of planning, organising and doing their work (Cacciamani et al., 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001; Ratheeswari, n.d.; Abiera & Ignacio, n.d.). For instance, teachers who are more comfortable with having a set schedule and are also overworked in administration can have challenges during periods of unpredictable schedules and higher administrative requirements. Likewise, teachers who prefer collaborative teaching styles might also be influenced by collegial support and opportunities for professional interaction. However, this connection must be empirically studied and not assumed. It is important to note that teachers' working conditions, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion are associated (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2017).

In the Indian context, secondary school teachers have to work in a variety of institutional environment such as government, aided and private schools. Teachers' circumstances can be influenced by the differences in administration, workload, resources, class size, and expectations in their institutions. The Meerut District, in the context of geography, is a relevant context for these investigations in the secondary school.

1. Demographic profile of respondents

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by gender (N = 350)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	153	43.71%
Female	197	56.29%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Authors' Analysis

The distribution of the respondents by gender is shown in Table 1. The data indicate that 197 teachers (56.29%) are female, while 153 teachers (43.71%) are male. So, females teachers outnumber the male teachers in the sample by 44 teachers. The sample is fairly representative of males and females teachers, however. This distribution forms the basis to analyse working style preferences and occupational stress of secondary school teachers by gender.

Table 2. Distribution by School Management

School management	Frequency	Percentage
Government	114	32.57%
Private	210	60.00%
Aided	26	7.43%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Authors' Analysis

A total of 350 respondents were analysed according to school management as shown in Table 2. The data indicate that the largest number of teachers within the sample are employed in private schools: 210 teachers or 60.00%. This is followed by 114 government school teachers (32.57%) and 26 teachers who work in aided school (7.43%). Therefore, the largest proportion of respondents is private school teachers whilst the smallest proportion is aided school teachers. The distribution of the teachers consists of three types of school management, which can be used as a foundation for analysing stress and working style preferences by school management type.

Table 3. Distribution by School Location

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	199	56.86%
Rural	151	43.14%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Authors' Analysis

Table 3 shows the distribution of 350 respondents by the place of their schools in Meerut District. From the table, it can be seen that 56.86% of the teachers are from urban schools, while 43.14% of the teachers are from rural schools. Thus, the proportion of teachers working in urban schools is higher than that of teachers working in rural schools. There were 48 more teachers in the other group, a difference of 13.72 percentage points. The data show in general that the sample consists of teachers from both rural and urban schools, and that the larger number of teachers are from urban schools. This distribution serves as a foundation to analyse occupational stress and preference of working style by school site.

Table 4: Teaching Experience

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
0–5 years	89	25.43%
6–10 years	104	29.71%
11–15 years	80	22.86%

16 years and above	77	22.00%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Authors' Analysis

Table 4 shows the distribution of 350 people who responded according to their teaching experience. The data shows that the highest number of teachers are those with 6-10 years of experience (104, 29.71%), and then those with 0-5 years of experience (89, 25.43%). In addition, 80 teachers (22.86%) have 11-15 years of experience and 77 teachers (22.00%) have 16 years or more of experience as teachers. Therefore, teachers who have 6–10 years of experience make up the largest percentage of the sample, while teachers who have 16 years or more experience make up the smallest percentage. Overall, the sample is representative of teachers at differing stages of their career, allowing an opportunity to explore occupational stress and working style preference at varying levels of teaching experience.

2. Descriptive analysis of the main variables

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation of study variables

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum–maximum
Occupational stress score	350	49.91	9.70	20–74
Working style preference score	350	60.75	12.20	26–93

Source: Authors' Analysis

The descriptive data of the two study variables to 350 respondents are shown in Table 5. The occupational stress score mean is 49.91 with a standard deviation of 9.70, maximum 74 and minimum 20. The mean working style preference score is 60.75 with a standard deviation of 12.20 and a range of 26-93. The standard deviations reflect the range of scores that the individual respondents obtain from their mean scores, e.g., working style preference scores have higher absolute standard deviations than occupational stress scores.

3. Correlational analysis

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Between Occupational Stress and Working Style Preferences

Variables	N	Pearson's r	95% confidence interval	t	df	p
Occupational stress and working style preference scores	350	.390	[.297, .475]	7.895	348	< .001

Source: Authors' Analysis

Table 6 shows the Pearson correlations between occupational stress and working style preference scores of 350 secondary school teachers. The results led to a positive and significant correlation between these two variables. This indicates that the higher a person scores on occupational stress, the higher the working style preference score. The 95% confidence interval is (0.297, 0.475) which suggests that there is a positive association. The t value calculated is 7.895, which has 348 degrees of freedom, thus the correlation is statistically significant. Hence, it is concluded that 'there is no significant relationship between occupational stress and working style preferences' hypothesis is rejected.

4. Coefficient of determination

Table 7. Shared Variance Between the Two Variables

Statistic	Result
Pearson correlation	0.389753
Coefficient of determination	0.151907
Percentage of shared variance	15.19%

Source: Authors' Analysis

The shared variance between occupational stress and working style preference among secondary school teachers is presented in Table 7. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.389753, and the coefficient of determination (\(r^2\)) is 0.151907. This means that about 15.19% of the variation of this one variable is due to the other variable. In other words, occupational stress and working style preference scores have a moderate positive association, with about 15.19% of their variability overlapping statistically. The other 84.81% of the variance is not accounted for by these variables and could be due to other variables and/or individual differences.

5. Comparison of occupational stress by gender

Table 8. Independent-Samples Comparison of Occupational Stress Scores

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	153	50.44	9.73
Female	197	49.50	9.68

Source: Authors' Analysis

Table 8 compares the occupational stress scores of Male and Female Secondary school teachers. The results indicate that male teachers (N=153) have a mean occupational stress score of 50.44 (SD=9.73), whereas female teachers (N=197) have a mean score of 49.50 (SD=9.68). Therefore, the male teachers have a slightly higher mean occupational stress score than the female teachers (M=52.35, SD=12.45 vs. M=51.41, SD=10.18). The standard deviations are almost the same, suggesting that there is a similar level of spread within each group. The result of an independent-samples t-test would be needed, however, to see if this difference is statistically significant. Thus, a meaningful gender difference in occupational stress can currently not be drawn.

Table 9. Welch's Independent-Samples t-Test:

Statistic	Result
t	0.899
Degrees of freedom	326.02
p	.369

Source: Authors' Analysis

The independent-samples, t-test was used as shown in Table 9 to investigate if there was a significant difference between the male and female secondary school teachers on the occupational stress scores. The results indicate that the difference is not statistically significant, t (326.02) =0.899, p=.369. The null hypothesis is not rejected since the p-value is larger than the significance level of .05. The Mean score of the male teachers (50.44) was slightly higher than that of the female teachers (49.50) but the difference was not statistically significant. Thus, there is not any significant difference between the occupational stress scores of the female teachers and male teachers in this study sample of 350 teachers.

6. Comparison of occupational stress by school management

Table 10. Occupational Stress by School Management Category

School management	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Government	114	49.93	9.20
Private	210	50.00	9.73
Aided	26	49.04	11.78

Source: Authors' Analysis

Table 10 shows that the mean and standard deviation of occupational stress scores for teachers in secondary schools in government, private and aided schools. The results indicate that the mean score for occupational stress of the private school teachers (N = 210) is 50.00 (SD = 9.73) followed closely by the mean for government school teachers (N = 114) at 49.93 (SD = 9.20). Aided school teachers (N=26) have the lowest mean score of 49.04 (SD=11.78). The differences in mean scores between the three categories are not that much, and the scores for the aided school teachers are more variable. But to test the statistical significance of these differences, a one-way ANOVA or an appropriate alternative test should be used. The results give a description of the occupational stress within the various categories of school management.

Table 11. One-way ANOVA:

Statistic	Result
F	0.115
Degrees of freedom	2, 347
p	.892

Source: Authors' Analysis

To check if there was significant difference between the occupational stress of teachers from government, private and aided schools, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed in Table 11. Considering the results, there was no significant difference, F (2,347) = 0.115, p=.892. The null hypothesis is not rejected because the p value is larger than the significance level which is .05. The differences in mean occupational stress score between private school teachers (50.00), government school teachers (49.93) and aided school teachers (49.04) were not statistically significant. Thus, the results indicate that the secondary school teachers in this sample of 350 teachers did not significantly differ on occupational stress based on the school management categories.

7. Comparison of occupational stress by teaching experience

Table 12. Occupational Stress According to Teaching Experience

Teaching experience	N	Mean	Standard deviation
0–5 years	89	51.22	10.33
6–10 years	104	49.00	9.52
11–15 years	80	48.39	9.47
16 years and above	77	51.19	9.23

Source: Authors' Analysis

Table 12 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of occupational stress scores of 350

secondary school teachers in various groups according to their teaching experience. The results reveal that teachers with 0-5 years' experience have a mean stress score of 51.22 (SD=10.33), which is almost the same with teachers having 16 years' experience or more, having a mean of 51.19 (SD=9.23). The mean score for teachers with 6-10 years of experience is 49.00 (SD=9.52) and for teachers with 11-15 years of experience, the lowest mean score is 48.39 (SD=9.47). So, the score of occupational stress is comparatively high for the least experienced and most experienced teachers and low for teachers having 11-15 years of experience. A one-way ANOVA is needed to ascertain if these differences are statistically significant, however. These results serve as descriptive data for analysis of the relationship between teaching experience and occupational stress.

Table 13. One-way ANOVA:

Statistic	Result
F	1.974
Degrees of freedom	3, 346
p	.118

Source: Authors' Analysis

To compare the differences in occupational stress between teachers with varying teaching experience, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used as shown in Table 13. The results showed there was no significant difference, F (3,346) = 1.974, p=.118. The p-value is not less than the .05 significance level, thus the null hypothesis is not rejected. The mean occupational stress scores for teachers across the four occupational stress experience groups did not differ significantly; teachers with the highest experience (0–5) had the highest score at 51.22, with teachers in the following group (16 plus) being very close at 51.19. The results indicate then, that there is no significant difference in occupational stress experienced by the secondary school teachers in this sample (N=350) depending on their teaching experience.

8. Summary of hypothesis testing

Table 14. Summary of Illustrative Statistical Results

Hypothesis tested	Statistical result	Decision at .05
Relationship between occupational stress and working style preference scores	r = .390, p < .001	Reject the null hypothesis
Gender difference in occupational stress	t = 0.899, p = .369	Fail to reject the null hypothesis
Differences by school management	F = 0.115, p = .892	Fail to reject the null hypothesis
Differences by teaching experience	F = 1.974, p = .118	Fail to reject the null hypothesis

Source: Authors' Analysis 9. Discussion and conclusion

The analysis shows that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between occupational stress and working style preference scores as well as non-significant differences between the groups in terms of gender, school administration and teaching experience.

Researchers have previously examined teacher stress with regard to professional and psychological issues. For instance, Klassen and Chiu (2010) explored teacher self-efficacy, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher job stress; and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) investigated teacher motivation, teacher self-efficacy, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher emotional exhaustion. These publications give background information to the research problem, but they do not substantiate the numbers found in the present research.

The present study may be helpful to the field of education because of the fact that it may explore the relationship between occupational stress and working style preferences among the teachers of secondary schools in Meerut District.

Implications of the Study

1. Implications for Teachers

The research can enhance the awareness of secondary school teachers regarding the significance of occupational stress and the potential link between occupational stress and teachers' working style preferences. It can encourage teachers to use good time management, optimize their job arrangements, build coping strategies and strive for a healthy work-life balance.

2. Meaning for School Administration

It is hoped that the study will be helpful to school administrators in identifying factors related to occupational stress of school personnel. Administrators can make decisions based on the actual findings that improve workload distribution, ensure adequate resources, foster collaboration among teachers, and create a positive working climate that supports teachers' professional health.

3. Implications for Teacher Education Institutions

The study could also offer some valuable information for teacher education institutions in their PD programmes. Programmes could be developed around stress management, classroom management, communication skills, time management and adaptation to working practices to enable teachers to handle their professional difficulties more effectively.

4. Educational Policy implications

The research could help educational policymakers grasp the significance of teachers' well-being in the profession. The results obtained can guide policies on workload management, institutional support, professional development and building healthy working environments in secondary schools.

5. Working Style Preferences Implications

The results of the study might lend insights into the relationships between teachers' preferred planning, organizational, decision-making, and collaborative practices and occupational stress. This information can contribute to schools fostering flexible and supportive work practices and acknowledging the diversity of teachers' work.

6. Implications for Future Research

The research results could lay a groundwork for further research related to occupational stress and working style preference of teachers from various types of education institutions. Larger samples, other districts, and other variables like job satisfaction, teacher self-efficacy, workload, and institutional support can be included in future studies to provide a more comprehensive description of teachers' professional experiences.

7. Overall Implication

The study can help to make the understanding of occupational stress and working style preference of secondary school teachers in Meerut District better. It might provide some helpful information for teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, and policy makers to design initiatives that make teachers' professional life better. These implications, however, should only be substantiated by actual information gathered from respondents, for now the only information given in the statistics is hypothetical.

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