"EDUCATING THROUGH EXHAUSTION: THE LINK BETWEEN STRESS AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IN TEACHERS"

Ms. Eashani BSc Clinical Psychology, Dept. of Psychology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, NIMS University, Jaipur

Abstract
Teachers play a crucial role in shaping society by guiding students' intellectual and personal development, yet they often face significant occupational stress that can impact their well-being. Data from 128 teachers using the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) reveals an average stress score of 141.3 with considerable variability, indicating that while some manage stress well, others experience high levels that may lead to burnout. Similarly, physical health symptoms measured by the PHQ-15 show moderate variability, with some teachers reporting few symptoms and others experiencing more severe issues. Importantly, a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.571$) between stress and physical health symptoms suggests that increased stress is associated with more frequent physical complaints like headaches and fatigue. These findings highlight the strong connection between occupational stress and physical health in teachers, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems to promote their overall health and effectiveness, which ultimately benefits both educators and their students.

Keywords: PHYSICAL HEALTH, STRESS, TEACHER

Introduction

Teachers are fundamental pillars of society, serving as beacons who light the way toward knowledge, wisdom, and the development of character for countless generations of students. Their role extends far beyond the classroom—they shape not only the minds of their students but also their values, dreams, and aspirations. A teacher serves as a mentor, role model, counselor, and at times, a second parent.
From the very first lessons in early childhood to advanced concepts in higher education, teachers are present at every stage of a person's academic journey. They devote their time, energy, and heart to nurturing the potential within each student, often going above and beyond their formal responsibilities to ensure no one is left behind. With patience and dedication, they help students overcome challenges, build confidence, and develop the skills they need to succeed in life.

Good teachers don't just teach subjects—they teach life. They instill discipline, ignite curiosity, and encourage critical thinking. They create a safe and supportive environment where students feel valued and empowered to express themselves. In doing so, teachers lay the foundation for a better society, one student at a time.

Throughout history, great leaders, scientists, writers, and thinkers have all been shaped by the influence of dedicated educators. Even in the face of evolving technology and modern challenges, the role of a teacher remains irreplaceable. No machine or software can replicate the human connection, understanding, and encouragement that a teacher provides.

In every corner of the world, teachers deserve recognition and respect for their hard work, compassion, and commitment to education. They do more than deliver lessons—they build futures. As we reflect on their contributions, we are reminded that behind every successful individual is a teacher who believed in them.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical health is a vital aspect of overall well-being and plays a foundational role in leading a balanced and fulfilling life. It refers to the condition of the body and its ability to perform daily activities with energy, strength, and endurance. Maintaining physical health involves taking care of the body through

regular exercise, a nutritious diet, adequate rest, and avoiding harmful habits like smoking or excessive alcohol consumption.

A healthy body supports a healthy mind. When we are physically fit, we are more likely to have better mental focus, emotional stability, and the energy needed to pursue our goals. Physical health also strengthens the immune system, reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, and improves the quality and longevity of life.

In today's fast-paced world, people often neglect their physical health due to busy schedules, stress, and sedentary lifestyles. However, even small daily habits—like walking, stretching, staying hydrated, and eating balanced meals—can make a significant difference. Physical health is not just about avoiding illness; it is about building a lifestyle that supports strength, resilience, and vitality.

As awareness grows about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, it is essential for individuals, families, and communities to make physical well-being a top priority. When we take care of our bodies, we are better equipped to face challenges, stay productive, and enjoy life to its fullest.

STRESS

Stress is a natural response of the body and mind to challenging or demanding situations. Stress is an emotional or physical strain that arises from any event or thought causing feelings of frustration, anxiety, or being overwhelmed. While a small amount of stress can be motivating and help people stay focused and alert, excessive or prolonged stress can have serious negative effects on both mental and physical health.

In today’s fast-paced world, stress has become a common part of daily life. From academic pressure and family responsibilities to financial concerns and health issues, various factors contribute to the stress individuals experience. If not managed properly, stress can lead to problems such as anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, weakened immunity, and even heart-related illnesses.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Occupational stress refers to the stress experienced in the workplace due to job-related factors. It can arise from long working hours, high workloads, lack of support, job insecurity, or conflicts with colleagues or supervisors. When workplace demands exceed a person’s ability to cope, it can lead to burnout, reduced productivity, and poor job satisfaction. Managing occupational stress is important for maintaining a healthy work-life balance and promoting overall well-being.

Methodology

Objective

- To explore the relationship between work-related stress and physical health conditions in teachers.

Hypotheses

- Teachers experiencing higher levels of stress are more likely to report physical health problems such as fatigue, headaches, and sleep disturbances.

Review of Literature

Recent transformations in the teaching profession have been linked to rising stress levels among teachers, particularly in Italy, where schools have undergone continuous changes driven by significant political, social, and economic shifts. This study explored the relationship between occupational stress, job satisfaction, and physical health among 565 Italian upper secondary school teachers, using a 32-item questionnaire to assess perceived job difficulties, satisfaction, and physical symptoms. Findings revealed that workload, perceptions of the work environment, senior management, and attitudes toward change were key stressors. Notably, both workload and attitude toward change had direct and indirect

effects on physical symptoms, the latter mediated by job satisfaction, which was found to reduce physical symptoms overall. These results highlight the importance of identifying specific stressors to mitigate stress and its physical consequences, ultimately promoting the well-being of teachers and the broader educational environment.

This systematic review aimed to identify the sources and consequences of chronic stress, as well as potential stress moderators, among physical education (PE) teachers, and to derive implications for future research and teacher education. From an initial pool of 2,483 publications, 47 met the inclusion criteria. Key stressors identified included the curriculum, inadequate facilities and equipment, the low status of PE, and student discipline issues. Most studies focused on burnout as a consequence of chronic stress, generally reporting low to moderate levels, although 20–25% of PE teachers experienced high burnout levels. The review highlights the need for future research to address the full stress process, apply more appropriate stress measurement tools, and explore potential stress moderators. Practically, the findings suggest that PE teachers should receive comprehensive pre- and in-service training focused on recognizing stress sources and developing effective coping strategies, alongside targeted interventions to prevent health-related outcomes such as voice disorders.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between stress and physical health among teachers. A total of 128 male and female teachers participated in the study, selected through non-probability convenience sampling to ensure a diverse sample. Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, which included standardized items related to stress and physical health symptoms. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically. The collected data were organized using Microsoft Excel and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were computed, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between stress levels and physical health outcomes. Ethical considerations such as participant anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw were strictly observed.

Result and Discussion

1. **TEACHER STRESS INVENTORY**

MEAN, MODE, MEDIAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

S.NO.	VARIABLE	N	MEAN	MEDIAN	SD
1.	TSI	128	141.3	141.5	37.554

TABLE 1

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM RANGE

CATEGORY	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
VALUES	59	245

TABLE 2

2. **PHYSICAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (PHQ-15)**

MEAN, MODE, MEDIAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

S.NO.	VARIABLE	N	MEAN	MEDIAN	SD
1.	PHQ-15	128	14.469	15	6.6817

TABLE 3

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM RANGE

CATEGORY	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
VALUES	1	30

TABLE 4

Teacher Stress Inventory

TABLE 1 AND 2

The data from the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) involving 128 teachers shows that the average stress score is 141.3, with a median very close at 141.5. This close proximity between the mean and median suggests that the distribution of stress scores among the teachers is fairly balanced and does not have extreme skewness. However, the standard deviation of 37.55 indicates that there is a substantial spread in the stress levels reported by the teachers. In practical terms, this means that while some teachers report stress levels near the average, others experience much higher or lower stress. The wide range of scores, from a minimum of 59 to a maximum of 245, further supports this observation, showing that the degree of stress experienced varies greatly among individuals. This variability could be due to numerous factors such as differences in workload, classroom environment, administrative support, personal coping mechanisms, or external stressors. Understanding this range and variation is important because it highlights that while some teachers may be managing stress effectively, others may be at risk of burnout or decreased job satisfaction. These insights can help in tailoring support and interventions to meet the diverse needs of teachers more effectively.

Physical Health Questionnaire (PHQ-15)

TABLE 3 AND 4

The data from the Physical Health Questionnaire (PHQ-15), collected from 128 participants, shows an average (mean) score of 14.47, with a median score of 15. The close similarity between the mean and median suggests the distribution of physical health symptom scores is fairly symmetrical, without significant skewness. The standard deviation of 6.68 indicates there is moderate variability in physical health symptoms among the participants—some report relatively few symptoms, while others report many more. The range of scores spans from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 30, highlighting a wide variation in symptom severity within the group. This broad range and moderate variability suggest that while some individuals experience minimal physical health issues, others report a high level of symptoms, which could reflect differences in underlying health conditions, lifestyle factors, or stress levels.

Correlations

		Physical Health Questionnaire (PHQ-15)
Teacher Stress Inventory	Pearson Correlation	0.571118
	N	128

TABLE 5

The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.571** between the Physical Health Questionnaire (PHQ-15) scores and the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) scores, based on 128 teachers, indicates a moderate positive relationship. This means that teachers who report higher levels of stress also tend to report more physical health symptoms. The strength of this correlation (0.571) suggests that stress and physical health symptoms are meaningfully linked but not perfectly aligned—other factors may also influence physical health. In practical terms, this finding suggests that as teacher stress increases, physical complaints such as headaches, fatigue, or other somatic symptoms measured by the PHQ-15 are likely to increase as well. This highlights the potential impact of occupational stress on teachers' physical well-being, emphasizing the importance of addressing stress to improve overall health.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.571) between teacher stress, as measured by the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), and physical health symptoms, assessed using the Physical Health Questionnaire (PHQ-15), among 128 teachers between the age group of 25-65 years. This correlation indicates that teachers experiencing higher levels of occupational stress are also more likely to report a greater number and severity of physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, and muscle pain. This relationship highlights the significant impact that psychological stress can have on

physical health, suggesting that stress experienced in the teaching environment does not only affect mental well-being but also manifests physically. Given the demanding nature of the teaching profession, these findings emphasize the importance of addressing stress through workplace interventions, support systems, and health promotion programs to help reduce the physical health burden on teachers.

While the correlation is substantial, it is important to note that this study identifies an association rather than causation. Other factors, such as lifestyle, pre-existing health conditions, or external stressors, may also contribute to physical symptoms. Overall, the data underscores the critical need for comprehensive strategies that target both stress reduction and physical health maintenance to enhance teachers' overall quality of life and job performance.

Reference

Bollen, K., & Lennox, R. (1991). Conventional wisdom on measurement: A structural equation perspective. Psycho-logical Bulletin, 110, 305–314.

Brief, A. P., Burke, M. J., George, J. M., Robinson, B., &Webster, J. (1988). Should negative affectivity remain anunmeasured variable in the study of job stress. Journal ofApplied Psychology, 73, 193–199.

Campbell, D. T., & Fiske, D. W. (1959). Convergent anddiscriminant validation by the multitrait–multimethodmatrix. Psychological Bulletin, 56, 81–105.

Carayon, P., Smith, M. J., & Haims, M. C. (1999). Workorganization, job stress, and work-related musculoskele-tal disorders. Human Factors, 41, 644 – 663.

Cohen, S. (1996). Psychological stress, immunity, and up-per respiratory infections. Current Directions in Psycho-logical Science, 5, 86 –90.

Cohen, S., & Herbert, T. B. (1996). Health psychology:Psychological factors and physical disease from the per-spective of human psychoneuroimmunology. Annual Re-view of Psychology, 47, 113–142.

Cooper, C. L., Sloan, S., & Williams, S. (1988). Occupationalstress indicator. Windsor, England: NFER-Nelson.Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internalstructure of tests. Psychometrika, 6, 297–334.

Cronbach, L. J., & Meehl, P. A. (1955). Construct validityin psychological tests. Psychological Bulletin, 32,281–302.

Davis, M. C., Matthews, K. A., Meihlahn, E. N., & Kiss,J. E. (1995). Are job characteristics related to fibrogenlevels in middle aged women? Health Psychology, 14,310 –318.

Evans, G. W., & Johnson, D. (2000). Stress and open-officenoise. Journal of Applied Psychology, 85, 779 –783.

Fayers, P. M., Hand, D. J., Bjordal, K., & Groenvold, M.(1997). Causal indicators in quality of life research.Quality of Life Research, 6, 393– 406.

Floyd, F. J., & Widaman, K. F. (1995). Factor analysis inthe development and refinement of clinical assessmentinstruments. Psychological Assessment, 7, 286 –299.

Fried, Y., Rowland, K. M., & Ferris, G. R. (1984). Thephysiological measurement of work stress: A critique.Personnel Psychology, 37, 583– 615

