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Role of Family Structure and Education Level in Work-Related Rumination among Private School Teachers

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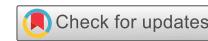✉ iram.naz@uog.edu.pk

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Abstract: This research examined the impact of family structure and education level on work-related rumination among teachers of private schools. 200 full-time teachers were enrolled in various private schools. The findings revealed a strong variation in rumination according to the family structures. The rumination was high in teachers who live in nuclear families (M = 41.53, SD = 5.15) compared to those who live in joint families (M = 39.89, SD = 3.71). The test given by Levene showed an unequal variance, and the adjusted t-test showed that there is a significant difference, t (196.59) = 2.62, p =.010, mean difference of 1.64. Work-related rumination also had a prominent influence on education level. The highest scores were observed in the group of teachers with intermediate qualifications (M = 41.76, SD = 4.72), followed by teachers with bachelor's degrees (M = 40.37, SD = 4.41), and finally master's degree teachers (M = 38.47, SD = 4.47). One-way ANOVA showed a significant overall effect, F (2,197) = 4.55, p =.012. The results of Tukey HSD revealed that only the intermediate vs. master comparison was significant (Mean difference = 3.28, p =.019). These results imply that family support and educational levels can have a weak impact on the propensity of teachers to ruminate about work during non-work time, which implies the necessity to create supportive family conditions and the chances of professional development.

Keywords: Work-Related Rumination, Family Structure, Education Level, Private School Teachers, Teacher Well-Being

Introduction

The work of the teachers in the private educational institutions is organised in unique structures that influence the psychological experience of the teachers in the most significant way. The private schools operate with a lot of freedom in terms of employment practice, performance expectation and institutional policies, unlike the public schools that operate under standardised regulations and collective bargaining agreements (Chubb & Moe, 1990). This freedom gives the teachers opportunities and vulnerabilities. Some of the private schools provide enabling conditions in which teachers develop professionally, but others place high-stress conditions, which are typified by heavy workloads, competition, and unstable employment terms (Ingersoll, 2001).

The teachers working in private schools are often the subject of increased accountability pressure due to the parents who pay the fees and who have high expectations towards the results of learning and individual attention (Bosetti, 2004). Such expectations are converted into longer working hours, extra duties outside classroom teaching and full-time accessibility to communicate with parents. Also, in private institutions, the focus is usually on the reputation of the institution, and thus, the teachers are pressured to deliver positive results that can make the school more marketable (Ball, 2003). The presence of such conditions preconditions the work-related rumination because teachers bring the cognitive loads of unsolved issues, unmet expectations, and expectations into their personal time.

A number of factors may alter their functioning; here, work-related rumination will be studied in private school teachers.

Work-related Rumination

Work-related rumination, which is the constant and intrusive thinking about work-related problems of the job outside of the workplace (Cropley & Zijlstra, 2011), has been associated with numerous adverse consequences, including reduced well-being, job satisfaction, and work-life balance among teachers in the private schools (Querstret & Cropley, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Influencing Factors of Rumination at Workplace
Workload and Job Demands

Workload is always predicted to be high, and rumination is high. Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) have discovered that employees who experience too much pressure have difficulty in mentally disengaging from work, which continues to perpetuate negative thought processes. Further, Brosschot et al. (2006) showed that long-term high demands related to cognitive activity prolong the physiological stress responses outside working hours.

Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

The lack of job satisfaction is associated with increased rumination (Frone, 2015). Poor work conditions that are not psychologically safe also worsen persistent negative thinking. Perceived organisational support is a protective factor; employees who have a sense of being valued have less affective rumination (Kinnunen et al., 2017). Also, job expectations and role ambiguity are unclear, which leads to ruminative thinking patterns (Bowling et al., 2015).

Interpersonal Factors

Negative cognitions are caused by conflicts with colleagues or even supervisors. Affective rumination is aggravated by poor workplace relationships, especially in non-work hours (Cropley et al., 2015). Workplace incivility encourages negative thought processes, whereas social support by coworkers is a buffer against rumination (Demsky et al., 2019). The type of leadership is also important; abusive supervision has a huge effect on increasing the employee rumination levels (Tepper, 2007).

Personal and Coping Factors

Work-related rumination is enhanced by personal life stressors and less effective coping strategies. People who do not manage their time well get more overwhelmed, which increases their ruminative tendencies (Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah, 2017). The personality traits are also involved; neuroticism is positively related to workplace rumination, and mindfulness practices lower it (Hulsheger et al., 2014). Workers who do not have any skills of boundary management between work and personal life are those who are highly ruminative (Park et al., 2011).

Consequences of Rumination

What the study demonstrates is that stress is the source of rumination, as well as demonstrating that rumination may negatively affect the future state of health, such as sleep, which causes exhaustion, burnout, mental health problems, and lowered well-being. (Turktorun et al., 2020). There have been links between work-related rumination and reduced well-being, depressive symptoms and a lower capacity to switch to non-work activities during non-work hours in studies on teachers. (Wu et al., 2023). This can be taken up as a recent study on physical education teachers who used diary approaches and multiverse style analyses to demonstrate that professional stress facilitated rumination, which in turn increased negative emotions - leading to burnout during follow-up. That is, their model found a series of mediations, namely, stress - rumination - bad emotions - burnout. A highly recent longitudinal study of 1,067 teachers revealed that job demands (especially work pace and role conflict) influenced affective work rumination, which subsequently predicted weariness with time (Geisler et al., 2023). That study confirms the cause-and-effect relationship: Job demands - Increased rumination - Exhaustion/burnout. A second recent study suggested among

school teachers that job burnout was predicted by workplace telepressure (need to respond to work messages outside work time), and WRR moderated this relationship.

Impact on Performance and Well-being

The long-term rumination has a negative effect on different functions and the well-being of employees. A study by Querstret & Cropley (2012) has shown that continuous work-related thoughts lower the quality of sleep, decrease the ability to recover after work stress, and impair performance on the next day. The impacts cut across several areas of employee well-being. With respect to cognitive functioning, the continued negative thoughts drain resources of the mind and thus reduce the capacity to solve problems and imagination capabilities (Watkins, 2008). This mental exhaustion leads to a vicious circle where the employees become less efficient in solving the same problems they are ruminating on. Moreover, emotional rumination eliminates psychological dissociation with work, which is a crucial aspect of mental recovery. Employees who are unable to psychologically dissociate experience a much higher risk of burnout and emotional depletion (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). This burnout builds up in the long run, which has the potential to cause long-term mental health impacts.

In addition to psychological impacts, the long-term rumination has physical health effects that can be measured. Cropley et al. (2015) discovered that work-related rumination raises evening cortisol concentrations and cardiovascular load, which leads to the risk of hypertension and heart disease. These physiological behaviours show how the mental patterns are converted to physical damage. Moreover, ruminating employees become less engaged in their jobs, which is manifested in low motivation and lack of commitment to the organisation (Flaxman et al., 2012). This disengagement eventually leads to an impact on productivity, job satisfaction and turnover intentions, with organisational-level implications that are not just limited to the well-being of an individual. All these results highlight the paramount significance of targeting rumination in the workplace, both at the individual and organisational levels.

Factors that could determine the tendency of an individual to ruminate at work might be the family structure and the level of education.

Family Structure Conceptualisation and Significance

Family structure can be defined as the structure and make-up of family units, and in this case, it includes many groups such as nuclear families, single-parent families, extended families, joint families and blended families (Brown, 2010). This basic demographic measure defines the day-to-day life of individuals, the level of resources, the system of support and the psychological functioning in the various aspects of life (Amato, 2010). The family structure is known to affect role expectation, caregiving duties, economic conditions and also interpersonal relationships that altogether form the environment in which people have to manage both professional and personal expectations (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). The concept of family structure involves focusing on the compositional aspects, which address the issue of who constitutes the household, as well as functional aspects, which address the way family members communicate with each other, sustain each other and share duties (Demo & Cox, 2000).

The modern society consists of more diverse family structures due to the evolution of the demographic, cultural, and social aspects (Cherlin, 2010). Nuclear families consisting of two parents and their children are one of the structural forms, but their proportion varies depending on the cultural and historical backgrounds. Single-parent families, which are mainly run by mothers, have specific problems such as having the sole responsibility of taking care of the children, managing the home, and being the breadwinner (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The extended family patterns that include several generations and collateral relatives offer more support patterns and introduce more intricate interpersonal relations that have to be negotiated (Bengston, 2001). The culture of joint families found in most Asian and African societies places individuals into a larger kinship system where the people share common resources, make decisions in groups, and therefore have mutual obligations (Chadda & Deb, 2013). The knowledge of this diversity allows looking into the experiences that various family arrangements bring concerning work-based rumination.

Studies with a direct focus on the effects of family structure on working adults have shown a lot of implications in occupational functioning and well-being (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Workers who are integrated into positive family environments are more satisfied with their work, have reduced job stress and improved work-family balance than those who have no family support (Michel et al., 2011). Psychological non-attachment to work is made convenient through family support, which offers interest-based activities, emotional processing, and other relationship-fulfilling activities that take place during non-working time (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). On the other hand, family issues such as conflict, family instability, or excessive family demands can hamper work stress recovery and maintain work-related cognitions (Repetti &Wang, 2017). These results indicate that the family structure is likely to affect work-related rumination by removing or providing psychological resources and recovery.

Extended and joint family structures have complicated work-family relations that depend on the cultural background as well as on the particular family conditions. The extended family often becomes a work-family conflict-reducing source in the form of childcare, household and emotional support of working people in collectivist cultural backgrounds (Aycan & Eskin, 2005). Families, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other extended family can share the burden of care, and therefore the primary earners can engage in work-related tasks without the fear of neglecting work responsibilities at the expense of family responsibilities (Bengston, 2001). Nevertheless, extended family also poses other needs such as the need to take care of the elderly, support family members and attend family activities that can increase the pressure on working people (Chadda & Deb, 2013).

Teachers are one professional group where family structure is especially important due to the emotionally charged aspect of school work (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). Teaching entails a lot of emotional work where one has to manage their emotions and the emotional needs of students, which leads to depletion that increases the need to rest during non-work time (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). The presence of teachers in the supportive family structures also provides the emotional resources that help them to recover this occupational emotional work (Bakker et al., 2005).

The study on the effects of family structure on teachers, particularly, shows that the study has considerable implications for occupational functioning and well-being. Research shows that married teachers who have supportive husbands and wives report a lower level of burnout, greater job satisfaction and more psychological health than single teachers or those in conflictual relationships (Maslach et al., 2001). The work-family conflict experienced by teachers who have children is aggravated, which can strain resources and make them susceptible to occupational stress (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). But, satisfying family life can also bring meaning and perspective that shields work-related distress, indicating intricate family-work links (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Education Level

In education professions, education level presents a certain level of complexity because all teachers are highly educated, but there is a great difference in the level of educational attainment (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Educators might possess undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, doctoral degrees, or professional certification of different levels of professional training. Increased levels of teacher education are generally associated with increased knowledge in pedagogy, and increased instructional repertoires as well as professional confidence (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Education level is also of special importance among teachers because, due to the knowledge-intensive nature of the educational work, and the different qualification requirements of the different educational settings, teachers will have different qualification requirements (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Educators who have higher education levels usually have better content and pedagogical repertoire and are more familiar with educational research that informs effective practice (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These knowledge resources can boost instructional confidence, eliminating anxiety-based rumination over the effectiveness of instruction. Also, higher education could foster reflective practice skills that could allow constructive handling of classroom experiences instead of unproductive rumination (Schön, 1987). The situation in private schools can mediate the impact of the education level on teacher functioning and rumination. Academic excellence is also a priority in the private schools, and this may help bring on

teachers with higher education levels who might want to match their personal qualifications with the school requirements (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Problem-solving abilities acquired in the course of the education process could have an impact on the vulnerability to rumination through better addressing of work-related issues (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2010). Problem-solvers are effective because they examine situations in a systematic way, come up with several solution options, compare alternatives in a rational manner, and execute the solutions selected. In situations where work-related issues are involved, those who are highly motivated to solve the problems can find the solution to problems more easily, eliminating unresolved problems that keep people in rumination (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008).

Rationale of the Study

There is little research that specifically concentrates on teachers of private schools and the influences that determine their rumination. The family structure is an unexplored but fundamental variable in this respect. Educationalists who are placed in stable and supportive family set-ups tap into emotional resources that enable them to cope with stresses in the workplace. On the other hand, individuals who have to cope with complicated family experiences might not have sufficient resources to manage work-related issues. Education level should similarly be analysed because higher levels of education, as a rule, result in a greater number of problem-solving skills and strategies to address problems, which may diminish the ruminative nature.

Objectives

1. To examine the difference in work-related rumination on family structure.
2. To investigate the difference in work-related rumination on the educational qualifications of teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

The current research used a cross-sectional comparative research design.

Participant

The sample was composed of 200 full-time teachers of private schools who were chosen from different schools in Gujrat.

Sampling Technique

The current research used purposive sampling to select the participants. In purposive sampling, the researchers identify the sample participants based on certain defined characteristics that are related to the study aims (Etikan et al., 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The teachers were considered to be included in the study if they were full-time employees, at least 19 years old, had at least six months of experience teaching in the current school, and could understand the English questionnaire. Adolescents with less than six months of teaching experience and teachers with any mental and physical diagnoses were excluded.

Measures

A structured questionnaire, which included a demographic information form and Work-Related Rumination Questionnaire (WRRQ), Querstret & Cropley (2012), was used to collect data. On the demographic form, age, gender, years of teaching experience, education level, and family structure were all assessed. The WRRQ is a scale with 15 items that evaluate three subscales: Affective Rumination, Problem-Solving Rumination, and Psychological Detachment. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Very Often), and the more the rumination, the higher the score. The WRRQ has proven to be quite reliable and valid in the research of occupational stress. Family

structure was divided into nuclear, extended and other based on how family structure studies are classified. The WRRQ, as a validated tool, is extensively applied in occupational psychology and has 15 measures that consist of affective rumination, problem-solving thoughts, and psychological detachment.

Procedure

The ethical approval was given by the institutional review board before data collection. School administration granted permission and informed the participants of the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, confidentiality and their right to drop out at any point. Data gathering was done by face-to-face activities during the scheduled school sessions or via a protected Google Form link, depending on the institutional preference. The questionnaire required about 10-15 minutes for participants to fill out. All the completed surveys were verified, coded, and stored in a secure manner that boosts the confidentiality and integrity of data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 24. To investigate whether work-related rumination varied among teachers from different family structures (nuclear versus joint), an Independent Samples t-test was used, as this method compares the mean scores of two independent groups. Additionally, a One-Way ANOVA was used to assess the impact of educational level (Intermediate, Bachelor's, and Master's) on work-related rumination, as it facilitates comparisons across more than two groups simultaneously.

Results

Results suggested that family structure and education level substantially differ across work-related rumination.

Table 1

Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Work-Related Rumination Scores across Family Structure (N = 200)

Family Structure	N	M	SD
Nuclear	112	41.53	5.15
Joint	88	39.89	3.71

Table 2

Independent Samples t-Test for Work-Related Rumination by Family Structure

Test	F	p	T	df	P	Mean Difference	95% CI for Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	8.93	.003	2.52	198	.013	1.64	[0.36, 2.92]
Equal variances not assumed	—	—	2.62	196.59	.010	1.64	[0.41, 2.88]

Note: Levene's test for equality of variances was significant, $F(1,198) = 8.93$, $p = .003$; therefore, the "equal variances not assumed" row is reported $p < .05$.

The Levene test was important as $F (1,198) = 8.93$, $p =.003$, indicating that the variances are not assumed to be the same; thus, the interpretation must be based on the row that does not assume the same variances. Based on that finding, the independent samples t-test of teachers in nuclear and joint families revealed a statistically significant difference in work-related rumination, $t(196.59) = 2.62$, $p =.010$. The average difference was 1.64 with a 95 per cent confidence interval of 0.41 to 2.88, which shows a credible difference between groups. In particular, teachers in nuclear families (M = 41.53) rated higher on work-related rumination than teachers in joint families (M = 39.89), and it is possible to infer that family structure is correlated with the extent of teachers staying occupied with work in non-work hours.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Work-Related Rumination by Qualification Level (N = 200)

Qualification	n	M	SD	95% CI for Mean	Min	Max
Intermediate	86	41.76	4.72	[40.74, 42.77]	32	56
Bachelors	97	40.37	4.41	[39.48, 41.26]	29	54
Masters	17	38.47	4.47	[36.17, 40.77]	31	45
Total	200	40.81	4.63	[40.16, 41.45]	29	56

Table 4

One-Way ANOVA for Work-Related Rumination by Qualification Level

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	188.65	2	94.32	4.55	.012
Within Groups	4080.75	197	20.71		
Total	4269.40	199			

The descriptive data suggest a consistent pattern according to qualification levels: teachers with intermediate qualifications were the most rumination (M = 41.76, SD = 4.72), next bachelor's, and lastly master's degree teachers were the lowest rumination (M = 38.47, SD = 4.47). This tendency shows that ruminating reduces with schooling. Accordingly, a one-way ANOVA showed a significant overall effect of the qualification level on work-related rumination $F(2,197) = 4.55$, p =.012), implying that at least two educational groups differ significantly. Practically speaking, teachers of lower qualification can ruminate more due to less job security, less control over work, and fewer skills to cope with it. Teachers with higher education, and those with a master's degree in particular, can ruminate less due to their higher levels of problem-solving skills, better work conditions and more autonomy or professional competence.

Table 5

Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons for Work-Related Rumination across Qualification Levels

Comparison (I–J)	Mean Difference (I–J)	SE	P	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Intermediate vs. Bachelors	1.38	0.67	.102	−0.21	2.98
Intermediate vs. Masters	3.28	1.21	.019	0.43	6.14
Bachelors vs. Masters	1.90	1.20	.253	−0.93	4.73

This table shows that Teachers with intermediate qualifications scored substantially higher on ruminating than those with master's degrees, as this table demonstrates. Mean Difference = 3.28, p =. 019. This indicates that, compared to teachers with higher qualifications, those with lower qualifications typically ruminate more about their work. On-Significant Differences Intermediate vs. bachelors: No significant difference (p = .102) Bachelors vs. masters: No significant difference (p = .253)

Discussion

The results of the current research prove that the family structure and the education level have a significant influence on the work-related rumination of the teachers of the private school population, a population that remains under-researched in occupational health psychology. Nuclear family residing teachers face more work-related rumination, whereas teachers with less education, who are intermediate, face less work-related rumination. Previous research has mostly targeted general employees or those in the public sector (Cropley & Zijlstra, 2011; Querstret & Cropley, 2012), which restricts the generalizability of the previous studies to the private school educators, who are frequently exposed to different stressors and performance pressure (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). The current findings build on this literature by showing that teachers in nuclear families ruminate much more than those in joint families. The trend is in line with the family systems theory, which suggests that the family context affects the processing of emotions and cognitive carryover (Bowen, 1978). Joint families can provide more social support and share responsibilities, which will assist in diminishing intrusive thoughts of working outside of schooling.

The level of education also came out to play, with teachers with an intermediate level reporting the highest level of rumination and those with a Master's degree reporting the highest level. This supports the earlier arguments that higher education improves metacognitive skills and emotional control (Cropley & Zijlstra, 2011), which may enable teachers to deal with stress better. Less qualified teachers might have reduced autonomy in the workplace and fewer coping resources, which makes them more likely to revisit work-related concerns in the course of their personal time.

These results indicate that family background and educational background are significant factors that lead to cognitive stress in teachers, in addition to workplace pressures. The study bridges significant knowledge gaps by combining family-level and school-level factors into the rumination literature, which provides a more contextualised view of teacher psychological well-being.

Conclusion

The findings conclude that family structure and educational level play a significant role in determining work-related rumination among teachers at a private school.

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