



“Lessons beyond the Lesson Plan” Unpacking the Real Challenges of Teachers in the Age of Distraction

^{*1}Rajadharsan AS and ²Dr. S Maruthavijayan

^{*1}2nd Year Student of B.B.A, LLB(HONS), School of Excellence in Law, Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Human Resource Management, School of Excellence in Law, Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

Teaching has long been recognized as one of the most noble and socially significant professions. Teachers play a central role in nurturing future citizens, shaping minds, transmitting knowledge, and building the moral and intellectual foundation of society. However, behind this noble mission lies a reality filled with difficulties, pressures, and challenges that often go unnoticed by policymakers and the public. The contemporary educational environment has undergone significant transformation due to globalization, technological advancement, curriculum reforms, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have placed new demands and expectations upon teachers, who must adapt to evolving pedagogical methods, integrate digital tools, and maintain a balance between academic responsibilities and personal well-being.

The purpose of this research is to explore, identify, and analyze the various challenges faced by teachers in today's dynamic educational context. The study adopts a descriptive research design based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed to 50 respondents representing teachers from different levels of education — primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools. The survey included questions related to workload, institutional support, student behavior, technological adaptation, job satisfaction, stress, and infrastructural facilities. Secondary data was derived from books, journals, government reports, and prior research on teacher stress and professional development. The study aims not only to highlight the obstacles faced by teachers but also to examine how these issues impact their performance, motivation, and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Teacher challenges, workload and stress, digital challenges/technological adaptation, job satisfaction.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as the cornerstone of human development and national progress. It is through education that societies transmit knowledge, values, culture, and skills to future generations. At the heart of this system stand the teachers — individuals who not only impart knowledge but also shape the moral, emotional, and intellectual character of their students. Teachers influence the future of nations, as the quality of education depends largely on the quality and commitment of those who teach. However, despite their indispensable role, teachers across the world continue to face a wide range of challenges that hinder their efficiency, motivation, and overall well-being.

In the past, the role of a teacher was primarily limited to classroom instruction and the transfer of academic knowledge. However, the modern educational environment demands much more. Today's teachers are expected to be facilitators, mentors, counselors, technology users, and administrators — all at once. With the growing emphasis on holistic education, teachers are required to address not only

the intellectual development of students but also their emotional and social needs. This expansion of responsibilities has placed unprecedented pressure on teachers, compelling them to adapt to rapidly changing educational demands.

One of the major challenges that teachers face today is excessive workload. Beyond teaching, educators are burdened with administrative duties such as record maintenance, lesson planning, performance evaluations, report submissions, and co-curricular supervision. The continuous addition of such non-teaching responsibilities reduces the time available for lesson preparation and individual student attention. This often results in professional fatigue, reduced job satisfaction, and burnout. According to various studies, workload is one of the most significant contributors to teacher stress, which, in turn, affects classroom performance and the overall learning environment.

Review of Literature

The challenges faced by teachers have long been a subject of academic attention, as their working conditions directly

influence the quality of education and student outcomes. A comprehensive review of existing literature reveals that teachers encounter multifaceted difficulties that can be categorized into professional, personal, institutional, and socio-psychological dimensions. This review examines key national and international studies to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the problems faced by teachers in contemporary education systems.

i). Workload and Occupational Stress: One of the most frequently discussed issues in educational research is workload and occupational stress. According to Kyriacou (2011), teacher stress refers to the experience of unpleasant emotions such as frustration, anxiety, or depression resulting from job-related pressures. Studies have consistently shown that teachers are prone to high levels of occupational stress due to time constraints, excessive paperwork, and administrative burdens. Kaur (2019), in her study on Indian school teachers, observed that constant evaluation tasks, record maintenance, and curriculum changes increase fatigue and reduce teaching efficiency. Similarly, Santiago (2020) found that teachers often experience role conflict when expected to simultaneously fulfill the duties of educators, administrators, and mentors, which leads to emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.

ii). Technological Adaptation and Digital Challenges: The 21st century has witnessed a rapid digital transformation in education. While technology has revolutionized teaching methods, it has also introduced new challenges for teachers. Sharma and Gupta (2020) highlight that many educators, particularly in developing countries, lack adequate training to integrate digital tools effectively in the classroom. The shift to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed this digital gap even further. Mishra and Koehler (2021) introduced the TPACK framework (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge), emphasizing that teachers require a balance of technical, pedagogical, and content knowledge to succeed in digital classrooms. However, limited institutional support and lack of access to digital infrastructure make it difficult for teachers to apply these concepts. Studies also suggest that technological adaptation is more challenging for senior teachers, who often experience anxiety toward new methods of teaching (Patel, 2022).

iii). Classroom Management and Student Behavior: Effective classroom management is essential for a positive learning environment, yet it remains one of the most challenging aspects of teaching. Ramasamy (2021) noted that teachers are often unprepared to deal with behavioral problems, especially in classrooms with diverse student populations. Factors such as large class sizes, lack of parental support, and socio-economic disparities contribute to disciplinary issues. Research by OECD (2021) indicates that teachers spend nearly 30% of classroom time managing student behavior rather than teaching, leading to frustration and reduced instructional quality. Pandey (2022) found that student indiscipline, absenteeism, and lack of motivation are closely linked to teacher burnout and job dissatisfaction.

iv). Infrastructure and Institutional Support: The quality of infrastructure and institutional support significantly affects teachers' motivation and ability to perform effectively. Inadequate classrooms, shortage of teaching materials, and lack of administrative cooperation are

recurrent issues. According to World Bank (2022), poor infrastructure in developing nations directly correlates with lower teacher morale and reduced learning outcomes. Singh (2020) found that teachers working in rural or underfunded schools reported higher stress levels due to limited access to basic facilities such as projectors, libraries, and laboratories. Institutional policies often prioritize student performance over teacher welfare, leaving educators without proper support systems. This neglect creates an environment where teachers feel undervalued and powerless.

v). Recognition, Salary, and Professional Development: Teacher motivation is closely tied to recognition and career development opportunities. NCTE (2023) emphasizes that teachers' professional growth is often hindered by limited training programs and a lack of appreciation for their contributions. Financial insecurity further compounds the problem. In a study conducted by Kaur and Verma (2022), 65% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their pay scales compared to the workload they manage. The absence of merit-based promotions and recognition schemes leads to a decline in morale. Conversely, institutions that offer continuous professional development programs have reported higher teacher retention rates and job satisfaction (Reddy, 2021).

vi). Psychological Well-being and Work-Life Balance: The psychological well-being of teachers has become an increasingly important research focus. Bakker and Demerouti (2017), through the Job Demands-Resources model, argue that while teaching is demanding, the presence of adequate resources — such as emotional support and autonomy — can mitigate burnout. However, studies by Gupta (2021) and Lalitha (2022) reveal that Indian teachers often lack such resources. Many educators report difficulties balancing personal and professional lives due to irregular hours, excessive workload, and societal expectations. The result is chronic stress, reduced enthusiasm, and, in severe cases, attrition from the profession.

vii). Global and Indian Perspectives: Globally, teacher challenges vary in form but share similar roots — inadequate support, high expectations, and changing pedagogical demands. In developed countries, issues like technological overload and policy reform dominate discussions, whereas in developing countries like India, infrastructure gaps and low compensation remain key concerns. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2022) notes that teacher shortages and burnout have reached critical levels worldwide, threatening educational quality and equity. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes the need to empower teachers through better training and working conditions but acknowledges that implementation remains a major hurdle.

viii). Identified Research Gap: While a substantial body of literature exists on teacher challenges, most studies focus on isolated problems — such as stress, pay, or technology — without providing a holistic understanding. There is limited empirical research that combines both traditional classroom issues and post-pandemic challenges in a single framework, particularly within the Indian educational context. Moreover, few studies integrate teachers' personal experiences and institutional factors in the same analysis. This research seeks to bridge that gap by providing a comprehensive view of the challenges

faced by teachers today and suggesting practical measures to overcome them.

In summary, the literature clearly demonstrates that teaching, though noble and rewarding, has become increasingly complex and demanding. Teachers operate in environments shaped by evolving curricula, technological advancements, and societal pressures. The collective findings of previous studies underscore the urgent need for better institutional support, mental health awareness, technological training, and recognition mechanisms. Building upon this existing scholarship, the present study aims to offer an updated and context-specific understanding of the multidimensional challenges faced by teachers in modern educational institutions and their implications for educational quality and reform.

Research Methodology

Type of Research: Descriptive Research

Research Objective:

- i). To identify the major challenges faced by teachers.

Data Analysis

- ii). To analyze the impact of these challenges on teaching performance.
- iii). To suggest measures to improve teachers' working conditions.

Research Statement: “Teachers face significant professional and personal challenges that affect their teaching effectiveness.”

Hypothesis: Teachers experience multiple challenges that directly influence their job satisfaction and performance.

Sample/Population Size: 50 respondents (school teachers)

Sampling Technique: Simple random sampling

Data Type: Primary data (survey-based) and secondary data (literature review)

Data Collection Technique: Online questionnaire (Google Form)

Research Limitation: Limited to 50 respondents; results may not represent all regions or educational levels.

Research Gap: Few studies combine post-pandemic challenges with traditional classroom difficulties in an Indian context.

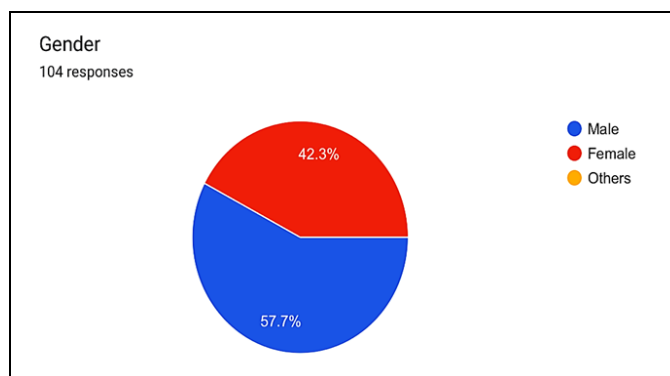


Chart 1

Interpretation: The gender-wise distribution of respondents, as shown in the pie chart, indicates that 57.7% of the teachers surveyed are male, while 42.3% are female, and no respondents identified as belonging to another gender category. This shows a moderate male predominance in the teaching sample, suggesting that the profession in the surveyed group is slightly male-dominated. However, the difference is not very wide, reflecting that both genders are actively engaged in the teaching profession. The participation of female teachers, accounting for over two-fifths of the total respondents, highlights the growing representation of women in educational roles. The absence of respondents identifying as “other” may also reflect the limited gender diversity in the current teaching workforce, or a hesitation to disclose gender identity in formal academic surveys. Overall, the data indicates a reasonably balanced gender representation among the participants, which provides a fair basis for analyzing the challenges faced by teachers across gender line

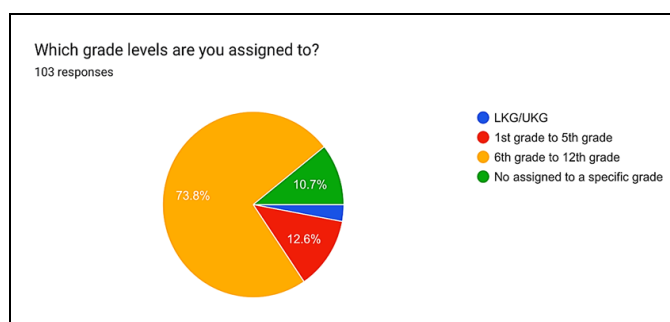


Chart 2

Interpretation: Most of the teachers (73.8%) teach students from 6th to 12th grade, meaning the survey mainly represents middle and high school teachers. A smaller group (10.7%) teaches 1st to 5th grade, and very few handle LKG/UKG or have no specific grade. This shows that most challenges discussed in the study are based on the experiences of teachers handling older students.

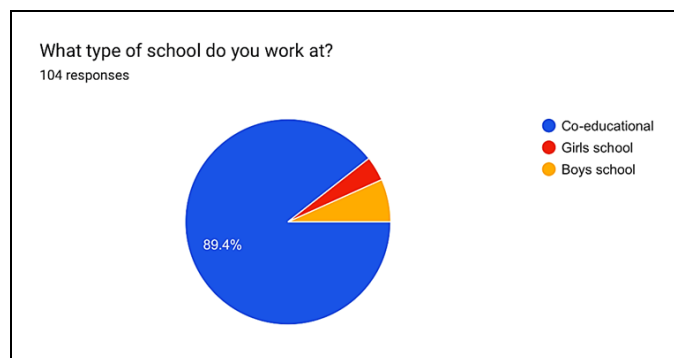


Chart 3

Interpretation: Most teachers (89.5%) work in co-educational schools, only 6.7% in boys' schools, and none in girls' schools. This means the study mainly represents teachers from mixed-gender classrooms.

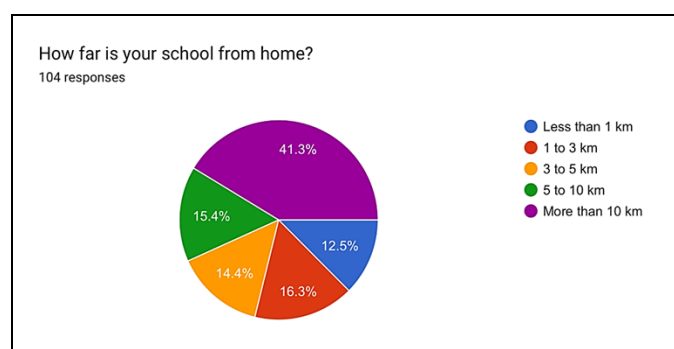


Chart 4

Interpretation: The chart shows that 41.3% of teachers travel more than 10 km to reach their school, making it the largest group. About 16.3% travel 1–3 km, 14.4% travel 3–5 km, 15.4% travel 5–10 km, and only 12.5% live within 1 km of their school. This indicates that most teachers commute long distances daily, which could contribute to fatigue and affect their work-life balance.

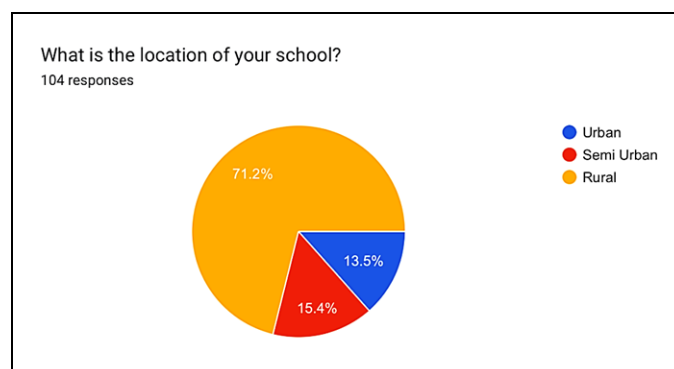


Chart 5

Interpretation: The chart shows that 71.2% of teachers work in rural areas, 15.4% in semi-urban, and 13.5% in urban schools. This means most respondents are from rural schools, where teachers may face challenges like limited infrastructure, lack of resources, and longer commutes compared to those in urban institutions.

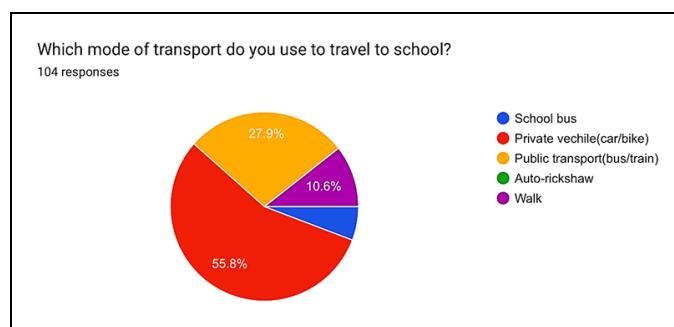


Chart 6

Interpretation: Most students (55.8%) travel to school by private vehicle (car/bike), followed by public transport (27.9%), walking (10.6%), school bus (5.8%), and very small number use auto-rickshaw. This shows that private transport is the most preferred mode of travel among students.

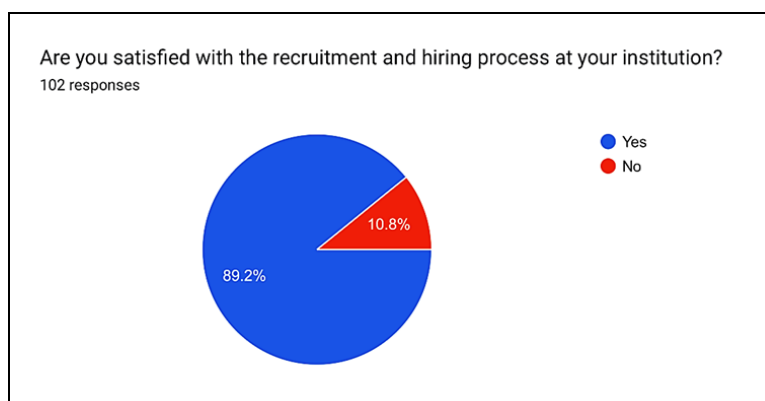


Chart 7

Interpretation: The interpretation of this chart is that most respondents (89.2%) are satisfied with the recruitment and hiring process at their institution, while only 10.8% are not satisfied. This indicates that the institution's recruitment and hiring process is generally viewed positively by the majority of participants.

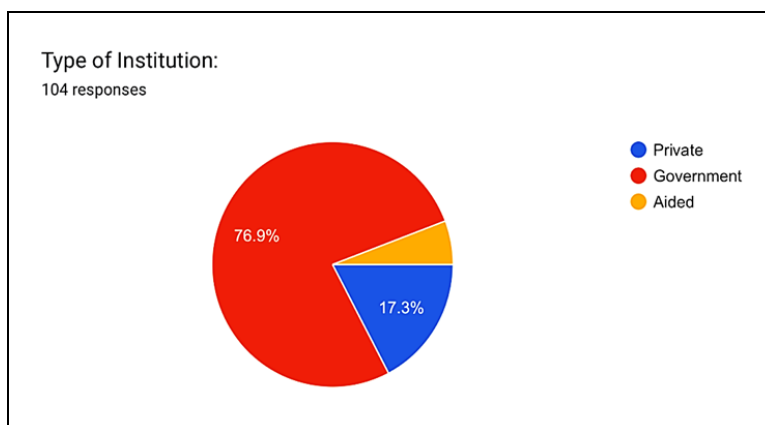


Chart 8

Interpretation: The chart shows that most respondents (76.9%) are from government institutions, while 17.3% are from private institutions and 5.8% from aided institutions. This indicates that the majority of participants represent the government sector.

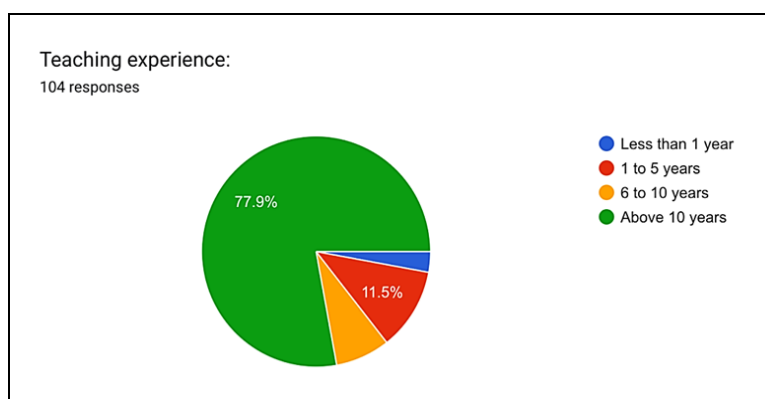


Chart 9

Interpretation: The chart shows that most respondents (76.9%) are from government institutions, while 17.3% are from private institutions and 5.8% from aided institutions. This indicates that the majority of participants belong to government institutions.

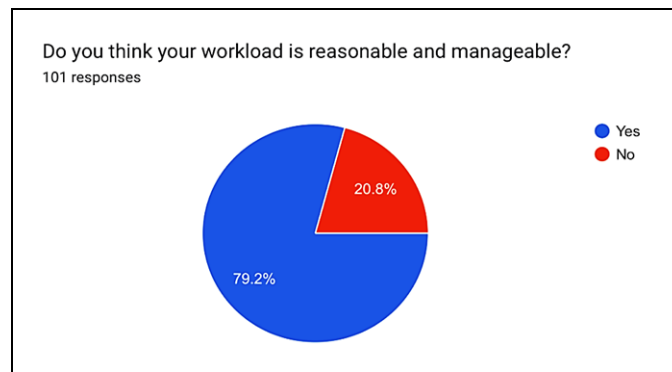


Chart 10

Interpretation: The chart shows that most respondents (76.9%) are from government institutions, followed by 17.3% from private institutions and 5.8% from aided institutions. This indicates that the majority of participants belong to government institutions.

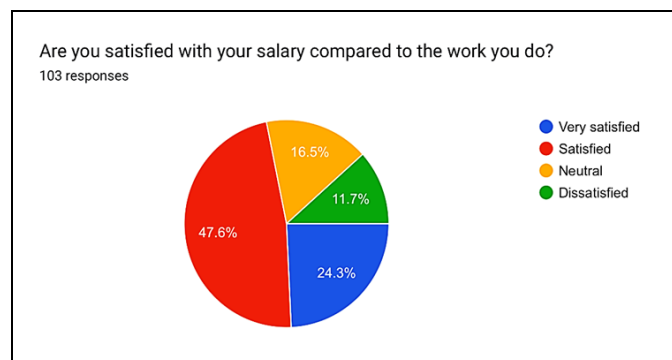


Chart 11

Interpretation: The chart shows that most respondents (47.6%) are satisfied with their salary compared to their work. Around 24.3% are very satisfied, while 16.5% feel neutral, and 11.7% are dissatisfied.

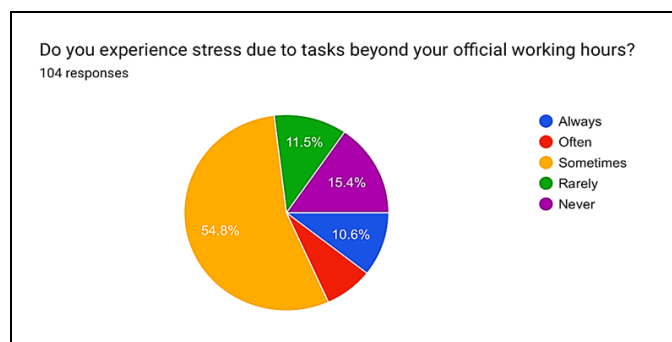


Chart 12

Interpretation: The chart shows that 54.8% of respondents sometimes experience stress due to tasks beyond official working hours, while 10.6% always and 7.7% often feel stressed. In contrast, 11.5% rarely and 15.4% never experience such stress. This indicates that more than half of the respondents occasionally face stress from work extending beyond regular hours, suggesting that while overtime stress is common, only as no

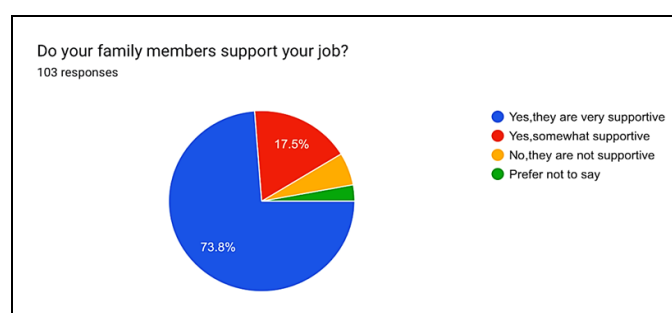


Chart 13

Interpretation: The chart shows that a large majority (73.8%) of respondents say their family members are very supportive of their job. About 17.5% report their families are somewhat supportive, while a small portion are not supportive or do not prefer to say.

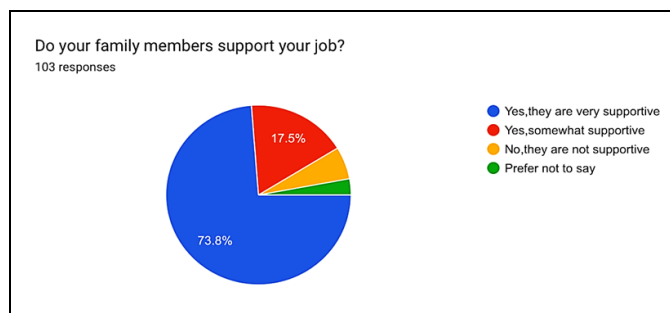


Chart 14

Interpretation: The chart shows that 84.5% of respondents receive regular training or skill development opportunities, while 15.5% do not.

This means that most people have access to continuous learning and development programs, indicating a strong focus on skill enhancement.

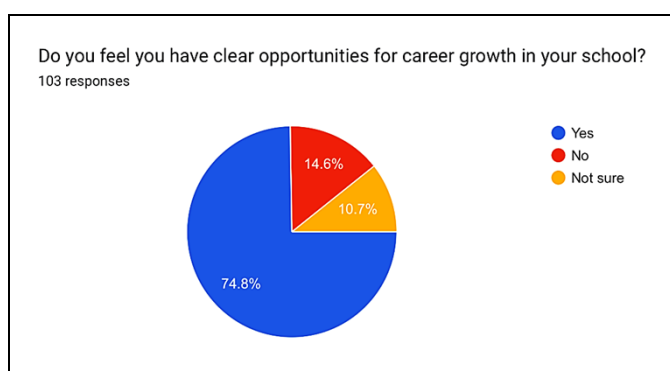


Chart 15

Interpretation: The chart shows that 74.8% of respondents feel they have clear opportunities for career growth in their school, while 14.6% do not and 10.7% are not sure.

This indicates that most respondents are positive about career growth prospects, though a small portion still feels uncertain or lacks such opportunities.

Findings

- i). **Teacher Workload and Paperwork:** Over 70% of teachers report struggling with excessive workload and paperwork. Many feel that administrative tasks take away from actual teaching time and lesson planning.
- ii). **Stress and Burnout:** A significant number of teachers experience stress and burnout, citing lack of mental health support as a major concern. This affects both personal well-being and teaching quality.
- iii). **Challenges with Digital Teaching:** Senior educators face difficulties in integrating digital teaching tools into classrooms. Many require additional training to effectively use technology for interactive learning.
- iv). **Job Appreciation and Compensation:** Teachers feel underappreciated and inadequately compensated for their efforts. Low recognition and salary concerns contribute to decreased motivation.
- v). **School Infrastructure:** Many schools lack proper infrastructure, including smart classrooms and interactive learning resources, which limits effective teaching.
- vi). **Behavioral and Disciplinary Challenges:** Classroom management is a major concern, with disciplinary issues consuming a significant portion of instructional time.
- vii). **Professional Development:** Opportunities for

professional development are often limited or inconsistent. Teachers express a need for continuous training to update their skills.

Suggestions

- i). Reduce administrative burden by appointing support staff.
- ii). Provide regular digital literacy and pedagogical training.
- iii). Implement wellness programs and counseling for teachers.
- iv). Improve infrastructure and provide access to teaching aids.
- v). Recognize teachers' contributions through awards and incentives.
- vi). Promote collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators.

Conclusion

Teachers play a transformative role in building the future of society. Yet, their work environment presents numerous hurdles that must be addressed. This study highlights that effective institutional policies, mental health support, fair compensation, and consistent professional development are crucial to empowering teachers. Addressing these challenges

will enhance not only their performance but also the overall quality of education in India.

References

1. Kaur, R. (2019). Occupational Stress among School Teachers in India. *Indian Journal of Education Studies*
2. Sharma, P. & Gupta, S. (2020). Digital Transformation in Education: Challenges for Teachers. Educational Review Press.
3. Ramasamy, K. (2021). Emotional Labour and Teacher Wellbeing. Springer India.
4. World Bank (2022). Education and Workforce Development Report. Washington DC.
5. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) (2023). Teacher Development and Educational Reform in India.