



## Occupational Stress and Mental Health: A Comparative Analysis of Quality of Work Life among Female Teaching Professionals in Private and Public Higher Educational Institutions in Odisha

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### ABSTRACT

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Occupational stress has emerged as a critical concern in the higher education sector, significantly influencing the mental health and overall well-being of teaching professionals. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) among female teaching professionals employed in private and public higher educational institutions in Odisha. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected through standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to examine key dimensions such as workload, job security, work-life balance, organizational support, and psychological well-being. The findings reveal notable differences between the two institutional categories: while public institution faculty reported greater job security and organizational stability, private institution faculty experienced higher stress levels linked to performance pressure and lack of tenure. Moreover, mental health indicators showed that chronic stress adversely affected emotional resilience, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness. The study highlights the urgent need for institutional interventions, such as counseling services, stress management programs, and supportive leadership, to enhance the QWL and mental health of female educators. These insights can inform policy reforms aimed at promoting gender-sensitive and mentally healthy work environments in higher education across Odisha.

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### Introduction

The global education industry has become increasingly intricate as a result of global competition, the open market, the privatization of higher education, and technological advancements. Universities and institutes of higher education are facing increasing pressure to stay internationally competitive due to the rapidly changing

work environment. This presents numerous challenges for faculty members. The current challenges are causing a significant rise in stress at work among teaching staff in higher education.

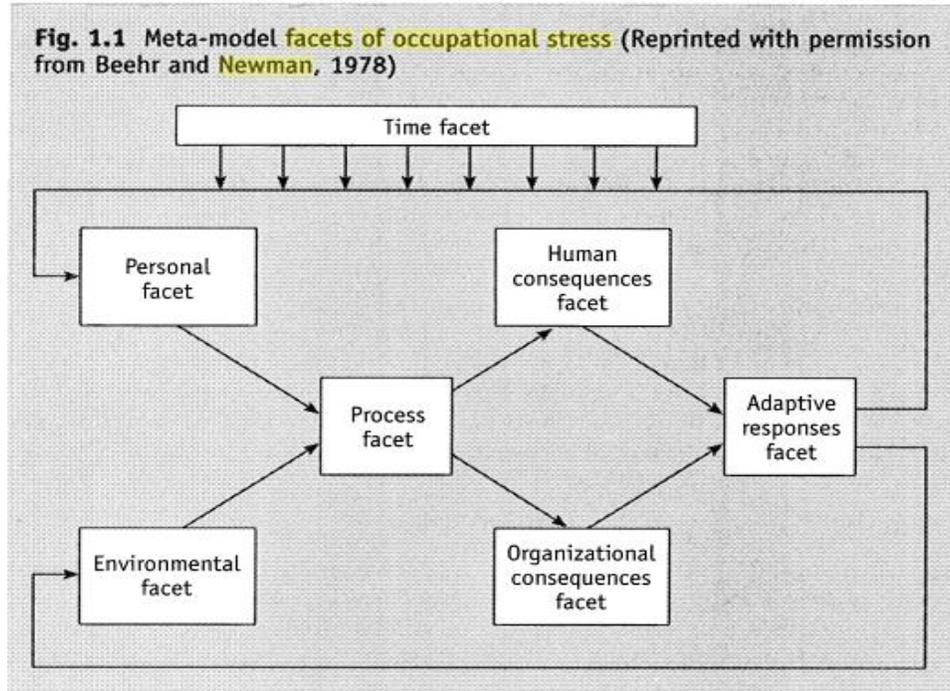
Occupational stress is increasingly recognized as a significant issue in various professional fields, particularly in education. In the context of higher education, teaching

professionals face unique challenges that contribute to high levels of stress and have profound impacts on their mental health and overall quality of work life. Female teaching professionals, especially in culturally traditional regions such as Odisha, face additional challenges related to gender expectations, balancing professional and personal responsibilities, and navigating institutional pressures. This comparative study explores the occupational stress and its impact on the mental health and quality of work life of female teaching professionals in the private and public higher education sectors in Odisha [1].

The expectations from faculty to engage in teaching, research, and administrative duties can create immense pressure. In addition to these professional demands, female teaching professionals often face the challenge of balancing these responsibilities with domestic duties and care giving roles.

Mental health is closely linked with occupational stress, with numerous studies documenting how chronic stress can lead to burnout, anxiety, depression, and other

mental health issues. These mental health challenges, in turn, can adversely affect the quality of work life (QWL) a concept that encompasses job satisfaction, work-life balance, and overall well-being at the workplace. The state of Odisha in India provides a unique context for exploring this issue. Odisha is a region where societal expectations of women are often traditional, and gender roles can limit women's professional opportunities and experiences. In higher education, female teaching professionals are faced with both academic pressures and societal norms that shape their work experiences differently from their male counterparts [2]. Furthermore, there is a distinct difference between the public and private higher education sectors in Odisha, with public institutions often being more structured and offering greater job security, while private institutions may provide more flexible environments but with fewer benefits and more job insecurity. This study seeks to investigate how these differing environments contribute to occupational stress and its impact on the mental health and QWL of female faculty.



**Figure 1: meta-model facets of occupational stress (reprinted with permission from Beehr and Newman, 1978)**

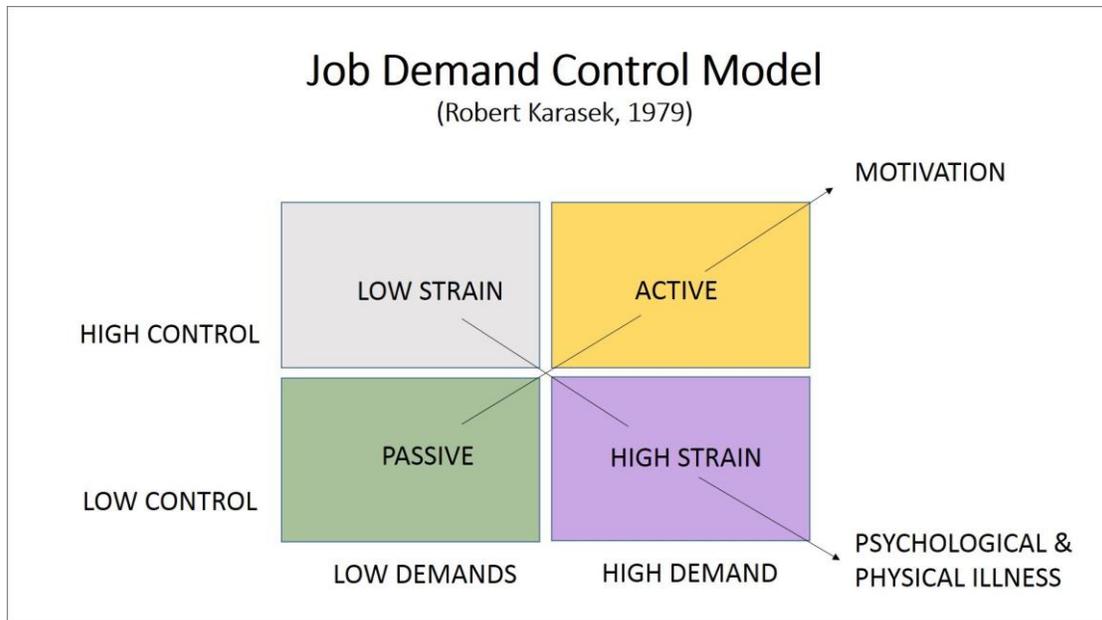
While numerous studies have examined the impact of occupational stress on mental health in various professions, there is a lack of focused research on female teaching professionals in higher education, especially in regions like Odisha, where socio-cultural dynamics play a significant role in shaping the work environment. Additionally, while the differences between public and private sector employment have been explored in other fields, there is limited research comparing the experiences of female professionals across these sectors in higher education [3]. Understanding the specific stressors that female teaching professionals

face is critical, as these stressors can have long-term implications not only for their mental health but also for their career progression, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. In particular, the study seeks to explore how institutional structures in public and private universities either mitigate or exacerbate stress, and how these experiences differ between sectors. By examining these factors, the study will provide valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by female educators and offer recommendations for improving the work environment to enhance their quality of work life.

The first is the **Demand-Control Model** developed by Karasek (1979), which suggests that occupational stress arises from the interaction between job demands and the level of control individuals have over their work [4]. High job demands coupled with low job control create a high-stress environment, which is a reality for many teaching professionals who must meet the demands of teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Another key framework is **Role Conflict and Role Overload Theory**. Female teaching professionals often juggle multiple roles — professional responsibilities as educators and personal duties as caregivers. The tension between these roles can create significant stress, particularly when professional and personal demands conflict, leading to role overload. Lastly, the **Work-Life Balance Theory** provides insights into how stress in the workplace can spill over into personal life, affecting overall well-being. This is particularly relevant for female teaching professionals who must navigate the traditional gender expectations placed on them in addition to their professional duties. When work demands

interfere with personal time, it can exacerbate stress and negatively impact both mental health and quality of work life.

The decision to focus on this population stems from the unique socio-cultural and institutional factors that influence women's experiences in Odisha [5]. The public and private sectors offer distinct environments, with the public sector often perceived as more secure and structured, while the private sector is associated with flexibility but often less job security and benefits. Data for the study will be collected through surveys and interviews with female faculty members across various disciplines, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. The study will also take into account factors such as age, marital status, and years of experience, as these variables are likely to influence both the level of occupational stress and the overall quality of work life. Additionally, the study will explore institutional policies related to work-life balance, career advancement, and mental health support, comparing how these policies differ between public and private institutions and their impact on female teaching professionals [6].



**Figure 2: job demand control model**

The role of teaching professionals in the higher education sector is pivotal in shaping the intellectual and professional future of students. These educators are responsible for not only imparting academic knowledge but also fostering critical thinking, innovation, and leadership among students. In the context of higher education, especially in a rapidly evolving academic landscape, teaching professionals must adapt to new methodologies, technologies, and an increasingly diverse student population. In addition to these pedagogical demands, they face various challenges, including work pressure, occupational stress, and the need to balance their personal and professional lives. Teaching professionals in higher education are involved in a wide array of

responsibilities that extend beyond traditional classroom instruction. They engage in curriculum development, research, administrative duties, and mentorship of students [7]. These roles require a high degree of dedication, time management, and continuous learning to keep up with advancements in their respective fields. In many institutions, particularly those with a focus on research, there is an expectation for faculty members to contribute to academic knowledge by publishing research papers and obtaining grants, further increasing their workload. Moreover, the growing emphasis on online education, driven by the digital transformation and the COVID-19 pandemic, has reshaped the dynamics of teaching. Professors and lecturers are now

required to be proficient in digital tools, learning management systems, and virtual teaching platforms. This shift has led to an increased demand for training and adaptation, adding additional layers of complexity to their roles.

### **Literature review**

**Agarwal and Panda (2019) [1]** conducted a comprehensive study on gender bias embedded within higher education institutions in Odisha, focusing on faculty recruitment and promotion practices. Their findings indicate that systemic discrimination continues to operate through unequal access to opportunities, subjective evaluation criteria, and institutional cultures that privilege male faculty. The authors emphasize that despite formal policies promoting gender equality, implicit biases and structural barriers restrict women's upward mobility in academia. Their work draws attention to the need for transparent procedures, policy reforms, and gender sensitive institutional mechanisms to address entrenched inequities in the higher education sector

**Anju (2015) [2]** examined anxiety and occupational stress among nurses, exploring how these psychological factors vary based

on hospital type, marital status, and length of service. Her study highlights that nurses often experience high stress levels due to demanding workloads, emotional labor, and organizational pressures. She found that personal variables such as being married or having longer service experience interact with workplace conditions to influence stress and anxiety levels. The research underscores the importance of providing supportive work environments, adequate staffing, and stress-management interventions to enhance nurses' psychological well-being and job performance.

**Arief, Purwana, and Saptono (2021) [3]** investigated the influence of Quality of Work Life (QWL) and work-life balance on job satisfaction, introducing employee engagement as a mediating variable. Their findings demonstrate that both QWL and work-life balance significantly enhance employee satisfaction, and this relationship is strengthened when employees feel meaningfully engaged in their roles. The authors argue that organizations aiming to improve job outcomes must prioritize not only working conditions but also employees' emotional and psychological involvement. Their research contributes to

understanding how engagement functions as a bridge between workplace factors and overall job satisfaction.

**Aruldoss, Kowalski, and Parayitam (2021) [4]** explored the dynamics between QWL and work-life balance, while assessing the mediating roles of job stress, job satisfaction, and job commitment within the Indian context. Their study reveals that better quality of work life reduces job stress, enhances satisfaction, and fosters stronger organizational commitment, which collectively lead to improved work-life balance. The authors highlight the complex interplay of psychological and organizational variables in shaping employees' professional experiences, emphasizing the need for holistic HR practices that address stress reduction and promote employee wellbeing.

**Asa and Lasebikan (2016) [5]** focused on the mental health of secondary school teachers in Nigeria, particularly examining levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Their research shows that teachers face substantial mental health challenges due to excessive workloads, inadequate resources, student behavior issues, and systemic pressures within the education sector. The study highlights that prolonged exposure to

these stressors not only affects teachers' well-being but also compromises the quality of education. The authors call for mental health interventions, improved working conditions, and support systems for teachers to mitigate these challenges.

**Baranauskas, Kupčiūnaitė, and Stukas (2022) [6]** explored the mental health and physical activity patterns of female higher education students in Lithuania during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their comparative cross-sectional study revealed that the pandemic significantly worsened psychological well-being among young women, with elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms. Reduced physical activity during lockdowns further intensified these mental health challenges, highlighting the interrelated nature of physical movement and emotional resilience. The authors emphasize the need for institutional interventions, such as mental health support programs and accessible fitness opportunities, to help female students maintain overall well-being during periods of crisis.

**Bhola and Nigade (2016) [7]** examined the relationship between work-life balance, quality of work life (QWL), and overall life quality among women employed in the

service sector. Their findings indicate that achieving equilibrium between professional and personal roles is strongly linked to higher QWL and improved general life satisfaction. Women who experienced supportive work environments, flexible scheduling, and fair organizational practices reported significantly better well-being. The study underscores the need for gender-sensitive workplace policies, especially in sectors where women often face heavy workloads and dual responsibilities.

**Borges et al. (2010) [8]** through the World Health Organization's World Mental Health Surveys, investigated the twelve-month prevalence and risk factors associated with suicide attempts across various countries. Their research revealed that suicidal behavior is influenced by a combination of sociodemographic factors, mental health disorders, and exposure to stressful life events. They found that mood disorders, substance abuse, and traumatic experiences markedly increase the likelihood of suicide attempts. The study's large-scale international dataset highlights the global importance of preventive mental health strategies and early intervention, particularly for high-risk populations.

**Chandra and Minkovitz (2006) [9]** explored how stigma influences adolescents' willingness to seek mental health services, noting key gender differences in help-seeking behavior. Their findings show that teenage girls are generally more open to accessing psychological support, while boys exhibit greater reluctance due to stigma and societal expectations surrounding masculinity. The authors argue that mental health stigma begins early in life and significantly shapes attitudes and behaviors toward professional help. They call for targeted awareness programs and school-based interventions to reduce stigma and encourage both boys and girls to seek support when needed.

**Chen, Lin, Wang, and Tung-Hsu (2009) [10]** conducted research published in the *Journal of Nursing Research* examining stress, job satisfaction, and coping mechanisms among nursing professionals. Their study revealed that nurses frequently experience high levels of work-related stress due to long shifts, emotional labor, and demanding clinical environments. However, effective coping strategies such as social support, problem-solving techniques, and organizational backing played a crucial role in mediating stress and enhancing job

satisfaction. The authors highlight the importance of creating supportive healthcare settings to promote nurses' mental health and improve patient care outcomes.

## **Methodology**

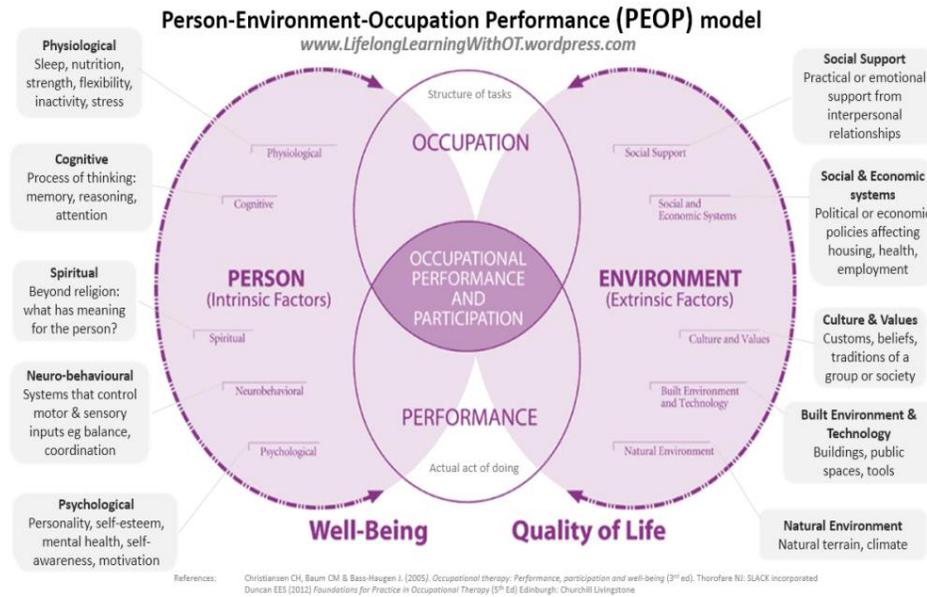
### **THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In recent decades health education has increased, and researchers have acknowledged the importance of occupational stress, mental health and quality of work life. However, there are many gaps, un-debated concepts and unanswered questions in this area. From the review of literature, the researcher perceives problems like: Firstly, while there have been various studies conducted on occupational stress, quality of work life and mental health, till recently, there has been no study conducted on the occupational stress of female teaching professionals in higher education in Odisha in relation to their mental health and work life balance [8].

Secondly, the university teaching employees are dealing with money and pertaining to more stress and less quality to their working life in the occupation. The responsibility of educationist has been increasing day to day due to policy changes. Now they are facing the challenges of high

work load when it is beyond their expertise and limit. In view of hectic work schedule and heavy workload, women employees find it challenging to strive work life harmony. All the inconvenience and discomfort suffered by the women employees in their professional journey as listed above have the potential to influence the work efficiency of the subjects thereby striking the quality of work performance.

Thirdly, according to the article 'Mental Health Red Alert: Odisha Sees Sharp Rise In Suicides' Whether caused by the Covid-19 epidemic or anything else, Odisha has seen a substantial rise in suicide rates over the previous six years. The most recent official statistics show that 28,249 suicide instances were registered in the state throughout the course of the previous six years (from 2016 to 2021). According to the data, the number of suicides rose every year. Odisha police stations recorded 3,884 suicides in 2016, however those numbers rose to 4,151 in 2017 and 4,447 in 2018. In 2019, there were 4,636 of them [9]. When the Covid-19 epidemic gripped Odisha in 2020 and 2021, the number of suicides in the state surpassed 5,000. In 2020, 5,482 people died by suicide whereas such incidents increased to 5,649 in 2021, as per the data.



**Figure 3: person-Environment- occupation performance (PEOP) model**

The Indian educational system faced several challenges during the corona virus epidemic, making it difficult for academics to maintain a positive sense of balance between their professional and personal lives while providing high-quality instruction [10]. The goal of this study by (Singh, 2022) is to examine the relationships between work-life balance and a range of attributes, including position, ability to work remotely, and social duties, among teaching professionals employed in higher education. For this study, 136 teaching professionals of various designations from diverse places were randomly selected. For the goal of the study, primary data was gathered. The research analysis was done using SPSS software, and

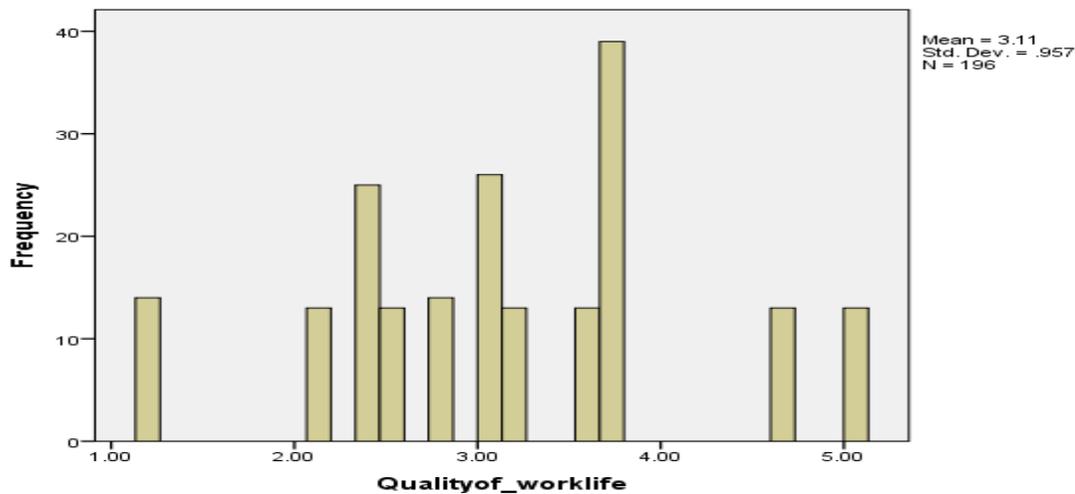
a chi-square test was utilised to determine the study's outcomes.

In the United States and the United Kingdom, anger and irritation were the most often reported psychological distresses, whereas Chinese employees showed tension and worry, and Indian workers showed acceptance. Gender, profession, and nation all affected coping mechanisms differently [11]. According to research on gender differences, women often report higher interpersonal pressures than males.

According to the study (Bliese, 2002) multilevel modeling has gained popularity among academics studying organisational

behaviour and public health in recent years. To demonstrate the advantages of using a multilevel approach to the research of occupational stress, this essay pulls from both of these domains. In terms of (a) individual-level analysis, (b) group-level analyses, and (c) cross-level analyses, the

authors highlight the important multilevel concerns in occupational stress. To demonstrate how one might evaluate multilevel occupational stress hypotheses, they combine the theoretical arguments with statistical models.



**Figure 4: Histogram of Quality of work life**

According to studies (TA., 1976) on gender and mental health, the stressors men and women are exposed to, the coping mechanisms they employ, the social relationships they participate in, and the personal resources and vulnerabilities they develop are all major risk factors for internalizing and externalizing problems [12]. These risk factors include conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The chapter

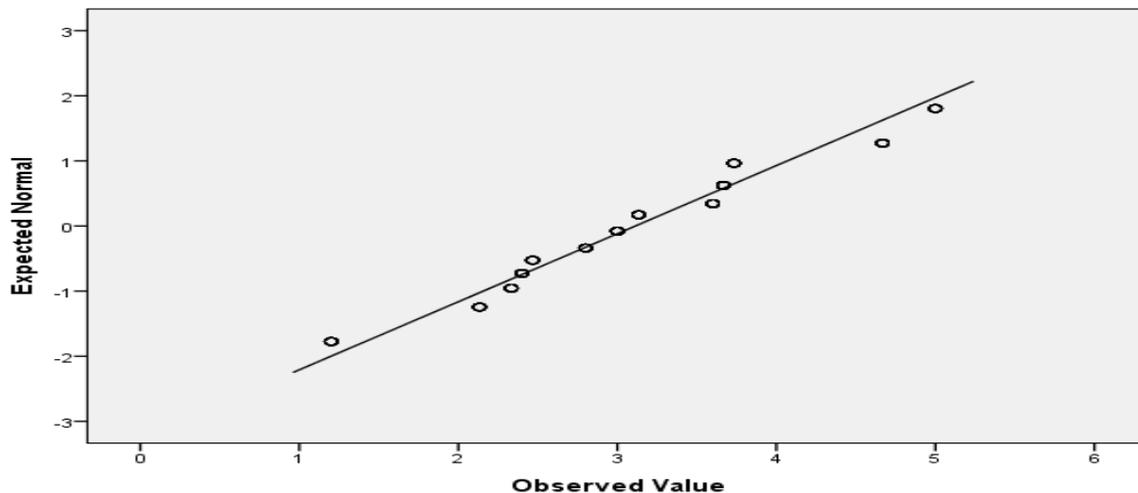
looked at various theories for gender disparities in general, as well as by race and class.

In order to comprehend the effects of perceived job insecurity on working hours, employee health, and diminished family time, this article focuses on the link between and impact of job insecurity on work-life balance. Data was gathered from 413

workers in various Indian industries, including construction, banks, hospitals, hotels, schools, FMCG, communications, etc., using a self-completed questionnaire [13]. This information was used to test five hypotheses. According to the study by (Begum, 2022) there is a link between employment uncertainty, health problems, and work-life conflict.

Study by (Hooda, 2022) investigated the association between work-life balance and mindfulness with workers' occupational stress in the Indian banking sector, which is undergoing significant changes as a result of mergers and privatization. In this study, a sample of 300 Indian banking employees

150 from public sector banks and 150 from private sector banks took part. They answered questions on the Work-Life Balance, the Occupational Stress Index, and the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale. The perceptions of work-life balance, occupational stress, and mindfulness among bank workers in the public and private sectors were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the t-test, and an inter-correlation matrix [14]. According to the findings, there is a very strong negative link between mindfulness and work-related stress. The findings have implications for possible program and policy developments seeking to enhance mindfulness at work and reduce occupational stress at workplace.



**Figure 5: normal Q-Q Plot quality of work life for employment status private**

The research design in a study refers to the overall strategy that the researcher chooses to logically and coherently integrate the study's different components, thereby ensuring the researcher effectively the research problem.

It is the blueprint for the data collection, measurement, and analysis of data. For this study, the researcher has followed a descriptive study on the female teaching faculties in higher education in both private and public sector in Odisha. The research attempts to describe the levels of occupational stress, mental health and quality of work life and attempts to substantiate the correlations [15]. This description will be of great relevance in making the new generation strong and mentally healthy professionals.

Stratified random sampling involves dividing the entire population into

homogeneous groups called strata (plural for stratum). Random samples are then selected from each stratum. For example, consider an academic researcher who would like to know the number of MBA students in a specific graduating year who received a job offer within three months of graduation.

## **Result**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The basic aim of this chapter is to attempt was to examine the difference between the private and public female teaching professionals in higher education in Odisha in terms of their level of occupational stress, metal health and its impact on their quality of work life. The previous chapters are to discuss concept related with variables, review of literature, methodology, rationale of the study, statistical analysis [16].

**Table 1: Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	391	97.8
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	9	2.3
	Total	400	100.0

A summary of item statistics was computed to evaluate the overall distribution of responses across the 64 items in the scale. The average item mean was **3.279** on a 5-point Likert scale, with a minimum mean of **1.330** and a maximum mean of **4.864**, indicating variability in how participants

rated the items. The range of the item means was **3.535**, and the maximum-to-minimum ratio was **3.658**, suggesting diversity in item response patterns. The average variance of **0.665** across items reflects a moderate level of response dispersion, further supporting the robustness of the scale.

**Table 2: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
.744	.757	56

Cronbach's Alpha = 0.744, this indicates acceptable reliability for the scale. A value

between 0.7 and 0.8 is considered acceptable for most research purposes, suggesting the

items on the scale are measuring the same construct reasonably well [17]. Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized Items = 0.757, this is a recalculated reliability coefficient based on standardized items (if the items are

on different scales or have different variances). It is slightly higher than the raw Cronbach's Alpha, further supporting the reliability of the scale.

**Table 3: Summary Item Statistics**

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.279	1.330	4.864	3.535	3.658	.665	56

AGE mean = 2.5013 (on a 4-point scale), suggesting that the average respondent falls around the midrange age group in the study. Marital Status: Mean = 1.3299 (on a 2-point scale), indicating that most participants likely belong to the first category (e.g., married if 1 = married, 2 = unmarried). Income\_ group: Mean = 2.5294 (on a 4-point scale), suggesting most participants fall in the second or third income group. Employment\_ status: Mean = 1.4987 (on a 2-point scale), evenly distributed between private (1) and public (2) sectors. STREAM: Mean = 2.9488 (on a 5-point scale), with respondents likely distributed across streams, leaning towards the third or fourth group. TEACHING\_EXPERIENCE: Mean

= 3.1867 (on a 5-point scale), indicating most participants have moderate teaching experience. DESIGNATION: Mean = 2.1509 (on a 4-point scale), suggesting most respondents hold middle-level positions.

**Variability:**

Std. Deviation: Explains the spread of data around the mean. Larger values (e.g., STREAM, TEACHING\_EXPERIENCE) indicate more diversity. Variance: The square of the standard deviation; included as a measure of spread. Range, Minimum, Maximum: Provide insight into the coding scale and the data's overall spread.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the demographic and professional

characteristics of the participants (N = 391). The mean age category was **2.50** with a standard deviation of **1.10**, indicating most respondents fell within the midrange age groups. Regarding marital status, the mean was **1.33** on a 2-point scale, suggesting a majority of respondents were likely married [18].

For income, the mean was **2.53** (SD = 1.06), reflecting a distribution across middle-income groups. The employment status mean of **1.50** (SD = 0.50) indicates an almost equal representation of private and

public sector employees. The teaching stream variable had a mean of **2.95** (SD = 1.37), showing diversity among the respondents' academic fields.

Participants had an average teaching experience of **3.19** (SD = 1.27) on a 5-point scale, suggesting moderate teaching tenure. Regarding designation, the mean was **2.15** (SD = 0.80), indicating most respondents held middle-level positions. The detailed distribution of responses is reflected in the range and standard deviation values for each variable [19].

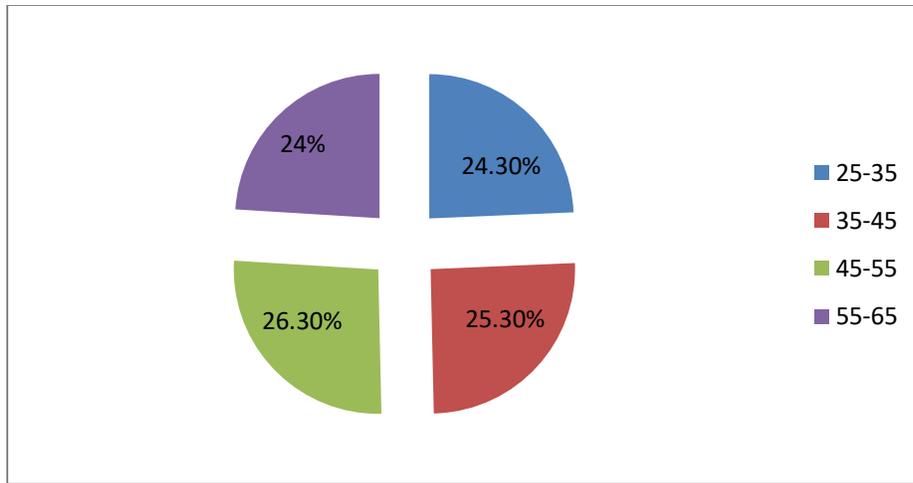
**Table 4: Frequency Table**

	<b>Frequen cy</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>25-35</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>24.3</b>
<b>35-45</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>49.6</b>
<b>Valid 45-55</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>76.0</b>
<b>55-65</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

In this frequency table age is the main criteria where for age group 25 to 35 the frequency is 95, percentage 24.3, valid percentage is 24.3 and the cumulative

percentage is also 24.3. In the age group 35 to 45yr the frequency is 99, percentage is 25.3, valid percentage is 25.3 and the cumulative percentage 49.6 [20].

**Figure 6: Age Percentage**



**Table 5: INCOME\_GROUP**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>1LAKH-5LAKH</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>21.7</b>
<b>5LAKH-10LAKH</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>47.6</b>
<b>Valid 10LAKH-15LAKH</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>77.7</b>
<b>15LAKH AND ABOVE</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

## Conclusion

The present study highlights that **occupational stress and mental health** are deeply intertwined with the **Quality of Work Life (QWL)** among **female teaching professionals** in Odisha's higher educational institutions. The comparative analysis between public and private institutions reveals significant disparities in work experiences and psychological well-being. Faculty members in public institutions generally enjoy greater job security, organizational support, and manageable workloads, which contribute to lower stress levels and better mental health outcomes. In contrast, female educators in private institutions face higher occupational stress due to job insecurity, excessive workloads, and performance-based pressures, leading to diminished QWL and increased mental health challenges. The findings underscore the necessity for **institutional and policy-level interventions** aimed at fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment. Initiatives such as stress management training, mental health counseling, equitable workload distribution, and gender-sensitive organizational policies are crucial to enhance the well-being of female faculty members. Strengthening

these aspects will not only improve their quality of work life but also contribute to better teaching performance, academic productivity, and institutional effectiveness. Ultimately, prioritizing the mental health of educators is vital for achieving sustainable development in the higher education sector of Odisha.

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