

STRESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE PETALING JAYA DISTRICT, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Creativity Objective: Teaching is a high-risk occupation for stress, which may impact quality of life (QOL). This study assessed stress levels and QOL among vernacular primary school teachers in Petaling Jaya District, Malaysia, and examined demographic associations.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 104 teachers selected through a stratified random sampling method. Data were collected using a Demographics Questionnaire, Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), and WHOQOL-BREF. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS.

Results: Female teachers reported significantly higher stress in life satisfaction ($p < 0.033$), while their overall QOL was rated as good. Teachers under 30 years scored higher in physical health ($p = 0.041$). Supervisory support was strongly associated with physical health.

Conclusions: Workplace support is essential for mitigating teacher stress and enhancing overall well-being.

Keywords: *Creative fostering behaviour, mathematics teachers, creativity, classroom practices, primary education.*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers in the 21st century are expected to be highly proficient in using digital tools, information and communication technology (ICT), and multimodal teaching approaches to enhance student learning (Parnabas et al., 2021). In Malaysia, ongoing educational reforms such as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR) emphasize the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills (Zakaria et al., 2017). While these initiatives aim to improve educational quality, they have also increased the complexity of teachers' roles. Educators are required to manage multiple responsibilities, including instructional delivery, classroom management, administrative tasks, and extracurricular involvement. These heightened demands, combined with time constraints, student behavioural challenges, and accountability pressures, contribute significantly to occupational stress when job requirements exceed an individual's capacity to cope (Bottiani et al., 2019; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001). Organizational factors such as limited resources, unclear role expectations, and insufficient administrative support may further intensify these stress levels (Ferguson et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2020).

Prolonged exposure to such occupational stress can lead to significant negative consequences for teachers. Studies have consistently shown that chronic stress is associated with burnout, emotional exhaustion, and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). These outcomes not only impair teachers' job performance but also affect student engagement and the overall quality of education

(Carroll et al., 2021). Moreover, the impact of stress extends beyond the workplace, influencing physical health, psychological well-being, and social functioning, thereby affecting an individual's overall life experience.

Given these broader implications, it is essential to examine stress not only as a workplace issue but also in relation to individuals' overall quality of life (QOL). QOL is a multidimensional construct encompassing physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environmental conditions (Felce & Perry, 1995). By integrating the concept of QOL, researchers can better understand how occupational stress influences teachers' well-being more holistically, rather than limiting the focus to job-related outcomes alone.

However, existing studies have largely examined occupational stress and well-being as separate constructs, resulting in a fragmented understanding of their interrelationship. In the Malaysian context, although research has explored teacher stress, there remains a lack of empirical studies that concurrently examine stress and quality of life, particularly among primary school teachers in vernacular school settings. Given the unique structural, linguistic, and cultural characteristics of these schools, findings from other contexts may not be fully generalizable.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the levels of stress and quality of life among primary school teachers in the Petaling Jaya district and to examine the relationship between these variables. By integrating both constructs within a single framework, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' well-being and to inform context-specific interventions and policy strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress

To provide a structured understanding of occupational stress among teachers, this study adopts the work stress model proposed by Palmer and Cooper (2003), as illustrated in Figure 1. The model conceptualizes workplace stress across six key domains: demands, control, support, relationships, role, and change, which collectively shape an individual's stress experience.

This model is particularly relevant as it integrates both organizational and psychosocial dimensions of stress, offering a comprehensive framework beyond isolated stressor identification. Unlike approaches that examine stress factors independently, it emphasizes the interaction between job demands and available resources, allowing for a more holistic interpretation of how stress develops within professional environments.

Importantly, this framework aligns closely with the constructs measured in this study. The domains assessed in the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), such as role stress, task-related stress, and supervisory support, correspond directly to the dimensions outlined in the model. This alignment strengthens the conceptual foundation of the study by ensuring that the measurement of stress reflects a theoretically grounded structure.

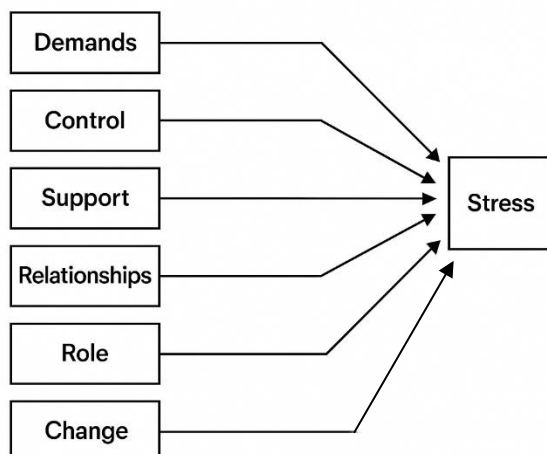
Furthermore, the inclusion of the 'change' dimension is particularly pertinent in contemporary educational settings. This aligns with ongoing curriculum reforms and evolving expectations placed on teachers, highlighting how systemic changes may influence stress experiences within schools.

Overall, the application of Palmer and Cooper's model provides a coherent theoretical basis for examining teacher stress while supporting the integration of occupational stress and quality of life within a single analytical framework. This approach enhances the study's ability to interpret findings meaningfully within the context of Malaysian primary education.

Figure 1

A Model of Work Stress

Model of Work Stress



Note. Source: Palmer and Cooper (2004)

Quality of Life

Quality of life (QOL) is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environmental conditions (Felce & Perry, 1995). Rather than reflecting a single outcome, QOL captures an individual's overall perception of their position in life within the context of their goals, expectations, and lived experiences.

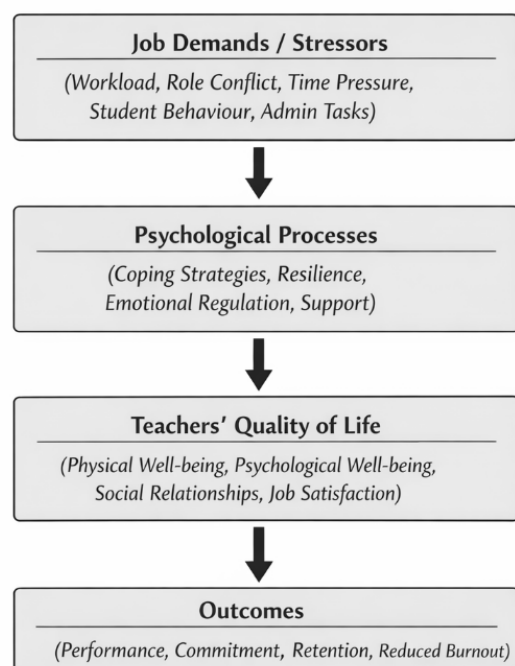
In occupational research, QOL serves as a valuable framework for understanding how work-related factors extend beyond professional settings to influence broader aspects of individual well-being. This is particularly relevant in teaching, where prolonged exposure to occupational stress may affect not only job performance but also physical health, emotional stability, and social functioning.

Within this study, QOL is operationalized using the WHOQOL-BREF instrument, which assesses four key domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental conditions. These domains provide a comprehensive basis for examining the broader impact of occupational stress on teachers' well-being. By integrating QOL into the analysis, the study moves beyond a narrow focus on stress outcomes and instead captures the wider implications of occupational demands on teachers' overall life satisfaction.

Thus, the inclusion of QOL complements the work stress framework by enabling a more holistic assessment of teacher well-being, supporting a deeper understanding of how stress manifests across multiple dimensions of life within the Malaysian educational context.

Figure 2

Conceptual Model Illustrating the Relationship Between Teachers' Stress, Psychological Processes, and Quality of Life



Note. Adapted from contemporary teacher well-being frameworks such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020).

The conceptual model presented in Figure 2 is grounded in established and contemporary literature on occupational stress and teacher well-being. Drawing on the framework proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), the model positions job demands—such as workload, role conflict, and administrative pressures—as primary stressors that influence teachers' overall well-being. Consistent with the stress process perspective of Palmer and Cooper (2003), these stressors do not directly determine outcomes but operate through psychological processes, including coping strategies, resilience, and emotional regulation. Recent teacher well-being models further support the inclusion of these mediating mechanisms in explaining how stress impacts broader life domains (e.g., Ozturk Wigelsworth & Squires, 2024). In this study, these processes are conceptualized as key pathways linking stress to teachers' quality of life, which encompasses physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Ultimately, consistent with prior research, variations in quality of life are expected to influence important professional outcomes such as performance, commitment, and retention, thereby justifying the proposed model as a comprehensive framework for examining teacher stress and its implications.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study took place in Petaling Jaya district vernacular schools, which are situated in the centre of Selangor state in Malaysia. In the Petaling Jaya district, the vernacular schools are identified in seven areas: Puchong, Petaling Jaya, Seri Kembangan, Sungai Buloh, Shah Alam, Klang and Subang. The sampling frame comprised an official and up-to-date list of all vernacular primary schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina and Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil*) within the Petaling District, obtained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Stratification was based on school type (Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools) to ensure proportional representation. From this frame, four schools were randomly selected using stratified random sampling, with two schools drawn from each stratum.

The study population consists of approximately 120 teachers aged 25–55 from four vernacular schools. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50% response distribution, the minimum required sample is 92 respondents, which aligns with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendation. To ensure representativeness and account for possible non-response or missing data, a 10% increment was applied, resulting in a final expected sample of 101 respondents. This sample size is sufficient to detect meaningful correlations in line with the study's objectives. Teachers were approached indirectly through the headmistress, who conveyed information about the study and coordinated teacher participation. The researcher did not have direct contact with the teachers. On the day of data collection, 120 teachers were sent a link to the online survey; the invitation also contained a link to the online survey, and the online survey is mobile-friendly. The PIS and the ICF were presented before the survey. Respondents who click "I agree to participate" can begin answering the survey. The returned questionnaires were checked on site to ensure completeness.

Demographics Questionnaire

The Demographics Questionnaire was designed to collect basic background information, including participants' age, gender, and educational level. No personally identifying information was requested, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of teacher responses.

Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI)

Teachers' stated stress levels and an overall stress score were determined by the Teacher Stress Inventory, updated by Schutz and Long (1988). This version has 36 items, each with a Likert scale with five possible scores. Role ambiguity, role stress, organisational management, work satisfaction, life satisfaction, task stress, and supervisory support are the seven categories. A high score suggests that the individual is under significant stress. A high score on one measure suggests that the patient is under a lot of stress in that particular area. The highest possible score is 180. Schutz and Long (1988) reported that Cronbach's alpha was high in their sample, with only three of the 36 items having item-total correlations below 50. For the first scale, the overall internal consistency reliability coefficient was 0.76. As a result, the items showed positive covariance, and the alpha fell within the intended range, indicating a significant level of internal consistency between individual items (Nunnally, 1978). More precisely, 0.7 has been shown by Nunnally (1978) to be a suitable reliability coefficient. This data shows how this test compares to others that measure the same construct of interest using an equal number of items (Hatcher & O'Rourke, 1994).

World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment (WHOQOL-BREF)

The World Health Organization Quality of Life – BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) is a 26-item self-report instrument developed to assess quality of life across four key domains: physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environmental factors (The WHOQOL Group, 1998). The Portuguese version of the instrument has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including temporal stability, construct validity, and satisfactory internal consistency across all domains (Canavarró et al., 2010). Similarly, studies using the tool in different instructional settings have shown consistently high internal reliability across domains. In the general population, the WHOQOL-BREF has been widely used to establish baseline indicators of well-being across its domains (Hawthorne et al., 2006; Woon et al., 2021). The Malay version of the WHOQOL-BREF has also been validated and exhibited good discriminant and construct validity, along with reliable internal consistency and test-retest stability (Hasanah et al., 2003).

Data Analysis

All statistical calculations and analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (latest version). The sociodemographic characteristics, occupational factors, prevalence of stress, and quality of life were all described using descriptive analysis. The categorical variables were presented as percentages (%) and frequencies (n). Data on stress were collected using the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), while quality of life was assessed using the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) instrument. Both instruments employed a 5-point Likert scale. Numerical data were presented as mean and standard deviation (SD) for normally distributed variables; otherwise, the median and interquartile range (IQR) were reported.

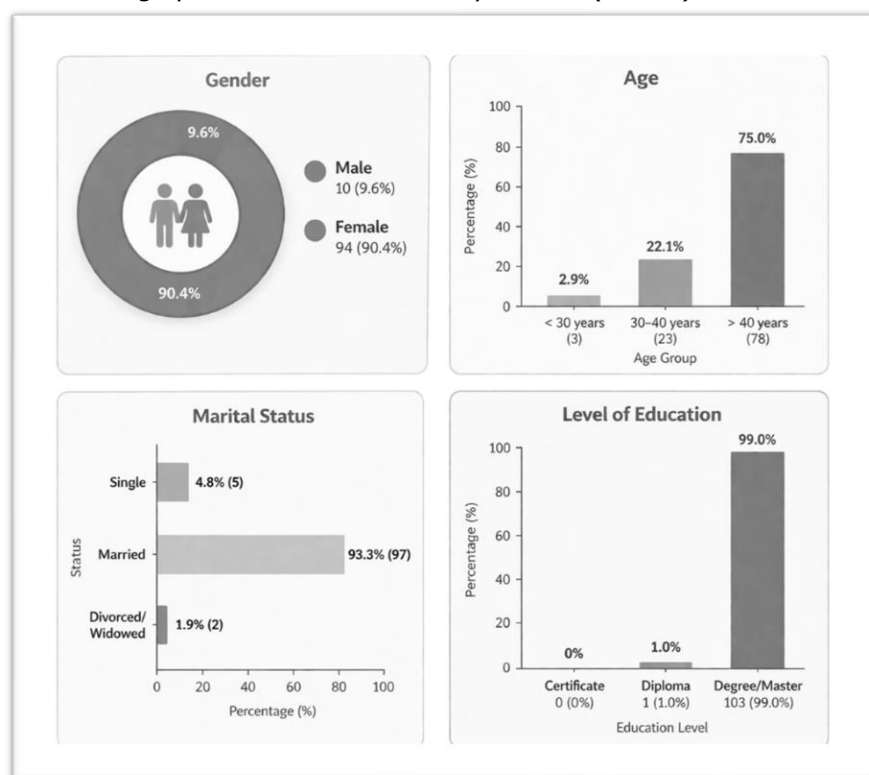
Bivariate analysis was conducted to examine relationships between stress and quality of life and sociodemographic variables, personal characteristics, and job-related factors. Since the data were monotonically related (i.e., increases in one variable were associated with increases in the other), but not bivariate normally distributed, Spearman's correlation was used to evaluate the statistical relationship between two continuous variables. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used for all outcomes. WHOQOL and TSI findings were further categorized according to key demographic variables, including age, gender, marital status, and education level, to support interpretation of results at the individual level.

RESULTS

A total of 110 responses were obtained; however, only 104 were included in the final analysis after applying eligibility screening. A filter question at the beginning of the online survey asked respondents to confirm whether they were actively involved in teaching, excluding those engaged solely in administrative duties. Only those who indicated active teaching responsibilities proceeded with the survey and were included in the study. Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the study population. The majority of the respondents were female (90.4%), over the age of 40 (75.0%), married (93.3%), and had a degree/master's level of education (99.0%) (Figure 3).

Figure 1

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (N=104)



Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI)

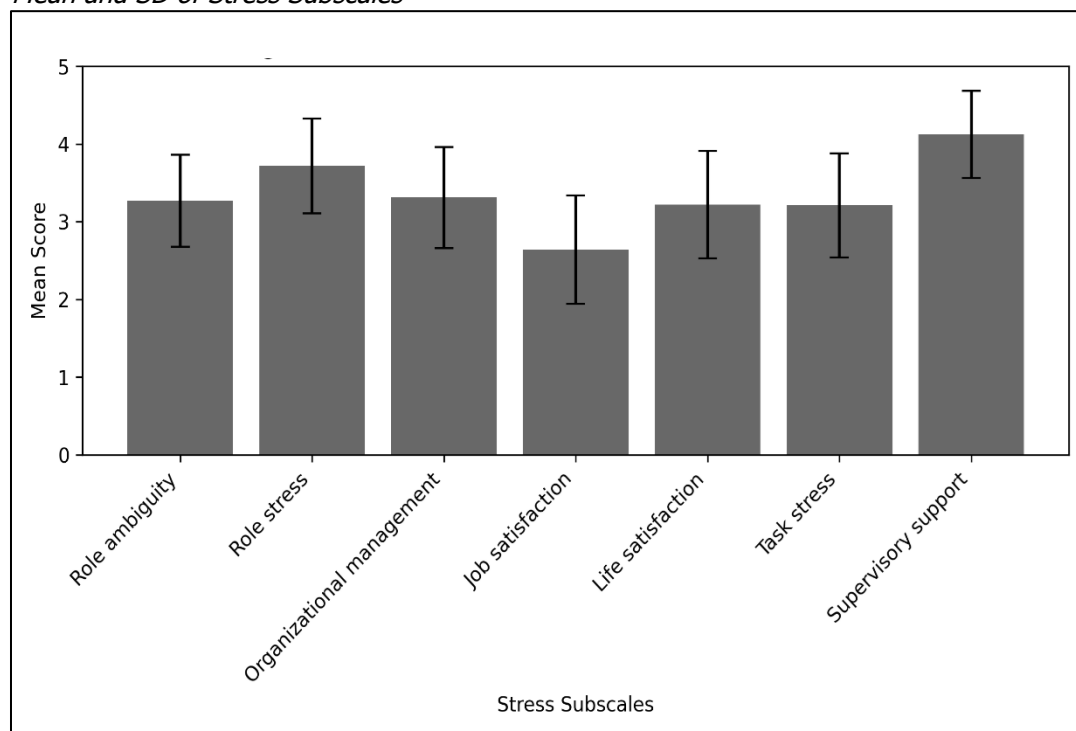
Analysis of the data revealed seven distinct stress-related subscales. Among these, supervisory support recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.56$), verbally interpreted as "frequently stressed," indicating it was the most prominent source of stress for the teachers (Figure 4). This was followed by role stress ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.61$), which also fell into the "frequently stressed" category, suggesting a substantial impact on respondents.

Role ambiguity ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.59$) and organisational management ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.65$) were interpreted as "occasionally stressed," reflecting moderate stress levels in these areas. The remaining

subscales, task stress ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.70$), job satisfaction ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.67$), and life satisfaction ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.69$) had lower mean scores and were classified as "sometimes stressed," indicating relatively lower levels of stress experienced in these domains.

Figure 2

Mean and SD of Stress Subscales



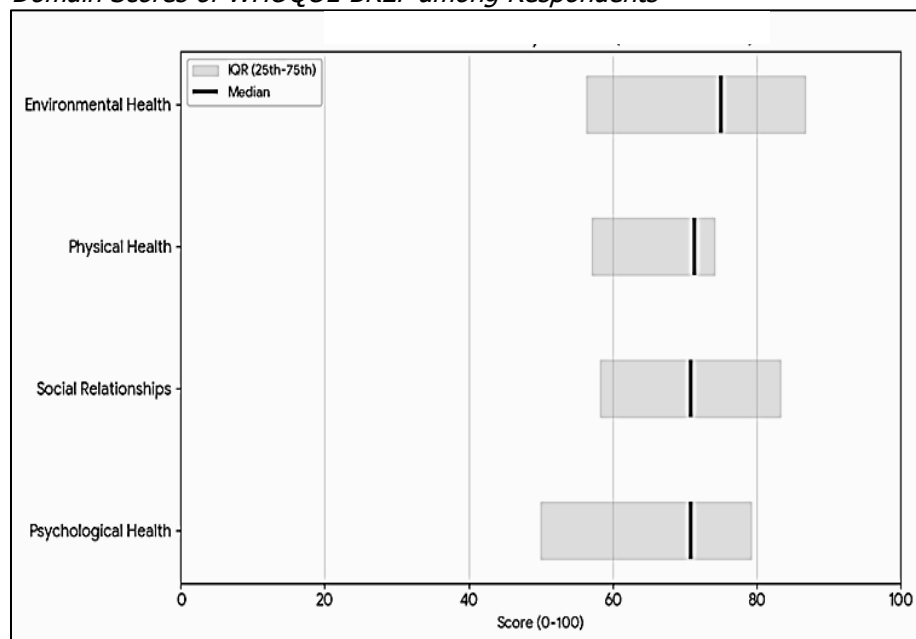
Note. Error bars represent standard deviations. Scale for interpreting mean values: 1.00–1.49 = Never, 1.50–2.49 = Rare, 2.50–3.49 = Sometimes, 3.50–4.49 = Often, 4.50–5.00 = Always.

Quality of Life

The majority of respondents said they were generally in excellent or very good health (76.0%) and had an overall quality of life (58.0%) (Table 3). From 70.8 (IQR=29.2, 95%CI=62.1, 68.9) (IQR=25, 95%CI=62.1, 71.4) to 75.0 (IQR=30.4, 95%CI=68.4, 75.5), the domain scores vary (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Domain Scores of WHOQOL-BREF among Respondents



Relationship between Stress and the Characteristics of Respondents

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and the various stress domains measured by the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI). The analysis utilized median scores to identify significant differences between male and female participants across the stress domains. A statistically significant association was found between life satisfaction (LS) and gender, with female teachers reporting higher stress levels (median = 3.40, $p < 0.033$) compared to their male counterparts. However, no significant correlations were observed between stress levels and other demographic variables, including age group, marital status, and educational attainment. Further details on the correlations between respondent characteristics and stress domains are presented in Table 4.

Table 1*Analysis of Stress among Respondents' Characteristics (N=104)*

Respondents' characteristics	Teacher Stress Inventory Measures													
	Role ambiguity (RA)		Role stress (RS)		Organizational management (OM)		Job satisfaction (JS)		Life satisfaction (LS)		Task stress (TS)		Supervisory support (SS)	
	Median (IQR)	p-value	Median (IQR)	p-value	Median (IQR)	p-value	Median (IQR)	p-value	Median (IQR)	p-value	Median (IQR)	p-value	Median (IQR)	p-value
Gender														
Male	3.40 (0.40)	0.108	3.58 (0.75)	0.225	3.30 (0.60)	0.924	2.90 (0.75)	0.680	3.00 (0.40)	0.033*	3.08 (0.58)	0.751	4.00 (0.69)	0.623
Female	3.20 (0.40)		3.67 (1.00)		3.40 (0.60)		2.80 (0.85)		3.20 (0.60)		3.17 (0.50)		4.00 (1.25)	
Age (Years)														
< 30	3.40 (0.00)	0.066	3.33 (0.00)	0.892	3.40 (0.00)	0.094	3.00 (0.00)	0.612	2.80 (0.00)	0.747	2.83 (0.00)	0.116	3.75 (0.00)	0.456
30-40	3.40 (0.40)		3.67 (0.83)		3.00 (0.80)		2.80 (0.60)		3.20 (0.60)		3.17 (0.67)		3.75 (1.25)	

>40	3.20 (0.40)		3.67 (1.0)		3.40 (0.60)		2.80 (1.00)		3.20 (0.40)		3.17 (0.50)		4.25 (1.06)	
Marital Status														
Single	3.40 (0.20)	0.403	3.83 (0.58)	0.749	3.40 (1.20)	0.497	2.40 (1.10)	0.349	3.00 (0.80)	0.587	3.00 (0.67)	0.105	4.25 (1.13)	0.470
Married	3.20 (0.40)		3.67 (1.17)		3.40 (0.60)		2.80 (0.80)		3.20 (0.50)		3.17 (0.50)		4.00 (1.25)	
Divorced/ Widowed	3.20 (0.00)		4.00 (0.00)		3.70 (0.00)		2.40 (0.00)		3.30 (0.00)		2.33 (0.00)		4.25 (0.00)	
Level of education														
Diploma	NA	0.506	NA	0.451	NA	0.919	NA	0.501	NA	0.172	NA	0.246	NA	0.601
Degree/Master	3.20 (0.40)		3.67 (1.00)		3.40 (0.60)		2.80 (0.80)		3.20 (0.60)		3.17 (0.50)		4.00 (1.25)	

Assessment of Quality of Life (QOL) Mean Scores Across Respondent Characteristics

Non-parametric tests were conducted to examine differences in Quality of Life (QOL) domain scores across various demographic characteristics. The Mann–Whitney U test was used to compare two independent groups (e.g., gender, education level), while the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to compare more than two groups (e.g., age categories, marital status), as the data were not normally distributed.

When comparing by education level, participants with a diploma had higher mean scores for physical and psychological health, though the differences were not statistically significant ($U = 93.00, p = 0.172$; $U = 51.00, p = 0.987$, respectively). In terms of gender, females reported higher mean scores for physical ($U = 52.67, p = 0.858$) and psychological health ($U = 53.14, p = 0.506$), although these differences were also not significant. Conversely, males scored higher in social relationships ($U = 436.50, p = 0.709$), while participants with a diploma scored higher as well ($U = 64.00, p = 0.699$), but both findings were not statistically significant. Environmental health scores were slightly higher among female participants ($U = 410.50, p = 0.511$) and those with a degree or master's degree ($U = 43.00, p = 0.776$), though again, without statistical significance.

To explore the influence of age and marital status on QOL domains, the Kruskal–Wallis H test was applied. A statistically significant difference was observed in physical health across age groups ($H = 6.37, p = 0.041$), where participants under the age of 30 reported higher mean scores. A general decline in physical health scores was noted with increasing age. Marital status was not significantly associated with physical health, although divorced or widowed participants had higher average scores ($H = 3.36, p = 0.186$). For the remaining domains—psychological health, social relationships, and environmental health—no statistically significant differences were found across age or marital status. Participants under 30 years old had slightly higher mean scores across all three domains (H values ranging from 0.45 to 1.85; $p > 0.05$). Similarly, single participants showed marginally higher scores compared to other marital status groups, but none reached statistical significance (H values ranging from 0.70 to 1.21; $p > 0.05$). A summary of these findings is presented in Table 5.

Correlation between TSI scores and WHOQOL-BREF scores

The association between the 104 respondents' WHOQOL-BREF domain scores and TSI domain scores was evaluated using Spearman's correlation (r_s) analysis. While the analysis showed mild to moderate numerical correlations ($r = 0.27$ to 0.53), these represent an inverse functional relationship due to the scaling of the instruments. Higher TSI scores indicate increased stress levels, while higher WHOQOL-BREF scores signify better quality of life. Notably, the strongest relationship was observed between supervisory support and physical health ($r_s = 0.53, p < 0.001$), suggesting that as perceived support from management increases, the physical well-being of these teachers improves significantly. Conversely, task stress and job satisfaction were found to be negatively associated with physical health, meaning higher task-related pressure corresponds to lower physical QOL within this sample.

Table 2*Analysis of Stress among Respondents' Characteristics (N=104)*

Respondents' characteristics	Physical health			Psychological health			Social relationship			Environmental Health		
	Mean rank	U ^a /H ^b	p-value*	Mean rank	U ^a /H ^b	p-value*	Mean rank	U ^a /H ^b	p-value*	Mean rank	U ^a /H ^b	p-value*
Gender												
Male	50.9	454.00 ^a	0.858	46.5	410.00 ^a	0.506	55.85	436.50 ^a	0.709	46.55	410.50 ^a	0.511
Female	52.67			53.14			52.14			53.13		
Age (Years)												
< 30	93	6.37 ^b	0.041*	68	0.90 ^b	0.639	73.33	1.85 ^b	0.396	57.17	0.45 ^b	0.798
30 - 40	46.8			50.57			48.63			48.98		
>40	52.62			52.47			52.84			53.36		
Marital status												
Single	69.2	3.36 ^b	0.186	54	0.983 ^b	0.612	65	1.21 ^b	0.545	57.8	0.70 ^b	0.703
Married	51.06			52.85			52.1			52.55		
Divorced/ Widowed	79			31.75			40.5			36.75		
Level of education												
Diploma	93	11.00 ^a	0.172	53	51.00 ^a	0.987	64	40.00 ^a	0.699	44	43.00 ^a	0.776
Degree/ Master	52.11			52.5			52.39			52.58		

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients Between WHOQOL-BREF Scores and TSI Scores among the Respondents

Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI)	WHOBREF-QOL Domains			
	Physical health	Psychological health	Social relationships	Environment health
Role Ambiguity	0.072 p<0.465	0.198* p<0.044	0.396* p<0.001	0.206* p<0.036
Role Stress	0.274* p<0.005	0.152 p<0.123	0.217* p<0.027	0.192 p<0.051
Job Satisfaction	-0.322* p<0.001	0.029 p<0.770	-0.018 p<0.857	-0.157 p<0.112
Organizational Management	0.476* p<0.001	0.346* p<0.001	0.465* p<0.001	0.362* p<0.001
Life Satisfaction	-0.049 p<0.618	0.170 p<0.085	-0.095 p<0.336	-0.013 p<0.896
Task stress	-0.288* p<0.003	0.183 p<0.063	0.191 p<0.052	0.109 p<0.270
Supervisory support	0.528* p<0.001	0.411* p<0.001	0.395* p<0.001	0.458* p<0.001

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insight into the relationship between occupational stress and quality of life (QOL) among vernacular primary school teachers in the Petaling Jaya district. Within this sample, female teachers reported significantly higher stress levels in the life satisfaction domain compared to male teachers. This suggests that gender-related differences may influence how stress is experienced, particularly in relation to personal well-being. However, this interpretation should be approached cautiously, as the sample was predominantly female, which may limit meaningful gender comparisons.

Age was also found to be significantly associated with physical health, with teachers under 30 years reporting higher QOL scores in this domain. This pattern may reflect better physical resilience among younger teachers or fewer cumulative occupational and health burdens. Conversely, the observed decline in physical health scores with increasing age may indicate the long-term effects of sustained work-related demands. Nevertheless, given the cross-sectional design, these findings do not imply age-related causality and should be interpreted as associative trends within this sample.

The correlation analysis between Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) and WHOQOL-BREF domains revealed mild to moderate associations. While several coefficients appeared positive in magnitude, this reflects the inverse scaling of the instruments, where higher stress scores represent poorer conditions and higher QOL scores indicate better well-being. When interpreted appropriately, the findings suggest that increased stress is generally associated with lower quality of life. In particular, task stress and lower job satisfaction were linked to poorer physical health, whereas supervisory support demonstrated a consistent positive association with all QOL domains.

The strong association between supervisory support and QOL highlights the importance of organisational factors in shaping teacher well-being. Supportive leadership, clear communication, and effective management practices may help buffer the negative effects of occupational stress. This aligns with existing theoretical models, including the framework by Palmer and Cooper (2003), which emphasises the role of support systems in mitigating stress outcomes.

Interestingly, not all stress domains demonstrated significant relationships with QOL. This may suggest that certain stressors have a more direct or immediate impact on well-being than others. For example, organisational management and supervisory support showed more consistent associations with QOL

domains compared to life satisfaction or role ambiguity. This finding indicates that structural and workplace-related factors may play a more prominent role in influencing teachers' overall well-being than individual perceptions alone.

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with prior research indicating that occupational stress negatively affects well-being. However, some inconsistencies with earlier studies were observed. For instance, previous research has reported no significant relationship between stress and QOL in certain teacher populations. Such differences may be attributed to variations in measurement tools, sample characteristics, or contextual factors such as school environment and cultural expectations. Therefore, direct comparisons should be made cautiously.

From a practical perspective, the results underscore the need for targeted interventions at the organisational level. Enhancing supervisory support, promoting positive workplace relationships, and implementing stress management programmes may help reduce stress levels and improve QOL among teachers. Additionally, age- and gender-sensitive strategies may be beneficial, although further evidence is required before firm recommendations can be made.

It is important to emphasise that the findings of this study are specific to a relatively small sample of teachers from four vernacular schools in a single district. As such, the results should not be generalised to all teachers in Malaysia or other educational contexts. Differences in institutional structures, cultural settings, and resource availability may influence both stress levels and quality of life.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between stress and QOL. While associations were identified, it cannot be determined whether stress leads to reduced QOL or whether individuals with lower QOL are more likely to perceive higher stress. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand the directionality and dynamics of this relationship better.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the existing literature by examining stress and QOL concurrently within a specific and under-researched population. The integration of these constructs provides a more comprehensive understanding of teacher well-being and highlights the importance of organisational support in educational settings.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that occupational stress and quality of life are interrelated among vernacular primary school teachers in this sample, with supervisory support emerging as a key influencing factor. Addressing workplace stress through supportive organisational practices may play a critical role in enhancing teachers' overall well-being. Future research should build on these findings using larger, more diverse samples and more robust study designs to strengthen the evidence base.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study presents several limitations that should be considered. First, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires introduces the potential for response bias, including overreporting or underreporting due to social desirability or personal interpretation of questions. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences between stress levels, quality of life (QOL), and associated demographic variables, as data were collected at a single point in time.

Additionally, the questionnaires used in the study provided only two response options, which may have constrained the depth and variability of the data collected. Future research could benefit from incorporating more detailed response scales or qualitative methods to capture richer insights into teachers' experiences. Lastly, the study did not employ multivariate analysis, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between variables and yield more robust conclusions.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the small sample size, the racialization of stressors affecting teachers should be studied on a large scale. Further research on teacher stress and quality of life will likely increase the generalizability of the results (Pressley, 2021). Finally, conducting future research in other contexts or settings would further inform the pressures that teachers face and offer recommendations to reduce them.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study of 104 educators demonstrates that occupational stress and quality of life are closely interconnected, with supervisory support emerging as the primary factor influencing well-being. By examining these constructs together, the findings highlight that for these participants, a supportive organizational environment is not merely an administrative preference but a necessity for maintaining physical and psychological health. Future efforts within Malaysian vernacular schools should focus on context-sensitive strategies that address these specific workplace demands to promote sustainable teacher performance.

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