



Gender Differences in Stress, Self-compassion and Job Satisfaction Among School Teachers

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Abstract: The present study was conducted to examine the gender differences in self-compassion, stress and job satisfaction among school teachers. The sample of 370 school teachers were (male= 156, female= 214) were collected from different government (n=127) and private (n=243) schools of Lahore. The instruments used for data collection were demographic questionnaire, self-compassion scale ($\alpha = .78$), teacher stress scale ($\alpha = .82$) and job satisfaction scale ($\alpha = .67$). Inferential statistics used for the data analysis include descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test. The result revealed that there was significant difference between men and women with respect to self-compassion ($t = -2.99, p < .01$) and job satisfaction ($t = -4.03, p < .01$). However, no significant gender difference was found on the scores of stress.

Keywords: Self-compassion; Stress; Job Satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

One of the most noble professions in the world is teaching is as it impacts future of new generation. Teachers are the builders of our society as they enlighten the young minds and broaden the perspectives of students. However, teaching is also considered as one of the most stressful professions [7]. Student behavioral issues [1], dealing with impulsive parents [3], workload [15], classroom discipline maintenance [32], evaluation by monitoring staff [22], meetings during and after school timings [5] and high expectations [12] all these factors lead towards stress and burden in teachers. BBC (2015) has reviewed a survey of 3500 members of Naswut Teaching Union, England and the two third of respondents intended to leave the teaching job. National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) had conducted a survey in May (2000) showed that 40% of teachers have visited doctors due to experiencing stress in the past year, 20% reported taking alcohol due to stress and 25% reported that they suffer from hypertension, insomnia and stomach problems due to stress. The level, intensity and outcome of stress (distress, burnout) experienced by the teachers depend on the level of self-compassion. The ability to be considerate and empathetic towards others depends on one's ability to be considerate and compassionate towards one's own self.

1.1 Self-compassion

The concept derived from Buddhist philosophy as it focuses on understanding of self [14]. It is the capability of acceptance towards oneself, understand own affliction, to experience feelings of care and benevolence to oneself, take a perceptive approach, to adopt non-judgmental manner toward one's failures, inadequacies, and to recognize that one's incidents and experiences are part of

general human experiences. Compassion is also a central concept of Islam. A Muslim initiates every work by reciting Bi Ism-i- Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim 'in the name of Allah Who is Compassionate and Merciful' (Al-Quran ,1:1). Thus Muslims asks the blessings of Allah who is most compassionate and merciful. Compassion is defined as the ability to be gentle and kind towards others. It covers "the qualities of love, compassion, benevolence and generosity." Various Hadiths related to the compassion are narrated by Prophet (PBUH) like 'One who is not compassionate, God will not be compassionate to him' (Bukhari). Thus compassion to others and self, gives us hope in Allah's Mercy, makes us more patient with the failures of ourselves and others and best of all, gives us the space to forgive ourselves when we make mistakes and helps overcome problems and stressful situations in life. Neff (2003) described self-compassion as having three fundamental components, (i) Self-kindness extending kindness and understanding to oneself rather than harsh self-criticism and judgment, (ii) Common humanity seeing one's experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than as separating and isolating and (iii) mindfulness holding one's painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them. The self-compassion is a process that involves engaging oneself in a course of action that entails for identification of the similar experiences of self and other people [14]

Previous literature reports that people who have high self-compassion possess improved mental health in comparison to people with low self-compassion. They are less likely to experience stress, depression, anxiety, aggression and over-identification, show greater life satisfaction, positive affect and emotional intelligence [15]. Both men and women express

compassion throughout their lives. The difference is in the expression. Moreover, some studies reported that men are more compassionate towards oneself as women have high tendency to be self-critical. Research also reports that socialization process also impacts the expression of compassion in men and women. Dolls and baby carriages are handed to girls for play [4] which fosters nurturance and care in them. They are expected to take care of their siblings and family in absence of adults. However, boys are given cars, guns or soldier type toys which fosters aggressive and protective behaviors in them. They are told that they should not cry as it depicts weakness. Thus adherence to muscular norms is associated with lower level of self-compassion in men [5].

1.2 Stress

Stress is derived from Latin word 'Strictus' meaning rigid or stiff. Stress is the feeling of uneasiness and disturbance that stems from real or perceived demand that requires change or adaptive behavior [21]. Professional stress is defined by means of the response of people to the excessive demands and pressure by the organization and people try to solve the problem but still they worry about it. Occupational stress is well recognized in all professions but it is most prevalent in teaching profession [25].

The demands and pressure on the teachers may be the reason for stress in teachers [11]. While according to Folkman & Lazarus (1980) stress is caused by the discrepancy between work load on the teacher and his ability to handle this work load and demands made on him. According to author [10] demands of pupils, physical demands of teaching, low earnings and funding, meetings during and after school timings and demands made on teachers by school management are potential stressors. The stress in teachers impacts health, quality of work and performance of teachers. Absenteeism, job dissatisfaction and low performance of students are the consequences of this stress [26]. As a result, adverse effects on health has been observed like physical and emotional exertion, reduction in personal competence and accomplishment, depersonalization, and lower levels of self-efficacy. Study reported that younger and less experienced teachers have more stress as compared to experienced ones [22]. Moreover, it was observed that low income, less chances for promotion is related to more stress level in teachers [2].

Prior literature is inconsistent about the gender difference in teachers. Some studies reported that female teachers experience higher level of stress that arises from classroom problems, disobedient students and family interference [12], while few others reported that males experience more stress related to economic burden as compared to female teachers. Male teacher's exhibits more stress as compared to female teachers and females are more satisfied with their jobs as found some studies [27, 28].

A study [27] examined occupational stress in schools of United Kingdom reported that male teachers showed more stress on student's behavioral misconduct and education related duties. While female teachers have problems related to professional concerns. Moreover, only one third female teachers reported job satisfaction.

Another study which explored relationship of demographic factors and work stress in school teachers identified that male teachers reported more stress. Similarly, teachers with lower qualification, large class size and more experience reported more stress [23].

1.3 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as the degree to which the employee's needs such as health, nourishment, affiliation, esteem and sense of achievement are fulfilled as a result of the job [31]. Job satisfaction expresses the degree to which the employee's potential and expectations regarding the rewards of the job correlate. There are number of factors that influence job satisfaction some of them are intrinsic like competence and skill as well as extrinsic factors like the relationship with colleagues, quality of supervision. Daily classroom tasks as well as can influence intrinsic satisfaction. While salary, safety, access to resources, perceived administrative support are among the extrinsic factors which are found to enhance teacher's satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is also a significant factor along with job stress in teachers [3]. Job satisfaction might expect the extent of stress in teachers. According to a survey on the pay scale, job meaning, job stress and job satisfaction, English language post-secondary teachers reported 74% satisfaction, secondary school teachers reported 76%, middle school teachers reported 72% satisfaction, and kindergarten teachers reported 81% satisfaction. While all other post-secondary teachers reported 83% satisfaction with job.

Work-related stress leads to negative emotions as a result of teaching and is related with adverse outcomes like absenteeism, low sense of teaching efficacy and also reduces the level of job satisfaction. Study reported that stress is negatively related to job satisfaction, thus teachers who reported satisfaction with their jobs reported low work stress [2]. Teachers reporting less satisfaction with their jobs experience more occupational stress and suffer from low self-esteem and psychological distress [30]. A study examined the relationship of work stress, jobs satisfaction, consequences of stress and coping strategies in Norwegian teachers reported that most teachers reported high levels of stress due to school based factors while the other teachers reported job satisfaction due to intrinsic factors i.e. salary [6]. Another study was conducted to assess the level of job satisfaction across genders in public and private sector school teachers. The results showed no difference basis on gender but it was found that intrinsic factors like pay, promotion policies and work environment is positively related to job satisfaction [24].

It has been found that self-compassion has negative relationship with psychological distress and other reduces other related symptoms like rumination, neuroticism, and perfectionism [18]. Furthermore, a meta analysis on the relationship between self-compassion, anxiety, stress and depression revealed that high level of self-compassion is linked with lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Self-compassion seems to devitalize specific acute, chronic and traumatic stress outcomes. One of the main features of self-compassion is lack of self-criticism that is considered as a predictor of stress and anxiety, thus self-compassion reduces the stress and anxiety controlling self-criticism (15).

The studies reported that most of the teachers express job dissatisfaction due to the stress in teaching job. Study report that teachers reporting less satisfaction with their jobs experience more occupational stress and suffer from low self-esteem and psychological distress [3].

1.4 Hypothesis

There would be a significant difference in self-compassion, stress and job satisfaction among male and female school teachers.

2. Method

2.1 Research design & Sampling Strategy

It was a quantitative study in which purposive sampling was used for the selection of sample for the study.

2.2. Participants Characteristics

The sample of 370 school teachers (male= 156, female = 214) was collected from different government (n= 127) and private (n= 243) schools of Lahore. The participants were selected on the following criteria

- Participants who are currently teaching.
- Participants who have been in teaching from three months.
- Participants who were doing internships for requirement of their degrees were excluded.
- Moreover, the participants who were teaching in academies or home were not included in the study.

2.3 Instruments

The measuring instruments were demographic questionnaire prepared by the researcher to gain information about demographic characteristics of teachers like school type (i.e. private or government), gender, age, monthly income, years of teaching experience, hurdles and difficulties faced during teaching etc. **Self-compassion scale** developed by Neff (2003) was used to measure compassion towards oneself which assessed the extent to which participants treat themselves with self-compassion during the times of difficulty. It comprised total 26 items with 5 point response category (1= almost never to 5= almost always). Half of the items were positively phrased and half were negatively phrased. The scores could range from 6-30. It has six sub scales which are self-kindness, self-judgement, common humanity, isolation, over-identification and mindfulness. The instrument has well defined psychometrics with the internal consistency of 0.92 and chronbach alpha in the present study was 0.78. **Teacher Stress Inventory** developed by Boyle, Borg, Fazlon and Baglioni (1995) comprised 20 items that highlights the sources of stress in teachers on a 5 point scale ranging from 0= no stress to 4= extreme stress. The score on this scale ranges from 0-80, higher score indicated more

stress. The chronbach alpha of the scale in this study was 0.82 and **Job Satisfaction Scale** constructed by Munir and Khatoon (2015) included 20 items with 12 items positively worded while 8 items negatively worded. The items were scored on a 5 point response category from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. The score on this scale ranges from 20-100. The chronbach alpha of the scale in the present study was 0.67.

2.4 Procedure

The sample of 370 teachers (male= 156, female = 214) were approached for the study. The instruments were self-administered by most of the participants while for some they are verbally administered by the researcher. The instruments were administered in a sequence as demographic form, Self-compassion scale, Teacher Stress scale and Job Satisfaction scale. It took almost 30 minutes to answer these four instruments.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards that were kept during the study were

- Instruments were used after taking written consent from their respective authors.
- The data was collected from schools after taking permission from school authorities.
- Written consent was also taken from the participants and details of the study was explained to them.
- The participants who faced any difficulty regarding vocabulary of any statement were guided on the spot.
- The participants were not disturbed during their class timings.
- The participants were explained of their right to withdraw at any point in the study and were ensured about the confidentiality of the data.

3. Results

The findings on the demographic characteristics of the study revealed that the mean age is 32 years. Most of the teachers have done bachelors and masters. Majority of them are middle and high school teachers with the mean income of Rs.25689/-. Moreover, it was also revealed that more than half of the teachers were unsatisfied with their pay and increments.

Table 1: *Frequencies and Percentages of job related variables of school teachers (N=370)*

Descriptive variables	<i>f</i>	School teachers %
Satisfaction with pay		
Yes	164	44.2
No	200	53.9
To some extent	6	1.6
Satisfaction with job		
Yes	259	70
No	101	27.2
To some extent	10	2.7

Table 2: Mean Differences on the Self Compassion, Teacher Stress, and Job Satisfaction between Men and Women

Variables	Men (n=156)		Women (n=214)		t (368)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Self-compassion	18.44	1.64	18.98	1.74	-2.99**	.003	-.89	-.19	.37
Teacher stress	41.76	10.29	40.39	12.85	1.09	.272	-1.89	3.89	.13
Job Satisfaction	62.24	8.53	65.95	8.88	-4.03**	.000	-5.52	-1.9	.49

Note. CI= Confidence Interval. LL= lower limit. UL= upper limit. N= 370

Results indicated that there was significant mean difference between men and women with respect to self-compassion ($t = -2.99, p < .01$) and job satisfaction ($t = -4.03, p < .01$). Further, it was found that women have higher score on self-compassion and job satisfaction as compared to men. However, no gender difference was found on the scores of stress among male and female teachers ($t = 1.09, p < n.s$).

4. Discussion

Teaching is considered both noble and stressful occupation among the helping professions [2]. The work load, demands and duties of teachers make their job hectic and exhausting. Low salary packages, workload, meetings after the school timing and lack of respect in Pakistan make it even more stressful and lowers the satisfaction level among teachers. However, in recent studies self-compassion has emerged as having a comforting effect in facing the adverse and stressful situations.

In current study, we aimed to contribute to self-compassion literature related to teachers and investigated the gender differences in self-compassion, stress and job satisfaction. The findings of the study revealed that there is significant difference in self-compassion between male and female teachers; as female teachers presented more self-compassion as compared to male teachers. Similar results were reported in pervious literature [16] that women are more self-sacrificing and thus have more compassion. Similarly soothing and comforting are considered as components of self-compassion and are reported to be more prevalent in females [16].

Research also suggested that socialization process effects the level of self-compassion across gender. As women are brought up with nurturing toys like dolls which fosters care and compassion [4]. The presence of neurotransmitters affects the compassion level like Oxytocin, a relationship bonding hormone which fosters calm, care, trust and ability to feel warmth and compassion, is released more in females [5] thus females have more tendency to be nurturing and compassionate. Moreover, in Pakistani culture, women are supposed to be soft hearted, kind, sensitive and caring. All of these studies and cultural factors support the findings of the current study that females are more self-compassionate as compared to males. Thus level of stress is lower in females as compared to males. As the research suggests that self-compassionate people are less likely to experience stress, anxiety and other psychological issues [15].

Male teachers reported less job satisfaction as compared to female teachers while female teachers were more satisfied with their jobs. The review of literature suggested no consistent difference among genders. In line with the current study, the authors [8, 23] presented the same findings that female teachers were more satisfied with their jobs as compared to male teachers. However, the authors of [12, 22, 27] showed the opposite findings with female teachers depicted more concerns and problems with their jobs and have lower job satisfaction levels than male teachers.

The reason for more satisfaction in female teachers in Pakistani society might be that women have in their nature to care and guide the children. Moreover, they are habitual to teaching as they teach their own kids. Another reason is that in Pakistani culture teaching is considered as the most suitable and respectable profession for women. In addition, women do jobs in our culture to earn extra income or for spending their leisure time. So they feel satisfied in performing this by teaching children and feel themselves contributing in the society.

While the reason for low level of job satisfaction in males is due to the fact that teaching is a low payed job in Pakistani society, in fact private schools have a low pay scale and more work load. Men have to run the whole family as economic burden of the house in on the men in Pakistani society. So due to the concerns about salary men report lower satisfaction and they have to do additional jobs or tuitions for a reasonable income.

No difference on the basis of stress was found in male and female teachers. Both of them reported their job as stressful. As it is reported frequently in previous literature that teaching is stressful occupation among other helping professions [2] and teachers experience burden of work, high levels of stress and even burnout [28].

4.1 Strengths

- Teachers are the role models of the society but the incidences of stress are increasing day by day in them. Among all the professions teaching is considered as the most stressful one. This study highlights the gender differences in stress, problems faced by teachers in Pakistan and their job satisfaction.

- Moreover, the study highlights the role of self-compassion in reducing stress level and fostering satisfaction about job.

4.2 Limitations

- The teachers have busy schedule they hardly get time to fill the instruments due to frequent classes and checking work. The only get free time in recess period which they don't want to spoil by involving in form filling so it is a bit difficult to collect data from them.

- Further studies could include some other factors like qualification and experience of teachers, public or private schools and how does it impact the teaching quality, stress and job satisfaction.

4.3 Implications

- The government should make policies to reduce the burden of teachers and to reinforce and support teachers by increasing their salaries and by making the feasible work environment for them so that they could feel comfortable, secure and satisfied with their jobs and in turn provide quality education to students.

- The government should also set policy for the increments in the school sector so that teachers could be free from economic pressure which is the main reason for lower job satisfaction in male teachers.

- Supportive work environment, good administrative relations and friendly colleagues were found to be associated with low stress and more satisfaction. The importance of supportive work environment should be highlighted to increase the satisfaction level in teachers.

- Professional orientation and training programs and courses should be organized by the public and private sector to encourage, motivate and enhance the skills and competencies of the teachers leading to satisfaction with their profession.

- Self-compassion was found to lower the stress and increase the satisfaction level, so compassion training workshops and intervention programs should be designed with teachers most importantly with male teachers to foster the level of self-compassion in them.

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