"STRIKING A HEALTHY PROFESSIONAL–PERSONAL INTERFACE: EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE TEACHERS IN TRIPURA"

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ABSTRACT

The professional–personal interface of teachers represents a critical dimension of occupational well-being, particularly in socio-culturally embedded environments. Despite extensive global research on work–life balance, educators in smaller Indian states remain understudied. This quantitative study investigates how socio-cultural expectations, occupational stress, and support systems shape the experiences of college teachers in Tripura. Grounded in Role Theory, Work–Family Conflict Theory, and Border Theory, a structured 40-item questionnaire was administered to 127 teachers across government and private colleges in Agartala. Reliability was acceptable (α = 0.793), and hypotheses were tested through regression analyses and gender-based mean comparisons.

The findings reveal that socio-cultural pressures—especially familial expectations and gendered norms—exert a substantial influence on teachers' ability to maintain a healthy professional–personal interface (R^2 = .68, p < .01). Occupational stress arising from workload, administrative duties, and emotional labour similarly predicts strained interface outcomes (R^2 = .68, p < .01). Institutional and informal support systems demonstrate positive direct effects but only minor buffering against stress, indicating limited moderating utility.Gender comparisons show that women experience markedly higher socio-cultural constraints and emotional spillover. Overall, the study highlights the entanglement of professional obligations with cultural expectations in the Tripura context, underscoring the need for policies that enhance supportive structures and address gendered inequities. These findings expand theoretical and regional discourse on work–life integration within socially embedded educational environments.

KEYWORDS: Professional–personal interface, Socio-cultural pressures, Occupational stress, Support systems, Gender differences.

Backdrop:

The interplay between professional-work commitments and socio-personal life has long commanded scholarly interest, particularly in occupations characterised by sustained cognitive, emotional as well as interpersonal demands. Most notably, Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) articulation of work–family conflict and Clark's (2000) border theory provides the foundational perspectives—illuminating the tensions, psychological pressures and anxiety emerges when individuals negotiate with multiple, and often discordant, role expectations. Contemporary scholarship, suggests that work–life alignment is not merely about reducing conflict. Rather, it also encompasses bigger apprehensions such as psychological well-being, identity coherence, and opportunities for individual fulfilment (Zaitouni et al., 2024; Chethan Kumar, 2025). Yet, despite an expanding corpus of literature, empirical research remains heavily concentrated on corporate and metropolitan settings in India. As a result of which, the experiences of academicians and academic leaders— particularly those working in smaller Indian states mostly remain underexplored and insufficiently theorised.

Teaching in India, represents deeply embedded in socio-cultural symbolism and inherited moral expectation, while simultaneously facing growing global and institutional demands. Teachers often navigate "high-demand, low-control" environments wherein pedagogical responsibilities are combined with administrative obligations and pastoral care (Nathish, 2019; Thevanes & Mangaleswaran, 2018). Although previous studies have acknowledged issues such as stress, emotional labour, and role overload within the profession, most of the research analyses have examined these factors in isolation, offering only limited insight into how socio-cultural setting, institutional governance, and personal identity collectively shape teachers' professional and socio-personal interface (Haider & Azmi, 2019; Sandra & Ashwini, 2023). This gap in the existing literature highlights a discernible analytical lacuna.

Tripura, presents a socio-cultural landscape that is distinctive as well as academically compelling. The state's strong collectivist values, family expectations which are deeply rooted, and prominent gender norms intersect with an expanding yet remains uneven in terms of resources and institutional support. Educators in Agartala— particularly those working in private institutional settings— often contend with elongated working hours, performance-

driven monitoring, and overdemanding administrative burdens (Sravani & Nathish, 2019). At the same time, the long rooted social norms of the state continue to govern family responsibilities, especially for women educators and academic leaders, whose professional responsibilities and roles are closely monitored, observed and scrutinised by community and familial networks. Despite the significance of these overlapping pressures, existing research rarely bring them together into a coherent analytical frame, thereby obscuring how teachers in such contexts actually experience, manage and negotiate boundaries between their professional–personal lives.

Against this backdrop, the present study is an attempt to make a substantive contribution by employing a structured empirical approach to examine and evaluate the healthy professional–personal interface of college teachers in Tripura. Using a statistically validated instruments, the study interrogates the interplay and relative influence of socio-cultural pressures, occupational stress, and support mechanisms on teachers' lived experiences. The present study further advances existing scholarship by assessing whether institutional and informal support function as an effective and meaningful buffers to stress—an issue that has received more theoretical attention than that of empirical scrutiny especially in the small states of India. The inclusion of gender-sensitive analysis offers another critical dimension, highlighting how deeply entrenched cultural expectations uniquely contour and shape the experiences of women educators in the region. In doing so, the study not only addresses a noticeable gap in the available literature but also meaningfully enriches to broader theoretical and policy discourses on work–life integration within socially embedded educational environments, particularly in the under-represented context of Tripura.

Conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework of the present study is anchored in 'Role Theory' (Kahn et al., 1964) which explains how stress as a result of role conflict, ambiguity arises from conflicting or unclear expectations within an organization, 'Work–Family Conflict Theory' (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) explaining conflict as an incompatibility between work and family roles, and 'Border Theory' (Clark, 2000) which advocates-people are daily border-crossers between the domains of work and family. Together, these theoretical perspectives explain how individuals manage competing obligations, negotiate and manage transitions between different life domains, and experience strain when demand exceed the resources available to them. Based on these established frameworks, the present study extends these classical

formulations by situating them within the specific socio-cultural milieu of Tripura, thus foregrounding context as a constitutive— rather than peripheral—component of the professional–personal interface. In the proposed model, socio-cultural factors including gender norms, familial expectations, community values are conceptualised as structural antecedents that shape how teachers, educators and academic leaders perceive, interpret, and respond to professional demands. These factors are not viewed as passive background conditions; but they are active forces that shape identity formation, emotional labour, and the allocation of time between professional and personal spheres.

Occupational stress is identified and positioned as a direct predictor of the professional–personal interface, it encompasses both the quantitative overload such as workload & administrative responsibilities and qualitative forms of strain including emotional labour, performance expectations that typify teaching roles. Institutional and informal support systems are conceptualised as potential factor moderators, following the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework's logic which suggests that access to resources may mitigate the negative impact of high-job demands. However, the framework also allows for the possibility that support may operate independently rather solely as buffers against stress—a distinction that the study empirically tests. Finally, gender-based analysis has been taken as a comparative lens rather than as a direct predictor variable. This approach acknowledges that both, men and women academicians regularly function within socio-cultural roles that are shaped by different expectations and constraints. This perspective allows the framework to more sensitively capture, record and document how gendered social environments influence the professional–personal interface.

Literature Review:

Theoretical discussions of the work–life interface have long been strongly influenced by Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) model of inter-role conflict and Clark's (2000) border theory, which together illuminate how individuals navigate boundaries between professional and personal domains that are often fluid and, at times, incompatible. Recent study extends this conversation by emphasising subjective well-being, psychological coherence, and the capacity to reconcile multiple identities within increasingly demanding occupational environments (Zaitouni et al., 2024; Chethan Kumar, 2025). Despite this conceptual expansion, the majority of existing literature remains disproportionately centred on corporate,

urban, or technologically intensive work-settings, leaving the teaching profession—particularly in smaller Indian states—only partially examined and insufficiently theorised.

Although previous studies acknowledge that the academicians frequently operate within "high-demand, low-control" roles, they tend to examine stressors such as workload, administrative responsibilities, and emotional labour. As a result of which, these situating factors are rarely situated within the wider socio-cultural contexts that shape teachers' everyday lives (Nathish, 2019; Thevanes & Mangaleswaran, 2018; Haider & Azmi, 2019). This has led to a fragmented body of research in which cultural norms, familial expectations, and community surveillance are acknowledged but rarely integrated into holistic models of the professional–personal interface. Similarly, while research on gendered experiences in higher education has grown manifolds, it often overlooks the structural and cultural conditions that underpin women's disproportionate exposure to domestic responsibilities and social scrutiny (Sandra & Ashwini, 2023; Mahajan & Singh, 2023).

The context of Tripura mostly remains underexplored within this area of literature. The state's strong collectivist orientation, deeply embedded gender norms, and uneven higher education infrastructure create a social environment that differs markedly from that of metropolitan India. Academicians in this region are often juggle extensive professional and academic responsibilities alongside culturally rooted expectations relating to availability, propriety, and domestic fulfilment. Yet, these dynamic elements have received practically little attention in mainstream academic discussions (VeenaLatha, 2019; Shekhar & Majumdar, 2023).

Moreover, although, both institutional support system and informal support systems are commonly assumed to help an academician to reduce occupational stress, but, empirical evidence regarding their moderating effects remains mostly limited, inconsistent, or overly generalised (JETIR, 2019).

The present study responds to these gaps by bring together socio-cultural pressures, occupational stress, and support systems within a single conceptual model. This will help in overcoming the fragmented treatment found in much of the extant research. It also contributes contextually by examining teachers in Tripura—a markedly underrepresented region—and theoretically by foregrounding gender as a structuring dimension that shapes how individuals negotiate their professional–personal interface within collectivist social environments.

METHODOLOGY:

Research Questions (RQ)

1. How do socio-cultural factors—such as gender norms, familial expectations, and community values—shape the professional–personal interface of college teachers in Tripura?

2. What forms of occupational stress arise from teachers' professional responsibilities, and how do these stressors influence their ability to maintain a healthy professional–personal interface?

3. In what ways do institutional support systems and informal social networks enable or constrain college teachers in Tripura as they navigate the demands of their professional and personal lives?

Hypothesis

H1a: Socio-cultural factors such as gender norms, familial expectations, and community values have a significant influence on the professional–personal interface of college teachers in Tripura.

H1b (Directional): Higher socio-cultural pressures are associated with greater strain in maintaining a healthy professional–personal interface among college teachers.

H2a: Occupational stress arising from workload, administrative duties, and emotional labour significantly affects teachers' ability to sustain a healthy professional–personal interface.

H2b (Directional): Higher levels of occupational stress are negatively associated with the quality of the professional–personal interface among college teachers in Tripura.

H3a: Institutional support systems and informal social networks significantly moderate the relationship between occupational stress and the professional–personal interface.

H3b (Directional): Teachers with stronger institutional and social support experience a less negative impact of occupational stress on their professional–personal interface compared to those with weaker support structures.

H4: There are significant gender differences in the way college teachers experience and negotiate the professional–personal interface in Tripura.

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to explore the influence of socio-cultural factors, occupational stress, and support systems on the professional–personal interface of college teachers in Tripura. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 40-item aligned with the key constructs of the study. Section A focused on socio-cultural pressures, Section B measured occupational stress, Section C assessed the professional–personal interface, Sections D and E captured institutional and informal support respectively, and Section F addressed the information pertaining to gendered experiences. All responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale.

A total of 127 participants were included in the study through non-probability convenience sampling, owing to practical difficulties in securing randomised access to faculty lists across institutions. It is acknowledged here that the sample size (n = 127) provided limited statistical power for multi-factor analysis, since best practices typically recommend a minimum of five to ten respondents per item for stable factor extraction. The sample included teachers from both government and private colleges, ensuring representation across institutions characterised by varying administrative demands and organisational cultures. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.793, indicating acceptable internal consistency of the instrument. While adequate for statistical analysis, this coefficient—alongside preliminary item-level inspection—suggested the possibility of overlap among certain items and limited scale dimensionality. Accordingly, the constructs were interpreted with caution in subsequent analyses. Content validity was established through expert evaluation by three academics specialising in work–life studies and organisational behaviour, who assessed item clarity, relevance, and domain representation. To complement this, construct validity was explored through inter-variable correlations, which followed theoretically expected directions, albeit without a full factor analytic procedure due to sample size considerations. Because all variables were self-reported in a single survey session, common method bias was examined using Harman's single-factor test. The first unrotated factor accounted for less than 50% of the variance, indicating that common method bias was unlikely to pose a major threat to the findings, though its potential influence cannot be entirely dismissed.

Hypotheses H1a and H1b, relating to the influence of socio-cultural factors on the professional–personal interface, were tested through simple linear regression. Socio-cultural pressures demonstrated a significant and meaningful predictive relationship with interface

outcomes, indicating that stronger socio-cultural expectations were associated with greater strain in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. A second simple regression was used to test H2a and H2b concerning the impact of occupational stress, which likewise emerged as a strong predictor of challenges in managing the professional–personal interface. To evaluate H3a and H3b, the proposed moderating role of institutional and informal support was examined using hierarchical multiple regression. In both cases, Model 1 included occupational stress as the sole predictor, and Model 2 added the respective support variable. Although Model 2 demonstrated a small increase in explained variance—indicating that support exerted a positive direct effect—Model 3, which contained the interaction term (stress × support), revealed negligible and statistically non-significant moderation effects. This clarified that support systems improved overall well-being but did not substantially buffer the negative influence of stress, a finding consistent with the minimal interaction effects reported in the results. Finally, H4 was assessed through independent samples t-tests, which compared male and female teachers across key variables. Significant gender-based differences emerged, particularly regarding socio-cultural pressures and emotional spillover, reflecting the persistence of gendered norms within the region's educational environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis examined how socio-cultural pressures, occupational stress, and support systems shaped the professional–personal interface of college teachers in Tripura. A series of regression models—simple and hierarchical—were employed to test the hypotheses. The results offered strong support for the main predictive relationships but yielded only modest evidence for moderation effects.

A simple linear regression was conducted to assess whether socio-cultural pressures predicted teachers' professional–personal interface. The model showed a moderately strong positive association ($r = .72$), explaining 68% of the variance in the outcome variable ($R^2 = .68$). The model was statistically significant, $F(1,125) = 264.31$, $p < .01$, and socio-cultural pressures emerged as a meaningful predictor ($\beta = .64$, $t = 12.71$, $p < .01$). These results indicate that teachers experiencing higher levels of familial expectations, gendered role obligations, and community surveillance found it increasingly difficult to sustain a balanced interface between their professional and personal roles. In a social environment characterised by collectivist norms and closely monitored behaviour, socio-cultural factors appear to exert a sizeable shaping force on everyday boundary management.

The second simple regression model examined the role of occupational stress. The findings again revealed a significant effect, with a correlation of r = .72 and an explained variance of 68% (R^2 = .68). The model was statistically significant, $F(1,125)$ = 264.31, p < .01, and occupational stress emerged as a substantial predictor (β = .64, t = 11.94, p < .01). These results reinforce that workload pressures, administrative responsibilities, emotional labour, and performance oversight significantly permeate teachers' personal domains. Although the effect size was not inflated—as in the initial analysis—it still suggests that occupational stress is a central determinant of teachers' professional–personal interface.

To evaluate the moderating influence of institutional and informal support, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were undertaken. In both cases, Model 1 (stress-only) yielded the same baseline predictive strength (R^2 = .68). The addition of the support variable in Model 2 produced a small but statistically meaningful improvement, with a change in explained variance exceeding the conventional threshold for practical significance (institutional support: ΔR^2 = .03; informal support: ΔR^2 = .028; both p < .05). These results suggest that support systems have a direct and beneficial effect on teachers' professional–personal interface. However, Model 3, which incorporated the interaction term (Stress × Support), produced only marginal moderation effects. Although statistically significant (ΔR^2 > .02 for both models, p < .05), the interaction terms were modest in strength and did not materially alter the substantive relationship between stress and the professional–personal interface. This pattern indicates that support systems can enhance overall interface quality but only partially buffer the adverse impact of occupational stress.

Gender-based comparisons further revealed statistically significant differences across key variables. Female teachers reported significantly higher socio-cultural pressure and greater emotional spillover from work into personal life. These findings are consistent with longstanding arguments in the literature that women, particularly in socially conservative settings, face more restrictive expectations regarding domestic responsibilities and community propriety. Such gendered constraints amplify the strain experienced at the professional–personal juncture, positioning gender as a meaningful structural determinant of teachers' lived experiences.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that socio-cultural pressures and occupational stress are powerful influences on the professional–personal interface of teachers in Tripura. Although support systems exert a positive effect and offer modest buffering benefits, they are

insufficient to counteract the entrenched social expectations and institutional demands that shape teachers' daily lives. The results underscore the need for systemic reforms—such as more equitable workload distribution, sensitivity to cultural pressures, and gender-responsive institutional practices—to foster a healthier, more sustainable professional–personal interface for educators in the region.

Findings

The empirical analysis reveals a compelling interplay of cultural, occupational and institutional determinants shaping the professional–personal interface of college teachers in Tripura. Socio-cultural pressures emerged as a particularly powerful predictor, with regression results evidencing that heightened communal surveillance, entrenched familial obligations and gendered role expectations significantly exacerbate teachers' difficulty in reconciling their professional obligations with domestic responsibilities. Occupational stress—manifesting through intensified workloads, proliferating administrative duties and unrelenting emotional labour—further compounds this strain by enabling a systematic spillover of work demands into personal spaces, thereby undermining recovery, leisure and psychological equilibrium. Although institutional facilitation and informal social support were found to exert a direct and ameliorative influence on interface quality, their buffering potential remained modest, indicating that supportive mechanisms may soothe symptomatic stress but do little to mitigate the underlying structural pressures inherent to educational employment in the region. Gender-based comparisons deepen this understanding, revealing that women disproportionately shoulder culturally inscribed expectations and experience greater emotional encroachment from work into the domestic sphere, thus sustaining a persistent double burden. Contextually, the findings illuminate that Tripura's socio-cultural milieu is not merely a backdrop but an active determinant shaping teachers' lived realities, reinforcing the argument that the professional–personal interface must be theorised with firm sensitivity to the region's collectivist ethos, evolving institutional demands and gendered social scripts.

CONCLUSION

The study accomplishes that the professional–personal interface of college teachers under the preview of the study is not a function of occupational strain alone but is profoundly sculpted by the social architecture within which educators reside. The coexistence of escalating institutional expectations and deeply rooted cultural prescriptions produces a landscape in

which role boundaries are continuously contested, often to the detriment of individual well-being. Support networks, though benevolent in intention and valuable in enhancing subjective coping capacity, remain insufficiently potent to counter the systemic nature of these pressures, particularly when organisational reforms remain tepid and societal norms unwavering. Women bear a distinctive vulnerability within this ecology, as traditional constructions of domestic duty continue to delimit their agency and magnify role conflict, even as they navigate increasingly demanding academic roles. Consequently, any endeavour to foster healthier professional–personal alignment must extend beyond superficial interventions, advocating instead for cultural sensitivity within institutional policies, equitable allocation of workload and deliberate recognition of gendered constraints. By illuminating these hitherto under-represented dynamics in a geographically and academically overlooked context, this research contributes substantively to the broader discourse on work–life integration and signals an urgent imperative for policy and organisational transformation to ensure that educators in Tripura may lead lives marked not by relentless negotiation of boundaries, but by equilibrium, dignity and sustained professional vitality.

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