

# Experience of stress and job satisfaction among government and private elementary school teachers

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## Abstract

Changes in the teaching methods of students, especially during the COVID-19 crisis phase and the endemic transition, caused increased teacher stress. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction among government and private elementary school teachers. This study used a cross-sectional survey design in which elementary school teachers in Gombak were selected by convenience sampling. One hundred and fifty elementary school teachers participated in this study, including 75 government and 75 private elementary school teachers. The online questionnaire consists of the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) and the Short-Form Minnesota Questionnaire (MSQ). Descriptive analysis, Pearson's correlation, and the independent t-test were used to find the relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction and the difference between teacher stress and job satisfaction between government and private elementary school teachers. Findings revealed a negative correlation between teacher stress and job satisfaction [ $r(148) = -0.23$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ]. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in teacher stress and job satisfaction between government and private elementary school teachers [ $t(148) = 2.50$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ]. Private school teachers have been found to have higher teacher stress and job satisfaction than government school teachers. Although, with some limitations, the present study has contributed to existing knowledge and literature identifying why teachers' well-being needs greater attention, as well as alarming the management of both private and government schools, providing avenues to reduce the stress level among teachers in promoting job satisfaction and enhancing teaching effectiveness.

## Keywords

Elementary school teachers, job satisfaction, teacher stress

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused more significant problems for those working in schools due to various challenges of government-directed changes in pedagogy. While students face multiple challenges, teachers also pay a high price. Teaching was identified as one of the most demanding professions in the world during the pandemic (Robinson et al., 2023). Educators must deliver scholastic guidance, offer social-emotional assistance, and establish connections with students and their families, often needing more remuneration or backing from administrative and managerial authorities. This circumstance can cause stress, frustration, and burnout and ultimately result in the departure of teachers from their positions (Stauffer et al., 2013).

In Australia, 749 teachers reported experiencing work-related stress and burnout during the pandemic (Carroll et al., 2022). The same case was also reported worldwide, including in Asia. These stressors encompass a perceived loss of autonomy and influence over classroom decisions and curricula, difficulties in effectively regulating student conduct, a perceived lack of professional respect, and inadequate support and resources (Kyriacou, 2001; Richards, 2012). The persistent pressures experienced by teachers affect their physical health and overall well-being (Madigan et al., 2023). It is a phenomenon felt by all government and private school teachers.

Some studies found that there is no significant difference in job stress between government and private school teachers (Bano & Malik, 2014); there is also a study that stated that government school teachers have higher job stress than private school teachers Doss et al. (2018) and other studies noted that private school teachers have higher job stress than government school teachers (Dawn et al., 2016). This may be due to different working cultures or salaries between government and private schools. Although most studies have been prominent before COVID-19, it is important to examine the pandemic-related teacher stress that teachers are experiencing. These emotional challenges may be related to quality of life.

Job satisfaction is another variable in the current study. The nature of the current pandemic challenges poses a risk to how well teachers will be satisfied with their jobs. Some studies state that teachers with high-level job satisfaction also tend to have good mental health and vice versa (Chirico et al., 2020). While teachers have reported that job satisfaction is attained through their daily teaching tasks (Klassen & Chiu,

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2010; Halder & Roy, 2018; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017), some have noted that these same daily tasks have also contributed to teacher stress (Smith & Smalley, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in the daily responsibilities of teachers, which can intensify sources of stress, alter their use of coping mechanisms, and influence their overall job satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the emergence of novel teaching settings, leading to modifications in teacher routines and the imposition of extra obligations and technology onto teachers' already demanding workdays in unfamiliar domains (Daniel, 2020).

Hence, this study examines the relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction among government and private school teachers and then explores the difference between teachers working in government and private schools.

## Method

### Participants

The population of the participants in this study consists of elementary school teachers, and the sampling frame for this study is government and private elementary school teachers who can read and understand English, have experience teaching students in school and online classes, and have given their consent to participate in this study. The study is conducted in Gombak, Selangor. Gombak is considered one of the most educational districts in Selangor, as there are 131 schools, including government and private schools. There are 53 government elementary schools and 14 private elementary schools in Gombak. Therefore, it is a proper setting to conduct the research here. After getting permission from the Chief Officer of the Gombak District Education Office to conduct research among elementary school teachers in the Gombak District, the researcher went to three government and three private schools and obtained the headmaster's permission to investigate potential participants. The sample of this research was selected through nonprobability sampling, which is convenience sampling used to determine the participants for the study. The headmaster distributed the questionnaire for this study through online platforms such as Whatsapp and Telegram. The participants' demographic information was obtained from the first section (Section A) of the questionnaire, which includes age, sex, duration of employment, and type of school. A total of 150 elementary school teachers participated in this study, which consisted of 75 government school teachers and 75 private school teachers. The majority of teachers that participated in this study were female ( $n = 99$ ), which equals 66% of the total sample ( $n = 150$ ), while 34% of the full model for this study were male ( $n = 51$ ). 27.3% of teachers are less than 31 years old ( $n = 41$ ), similar to teachers aged 31 to 40. 26% of the total sample ( $n = 150$ ) range from 41 to 50 years old. The minority age was more than 50 years old, which is 19.3% ( $n = 29$ ). In terms of duration of employment, the majority of participants of the participants had been working as a teacher for less than 11 years ( $n = 72$ ), which equals 48.0% of the total sample, and only 4.7% of them had worked more than 30 years ( $n = 7$ ).

### Research Instruments

The online questionnaire using a five-Likert scale was used to collect data from 150 elementary school teachers in Gombak, consisting of 75 government and 75 private school teachers. Teacher stress was measured using the Teacher Stress Inventory developed by Boyle et al. (1995), which consists of a 20-item self-report scale. The Cronbach's alpha is well above 0.70. The items were scored using a five-point Likert scale with 0 = no stress, 1 = mild stress, 2 = moderate stress, 3 = a lot of stress, and 4 = extreme stress. This inventory comprises five dimensions: workload, student misbehavior, poor colleague relations, professional recognition, and time/source difficulties. The items were scored directly, which is the higher score for the dimension, the more stress severity the individuals through because of the factor.

Teachers' job satisfaction was measured using the Short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, with Each of the 20-item is represented by 20 scales from the long-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967). Responses to the items were scored using a five-point Likert scale with 1 = very unhappy, 2 = unhappy, 3 = none, 4 = satisfied and 5 = very satisfied. There are three scales: intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction. The Cronbach's alpha for innate ranged from 0.84-0.91, with a median of 0.86. Internal Consistency for extrinsic satisfaction from 0.77-0.82, median 0.80. For general satisfaction, 0.87-0.92, median 0.90. The total score is obtained by summing or averaging the item responses.

### Data Analysis Technique

This study used Pearson correlation and independent t-test to analyze the collected data. Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction. An independent t-test was used to explore the difference between teacher stress and job satisfaction between government elementary school teachers and those working in private schools.

## Result

The Descriptive Analysis data show that the mean teacher stress score of the elementary school teachers was ( $M = 41.28$ ,  $SD = 17.82$ ). Meanwhile, the level of job satisfaction among elementary school teachers was ( $M = 69.87$ ,  $SD = 13.18$ ). This indicates that elementary school teachers in Gombak had moderate teacher stress, and most were satisfied with their work since the mean for job satisfaction was relatively high.

The Pearson correlation coefficient analysis for the first objective was calculated to examine the relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction. The result indicates a negative correlation between teacher stress and job satisfaction, which means that teacher stress is high when job satisfaction is low and vice versa. When teacher stress is low, job satisfaction is high. The correlation coefficient results,  $r(148) = -0.23$ ,  $p = 0.005$ , indicated a small effect between teacher stress and job satisfaction.

The T-test analysis for the second analysis shows that there is a significant difference in job stress between government and private elementary school teachers (see Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 1.** Summary of independent t-test for teacher stress and job satisfaction between government and private elementary school teachers (n=75)

Type of school	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Teacher stress				
Government school	37.71	17.73	-2.50	0.014
Private school	44.85	17.30		
Job satisfaction				
Government school	37.71	17.73	-2.50	0.014
Private school	44.85	17.30		

Table 1 shows that private elementary school teachers ( $M = 44.85$ ,  $SD = 17.30$ ) had higher teacher stress than public elementary school teachers ( $M = 37.71$ ,  $SD = 17.73$ ) by  $t(14) = 2.50$ ,  $p = 0.014$ . The results indicated a significant difference in teacher stress between government and private school teachers. There is a significant difference in job satisfaction between public and private elementary school teachers. The result shows that private elementary school teachers ( $M = 73.60$ ,  $SD = 10.63$ ) had higher job satisfaction than those who worked in government schools ( $M = 66.13$ ,  $SD = 14.44$ ) by  $t(148) = 3.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

## Discussion

The first objective of this study is to examine the relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction among government and private school teachers. The analysis found a negative correlation between teacher stress and job satisfaction. Therefore, the researcher accepted the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the study by Shivendra & Kumar (2016), who found a meaningful relationship between job stress and job satisfaction among physical education teachers working in government, semi-government, and private schools. A study reported by Febriantina et al. (2020) that school cultures, such as beliefs, norms, assumptions, values, and stress, impacted job satisfaction, supporting this study's finding.

When teachers experience high teacher stress, their job satisfaction will decrease. The change of pedagogy in education occasionally forces the teachers to adapt well to the current conditions, which can affect their pressure. Younger generations may adjust to everyday situations quickly and satisfactorily. However, this kind of thing is quite different for the older generations. They are facing difficulties in changing teaching style from face-to-face classes to online classes or hybrid classes (a combination of face-to-face courses and online classes) because they are used to or accustomed to education and educating students physically and manually for an extended period (Anderson & Perrin, 2017).

Teachers will be satisfied with their job when their perception of self-efficacy is high when conducting the classes (Kasalak & Dağyar, 2020). Usually, teachers are confident in delivering knowledge and information to students during a face-to-face class session as they have been used to physically conducting the teaching and learning session. Therefore, the change of methods in teaching and educating can affect teacher stress and job satisfaction as they have yet to become thoroughly familiar with the new teaching method and need

to adapt immediately, thus affecting their self-efficacy. Job satisfaction can help teachers be passionate and enjoy their work. As the teachers want and are satisfied with their job, their occupational stress will also be reduced, thus preventing them from burning out during their career (Jurado et al., 2019; Safari, 2020).

The second objective of this study is to examine the differences in job stress and job satisfaction between teachers working in government and private schools. The result of the job stress showed that there is a significant difference in teacher stress between government school teachers and private school teachers. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this study is accepted. Based on the result, private school teachers had higher teacher stress than government school teachers, which supports the study (Jani, 2017). However, the study's outcome was contradicted by Doss et al. (2018) findings, which stated that government school teachers had higher teacher stress than private school teachers. The difference in teacher stress levels may be caused by income, working environment, and inadequate facilities (Doss et al., 2018; Klapproth, 2015; Lee, 2020). Even though no studies explain the differences in teacher stress levels among government and private school teachers, some generally mention these factors.

Salary is one of the essential factors contributing to teacher stress among private school teachers (Premalatha et al., 2020). The differences in pay between government and private school teachers can be factors in the difference in teacher stress between them. One of the benefits of being a government teacher is that the job is stable, and the salary is guaranteed (Karim et al., 2011). Besides that, the government has provided them with allowances and financial assistance. Therefore, government school teachers may not face overly significant financial problems due to their stable financial status, thus reducing the percentage of stress. However, private school teachers do not have the same circumstances. They can have their salaries cut or be fired. The allowance they provide is also much lower than the government school teachers. So, based on the current conditions, private school teachers are likely to have a higher percentage of teacher stress than government school teachers.

Independent t-test analysis results also show a significant difference in job satisfaction between government and private school teachers. Comparably, Bhat (2018) found that government and private high school teachers in the district Baramulla had no significant difference in job satisfaction. They perceived that type of school did not affect job satisfaction among teachers.

Even though private school teachers had higher teacher stress levels than government school teachers, the findings found that private school teachers also have higher job satisfaction than those working in government schools. A study by Karim et al. (2011) found that private school teachers enjoyed their co-curricular activities facilities and had opportunities to expose their abilities in different dimensions. High teacher stress can reduce job satisfaction among teachers. One of the teacher stress factors is workload. The average number of students in government schools is much higher than in private schools (Karim et al., 2011). The higher the number of students, the higher the workloads placed on the teachers. This is because, during class, teachers need to maintain student discipline in the classroom and, at the same time, ensure that

every student can understand the topic taught and discussed in the class. As a result of a higher workload, teachers will quickly become stressed and less satisfied with their jobs, thus leading to burnout. Therefore, these arguments show that government school teachers have higher stress levels, thus leading to low job satisfaction compared to private school teachers.

## Conclusion and Implications

This study found that teacher stress can affect job satisfaction. Furthermore, private school teachers had higher teacher stress and job satisfaction than government school teachers. The findings corresponded with the past studies and some contrast results from the past studies. Higher authorities or administrators must give their full attention and concern to the current conditions of the teachers to prevent them from having high teacher stress, thus leading to burnout. The teacher's mental health and disease may impact teaching effectiveness, work performance, and job satisfaction.

With the sample of this study from one district in Peninsula Malaysia, it is evident that the findings cannot be generalized to a broader population. The focus on teacher stress and job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic can create greater attention among management and authorities in the education sector, emphasizing teacher well-being.

## Declaration

### Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to the participants who have contributed to the data collection.

### Author contributions

All authors conduct the concept of the research design, writing introduction, data collection, data processing, and writing discussion.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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