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## IDENTIFICATION OF WORK STRESS CAUSAL FACTORS IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

High levels of work stress and job burnout among educators have become a global concern, particularly for Vocational High School (SMK) / Vocational Teachers who face dual demands. The fundamental issue underlying this phenomenon is the need for a comprehensive identification of the factors that drive the emergence of work stress in vocational teachers, to allow for the design of effective and targeted interventions. The objective of this study is to systematically identify and synthesize the main causal factors of work stress in Vocational High School / Vocational Teachers based on a review of scientific literature published between 2020 – 2025. By employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, 14 journal articles focusing on work stress and burnout in vocational teachers were analyzed. Qualitative and quantitative data were extracted from the research findings and subsequently analyzed thematically. The results of the thematic analysis indicate that the causes of stress are predominantly driven by high job demands, including workload and classroom demands. Organizational factors, such as administrative pressure and inappropriate leadership, were found to be strong predictors affecting job satisfaction. Furthermore, a lack of social support, poor working conditions, and policy changes also contribute. The consequences of work stress include a decline in Quality of Work Life (QWL), reduced performance, and an increase in intention to quit teaching. Interventions should be directed toward reducing administrative burdens and strengthening individual resources, such as resilience.

**KEYWORDS:** Work Stress, Vocational High School Teachers, Vocational Teachers, Job Burnout, Systematic Literature Review (SLR).

## INTRODUCTION

Work stress among teachers is a crucial, globally recognized issue that significantly affects the quality of instruction and professional well-being. Within the context of vocational education or Vocational High Schools (SMK), this problem becomes more complex. Vocational teachers bear dual demands: not only the transfer of academic knowledge but also the development of practical technical skills, which makes their role unique and highly vulnerable to pressure. Various studies have confirmed that vocational educators experience significant stress levels.

### **The Empirical and Theoretical Gaps**

Despite the acknowledgment of high stress levels in SMK teachers which has led to numerous studies, the findings regarding its causal factors remain fragmented and scattered. Existing literature originates from diverse regions—ranging from China, Brazil, and Thailand to Indonesia—with differing focuses. Some studies highlight workload and classroom demands, while others emphasize organizational factors such as leadership and the working environment. This fragmentation creates an empirical gap due to the lack of a systematic and integrated synthesis that collectively evaluates these findings within the 2020-2025 timeframe. Without a comprehensive review, it is difficult to accurately distinguish between factors that constitute fundamental, shared challenges in the vocational teaching profession and those that are specific to certain geographical or methodological research contexts. Therefore, an SLR is necessary to integrate these heterogeneous findings and identify the hierarchy of dominant factors.

Theoretically, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is often used to analyze work stress. However, in the SMK context, more specific determinants of stress emerge that may not be fully captured within that traditional framework. For instance, one study identified that administrative pressure was the most decisive factor influencing job satisfaction among vocational teachers. Another study on young vocational teachers focused on the role of psychological capital and socio-cognitive factors as determinants of burnout. The theoretical gap lies in the absence of a systematic review to validate or expand existing work stress models to fit the complexity of the SMK teacher work environment.

### **Urgency of the Study**

This research holds high urgency because unmanaged work stress has negative and systemic impacts on the quality of education. Work stress has been proven to negatively affect teacher performance and Quality of Work Life (QWL). The most serious impact is stress leading to burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion. Burnout is a strong predictor of intention to

quit teaching. Prolonged work stress ultimately threatens the stability and quality of human resources within the vocational education system.

This urgency is reinforced by the emergence of new contextual factors within the reviewed period (2020–2025), notably the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Studies showed that teachers experienced high stress levels related to autonomy, role control, and the working environment. Furthermore, specific groups, such as teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience, were found to have lower resilience scores, making them a vulnerable group. An updated synthesis is vital to inform stress management strategies that are relevant to current dynamics and vulnerable populations.

To address the empirical gap (fragmentation) and the theoretical gap (model validation), a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach is required. This method is chosen because it allows for the systematic and objective collection, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence from various primary studies, thus yielding more valid and evidence-based results. The SLR will provide a clear overview of the most dominant and recurring themes of stress causal factors across different contexts.

Based on the background, gaps, and urgency described, this study aims to systematically identify, categorize, and synthesize the dominant causal factors of work stress in Vocational High School / Vocational Teachers published in the scientific literature between 2020 and 2025. This research is summarized in the following single research question:

### **Research Question**

"What are the main factors identified by the scientific literature (2020 – 2025) as causes of work stress and/or burnout in Vocational High School (SMK) / Vocational Teachers?"

### **Methods**

This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, referencing the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. This systematic method was conducted to identify, evaluate, and synthesize all relevant scientific evidence regarding the causal factors of work stress in Vocational High School (SMK) / Vocational Teachers.

## Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for selecting articles were defined using the PICO framework adapted for SLR, focusing on the population, interest, context, and outcome.

**Table 1: Article Selection Criteria.**

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<b>Population (P)</b>	Teachers/educators working in Vocational High Schools (SMK), vocational education, or technical education.
<b>Interest (I)</b>	Causal factors of work stress, job burnout, job demands, and factors influencing the intention to quit teaching.
<b>Context (C)</b>	Relevant academic publications (journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings).
<b>Outcome (O)</b>	Identification of research results that explicitly mention stress-triggering factors, their correlation, or their impact.
<b>Time</b>	Publications between <b>2020 – 2025</b> (period focused on the latest dynamics).
<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>	Research solely discussing general/primary school teacher stress, articles where the full text is unavailable, and non-systematic narrative reviews.

## Literature Search Strategy and Databases

The literature search was conducted through three main international journal databases (Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar) and supplemented with specific searches on Google Scholar Indonesia, SciSpace, and PubMed. Both accredited national and international journals were targeted.

The search strategy utilized a combination of **Boolean keywords** (in English and Indonesian):

1. *Vocational Teacher OR SMK Teacher OR Technical Educator*
2. *AND Job Stress OR Teacher Stress OR Job Burnout OR Workload*
3. *AND Cause OR Factors OR Determinant OR Predictor*

## Initial Search Results and Selection Process

Based on the initial search results, the identification process yielded a total of 355 papers from various databases (including SciSpace Basic/Full-Text Search, Google Scholar, and PubMed). After the deduplication process, 136 unique journals passed the initial screening phase (Title and Abstract).

The subsequent selection process, involving a full-text screening (screening and eligibility stage), resulted in 14 journal articles included as the literature reviewed in this SLR study.

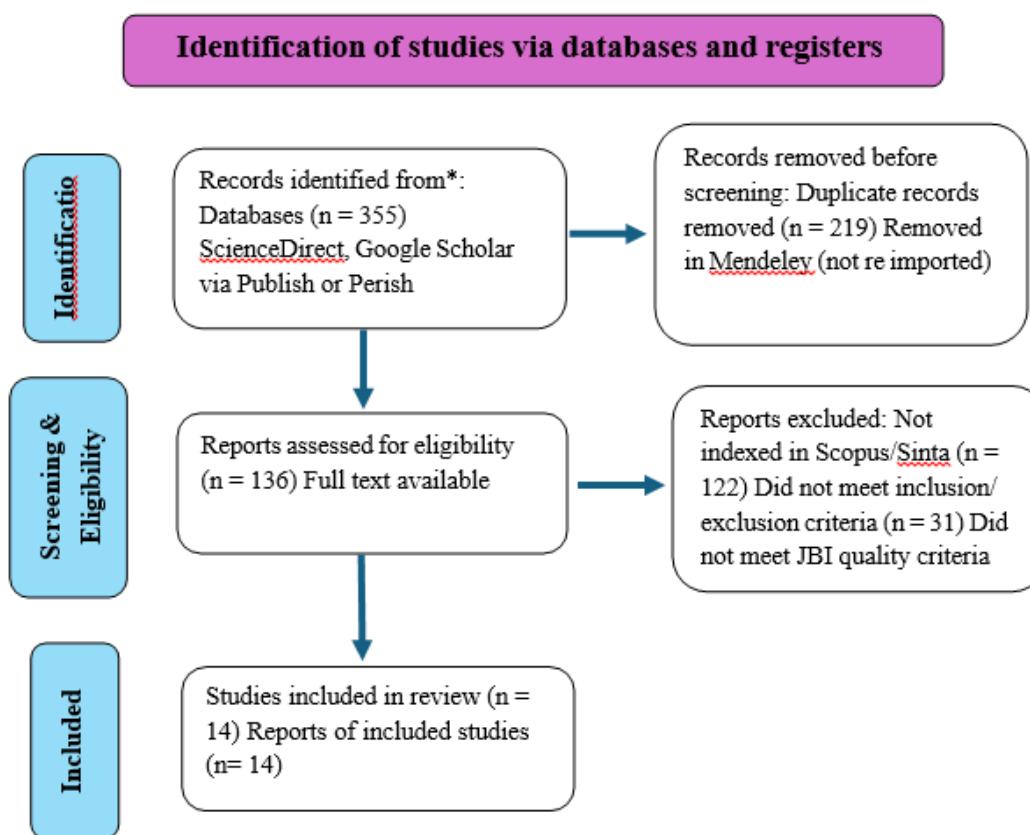
### Data Extraction and Analysis

Data was extracted from the 14 selected journal articles (2020–2025). The extracted data included: author(s) and year, research objective, number of participants, research instrument, and research findings (focusing on stress causal factors and their impact). The analysis technique employed was Qualitative Thematic Analysis to categorize the recurring and dominant stress causal factors across all reviewed research findings.

### PRISMA Flow Diagram

The literature selection process followed a simplified flow derived from the PRISMA diagram (conceptually illustrated below):

**Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram**



**Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram.**

## RESULTS

The results of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) are based on the synthesis of data from 14 relevant articles/journals/publications concerning work stress in Vocational High School

(SMK) / Vocational Teachers, covering the period 2020 – 2025.

Table 2 lists the 14 journal articles, including the author and year, the country of the study, and the key research findings.

**Table 2: Characteristics and Journal Review.**

No	Author & Year	Country of Study	Research Findings
1	S. Barnová et al., 2023	Slovakia (474)	Teachers with teaching experience < 10 years have lower resilience scores. Resilience is related to coping strategies for teacher stress.
2	S. de A. Teixeira et al., 2024	Brazil (10 campi Instituto Federal) (250)	Teachers experienced high stress levels during the pandemic. High stress was specifically linked to autonomy, role control, and the work environment. Demographic variables were also found to influence stress levels.
3	S. Wang & Z. Li, 2023	China	Key determinants of burnout in young vocational educators include psychological capital, socio-cognitive factors, perceived behavioral control, and interpersonal psychological capital.
4	T. Kärner & J. Höning, 2021	Germany (108)	Specific classroom demands experienced by teachers are associated with time-lagged autonomic stress reactions.
5	S. Preechawong et al., 2021	Thailand (510)	Job satisfaction is the strongest predictor of intention to quit. Burnout components ( <i>emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment</i> ) significantly affect the intention to quit the teaching profession.
6	Kurniasari Tripambudi et al., 2022	Indonesia (Bantul Regency) (90)	Workload has a significant effect on work stress. Work stress was found to negatively affect Quality of Work Life (QWL) and teacher performance.

7	Tri Anita, S. Tjitrosumarto, J. S. Setyohadi, 2021	Indonesia (East Jakarta) (115)	Compensation and the work environment significantly affect SMK teacher work stress during the pandemic. The combined contribution of these two variables to work stress is 38%.
8	Monika Dobiášová et al., 2025	Not specified (literature review)	A different spectrum of stressors contributes to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction in technical educators.
9	Shi Xiaodong, Dan Sabihah Binti Johan, 2024	China (Western Guangdong) (348)	SEM analysis revealed that all forms of job stress ( <i>Teaching Stress, Research Stress, and Administrative Pressure</i> ) have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction. Administrative Pressure was identified as the most decisive stress factor.
11	Nasib Tua Lumban Gaol, 2021	Indonesia (literature study)	Seven main factors causing teacher stress were found: poor student behavior, inappropriate principal leadership practices, lack of colleague support, high job demands, inadequate salary/rewards, poor working conditions, and changes in education policy.
12	Rachmat Satria, Fauzan, Al Fadil Muhammad, 2025	Not specified (literature review) (20)	Four main factors causing stress (job demands, relationships, individual factors, and external context) have a significant impact on teacher performance.
13	Syarif Zulkifli, Nur Afifah, Mustaruddin, 2024	Not specified (SLR) (10)	High job stress was found in various professions, including (and not limited to) nurses, hospitality workers, and migrant workers.
14	Belinda Agyapong et al., 2022	Multi-country (scoping review) (70)	Prevalence of clinically significant conditions varied: burnout (25.12%–74%), stress (8.3%–87.1%), anxiety (38%–41.2%), depression (4%–77%). Important correlates include socio-demographic factors, class size, teaching load, years of teaching, job satisfaction, subject taught, and administrative support.

Based on the review of 14 journal articles, a thematic analysis of the research findings identified four primary categories of stress causal factors, as well as their consequences. The most dominant causal factors of work stress in Vocational High School / Vocational Teachers were grouped into four main categories: (1) job demands (Workload), (2) organizational and leadership factors, (3) interpersonal and classroom factors, and (4) contextual and individual factors.

**Table 3: Categories of Work Stress Causal Factors.**

Main Category	Description	Sources
<b>Job Demands</b>	High workload ( <i>work overload</i> ) and high job demands were consistently identified as primary stressors. Workload was found to have a significant effect on work stress. Administrative pressure is the most decisive form of work stress and has a significant negative effect on the job satisfaction of SMK / Vocational teachers. Furthermore, classroom demands are associated with autonomous stress reactions experienced by teachers.	Shi & Johan (2024), Tripambudi et al. (2022)
<b>Organizational and Leadership</b>	Inappropriate principal leadership practices were identified as a cause of teacher stress. A lack of colleague support also contributes to stress. Poor working conditions is one factor causing teachers to experience work stress, and inadequate salary/rewards also acts as a stress trigger. Similarly, compensation and the work environment significantly affect work stress, especially during the pandemic.	Gaol (2021), Tri Anita et al. (2021)
<b>Interpersonal and Classroom</b>	Student behavior is one of the main causal factors of stress in teachers.	Agyapong et al. (2022)

<b>Contextual and Individual</b>	The Covid-19 pandemic proved to cause high stress levels among teachers, particularly related to autonomy, role control, and the work environment. In young educators, burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion influenced by determinants such as psychological capital and socio-cognitive factors. It was also found that low resilience in teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience makes them a more vulnerable group to stress.	Teixeira et al. (2024), Barnová et al. (2023)
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The work stress identified in SMK teachers has significant negative consequences on various aspects of their professional life and well-being.

**Table 4: Consequences of Work Stress.**

<b>Negative Consequence</b>	<b>Description of Research Findings</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Performance and QWL</b>	Work stress negatively affects Quality of Work Life (QWL) and teacher performance.	Kurniasari Tripambudi et al. (2022)
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	All forms of work stress (teaching, research, administrative pressure) have a significant negative effect on teacher job satisfaction.	Shi Xiaodong & Dan Sabihah Binti Johan (2024)
<b>Intention to Quit</b>	Burnout components ( <i>emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment</i> ) influence the intention to quit teaching. Job satisfaction is the strongest predictor of intention to quit.	S. Preechawong et al. (2021)
<b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>	The spectrum of stressors contributes to emotional exhaustion and a decline in job satisfaction.	Monika Dobiášová et al. (2025)

## DISCUSSION

The synthesis of the 14 journal articles (2020–2025) focused on comparing data analysis methods and core findings to identify universal commonalities within the vocational education context.

### Synthesis of Findings Based on Data Analysis Techniques

The findings in this SLR resulted from various analysis techniques, which can be grouped into two main approaches: **Quantitative (Inferential)** and **Qualitative (Descriptive)**.

**Table 5: Data Analysis Approach.**

Data Analysis Approach	Key Techniques	Primary Findings Generated
<b>Quantitative (Inferential)</b>	Multiple Regression, PLS-SEM, SEM, Pearson Correlation, <i>t</i> -test/ <i>F</i> -test	Identified causal relationships and significance: Workload and work stress negatively affect QWL/performance. Administrative pressure is the strongest negative predictor of job satisfaction. Compensation and the work environment significantly affect stress.
<b>Qualitative/Descriptive</b>	Thematic Analysis, Descriptive Analysis, Literature Review	Identified the spectrum and themes of stressors: Job demands, interpersonal relationships, inappropriate leadership, student behavior, and contextual factors as causes of stress. Measured teacher resilience levels.

The comparison of quantitative approaches (specifically SEM and regression) provided strong evidence regarding the interconnectedness and significance of organizational factors (workload, administrative pressure, compensation) with outcome variables (stress, satisfaction, performance). Meanwhile, the qualitative and literature review approaches supplemented this by identifying the spectrum and complexity of psychosocial and interpersonal factors (e.g., time-lagged stress reactions, lack of support, student behavior).

### Similarity of Findings Across Research

Although the research was conducted in various countries (Slovakia, Brazil, Germany, China, Thailand, Indonesia, etc.) and utilized diverse methodologies, there is substantial agreement on the main findings, which strengthens the hypothesis about the core stress factors for vocational teachers.

**Table 6: Similarity of Findings Across Research**

Substance	Description	Sources
<b>Dominance of Workload and Job Demands</b>	Universally, both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative studies (regression/SEM) agree that high workload ( <i>work overload</i> ) and job demands are the most prominent sources of stress. This is exacerbated by administrative pressure that burdens teachers beyond core teaching duties.	Barnová et al. (2023), Shi & Johan (2024), Tripambudi et al. (2022)
<b>Stress Linked to Burnout and Turnover</b>	There is a strong causal relationship between work stress, job burnout (emotional exhaustion), and intention to quit teaching. Job satisfaction functions as a key mediating variable or primary negative predictor of the intention to quit.	Preechawong et al. (2021), Wang & Li (2023)
<b>Influence of Environment and Social Support</b>	Environmental and interpersonal factors, such as inappropriate leadership, lack of colleague support, and poor working conditions / compensation, consistently contribute significantly to increased stress.	Gao (2021), Agyapong et al. (2022)

### Statement of Key Findings

The quantitative and qualitative synthesis from this SLR clearly addresses the research objective: identifying the dominant causal factors of work stress in SMK / Vocational Teachers (2020–2025). The key findings state that the causal factors of work stress in SMK / Vocational Teachers can be categorized into three main, interconnected clusters: (1) Core Workload Factors: Characterized by high workload and significant administrative pressure. (2) Relationship and Organizational Factors: Including lack of colleague support, inappropriate leadership, and inadequate working conditions / compensation. (3) Interaction and Individual Factors: Including classroom demands (such as student behavior) and individual variables like low resilience in teachers with less than 10 years of experience, making them more vulnerable to stress.

All these factor clusters work cumulatively, leading to serious consequences, such as decreased job satisfaction and an increased risk of the intention to quit teaching.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS CONCLUSION

The systematic literature review (SLR) of 14 journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 concludes that the professional pressure experienced by Vocational High School (SMK) / Vocational Teachers is deeply rooted in structural and organizational factors. The escalating

burden of job demands, especially those related to non-teaching duties or Administrative Pressure, proved to be the most critical determinant significantly eroding teacher job satisfaction. This erosion of well-being manifests as Job Burnout, which ultimately directly increases the probability of educators considering leaving the profession (intention to quit). Therefore, the main challenge in maintaining the stability and quality of teaching in SMK is the management of organizational resources and the reduction of disproportionate job demands, supported by adaptive and supportive leadership.

### **Practical Suggestions**

Based on the identification of the dominant stress causal factors, Practical Suggestions are directed at vocational school management and policymakers (1) Workload Audit: Conduct a review and adjustment of the volume and complexity of teachers' administrative tasks to reduce the pressure proven to be most detrimental to job satisfaction. (2) Strengthening Organizational Resources: Implement training programs for school principals to develop supportive leadership practices and build strong colleague support networks in the workplace.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should focus on: (1) Investigating the effectiveness of intervention programs based on enhancing Resilience and psychological capital, specifically targeted at SMK teachers with relatively short tenures <10 who were found to be more vulnerable to stress. (2) Conducting longitudinal studies to more accurately map the causal pathway between stress, burnout, and intention to quit teaching in various geographical contexts in Indonesia.

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