

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS AMONG PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT SCHOOL TEACHERS: EXPLORING LEVELS AND VARIATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Defensive behaviour among urban educators can impact professional interactions, job satisfaction and resultantly student outcomes significantly. Thus, it is crucial to understand the factors which lead to defensive behaviour. This in turn contributes to fostering a positive work climate. Thereby, teacher wellbeing is promoted in an educational set up. This research paper aims to understand how teachers develop defense mechanisms as an adoptive strategy for their psychological protection. The study employs a qualitative research method to conduct a comparative analysis between private and government school teachers. The research employs a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The quantitative aspect comprises of a standardized questionnaire to assess the prevalence of defense mechanisms and coping strategies. Qualitative interviews reveal a rich tapestry of coping techniques. The study concludes that although urban educators demonstrate remarkable adaptability, there is a critical need for creating supportive environments to enhance their coping potential.

KEY WORDS- Defensive Behaviour, Coping Mechanism, Urban educators, Teacher wellbeing

Introduction

In this revolutionary age of teaching, learning scenario, face multitude of unique challenges which make a significant impact on their profession as well as personal lives. Distinctive challenges for teachers which range from economic disparities to cultural diversity are commonly experienced in urban educational setting. This is faced by government and private school teachers. To navigate these stressors, educators often develop defense mechanisms as adaptive strategies to protect their psychological wellbeing (**Smith and Johnson 2018**). According to **Sigmund Freud(1936)**, Defense Mechanisms operate unconsciously and serve to protect an individual from distressing emotions or thoughts. The research is an attempt to unravel the relationship that exists between urban educational stressors and the defense mechanisms adapted. The findings of the study reveal several important insights into defensive behaviour of school teachers while some dimensions of defensive behaviour showed no significant difference based on gender and school type. Others exhibited disparities. Interestingly Cognitive psychologists have uncovered the presence of unconscious processes once more. Virtually leading cognitive psychologist today accepts premise that mental processes go on outside of awareness(**Cramer P-638**).

John W. Best 2018 *The secret of our cultural development has been research, pushing back the areas of ignorance by discovering new truths, which in turn lead to better ways of doing*

things". It was ensured that the findings underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique stressors affecting urban Indian educators. Thus the basic purpose of enhancing teacher wellbeing and creating a more supportive teaching environment is met out as a form of this intellectual activity.

Objectives

- a. To identify the level of Defense Mechanisms employed by urban educators.
- b. To explore the prevalent type of Defense Mechanisms of teachers.
- c. To investigate the defensive behavior and its dimensions among teachers in private and government schools

Literature Review

Education in an urban setting is laden with unique challenges. There is a complex web of cultural diversity, socio-economic factors, and commonly occurring heightened behavioral issues. This review explores the existing literature related to Defense Mechanisms employed by teachers. Higher rates of student behaviour challenges create an atmosphere which is emotionally charged.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals employ various defense mechanisms to restore their sense of self-integrity. For instance, attributing failure to external factors such as bad luck or reducing the significance of the event (**Dave Cornell, 2024**).

We can take the perspective as imagining the human mind poised like a soldier within the human body. This embodied soldier is usually in a position to safeguard oneself from the things that may not be agreeable.

It can be said that no other things will be more important to the mind than a peaceful and calm mind. Thus, the operational system of fighting or surviving of the human mind is known as Defense Mechanisms as explained in the book "**Understanding Defense Mechanisms in Psychology**" by **Ritu (Jan 2023)**

A study on work stress among primary and secondary school teachers was conducted by **Kavita N Hasan (2018)** in the faculty of Education, Malaysia. It reported that secondary school teachers perceived more stress due to various factors as work load, time constraint, student attitude, lack of recognition and resources.

Sigmund Freud (1936) conceptualized Defense Mechanisms as unconscious strategies employed to protect the ego from distressing thoughts and emotions. Thus, in the teaching context, these mechanisms serve as adaptive strategies to shield educators from the emotional impact from urban education stressors. According to **Kyriacou (2001)**, the teaching profession is recognized as demanding and stressful. Although teaching stressors can vary, many studies have identified common sources of stress. These include encountering unmotivated students during teaching-learning activities, sudden curriculum changes, and frequent assessments and evaluations by the Department of Education. The corollary is that in order to curb stress,

teachers need to acquire abilities to restore their emotional balance, (Kyriacou 2001, Prilletsensky et al 2016).

It is to be understood that a lack of coping mechanisms may contribute to emotional exhaustion and reduced effectiveness in the classroom.

A study by Isaac Nyame, Fatima Iddresu Faculty of Education, University of Developmental Studies Ghana on A study examining perceived stress and coping mechanisms among teachers in three schools in northern Ghana found a pressing need for effective coping strategies to protect teachers' health. It recommended that incorporating a social support system into teachers' roles would be beneficial.

Methodology

To develop a road map for assessing the psychological defense mechanisms of teachers, a crafty and systematic strategy was set. The focus was narrowed down to the objectives specifically. The allocation of the collected data material served the main purpose of exploration, description and explanation of the research problems. It was ascertained that the qualities of a good research was maintained, leading to novelty, significance, technical soundness and critical assessment of existing work. The ensuing data involves coding and interpretations, contextualizing findings within existing literature on Defense Mechanisms.

Study of level of Defense Mechanism used by Secondary School Teachers

OBJECTIVE 1: To identify the level of Defense Mechanism used by Secondary School Teachers.

The DBRS Questionnaire was administered to a total of 400 secondary school teachers. Table 4.1 shows the mean and standard deviation of defense mechanism for the entire data collected. It also shows if the mean lies in the low, medium, or high category as shown below.

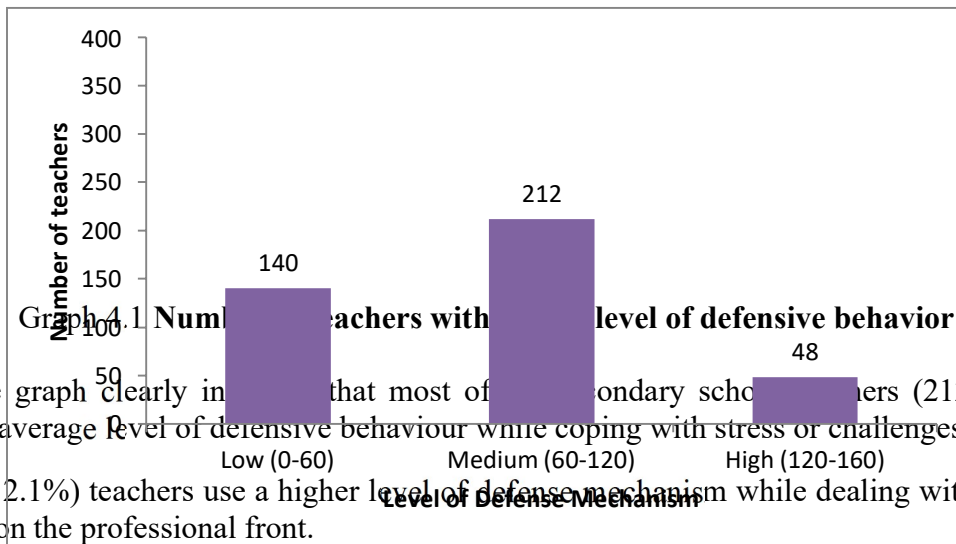
Defensive Behaviour		
N	400	
Mean	93.54	
Standard Deviation	22.26	
Levels	High	120-160
	Average	60-120
	Low	0-60

Table 1: Level of Defensive Behaviour of School Teachers

The entire dataset has been categorized into three groups based on the scores:

- **Low (0-60):** Represents teachers with lower levels of defensive behaviors. Teachers in this category are likely to handle stress and challenges in a more direct and less defensive manner.
- **Average (60-120):** Represents teachers with moderate levels of defensive behaviors. Such teachers use a mix of direct coping strategies and some defensive mechanisms to manage stress and professional challenges.
- **High (120-160):** Represents teachers with high levels of defensive behaviors. This category of teachers is likely to rely heavily on defense mechanisms, possibly due to higher stress levels or less effective coping strategies.

The overall mean score for defensive mechanisms among all school teachers is 93.54. Therefore, the data falls within the average category. This indicates that, on average, teachers exhibit a moderate level of defensive behaviors. This suggests a balanced approach to coping with stress, combining both adaptive and defensive strategies.



The above graph clearly indicates that most of the secondary school teachers (212- 53.1%) exhibit an average level of defensive behaviour while coping with stress or challenges.

Only 48 (12.1%) teachers use a higher level of defense mechanism while dealing with difficult situations on the professional front.

Study of prevalent type of defense mechanism used by Secondary School Teachers

OBJECTIVE 2: To identify the prevalent type of defense mechanism used by secondary school teachers

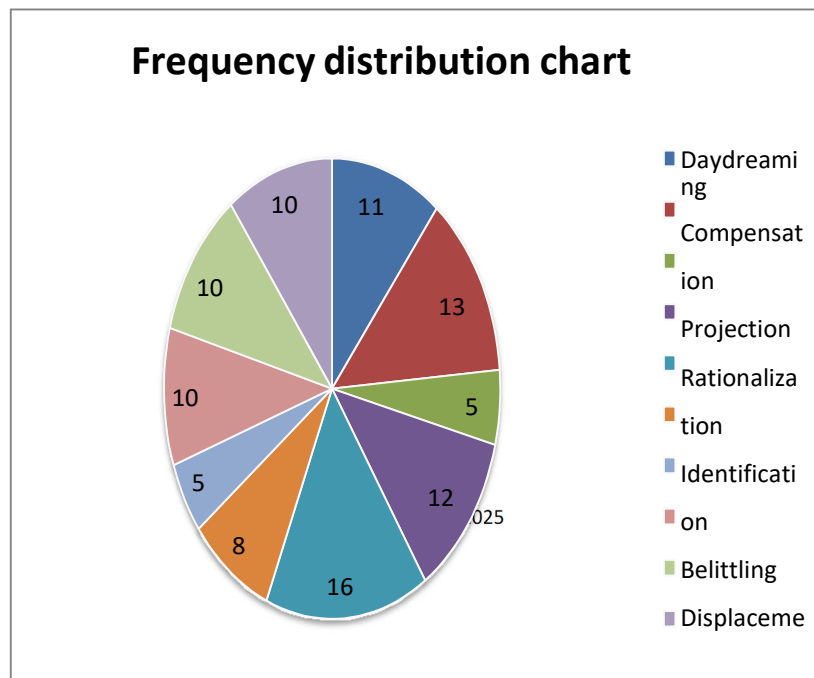
The responses of the DBRS Questionnaire were categorized into different dimensions of Defense Mechanism. The data below shows the distribution of defense mechanism across various dimensions.

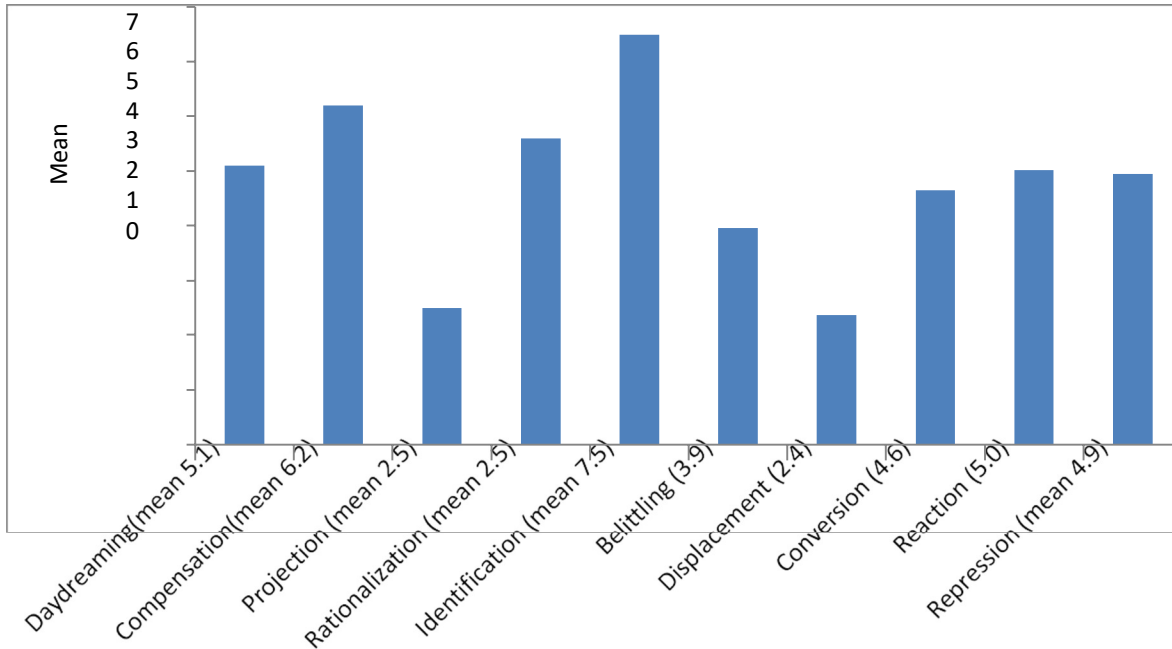
Table 4.2: Distribution of Defense mechanism across various dimensions.

Dimension type	Score	Mean	Percentage
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Daydreaming	2040	5.1	10.7%
Compensation	2480	6.2	13%
Projection	1000	2.5	5.2%
Rationalization	2240	5.6	11.7%
Identification	3000	7.5	15.7%
Belittling	1600	4	8.4%
Displacement	960	2.4	5%
Conversion	1840	4.6	9.6%
Reaction	2000	5	10.5%
Repression	1960	4.9	10.3%

The above data shows the percentage obtained by each Defensive Behavior across various dimensions:





The data reveals that Identification (mean = 7.5) and Compensation (mean = 6.2) are the highest among the defense mechanisms, whereas Displacement (mean = 2.4) and Projection (mean = 2.5) have the lowest means. The detailed analysis of all the dimensions are explained below:

High Mean Values: Identification and Compensation

Identification(7.5):

High Mean: Identification involves adopting the characteristics or behaviors of another person, often someone admired or perceived as successful.

Reason: Secondary school teachers might frequently use identification as a coping mechanism to emulate successful colleagues or mentors, especially in a profession where role models are crucial for professional development. It can also stem from the desire to align with the educational values and practices of respected figures in the field, providing a sense of security and direction.

Compensation(6.2):

High Mean: Compensation involves offsetting perceived deficiencies by emphasizing strengths in other areas.

Reason: Teachers might use compensation to cope with areas where they feel inadequate, such as dealing with difficult students or meeting administrative demands. By focusing on their strengths, such as innovative teaching methods or strong rapport with students, they maintain their self-esteem and professional confidence.

Low Mean Values: Displacement and Projection

Displacement (2.4):

Low Mean: Displacement involves shifting emotions or reactions from the original source of stress to a safer or less threatening target.

Reason: The low mean suggests that teachers might have developed more direct coping mechanisms for stress rather than redirecting it. The supportive school environment and professional development opportunities might provide them with tools to address issues head-on rather than displacing their emotions.

Projection (2.5):

Low Mean: Projection involves attributing one's own unacceptable feelings or thoughts to others.

Reason: The low mean for projection indicates that teachers might have a better understanding and acceptance of their emotions, reducing the need to attribute their own feelings to others. This can be attributed to professional training that emphasizes self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

Low Mean Value: Displacement (2.4)

Low Mean: Displacement involves shifting emotions or reactions from the original source of stress to a safer or less threatening target.

Reason: The low mean suggests that teachers might have developed more direct coping mechanisms for stress rather than redirecting it. The supportive school environment and professional development opportunities might provide them with tools to address issues head-on rather than displacing their emotions.

Other Dimensions

Daydreaming (5.1): Daydreaming serves as a temporary escape from stress and allows teachers to mentally recharge. It's a moderate-level defense mechanism, indicating a balance between engagement and the need for occasional mental breaks.

Rationalization (2.5): Rationalization, another low mean value, indicates that teachers might not heavily rely on justifying their actions or failures with logical but false reasons. Instead, they may face their challenges more directly.

Belittling (3.9): Belittling, which involves demeaning others to feel superior, has a moderate mean value. This indicates that while it is present, it is not a dominant defense mechanism among teachers, likely due to the emphasis on positive student-teacher relationships.

Conversion (4.6): Conversion involves transforming emotional stress into physical symptoms. Its moderate mean value suggests that while some teachers might experience this, it is not overly common.

Reaction (5.0): Reaction formation, where unacceptable impulses are transformed into their opposites, is moderately used, indicating that teachers may sometimes display exaggerated behaviors contrary to their true feelings.

Repression (4.9): Repression, the unconscious blocking of unacceptable thoughts, is also moderately used, reflecting a common, albeit not extreme, way to cope with stress.

Overall, the data reveals a balanced use of various defense mechanisms, illustrating the complex and multifaceted nature of the teaching profession. Teachers utilize a range of strategies to manage stress and sustain their professional effectiveness.

Study of defensive behavior and its dimensions between private and government secondary school teachers.

OBJECTIVE 3: To study defensive behavior and its dimensions in private and government secondary school teachers.

The DBRS Questionnaire was distributed to 205 private school teachers and 195 government schoolteachers, totaling 400 participants. The responses were categorized into various dimensions of defense mechanisms. Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviations for each dimension and the overall defense mechanism, along with the corresponding ‘t’ and ‘p’ values to determine whether there are significant differences.

Table 3: Results for Defensive Behaviour and its Dimensions for Private and Government Secondary School Teachers

Dimensions	School type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Daydreaming	Private	205	5.3	3.47	0.33	.75
	Govt.	195	5.45	5.31		
Compensation	Private	205	6.38	3.43	0.73	0.45
	Govt.	195	6.17	2.22		
Projection	Private	205	2.7	2.68	0.96	0.34
	Govt.	195	2.48	2.29		
Rationalization	Private	205	5.5	2.51	1.12	0.26
	Govt.	195	5.82	3.11		
Identification	Private	205	8.61	4.43	3.01	0.032*
	Govt.	195	7.47	3.05		
Belittling	Private	205	3.42	1.84	2.25	0.025*
	Govt.	195	4.05	3.43		
	Private	205	2.52	3.32		

Displacement	Govt.	195	1.84	2.96	2.16	0.029*
Conversion	Private	205	5.69	4.7	2.62	0.091*
	Govt.	195	4.58	3.75		
Reaction	Private	205	5.03	3.37	2.86	0.045*
	Govt.	195	4.11	3.05		

Repression	Private	205	5.04	3.39	2.44	0.015*
	Govt.	195	4.24	3.13		
Overall Defensive Behaviour	Private	205	49.05	23.23	2.39	0.018*
	Govt.	195	44.14	17.61		

* Significant at 0.05 level.

Table 3 indicates that the calculated ‘t’ value for overall defensive behavior between private and government school teachers is 2.39, which exceeds the table value of 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests a significant difference in the overall defense mechanisms employed by private and government secondary school teachers.

Regarding specific dimensions, the ‘t’ values for Identification, Belittling, Displacement, Conversion, Reaction, Repression, and overall Defense Behavior are 3.18, 2.25, 2.19, 2.62, 2.86, 2.44, and 2.39, respectively. These values are all greater than the table value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level, indicating significant differences between private and government school teachers for these dimensions.

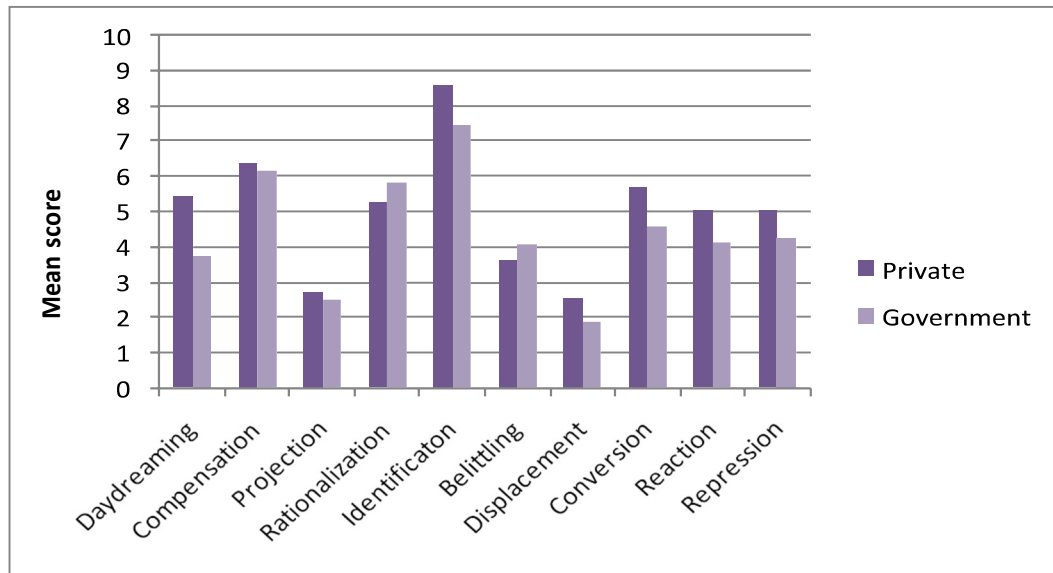
In contrast, the ‘t’ values for Daydreaming, Compensation, Projection, and Rationalization are 0.32, 0.75, 0.96, and 1.12, respectively, which are below the table value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level. Therefore, there is no significant difference between private and government school teachers with regard to these dimensions.

Observations:

- **No Significant Difference in Overall Defense Mechanism:** There is no significant difference in the overall defense mechanisms used by private and government secondary school teachers. This indicates that teachers from both types of schools employ similar overall strategies to cope with stress and challenges.
- **Significant Differences in Specific Defense Mechanisms:** Significant differences are observed between private and government school teachers concerning Identification, Belittling, Displacement, Conversion, Reaction, Repression, and overall Defense Mechanism. This suggests that teachers from private and government schools utilize these specific defense mechanisms differently when addressing challenges.
- **No Significant Difference in Certain Defense Mechanisms:** There are no significant difference in the use of Daydreaming, Compensation, Projection, and Rationalization between private and government school teachers. This implies that teachers from both types of schools manage these defense mechanisms similarly when facing stress or difficult situations.
- **Hypothesis Rejected:** The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in defense mechanisms and their dimensions between private and government secondary school teachers is rejected.

Dimension-wise Analysis:

Table 4: Graphical representation showing type of school distribution of teachers among different dimensions of defense mechanism



The above graph represents the mean values of private and government school teachers across all defense behavior dimensions. The overall trend indicates that private school teachers generally exhibit

higher mean values for most defensive behaviors compared to government school teachers. Identification is notably the most significant defense mechanism used by private school teachers, with the highest mean value (8.61). This suggests that private school teachers frequently adopt traits and behaviors of successful individuals as a way to meet high expectations. The interpretation of each defense behavior dimension is explained as under:

Daydreaming:

- Mean Values: Private - 3.71, Government - 5.45
- p-value: 0.2

The mean value of Daydreaming for government school teachers (5.45) is higher than that for private school teachers (3.71), indicating that government school teachers might tend to daydream more. However, with a p-value of 0.2, the difference is not statistically significant, suggesting similar levels of daydreaming between the two groups.

Compensation:

- Mean Values: Private - 6.38, Government - 6.17
- p-value: 0.2

Private school teachers have a slightly higher mean value (6.38) of Compensation compared to government school teachers (6.17), but the p-value of 0.2 indicates no significant difference between the two groups in this behavior.

Projection:

- Mean Values: Private - 2.7, Government - 2.48
- p-value: 0.2

Projection involves attributing one's undesirable traits or feelings to others. The mean values for private (2.7) and government (2.48) school teachers are close, and the p-value of 0.2 indicates no significant difference, suggesting similar levels of projection in both groups.

Rationalization:

- Mean Values: Private - 5.24, Government - 5.82
- p-value: 0.2

Government school teachers have a higher mean value (5.82) of Rationalization compared to private school teachers (5.24). However, the p-value of 0.2 indicates that this difference is not statistically significant, suggesting similar tendencies for rationalization in both groups.

Identification:

- Mean Values: Private - 8.61, Government - 7.47
- p-value: 0.002

Private school teachers exhibit a higher mean value (8.61) of Identification compared to government school teachers (7.47), and the significant p-value of 0.002 indicates that private school teachers are more likely to engage in identification behaviors.

Belittling:

- Mean Values: Private - 3.63, Government - 4.05
- p-value: 0.02

Government school teachers have a higher mean value (4.05) of Belittling compared to private school teachers (3.63), with a significant p-value of 0.02, indicating that government school teachers are more likely to engage in belittling behaviors.

Displacement:

- Mean Values: Private - 2.5, Government - 1.8
- p-value: 0.02

Displacement involves redirecting emotions from a threatening object to a safer one. Private school teachers show a higher mean value (2.5) compared to government school teachers (1.8), with a significant p-value of 0.02, indicating that private school teachers are more likely to engage in displacement behaviors.

Conversion:

- Mean Values: Private - 5.7, Government - 4.6
- p-value: 0.01

Private school teachers exhibit a higher mean value (5.7) of Conversion compared to government school teachers (4.6), with a significant p-value of 0.01, indicating that private school teachers are more prone to conversion behaviors.

Reaction:

- Mean Values: Private - 5.03, Government - 4.1

- p-value: 0.002

Private school teachers have a higher mean value (5.03) of Reaction compared to government school teachers (4.1), and the significant p-value of 0.002 suggests that private school teachers are more likely to engage in reaction formation.

Repression:

- Mean Values: Private - 5.04, Government - 4.3
- p-value: 0.02

Private school teachers exhibit a higher mean value (5.04) of Repression compared to government school teachers (4.3), with a significant p-value of 0.02, indicating that private school teachers are more likely to repress their emotions.

Overall Defense Mechanism

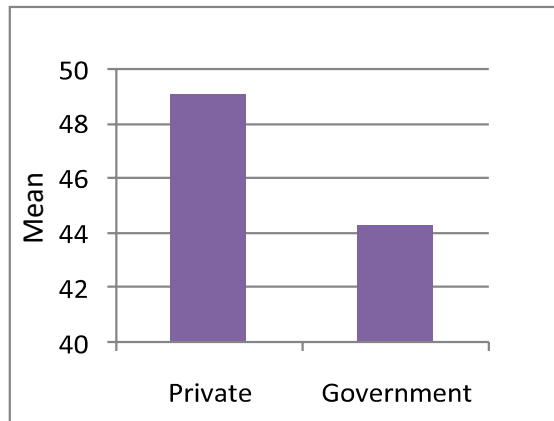


Table 4: Graphical representation showing the overall mean defense mechanism for private and government school teachers

Overall, the mean value of defensive behavior for private school teachers is more as compared to government school teachers. This could be attributed to the increased performance pressure, competitive environment, high parental and community expectations, and the demanding workload prevalent in private schools. These factors create a stressful work environment, prompting teachers to adopt various defensive behaviors as coping strategies. In contrast, government school teachers benefit from greater job security, a more collaborative culture, regulated workloads, and systemic support, leading to lower stress levels and less reliance on defensive mechanisms. Understanding these differences can help in developing targeted interventions to support teachers' mental health and well-being in both private and government schools.

Conclusion

The study revealed nuanced insight into the psychological dynamics of educators. Targeted interventions and professional development programmes can be structured to mitigate defensive behaviour and establish a flourishing healthy community of teachers. This study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of defense mechanisms employed by private and government school teachers. The findings reveal significant variations in the types and levels of defense mechanisms used by teachers in different educational settings. Private school teachers predominantly exhibited defense mechanisms often linked to higher performance expectations and greater administrative support. Conversely, government school teachers displayed higher levels of mechanisms like denial and projection, potentially stemming from larger class sizes, resource constraints, and bureaucratic challenges.

The study highlights the critical role of the work environment in shaping teachers' coping strategies. While private school teachers benefit from better resources and support systems, government school teachers face unique stressors that necessitate different defense mechanisms. These insights underline the importance of tailored mental health and support programs for teachers, acknowledging the distinct challenges faced in each educational context.

Future research should explore intervention strategies to enhance adaptive defense mechanisms among teachers and examine the long-term impact of these mechanisms on their professional efficacy and well-being. By addressing the psychological needs of teachers, educational institutions can foster a more supportive and effective teaching environment, ultimately benefiting students and the broader educational landscape.

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