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Occupational stresses among teachers: A systematic review

Alma B. Picot *

Institute of Advanced Studies, Davao del Norte State College, New Visayas, Panabo City, Davao del Norte, Philippines.

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Abstract

Everyone encounters stress in some form in their daily lives. Job insecurity, long working hours, and low morale are among the causes of stress for teachers, making it a growing concern. This study aims to answer the following questions: (a) What are the common sources and causes of occupational stress among teachers? (b) How does occupational stress affect teachers' physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and job performance? (c) What interventions and strategies have been proposed or implemented to mitigate occupational stress among teachers, and what are their effectiveness and limitations? The findings highlight the common sources and causes of stress among teachers, its impact on their physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and job performance, as well as the interventions and strategies proposed to reduce occupational stress. The results of this systematic review have significant implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders concerned with teacher welfare and professional development. By identifying and addressing the sources of occupational stress, fostering supportive work environments, and implementing evidence-based interventions, educational institutions can enhance teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and performance.

Keywords: Occupational Stress; Teachers; Intervention and Strategies; Systematic Review Analysis

1. Introduction

Occupational stress affects teachers' performance and well-being and is a widespread problem in the teaching profession. Understanding and resolving occupational stress among teachers has become a crucial concern for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners as educators encounter several demands and challenges in their daily work. This thorough systematic review tries to summarize the body of knowledge on occupational stress in teachers by looking at its sources, effects, and potential treatments.

Since it is caused by all aspects of human activity, occupational stress is one of the most prevalent phenomena in today's culture [1,8]. Psychology defines stress as the body's response to a change that demands a response or adjustment on a mental, bodily, or emotional level [2]. Occupational stress is the tension that people feel in the workplace because of the mismatch between their needs and their resources [16]. High workload, time constraints, difficult student conduct, administrative duties, and a lack of support are all variables that contribute to occupational stress in the teaching environment [10]. Teachers' physical and emotional health, job happiness, and performance may all be adversely impacted by these stressors.

When it comes to teaching, variables that contribute to occupational stress include a heavy workload, deadline pressures, difficult student conduct, administrative obligations, and a lack of support [10]. These pressures can have a negative impact on teachers' physical and mental health as well as their job happiness and productivity.

The effects of workplace stress on teachers are extensive. High amounts of stress can result in weariness, musculoskeletal difficulties, and cardiovascular problems, among other physical health problems [10]. Burnout, anxiety,

* Corresponding author: Alma B. Picot

and depression are among the mental health conditions that teachers who are under stress may experience [10,12]. Additionally, job stress can have a negative impact on job satisfaction, with instructors reporting lower dedication, motivation, and involvement in their work [3,17].

There have been many suggested remedies and ways to manage the difficulties brought on by occupational stress in teachers. Individual-level strategies including stress management programs, mindfulness-based therapies, and cognitive-behavioral therapy are among them [5,13,15]. Additionally, organizational-level solutions emphasize building a healthy school climate, enhancing working circumstances, and providing enough resources and support [7,9,14].

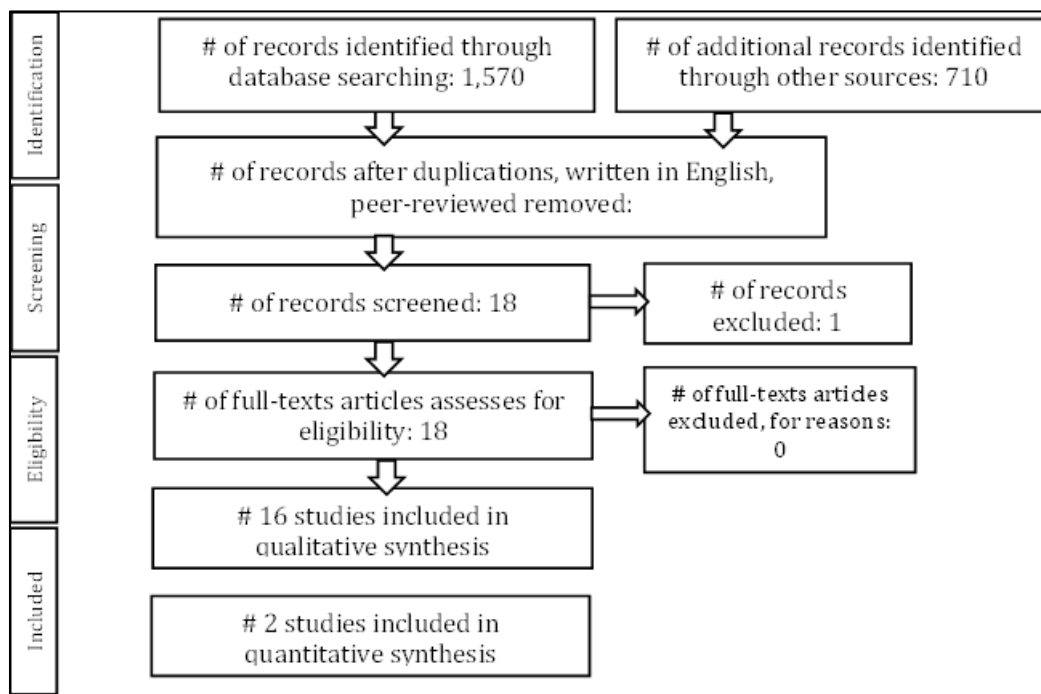
1.1. Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to conduct a systematic review analysis of the existing literature about occupational stresses among teachers. Mainly, it aims to answer the following:

- What are the common sources and causes of occupational stress among teachers?
- How does occupational stress impact teachers' physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and job performance?
- What interventions and strategies have been proposed or implemented to mitigate occupational stress among teachers, and what are their effectiveness and limitations?

2. Methods

This study used systematic review analysis as the functional research design in answering the research questions. Systematic reviews frequently also include meta-analysis, a statistical technique for statistically combining the findings of numerous research studies to obtain a pooled estimate of treatment effect [18]. According to Chandler et al. [19], systematic reviews are regarded as the highest level of evidence.



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Figure 2 Information flow between the various stages of a systematic review

Further, as indicated in Figure 2, this systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) reporting checklist [20]. The process involved four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. A thorough literature search was conducted to identify systematic review publications for the purposes of this study.

2.1. Searching, Screening, and Data Extraction

The primary database search tool used for this study's inclusion of relevant literature was Google Scholar. Google Scholar was chosen primarily because it includes an advanced search tool that allows users to specify their desired operative terms, the portion of the study in which they were used, and the year of publication. Additionally, it offers statistics depending on inclusion and exclusion standards such as full-text versions, English writing, research designs, etc. For this investigation, Eric served as an external search engine for supplementary research materials.

The search terms included variations of "occupational stress," "teachers," "job stress," "job satisfaction," "job performance," "well-being," "interventions," and "systematic review." Additionally, reference lists of identified studies and relevant review articles were examined to identify additional sources.

2.2. Determining Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

Based on this study's stated research questions and focus, the following inclusion criteria were included throughout the systematic review. Valid literature in this review was conducted in quantitative and qualitative research design containing occupational stresses among teachers. Further, the study was conducted in public and private school institutions, written in English, and available in open access and full text. Furthermore, the different pieces of literature were peer-reviewed from 2002 to 2022 since the abundance of occupational stress literature is evident from the last 20 years.

Studies were excluded if they were not empirical (e.g., literature reviews, theoretical papers), focused on non-teaching professions, or did not provide sufficient information related to occupational stress among teachers.

2.3. Data Extraction Procedures

The following inclusion criteria were applied throughout the systematic review based on the research goals and focus of this investigation. Teachers' occupational stress was included in the valid literature review's quantitative and qualitative study approach. The study was published in English, done in both public and private educational settings, and is open access and fully available online. Since there has been a wealth of literature on occupational stress over the past 20 years, the various pieces of literature were also peer-reviewed from 2002 to 2022.

2.4. Data Analysis

A narrative synthesis approach was used to analyze and summarize the findings of the included studies. The data were organized thematically based on the research questions, allowing for the identification of common themes, patterns, and variations across studies.

Moreover, the strength of evidence for each research question was evaluated based on the quality of included studies, consistency of findings, and the magnitude of effects reported. This assessment provided insights into the overall confidence and generalizability of the findings.

3. Results and discussion

This section presents the comprehensive results and discussion of the systematic review on occupational stress among teachers. The findings are organized according to the research questions and themes identified in the literature.

3.1. Common sources and causes of occupational stress among teachers?

The review identified several common sources and causes of occupational stress among teachers. These include high workload, time pressures, student behavior management, lack of resources, administrative demands, and inadequate support systems [4,10,11]. Teachers often experience stress due to the need to balance instructional responsibilities, curriculum planning, grading, and extracurricular activities [4]. Student-related factors, such as disruptive behavior and academic pressure, also contribute to occupational stress [6]. Administrative tasks, such as paperwork and meeting deadlines, add to the burden on teachers [11]. Additionally, the lack of support from colleagues, administrators, and parents can increase teachers' stress levels [10].

3.2. Impact of occupational stress to teachers' physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and job performance

The review revealed that occupational stress has significant effects on teachers' physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and job performance. High levels of stress are associated with physical health problems, including fatigue, musculoskeletal disorders, and cardiovascular issues [10]. Moreover, teachers experiencing occupational stress are more prone to mental health issues, such as burnout, anxiety, and depression [10,12]. These negative outcomes have a detrimental impact on teachers' overall well-being and job satisfaction [3,17]. Occupational stress also influences job performance, leading to decreased engagement, motivation, and commitment to the profession [3,17]. It can affect instructional quality, classroom management, and teacher-student relationships [3].

3.3. Interventions and strategies have been proposed or implemented to mitigate occupational stress among teachers, and their effectiveness and limitations.

The systematic review identified various interventions and strategies aimed at mitigating occupational stress among teachers. These interventions can be categorized into individual-level and organizational-level approaches.

Table 1 List of Interventions and strategies that have been proposed or implemented to mitigate occupational stress among teachers.

Approaches	Intervention and Strategies	Source
Individual-level	Stress management programs; Mindfulness-based interventions; and Cognitive- behavioral therapy	[5,13,15]
Organization-level	Workload reduction; Professional development opportunities; Mentoring programs; Supportive leadership; and Engaging activities in curricular and co-curricular activities	[7,9,14] [11,18,19]

At the individual level, stress management programs, mindfulness-based interventions, and cognitive-behavioral therapy have shown promise in reducing occupational stress among teachers [5,13,15]. These interventions provide teachers with tools and techniques to manage stress, enhance self-awareness, and improve coping skills. Mindfulness-based interventions, in particular, have demonstrated positive effects on reducing stress and promoting well-being among teachers [5].

Organizational-level interventions focus on improving working conditions, providing resources and support, and fostering a positive school climate. Strategies such as workload reduction, professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and supportive leadership have been shown to alleviate occupational stress among teachers [7,9,14]. Creating a supportive and collaborative work environment that recognizes and values teachers' efforts can contribute to reducing occupational stress [7].

Additionally, schools can manage stress by focusing on engaging curricular and co-curricular activities, which boost student interest and, in turn, reduce teachers' stress levels [21,18]. Involving students and teachers in activities such as campaigns and physical exercises, including yoga, can further enhance engagement and well-being [19].

While these interventions offer potential benefits, it is important to note that their effectiveness may vary depending on the context and individual needs of teachers. Additionally, resource limitations and the need for sustained commitment from educational institutions can present challenges in implementing and maintaining these interventions [7].

Overall, this systematic review highlights the pressing issue of occupational stress among teachers and its significant impact on their well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance. The findings emphasize the importance of addressing occupational stress through both individual-level and organizational-level interventions. By providing support systems, reducing workload, and promoting a positive work environment, educational institutions can contribute to the well-being and effectiveness of teachers.

4. Conclusion

This systematic review provides a comprehensive analysis of the literature on occupational stress among teachers. The findings highlight the common sources and causes of stress among teachers, the impact of stress on their physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and job performance, as well as the interventions and strategies proposed to mitigate occupational stress.

The review reveals that teachers face numerous stressors in their profession, including high workloads, time pressures, student behavior management, lack of resources, administrative demands, and inadequate support systems. These stressors can have detrimental effects on teachers' physical and mental health, leading to fatigue, musculoskeletal disorders, burnout, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, occupational stress negatively impacts job satisfaction and job performance, affecting instructional quality, classroom management, and teacher-student relationships.

To address occupational stress among teachers, both individual-level and organizational-level interventions have been proposed. Individual-level interventions, such as stress management programs, mindfulness-based interventions, and cognitive-behavioral therapy, equip teachers with coping mechanisms and self-care strategies. Organizational-level interventions focus on improving working conditions, providing resources and support, and fostering a positive school climate through workload reduction, professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and supportive leadership.

Research Agenda

The findings of this systematic review have important implications for educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in teacher well-being and professional development. By recognizing and addressing the sources of occupational stress, promoting supportive work environments, and implementing evidence-based interventions, educational institutions can support the well-being, job satisfaction, and effectiveness of teachers.

It is crucial for future research to continue exploring the complex nature of occupational stress among teachers, including its underlying causes, mechanisms, and the long-term effects on teachers and their students. Further investigation into the effectiveness of interventions and strategies in diverse educational contexts will contribute to evidence-based practices that effectively mitigate occupational stress and promote teacher well-being.

Overall, this systematic review underscores the need for comprehensive support systems and interventions that prioritize the well-being of teachers, as they play a critical role in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of students.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of Conflict of interest

I, Alma B. Picot, declare that I have no conflicts of interest or competing interests to disclose regarding the publication of this manuscript or any institution, product, or entity mentioned within. Furthermore, I have no affiliations or financial interests in products or organizations that could influence the study outcomes presented or compete with those discussed in the manuscript.

Statement of ethical approval

All ethical standards were strictly followed in the conduct of this study, including the use of the PRISMA framework. All sources and authors referenced in the manuscript were properly cited in accordance with academic and ethical guidelines.

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