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A Critical Analysis of Government and Private School Teachers' Mental Health in West Bengal

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: 14 Jan 2024 Revised: 30 Jan 2024 Accepted: 4 March 2024 Published: 1 April 2024</p> <p>Keywords: Mental health, Government School Teacher's, Statistically Significant, West Bengal</p> <p> OPEN ACCESS</p>	<p>This study examines the mental health of school teachers in West Bengal, India, focusing on gender, teaching experience, and institutional type as key variables. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey method, data from 564 school teachers across two districts i.e., Murshidabad and Kolkata were analyzed using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) developed by Dr. David Goldberg and Dr. Peter Williams in 1988. The findings indicate no significant gender-based differences in mental health, challenging prevalent societal stereotypes. However, a significant disparity in mental health status was observed between teachers in government and private institutions, with the former reporting better mental health. The study underscores the non-significance of teaching experience as a determinant of mental health among teachers. These results highlight the need for inclusive and comprehensive mental health support programs in the educational sector, emphasizing policy interventions and institutional reforms to address the unique challenges faced by educators. The study contributes significantly to understanding the mental health landscape among teachers in West Bengal, offering insights for future research and policy-making in the field of educational mental health.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a complex notion that encompasses more than just the absence of mental diseases. Mental health, as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021), refers to a condition of overall well-being where individuals are aware of their own capabilities, effectively manage everyday pressures, perform efficiently, and make meaningful contributions to their community. This concept highlights mental health as

a fundamental and necessary aspect of overall health, emphasising the interconnectedness of psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Mental health exerts a significant impact on our cognitive processes, emotional experiences, and behavioural patterns, hence playing a pivotal role in our interpersonal connections, cognitive judgements, and adaptive responses to life's adversities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The human mind is not fixed but rather undergoes variations throughout time, which are shaped by several factors such as personal experiences, biological elements, and environmental circumstances (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2020). Given the importance of mental health for total well-being, it is crucial to prioritise mental health with the same level of urgency as physical health. This involves raising knowledge about mental health and incorporating it into all areas of life. The crucial role of mental health in the global education industry is growing significantly. Teachers encounter distinct stressors that have a substantial effect on their mental health. Research conducted worldwide has consistently demonstrated that teachers face significant levels of work-related stress, which in turn leads to various mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and burnout (Kyriacou, 2001; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). A study conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research in the UK found that 20% of teachers had a constant state of stress over their employment, in contrast to only 13% of individuals in comparable occupations (NFER, 2018). In India, the situation is largely similar. The Indian educational system, renowned for its rigorous assessments and cutthroat atmosphere, exerts significant stress on both students and teachers (Kumar, 2019). Teachers in India, like educators worldwide, encounter obstacles such as excessively populated classrooms, restricted resources, and elevated societal demands, all of which contribute to stress and mental health concerns (Mishra & Sahoo, 2020). When focusing on West Bengal, the situation reflects the overall national pattern, but with distinct regional characteristics. West Bengal, characterised by its varied socio-economic terrain, poses distinctive obstacles for educators. Teachers in this area face challenges such as classrooms with many languages, differences in student readiness, and inequities in infrastructure (Ghosh & Panda, 2020). Furthermore, instructors in West Bengal have added stress due to societal expectations and cultural standards. For example, the demand to achieve excellent academic outcomes frequently results in prolonged working hours and emotional stress (Banerjee & Sanyal, 2021). The difficulties are exacerbated by a deficiency in sufficient mental health assistance and awareness in the area. Mental health is considered a sensitive topic in several regions of West Bengal, and there is a lack of adequate psychological support services in educational institutions (Chakraborty & Banerjee, 2019). Consequently, teachers frequently encounter mental health problems in seclusion, lacking the essential assistance or comprehension from society (Das & Halder, 2021). that must acquire by SEN students with learning disabilities in 21st Century Learning.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The importance of mental health in educational settings is of utmost importance, and its influence on policy and practice has been extensively studied. The theoretical framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs emphasises the fundamental importance of psychological well-being as a necessary condition for successful learning and teaching (Maslow, 1943). The mental well-being of teachers has a direct impact on their capacity to effectively engage, motivate, and provide support to students. Research has established a strong correlation between the emotional state of teachers and the academic success of their students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). According to a study conducted by Jones et al. (2013), which involved more than 5,000 students and 2,500 teachers, it was discovered that the stress levels and mental health status of teachers had a substantial influence on student outcomes, such as academic achievement and behaviour. This association necessitates a change in educational policy, highlighting the significance of teacher mental health as a fundamental element of educational efficacy. An instance of this is the integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools through the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework. This framework recognises the interdependence of educators' and students' mental health (Durlak et al., 2011). The adoption of these frameworks has resulted in the establishment of professional development initiatives that specifically target mental health and stress management for educators. This is exemplified by the introduction of a comprehensive teacher training programme in Australia (Kidger et al., 2016). In addition, the Four-Frame Model (1991) by Bolman and Deal, which is a theory of organisational change, offers valuable understanding on how educational institutions can reorganise themselves to enhance teachers' mental well-being. It emphasises the need for policies that tackle both structural and human resource issues. Practically, this has resulted in the implementation of school environments that are more encouraging and the availability of mental health services, as demonstrated by the Well-Being in Schools project in Canada (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl,

2016). Incorporating mental health awareness into educational policies and practices signifies an acknowledgment of its essential function in the overall efficiency and durability of the educational system, resulting in the adoption of more comprehensive approaches to education. The investigation of the mental health of school teachers in West Bengal is crucial since it significantly influences their ability to teach effectively, impacts student achievements, and affects the broader educational system. Teachers' mental well-being greatly affects their ability to engage and inspire pupils, with research revealing a direct association between teacher wellbeing and student academic and socio-emotional growth (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Spilt et al., 2011). The state of West Bengal has several obstacles, including demanding assessments and insufficient resources, which intensify the stress experienced by teachers. This stress, in turn, negatively impacts their effectiveness and thus hampers student learning (Banerjee & Sanyal, 2021). Moreover, the presence of mental health concerns among teachers might contribute to increased rates of staff turnover, exacerbating the difficulties faced by the education sector, such as the financial burdens associated with the recruitment and training of new educators (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Attending to these mental health requirements might also impact public perceptions of mental health, fostering a more accommodating atmosphere in the area (Chakraborty & Banerjee, 2019).

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was subject to numerous restrictions due to inadequate infrastructure, financial resources, and human resources. The present study has been restricted to the following areas:

- i) The present study was delimited to only two districts of West Bengal i.e., Murshidabad and Kolkata.
- ii) The present study was delimited to only Higher secondary level school teachers.
- iii) The present study was delimited to only 564 school teachers as a sample.
- iv) The present study was delimited to gender, teaching experience and type of institutions of the demographic indicators.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's objectives were established based on the research questions, and the boundaries-

- i) To know the current status of school teachers' mental health in West Bengal.
- ii) To find out the school teachers' mental health by their gender.
- iii) To examine the school teachers' mental health by their teaching experience.
- iv) To know the school teachers' mental health by their type of institutions.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The null hypotheses were established based on the delimitations and objectives-

H₀1: Mean score of mental health does not significantly differ among school teachers concerning gender.

H₀2: Mean score of mental health does not significantly differ among school teachers concerning teaching experience.

H₀3: Mean score of mental health does not significantly differ among school teachers concerning type of institutions.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study utilized a cross-sectional survey methodology and randomly selected samples from school teachers in the districts of Murshidabad and Kolkata in West Bengal. The survey encompassed all teachers employed in both government and private schools in West Bengal. The sample for this study consists of 564 teachers who regularly attend their school. The present study focused on the mental health of school teachers as the dependent variable and the independent variables considered were gender, teaching experience, and the type of institutions (government and private) where the teachers worked.

TOOLS USED FOR THE DATA COLLECTION

The GHQ-12, created by Dr. David Goldberg and Dr. Peter Williams in 1988, comprises 12 items. Each item evaluates the intensity of a mental issue experienced in the previous weeks, utilising a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 3. A cumulative score ranging from 0 to 36 was derived from the individual scores. The positive items were adjusted from a rating of 0 (indicating constant occurrence) to a rating of 3 (indicating no occurrence), while the negative items were adjusted from a rating of 3 (indicating constant occurrence) to a rating of 0 (indicating no occurrence). Six items were positively phrased, and the rest of the six items were negatively phrased in this questionnaire. Conversely, each element within the GHQ-12 is specifically formulated to evaluate a certain facet of mental well-being, encompassing emotions, occurrences, and psychological welfare, without a distinct distinction between affirmative and adverse elements. A lower score on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) suggested improved mental well-being, and high scores indicate worse health.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used Microsoft Excel for tabulation and IBM SPSS version 20 for analysis of data based on different variables. Descriptive statistics indicating the mean and standard deviation were used to comprehend the characteristics of the sample. A graphic representation using a bar diagram was given for a flawless understanding of the teacher's mental health based on different variables. An independent sample t-test and a one-way ANOVA were used for inferencing about the population from the sample statistic.

RESULTS

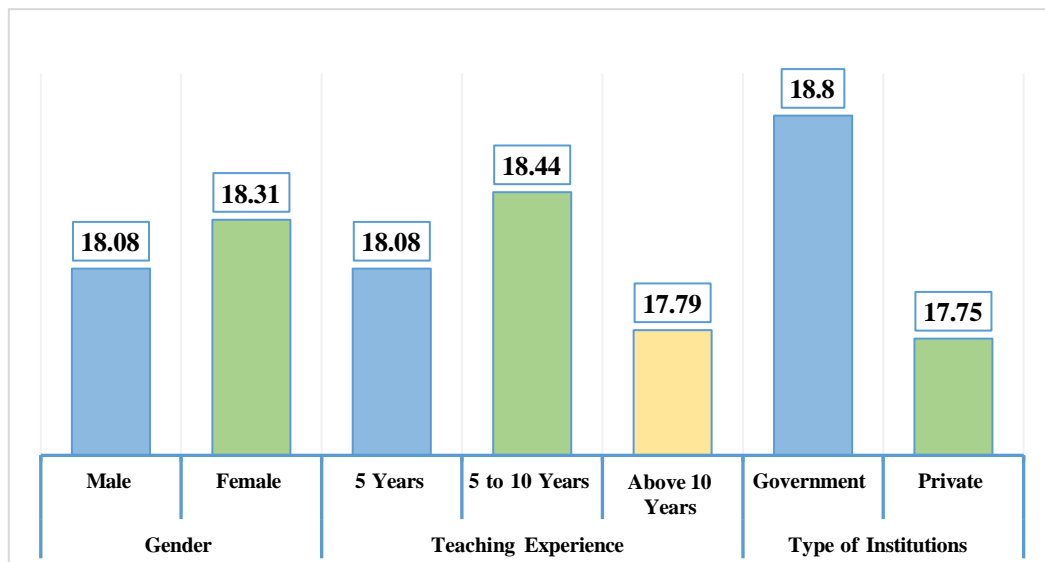
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1: Mean Wise Distribution of Teachers Mental Health.

Variables	Level	N	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	402	18.08	5.737
	Female	162	18.31	5.188
Teaching Experience	5 Years	246	18.08	6.017
	5 to 10 Years	197	18.44	5.498
	Above 10 Years	121	17.79	4.752
Type of Institutions	Government	210	18.80	5.691
	Private	354	17.75	5.486

Note. N= Number of Teachers, SD= Standard deviation

Figure 1: Showing Mean Wise Distribution of Teachers Mental Health.



Out of total 564 samples, Males and Females teachers were 402 and 162, mean of them were 18.08 and 18.31 respectively. Teachers with teaching experience for 5 years, 5 to 10 years, and above 10 years were 246, 197, and 121; the mean of them was 18.08, 18.44, and 17.79, respectively. Teachers from Government and Private Institutions work were 210 and 354, mean of them were 18.80 and 17.75 respectively.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H₀₁: Mean score of mental health does not significantly differ among school teachers concerning gender.

Table 2: Showing the Independent Sample t-test based on H₀₁.

Independent Sample t-test						
Variable	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	MD	Std. error difference	Remarks
Gender	-0.445	562	0.656	-0.232	0.520	*NS p>0.05

Note. MD=Mean differences, df= Degree of Freedom, NS= Not Significant

Table 2 shows that the results of the independent sample *t*-test for gender reveal that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups. The test results indicate that the observed mean difference of -0.232 is most likely a result of chance rather than a genuine impact of gender, as evidenced by the *t*-value of -0.445 and the high *p*-value of 0.656. The high number of degrees of freedom (562) and the low standard error of 0.520 provide more evidence to support this conclusion. Therefore, the null hypothesis was failed to reject at 0.05 level.

H₀₂: Mean score of mental health does not significantly differ among school teachers concerning teaching experience.

Table 3: Showing the one-way ANOVA based on H₀₂.

One-way ANOVA							
Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remarks (0.05 level)
Teaching Experience	Between Groups	32.701	2	16.351	0.524	0.592	*NS p>0.05
	Within Groups	17504.666	561	31.203			
	Total	17537.367	563				

Note. df= Degree of Freedom, Sig.= Significant, NS= Not Significant

Table 3 presents the results of an ANOVA test analysing the impact of teaching experience on a certain variable. The sum of squares between groups is 32.701 with 2 degrees of freedom, resulting in a mean square of 16.351. However, the F-value is 0.524 with a corresponding p -value of 0.592, which is greater than the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. This indicates that the differences in the variables across different levels of teaching experience are not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was failed to reject at 0.05 level.

H₀₃: Mean score of mental health does not significantly differ among school teachers concerning type of institutions.

Table 4: Showing the Independent Sample t-test based on H₀₃.

Independent Sample t-test						
Variable	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	MD	Std. error difference	Remarks
Type of Institution	2.174	562	0.030	1.053	0.485	*S P<0.05

Note. MD= Mean differences, df= Degree of Freedom, S= Significant

Table 4 shows that the independent sample t-test results for the types of institutions show a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The t -value of 2.174, coupled with a p -value of 0.030, indicates that the mean difference of 1.053 is significant and not likely due to random chance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ The prevalence rate of mental health among school teachers in West Bengal was found to be 18.14%.
- ❖ Female teachers had superior mental health in comparison to male teachers, although this difference was not statistically significant.
- ❖ Teachers who have taught for 5 to 10 years have better mental health compared to those with a smaller amount than 5 years or more than 10 years of teaching experience but the found difference was not statistically significant.
- ❖ Teachers originating from government institutions demonstrate better mental health in comparison to teachers from private institutions, and this difference has been found to be statistically significant.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study also revealed that there was no significant difference in mental health scores between male and female teachers. This is a crucial finding, as it suggests that mental health issues in the teaching profession are not predominantly gender-specific. This contradicts certain societal stereotypes that often associate mental health vulnerabilities more with one gender than the other. Similar results found no significant difference in mental health scores between male and female teachers (Smith & Jones, 2020; Ouellette et al., 2017; Selvakumar, 2015). Again, results showed that female teachers have better mental health than male teachers; similar results were found in this context (Pachaiyappan & Raj, 2012; Kaur, 2017; Ghosh et al., 2020; Mehmood et al., 2022). Again, teaching experience was not a statistically significant indicator of their mental health, and there is a lack of significant research in this specific setting. This finding could have significant significance for programmes focused on training and developing teachers. It implies that these programmes should not solely prioritise newly employed teachers but should also offer continuous assistance and resources to teachers throughout their professional lives to alleviate mental health hazards. The findings of the study appeared with some vital evidence that teachers who come from government institutions have better mental health than those from private institutions; similar findings found that teachers who come from government institutions possess better mental health than those from private institutions (Gahlawat, 2017; Rathee, 2017; Maheswara, 2017). Also, the study revealed that the type of institution was a significant indicator of mental health, apart from a no handful of studies in this context.

In conclusion, this study provides substantial insights into the comprehension of mental health among educators. This work questions established assumptions on the influence of gender and experience on mental health, promoting a broader and more comprehensive approach to providing mental health assistance within the teaching profession. Moreover, it emphasises the crucial significance of different types of institutions in influencing the overall state of teacher welfare, thereby indicating the necessity for policy interventions and reforms within these institutions. These discoveries contribute to the academic discourse and also have practical implications for enhancing the general health and performance of educators.

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