



## A Study of Depression among Government and Private Secondary School Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

Depression ranks among the most prevalent contributors to global disease burden, significantly impairing individual functioning and quality of life. Within the spectrum of high-stress professions, teaching is frequently cited as one of the most mentally and emotionally demanding, largely due to persistent occupational stressors. The teaching role demands sustained physical and psychological exertion, which cumulatively contributes to elevated levels of depressive symptoms among educators. This study investigates the prevalence of depression among secondary school teachers in Amritsar city, employing a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 200 secondary school educators was selected through a simple random sampling method. The assessment was conducted using the standardized Depression Scale developed by Mishra, Verma, and Kumar (2010). The findings reveal that 42% of respondents demonstrated a moderate level of depressive symptoms, while 36% exhibited depression levels below the average threshold. Approximately 12% of the sample reported higher-than-average depressive tendencies, and 9% displayed low levels of depression. Notably, 1% of participants showed symptoms indicative of severe depression. Statistical analysis indicated significant variations in depression levels between teachers employed in government and

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private institutions, as well as between male and female educators. These results underscore the critical need for targeted mental health interventions and support systems within the educational sector. The outcomes hold practical implications for educational stakeholders, including policymakers and institutional leaders, emphasizing the urgency of developing strategies that promote mental well-being among teachers. Furthermore, the insights gained can assist educators in effectively managing depressive symptoms both within professional contexts and in broader life scenarios.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the modernization and fast-paced evolution of society have brought mental health concerns, particularly depression, to the forefront of public and academic discourse. Among the myriad contributors to psychological distress, occupational stress remains a significant determinant. Employment, while central to personal and societal functioning, often becomes a source of emotional strain. Within this context, the teaching profession is widely acknowledged as one of the most psychologically taxing vocations. Educators routinely navigate a landscape marked by multifaceted demands intellectual, emotional, and physical both within the classroom and in their personal lives. The persistent nature of these stressors renders teachers particularly susceptible to depressive conditions.

Depression continues to be a predominant contributor to the global burden of disease, affecting individuals across diverse demographics and professions. It stands not only as the most frequently diagnosed mental disorder in both general healthcare and specialized psychiatric settings, but also as a critical public health issue with far-reaching implications. Specifically for educators, depression compromises overall health and significantly diminishes both physical and mental resilience.

Ronald and Kahn (2004) define depression as a profound emotional state characterized by pervasive sadness, anxiety, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, social withdrawal, disturbances in sleep and appetite, diminished libido, and either psychomotor agitation or lethargy. It manifests as a chronic psychological condition that disrupts mood regulation, often marked by anhedonia and low motivation. Depression can emerge from a range of adverse life events such as the loss of a significant person,



relationship, object, or personal health—but may also arise spontaneously, without any clearly identifiable cause.

According to Chopra (2005), in the *Academic Dictionary of Psychology*, depression is identified as a mood disorder featuring prolonged episodes of sadness lasting several weeks or more. Neurologically, it involves disruptions in brain chemistry, particularly imbalances in the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine, which are crucial for regulating mood and emotional states. Similarly, Ahmad (2008), in the *Comprehensive Dictionary of Education*, describes depression as a predominantly negative emotional experience, often accompanied by despondency, helplessness, and a sense of irretrievable loss.

While depression may be instigated by biological agents such as viral infections or environmental toxins, nutritional deficiencies, and other physiological changes, the etiology is often multi-factorial. Environmental risk factors may include both biological and non-biological elements: possible exposure to neurotoxic substances, dietary inadequacies, or even unidentified depressogenic agents present in air or water. A growing body of research also emphasizes a genetic predisposition to depressive disorders, affirming that vulnerability to depression often runs in families (Horwath, 2004).

Life stressors serve as critical catalysts for depressive episodes. Events such as bereavement, chronic illness, financial strain, unstable relationships, career stagnation, or abrupt life transitions can precipitate depressive symptoms. Furthermore, individuals exhibiting certain personality traits—such as low self-worth, persistent pessimism, heightened sensitivity to stress, excessive dependency, introversion, or a chronic sense of inadequacy are particularly prone to depression. According to Horwath (2004), these psychological characteristics not only increase susceptibility but also impair one's ability to cope with everyday challenges. Moreover, advancements in psychopharmacology and neurobiology have affirmed that severe depressive states are frequently linked to biochemical imbalances in the brain, particularly involving the deficit of mood-regulating neurochemicals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The interplay between occupational stressors and psychological health among educators has been extensively explored in recent scholarship. Pirzadeh et al. (2023) identified a significant correlation between depressive symptoms in teachers and variables such as age, professional tenure, residential conditions, and student conduct. However, their study found no statistically significant associations



between depressive states and factors including marital status, the employment status of spouses, educational qualifications, or collegial relationships.

Abraham (2022) reported gender-based disparities in depressive tendencies, noting that female teachers exhibited higher levels of depression than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the research indicated that married educators experienced greater psychological distress than unmarried ones, and those residing in joint family systems were more susceptible to depression compared to those living in nuclear families.

In a study conducted by Klai and Bahrin (2022), the mitigating role of social support networks and religious involvement was underscored as pivotal in helping teachers manage depressive symptoms. Complementing these findings, Santamaría et al. (2021) documented a high prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression among teaching professionals. The study highlighted that women demonstrated significantly higher levels of stress and anxiety than men. Additionally, teachers with children were more likely to experience depressive symptoms, and individuals suffering from chronic illnesses or cohabiting with someone who was—showed elevated levels of psychological distress across all three domains.

Peele and Wolf (2020) emphasized environmental factors within the workplace as critical determinants of mental health outcomes. Their research found that suboptimal work environments contributed to heightened anxiety and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, insufficient parental support and recent relocation to unfamiliar communities were linked with increased anxiety levels among educators.

Parkash and Hooda (2019) explored institutional and demographic disparities, discovering significant differences in depression levels between teachers employed in government and private secondary schools. Their study also revealed that gender played a role in mental health, with marked differences in depressive symptoms between male and female teachers within the government school sector. Additionally, the geographical context urban versus rural was found to significantly influence depression levels among educators in both settings.

Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2018) reported a high incidence of psychological disorders among teachers, with 43.0% exhibiting symptoms of depression, 68.0% showing signs of anxiety, and



32.3% experiencing stress. Their analysis also indicated that female secondary school teachers were more prone to depression than their male peers.

Finally, Srivastava and Sharma (2017) conducted a comparative study between general and special education instructors. Their findings revealed that special educators faced significantly higher levels of stress and depression compared to their counterparts in general education. However, no substantial difference was noted in anxiety levels between the two groups.

## **NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Previous studies by Santamaría et al. (2021), Franciole et al. (2021), Rodrigues et al. (2020), Othman and Vevehkananda (2018), and others have examined depression, stress, and anxiety among teachers. Research by Narayanbhai and Tajpariya (2020), and Saravanan and Lakshmi (2017) focused on occupational stress, while Shukla and Trivedi (2008), and Chakravorty and Singh (2021) studied teacher burnout.

Although stress-related research among teachers in India is extensive, very limited work specifically addresses depression among secondary school teachers in Amritsar, Punjab. This gap highlights the necessity of the present study. The study aims to assess the level of depression among secondary school teachers and to contribute toward improving their mental well-being. Its significance lies in offering practical suggestions to help reduce depression and enhance teachers' psychological health, which is essential for maintaining effective teaching and learning environments.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To assess the overall level of depression prevalent among secondary school teachers.
2. To examine gender-based differences in depression between male and female secondary school teachers.
3. To analyze the variation in depression levels between teachers employed in government and private secondary schools.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study adopted a descriptive survey method to investigate the level of depression among secondary school teachers.

**Sample:** The sample comprised 200 secondary school teachers from Amritsar city, Punjab, including 100 from government schools and 100 from private schools. Each group consisted of 50 male and 50 female teachers to ensure gender representation.

**Tool Used:** Data were collected using the standardized Depression Scale developed by Mishra, Verma, and Kumar (2010).

**Statistical Techniques:** Descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and t-test were applied to analyze the data and derive meaningful interpretations.

## RESULT ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### Objective 1: To Measure the Overall Depression among Secondary School Teachers

**Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics of Depression Scores**

Statistic	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max	Range
Scores	56.64	56	10.59	34	80	46

**Table 1.2: Distribution by Depression Levels**

Sr. No.	Z-Score Range	Depression Level	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	38 & below	Minimal Depression	18	9
2	39–58	Below Average Depression	72	36
3	59–66	Moderate Depression	84	42
4	67–77	Above Average Depression	24	12
5	78–129	Severe Depression	2	1

The data indicates that the majority of teachers fall under moderate (42%) and below average (36%) depression categories. A smaller proportion exhibits above average (12%) and minimal (9%) levels, with only 1% experiencing severe depression.

### Objective 2: To Examine Gender Differences in Depression

**Hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>):** *There is no significant difference in depression between male and female secondary school teachers.*

**Table 2.1: Gender-wise Comparison of Depression**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Female	100	58.98	10.85	2.62	0.0102	Significant
Male	100	54.37	8.47			

The t-value (2.62) exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 level, with a p-value of 0.0102, confirming a statistically significant difference in depression levels by gender. Female teachers reported significantly higher depression levels than their male counterparts. These results are consistent with findings from Parkash & Hooda (2019), Othman & Sivasubramaniam (2019), Alvi et al. (2021), and Abraham (2022). Hence,  $H_{01}$  is rejected.

**Objective 3: To Compare Depression between Government and Private School Teachers**

**Hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ):** *There is no significant difference in depression between government and private secondary school teachers.*

**Table 3.1: Comparison by School Type**

Category	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Private	100	60.08	11.17	2.98	0.0109	Significant
Government	100	56.24	9.36			

The t-value (2.98) exceeds the critical threshold at the 0.05 level, and the p-value (0.0109) confirms a statistically significant difference. Private school teachers reported higher depression levels than those in government schools. These findings align with earlier research by Parkash & Hooda (2019), Pal (2017), and Shetageri & Gopalakrishnan (2016). Therefore,  $H_{02}$  is rejected.

**DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS**

The present study aimed to investigate the depression levels among secondary school teachers in Amritsar, Punjab, and assess the impact of demographic factors, such as gender and school type, on these levels. The findings, based on descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing, provide valuable insights into the mental health status of teachers in the region.



### **A. Result Pertaining to the Overall Level of Depression among Secondary School Teachers**

The findings revealed a significant prevalence of depression among secondary school teachers. Approximately 42% of teachers exhibited moderate depression, while 36% demonstrated below-average depression. Only 9% reported minimal depression, and 1% displayed severe depression. This pattern suggests that a majority of teachers are experiencing varying degrees of depressive symptoms. These results align with previous studies indicating that teaching as a profession is associated with high stress and mental health issues (Pirzadeh et al., 2023; Santamaría et al., 2021). This emphasizes the necessity for interventions to support the mental well-being of educators and address the contributing stressors.

### **B. Result Pertaining to the Difference between Male and Female Teachers with respect to Depression**

The second objective of the study focused on the gender difference in depression levels. The hypothesis tested revealed a significant difference between male and female teachers' depression levels. Female teachers exhibited higher depression levels (Mean = 58.98) compared to male teachers (Mean = 54.37), with a t-value of 2.62 and a p-value of 0.0102, which is significant at the 0.05 level. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Parkash & Hooda, 2019; Abraham, 2022), which suggest that female teachers may be more susceptible to depression due to factors like work-life balance challenges, societal pressures, and emotional labor demands. This highlights the need for gender-specific mental health support and interventions that address the unique challenges faced by female teachers.

### **C. Result Pertaining to the Difference between Government and Private School Teachers with respect to Depression**

The third objective examined the depression levels between teachers in government and private schools. The hypothesis testing indicated a significant difference, with private school teachers reporting higher depression levels (Mean = 60.08) than government school teachers (Mean = 56.24), with a t-value of 2.98 and a p-value of 0.0109. This result corroborates earlier studies (Parkash & Hooda, 2019; Shetageri & Gopalakrishnan, 2016), suggesting that private school teachers face higher job-related stress, performance pressures, and job insecurity, contributing to higher depression levels. On the other hand, government school teachers may have more stable job security and work conditions, which can mitigate stress and depressive symptoms.





## Implications for Interventions

These findings underline the urgent need for targeted mental health interventions, particularly for female teachers and those in private schools. Implementing programs such as stress management workshops, counseling services, and peer support initiatives would be beneficial in alleviating depressive symptoms. Additionally, addressing the specific needs of female teachers, as well as teachers in private schools, can further contribute to their mental well-being and reduce the impact of occupational stressors.

The study's findings demonstrate significant levels of depression among secondary school teachers, with gender and school type being key factors influencing these levels. These results highlight the need for focused mental health support and interventions to improve the overall well-being of teachers.

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- **Counseling Services:** The study highlights the importance of providing counseling services at educational institutions to help teachers identify and manage depression effectively.
- **Principal's Role:** School principals should foster a supportive work environment by organizing meetings with teachers to address mental health concerns and manage school-related stress.
- **Annual Mental Health Screenings:** Policymakers and educational planners should implement annual mental health screenings for teachers to detect and address depression early.
- **Administrative Support:** Administrative support, including workload management and awareness programs, can help alleviate the pressures teachers face, reducing the likelihood of depression.
- **Teacher-Student-Parent Cooperation:** Encouraging collaboration among teachers, students, and parents to address behavioral issues and create a harmonious school environment can help reduce teacher stress.
- **Economic Support:** Addressing teachers' economic challenges by considering their heavy workloads and varying expectations will contribute to their overall well-being and help reduce work-related depression.

## SUGGESTIONS

- **Larger Sample Studies:** Future research should involve a larger sample size to enhance the generalizability of the findings.



- Gender-Based Work Environment Analysis: Further studies should explore gender differences in the work environment and their impact on depression among teachers.
- Extended Scope: The study could be expanded to a state or national level for a broader understanding of depression in the teaching profession.
- Explore Other Variables: Future research could examine related factors such as job satisfaction, coping strategies, and life satisfaction in connection to depression.
- Focus on Teacher Well-Being: Schools should implement strategies for teachers' mental well-being, focusing on reducing work-related stress and promoting a healthier work-life balance.

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