



Research Paper: Work Stress as a Correlate of Mental Well-being: A Study of Private School Teachers



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Abstract

Objective: The increasing demands of the teaching profession, especially in private schools, have made work-related stress a major contributor to the decline of mental well-being among teachers. Understanding the relationship between work stress and mental well-being is crucial in order to help teachers deal with this overwhelming problem. This study examined work stress as a correlate of mental well-being among private secondary school teachers, and to assess whether gender, marital status, and teaching experience moderate this relationship.

Methods: A descriptive correlational research design was adopted for this study. The target population of the study was 1,253 private school teachers and a sample of size of 424 private school teachers was utilised using stratified random sampling method. The instruments utilised for data collection are the School Teachers Job Stressor Scale (STJSS) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). Pearson correlation and hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the data.

Results: The results showed a significant negative correlation between work stress and mental well-being ($r = -0.767$, $p < 0.001$). Gender significantly moderated the relationship ($\beta = .187$, $p < 0.001$), with male teachers showing greater susceptibility. Marital status ($\beta = -0.191$, $p < 0.001$) and teaching experience ($\beta = .187$, $p < 0.001$) also significantly moderated the relationship, indicating that married and less experienced teachers were more negatively affected by work stress.

Conclusion: The study concludes that high work stress significantly diminishes the mental well-being of private school teachers, with the magnitude of this impact varying significantly across demographic variables such as gender, marital status, and years of teaching experience.

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1. Introduction

Teaching is a profession that is known globally to induce stress and lead to burnout. This is largely because the demands of the job require teachers to consistently give their best, demonstrating diligence, commitment, and dedication. Meeting these expectations can be challenging at times, which may result in significant stress. According to the World Health Organization, as cited by [Mishra and Srivastava \(2022\)](#), work-related or occupational stress occurs when individuals face work demands and pressures that exceed their skills, abilities, and knowledge, making it difficult for them to manage or cope effectively. Work stress has been known and documented to be experienced by teachers in different levels and institutions – with private school teachers encountering stress more levels of stress ([Ahmad et al., 2024](#)). The [World Health Organization \(2024\)](#) conducted a survey and reported that 15% of working-age adults were estimated to have a mental disorder. Among the teacher population, the prevalence of work stress in Europe according to the [European Commission Eurydice Report \(2021\)](#) range from 50-90%. In a study by [Desouky and Allam \(2017\)](#), the researchers reported as high as 100% prevalence of occupational stress among Egyptian teachers. In Nigeria, [Aharandu and Nwankwo \(2023\)](#) found a 50.3% prevalence rate of work stress among secondary school teachers. The presence of chronic work stress, if not effectively managed, can pose significant challenges for teachers, as evidence from previous research indicates that it is a leading contributor to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and other

long-term mental conditions ([Agyapong et al., 2022](#)).

Several factors are responsible for inducing stress on teachers with research on work stress among the general teacher population indicating that the causes of work-related stress are consistent job demands and student management ([Agai-Demjaha et al., 2015](#); [Zhao et al., 2022](#)). Researchers who have examined work-related or occupational stress among private school teachers insist that the long hours spent on teaching, learning, and extracurricular activities ([Okoro & Wali, 2020](#)), inadequate salaries received ([Agarwal et al., 2023](#)), job insecurity, and the challenge of managing disrespectful and uncooperative students ([Ahmad, 2017](#); [Singh & Rani, 2015](#)) are the major causes of occupational stress. [Onyiri et al. \(2022\)](#) also argue that inasmuch as work overload contributes to stress among individuals in the workplace, work under load can have a similar effect. When the skills and expertise of teachers are not adequately utilised, it can lead to stress, thereby impacting their mental well-being. Private school teachers in Taraba State face similar challenging work environment as their counterparts in other parts of Nigeria and the world as they are often burdened with teaching multiple subjects across different classes. In addition to their heavy workload, they contend with high expectations from parents regarding their students' academic performance. Compounding these pressures is the insecurity surrounding their jobs, which are typically not pensionable. Many of these schools also offer low salaries, meaning teachers are required to work full-time for

minimal compensation. This combination of factors can be highly stressful and may negatively impact their mental well-being.

Sharma (2017) defines mental wellbeing as a mental state in which an individual can think clearly, manage the everyday stresses of life, and sustain fulfilling relationships. Poor mental well-being has significant impact on a person's work, relationships, and overall quality of life. Ahmad et al. (2024) assert that teachers with quality mental well-being and are responsible for facilitating lessons for students in schools, have been known to deliver effective and engaging learner-centred lessons than their counterparts who do not enjoy quality mental well-being. Mental well-being is a positive condition of emotional, psychological, and social health, marked by feelings of satisfaction, resilience, and the ability to handle life's difficulties effectively (Gautam et al., 2024). It includes experiencing positive emotions, having a sense of meaning or purpose, and being able to maintain healthy relationships and participate in meaningful activities.

Previous studies have established the relationship between work stress and mental well-being with most studies asserting that work stress is linked to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, irritability, sleep disturbances and emotional exhaustion (Chen et al., 2022; Mensah, 2021). In the educational setting, especially the private school sector, teachers experiencing stress are poorly motivated, have little motivation and are less safe at their working place. Work stress and mental well-being are moderated by gender, marital status and years of

teaching experience. To better understand how moderating variables relate to work stress and mental well-being, empirical studies that have explored these variables among teachers are reviewed. Ferlis et al. (2016) investigated the effect of occupational stress on teachers' psychological well-being. The researchers sampled a total of 112 secondary school teachers from Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. The findings of this study indicated a significant effect of occupational stress on teachers' psychological well-being. Liao et al. (2023) conducted a study with 562 participants to investigate the effect of work stress on the well-being of primary and secondary school teachers in China. The researchers found that female teachers had significantly higher levels of work stress compared to male teachers. Despite the differences in stress, male and female teachers reported similar levels of overall well-being. Liang et al. (2022) explored the relationship between job-related stress and township teachers' professional well-being. A total of 24,276 township teachers in China participated in the study. The result revealed that female township teachers experience significantly higher levels of well-being compared to their male counterparts. The result also shows that well-being of teachers tends to increase with years of experience, especially in the later stages of a teaching career (36-40 years). However, early (3-5 years) and mid-career (11-15 years) teachers appear to be at greater risk for lower well-being.

Asa and Lasebikan (2016) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional design with 471 teachers to investigate their mental health of

as a result of stress and depression. Chi square was utilised for analysis and it was found that male teachers significantly experienced stress compared to female teachers. It was also discovered that being married was also associated with higher levels of stress among teachers. [Ansah-Hughes et al. \(2017\)](#) carried out a comparative study of occupational stress level among private and public sector teachers in the Techiman South Circuit using descriptive survey design and a sample of 88 respondents. The researchers found out after using chi square for data analysis that female teachers in private schools are more stressed as compared to their male colleagues.

[Anuradha et al. \(2015\)](#), in a descriptive survey study on work stress among secondary school teachers in India using 100 participants, reported that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience have higher levels of stress compared to their more experienced counterparts. The researchers also found that married teachers experience significantly higher levels of work stress than unmarried teachers. [Kavita and Hassan \(2018\)](#) compared the levels of work stress among 268 primary and secondary school teachers, using percentage and independent t-test, they found that married teachers experience significantly more stress levels compared to single (unmarried) teachers. The researchers also found that teachers with 11-15 years of experience reported higher stress compared to those with only 1-5 years of experience.

[Lavanya et al. \(2024\)](#) conducted a cross-sectional study to find out the level of

perceived stress among private school teachers in Chengalpattu District, Tamil Nadu, India. A total sample of 300 respondents was selected and the data collected was analysed using chi square. The results indicated that married private school teachers have higher stress levels compared to those who are single. The result also shows that private school teachers with more than 20 years of experience had higher stress levels than those with fewer years. [Mathew \(2023\)](#) explored occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers and found that there is no significant relationship between occupational stress and wellbeing. Descriptive survey method was utilised and 100 teachers were selected as the sample, whereas Pearson's correlation and independent t-test were used for data analysis. The result also revealed that there is no significant difference in occupational stress and wellbeing among teachers with many years of teaching experience and those with little teaching experience. In a descriptive survey to determine the mental health of private school teachers, [Premalatha \(2021\)](#) selected 154 respondents, used t-test and ANOVA for analysing the data. The researcher discovered that male and female private school teachers had poor levels of mental health. The researcher also discovered that the mental health of private school teachers did not differ based on their work experience. However, the researcher found that single teachers in private schools had better mental health than their colleagues who are married.

The body of knowledge shows that extensive research has been carried on

work/occupational stress among teachers. However, most of these studies focus on public school settings or generalised teacher populations and despite the increasing encounters of work stress by teachers, little attention has been paid to how work stress specifically correlates with the mental well-being of private school teachers. To make it even worse, few studies examined the correlation or relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers. In the same vein, fewer studies have explored demographic or moderating variables such as gender, marital status, and years of teaching experience among private school teachers in Nigeria and specifically the area of the study which is Taraba State. This therefore, represents a significant gap in literature, especially given the challenges that private school teachers in Taraba State and especially Jalingo Education Zone face. The lack of research in this area has left stones unturned in the sense that the mental well-being of private school teachers in Taraba State has been on a decline. Therefore, this study seeks to examine work stress as a correlate of mental well-being among private school teachers in Taraba State. The study formulated and tested the following hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no statistically significant correlation between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers.

H02: Gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers.

H03: Marital status does not significantly moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers.

H04: Teaching experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design, Population and Sampling

This section explains the processes involved in conducting the study. The researchers explored certain areas such as research design, area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, instruments for data collection, procedure for data collection and method of data analysis. Descriptive correlational design was adopted to measure the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of this study. The reason for selecting this type of design was because descriptive correlational studies analyse the link between variables, frequently utilising methods like correlation coefficients to characterise the degree to which changes in one variable are connected to changes in another (Gall et al., 2007).

This study was conducted in Jalingo Education Zone of Taraba State, Nigeria. This region has three local government areas namely: Jalingo, Ardo-kola and Lau LGAs. Jalingo is the capital city of Taraba State in northeastern Nigeria. As of November, 2022 the city is estimated to have around 581,000 people of different ethnicity including Mumuye, Kona, Fulfulde, Hausa and many other local languages. It is located between

latitude 8°54'N and longitude 11°22'E. Ardo-kola which is another LGA in Jalingo Education Zone has an area of 2,262 km² with its headquarters domiciled in the town of Sunkani. Lau is also one of the Local Government Areas in Jalingo Education Zone of Taraba State, Nigeria with its headquarters in the town of Lau. It has an area of 1,660 km² and shares borders with Ardo-kola, Jalingo, Yorro and Zing. The reason why the researchers selected Jalingo Education Zone as the area of the study is because the region is known for its high number of private schools and students, but low number of teachers. This has led to frequent complaints and concerns about the stressful situation of teachers and their mental well-being. The target population of this study consisted of 1,253 teachers. This population comprised of male and female private secondary school teachers from Jalingo Education Zone of Taraba State, Nigeria.

The sample size of this study was 424 private secondary school teachers. Stratified

random sampling was employed to ensure that the sample size accurately represented the demographic characteristics relevant to the moderating variables of the study which include gender (male or female), marital status (single or married), and teaching experience (0-5 years or 6-10 years). In order to implement stratified random sampling, twenty-five private secondary schools were randomly selected from the three LGAs in Jalingo Education Zone, thereafter; the entire population of the teachers in in the twenty-five schools was stratified into eight distinct strata, each representing a combination of the moderating variables. Proportional allocation was then used to determine the number of participants to be drawn from each stratum. After calculating the sample size for each stratum, the researchers used simple random sampling within each stratum to select a total sample size of 424 participants, thereby ensuring that every teacher had an equal chance of being included in the sample. The table below presents the stratified sampling distribution used in the study.

Table 1

Stratified Sampling Distribution

Stratum	Gender	Marital Status	Teaching Experience	Population	% of Total	Sample Size
1	Male	Married	0-5 years	157	12.53%	53
2	Male	Married	6-10 years	156	12.45%	53
3	Male	Single	0-5 years	157	12.53%	53
4	Male	Single	6-10 years	156	12.45%	53
5	Female	Married	0-5 years	157	12.53%	53
6	Female	Married	6-10 years	156	12.45%	53
7	Female	Single	0-5 years	157	12.53%	53
8	Female	Single	6-10 years	157	12.53%	53

2.2. Instruments

School Teachers Stressor Scale (STJSS): The original version of the STJSS was designed by Keiko et al. (2019) and comprises of 23 items used to determine the level of teachers' work stress. This version was adopted by the researchers and used in measuring stress of private school teachers. The STJSS was trial tested on 68 private secondary school teachers drawn from the population. The participants who responded to the STJSS during the trial test were not part of the respondents who participated in the main study. However, they share similar characteristics and experiences of work stress in the course of discharging their duties. The data derived from the administration of the pilot test was analysed using Cronbach's alpha index and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. Thus, the STJSS was ascertained to be reliable in the context of the study.

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12): This Questionnaire developed by Goldberg and Hillier (1979). The GHQ-12 was adopted for this research and used to measure the overall well-being of teachers. The GHQ-12 contains 12 items with an established Cronbach's reliability index of 0.77. The researchers trial tested the GHQ-12 on the 68 private secondary school teachers. The data was analysed through Cronbach's alpha index and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 was derived, thereby making the instrument reliable for data collection.

2.3 Procedure

The researchers used direct method of administration to administer copies of the STJSS and GHQ-12 to the respondents in

their respective schools. The procedure was done with the help of five research assistants who were adequately briefed on modalities related to the study. The researchers first visited each selected school and sought consent from the Managements of the schools. Thereafter, the researchers and research assistants visited each school and distributed the required numbers of the STJSS and GHQ-12 to the selected sample. The copies of the STJSS and GHQ-12 were retrieved and data from the administration was analysed. The researchers utilized inferential statistics of Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis to test the data that was collected. Pearson correlation was utilised to test H_{01} , whereas multiple regression was used in analysing H_{02} , H_{03} & H_{04} . All these null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Pearson correlation was considered as one of the statistical tools for analysing H_{01} because, it is a statistical tool that measures the degree and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. In the case of this study, it was used to test the correlation between work stress and mental well-being. The reason why the researchers utilised multiple regression for analysing H_{02} , H_{03} & H_{04} was because it assists in identifying the type and degree of correlation between the dependent variable and several predictors. The predictors which the researchers aimed to establish a relationship in this study using multiple regression are gender, marital status and teaching experience.

3. Results

Table 2

Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal.	p-value
Work Stress	424	57.41	5.646	-.767**	.001
Mental Well-being	424	24.42	6.497		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To test H_{01} , which posits that there is no statistically significant correlation between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Descriptive statistics showed that work stress had a mean of 57.41 ($SD = 5.646$) and mental well-being had a mean of 24.42 ($SD = 6.497$) among 424 private school teachers. The correlation analysis revealed a strong negative

correlation between work stress and mental well-being, $r(422) = -.767$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). This indicates that higher work stress is associated with lower mental well-being. The effect size ($r = -.767$) is large, according to Cohen’s (1988) guidelines ($|r| \geq .50$). Thus, H_{01} is rejected, as there is a statistically significant correlation between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers.

Table 3

Model Summary and ANOVA for the Moderation Analysis of Gender on the Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Model	Predictors Entered	R	R ²	F	p	SS	MS	F Overall
1	WorkStress_Centred, Gender	.816 ^a	.665	418.477	.001	11880.752	5940.376	418.477
	Residual					5976.192	14.195	
2	WorkStress_Centred, Gender, StressXGender	.827 ^b	.683	23.629	.001	12199.064	4066.355	301.857
	Residual					5657.880	13.471	

Note: $N = 424$. $R^2 =$ proportion of variance explained; Adj. $R^2 =$ Adjusted R^2 ; $\Delta R^2 =$ change in R^2 ; Gender coded as 0 = Male, 1 = Female. WorkStress_Centred is mean-centred work stress. p values reflect significance of F change and overall model. Total sum of squares = 17856.943, $df = 423$.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for the Moderation Analysis of Gender on the Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Model	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	26.208	.259		101.231	.001		
	WorkStress_Centred	-.869	.032	-.755	-26.754	.001	.998	1.002
	Gender	-3.590	.366	-.277	-9.800	.001	.998	1.002
2	(Constant)	26.170	.252		103.713	.001		
	WorkStress_Centred	-1.020	.044	-.886	-23.018	.001	.509	1.964
	Gender	-3.591	.357	-.277	-10.062	.001	.998	1.002
	StressXGender	.308	.063	.187	4.861	.001	.510	1.962

Note: Dependent variable: Mental well-being. Gender coded as 0 = Male, 1 = Female. WorkStress_Centred is mean-centred work stress. StressXGender is the interaction term. β = standardised regression coefficient; *SE* = Standard Error; *CI* = Confidence Interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; *VIF* = Variance Inflation Factor.

To test H_{02} , which posits that gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. In Step 1 as seen on Table 3, work stress (centered) and gender were entered as predictors of mental well-being. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 421) = 418.477$, $p < .001$, explaining 66.5% of the variance in mental well-being ($R^2 = .665$, adjusted $R^2 = .664$). Both work stress ($\beta = -.755$, $t(421) = -26.754$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* [-.933, -.805]) and gender ($\beta = -.277$, $t(421) = -9.800$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* [-4.310, -2.870]) were significant predictors, indicating that higher work stress was associated with lower mental well-being, and female teachers reported lower mental well-being than male teachers.

In Step 2 shown on Table 4, the interaction term (WorkStress_Centred \times Gender) was added to test for moderation. The model remained significant, $F(3, 420) = 301.857$, p

$< .001$, explaining 68.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .683$, adjusted $R^2 = .681$). The addition of the interaction term significantly improved the model, $\Delta R^2 = .018$, $F(1, 420) = 23.629$, $p < .001$. The interaction term was significant ($\beta = .187$, $t(420) = 4.861$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* [.183, .432]), suggesting that gender moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being. Specifically, the negative effect of work stress on mental well-being was weaker for female teachers compared to male teachers. Thus, H_{02} which says that gender does not moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers is rejected.

Table 5

Model Summary and ANOVA for the Moderation Analysis of Marital Status on the Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Model	Predictors Entered	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	ΔR ²	F Change	df1	df2	p	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Overall
1	WorkStress_Centred, MaritalStatus	.81	.66	.664	.66	418.47	2	421	.001	11880.75	5940.37	418.47
	Residual									5976.19	14.19	
2	WorkStress_Centred, MaritalStatus, StressXMaritalStatus	.827 ^b	.68	.681	.01	23.62	1	420	.001	12199.06	4066.35	301.85
	Residual									5657.88	13.47	

Note: *N* = 424. *R*² = proportion of variance explained; Adj. *R*² = Adjusted *R*²; Δ*R*² = change in *R*²; MaritalStatus coded as 0 = Single, 1 = Married. WorkStress_Centred is mean-centred work stress. *p* values reflect significance of *F* change and overall model. Total sum of squares = 17856.943, *df* = 423.

Table 6:

Regression Coefficients for the Moderation Analysis of Marital Status on the Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Model	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI [LL, UL]	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	22.618	.259		87.367	.001	[22.110, 23.127]		
	WorkStress_Centred	-.869	.032	-	-	.001	[-.933, -.805]	.998	1.002
	MaritalStatus	3.590	.366	-	9.800	.001	[2.870, 4.310]	.998	1.002
				.277					
2	(Constant)	22.579	.252		89.482	.001	[22.083, 23.075]		
	WorkStress_Centred	-.712	.045	-	-	.001	[-.801, -.623]	.489	2.045
				.619	15.750				
	MaritalStatus	3.591	.357	.277	10.062	.001	[2.889, 4.292]	.998	1.002
	StressXMaritalStatus	-.308	.063	-	-4.861	.001	[-.432, -.183]	.489	2.043
				.191					

Note: Dependent variable: Mental well-being. MaritalStatus coded as 0 = Single, 1 = Married. WorkStress_Centred is mean-centred work stress. StressXGender is the interaction term. *β* = standardised regression coefficient; *SE* = Standard Error; *CI* = Confidence Interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor.

To test *H*₀₃, which posits that marital status does not significantly moderate the

relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers, a

hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. In Step 1 as shown on Table 5, work stress (centered) and marital status were entered as predictors of mental well-being. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 421) = 418.477$, $p < .001$, explaining 66.5% of the variance in mental well-being ($R^2 = .665$, adjusted $R^2 = .664$). Work stress was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.755$, $t(421) = -26.754$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.933, -.805]), indicating that higher work stress was associated with lower mental well-being. Marital status was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .277$, $t(421) = 9.800$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [2.870, 4.310]), suggesting that married teachers reported higher mental well-being than single teachers.

In Step 2 shown on Table 6, the interaction term (WorkStress_Centred \times MaritalStatus)

was added to test for moderation. The model remained significant, $F(3, 420) = 301.857$, $p < .001$, explaining 68.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .683$, adjusted $R^2 = .681$). The addition of the interaction term significantly improved the model, $\Delta R^2 = .018$, $F(1, 420) = 23.629$, $p < .001$. The interaction term was significant ($\beta = -.191$, $t(420) = -4.861$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.432, -.183]), indicating that marital status moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being. Specifically, the negative effect of work stress on mental well-being was stronger for married teachers compared to single teachers. Thus, H_{03} is rejected, as marital status significantly moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers.

Table 7

Model Summary and ANOVA for the Moderation Analysis of Teaching Experience on the Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Model	Predictors Entered	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	ΔR^2	F Change	df 1	df 2	p	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Overall
1	WorkStress_Centred, TeachingExperience	.816 ^a	.665	.664	.665	418.477	2	420	.001	11880.752	5940.376	418.477
	Residual									5976.192	14.195	
2	WorkStress_Centred, TeachingExperience, StressXTeachingExperience	.827 ^b	.683	.681	.018	23.629	1	420	.001	12199.064	4066.355	301.857
	Residual									5657.880	13.471	

Note: $N = 424$. $R^2 =$ proportion of variance explained; Adj. $R^2 =$ Adjusted R^2 ; $\Delta R^2 =$ change in R^2 ; TeachingExperience coded as 0 = 0-5 years, 1 = 6-10 years. WorkStress_Centred is mean-centred work stress. p values reflect significance of F change and overall model. Total sum of squares = 17856.943, $df = 423$.

Table 8
Regression Coefficients for Hierarchical Regression on Teaching Experience Moderating the Relationship between Work Stress and Mental Well-being

Model	Predictor	B	SE	B	t	p	95% CI [LL, UL]	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	26.208	.259		101.231	.001	[25.699, 26.717]		
	WorkStress_Centred	-.869	.032	-.755	-26.754	.001	[-.933, -.805]	.998	1.002
	TeachingExperience	-3.590	.366	-.277	-9.800	.001	[-4.310, -2.870]	.998	1.002
2	(Constant)	26.170	.252		103.713	.001	[25.674, 26.666]		
	WorkStress_Centred	-1.020	.044	-.886	-23.018	.001	[-1.107, -.932]	.509	1.964
	TeachingExperience	-3.591	.357	-.277	-10.062	.001	[-4.292, -2.899]	.998	1.002
	StressX TeachingExperience	.308	.063	.187	4.861	.001	[.183, .432]	.510	1.962

Note: Dependent variable: Mental well-being. TeachingExperience coded as 0 = 0-5 years, 1 = 6-10 years. WorkStress_Centred is mean-centred work stress. StressXGender is the interaction term. β = standardised regression coefficient; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor.

To test H_{04} , which posits that teaching experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. In Step 1 as shown on Table 7, work stress (centered) and teaching experience were entered as predictors of mental well-being. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 421) = 418.477$, $p < .001$, explaining 66.5% of the variance in mental well-being ($R^2 = .665$,

adjusted $R^2 = .664$). Work stress was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.755$, $t(421) = -26.754$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.933, -.805]), indicating that higher work stress was associated with lower mental well-being. Teaching experience was also a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.277$, $t(421) = -9.800$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-4.310, -2.870]), suggesting that teachers with less experience reported lower mental well-being.

In Step 2 shown on Table 8, the interaction term (WorkStress_Centred ×

TeachingExperience) was added to test for moderation. The model remained significant, $F(3, 420) = 301.857, p < .001$, explaining 68.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .683$, adjusted $R^2 = .681$). The addition of the interaction term significantly improved the model, $\Delta R^2 = .018, F(1, 420) = 23.629, p < .001$. The interaction term was significant ($\beta = .187, t(420) = 4.861, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.183, .432]$), indicating that teaching experience moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being. Specifically, the negative effect of work stress on mental well-being was weaker for teachers with less teaching experience. Thus, H_{04} which says that teaching experience does not moderate the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers is rejected.

4. Discussion

This study investigated work stress as a correlate of mental well-being among private school teachers. The findings have clarified the hypotheses that were formulated and have given clarity on the issues at hand. The first finding indicates that there is significant negative correlation between work stress and mental well-being, implying that higher levels of work stress are associated with lower levels of mental well-being among private school teachers. This finding agrees with finding by [Ferlis et al. \(2016\)](#) who found that occupational stress has significant effect on teachers' psychological well-being. Teachers, whether they work in a private or public sector are prone to stress and this stress results in low mental and psychological well-being. This finding is also consistent with previous research by [Chen et al. \(2022\)](#) and

[Mensah \(2021\)](#), who reported that work stress contributes to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion among teachers and educators. As shown in previous studies, the high prevalence of work stress could be the reason for the decline in mental well-being that was observed in this study. The finding, however, disagrees with finding by [Mathew \(2023\)](#) as the researcher reported in his study that occupational/work stress does not have significant relationship with well-being among teachers.

The second finding indicates that gender significantly moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers. Specifically, the negative effect of work stress on mental well-being was weaker for female teachers than for male teachers. This finding contrasts with some studies, such as [Liao et al. \(2023\)](#), which found higher work stress among female teachers but similar well-being levels across genders. The finding also contrasts [Ansah-Hughes et al. \(2017\)](#) as the compared the stress levels of private school teachers and reported that female teachers are more stressed as compared to their male colleagues. In the aspect of mental well-being, the male participants of this study reported lower levels, while the female participants have a slightly higher level of mental well-being. This current finding aligns with [Liang et al. \(2022\)](#), who reported higher professional well-being among female township teachers in China. The weaker effect of work stress on female teachers in this study reflects the resilience of women that they have developed over the years by

managing multiple roles such as teaching and domestic responsibilities.

The third finding shows that marital status moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers, with the negative effect of work stress being stronger for married teachers than for single teachers. This finding supports studies by [Anuradha et al. \(2015\)](#), [Asa and Lasebikan \(2016\)](#), [Kavita and Hassan \(2018\)](#), and [Lavanya et al. \(2024\)](#), which reported higher work stress levels among married teachers due to additional familial responsibilities. In Taraba State, married teachers, particularly those in private schools, may face increased financial pressures due to low salaries which are not enough to cater for their personal and family needs. This implies that family and teaching responsibilities may trigger their work stress levels, thereby negatively affecting their mental well-being. However, this finding contrasts with [Premalatha \(2021\)](#), who found better mental health among single private school teachers. The stronger effect of work stress on mental well-being for married teachers in the present study may reflect the burden associated with work and family obligations, leading to a reduction in the teachers' abilities to cope with occupational stress.

The fourth finding shows that teaching experience moderates the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers, with the negative effect of work stress being weaker for teachers with less experience than for those with more experience. This

corroborates with [Anuradha et al. \(2015\)](#), who reported lower stress among more experienced teachers, a prominent reason being that these teachers have adapted to the demands of their job. The finding, however, contrasts with [Lavanya et al. \(2024\)](#), who found higher stress among teachers with over 20 years of experience, [Kavita and Hassan \(2018\)](#) who found higher levels of work stress among teachers with 11-15 years of experience, and [Mathew \(2023\)](#) who reported no significant relationship between experience and stress. The finding also shows that even though teachers with more years of experience have lower stress levels, they also have significant declines in their mental well-being, implying that experience and adapting to job demands does not guarantee resilience.

These findings imply that the issues of work stress and mental well-being of private school teachers in Taraba State should not be taken lightly, and that employers, employees and educational policymakers should urgently address work stressors such as low salaries, long hours, and job insecurity. This study, though successfully carried out, is not devoid of certain limitations. One limitation of this study is the exclusive focus on private secondary school teachers, excluding those in private primary schools. This restriction limits the generalizability of the findings, as it does not capture the experiences of teachers at the primary level. Future research should consider including teachers from private primary schools across the state to enhance the applicability and relevance of the findings, particularly in relation to studies on work-related stress and mental well-being. Another limitation of this study is the

relatively small sample size, with only 420 private school teachers selected, which may not be sufficient for broad generalizations. Additionally, the study was limited to just three out of the sixteen local government areas in Taraba State. To improve the generalizability of future findings, subsequent studies should consider including a larger sample size and expanding the scope to cover all local government areas in the state or even extend to other states across the country. A larger sample size will give more clarity and provide appropriate understanding of the situation of private school teachers with regards to work stress and mental well-being.

Another limitation of the study is that it did not consider work stress in relation to the specific subjects taught by teachers. The study overlooked the possibility that certain subjects may be more demanding than others, potentially contributing to varying levels of stress and affecting teachers' mental well-being differently. Future research should investigate the influence of subject specialization on work-related stress, as this may serve as an eye opener into the specific challenges faced by teachers across different academic disciplines. Although the study considered years of experience among private school teachers, it did not examine their levels of work stress and mental well-being in relation to their academic qualifications. Teachers may experience varying levels of stress depending on their qualifications, as higher qualifications may come with additional responsibilities or expectations. Future studies should investigate how academic qualifications

influence work stress and mental well-being so as to understand the factors contributing to the work or occupational stress of teachers in private schools.

The age of respondents was not considered as a variable in this study. This omission limits the ability to assess whether age plays a role in influencing work-related stress and mental well-being. Future studies should include age as a moderator variable in the study of work stress and mental well-being as different age groups may experience and respond to stress differently due to varying levels of experience, resilience, or personal circumstances. This study focused solely on the relationship between work stress and mental well-being, without examining how these factors may affect job performance or job satisfaction. Future research could explore the influence of work stress and mental well-being on the job performance or job satisfaction of private school teachers. Such investigations would add to the body of knowledge on how psychological factors impact teachers' effectiveness and overall productivity in their place of work.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated work stress as a correlate of mental well-being among private school teachers in Taraba State, and found that a strong negative correlation between work stress and mental well-being among private school teachers in Taraba State exists, with gender, marital status, and teaching experience significantly moderating this relationship.

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Conflict of interest

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