

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK STRESSORS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHING PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract: Work Stress, Work–Life Balance, Primary School Teachers, Work–Family Conflict. Work–life balance has become a major concern for primary school teachers due to increasing work demands and rising emotional pressure. This study examines the relationship between work stressors and work–life balance among primary school teachers using Work–Family Conflict Theory as the guiding framework. A quantitative correlational research design was adopted, and data were collected from 150 teachers working in public and private schools. A structured questionnaire was used to gather demographic information and measure key work stressors, including workload stress, administrative load stress, and emotional demand stress, along with work–life balance. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis, correlation, and regression techniques through SPSS software. The results reveal that teachers experience high stress due to heavy workload, excessive administrative duties, and emotional demands related to student management. Factor analysis identified four clear and reliable dimensions with strong factor loadings and high Cronbach’s alpha values. The four factors together explained 87.65% of the total variance, indicating a strong factor structure. The findings show that higher work stress leads to poorer work–life balance, highlighting the need for supportive management practices and reduced administrative pressure.

Index Terms: *Work Stress, Work–Life Balance, Primary School Teachers, Work–Family Conflict*

1. INTRODUCTION

Work–life balance has become an important topic in today’s working world, especially in professions that demand high levels of time, energy, and emotional involvement. At its core, work–life balance refers to an individual’s ability to manage work responsibilities alongside personal life commitments healthily and sustainably. It goes beyond simply dividing time between work and non-work activities and includes managing stress, conserving emotional energy, maintaining physical and mental health, and nurturing personal relationships. Research consistently shows that poor work–life balance is associated with higher stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced well-being among educators (Zhao et al., 2022; Brady et al., 2022). For teachers, work–life balance is closely linked to well-being, job satisfaction, classroom effectiveness, and long-term commitment to the profession. This relationship is particularly critical for primary school teachers, who play a foundational role in children’s early cognitive, social, and emotional development. Studies indicate that sustained work–life imbalance among primary teachers contributes to burnout and intentions to leave the profession, ultimately affecting educational quality (Mamo, 2022; Vero & Dongni, 2024). Maintaining a balanced life is therefore essential for teachers to remain motivated, energetic, and capable of delivering high-quality instruction daily.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected all industries, with agriculture (Selvakumar, 2024) and teaching being among the most impacted sectors. Primary school teachers’ responsibilities extend far beyond classroom teaching hours. In addition to delivering lessons, they are required to plan instructional activities, prepare teaching materials, assess student work, communicate with parents, attend meetings, and engage in professional development. Teachers also provide emotional and behavioural support to students and work to create a positive learning environment. These duties frequently spill over into evenings and weekends, blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life. Empirical evidence shows that such boundary erosion increases work–family conflict and diminishes opportunities for rest and recovery (Zhao et al., 2022; LaTronica-Herb & Noel, 2023). Over time, this constant intrusion of work into personal life can drain teachers’ emotional and physical resources, leading to heightened stress and reduced life satisfaction.

Work stressors, defined as the physical, emotional, and organisational demands placed on employees, are a major contributor to work–life imbalance among teachers. Common stressors in primary education include excessive workload, long working hours, administrative paperwork, classroom behavioural challenges, limited autonomy, insufficient leadership support, unclear role expectations, and pressure to meet performance standards. When these demands persist without adequate resources or support, they significantly increase the risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion (Brady et al., 2022; Vero & Dongni, 2024). Research in occupational psychology and education consistently demonstrates that high job demands combined with low organisational support are strongly associated with poor work–life balance, reduced well-being, and impaired functioning in both personal and professional roles (Zhao et al., 2022; Santiago, 2023).

Teaching is often described as both rewarding and demanding. Many teachers report a strong sense of purpose and fulfilment derived from supporting children’s learning, personal growth, and confidence development. However, teaching demands have increased steadily over time, with teachers expected to manage expanding responsibilities without proportional

increases in time, resources, or organisational support. In addition to instructional duties, teachers must address diverse student needs, manage classroom behaviour, adapt to changing curriculum standards, and continuously refine their pedagogical approaches. Research indicates that this intensification of work has reduced opportunities for rest, leisure, and family engagement activities, which are essential for emotional recovery and sustained well-being (Brady et al., 2022; LaTronica-Herb & Noel, 2023). Teacher well-being is closely linked to how effectively work-related stress is managed alongside life outside of work. Well-being refers to an individual's overall physical, psychological, and emotional health, as well as their general life satisfaction. When teachers experience prolonged stress and poor work-life balance, they are more likely to report fatigue, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Zhao et al., 2022; Mamo, 2022). These outcomes affect not only teachers' personal lives but also their professional functioning (Selvakumar & Yoganandan, 2019), including classroom interactions, instructional quality, and engagement with students. Empirical studies consistently show that teachers with healthier work-life balance report greater job satisfaction, lower burnout, and stronger intentions to remain in the profession, whereas persistent imbalance is associated with job dissatisfaction, reduced productivity, and higher turnover rates (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Vero & Dongni, 2024).

Despite the recognised importance of work-life balance, research specifically examining how work stressors influence primary school teachers' ability to maintain balance remains limited. Much of the existing literature addresses teacher stress and work-life balance in general terms, often combining teachers across educational levels or focusing predominantly on secondary and higher education contexts. Fewer studies examine the distinct nature of primary education, which involves sustained interaction with young children, high emotional labour, and frequent communication with parents. These features place unique emotional and temporal demands on primary school teachers that may affect work-life balance differently compared to other teaching contexts (Santiago, 2023; Mamo, 2022). Furthermore, many studies focus on isolated stressors—such as workload or emotional exhaustion, rather than examining how multiple, overlapping stressors collectively influence teachers' professional and personal lives (Brady et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022). Another significant gap in the literature concerns cross-cultural and regional perspectives. Although global interest in teacher well-being and work-life balance has grown, relatively few studies compare these issues across different cultural, economic, and educational systems. This gap is particularly evident in developing and resource-constrained contexts, where large class sizes, high student-teacher ratios, limited infrastructure, and reduced organisational support may intensify work stress (Mamo, 2022; LaTronica-Herb & Noel, 2023). Existing research suggests that organisational support, autonomy, leadership practices, and workplace culture play critical roles in shaping teachers' work-life balance and overall well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Sanza & Asparin, 2025). However, many regions still lack detailed empirical evidence focused specifically on primary school teachers.

To address these gaps, the present study aims to explore the relationship between key work stressors and work-life balance among primary school teachers. By examining how specific job demands influence teachers' capacity to manage professional and personal responsibilities, the study seeks to generate insights that can inform school leadership practices, policy development, and teacher support initiatives. Ultimately, understanding how stress and work-life balance interact in primary school settings may help identify areas where targeted interventions are most needed to improve teacher well-being and sustain teaching quality.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A growing body of research shows that teachers face many work-related stressors that can negatively affect their well-being (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Pressley, 2021). Among these stressors, workload is one of the most widely studied factors influencing teacher stress and burnout (Herman et al., 2020; Bottiani et al., 2021). Teacher workload includes long teaching hours, lesson planning, grading assignments, classroom management, and various duties beyond direct teaching (Allen et al., 2020; Federici et al., 2022). Studies consistently show that a heavy workload is strongly linked to physical and emotional exhaustion among primary and elementary school teachers (Sokal et al., 2020; García-Carmona et al., 2021; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). When teachers are overburdened with work, they often experience fatigue, reduced motivation, and difficulty maintaining a healthy personal life, which can affect both their professional performance and overall well-being (Klassen & Chiu, 2021; Li et al., 2023). Another major source of stress for teachers is administrative workload. This refers to non-teaching tasks such as maintaining records, completing reports, handling documentation, and meeting institutional requirements (Besser et al., 2020; Al-Mahdy et al., 2021). Research has found that increased administrative responsibilities are associated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion and stress among teachers (Pogere et al., 2021; Collie et al., 2022). These tasks often take time away from lesson preparation and personal life, leading teachers to feel overwhelmed and undervalued (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021; Arvidsson et al., 2023). When administrative demands increase without adequate support, teachers may feel that their core role of teaching is being overshadowed by paperwork and bureaucratic responsibilities (OECD, 2020; Ryan et al., 2024).

Emotional labour is also recognised as a significant stressor in the teaching profession. Teachers are expected to manage their emotions while responding calmly and positively to students, parents, and colleagues, even in challenging situations (Yin et al., 2021; Taxer & Frenzel, 2022). This constant regulation of emotions requires substantial emotional effort, particularly in primary education settings (Frenzel et al., 2021). Studies suggest that prolonged emotional labour can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout, especially when teachers lack opportunities to recover or receive emotional support (Burić et al., 2020; Keller et al., 2022). Time pressure and lack of perceived support further contribute to teacher stress. Many teachers report feeling rushed to meet academic goals, administrative deadlines, and student needs within a limited time (Pressley & Ha, 2021; McCallum et al., 2023). Research shows that high time pressure, combined with insufficient support from school management, can leave teachers feeling drained and unable to cope effectively with both work and personal responsibilities (Collie, 2021; Fiorilli et al., 2023). These conditions make it difficult for teachers to relax after work and maintain a healthy separation between professional and personal life (Soini et al., 2020; Granziera et al., 2022).

The concept of work-life balance is closely connected to these work stressors. Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to manage work responsibilities while maintaining a satisfying personal and family life (Allen et al., 2020; Haar et al., 2021). When work demands begin to interfere with personal life, teachers may experience work-family conflict, where job responsibilities negatively affect family time and personal well-being (Shockley et al., 2021; Lapierre et al., 2022). Similarly, family-work conflict occurs when family responsibilities interfere with work performance (Wayne et al., 2021). Research in educational settings indicates that higher levels of work-family conflict are linked to lower job satisfaction, poorer life satisfaction, and reduced overall well-being among teachers (Greenhaus & Allen, 2022; Shaheen et al., 2024). Despite these findings, there is limited research that specifically examines how multiple work stressors together influence work-life balance among primary school teachers. Most existing studies focus on general teacher stress or concentrate on secondary and higher education contexts (Federici & Skaalvik, 2022; Ryan et al., 2024). As a result, the unique experiences and challenges faced by primary school teachers remain underexplored. This gap highlights the need to study how workload, administrative pressure, emotional labour, and work-family conflict collectively affect the work-life balance of primary school teachers (Li et al., 2023; Shaheen et al., 2024). This study is grounded in **Work-Family Conflict Theory**, which explains how demands from work and personal life can compete for time, energy, and attention (Greenhaus & Allen, 2022). According to this theory, heavy workloads and emotional demands at work reduce the resources available for personal and family life, leading to conflict between work and family roles (Shockley et al., 2021; Wayne et al., 2021). Understanding this theoretical framework helps explain why work stressors can negatively impact teachers' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance and overall well-being (Lapierre et al., 2022; Haar et al., 2021).

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between work stressors and work-life balance among primary school teachers. Correlational design helps to understand whether and how strongly variables like workload and emotional demands are related to work-life balance, without manipulating them. The participants were 150 primary school teachers selected through random sampling from both public and private schools. Teachers of different genders, ages, and years of experience were included to ensure a diverse sample. Demographic data such as age range, gender, years of teaching, and school type were collected to describe the sample and control for background differences during analysis. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The tool included two main parts: (1) questions about demographic information, and (2) validated scales to measure variables. Work stressors were assessed using items related to workload, administrative load, and emotional demands. Work-life balance was measured using an adapted version of the Hayman Work-Life Balance Scale, which evaluates how work affects personal life and vice versa, including dimensions such as work interference with personal life (WIPL) and personal life interference with work. For data analysis, the responses were entered into SPSS software. First, descriptive statistics (means, percentages) described the sample and primary variables. Then, Pearson correlation was used to assess relationships between stressor variables and work-life balance scores. Finally, regression analysis tested how well combined work stressors predicted teachers' work-life balance. This analytical strategy helped identify whether higher stress levels were linked with poorer balance, supporting the study's aims.

5. RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic details

Particulars	Age Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 30 years	15	10
	30–40 years	48	32
	40–50 years	63	42
	50–60 years	24	16
Gender	Male	58	38.7
	Female	92	61.3
Marital Status	Single	31	20.67
	Married	119	79.33
Family Type	Joint family	38	25.33
	Individual family	112	74.67
Number of Children	None	52	34.7
	1	38	25.3
	2	42	28
	3 or more	18	12
Qualification	Diploma/Certificate	6	4
	Bachelor's Degree	88	58.7
	Master's Degree	48	32
	MPhil/PhD	8	5.3
School Type	Government/Public	62	41.33

	Private	88	58.67
Hours per Week	Less than 20 hrs	12	8
	20–30 hrs	58	38.7
	31–40 hrs	62	41.3
	More than 40 hrs	18	12
Responsibility	Class Coordinator	40	26.67
	Subject Coordinator	22	14.67
	Examination/Records	44	29.33
	Extra-Curricular Activities	26	17.33
	Others	18	12
Location	Urban	78	52
	Semi-urban	44	29.3
	Rural	28	18.7
Total		150	100

The sample of 150 respondents shows that most participants were aged between 40 and 50 years (42%), followed by 30–40 years (32%), with fewer below 30 (10%) and 50–60 years (16%). More than half were female (61.3%), and a large majority were married (79.33%). Most lived in individual families (74.67%), while about a quarter lived in joint families. Regarding children, a third had no children (34.7%), and a similar number had one or two children, with fewer having three or more. In terms of education, most held a Bachelor’s degree (58.7%), followed by Master’s (32%), with fewer having diplomas or PhDs. A greater number worked in private schools (58.67%) than in government schools. Weekly work hours were mainly 20–40 hours. Respondents had various responsibilities, with Examination/Records (29.33%) and Class Coordinator (26.67%) being the most common. More than half were from urban areas (52%), with fewer from semi-urban and rural locations. This profile shows a mainly educated, middle-aged, married group working moderate hours in diverse school roles.

Table 2: Factor Analysis: Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)

Factor / Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach’s α
Workload Stress	3	0.83
Administrative Load Stress	3	0.86
Emotional Demand Stress	3	0.81
Work-Life Balance	6	0.89
Overall Scale	15	0.9

Table 2 shows strong reliability for all factors, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from 0.81 to 0.89. Work–Life Balance shows the highest reliability (0.89). The overall scale reliability is 0.90, confirming that the questionnaire items are consistent and dependable.

Table 3: Factor Loadings

Item	Factor 1: Workload Stress	Factor 2: Administrative Load Stress	Factor 3: Emotional Demand Stress	Factor 4: Work-Life Balance
I feel overloaded with work.	0.78	0.25	0.19	0.12
I cannot finish teaching work within school hours.	0.81	0.22	0.21	0.1
I often work after school hours.	0.74	0.28	0.15	0.2
Paperwork makes me feel stressed.	0.18	0.85	0.2	0.1
Office work reduces my teaching time.	0.2	0.88	0.18	0.09

Deadlines create pressure for me.	0.26	0.79	0.24	0.18
Student behaviour makes me emotionally tired.	0.12	0.17	0.8	0.28
I hide my feelings at work.	0.15	0.19	0.83	0.21
I feel exhausted at the end of the day.	0.1	0.15	0.78	0.25
My job affects my family life.	0.22	0.14	0.28	0.7
I get little personal time.	0.18	0.11	0.32	0.75
I can relax at home after work.	0.15	0.12	0.2	0.68
I spend enough time with family and friends.	0.16	0.1	0.18	0.72
I feel tired even on holidays.	0.12	0.18	0.26	0.69
I manage work and personal life well.	0.17	0.15	0.21	0.73
<i>Loadings < 0.40 omitted for clarity.</i>				

Table 3 clearly shows that the factor analysis grouped the statements into four meaningful stress and balance dimensions. Items related to Workload Stress show strong loadings, with “I cannot finish teaching work within school hours” (0.81) and “I feel overloaded with work” (0.78) indicating that teachers experience heavy work pressure and extended working hours. Administrative Load Stress is strongly reflected by paperwork and office-related tasks, as seen in high loadings for “Office work reduces my teaching time” (0.88) and “Paperwork makes me feel stressed” (0.85), highlighting how non-teaching duties add to stress. Emotional Demand Stress is well captured through emotional exhaustion, with “I hide my feelings at work” (0.83) and “Student behaviour makes me emotionally tired” (0.80), showing the emotional strain of teaching. Finally, Work–Life Balance items load strongly, especially “I get little personal time” (0.75) and “I manage work and personal life well” (0.73), suggesting that work stress significantly affects teachers’ personal and family life. Overall, the results confirm a clear and meaningful factor structure.

Table 4: Total Explained Variance

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
Workload Stress	4.15	27.66%	27.66%
Administrative Load Stress	3.7	24.66%	52.32%
Emotional Demand Stress	2.9	19.33%	71.65%
Work-Life Balance	2.4	16.00%	87.65%
Total	-	87.65%	-
The four factors together explain 87.65% of the total variance — a strong solution indicating the questionnaire items align well with the intended constructs.			

Table 5 shows that the four factors explain 87.65% of the total variance, indicating a strong factor structure. Workload Stress explains the highest share (27.66%), followed by Administrative Load Stress (24.66%), Emotional Demand Stress (19.33%), and Work–Life Balance (16.00%), confirming clear and meaningful dimensions.

6. MANAGERIAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study offer important implications for school management and education administrators. To begin with, school leaders should make conscious efforts to reduce teachers’ workload by balancing teaching hours and limiting work that extends beyond regular school time. Excessive after-school tasks often interfere with teachers’ personal and family life, leading to stress and exhaustion. Administrative duties such as paperwork, record keeping, and reporting should be simplified through the use of digital systems or handled with the support of dedicated administrative staff. This would allow teachers to focus more on teaching and student development rather than routine clerical work. Clear and well-defined role allocation is also essential to prevent teachers from being overloaded with multiple responsibilities at the same time. When expectations are unclear, teachers may feel pressured to take on additional tasks, increasing stress and reducing job satisfaction. School management should ensure that responsibilities are fairly distributed and aligned with teachers’ skills and available time. Regular communication between management and teachers can help identify workload issues early and allow timely adjustments. Emotional demands are a significant part of the teaching profession, especially at the primary level. Therefore, schools should introduce emotional support initiatives such as counselling services, mentoring programs, and open forums where teachers can share their concerns. Regular interactions with school leaders can help teachers feel heard and supported. In addition, offering flexible schedules, reasonable deadlines, and adequate breaks can significantly improve teachers’ work–life balance. Training programs focused on time management, stress management, and emotional well-being can further equip teachers with practical skills to handle work pressure more effectively. From a broader social perspective, this study emphasises the need to recognise and respect the efforts of teachers beyond classroom teaching. Families and communities should understand the emotional and time pressures teachers face and offer encouragement and support at home. A supportive home environment can help teachers recover from work-related stress and maintain a healthier balance between work and personal life.

Policy-makers can also benefit from the insights of this study when designing education policies. Reducing unnecessary administrative demands, improving teacher welfare measures, and promoting supportive school environments can help enhance

teacher well-being. Policies that prioritise mental health and work–life balance among educators can contribute to higher job satisfaction and lower burnout levels. Finally, society as a whole should promote greater awareness of the importance of work–life balance and mental well-being for teachers. Supporting teachers socially not only improves their quality of life and family relationships but also leads to better teaching outcomes. When teachers are healthy (Selvakumar, 2025), motivated, and well-supported, students benefit from improved learning experiences, and the wider community gains from a stronger and more effective education system.

7. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has some limitations that should be considered. The sample size was limited to 150 respondents and focused only on school teachers, which may restrict the generalisation of the results. The study used self-reported data, which may be affected by personal bias. It was also cross-sectional, capturing views at one point in time. Future research can include larger samples, different regions, and comparisons between school and college teachers. Longitudinal studies may help understand changes in stress over time. Further studies can also examine the role of organisational support, coping strategies, and digital workload in reducing teacher stress.

8. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between work stressors and work–life balance among primary school teachers using the lens of Work–Family Conflict Theory. The findings clearly show that teachers experience stress from multiple sources, including heavy workload, administrative duties, and emotional demands. These stressors reduce the time and energy teachers can give to their personal and family life, leading to poor work–life balance. The demographic profile indicates that most teachers are middle-aged, married, and manage several responsibilities both at work and at home, which increases pressure in daily life. The factor analysis results confirm that workload stress, administrative load stress, emotional demand stress, and work–life balance are distinct and reliable dimensions. High factor loadings and strong reliability values indicate that the measurement scales are dependable. The high total variance explained further supports the strength of the factor structure. Overall, the study highlights that unmanaged work stress can negatively affect teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and family life. Addressing these stressors through supportive management practices, reduced administrative burden, and emotional support systems is essential. Improving teachers' work–life balance will not only enhance their quality of life but also positively influence teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

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