



The Intensified Academy: A Pre-Post Pandemic Analysis of Workload Redistribution and Well-being Among Higher Secondary Teaching Faculty in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu

S. Shyamsundar¹, Dr. M. Uma Raman²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, St. Peter's Institute of Higher Education and Research, Avadi, Chennai – 600054, Tamil Nadu. Contact

²Professor and Head, Department of Management Studies, Rajalakshmi Engineering College, Thanda Lam, Mevalurkuppam, Tamil Nadu 602105

Abstract- The global COVID-19 pandemic catalysed an unprecedented and involuntary transition of education from traditional classrooms to digital platforms, profoundly transforming the landscape of academic labour. This dissertation examines the lasting ramifications of this transformation on both the workload and subjective well-being of higher secondary school faculty in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu a region representative of India's semi-urban educational milieu. Utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, the research commenced with the collection of quantitative data from 327 teachers through a stratified random sampling survey, which assessed multiple facets of workload (instructional, administrative, digital, emotional) alongside well-being indicators. Subsequently, qualitative insights were garnered via phenomenological interviews with 24 purposefully selected participants to elucidate their lived experiences in depth. The findings reveal a pronounced post-pandemic intensification and reconfiguration of academic labour, not only in terms of increased working hours but also through a qualitative broadening of responsibilities, encompassing digital content curation, continuous online communication heightened emotional labour. Importantly, this restructuring has significantly blurred conventional work-life boundaries, precipitating notable declines in faculty well-being and elevating the risk of burnout. Although institutions demonstrated resilience, this was often achieved at considerable personal cost to teachers, with the burden unevenly distributed along lines of gender and school type. The study ultimately contends that the post-pandemic educational milieu constitutes a regime of intensified academic workload. It advocates for urgent policy measures that extend beyond mere technological integration to holistically address the work ecology of teachers, positioning faculty well-being as a core determinant of both educational quality and sustainable institutional resilience.

Keywords- Academic labour; teacher well-being; workload intensification; post-pandemic education; mixed-methods; India; work-life boundary.



I. INTRODUCTION

Even though the educational systems have constantly adapted to the larger changes in the society, the COVID -19 pandemic is one of the few recent events that triggered a global-scale change. Rapid, in most cases unreal, shift to remote digital education disrupted the old models of face-to-face, place-based education. Although the acute crisis phase is over, and the face-to-face schooling has been restored mostly, the empirical and anecdotal data suggest that the professional reality of teachers did not go back to the pre-pandemic state. Rather, a new and more challenging ecosystem of academic labour has arisen - one that is typified by a hybridisation of past duties, and a host of digitally mediated duties. I refer to this evolving state of affairs as the graduated condition, the intensive academy, a name which justified a critical scrutiny of the sustainability of the teaching in the long-term and the hidden expenses of sustaining the continuity of education in the face of massive upheavals and even the continued existence of the teaching profession in general.

The core question that is considered in the study is the mismatch between an idealised, restricted, and sustainable teaching workload, a workload that promotes pedagogical innovation and professional renewal, and the reality of the post-pandemic, larger, diffusive, and even intrusive burdens. The ideal suggests that teachers dedicate their time, efforts, and energies to direct instruction, lesson planning and assessment within delimited contract time frames and the boundary between work and personal life is strictly observed. Practically, though, these lines seem to have been indefinitely blotted out by the introduction of digital tools brought about by the crisis. Continuous electronic interaction, development of multimedia resources, and hybrid data management, as well as augmented socio-emotional student services requirement, are only some of the roles that now are taken by teachers. Such jobs are often performed after working hours and do not lead to a fair distribution of traditional elements of workload.

Even as it has started mapping this ground by explaining the radical psychological and technological stresses of emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020; Sahi and Mishra, 2020), current technostress (Jena, 2020), and growing burnout (Sokal et al., 2020), there are still large gaps in the literature. The various studies conducted before are usually limited by methodological singularity, either quantitative breadth and lacks experiential details or limited to qualitative depth and lacks generalisability. Besides, much of the literature exists within policies in the Global North or metropolitan India, with little regard to the specifics of the situation in semi-urban and rural regions where the conditions in households, the institutions, and the digital infrastructure vary significantly (Mukhopadhyay, 2021). The idea of the pandemic as a trigger of a paradigm shift in the redistribution of academic labour is rarely conceptualized in any analysis, and little is able to use a serious comparative lens that empirically connects changes in the composition of workload with the outcome of teacher well-being.

This research problem has direct and serious implications. In the case of individual teachers and professors, the intensified academy is observed in the forms of prolonged stress, burnout, lower job satisfaction, and higher turnover, hence, depleting the human capital around which the quality of education is based. The phenomenon poses a threat to instructional excellence indirectly by limiting the ability of the teachers to be innovative and engaging in personalised interaction. On the systemic level, it threatens to further increase educational inequalities, since the effects of increased labour are not likely to be evenly distributed. The hypothesis suggested in this dissertation is that the explanation of modalities and psychosocial consequences of such redistributing of work falls under the category of social justice and professional ethics, instead of administration, issue.

In order to manage this gap, the current research conducts a district level exploration in Namakkal, TamilNadu using a sequential explanatory mixed-method design. This method goes beyond the



documentation of workload alterations, questioning the processes and effects of these alterations. Riding the research on the background of technostress and burnout, the study stands out due to its focus on the comparative pre- and post-pandemic approach, the choice of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017) as the conceptual framework, and the localization of its study to a particular and under-researched socio-geographical location. It is especially suitable the JD-R model who assume that the excessive job demands, including those, which define the heightened academy, drain the psychological resources and trigger burnout, in instances where compensatory resources are not available. In this study, the framework will be empirically tested in the post-pandemic context of the Indian higher secondary. Finally, the recommendation of a granular, contextual grounded approach is promoted to produce both academically sound and practically significant insights to inform equity-based recovery and policy responses at state and district scales.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to critically question the personality, scale, and consequences of redistribution of workload among higher secondary teaching staff in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period in the Namakkal District. Towards this objective, the paper will be organized in accordance with the following specific objectives:

1. To compare the perceived levels and composition of the workload among higher secondary teachers (in the instructional, administrative, digital, and emotional dimensions) prior to and following the pandemic on a quantitative basis.
2. To determine the association between the workload attributes after the pandemic and the key measures of subjective well-being and work burnout.
3. To qualitatively explore lived experience and experiences of teachers, insofar as they are concerned with a labour intensification, the break of work-life boundaries, and the personal and professional consequences associated with these experiences.
4. To examine the variation in the manifestation of these phenomena in major demographic subgroups, and specifically, the role of gender and type of school management (government versus private).
- 5.

This question is important on both academic and practice levels. Academically, it contributes to the sociology of work and educational policy literature by providing empirical evidence based on the Global South on how systemic crises bring about long-lasting change in professional labour. More so, it empirically examines and possibly broadens the suitability of the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model in a non-western, publicly-serving, education setting. In practical terms, the research findings will be used to guide educational administrators and policymakers in the state of Tamil Nadu and similar areas. With the aim of shaping the desired support mechanisms, rationalised systems of work allocation and well-being programs, the research would help define the most adverse aspects of the emerging workload regime and clarify their harmful impacts, thus contributing to the creation of a more sustainable and balanced teaching profession.

The dissertation is organized as follows: After this introduction, a critical literature review provides the location of the study within the existing discussions on academic labour and well-being of educators. The following methodology chapter describes mixed-methods approach, sampling process and methods of analysis which are used. Empirical results are then presented, succeeded by a discussion that interprets the findings through the lens of the JD-R model, contrasts them with prior literature, and acknowledges the study's limitations. The concluding chapter synthesizes the principal arguments and delineates implications for policy and future research.



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital transformation of the professional practice of teachers, which was hastened to unimaginable levels by the COVID-19 pandemic, is at the intersection of multiple academic fields: the development of academic labour, the psychology of work-related stress, and sociology of professions. A critical review of the remaining literature highlights a significant progress in defining the problems of post-pandemic, but, at the same time, finds a notable lack of integrative, context-specific studies that explicitly relate discrete workload shifts to well-being outcomes in the context of local educational ecosystems.

The notion of workload intensification offers a background perspective through which this discussion can be viewed. Before the pandemic, researchers had focused on the increasing accountability regimes and accumulating administrative burdens (Ball, 2003). Empirical research developed strong links between excessive and in particular extrinsic demands with negative consequences, including stress and burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006). The pandemic, in turn, added a new dimension of intensification: digitalisation. Hodges and colleagues (2020) are especially keen to make an important distinction between carefully planned online learning and the so-called emergency remote education, which is brought by the crisis and puts under stress the instabilities and increasing demands of the latter. Sahi and Mishra (2020) reported about the acute stress induced to the teachers due to lack of digital literacy, infrastructural shortfall, and scope of institutional support during the lockdown. Although such studies were valuable in providing important information about the acute crisis stage, they mainly theorised digital integration as a passing event, not a long-lasting driver of structural change.

This has been followed by a series of studies that attempt to challenge the long-term impacts of the pandemic, which anticipates the qualitative reallocation of academic labour. The study on Indian teachers by Jena (2020) has revealed such phenomenon as technostress, or psychological stress caused by constant use of technology and the need to maintain digital competence, as a relevant phenomenon. This is not only limited to quantitative time measures but also cognitive, as well as affective burdens. International parallel studies cite constant communication as a strong stressor, and anticipations of instant digital availability increase the time constraints of work (Allen et al., 2021). This evolution can be echoed by Boundary Theory (Clark, 2000) that predicts that the work-home domain permeability was radically increased in the course of remote teaching, and the boundary erosion remained after the crisis. Greenhalgh (2020) also argues that digital platforms have created institutions of novel surveillance regimes and an always-on culture of work due to continuity. Interestingly, much of this literature is hypothetical or on comparatively homogeneous groups like university faculty hence it leaves the experiences of the secondary educators in semi-urban Indian settings relatively untested.

In terms of results, the studies have always revealed negative correlations between the changes due to a pandemic and the well-being of teachers, whereas the mechanisms are not studied thoroughly. As Sokal et al. (2020) found, the burnout rates among Canadian educators significantly increased, which the researcher attributes to workload, as well as to social isolation. In a meta-analysis of researchers worldwide, Panisoara et al. (2020) confirmed the presence of high burnout rates. Nevertheless, these studies mostly theorise the workload as a single or purely quantitative phenomenon, rarely breaking it down into the specific post-pandemic realms of digital content creation, emotional labour with stressed students, hybrid classroom control, etc., and studying the ways of varying effects on well-being. This is a major gap: it is essential to understand whether, as an example, administrative or emotional needs are more detrimental in order to develop specific interventions.

The literature is also limited in its applicability by the geographical and institutional orientations of the literature. Research particularly is disproportionately concentrated in Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) contexts. Indian scholarship tends to focus on the cities or aggregate



national information and thus ignore the regional difference (Mukhopadhyay, 2021). The specific environment of districts like Namakkal, where the heterogeneous combination of both the state and the non-state institutions, inconsistent digital coverage across the rural and urban areas, and the different socio-cultural dynamics is characteristic of these environments, are under researched. There are little comparative studies of government and private school settings, even though there are reasonable suppositions of increased digital strains on the private-sector teachers and of acute resource limitations among their governmental equivalents.

In methodological terms, there remains a dichotomy of quantitative studies that are broader and find statistical relationships, but lack the depths of explanation, and qualitative studies that are rich and situated, but cannot be generalised extensively. The result of this split is either general schematic descriptions or descriptions of single experiences. An integrative research method is justified. The Job Demands R Job Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017) is a valid analytical model that states that burnout is the result of having high job demands in the form of increased work and emotional loads without sufficient resources, including organisational support or job autonomy. Although the JD-R model has been applied to educational research, its use in the post-pandemic Indian secondary setting with a particular focus on the emergent digital and emotional job requirements is a new contribution.

In short, the literature is clear in showing that the pandemic has increased and adversely impacted the workload of teachers and general wellbeing, but it lacks that more specific, comparative analysis of how workload redistribution is represented in the local context, which demands are most pressing, and how the latter affect various subgroups differently. The current study aims to fill these critical gaps by means of a pre-post, mixed-methods based study with the JD-R model and Namakkal District as its background and area of interest. It hopes to move the conversation to a place where it documents the global trends but expounds on the localised, mechanistic, foundations of these changes thus generating knowledge that is theoretically accomplished and practically applicable to the district-level educational interests.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study followed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018), which included a quantitative stage followed by a qualitative stage aimed at explaining and placing the results of the quantitative version into perspective. The selection of this methodological framework was specifically aimed at satisfying the two main requirements of quantitatively measuring the extent and interdependence between changes in workload and well-being (Objectives 1 and 2), and still being able to afford an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the lived experience and subjective interpretation that sustains these phenomena (Objectives 3 and 4). The research was carried out in an eight-month period, that is, between January and August 2023, in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu.

Research Setting and Participants

The research focused on second secondary schools (Grades 1112) which are run by the government and the private sector in the Namakkal District. In the quantitative stage, stratified random sampling method was used. All the higher secondary schools which are registered with the district education office formed the sampling frame. Management type (government/aided and private) was first used to stratify schools, where fifteen schools under each stratum were randomly selected. In both of the selected institutions, ten or twelve teachers were randomly invited to take part, and a target sample of 350 was desired. Finally, 327 teachers responded to the survey, which translated to a response rate of 93.4 per cent. The last sample consisted of 58/per cent female and 42/per cent male teachers, 52/per cent of the government/aided schools and 48/per cent of the privately-run schools. The experience in teaching among the participants was five to thirty years.



In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling approach was used in order to determine information-rich cases among the survey cohort. Twenty four educators of the sample were chosen in order to maximize variation among such attributes as gender, school type, age, and quantitative scores on the workload and well-being indices. This strategy made it possible to have a variety of different viewpoints to provide in-depth qualitative analysis.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Quantitative Phase: Data collection was undertaken via a structured questionnaire comprising four distinct sections. Section A solicited demographic and professional background information. Section B consisted of the Workload Redistribution Scale (WRS), a 25-item instrument specifically developed and psychometrically validated for the present study through expert review and pilot administration (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). This scale utilized a 5-point Likert response format (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to assess perceived changes from the pre-pandemic period (2019) to the present (2023) across four subscales: Instructional Load (e.g., "Time spent preparing digital teaching materials"), Administrative Load, Digital Communication Load, and Emotional Labour. Section C measured well-being, employing the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (Tennant et al., 2007) and the Burnout subscale from the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). Surveys were administered both in-person and online to optimize response rates, with explicit instructions emphasizing the pre-post comparative framework.

Qualitative Phase: The semi-structured interview protocols were produced based on preliminary quantitative results. Interviews (between forty-five and seventy minutes long) investigated the following salient themes: boundary management, the subjective sense of alterations in workloads, institutional support systems, and personal coping mechanisms. All the interviews were performed in Tamil; they were audio-recorded with informed consent and then transcribed and translated to English to be analyzed.

Analyzing of Data

The analysis of the quantitative data was performed with the SPSS version 27. To summarise demographic characteristics and scale scores, descriptive statistics were used. A comparison of retrospective pre-pandemic and current post-pandemic scores regarding workload was done using paired samples t -tests. Several regression analyses were performed in order to determine which workload subscales best predicted well-being and burnout outcomes. There was also independent samples t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine differences between gender and type of school management.

The thematic analysis framework ensured by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been used to analyse qualitative data. The coding of transcripts was done using both inductive and deductive methods, the latter guided by the conceptual categories in the JD -R model, and the themes were developed in an iterative manner. Member-checking a sub-sample of the participants and peer debriefing in the research team increased the trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval of the institution was received. Informed consent was given by all the participants. The anonymity and confidentiality were observed. The participants were told that they could pull out at any time and given the contact information of the counselling services in case the discussion became distressing.



IV. FINDINGS/RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

Sample Demographics: The final sample (N=327) had a mean age of 42.3 years (SD=8.7) and mean teaching experience of 15.2 years (SD=7.4). The distribution by gender and school type is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	190	58.1
	Male	137	41.9
School Type	Government/Aided	170	52.0
	Private	157	48.0
Mean Age (Years) [SD]		42.3 [8.7]	
Mean Teaching Experience (Years) [SD]		15.2 [7.4]	

Workload Redistribution: Paired-sample t-tests revealed significant increases ($p < .001$) in all workload dimensions from the retrospective pre-pandemic assessment to the current post-pandemic period. The most pronounced increase was in Digital Communication Load (Mean Difference = 1.82, SD=0.54), followed by Emotional Labour (Mean Difference = 1.45, SD=0.61). Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Pre-Post Pandemic Comparison of Workload Dimensions (Paired Samples t-test)

Workload Dimension	Pre-Pandemic Mean (SD)	Post-Pandemic Mean (SD)	Mean Diff.	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Instructional Load	3.21 (0.67)	3.85 (0.59)	0.64	14.72	<.001	0.81
Administrative Load	3.45 (0.71)	3.90 (0.64)	0.45	10.11	<.001	0.56
Digital Comm. Load	2.88 (0.78)	4.70 (0.43)	1.82	38.54	<.001	2.13
Emotional Labour	2.95 (0.82)	4.40 (0.51)	1.45	28.93	<.001	1.60

Well-being and Burnout: The mean score on the WEMWBS was 42.3 (SD=8.1), notably below population averages suggested for the scale. The mean score on the OLBI Burnout subscale was 2.65 (SD=0.49), indicating elevated burnout levels (scores >2.5 are considered high).

Table 1. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Burnout

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	0.85	0.22		3.86	<.001	
Instructional Load	0.05	0.04	.07	1.25	.212	1.58
Administrative Load	0.03	0.04	.04	0.75	.454	1.62
Digital Comm. Load	0.15	0.03	.29	5.00	<.001	1.41



Emotional Labour	0.36	0.05	.38	7.20	<.001	1.30
<i>Note:</i> $R^2 = .37$, Adjusted $R^2 = .36$, $F(4, 322) = 47.22$, $*p^* < .001$.						

Regression Analysis: A multiple regression analysis was performed with burnout as the dependent variable and the four post-pandemic workload subscales as predictors. The model was significant ($F(4,322) = 47.22$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .37$). Emotional Labour ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) and Digital Communication Load ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$) were the strongest unique predictors of burnout. Instructional and Administrative loads were not significant unique predictors in this model.

Group Differences: Independent t-tests showed female teachers reported significantly higher post-pandemic Emotional Labour ($t=3.12$, $p=.002$) and higher burnout scores ($t=2.45$, $p=.015$) than male teachers. Teachers in private schools reported significantly higher Digital Communication Load ($t=2.89$, $p=.004$) than their government school counterparts.

Qualitative Findings:

Three principal themes emerged from the qualitative interviews, providing critical depth and context to the quantitative findings:

- **The Expectation and Boundary Erosion of Expectation:** Expectation: The school day is becoming permeable, and the temporal and spatial borders between school and home are unsuccessfully dissolved. One teacher of a single school commented that the school gate was shut at 5:30 PM, yet my WhatsApp groups have no sleep. The ubiquitous need to be responsive to both parents and students turned the digital devices and especially smartphones into digital leashes. This continuous connectivity was found as a salient stressor; this state directly correlates with high scores on Digital Communication Load found in the quantitative stage.
- **The Double Burden of Digital and Emotional Labour:** Teachers explained that digital work is somehow inextricably linked to emotional work. The designing of online teaching resources, as well as the administration of online discussion boards, required the sustained energy and positivity to be implemented, despite the state of fatigue. At the same time, the teachers also took on new roles as directly impacted responders to student anxiety and family stress which still stayed after the school shutdowns. The high scores on Emotional Labour which were registered quantitatively were summarized as one government school teacher stated that they are now teachers, tech-support, and part-time counsellors.

Institutional Pressures and the Resource Gap: The faculty in the private schools indicated direct managerial demands to maintain advanced digital content and fast communication as a market differentiation method. Contrarily, teachers in government schools focused on the resource imbalance being assigned similar digital duties without corresponding training, data allotment or hardware assistance. This institutional difference was a reflection of the quantitative result in an increased digital load in the private schools. The description they gave of their institutional settings indicated that they were rigid and lacked institutional resources such as job resources, thus contributing to the bad impact of high job demands.

These themes, in combination, demonstrate the multifaceted interaction of digitalization, emotional labour, and institutional context in developing the augmented post-pandemic work ecology of teachers.

V. DISCUSSION

This study provided strong support proving that the post-pandemic era did not just reinstate the pre-epidemic trends in terms of teacher workload in Namakkal District; on the contrary, it has radically



restructured the trends into more intensive and more pervasive regime. The results affirm that this enhancement goes beyond quantitative enrichment; it involves an immense qualitative redistribution, in which digital and affective imperatives have become dominant, destructive factors in the modern academic labour environment. These dynamics have serious implications on theoretical framework, professional practice and well-being of teachers.

First in the list of findings is the strong predictive power of the Emotional Labour and Digital Communication Load as predictors of burnout, which also extends the explanatory strength of the Job Demands -Resources (JD-R) model to the context. As opposed to the traditional approaches to teacher stress, which may focus on the number of students, the administrative load or the student behaviour, the current analysis suggests that the most demanding tasks in the post-pandemic academy are the socio-emotional and digitally mediated ones. Existence of a continuous, boundaryless communication, which is the acute job requirement, has not been effectively alleviated with the help of personal or organizational resources (e.g., communication guidelines, the policy of digital non-attachment), which results in the exhaustion of resources and increased burnout risk (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). The observation supports Allen et al. (2021) on the phenomenon of constant communication, but provides novel and regression-based evidence of the predictive salience of the same in the Indian context.

The use of Boundary Theory can be best captured in qualitative reports about the always-on expectation (Clark, 2000). The disappearance of the physical barrier symbolized by the school at the time of the pandemic has not been corrected, rather being replaced by a porous digital membrane that needs to be constantly tended to. This constant bargaining of limits cannot happen without significant cognitive and emotional expenditure, which in itself significantly compromises recovery opportunities and work-life balance, which is quite an overlooked aspect of the research that is mostly preoccupied with quantifiable work hours.

These results, where women are found to have reported higher levels of emotional labour and burnout are in line with general trends of gendered care labour (Acker, 1990). This imbalance has probably been deteriorated by the pandemic where female teachers have taken more responsibilities both professionally and even at home. Also, the fact that the teachers of the private-school show more cases of greater digital load is a manifestation of market requirements of privatization of education when parental satisfaction (often mediated by digital interaction) becomes a key performance indicator. This interaction creates a specific ecosystem of pressure, unlike the resource is bounded and administrative pressures of the government schools.

Some of the deviations of available literature are of special interest. Whereas Sokal et al. (2020) attributed workload increments, in general, to burnout, the current regression analysis indicates that the qualitative aspect of workload (as opposed to its magnitude) is the one that has the strongest effect. The instructional load, which is the main part of the teaching profession, was not a separate predictor of burnout. This contradicts the linear assumptions about the work load and stress with specific toxicity of unchecked, emotionally charged and digitally enabled demands. Moreover, although Jena (2020) focused on the technostress as the outcome of technological incompetence, the respondents in this study were even more significantly influenced by the ubiquity and unavoidability of technology in its essence.

There are some constraints that should be admitted. The pre-pandemic workload assessment was based on the self-report which was retrospective, which added the risk of recall bias. Such comparative methods are customary in the study of the sudden systemic change; however, longitudinal follow-up of the same cohort would create more substantial inferences. This study further focused on one district and hence, it was better in depth, but it could have restricted generalisability of findings to other socio-



economic and policy settings. Though the mixed-method approach is a significant strength, the qualitative sample, though heterogeneous, is not able to represent all the teacher experiences.

Future studies must be designed as longitudinal studies that need to follow the trends of workload and well-being over time. It may be informative to make comparative analyses across several districts or states in order to identify macro-level policy determinants. Also, studies ought to commence on the creation and testing of individual job resources, like digital detachment guidelines, emotional labour support programs, or administrative changes, which can offset the harmful demands, as revealed herein. Analysis of successful coping strategies on an individual and institutional level in high-stress environments may also help inform specific interventions and policy development.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to question the essence and the consequences of workload redistribution among educators in higher secondary in Namakkal District in the post-COVID-19 age. The results clearly reveal that the pandemic has been a trigger to a radical and possibly long-term escalation in academic labour. Instead of being a simple addition to the existing obligations, the data indicate that the work regime is restructured fundamentally, where the functions of digital communication and emotional labour are now taking leading (and often intrusive) roles among the classical ones of instruction and administration. Most importantly, these are the most powerful demands that predict lower well-being and more burnout, and female teachers are especially vulnerable.

The implications of these findings in the wider society are two. In theory, the research supports and further develops the Job Demands -Resources (JD-R) model by showing that in post-crisis education settings, the most prominent stressors tend to be boundary-less and emotional. Moreover, it is revealed that incorporation of Boundary Theory plays an important role in explaining the everyday processes of stress at work. Pragmatically, the research gives an interesting deeper warning to educational policy makers and institutional heads: the existing paradigm of institutional resilience, which relies on the unpaid and unlimited labour of teaching faculty, is precarious and unsustainable in nature.

In recognition of the shortcomings of retrospective self-reporting and the geographical location of the study, the research indicates some distinct paths of future research. The only way to tell whether these phenomena are stable is to conduct longitudinal studies across multiple sites to trace more general trends. Most importantly, the research agenda should now shift to include the design and empirical research on specific interventions instead of merely descriptive analysis, e.g., the introduction of the right to disconnect policies, the systematic supports of emotional labour, and total workload audits with consideration of the digital and affective aspects.

Through promoting our knowledge about academic work, this research will change the debate on the acute stage of the emergency pandemic to the long-term institutional impact of the pandemic. It shows that the intensified academy is not a momentary break, but a new and more demanding balance. To achieve the sustainability and fairness of this post-pandemic order, it is essential to consider the concept of teacher well-being as a public good, which is part of the quality and future of education per se. The urgent issue is to reinvent the post-pandemic work ecology in a manner that resources and not exhausts the human heart of the teaching profession.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

In order to overcome the unsustainably intensive character of instructional workload, we suggest a set of specific measures:



- A. Policy Actions and Administrative Actions. Introduce a Right to Disconnect: Educational authorities should issue a codified Right to Disconnect, which should include sensible limits to off-hours work and mandatory communication blackout times that will protect the work-life balance of teachers. Officially Recognize New Labour: The official workload policies must undergo a revision to include the idea of digital curation and emotional support as the two essential and measurable responsibilities that should be added to the core responsibilities so that the distribution of tasks and allocation of resources could become fairer and more effective.

Adopt Institutional Reforms: The school management should perform a digital workload audit at least once a year to optimize tools and activities. Support needs to vary: every educator will need to train on digital wellness and hybrid pedagogy, whereas the private schools will have to soften the pressure of the market and the government schools will have to be provided with specific resources to facilitate equipment and technical maintenance.

- B. Building a Professional Resilience. Give Competent Help: The approaching schools are recommended to incorporate peer -support forums and counselling access to deal with the reported emotional labour burden. Develop Collective Advocacy: Professional learning communities are to be nurtured whereby teachers can share their resource and strategies, which enables them to change the personal coping mechanisms into a collective advocacy of sustainable practices.

Future Research and Limitations

This research has a number of inherent limitations that define the contribution of this research. Past data, collected pre-pandemic, is susceptible to recall bias, and the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow the researcher to determine causes and effects between workload changes and well-being outcomes. Furthermore, the district level focus reduces outer validity especially where the regions with a variation in infrastructural capacity or policy regime are involved. The teacher-only view also reduces the contextual richness since no input is given by the administrators and parents who all create the educational environment. The longitudinal and prospective approaches are recommended to explain the causal patterns as well as enable the multi-site comparative studies that can elucidate how regional policy forms vary in their influence. Inclusion of the expanded base of stakeholders and the shift toward the evaluative trials of specific interventions, including the digital disconnection mandates, represent the unavoidable steps.

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Ethical Statement

Institutional ethics approval was obtained for this study. Informed consent was secured from all participants prior to their involvement. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time and were provided with contact information for counseling services should the discussion cause distress.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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