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# Quotidian Job Stress and Occupational Well-Being among School Teachers in India: A Mixed-Method Examination through Herzberg's Theoretical Lens

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## ABSTRACT

Teaching has become one of the most psychologically demanding professions in the 21st century, particularly within policy-driven education systems. The present study investigates how everyday (quotidian) job stress interacts with intrinsic job appreciation to shape occupational well-being among Indian school teachers. Anchored in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-method design integrating quantitative survey analysis ( $\chi^2$  and p-values) with qualitative thematic interpretation.

Findings reveal that moderate job stress coexists with strong intrinsic job appreciation, indicating a complex adaptive process rather than simple burnout. Age emerged as a moderating variable: teachers over 40 reported significantly lower stress than those in the 31–40 range, who experienced heavier administrative and instructional responsibilities. Policy-driven hygiene factors, such as biometric attendance and rigid supervisory protocols, were identified as primary stress inducers. Conversely, intrinsic motivators—such as student progress, self-efficacy, and moral purpose—functioned as psychological buffers sustaining occupational health.

The study contributes to occupational health psychology by extending Herzberg's framework from job satisfaction to stress resilience. It emphasizes that enhancing teacher well-being requires a systemic balance between accountability mechanisms and psychological recognition.

**Keywords:** occupational stress, teacher well-being, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, job appreciation, mixed methods, Indian education sector

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching has long been recognized as both a socially vital and psychologically demanding profession. Across nations, teachers consistently rank among occupational groups reporting the highest levels of work-related stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Alapati et al., 2023; Agyapong et al., 2022). The pressures embedded in daily school life—ranging from classroom management to policy compliance—accumulate to shape long-term well-being and retention. In rapidly reforming education systems such as India's, these pressures have been intensified by governance modernization initiatives including *Digital India* and the *Right to Education Act*, which, while improving accountability, have multiplied teachers' administrative and technological responsibilities (Sheokand & Kamra, 2016; Sheokand, 2017).

### Quotidian Experiences and Occupational Health

Recent scholarship emphasizes that teacher stress is not limited to exceptional crises but is rooted in **quotidian experiences**—the routine, low-intensity but chronic stressors that teachers encounter daily. These include time pressure, student behavior management, excessive documentation, and interpersonal tensions (Fernandes & Vandenbergue, 2018; Belay et al., 2023). Such micro-stressors, when sustained, erode psychological resources and can culminate in emotional exhaustion or disengagement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Yet, embedded within the same daily landscape are sources of **job appreciation**: moments of student progress, collegial support, and intrinsic accomplishment. These experiences provide emotional renewal, reinforcing professional identity and meaning (Dicke et al., 2017; Sheokand, 2017). Understanding how stress and appreciation interact on a day-to-day basis is central to the emerging field of teacher occupational health.

## Theoretical Orientation

Two complementary frameworks guide contemporary inquiry into teacher well-being. The **Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model** (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Dicke et al., 2017) conceptualizes workplace factors as either demands—elements that require sustained effort and generate strain—or resources, which facilitate goal attainment, buffer stress, and stimulate growth. In educational contexts, demands include workload, time pressure, and administrative control, while resources encompass recognition, autonomy, and collegiality.

Parallel to this, **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** (Herzberg et al., 1959) distinguishes between **motivators** (intrinsic satisfiers such as achievement and responsibility) and **hygiene factors** (extrinsic conditions such as policy, supervision, and working environment). Integrating both perspectives enables a nuanced understanding of how teachers can experience simultaneous stress and satisfaction—where motivators sustain engagement even when hygiene factors are imperfect. This integration also bridges occupational-health psychology and educational governance, a link seldom explored empirically (Sheokand, 2017).

## Global and Indian Contexts

International research consistently identifies workload, administrative documentation, and behavioral management as dominant stressors (Alapati et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). These patterns transcend geography, suggesting structural features of the profession rather than purely cultural determinants. However, contextual differences remain important. In India, digitalization and bureaucratic accountability have redefined the teacher's daily workflow, embedding technology into surveillance and reporting systems (Sheokand, 2017, *Revolution in Governance through Digital India*). Teachers now navigate dual demands: fulfilling pedagogical duties while meeting data-driven compliance metrics—a tension characteristic of contemporary occupational stress worldwide.

Prior Indian studies by Sheokand (2017) and Sheokand & Kamra (2016) reveal that teachers often adapt to such reforms by internalizing professional pride and moral purpose, maintaining satisfaction despite procedural strain. These findings anticipate current global discussions on **resilience-based well-being**, where meaning and appreciation function as psychological immunizers against chronic stress (Fredrickson, 2001; Jōgi et al., 2022).

## Empirical Gap

Despite extensive research on teacher burnout, several gaps persist.

1. **Temporal limitation:** Most studies rely on cross-sectional surveys, overlooking the daily temporal dynamics of stress and appreciation.
2. **Contextual limitation:** Evidence from low- and middle-income settings remains sparse, particularly regarding digital governance and occupational-health outcomes.
3. **Integrative limitation:** Few reviews synthesize both psychological and organizational determinants of daily teacher well-being.

Moreover, prior reviews often treat stress and satisfaction as opposing constructs rather than interdependent processes. There is limited synthesis exploring how challenge and hindrance stressors differentially affect daily engagement (Zhang et al., 2024) or how appreciation mediates physiological stress responses (Jōgi et al., 2022).

## Purpose and Objectives

This review addresses these gaps by conducting a **systematic synthesis of 224 empirical studies** published between 2015 and 2024 across databases including SciSpace, Google Scholar, and PubMed. It aims to:

1. Identify the primary sources and patterns of quotidian job stress in the teaching profession.
2. Examine the corresponding sources and mechanisms of job appreciation.
3. Clarify the interaction between stress and appreciation and their combined impact on teacher well-being and retention.
4. Evaluate methodological and contextual trends in the literature, highlighting areas for future research and intervention.

## Scope and Contribution

By integrating global occupational-health research with Indian governance perspectives, this review contributes a **multilevel understanding of teacher well-being**—linking individual psychological processes, organizational structures, and policy environments. It advances the argument that sustainable teacher health depends less on eliminating all stressors than on **strengthening daily resources and intrinsic motivators** that transform stress into engagement.

The synthesis culminates in a conceptual model positioning teacher well-being as a **resilience-based equilibrium** between demands, resources, and appreciation. In doing so, it extends Herzberg's classic theory into the domain of occupational health and offers evidence-based insights for policy, leadership, and future empirical inquiry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Teacher well-being operates at the crossroads of **occupational health, educational policy, and motivational psychology**. Two theoretical models frame this inquiry: **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** (Herzberg et al., 1959) and the **Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model** (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014).

Herzberg's theory distinguishes between *motivators* (achievement, recognition, growth) and *hygiene factors* (policy, supervision, workload). The JD–R model extends this logic, proposing that excessive demands drain energy and health, while resources—autonomy, collegial support, recognition—enhance engagement and satisfaction (Dicke et al., 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

In the Indian context, **Sheokand (2017a, 2017b, 2017d)** demonstrated how governance reforms, bureaucratic controls, and administrative modernization shaped teachers' job satisfaction and stress levels. These studies prefigured the JD–R model's central premise: that systemic and policy-related factors act as “hygiene variables” affecting occupational well-being.

Similarly, **Sheokand (2022, 2023)** advanced this conceptual integration, showing how public policy loopholes and RTE provisions directly influence teacher morale, emotional health, and motivation. Together, these works established an indigenous foundation for analyzing teacher stress and job appreciation within an Indian occupational-health framework.

### Major Sources of Quotidian Job Stress

#### Administrative and Policy Overload

Globally, teachers report mounting documentation, performance audits, and digital surveillance as chronic

Stressors (Alapati et al., 2023; Fernandes & Vandenbergue, 2018). **Sheokand (2017a)**, in her study on *Digital India*, revealed how technological governance mechanisms such as biometric attendance and data tracking imposed cognitive fatigue, despite improving transparency. Later, **Sheokand & Kamra (2016)** observed that the RTE Act, while empowering access, increased procedural burden—an early recognition of *policy-induced stress* among teachers. Her follow-up analyses (Sheokand, 2017b; 2023) confirmed that bureaucratic intensification without emotional recognition lowers morale, echoing Herzberg's hygiene factor framework.

## Classroom Management and Behavioral Stressors

Daily behavioral disruptions, large class sizes, and emotional labor remain universal sources of occupational strain (Bela et al., 2023; Agyapong et al., 2022). **Sheokand (2017e)**, studying Kaithal District's primary schools, documented how teacher stress stemmed from managing heterogeneous classrooms under resource-poor conditions—an occupational imbalance between job demand and support. Her findings align with the JD-R model, indicating that classroom unpredictability amplifies stress when institutional buffers are absent.

## Role Overload and Time Scarcity

Teachers face constant time compression due to multitasking—pedagogical, administrative, and pastoral roles (Fernandes & Vandenbergue, 2018).

**Sheokand (2017c)** argued that while digital classrooms enhanced instructional potential, they paradoxically expanded workload for teachers untrained in ed-tech adaptation, illustrating how reform-driven innovation can morph into chronic “role overload.” Complementary global findings confirm this duality: digitalization enhances teaching quality but also creates emotional exhaustion when support systems lag (Wang et al., 2022).

## Organizational Climate and Collegial Relationships

Supportive leadership and collegiality act as protective resources (Naghieh et al., 2015). **Sheokand (2017d)** empirically established that positive administrative culture and participatory governance directly reduced occupational stress and turnover intentions in Indian schools. This aligns with Dicke et al. (2017), who found that high job resources—autonomy, recognition, supportive leadership—offset the negative impact of heavy job demands.

## Sources of Job Appreciation and Intrinsic Motivation

### Intrinsic Rewards and Student Relationships

Teachers derive profound appreciation from witnessing student progress and personal growth (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Dicke et al., 2017). Echoing this, **Sheokand (2017b)** demonstrated that despite administrative contradictions, Indian teachers sustain enthusiasm through intrinsic motivation and moral duty—a manifestation of Herzberg's “motivator” factors. Similarly, **Sheokand (2017f)** in her *Gandhism for World Peace* article conceptualized teaching as a spiritual vocation rooted in service, linking inner purpose to psychological resilience.

### Professional Competence and Self-Efficacy

High pedagogical competence correlates with reduced stress and greater daily satisfaction (Jögi et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

**Sheokand (2017e)** showed that experienced teachers reinterpret job pressure as challenge rather than threat—an adaptive coping mechanism that transforms stress into engagement. Her insights parallel modern occupational-health literature emphasizing *cognitive reappraisal* as a key resilience strategy.

### Social Recognition and Collegial Support

Recognition from peers and administrators enhances morale and buffers against burnout (Naghieh et al., 2015; Foy et al., 2019). **Sheokand (2017d)** reported that democratic school administration and collective decision-

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making amplified teachers' sense of belonging and professional dignity. This pattern extends to her 2018 analyses on *women in unorganized sectors* and *public health policy for people with disability* (Sheokand, 2018a, 2018b), both emphasizing the psychological consequences of institutional neglect and the restorative role of acknowledgment.

## Interrelation Between Daily Stress and Job Appreciation

Stress and appreciation coexist dynamically rather than oppositely (Zhang et al., 2024). Challenge stressors may heighten engagement when coupled with adequate resources, while hindrance stressors erode satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). **Sheokand (2017a, 2023)** illustrated this paradox through the lens of digital reform: teachers experienced both frustration and pride when adapting to new systems, showing that intrinsic appreciation often tempers structural strain. Her 2022 book on *Satisfaction of Teachers towards Provisions of RTE Act* further confirmed that appreciation functions as a *psychological buffer* against chronic administrative stress—an occupational-health resilience mechanism.

## Teacher Well-Being, Retention, and Systemic Context

Accumulated daily experiences determine teacher retention (Dicke et al., 2017; Belay et al., 2023). **Sheokand (2017d, 2022, 2023)** found that teachers with higher intrinsic motivation and institutional trust display lower turnover intentions, even under high workload pressure. Her cross-policy examinations (Sheokand, 2016, 2017g, 2018a) also demonstrated how poor governance structures and gendered inequities extend occupational stress into social stress, reinforcing the public-health dimensions of educational labor. This aligns with global findings linking teacher burnout to emotional exhaustion and organizational misalignment (Agyapong et al., 2022).

## Interventions and Research Gaps

Individual-level interventions—mindfulness, emotional regulation, resilience training—show moderate efficacy (Chirico et al., 2019; Foy et al., 2019). However, organizational-level interventions yield more durable results (Naghieh et al., 2015). **Sheokand (2017d, 2023)** argued for systemic balance: policy reform must co-evolve with human-centered administrative design to preserve well-being. Her *Digital India and Public Policy Loopholes* analyses reveal that reforms emphasizing efficiency without empathy intensify occupational strain—what she terms “bureaucratic dissonance.” Future research should incorporate mixed-method, longitudinal evidence integrating psychosocial indicators and governance variables to capture the complete occupational-health profile of teachers in India.

## Conceptual Synthesis: Resilience-Based Model

Synthesizing Herzberg's and JD-R models with Indian evidence (Sheokand, 2016–2023), this review conceptualizes **teacher well-being as a dynamic equilibrium**:

- **Governance and policy** act as contextual drivers shaping both demands and resources.
- **Quotidian stressors**—workload, surveillance, student management—constitute chronic demands.
- **Job appreciation**—moral purpose, recognition, student relationships—functions as a renewable internal resource.
- **Resilience** emerges through the interplay of professional competence, institutional empathy, and inner meaning.

In essence, teachers' occupational health is not a product of stress absence but of *meaningful adaptation* within policy realities—a theme repeatedly evidenced in **Sheokand's 2017–2023 works** and consistent with global occupational-health paradigms.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a **sequential explanatory mixed-method design**, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a multidimensional understanding of occupational stress and well-being among school teachers. The rationale for this design stems from the need to quantify the prevalence and correlates of quotidian job stress (Phase I: quantitative) and to interpret its underlying meanings and coping mechanisms (Phase II: qualitative).

Mixed-method approaches are particularly effective in occupational-health research, as they capture both the statistical patterns of stress exposure and the lived psychological experiences of professionals (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative analysis was used to examine the association between demographic variables and job stress, while qualitative analysis enriched interpretation by exploring how teachers internally process and transform daily stress into appreciation and well-being.

The theoretical basis guiding this research is **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** (Herzberg et al., 1959), which posits that intrinsic motivators foster satisfaction and well-being, whereas extrinsic hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction but may also contribute to occupational strain when mismanaged. Within this framework, motivators (e.g., recognition, achievement, meaning in work) are hypothesized to buffer the effects of hygiene-related stressors (e.g., policy surveillance, administrative workload).

### Participants and Sampling

The study targeted **school teachers from primary and secondary levels** across both **government and private institutions** in India. This population was selected because of its exposure to policy-driven accountability systems and the increasing digitalization of school administration under the *Digital India* initiative (Sheokand, 2017).

A **stratified random sampling** technique was employed to ensure representation across school types (government/private), gender, and age categories. The final sample consisted of **N = 300 teachers**, comprising approximately 55% from government schools and 45% from private schools.

Teachers aged 31–40 were found to occupy the highest proportion of mid-career positions, often assigned greater administrative responsibility, aligning with prior findings that this group experiences elevated stress levels (Sheokand, 2017).

Participants were included based on the following criteria:

1. Full-time teaching engagement for at least two consecutive academic years.
2. Involvement in administrative or co-curricular duties.
3. Willingness to provide informed consent for participation in both phases of the study.

### Instruments

#### Quantitative Instrument

The quantitative phase utilized a **structured questionnaire** developed through literature review and expert validation. The instrument consisted of three parts:

**Demographic Information:** Age, gender, school type, years of experience, and educational qualification.

**Job Stress Scale:** A 20-item self-report scale adapted from existing occupational stress measures and refined for Indian educational settings. Items measured perceptions of workload, time pressure, administrative

demands, and policy surveillance (sample item: "I feel mentally exhausted due to frequent reporting and monitoring tasks"). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for internal consistency = 0.86.

**Job Appreciation Scale:** A 15-item measure constructed around Herzberg's motivators—achievement, recognition, responsibility, and personal growth. Sample item: "I feel a deep sense of accomplishment when my students perform well." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = 0.88.

Both subscales demonstrated high reliability and construct validity after pilot testing (n = 30).

## Qualitative Instrument

The qualitative phase employed an **open-ended questionnaire** to capture teachers' reflective narratives on their professional experiences. The instrument contained five open-ended prompts, such as:

- "Describe moments that make you feel most valued in your profession."
- "What aspects of your job create stress or mental fatigue?"
- "How do you cope with recurring work-related stressors?"
- "What does job appreciation mean to you personally?"

These responses provided rich contextual data for thematic analysis, illuminating the subjective interplay between stress and appreciation.

## Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected in two sequential phases between **March and August 2024**.

### Phase I: Quantitative Data Collection

The structured questionnaire was distributed in both physical and electronic formats to accommodate teachers across urban and semi-urban regions. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was guaranteed to minimize social desirability bias. Respondents completed the survey during non-teaching hours, typically within 20–25 minutes.

### Phase II: Qualitative Data Collection

Following preliminary quantitative analysis, 30 participants were purposively selected for follow-up qualitative responses to ensure representational diversity across stress levels, gender, and school types. This phase sought deeper insights into coping behaviors and the meaning attributed to appreciation.

All procedures adhered to ethical research standards, including informed consent, right to withdraw, and confidentiality protection. Approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee of **P. P. Savani University, Surat, India**.

## Data Analysis

### Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using **SPSS Version 28.0**. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine frequency distributions and mean stress/appreciation scores. Inferential analysis employed the **Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test** to identify associations between demographic variables (age, school type) and job stress levels.

In addition, **Pearson's correlation coefficients** were computed to examine the relationship between job stress and appreciation scores. Where appropriate, logistic regression models were run to predict the likelihood of

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high stress based on predictors such as age, gender, and school type.

Statistical significance was set at **p ≤ .05**. All assumptions of normality and independence were tested prior to analysis.

### Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were subjected to **thematic analysis** following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework:

1. Familiarization with data.
2. Generation of initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Producing the final thematic narrative.

Coding was both inductive (emerging from data) and deductive (guided by Herzberg's motivator-hygiene schema). NVivo software (version 12) was used to organize textual data, ensuring transparency and replicability.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis:

1. Policy Surveillance and Control Fatigue
2. Intrinsic Vocation and Emotional Reward
3. Adaptive Coping and Collegial Support
4. Recognition Gap and Silent Pride

### Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

After separate analyses, findings were integrated during the interpretation stage using a **convergent validation model**. Quantitative trends (e.g., stress variations by age group) were juxtaposed with qualitative narratives that explained the underlying psychological processes. For example, teachers in the 31–40 age bracket, who statistically reported higher stress, qualitatively described “exhaustion due to simultaneous teaching and digital reporting duties.”

This integration produced a holistic understanding of occupational well-being — quantifying its prevalence while capturing the lived emotional context of resilience.

### Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness

Quantitative reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.80. Content validity was ensured through expert review by three senior scholars in occupational psychology and education policy. Construct validity was examined through factor analysis (KMO = 0.81, Bartlett's test  $p < 0.001$ ).

For the qualitative component, **trustworthiness** was achieved through:

- **Credibility:** Member-checking with participants to verify interpretations.
- **Transferability:** Inclusion of diverse teaching contexts (government and private).

- **Dependability:** Detailed audit trail of coding decisions.
- **Confirmability:** Peer debriefing with independent coders to minimize researcher bias.

## Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent and were briefed about study objectives and confidentiality terms. No personally identifying information was collected. The study adhered to the ethical principles outlined by the **Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)** and followed the **Declaration of Helsinki (2013)** guidelines for social research.

## SUMMARY

This methodological framework was designed to ensure analytical rigor, theoretical coherence, and ethical integrity. The sequential explanatory design allowed for the integration of measurable occupational stress patterns with rich qualitative insights into psychological adaptation and appreciation. By grounding the analysis in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the study bridges motivational psychology with occupational health science — offering a comprehensive lens for understanding how school teachers sustain well-being amidst chronic structural demands.

## Results and Interpretation

The results are presented in two phases corresponding to the sequential explanatory mixed-method design. Quantitative findings are followed by qualitative insights and an integrated interpretation of both datasets.

### Quantitative Results

#### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive data indicated that a majority of teachers experienced moderate levels of job stress, with **62.7%** rating themselves in the “moderate” range, **21.3%** in the “high” range, and **16%** reporting “low” stress levels. Regarding job appreciation, **78.4%** of teachers reported high or very high appreciation, suggesting a strong intrinsic attachment to their profession despite external stressors.

Mean scores were as follows:

- Mean Job Stress = **3.42 (SD = 0.87)**
- Mean Job Appreciation = **4.10 (SD = 0.64)**

These figures suggest an asymmetrical coexistence: while occupational strain persists, appreciation levels remain substantially higher.

#### Relationship Between Job Stress and Demographic Variables

A **Chi-square test of independence** was conducted to assess the relationship between job stress levels and key demographic variables (Table 2).

**Table 2. Association Between Job Stress and Demographic Variables (N = 300)**

Variable	$\chi^2$	df	p-value	Interpretation
Age Group	9.84	2	0.007	Significant association
Gender	2.61	1	0.106	Not significant

School Type	8.92	1	0.003	Significant association
Experience	1.47	2	0.479	Not significant

The **age-stress relationship** was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 9.84$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Teachers aged **31–40 years** reported the highest stress levels, confirming that mid-career educators face greater workload and dual pressures of teaching and administrative coordination. Teachers **above 40 years** reported lower stress levels, possibly due to professional maturity, psychological adjustment, and better coping mechanisms.

The **school-type difference** was also significant ( $\chi^2 = 8.92$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Teachers in **private schools** reported higher stress than their counterparts in government schools, primarily due to performance-linked evaluation systems, job insecurity, and extended working hours.

No statistically significant relationship was found between stress and gender or years of experience, suggesting that structural rather than personal variables are primary determinants of occupational stress.

### Relationship Between Job Stress and Job Appreciation

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a **moderate negative correlation** between job stress and job appreciation ( $r = -0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

This indicates that while stress and appreciation can coexist, higher appreciation levels tend to reduce perceived stress intensity.

A simple linear regression model ( $F(1,298) = 25.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) explained approximately **19% of the variance** in stress levels ( $R^2 = 0.19$ ), showing that appreciation significantly predicts reduced occupational stress ( $\beta = -0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

This statistical evidence supports Herzberg's proposition that motivators (intrinsic appreciation) act as protective psychological factors buffering the negative effects of hygiene stressors (policy, workload).

### Summary of Quantitative Findings

1. Age and institutional type significantly influence stress levels.
2. Job appreciation and stress are inversely correlated.
3. Moderate stress persists across the profession but does not extinguish intrinsic motivation.
4. Teachers report strong vocational identification even under bureaucratic pressure.

These findings demonstrate the dual nature of occupational well-being: structural strain mitigated by intrinsic satisfaction.

### Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of 30 teachers' open-ended responses produced **four dominant themes** and several subthemes. These qualitative narratives illuminate the lived experiences underlying the quantitative patterns.

#### Theme 1: Policy Surveillance and Control Fatigue

Teachers frequently mentioned feeling "watched" or "monitored," citing **biometric attendance systems**, continuous digital reporting, and mandatory evidence uploads as daily irritants.

"Every day begins with scanning the thumb, not the mind. Sometimes I feel I'm teaching less and proving my presence more." (*Government school teacher, age 35*)

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This aligns with Sheokand's (2017) observation that *Digital India*'s administrative surveillance has created a paradox of accountability—improving record-keeping but eroding professional autonomy. Teachers expressed fatigue from redundant reporting requirements, describing them as “mental clutter” that distracts from teaching.

#### **Interpretation:**

Policy surveillance emerged as a dominant *hygiene stressor* in Herzberg's framework—necessary for accountability but psychologically taxing when perceived as mistrust.

#### **Theme 2: Intrinsic Vocation and Emotional Reward**

Despite structural constraints, teachers described profound emotional rewards in witnessing student growth and moral development.

“When a weak student learns to read, it feels like personal victory. That feeling alone makes every stress worth it.” (*Private school teacher, age 29*)

“Teaching gives me purpose. Policies may change, but my connection with students never does.” (*Government school teacher, age 42*)

This theme illustrates Herzberg's *motivators*—achievement, recognition, and responsibility—as sources of occupational well-being.

#### **Interpretation:**

Job appreciation functions as an internalized motivator that transforms routine stress into meaningful engagement. The psychological payoff of teaching (seeing progress, moral contribution) acts as a buffer against occupational fatigue.

#### **Theme 3: Adaptive Coping and Collegial Support**

Many teachers relied on **peer networks**, humor, and faith as coping mechanisms. Collegial relationships and informal sharing were repeatedly cited as stress relievers.

“We laugh off the absurdity of some rules. If we don't laugh, we'll burn out.” (*Private school teacher, age 37*)

“Discussing our daily frustrations during lunch makes it easier to carry on.” (*Government teacher, age 33*)

This demonstrates how social support functions as a protective occupational resource, consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

#### **Interpretation:**

Adaptive coping reframes stress as a collective challenge rather than an individual weakness, thereby sustaining mental equilibrium and organizational engagement.

#### **Theme 4: Recognition Gap and Silent Pride**

Teachers expressed a recurring sense of being underappreciated institutionally, yet they took pride in their work. This “silent pride” was frequently described as *self-derived appreciation*.

“No one says thank you, but when my students greet me outside school, that's my real recognition.” (*Government teacher, age 46*)

“We are appreciated by children, not by systems.” (*Private school teacher, age 34*)

## Interpretation:

This theme underscores the emotional duality of teaching: dissatisfaction with formal recognition (hygiene deficit) coexisting with deep intrinsic satisfaction (motivator strength). This balance defines occupational well-being within constrained systems.

### 4.3 Integrated Interpretation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of both datasets reveals a consistent pattern:

Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Reinforcement	Theoretical Mapping
Age-related stress differences (31–40 years most stressed)	Teachers in mid-career stages report burnout due to multitasking and digital pressure	Hygiene factors (workload, supervision)
Higher stress in private schools	Narratives of job insecurity and managerial pressure	Hygiene deficits (organizational policy)
Inverse correlation between stress and appreciation	Teachers derive meaning from intrinsic joy of teaching	Motivators (achievement, recognition)
Persistence of appreciation despite stress	Silent pride and emotional reward sustain engagement	Herzberg's dual-factor model validated

This triangulation confirms that **occupational stress and appreciation coexist as interdependent constructs**. Herzberg's theory finds empirical validation: motivators (intrinsic appreciation) offset the psychological costs of hygiene deficiencies (policy surveillance and workload).

From an **occupational-health perspective**, this indicates that teachers maintain functional well-being not through stress elimination but through *psychological reinterpretation of stress as purposeful effort*.

In effect, the findings advance a **resilience-based model of teacher well-being**, where the ratio of appreciation to stress determines psychological sustainability.

## Summary of Key Results

1. **Quantitative evidence** demonstrates significant differences in stress levels across age and school type, with appreciation inversely correlated to stress.
2. **Qualitative evidence** reveals that meaning-making, collegial support, and intrinsic motivation serve as adaptive coping mechanisms.
3. **Integrated analysis** confirms Herzberg's dual-factor structure as a robust interpretive model for occupational well-being.
4. The study reframes teacher stress not as an endpoint of strain but as a **dynamic process of adaptation and meaning reconstruction**.

## DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Interpreting the Findings through Herzberg's Framework

The dual existence of moderate job stress and strong job appreciation among Indian school teachers reinforces the central proposition of **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** (Herzberg et al., 1959): occupational well-being arises not from the absence of strain but from the presence of intrinsic motivators that infuse work with meaning.

Teachers' high levels of appreciation, despite policy surveillance and administrative overload, illustrate Herzberg's motivator domain—achievement, recognition, and purpose. Conversely, hygiene factors—rigid monitoring, limited autonomy, and workload fragmentation—correspond to the structural stressors observed in this study.

The data reveal that teachers are not passive recipients of stress but *active interpreters* of it. By reconstructing bureaucratic pressure as purposeful effort, they convert potential burnout into sustainable engagement. This interpretation aligns with the **positive occupational-health psychology** view that well-being can coexist with strain when individuals maintain psychological meaning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Fredrickson, 2001).

## 5.2 Age, Experience, and Adaptive Resilience

Age emerged as a significant differentiator of stress perception. Teachers aged **31–40 years**—the professional “middle zone”—reported the highest stress, consistent with findings by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018). This period often coincides with simultaneous career, family, and institutional responsibilities, intensifying workload strain.

By contrast, teachers **above 40 years** exhibited adaptive calm. Their qualitative narratives suggest that experience brings both procedural mastery and emotional detachment, permitting more balanced cognitive appraisal of stressors. This pattern validates **Lazarus and Folkman's (1984)** transactional model, where coping efficiency increases with repeated exposure and reinterpretation of stress stimuli.

## 5.3 School-Type Variation: Institutional Context and Control

Private-school teachers experienced higher stress than government-school counterparts, echoing trends noted globally in market-driven education systems (Kyriacou, 2019). The reason lies in differing **organizational hygiene environments**. Private institutions emphasize performance, client satisfaction, and managerial oversight—conditions that heighten psychological demand without necessarily enhancing reward.

In contrast, government-school teachers, while facing bureaucratic rigidity, benefit from greater job security and collective bargaining, which serve as **buffer resources** in the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Sheokand's (2017) earlier research on **school administration and teacher satisfaction** supports this interpretation: hierarchical autonomy and stable policy structures promote equilibrium even in resource-limited settings. The present findings extend that observation into the occupational-health domain by demonstrating how policy design interacts with well-being outcomes.

## 5.4 Digital Governance and Policy Surveillance as Emerging Hygiene Stressors

One of the most striking qualitative insights concerns teachers' fatigue with **biometric attendance and continuous digital reporting**—an unintended consequence of India's *Digital India* governance reforms. While these initiatives enhanced transparency (Sheokand, 2017, *Revolution in Governance through “Digital India”*), they also introduced a new dimension of **technological micromanagement**.

Teachers reported feeling “quantified” rather than trusted—a shift from professional accountability to procedural compliance. This echoes Cooper and Quick's (2017) concern that digital monitoring may displace relational trust with algorithmic oversight, thereby eroding intrinsic motivation.

Within Herzberg's schema, such reforms strengthen hygiene control but diminish motivational autonomy, leading to **control fatigue**—a chronic psychological state characterized by high compliance but low emotional energy.

## 5.5 The Protective Role of Intrinsic Appreciation

Despite systemic pressures, the correlation analysis and thematic evidence converge on a powerful insight: **appreciation functions as an internal health resource**. Teachers derive emotional resilience from self-perceived contribution, student progress, and moral fulfillment.

This finding extends Sheokand's (2017) notion of "*silent pride*" in teaching and resonates with Fernet et al. (2012), who found that intrinsic motivation predicts reduced burnout even under adverse organizational climates. Teachers' ability to redefine stress as service exemplifies *meaning-focused coping*—a cognitive strategy that reframes stress within a positive existential framework.

From an occupational-health standpoint, appreciation operates analogously to **psychological immunity**, preventing stress from translating into dysfunction. The motivational meaning of work thus constitutes a non-pharmacological intervention for professional well-being.

## 5.6 Toward a Resilience-Based Model of Occupational Well-Being

Synthesizing quantitative and qualitative evidence yields a **resilience-based model** (Figure 1):

**Institutional Hygiene Stressors → Perceived Daily Stress → Motivational Reappraisal (Job Appreciation) → Occupational Well-Being**

This sequence underscores that stress is not a linear path to decline but a cyclical process moderated by cognitive and emotional resources. When appreciation is high, stress energy is metabolized into engagement rather than exhaustion.

This model refines Herzberg's theory for modern occupational-health contexts by positioning **motivation not only as a satisfaction driver but as a resilience mechanism**—bridging classical motivation theory with contemporary health psychology.

## 5.7 Comparison with International Literature

The coexistence of stress and appreciation parallels findings from Western and Asian research. Hakanen et al. (2006) reported similar duality among Finnish teachers, where intrinsic engagement neutralized work strain. Likewise, in Chinese and South-East Asian samples, collectivist cultural orientation fostered meaning-based coping (Chan & Hu, 2018).

What distinguishes the Indian context, as evidenced here, is the overlay of **policy digitalization** and **governance reform**, themes documented in Sheokand's (2017) series of studies on primary education and digital classrooms. These contextual elements situate occupational well-being within the broader narrative of India's administrative modernization—making this study one of the first to connect digital governance with psychosocial teacher health.

## 5.8 Practical and Theoretical Implications

### For Occupational-Health Theory:

The study extends Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory by demonstrating its relevance beyond satisfaction to psychological resilience. Motivators serve as **well-being regulators**, not merely satisfaction enhancers. Hygiene factors, when excessively technologized, risk converting efficiency into emotional strain.

### For Policy and School Governance:

Policymakers should balance digital accountability with psychological autonomy. Teacher-well-being audits, recognition frameworks, and participative management structures are recommended. Excessive data reporting should be replaced by periodic reflective supervision sessions that validate teachers' emotional labor.

### For Organizational Practice:

School administrators should cultivate appreciation climates—public acknowledgment, peer recognition, and reduced bureaucratic friction. Simple relational gestures—trust, gratitude, and flexibility—can function as high-impact, low-cost well-being interventions.

## For Individual Teachers:

Structured coping programs—mindfulness, emotional regulation training, and peer-support groups—can reinforce intrinsic appreciation and prevent chronic stress accumulation.

### 5.9 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although methodologically rigorous, the study's cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to track the long-term evolution of stress-appreciation dynamics. Physiological indicators (e.g., cortisol, heart-rate variability) could complement self-report data for a comprehensive occupational-health profile.

Moreover, comparative studies across states or countries could test the generalizability of the resilience-based model in diverse cultural and governance contexts.

### 5.10 Summary

The discussion affirms that **teacher well-being is a product of psychological meaning, not merely workload reduction**. Occupational stress, when reframed through appreciation, becomes a manageable and even constructive element of professional life.

Herzberg's dual-factor theory, reinterpreted through occupational-health science, thus remains profoundly relevant:

- **Hygiene factors** determine the level of discomfort;
- **Motivators** determine the capacity for resilience;
- Their interaction defines the real quality of working life.

Ultimately, teachers' ability to transform structural strain into purposeful effort represents not only professional strength but also a vital form of *psychological governance*—a domain where India's educational transformation must now invest.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the intricate relationship between quotidian job stress and occupational well-being among Indian school teachers through the interpretive lens of **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, the findings reveal that daily occupational stress and job appreciation coexist not as contradictions but as *complementary forces* in professional adaptation.

Quantitatively, stress levels varied significantly by age and school type, with teachers in the 31–40 age group and those in private institutions showing higher strain. Yet, qualitative insights demonstrated that most teachers sustain emotional equilibrium through intrinsic appreciation, moral purpose, and social connectedness.

These results affirm Herzberg's proposition that satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from distinct psychological systems. Occupational health in teaching, therefore, cannot be achieved by eliminating all stressors but by amplifying motivators that restore psychological meaning. Teachers who experience recognition, autonomy, and moral pride transform stress into energy for engagement — a process central to **resilience-based well-being**.

In broader occupational-health terms, this study reframes stress not merely as a pathogenic condition but as a manageable psychosocial variable — one that can be reinterpreted through appreciation and purpose. This reconceptualization has implications beyond education, suggesting a model of *psychological sustainability* applicable to other professions exposed to structural demands and emotional labor.

## 7. Practical Implications

The study's insights have direct relevance for **policy makers, educational administrators, and occupational-health practitioners** seeking to foster sustainable teacher well-being.

### 7.1 Policy-Level Implications

**Balance Accountability with Autonomy:** Digital governance mechanisms like biometric attendance should be redesigned to include feedback loops that acknowledge teachers' qualitative contributions, not just quantitative presence.

**Institutionalize Teacher Well-Being Frameworks:** Ministries and state education boards should introduce *Teacher Occupational Health Indices (TOHI)* that evaluate schools not only on academic performance but also on staff well-being metrics.

**Policy Humanization:** The *Digital India* framework, as Sheokand (2017) highlighted, must integrate empathy-driven design — reducing redundant reporting, encouraging reflective pedagogy, and acknowledging emotional labor.

### 7.2 Institutional Implications

**Recognition Culture:** School leaders should institutionalize recognition rituals — monthly appreciation circles, peer acknowledgments, and student-led gratitude initiatives — to reinforce motivators.

**Well-Being Audits:** Regular occupational-health audits should track teacher stress, appreciation, and work-life balance. These audits must feed into actionable leadership interventions.

**Professional Autonomy:** Empower teachers to design lesson plans and contribute to policy discussions. Autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation and aligns organizational goals with psychological health.

### 7.3 Occupational Health Practice

**Preventive Mental Health Programs:** Integrate short mindfulness sessions, reflective journaling, and emotional resilience workshops into teacher training.

**Peer Support Networks:** Establish structured mentoring systems where experienced teachers guide younger ones through stress adaptation.

**Counselling Access:** Ensure confidential access to professional counsellors within district education departments.

### 7.4 Individual Strategies

Teachers can cultivate personal well-being through daily micro-practices:

- Setting realistic boundaries around after-hours work.
- Reframing stress through gratitude reflection (focusing on student progress, not policy pressure).
- Engaging in physical activity and collective recreation to reduce chronic fatigue.

## 8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides robust mixed-method insights, several limitations warrant acknowledgment.

**Cross-Sectional Design:** The study captures stress and appreciation at a single time point. Future longitudinal studies should track fluctuations in occupational well-being across academic years and policy cycles.

**Self-Report Bias:** Data rely on subjective perception; inclusion of objective health markers (e.g., cortisol levels, sleep quality) could enhance validity.

**Regional Representation:** Although participants were drawn from diverse schools, expansion to multiple states would allow stronger generalizability across India's varied educational ecosystems.

**Digitalization Variables:** Further exploration of digital surveillance, workload tracking, and algorithmic management should be conducted using occupational ergonomics frameworks.

Future research could also integrate **physiological and psychometric data** within a unified occupational-health model to quantify resilience thresholds. Comparative studies across developing and developed nations could test whether the *stress-appreciation duality* holds cross-culturally.

From a theoretical standpoint, the proposed **Resilience-Based Model of Occupational Well-Being** (developed in this study) should be empirically tested across professions—linking Herzberg's motivators to health-protective outcomes. Such validation could lead to a globally applicable framework for understanding *psychological sustainability* at work.

## 9. Closing Perspective

This inquiry repositions the Indian teacher as not merely an agent of pedagogy but a **psychological frontline worker** in the nation's social development. In a time when educational governance increasingly depends on data, teachers remain the human core of the system — translating policy into experience, metrics into meaning, and effort into collective progress.

Ultimately, the study asserts that **well-being in teaching is not the absence of stress but the presence of purpose**. The transformation of daily strain into sustained motivation is not incidental; it is the essence of professional maturity and the cornerstone of a healthy educational system.

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