



Perceived Stress, Resilience, and Psychological Well-being among Teachers in Government Schools: A Cross –Sectional Study from Madurai, India

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Abstract

Background: Teaching is a demanding profession with significant implications for mental health. Teachers working in Government schools administered by the Madurai City Corporation run by the Madurai City Corporation, Tamil Nadu, often face multiple occupational and contextual stressors, highlighting the need to examine psychological factors that may buffer stress.

Methods: A cross-sectional correlational study was conducted among 166 teachers from these schools in Tamil Nadu, India. Standardized measures assessed perceived stress, psychological well-being, and resilience. The associations among these psychological variables and their relationship with selected demographic and professional characteristics, including gender, teaching experience, teacher grade, and school-related factors, were analysed using correlation and group comparison techniques.

Results: Perceived stress was significantly negatively associated with psychological well-being and resilience, while resilience was positively associated with psychological well-being, indicating strong interrelationships among these constructs. Significant variations were observed across teacher characteristics, particularly in relation to teaching experience and work context.

Conclusions: Resilience and psychological well-being act as protective factors against stress among teachers. These findings support the need for resilience-building and mental health promotion interventions in public school systems.

Keywords: School mental health; Perceived stress, Psychological Well-being, Resilience, Psychological; Occupational stress; Government School Teachers; India

1. Introduction:

Teaching is one of the most intellectually and emotionally demanding professions. Beyond academic instruction, teachers are expected to foster students' character, social-emotional development, classroom behaviour, and learning skills while simultaneously meeting increasing curricular, administrative, managerial, and technological demands. These expanding responsibilities expose teachers to considerable occupational stress, making psychological wellbeing a critical concern in educational research (Kyriacou, 2001). Teacher well-being has been consistently associated with professional commitment, classroom effectiveness, leadership, organizational citizenship, and student engagement and achievement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Conversely, prolonged occupational stress

contributes to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and reduced professional efficacy (Collie et al., 2012).

Recognising the importance of teacher wellbeing, both international and national policies have highlighted the need to support teachers. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) identifies teachers as central to achieving quality education, while India's National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) emphasizes strengthening teachers' professional engagement and working conditions. These policy initiatives underscore the importance of understanding the factors that influence teachers' psychological well-being. Among these factors, perceived stress has emerged as a major concern. It refers to an individual's appraisal that environmental demands exceed available coping resources (Cohen et al., 1988). Teachers frequently encounter heavy workloads, classroom management issues, administrative responsibilities, role conflicts, time constraints, and limited organizational support, all of which can adversely affect their professional functioning and personal well-being (Kyriacou, 2001). Psychological wellbeing, conceptualized by Ryff (1989) as comprising autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relationships, and self-acceptance, enables teachers to cope effectively with these challenges and sustain professional performance.

Resilience has gained increasing attention as an important psychological resource that enables individuals to adapt positively despite adversity. It is shaped by personal, organizational, and social factors and has been shown to buffer the negative effects of occupational stress while promoting psychological wellbeing (Mansfield et al., 2016). Individual characteristics such as optimism, emotional stability, coping skills, and professional commitment further influence teachers' ability to manage workplace demands (Feldman, 2017). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides a useful framework for understanding these relationships by proposing that personal resources, including resilience, mitigate the adverse effects of job demands on well-being and work outcomes.

Although research has established the importance of teachers' psychological wellbeing, relatively few studies have examined the interplay between perceived stress, resilience, and psychological wellbeing among Indian Government school teachers. These teachers often work in resource-constrained environments, manage large and diverse classrooms, and shoulder extensive academic and administrative responsibilities, making them particularly vulnerable to occupational stress.

From a social work perspective, promoting teachers' psychological wellbeing is essential for strengthening school mental health, enhancing educational outcomes, and fostering healthy communities. Understanding the relationships among perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being can inform evidence-based interventions, teacher support programmes, and educational policies aimed at improving teacher effectiveness and student well-being.

Therefore, the present study aimed to: (1) examine the relationship between perceived stress, resilience, and psychological wellbeing among Government school teachers; and (2) assess differences in these variables across selected socio-demographic and professional characteristics. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of social work and educational research by providing evidence to guide school-based mental health

interventions, teacher well-being initiatives, and policy decisions that support sustainable educational and community development.

2. Methods:

2.1 Study Setting

The study was conducted under the Happy Schooling Programme, an initiative of school mental health by MS Chellamuthu Trust and Research Foundation (MSCT&RF) in collaboration with HCL Foundation. This programme was conducted amongst government schools run by Madurai City Corporation. It will create awareness about mental health and provide tools to develop positive qualities and skills to deal with various aspects of life.

2.2 Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional correlational design was adopted for the study. In total, 166 teachers who attended a one-day teacher well-being training program organized by MSCTRF were recruited from government schools run by Madurai City Corporation, Tamil Nadu, India. The study was conducted among teachers working in various government schools managed by Madurai Corporation who participated in a one-day teacher well-being training program. The training was conducted on psychological well-being, appreciative living, work-life balance leading to higher adversity quotients. The participants were recruited through convenience sampling, and those who gave informed consents were included in the study.

2.3 Measures

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed by the researchers to collect the socio-demographic and professional details of the participants. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) by Cohen et al. (1988) was used to measure stress levels in teachers. It is a self-report questionnaire with ten items that taps into the extent to which one perceived their life unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelming in the past month. The six-factor psychological well-being scale by Ryff (2011) was used to measure psychological well-being. The items tapped into the six facets of psychological well-being, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance. Finally, the resilience of the participants was assessed using a 15-item resilience scale. It was adopted from the resilience scale developed by Wagnild and Young (1993). During the training program, the participants were asked to rate the items using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaires were filled out by the participants voluntarily and anonymously.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 14.0. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarise the socio-demographic, professional, and school-related characteristics of the participants, as well as the levels of perceived stress, psychological well-being, and resilience. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to examine differences in perceived stress, psychological well-being, and resilience across selected teacher groups, including sex, professional training status, teaching experience, and relevant school-related characteristics. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was performed to assess the bivariate relationships among the primary study variables, namely perceived stress, psychological well-being, and resilience. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee of the M.S. Chellamuthu Trust and Research Foundation (MSCTRF). Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed of the study objectives and procedures, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

3. Results:

3.1 Participant Characteristics

A total of one hundred and sixty-six government school teachers who were employed by the Madurai City Corporation were selected to participate in the present study. The sample included teachers who differed in terms of teaching experience, academic qualification, and posts held at the Government School. The variables selected for the purpose were assessed to arrive at a conclusion on whether perceived stress, resilience, and psychological wellbeing varied across the selected variables or not.

Table 1
Socio-Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Teachers

Variable / Subgroup	n (N = 166)	%
Gender		
Male	24	14.46
Female	142	85.54
School Level		
High School (8-10th Grade)	34	20.48
Higher Secondary (11-12 th Grade)	132	79.52
Teacher Designation		
BT.Assistant Teachers	136	81.93
PG. Assistant Teachers	30	18.07
Type of School		
Boys' School	17	10.24
Girls' School	90	54.22
Co-educational School	59	35.54
Years of Teaching Experience		
Below 10 Years	22	13.25
11-20 Years	74	44.58
21 Years and Above	70	42.17

Table 2
Association Between Demographic and Workplace Variables and Perceived Stress, Resilience, and Psychological Well-Being

Variable/ Subgroup	Perceived Stress M(SD)	t (df) (p)	Resilience M(SD)	t (df) (p)	Psychological Well-being M(SD)	t (df) (p)
Gender	52.8	0.190	68.2	0.260	79.7	0.940
Male	(9.7)	(0.215)	(8.1)	(0.327)	(8.6)	(0.174)
	53.2		69.2		77.7	
Female	(9.4)		(5.2)		(9.7)	
School Level	51.3		69.4		81.1	3.230
High School	(7.1)		(8.2)		(4.7)	(0.002)
(8–10th Grade)	53.6	1.470	57.1	5.690	77.2	
Higher Secondary	(9.9)	(0.322)	(8.3)	(0.001)	(10.3)	
(11–12 th Grade)						
Teacher Designation	53.5	1.200	66.1	1.358	77.8	0.600
BT. Assistant	(9.5)	(0.236)	(8.5)	(0.137)	(9.0)	(0.547)
Teachers	51.3		67.3		78.9	
PG. Assistant	(9.1)		(7.1)		(11.9)	
Teachers						

Table 3
Differences in Perceived Stress, Resilience, and Psychological Well-Being Based on Type of School

Variable	Boys' School M (SD)	Girls' School M (SD)	Co-educational School M (SD)	F (2,163)	p / η^2
Perceived Stress	55.0 (8.6)	59.7 (9.5)	50.2 (9.6)	4.580	p=.001, η^2 =.062
Resilience	65.2 (7.6)	69.8 (9.4)	55.9 (8.7)	8.780	p<.001, η^2 =.076
Psychological Well-Being	75.6 (7.4)	80.4 (10.7)	71.1 (8.2)	5.960	p=.001, η^2 =.080

Table 4
Differences in Perceived Stress, Resilience, and Psychological Well-Being Based on Years of Teaching Experience

Variable	Below 10 Years M (SD)	11–20 Years M (SD)	21 Years and Above M (SD)	F (2,163)	p / η^2
Perceived Stress	50.9 (8.8)	54.7 (10.1)	58.9 (8.8)	5.820	p=.001, η^2 =.058

Resilience	58.9 (9.2)	64.2 (9.6)	70.2 (7.2)	9.460	p<.001, η^2 =.082
Psychological Well-Being	78.4 (8.6)	75.9 (10.1)	80.1 (8.9)	3.520	p=.032, η^2 =.030

Table 5
Correlations Among Perceived Stress, Resilience, and Psychological Well-Being

Study Variable	n	M	SD	PSS	RES	PWB
Perceived Stress (PSS)	166	53.15	9.45	—		-0.613**
Resilience (RES)	166	68.26	8.67	-0.675**	—	0.703**
Psychological Well-Being (PWB)	166	78.01	9.57			—

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

3.2 Results

The socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. A total of 166 teachers participated in the study. The majority were female, employed in higher secondary schools, and designated as Bachelor of Teaching Assistants. More than half of the participants worked in girls’ schools, and most had 11–20 years of teaching experience.

The results of the independent-samples t-test examining differences in perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being according to gender, school level, and teacher designation are presented in Table 2. Significant differences were observed based on school level. Teachers working in high schools reported significantly higher resilience and psychological well-being than those working in higher secondary schools. However, no significant difference in perceived stress was found between the two school levels. In addition, no statistically significant gender differences were observed in perceived stress, resilience, or psychological well-being. Similarly, teacher designation was not significantly associated with any of the three outcome variables.

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examining differences based on the type of school are presented in Table 3. Significant differences were observed in perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being across the three categories of schools. Teachers working in girls’ schools demonstrated comparatively higher mean scores for perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being than teachers working in boys’ schools and co-educational schools. The observed effect sizes ranged from small to moderate.

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results based on years of teaching experience. Teachers with 21 years or more of teaching experience reported the highest levels of perceived stress and resilience, while also demonstrating better psychological well-being than teachers with fewer years of teaching experience.

Table 5 presents the results of the analysis of the relationship between perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being. Perceived stress was negatively correlated with

both psychological well-being and resilience, whereas the relationship between resilience and psychological wellbeing was positive and strong.

4. Discussion:

The present study aimed to investigate the relationships among perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being of teachers working in government schools run by Madurai City Corporation. Significant relationships were found among the study variables which highlights the need for sustaining psychological resources for effective teaching and psychological wellbeing of teachers.

The relationship between perceived stress and the other two variables was negative while that of resilience and psychological wellbeing was positive. Similar results have been reported by previous researchers which indicate that occupational stress has a detrimental effect on teachers' socio-emotional skills, adjustment, job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing (Kyriacou, 2001; Collie et al., 2012). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) in their study also found that occupational stress had a negative relationship with teachers' social-emotional competence which in turn influences classroom behaviour and learning environment. Thus, it can be argued that teacher perceived stress should be managed so that the teachers can function optimally in terms of psychological wellbeing and productivity. Resilience was found to have a positive relationship with psychological wellbeing. The result further implies that higher level of resilience among teachers will lead to higher level of psychological wellbeing. Similar results were reported Gu & Day (2007) who found that resilience predicted teacher effectiveness while Mansfield et.al. (2016) stated that organisational support and professional learning influenced teacher resilience directly. It can be argued that teacher resilience is a key factor in influencing psychological wellbeing. The findings further provide partial support for the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001) in explaining the role of personal resources on psychological wellbeing directly and adversely while resilience as a personal resource is likely to influence psychological wellbeing positively.

The study further found that there were significant differences in teacher resilience and psychological wellbeing across school level, school type and years of experience. However, no significant differences were found in perceived stress, resilience and psychological wellbeing between male and female teachers among teachers with different professional wellbeing. It can be argued that organizational factors have a greater influence on teacher wellbeing compared to individual factors.

In summary, the present study provided an insight into the relationships that exist among perceived stress, resilience, and psychological wellbeing of teachers. The study found that higher levels of resilience among teachers lead to lower levels of perceived stress and higher levels of psychological wellbeing which supports the notion that resilience is a desirable individual resource in teaching.

The findings of the study align with the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UNESCO, 2015) and the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 which call for improving teacher education, learning environments and promoting sustainable development through quality education.

The present study contributes to understanding the factors that influence teacher wellbeing by reporting the relationships that exist among perceived stress, resilience and

psychological wellbeing of teachers working in Government schools in Tamil Nadu. Further studies exploring causal relationship among the variables and interventions to improve teacher wellbeing based on the findings of the present study would be beneficial for future research.

4.1 Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

This study's strengths comprise inclusion of psychological measures in assessment, which improves reliability since standardized psychological measures were used. The study also involved teachers from different schools which provides insight into the government education system, Tamil Nadu.

However, like any other study, the current research has various limitations. First, the study has a cross-sectional design which limits the interpretation of cause and effect of the observed variables. Secondly, the current study relied on self-reported measures which might have caused response bias. Lastly, the study was conducted only in government schools run by Madurai City Corporation hence limiting the wider application of the conclusions.

I would like future studies to adopt a cross-sectional and intervention design to elaborate further on the role of resilience and psychological wellbeing and establish causal relationships between the variables. There is also a need for future studies to replicate this study using a larger sample size and different setting generalizing the results and testing the role of resilience and wellbeing interventions for teachers' mental health.

5. Implications:

5.1 Educational Implications

The results described the importance of teacher wellbeing in education. The school management should develop teachers' abilities related to stress management, resilience, teaching and balancing between work and professional life to improve their wellbeing.

5.2 School Mental Health Implications

Teacher wellbeing should be embedded into school mental health programmes, wherein the main focus should be made on developing teachers' stress management and psychoeducational competencies, encouraging resilience building practices, and consulting multidisciplinary school staff. This will ensure an appropriate level of psychological wellbeing among teachers and provide an opportunity to respond to teachers' mental health problems in a timely manner.

5.3 Social Work Implications

The current results demonstrated the significant contribution of school social workers in maintaining and improving teacher wellbeing. Therefore, school social workers should be actively involved in providing various services, including supportive counselling, mental health promotional programmes, and collaborative social work strategies, aimed at enhancing psychological wellbeing, encouraging teachers' self-care practices and promoting interdisciplinary collaborating to ensure high-quality social, psychological, and mental health services.

5.4 Policy Implications

The study results show that teacher wellbeing should be considered a priority by the educational police and school administrators. They should ensure the process of strengthening teachers' resilience, consulting teachers on post-trauma and crisis

management, and encouraging wellness and self-care practices as a part of school improvement and teacher preparation policies.

6. Conclusion:

The present study revealed that there is a significant relationship between perceived stress, resilience and psychological wellbeing among teachers working in government schools run by Madurai City Corporation. The teachers who reported high level of resilience and psychological wellbeing had lesser perceived stress. It is essential that these aspects need to be strengthened in teachers so that they cope up with various professional demands of teaching and learning process. Psychological resource building interventions targeting on enhancing the level of resilience and psychological wellbeing of teachers working in school are likely to promote conducive educational environment and sustainable teaching career.

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