

Female Teachers' Well-being in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic: Factors That Explain Professional Well-being in Madurai District

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally disrupted educational systems worldwide, placing unprecedented demands on teachers who were forced to rapidly adapt to online instruction, manage increased workloads, and navigate the blurring boundaries between professional and personal life. This study examines the factors that explain professional well-being among 120 female teachers in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, India, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. The study investigates the relationship between professional well-being and key factors including workload, administrative support, work-family balance, technological competence, and collective efficacy. Findings reveal that collective efficacy and administrative support emerged as the strongest predictors of professional well-being, explaining a significant proportion of variance. The study contributes to the understanding of teacher well-being in the Indian context and offers implications for educational policy and school leadership.

Keywords: Teacher well-being, COVID-19 pandemic, female teachers, Madurai District, professional well-being, collective efficacy

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated an unprecedented global educational crisis. In India, schools across the nation closed in March 2020, and teachers were compelled to transition to online instruction with minimal preparation time. Madurai District, located in Tamil Nadu with a population exceeding 3.2 million individuals, experienced significant COVID-19 transmission during the first epidemic wave, with seroprevalence reaching 40.1% among adults by late 2020. This public health context created additional stress and uncertainty for educators.

Teacher well-being has emerged as a critical concern during the pandemic period. Research from Norway indicates that teachers' experiences of well-being are related to whether they feel they have good skills in classroom management, are working in professional learning communities, and experience collective efficacy supported by school leaders. Similarly, studies examining Colombian teachers identified stressors at personal, organisational, and societal levels, including increased workload, work-family balance challenges, weak classroom management, poor relationships with parents and students, and societal devaluation of the teaching profession.

For female teachers specifically, the pandemic created unique challenges. Research suggests that female educators may suffer more stress and anxiety while teaching from home because they have domestic responsibilities alongside their professional obligations, and the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life posed particular difficulties. In the Indian context, teachers were often expected to serve dual roles as educators and relief workers, providing social and logistical support in emergency contexts while maintaining pedagogical responsibilities.

Despite growing international research on teacher well-being during COVID-19, limited empirical attention has been directed toward understanding the specific factors that explain professional well-being among female teachers in South India, particularly in districts like Madurai that experienced significant pandemic-related disruption. This study addresses this gap by examining the determinants of professional well-being among female teachers in Madurai District.

Research Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic created a convergence of stressors for teachers: rapid technological adaptation, increased workload, health concerns, and the challenge of maintaining work-family boundaries while working from home. For female teachers in India, these pressures were compounded by traditional domestic responsibilities and societal expectations. While international research has documented declines in teacher well-being during the pandemic, the specific factors that explain professional well-being among female teachers in Madurai District remain unexplored. Understanding these factors is essential for developing targeted interventions to support teacher well-being and retention in this context.

Hypotheses

Based on the job demands-resources model and prior empirical findings, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: Administrative support will be positively associated with professional well-being among female teachers.
- H2: Collective efficacy will significantly predict professional well-being.
- H3: Work-family balance will be positively correlated with professional well-being.
- H4: Workload will be negatively associated with professional well-being.
- H5: Technological competence will be positively associated with professional well-being.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed.

Sample

The sample comprised 120 female teachers from government and private schools in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria requiring active teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Measures

- Professional Well-being Scale: Adapted from established teacher well-being instruments, measuring enthusiasm, engagement, and satisfaction with professional role.
- Administrative Support: 5 items assessing perceived support from school leadership.
- Collective Efficacy: 5 items measuring teachers' shared beliefs in their collective capability.
- Work-Family Balance: 4 items assessing difficulty in managing professional and domestic responsibilities.
- Workload: 4 items measuring perceived work demands.
- Technological Competence: 4 items assessing comfort with online teaching platforms.

All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 25). The analysis proceeded in stages:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis for all variables.
2. Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency.
3. Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficients to examine bivariate relationships.
4. Multiple Regression Analysis: To identify significant predictors of professional well-being.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

The sample of 120 female teachers had a mean professional well-being score of 3.72 (SD = 0.68). Collective efficacy emerged as the strongest predictor in preliminary analysis. All scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding .70.

Correlation Analysis

Professional well-being showed significant positive correlations with collective efficacy ($r = .48, p < .001$) and administrative support ($r = .41, p < .001$). Work-family balance was positively but more modestly correlated ($r = .28, p < .01$). Workload demonstrated a negative correlation ($r = -.22, p < .05$). Technological competence showed a non-significant relationship ($r = .14, p > .05$).

Multiple Regression Analysis

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 114) = 9.84, p < .001$, explaining approximately 30% of the variance in professional well-being ($R^2 = .30$, Adjusted $R^2 = .27$).

Collective efficacy emerged as the strongest unique predictor ($\beta = .36, t = 3.92, p < .001$), uniquely explaining approximately 10% of the variance. Administrative support was also significant ($\beta = .28, t = 2.98, p < .01$), uniquely accounting for about 6% of the variance. Work-family balance approached significance ($\beta = .17, t = 1.89, p = .06$), while workload ($\beta = -.11, t = 1.24, p > .05$) and technological competence ($\beta = .08, t = 0.91, p > .05$) were not significant predictors.

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis Result

➤	H1: Administrative support	→	well-being	Supported
➤	H2: Collective efficacy	→	well-being	Supported (strongest)
➤	H3: Work-family balance	→	well-being	Partially supported
➤	H4: Workload	→	well-being	Not supported
➤	H5: Technological competence	→	well-being	Not supported

These findings align with international research demonstrating that collective efficacy is a stronger predictor of teacher well-being than individual factors. The prominence of collective efficacy and administrative support underscores the importance of school-level relational and organisational resources in supporting teacher well-being during crises.

Conclusion

This study examined factors explaining professional well-being among 120 female teachers in Madurai District during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings demonstrate that collective efficacy and administrative



support are the most significant predictors of professional well-being, together explaining a substantial proportion of variance. The results suggest that during times of crisis, the quality of collegial relationships and school leadership support matter more for teacher well-being than individual technological competence or workload management.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on teacher well-being in the Indian context and offers practical implications. Schools and educational administrators should prioritise building professional learning communities that foster collective efficacy, and school leaders should provide visible, consistent support to teachers during periods of disruption. For female teachers who face unique work-family challenges, supportive school environments may serve as a critical protective factor.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track well-being trajectories across pandemic and post-pandemic periods, and include male teachers for comparative analysis. Qualitative approaches would enrich understanding of the mechanisms through which collective efficacy and administrative support influence well-being in the South Indian context.

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