

# TEACHER OVERLOAD: EXPLORING IMBALANCED WORKLOAD AND ITS EFFECT ON TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

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## Abstract

Over the recent years, the problem of teacher overload has become more and more widely acknowledged as one of the significant issues in the educational facility. Imbalanced workload has also been realized with some teachers being given too many responsibilities as others have been relatively relieved. Administrative reporting, file management, clerical work, among others, are usually foisted on teaching personnel taking away precious time and energy which could be used in teaching. Consequently, the standards of teaching, planning, and interaction with the student are negatively influenced. This unprofessional distribution of work has been compounded in most learning institutions by increasing accountability pressures, large groups, and ever-changing curriculum changes. Educators are also being overburdened with non-academic activities which do not add much value to pedagogical enhancement but are very stressful and exhausting. This is leading to the decline of teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction and general professional well-being. The scenario forms a flaming challenge in the current education situation and it needs a structured review and reorganization of work load policies to provide equity, efficiency and sustainability in the teaching occupation. The current review paper examines the notion of the imbalanced workload among the teachers and its impact on teaching effectiveness, professional well-being and academic outcomes.

**Keywords:** Imbalanced, Pedagogical, Sustainability, Well-being.

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## I. Introduction

The teaching is a noble, vibrant and a complicated process involving the teacher, the learner and the curriculum, whose ultimate objective is to provide a significant and sustainable as well as progressive thought to the learner. It is a voluntary and interactive process whereby the teachers facilitate learning, develop curiosity and also enable the students to learn life-important skills.

Teaching is a reflective collaborative act which is not only the simple relay of information but also helps develop critical and liberal thinking, and maintains the ongoing interest in learning.

Teacher overload, defined as the state in which workload is perceived to exceed the available resources of time, energy, or skill (Hussain & Adeyemi, 2014; Kyriacou, 2011), has been identified as a major factor influencing the decline in teacher satisfaction and effectiveness, as well as the increase in attrition from the profession (OECD, 2020).

Although numerous studies have been conducted in this field. Workload has generally been addressed as a collective burden and attention/focus is limited to the comparison between overload on elementary school teachers' and burden on college teachers. However, given the tough and challenging circumstances in modern teachings, thorough and focussed examination of workload is badly needed irrespective of school or college teachers.

During the course of pandemic COVID-19, teachers had to quickly switch from teaching in person to teaching online very often without having enough time, training, or help from their schools. Because many did not have proper technological support or resources, their workload became even heavier as they had to learn how to use new digital tools like video call platforms, learning management systems, and online testing programs (Allen et al., 2020).

Besides teaching online classes, teachers also had to redesign their lessons for virtual learning, had challenge to keep students engaged through digital platforms, and fix technical issues on their own. To fulfil their increased responsibilities, teachers have to devote extra time to the usual scheduled work.

## **II. Unequal Distribution of Work: -**

In certain institutions, many duties are given to new teachers apart from teaching. Duties like organizing school events, handling documentation, coordinating online platform, file work or serving on various committees. Meanwhile many duties are relieved to the senior teacher or to the favored teachers.

The result is that some teachers have more work to do than others, even though expectations and contracts are the similar. This leads to burnout and resentment among overburdened staff.

# Teachers Are Burning Out on the Job

## Teachers' top sources of job-related stress

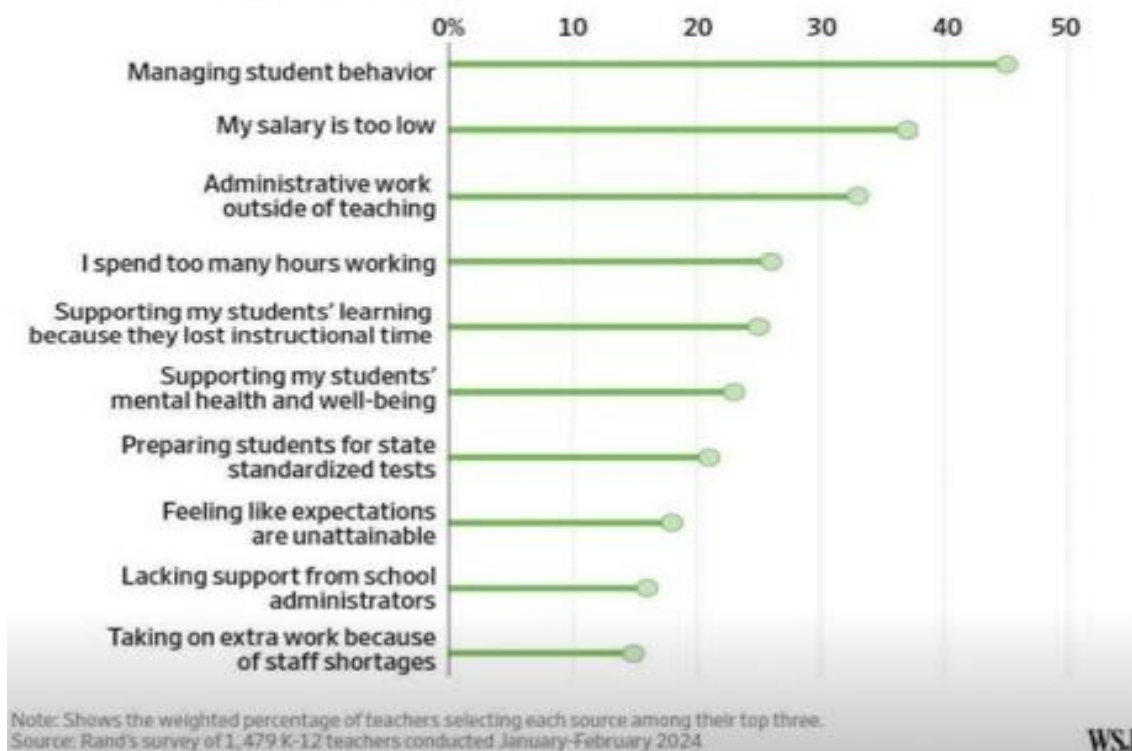


Figure 1: Teachers Top sources of stress

Source: Rand's Survey conducted in January- February 2024

### III. Impact on Teacher Morale and Teaching Quality: -

When large portion of workloads are assigned to only certain teachers, it has been reported that motivation may decrease and a feeling of exhaustion regarding teaching may occur. Quality delivery has an adverse effect on teaching as there is very little time for lecture preparation and time for updating oneself. In contrast, teachers who have less responsibility feel detached from team efforts and this reflected in their inconsistent performance. Over time, this imbalance will weaken teamwork, harm staff relationships and negatively impact students learning experiences.

#### Reasons Behind the Imbalance

Several factors have been noted as contributing to workload imbalance:

- **Cronyism/ Clique:**
- Teachers whose relationships are good with higher authority or senior teachers get less work.
- **Lack of clear role definitions:** Many schools do not provide transparent workload policies, which creates ambiguity.

- **Assumption of competence:** Hardworking teachers are often burdened with additional tasks because they are perceived as capable, further increasing their stress levels.

#### **IV. Impact on Teachers' Well-being: -**

**Stress and burnout** are seen when there is a heavy workload, such as administrative duties, clerical duties, large class sizes, extracurricular activities, maintain complete student records, and blaming teachers for mistakes in managing all of these tasks.

**Mental and physical health** - Overwork can lead to mental and physical health issues such as depression, insomnia, migraines, anxiety hypertension etc.

**Reduced job satisfaction** - Teachers who feel overburdened and unsupported have lower job satisfaction, which leads to poorer morale, higher absenteeism, and higher turnover rates.

#### **V. Impact on Teaching Quality**

**Instructional effectiveness** Instructional efficacy is sometimes lowered when excessive workloads are allocated, as less time is available for lesson planning, grading, and the creation of new or varied teaching approaches.

Feedback and student assistance are lowered when excessive tasks are imposed on teachers, making it difficult for personalized attention or timely feedback to be offered to students.

Innovation is diminished when engagement in professional development or the adoption of new technology and teaching practices is less likely to be undertaken by exhausted instructors.

#### **VI. Impact on Students**

Lower academic performance is noticed when teachers preoccupied, as a drop in instructional quality directly affects student learning results.

Decreased engagement happens in classrooms where lower excitement or energy is expressed by stressed teachers, leading to lower levels of student motivation.

Weaker teacher–student connections are created when insufficient time is provided for trust-building, mentoring, or providing emotional support due to instructors being flooded with work.

## VII Impact on the School/College and Education System

- Rising teacher turnover and workforce shortages: Persistent workload obstacles lead teachers to leave the profession, resulting in staffing shortages and institutional instability.
- Inconsistent quality is typically noted when new or substitute teachers are unable to maintain established teaching standards, consequently affecting the continuity of learning.
- A toxic school/ college culture may be established as a result of disproportionate workloads, leading to diminished staff morale, more disagreements, and reduced collaboration among colleagues.

## VIII. Possible Solutions

To alleviate teacher overload and unevenness in workload distribution, various approaches can be taken. Here are some actions that can be made to tackle the issues of teacher workload and lack of fairness in task distribution:

Firstly, there would be an annual review on workload to make certain responsibilities are assessed and shared evenly among staff members.

Additional support staff such as teaching employees and administrative staff need to be hired to relieve the pressure on teachers.

Providing teachers with training courses pertaining to time management and stress relief would allow them to deal more successfully with their workload.

There shall be adjustments in regulations where non-teaching duties have been reduced, and the school maintains adequate class sizes.

In addition, mental health care services should be made readily available through professional counselling services and wellness programs to ensure that emotional well-being of teachers is taken care adequately.

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