

Factors Contributing to Stress in University Teachers and Coping Mechanisms

¹ Zermina Tasleem *, ² Sohail Ayaz Muhammad, ³ Zerish Tasleem

Article History:

Received:

02 Oct, 2023

Revised:

15 Nov, 2023

Accepted:

12 Dec, 2023

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study addresses the prevalent issue of workplace stress experienced by university teachers and identifies key factors that significantly contribute to this stress. The primary objective of this research is to delve into the workplace elements responsible for inducing stress among university teachers.

Design and Methodology: Employing a qualitative research design facilitates an in-depth examination of this intricate issue, particularly suited for the exploration of complex subjects like workplace stress. The utilization of semi-structured interviews with a sample of 25 university teachers, chosen through convenience sampling, serves as an appropriate means to collect comprehensive and detailed perspectives.

Findings: The principal discovery underscores that workplace factors such as extra workloads, workspace conditions, job security concerns, delayed promotions, and the overall work environment play substantial roles in contributing to stress among university educators.

Implications: This study underscores the multifaceted nature of workplace stress experienced by university teachers and offers valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers seeking to enhance the well-being of their academic faculty.

Keywords: Workplace stress, Coping Mechanisms, Job security, Workloads.

1. Introduction

Workplace stress is widely recognized as a significant issue in various industries, including the academic world. Higher education teachers, in particular, experience high levels of stress due to the multidimensional nature of their job (Universari & Harsono, 2021). The shifting trends and

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. Corresponding author Email: zeminatasleem@bzu.edu.pk.

² Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. Email: rsohailayaz@gmail.com.

³ Assistant Professor, School of Governance and Society, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan. Email: zerish.tasleem@umt.edu.pk

demands of the twenty-first century, combined with extended working hours and additional obligations, have amplified the stressors faced by university instructors (McCallum, 2020).

In Pakistan, where universities are considered pivotal assets, the challenges encountered by university educators have grown more acute. The swiftly evolving work environment requisites and evolving performance benchmarks have augmented stress levels among educators. These educators are expected to excel not only in teaching but also in research and various other roles (Ahmad, Gul, & Kashif, 2022; Khan et al., 2014). Statistical data indicates that a substantial proportion of academic staff members in Pakistan toil for more than 50 or 60 hours per week, leading to heightened workplace stress (Ahmad et al., 2022). Furthermore, the competitive atmosphere concerning promotions adds an additional layer of psychological strain to the experiences of university educators. Understanding these factors will enable institutions to implement strategies and support systems to alleviate stress and create a healthier work environment for their teaching staff (Gunbayi, 2014). By addressing the causes of workplace stress, universities in Pakistan can enhance the well-being and job satisfaction of their teachers, ultimately improving the quality of education provided.

Despite the implementation of various governmental policies by the Higher Education Commission aimed at improving the academic roles and professional competencies of university teachers, there has been a lack of clear positive changes in reducing stress levels among teachers due to inadequate policy implementation. A significant aspect of failure pertains to the ineffective execution of promotion policies for university educators, resulting in problems such as postponed promotions and inadequate facilities accessible to teachers in educational institutions (Banerjee & Mehta, 2016). These elements play a role in fostering workplace stress among university faculty members.

In a study conducted by Khan et al. (2014) numerous workplace factors were identified as sources of stress among university educators. These factors encompassed increased workloads, role ambiguity and conflicts, ineffective management, discrepancies in rewards and penalties, unsupportive colleagues, and limited opportunities for career advancement. These challenges and sources of frustration have become more pronounced in recent years, largely due to rapidly evolving policies in higher education, particularly with regard to promotion guidelines for university instructors. The mounting workloads and additional responsibilities assigned to university teachers have played a significant role in the upsurge of workplace stress (Archibong et al., 2010). The occupation of university teaching itself is acknowledged as inherently demanding due to its multifaceted nature. Regrettably, there is currently an absence of stress management programs or strategies tailored for educators in Pakistan, as outlined in the study by (Hunnur et al., 2013; Khan et al., 2014).

To tackle these concerns, the presence of effective and supportive management, as well as the provision of transparent and equitable career advancement pathways for all educators, is of paramount importance. This paper is dedicated to delving into the origins of workplace stress experienced by university teachers and suggesting effective coping mechanisms. The research endeavors to address crucial inquiries related to the sources of workplace stress, the existing measures taken to address these sources, and the strategies that can be implemented to enhance the overall well-being of university instructors in relation to workplace stress.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, workplace stress has witnessed a significant increase, particularly in the higher education sector and among university teachers in Pakistan. Although stress is acknowledged as a common concern in various professions, its significance has escalated within the sphere of higher education (Quraishi et al., 2018). Consequently, there is a need for more comprehensive research into the primary factors contributing to workplace stress among university educators in Pakistan. The complexity and ambiguity of government plans in higher education, coupled with frequent policy changes, contribute to the escalating problem of workplace stress in the nation (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Numerous studies conducted internationally have highlighted workplace stress as a main reason of job burnout and decreased job satisfaction among university teachers. This issue is prevalent not only in Pakistan but also in other Asian countries such as Bangladesh and India. Unfortunately, governments in these countries have not made significant breakthroughs in addressing the problem. For instance, a study conducted by Solanki and Mandaviya (2021) identified challenges related to work overload, career progression, and inadequate management support among university teachers in India. Consequently, an increasing number of university teachers express their intention to leave their current positions due to the stress they experience. Furthermore, the rapid growth of Indian universities, combined with the increasing performance standards and expectations imposed on teachers, has made universities highly stressful work environments (Devi & Lahkar, 2021). Educators are presently expected to generate high-quality research alongside their teaching duties, leading to a stressful predicament for them (Rasool & Ellahi, 2017; Sidhu et al., 2019).

Given the concerning trends and the impact of workplace stress on university teachers, it is crucial for governments and institutions to prioritize addressing this issue (Chaudhry, 2020; Kaur & Kumar, 2019). Implementing supportive measures, such as clear career progression pathways, managing workloads effectively, and providing adequate support and resources, can contribute to reducing workplace stress and improving the overall well-being of university teachers (Asaloei et al., 2020).

Recent research has highlighted the increasing stress levels among university teachers in various regions. In South India, university teachers face rising demands from management to fulfill different responsibilities, which often exceeds their capacity to cope. This leads to adverse physical, social, and psychological effects on teachers' emotional well-being and academic performance (Solanki & Mandaviya, 2021). Likewise, in Bangladesh, university educators experience a sense of being overwhelmed owing to the substantial demands associated with their work, including heavy workloads and the pressures related to research publications mandated by academic institutions (Basak & Akter, 2022).

In Chinese universities, teachers must produce high-quality research publications in addition projects, supervise student research, and fulfill other related duties. The fast-changing higher education policies in China contribute to increased workload and resultant stress among university academic staff, impacting their creativity and innovation (Pu et al., 2017). In Iran, job-related stress and burnout have been pinpointed as significant factors contributing to workplace stress among academic faculty members (Ahmady et al., 2007). Nigerian studies have also highlighted different workplace stressors leading to lower performance among academic staff, including demanding workloads. Prolonged exposure to continuous stress can have detrimental effects on the emotional and physical health of individuals (Osibanjo et al., 2016).

In the Ethiopian setting, prominent factors contributing to workplace stress amongst higher education teaching staff include burnout, job discontent, aggressive behavior and subpar performance (Yeshaw & Mossie, 2017). In Malaysia, research has primarily focused on the factors influencing job-related stress among university teaching personnel. Key elements such as inadequate organizational support, job insecurity, role ambiguity, work-related conflicts, and overwhelming workloads have emerged as significant contributors to workplace stress experienced by academic staff within Malaysian universities (Tai et al., 2019).

These findings emphasize the pressing need for institutions and policymakers to address the factors contributing to workplace stress among university teachers. Implementing supportive measures, such as workload management, providing resources and support, and promoting a conducive work environment, can help alleviate stress and enhance the well-being and productivity of university teachers (Faisal et al., 2019; Malik, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2017).

Researchers have observed substantial transformations in the realm of academia, ushering in a departure from many of its conventional attributes. In earlier times, academic work was often regarded as stress-free and flexible, emphasizing quantity over quality. However, the contemporary academic landscape has evolved to prioritize quality, consequently elevating stress levels among academic practitioners (Solanki & Mandaviya, 2021). This shift is ascribed to the evolving global policies and societal perceptions of higher education, as well as the heightened challenges and competition associated with it. The growing interconnection among university students, educators, and industry has sparked significant shifts in the work patterns of university teachers.

As a result, universities are gradually adopting characteristics more akin to other professions in terms of their work settings and circumstances (Kaur & Kumar, 2019). A recurring obstacle encountered by university educators is the burden of excessive work. This phenomenon arises from the escalating emphasis on research as an essential element for career advancement and the imposition of supplementary administrative tasks (Wadhera & Bano, 2020). Consequently, the role of university teachers within higher education has grown more demanding, encompassing factors such as heightened research expectations, augmented responsibilities, sluggish career progression, restricted avenues for promotion, inadequate support from seniors, plus a widening rift between professional and personal requisites (Ahmad & Ashraf, 2016).

To contend with these demands, university instructors are now expected not only to possess effective teaching capabilities but also entrepreneurial skills, aimed at securing funding and withstanding mounting pressures related to academic publications (Banerjee & Mehta, 2016). The principal objective of this study is to probe into the workplace factors that trigger stress amongst higher education educators and to identify strategies for coping with these challenges.

2.1 Workplace Stress

Stress is a state that impacts individuals both physically and mentally as a result of environmental influences (Hunnur, Vyas, Sudarshan, Mathad, & Pareek, 2013). When left unattended during its initial stages, it has the potential to give rise to additional complications. This condition arises when there is an inequality between the requirements of a job and an individual's abilities and available resources (Kodavatiganti & Bulusu, 2011).

Workplace stress has been on the rise due to the rapid transformations in work settings and the intense competitiveness within organizations, including higher education institutions. This has presented formidable challenges for both management and faculty members as they grapple with these changes, ultimately resulting in a pervasive sense of stress within the workplace (Kavita & Hassan, 2018). Particularly in the context of Pakistani universities, where research is vital for career progression, academic staff often contend with elevated job demands, hefty workloads, and the imperative to produce research outputs (Faisal, Noor, & Khair, 2019). These factors collectively contribute to the stressful predicament faced by educators.

The repercussions of workplace stress on employees are diverse and encompass symptoms like anxiety, depression, aggression, anger, diminished motivation, difficulties in concentration, and physical ailments such as headaches and palpitations (Masuku & Muchemwa, 2015). Prolonged exposure to stress can precipitate more severe consequences, impacting the neuroendocrine and cardiac systems, weakening immunity, and precipitating a range of psychological and physical maladies (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001).

The psychosocial dynamics prevailing in the work environment, including feelings of anxiety, tension, depression, and disruptions in personal life, further contribute to the prevalence of stress-related issues (Chaudhry, 2012). Additionally, the presence of noisy conditions in the workplace is closely linked to heightened stress levels, with employees in noisy environments being more susceptible to stress compared to their counterparts in quieter settings (Banerjee & Mehta, 2016). Overall, workplace stress significantly jeopardizes the well-being of individuals, necessitating a proactive approach to address its root causes and implement effective stress management strategies in order to foster a healthier work environment. The "publish or perish" culture prevalent in the contemporary research-concerned with work environment has contributed to the challenging competition and survival challenges faced by university teachers (Ahmad, Gul, & Kashif, 2022). However, this approach has proven counterproductive and has negatively impacted the professional role of teachers, leading to decreased morale among them.

University teachers are now working with larger numbers of students in various capacities, such as research supervision, counseling, coaching, and teaching. These additional responsibilities have become more demanding over time (Tahseen, 2015). Teachers must adapt to new curriculum requirements, meet the terms with quality assurance procedures, stay updated with the latest knowledge about research, understand new skills, and incorporate technological innovations into their administrative duties (Sabherwal, Ahuja, George, & Handa, 2015).

Inadequate financial resources and structural shortcomings within the teaching profession have influenced the outlook of university faculty members and played a role in generating stress (Khan, Yusoff, & Azam, 2014). A deficiency in both human and material resources essential for facilitating the work of educators has emerged as substantial impediments to achieving efficiency and upholding quality standards. This absence of support and independence can result in discontent among teachers (Haseeb & Sattar, 2018).

Furthermore, factors such as job instability, restricted avenues for timely career advancement, suboptimal interpersonal relationships (including a dearth of support from peers and higher-ranking colleagues), and a sense of undervaluation collectively contribute to the experience of workplace stress among university educators (Arekkuzhiyil, 2014). These factors can lower their morale and job satisfaction. Imbalances between work and personal life are also sources of stress. Demands for increased work hours, including evenings and weekends, can negatively impact teachers' private lives and create difficulty in achieving work-life balance (Sabherwal et al., 2015). This, in turn, can lead to job turnover among academic staff.

Lack of proper workspace has been associated with psychological complications such as anxiety and depression, affecting the commitment and productivity of academic staff (Shrivastava, 2020). Prolonged working hours, increased responsibilities, and disruptions to leisure time and sleep can negatively impact professional performance (Mensah, Fosu, & Oteng-Abayie, 2017).

Educators who have limited influence over their work schedules and receive minimal support from their superiors might encounter a greater degree of work-life imbalance, leading to reduced psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and an increased inclination to consider leaving their positions (Usman, Ahmed, Ahmed, & Akbar, 2011). Overall, the multiple demands and challenges faced by university teachers contribute to workplace stress, affecting their well-being and professional satisfaction. It is important to address these factors and create supportive work environments to promote the health and productivity of university teachers.

The conditions of university jobs have undergone changes, including policy requirements to address gender balance-related issues in appointments. In addition to teaching responsibilities, the increasing demands of research projects and additional responsibilities contribute to stress factors for university teachers. Female university employees might experience elevated stress levels as a consequence of gender-based discrimination in hiring, task allocation, and career advancement, potentially resulting in a higher rate of employee turnover (Rahoo, Raza, Arain, & Memon, 2017).

Disparities between home and work commitments are additionally cited as noteworthy generators of stress within higher education. Nonetheless, research findings have displayed varied outcomes concerning gender distinctions in the extent and ramifications of stressors impacting both professional and personal aspects (Ojeka, Dickson, & Edeoga, 2019). Certain investigations have underscored institutional elements, such as university structure, workplace atmosphere, suboptimal managerial approaches, limited involvement in decision-making processes, and insufficient independence and control over job tasks, as key origins of stress among university educators (Yeshaw & Mossie, 2017).

The organizational hierarchy and power dynamics within the university workplace can also be a source of stress. Disparities in authority, autonomy in tasks, work responsibilities, job stability, and job rank can foster perceptions of superiority and inferiority among educators, contributing to elevated stress levels (Gunbayi, 2014). It is notable that individuals in junior positions may often experience higher levels of stress compared to those in senior positions due to variations in income, job security, and job standing, although some studies do not identify significant differences based on job rank (Zhi, Malek, & Bahari, 2017).

Comparisons between university personnel and their counterparts in other industries have demonstrated that stressors in the higher education sector are frequently linked to the necessity to make crucial decisions and handle emergency situations (Adewale, Ghavifekr, & Abdulsalam, 2017). Workplace stress in the higher education sector has gained attention from policymakers, experts, researchers, and academics globally. Numerous research studies have been conducted to identify stress and stressors in the workplace, with the aim of minimizing their effects and developing coping strategies. Organizations are allocating substantial resources to the development of stress training initiatives, programs for recognizing and managing stress, as well as strategies for coping with workplace stress (Ahmad et al., 2022; Areekkuzhiyil, 2014; Chaudhry, 2012).

Overall, the changing conditions and various stressors in university jobs have led to increased focus on understanding and managing workplace stress for the well-being and effectiveness of university teachers.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The notion of stress has been a longstanding aspect of human encounters, prompting individuals to employ diverse strategies and solutions for addressing work-related stress. Nevertheless, in contemporary organizational settings, stress has evolved into an inescapable aspect of life, owing to fierce professional competition, advancements in technology, and the omnipresent impact of social media (Zakaria & Asmawi, 2015). This trend is particularly conspicuous within the higher education sector, where university educators operate within a demanding environment characterized by substantial professional expectations and requisites (Shahab & Ali, 2013). Workplace stress, as previously defined, arises when job-related factors intersect with an individual, leading to psychological or physiological changes that deviate from the normal state of functioning (Mkumbo, 2014). Various influential theories regarding workplace stress have emerged, including the person-environment fit theory, the occupational stress framework, and the demand-control-support model. These theories underscore the significance of interactions among colleagues and coworkers in shaping workplace stress. When these interactions are marked by uncooperativeness or conflict, the work environment becomes a source of stress (Dewe, O'Driscoll, & Cooper, 2012).

The terminology surrounding workplace stress often overlaps with phrases like occupational stress, organizational stress, and work-related stress, all referring to the stress experienced by employees (Asaloei et al., 2020). Initially, workplace stress was perceived as external pressure exerted by the environment. However, it is now comprehended as the dynamic relationship between an employee and their environment, where stress emerges when the individual cannot adequately meet the demands placed upon them, potentially leading to mental and physical health issues (Banerjee & Mehta, 2016).

Workplace stress has also made its presence felt in educational institutions, including universities. Traditionally, universities were perceived as relatively low-stress environments for teaching. However, recent research underscores that universities have evolved into high-stress settings, primarily attributed to factors like heightened workloads, suboptimal educational policies, diminished autonomy, and a decline in academic standards (Ahmad et al., 2022). Investigations into stress levels among both academic and non-academic staff have shown a noteworthy upswing in workplace stress within university settings. While it was once believed that workplace stress predominantly affected senior employees due to their multifaceted responsibilities and heavy workloads, it now affects personnel across all hierarchical levels (Ahmad & Ashraf, 2016).

This study endeavors to delve into the workplace elements responsible for inducing stress among university educators and aims to pinpoint effective coping strategies to address these challenges. By comprehending these contributing factors and developing efficacious coping mechanisms, it is feasible to alleviate the adverse effects of workplace stress on the well-being and professional performance of university teachers.

3. Methodology

A Qualitative research design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue and gather rich data through the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Qualitative research proves especially beneficial when the objective is to delve into, portray, and gain insight into intricate human encounters and societal occurrences (Tasleem, Muhammad, Na'eim Ajis, & Abidin, 2022; Tasleem, Na'eim Ajis, & Abidin, 2020). Further, convenience sampling and participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, ensuring diversity in perspectives. Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached, meaning that no new information or insights were emerging from further interviews within each faculty. A total of 25 interviews were conducted across different faculties. A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on relevant literature, containing open-ended questions to capture personal narratives and experiences related to workplace stress.

Semi-structured interviews provide the adaptability to investigate a wide range of viewpoints within a flexible framework. They strike a harmonious balance between structured inquiries and open-ended discussions, which enhances research by encouraging deeper insights and participant involvement (Tasleem, 2021, Sultana, Siddiqui, Kashif, Hanif, & Kalsoom, 2022). The interviews focused on three major themes: workplace factors contributing to stress, reactions to stress-related factors, and coping techniques for dealing with workplace stress. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed, including obtaining written consent, using pseudonyms to protect participant identities, and ensuring the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were university teachers from various faculties at the Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan, providing multiple perspectives within the same university setting.

The researchers created a friendly environment, respected participant autonomy, and refrained from imposing personal choices. Probing questions were used when necessary to delve deeper into issues. The duration of interviews varied based on participant engagement, ranging from 15 to 40 minutes. Participants were given the freedom to express their views without pressure. Interviews were recorded using a tape recorder, and field notes were taken in some cases. Cultural and personal preferences were respected regarding recording.

Transcriptions of interviews were completed and shared with participants for accuracy and completeness before analysis. Once all transcribed interviews were approved, the researchers proceeded with data analysis. Further interviews were concluded when saturation was reached, meaning that additional interviews were not providing significant new insights or information.

4. Data Analysis and Results

In the study, the collected data from the semi-structured interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytical approach that aims to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. It allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation by capturing both explicit and implicit ideas and themes (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis comprises a series of steps. Initially, the researcher acquaints themselves with the data by carefully reviewing the transcriptions repeatedly. This iterative process aids in developing a profound comprehension of the content. Throughout this phase, significant pieces of information or data segments are highlighted and organized into categories known as codes. Once the codes are generated, the researcher proceeds to search for themes by grouping together similar ideas or codes. These grouped themes are then defined and described (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). The researcher identifies major themes that emerge from the data, representing the different factors contributing to workplace stress experienced by university teachers as well as the coping strategies they employ. By employing thematic analysis, the researchers in this study aimed to uncover the underlying patterns and meanings within the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding workplace stress among university teachers.

4.1 Extra Workload

Based on the responses from the interviewed university teachers, it is evident that extra work burden is a significant factor contributing to workplace stress. Thirteen out of the 5 respondents emphasized that workload was a key issue causing stress among teachers. They indicated that, apart from their teaching duties, they were obligated to engage in research, fulfill departmental obligations, and manage extra tasks. The educators conveyed that the amalgamation of routine lectures, research commitments, administrative duties, and other assigned obligations placed a heavy load on them, resulting in stress. They found themselves inundated by the numerous roles they had to manage. As an example, one respondent cited the challenge of serving as a semester coordinator while also being tasked with coursework and the supervision of research scholars, which brought about stress and time constraints.

Furthermore, among the 25 respondents, 15 specifically pointed out the extra administrative responsibilities delegated by the university's management. These responsibilities affected their academic and departmental tasks, causing stress and making it challenging to balance their workload. Teachers reported instances of being called for meetings while having classes, which further added to their stress.

The research findings indicated that 12 teachers experienced a challenge in fulfilling their primary teaching responsibilities due to the overwhelming workload and additional tasks imposed by the management. This not only had repercussions on their professional duties but also played a significant role in elevating their stress levels. Even after engaging in discussions with the management regarding this issue, there was a lack of appropriate measures taken to resolve the problem. The incapacity to prioritize teaching obligations alongside the mounting pressure of added responsibilities culminated in feelings of frustration and eventual burnout among these educators. Additionally, the lack of academic and supportive staff was identified as a factor contributing to increased workload and stress. Respondents pointed out that if work was distributed more evenly among employees, it would help manage their workload and cope with stress.

Overall, the findings indicate that the extra work burden placed on university teachers, including teaching, research, administrative tasks, and additional responsibilities, significantly contributes to workplace stress. The lack of time for personal and family life further adds to the frustration and challenges faced by teachers. Addressing workload distribution and providing necessary support can play a vital role in reducing stress levels among university teachers.

4.2 Workspace Conditions

As per the feedback provided by the interviewed university faculty, the inadequacy of appropriate office space, associated amenities, and equipment emerged as a noteworthy concern. Among the 25 respondents, 21 expressed dissatisfactions with their working environments. They noted the insufficiency of personal office space, which often necessitated sharing offices with other colleagues. This situation posed challenges, particularly when they needed to meet with research scholars, visitors, or students.

Another issue raised by the respondents was the limited storage space for maintaining files and student portfolios. They clarified that as they were tasked with grading students' papers and managing exam-related documents, the restricted space available in their offices frequently resulted in the mixing of files. This, in turn, led to difficulties in locating specific documents and caused delays in processing examination results. One respondent shared a personal account of experiencing considerable stress due to file mix-ups and subsequent delays in examination-related responsibilities.

The participants in the survey emphasized the viewpoint that if the university administration were to provide more appropriate and individualized work environments for teachers, it would have a positive impact on their work efficiency and serve to reduce stress levels. They underscored the significance of having dedicated personal offices and ample storage facilities to facilitate organization and enhance effectiveness in their duties. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of providing university teachers with suitable office spaces, related facilities, and equipment to support their work. Addressing the lack of space and ensuring individualized work areas can contribute to improved job performance and reduced stress experienced by university teachers.

4.3 Job Security

In addition to the 25 respondents, 18 stated that number of teachers in their university were employed on visiting or other non-permanent contracts. The lack of job security and the constant fear of being fired added to their stress levels. Job insecurity was mentioned as a significant factor contributing to workplace stress by 14 respondents. They expressed concerns about the economic consequences they would face if they were to lose their jobs.

In public sector universities, a significant number of employees work on contract or other non-permanent arrangements. Seven respondents mentioned that they were currently employed but remained conscious of their future stability. They felt that their jobs were not safe and secure, causing stress and anxiety. They had families and financial needs to consider, and the uncertainty surrounding their job security was a major source of stress. Eleven respondents expressed that the feeling of job insecurity had a significant impact on their work attitude. The constant fear and stress associated with job insecurity affected their commitment and passion for their work. They felt undervalued and unappreciated as contractual or daily wage employees, with no certainty about the duration of their employment or the freedom to plan their courses accordingly. They believed that if the organization did not value them, they couldn't provide their services passionately. The participants underscored that the primary cause of stress among the various factors they mentioned was job insecurity. They raised questions about their ability to fully dedicate themselves to their work when their own job security remained uncertain. Furthermore, individuals working as daily wage or fixed-pay employees experienced heightened stress and anxiety due to delayed payment processes, resulting in financial crises and associated repercussions.

The respondents also conveyed a sense of frustration regarding the perceived disregard for their opinions and preferences in matters related to scheduling and teaching assignments. They believed that permanent employees viewed them unfavorably, which engendered feelings of stress, helplessness, and a perceived obligation to comply with directives. When asked about potential strategies for mitigating workplace stress, a significant number of respondents emphasized the necessity of regularizing their employment status as permanent staff members. They firmly believed that job security would alleviate stress and instil a sense of stability. However, they expressed frustration over the unavailability of this option, which added to their persistent stress levels.

4.4 Delay in Promotion

Out of the 25 participants, 18 individuals conveyed their discontent regarding the administration and management due to perceived delays in employee promotions. They firmly believed that promotion played a pivotal role in career advancement and served as a means of acknowledging and appreciating the contributions made by employees. They expected their organization to take care of its employees by ensuring timely promotions.

The respondents emphasized that promotion was not just about professional growth but also about personal and social progress. They believed that being promoted without having to constantly

follow up or request for it would boost their enthusiasm and motivation towards organizational goals. However, when promotions were delayed, it negatively affected their self-esteem and created stress. They felt that the administration should prioritize timely promotions as a way to show appreciation for their work.

Fourteen out of 25 respondents suggested that organizations should create an environment where teachers feel free and independent. They believed that if teachers are constantly worried about their job and facing difficulties in getting promotions, it becomes challenging for them to emphasize on academic activities in addition to other departmental duties. They emphasized that organizations need to prioritize employee needs and demands to reduce tension and stress among teachers. The respondents viewed promotion as a form of motivation that could positively impact their mental and social well-being. They anticipated their corporations to recognize their efforts and provide promotions as a way to show value and appreciation for their services.

4.5 Working Atmosphere

Sixteen of the 25 participants pinpointed a lack of supportive work environment as a notable origin of workplace stress among educators. They underscored the necessity of establishing an encouraging educational setting that fosters favorable interactions and assists teachers in improving students' educational journeys. Prior research has underscored the significance of a positive workplace atmosphere in mitigating the effects of workplace stress.

Thirteen of the 25 respondents specifically cited workplace noise as a significant occupational hazard that contributes to psychological stress. They recounted instances where external individuals and students from different departments caused disturbances in corridors and classrooms, particularly during examination periods. The noise not only disrupted students' concentration but also posed challenges for teachers in supervising exams. The respondents conveyed that working in such a noisy environment was arduous and obstructed their productivity.

Seventeen out of the 25 participants stressed the need for a tranquil work environment. They brought attention to the issue of shared offices, where one person's activities could adversely affect others' work and concentration. Several respondents mentioned their requests for individual offices to conduct research activities, which had not yet been fulfilled. Furthermore, the participants proposed the implementation of designated time slots for visitors and students from other departments as a means to mitigate disruptions and maintain an optimal teaching-learning environment. In summary, the participants highlighted the critical importance of a supportive and peaceful work atmosphere that enables teachers to focus on their duties and fosters an ideal learning environment for students.

The findings of this study, obtained through thematic analysis of data from semi-structured interviews, shed light on several significant factors that contribute to workplace stress among university teachers, underscoring the challenges they face and the potential impact on their well-being and job performance. These factors are interrelated and encompass extra workload, primarily

resulting from teaching, research, administrative tasks, and additional responsibilities, leading to time constraints and eventual burnout. Inadequate workspace conditions, such as shared offices and limited storage facilities, add to the stress by hindering efficiency and organization. The lack of job security, particularly for teachers on non-permanent contracts, fosters fear and uncertainty, affecting their commitment and enthusiasm. Delays in employee promotions negatively impact self-esteem and motivation, while a lack of a supportive work environment, coupled with disruptive workplace noise, contributes to psychological stress. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of addressing these interconnected stressors through equitable workload distribution, improved workspace provisions, enhanced job security, timely promotions, and the creation of a conducive work environment. Recognizing and mitigating these stressors can enhance job satisfaction and the overall well-being of university teachers, benefiting both educators and the institutions they serve.

5. Recommendation for Enhancement

During the study, 20 out of the 25 respondents pinpointed the absence of adequate professional training as a prominent factor contributing to workplace stress experienced by teachers. They stressed that when teachers are equipped with training in stress management strategies, it significantly reduces the likelihood of encountering psychological distress in their work environment. Furthermore, some respondents underscored the importance of incorporating psychological well-being training alongside their professional development, recognizing that mental health issues can profoundly impact their performance in higher education.

Likewise, 14 out of 25 respondents articulated the need for their organization to actively support them in accessing a variety of professional training opportunities. They believed that these training programs not only benefited the personal growth of teachers but also had a positive impact on the organization as a whole. Additionally, during the interviews, an additional 9 respondents recommended that institutional administrators should possess a comprehensive understanding of the negative factors that can affect employees' well-being. Such knowledge would enable the organization to cultivate a positive and supportive environment, facilitating employees' optimal performance without the burden of stress.

In summary, the respondents emphasized the critical significance of providing teachers with comprehensive training, encompassing stress management and psychological well-being, as a means to foster a constructive work atmosphere and enhance their professional development. They also emphasized the importance of administrators having a profound comprehension of the elements that impact the mental health and general well-being of employees. The research presents various methods for dealing with workplace stress within higher education.

Delivering Professional Training: The institution's leadership and management should assume the responsibility of providing pertinent stress management training for educators. The lack of such training was pinpointed as a significant factor hindering teachers' ability to handle stressful circumstances. It is recommended that training programs covering stress management, time management, and resource management should be made readily available to teachers.

Supportive Work Environment: Higher education institutions should cultivate a supportive work environment that encourages teachers to carry out their responsibilities with dedication and commitment. Provision of such support enhances employees' commitment to their work. Achieving this can involve offering workshops, seminars, and opportunities for professional development related to stress management strategies.

Continuous Professional Growth: Teachers should receive comprehensive support and opportunities for ongoing professional development. This includes orientation on the latest advanced pedagogical teaching methods. By enhancing their teaching skills and knowledge, teachers will be better prepared to handle the teaching-learning process and effectively deal with any stressors that may arise.

Recognition of Training's Importance: The study underscores the importance of relevant training focused on stress management and its potential to reduce workplace stress. It suggests that without proper training and opportunities for professional development, workplace stress will continue to escalate.

These findings align with previous studies that have underscored the pivotal role of training and a supportive work environment in mitigating workplace stress among teachers. In conclusion, the study strongly recommends the provision of adequate training for teachers, the fostering of a supportive work environment, and the prioritization of their professional growth as effective strategies for coping with workplace stress in the realm of higher education.

5.1 Implications and Limitations

This research makes significant contributions in multiple facets. It delves into an in-depth analysis of factors that mold workplace stress within the unique context of a university, shedding light on the specific challenges educators face in this setting. This contribution underscores the idea that workplace stress is inherently tied to its contextual surroundings, challenging the notion of a one-size-fits-all experience. Furthermore, it provides actionable recommendations for educational institutions and higher education management to effectively address these stressors, offering tailored strategies to foster more supportive work environments. The study also emphasizes the importance of investing in professional development, specifically in time management and stress management competencies for educators, thereby empowering them to navigate stress more effectively. Additionally, the research highlights the significance of environmental factors within the physical workspace, advocating for the allocation of resources and facilities that enhance educators'

concentration and productivity, ultimately reducing workplace stress. The distinctive contribution lies in the recognition of environmental factors as influential components of workplace stress.

The research considers numerous implications for both academia and higher education management. Firstly, by identifying the factors that influence workplace stress, it provides valuable insights for institutions and managers. This understanding can assist institutions in addressing the unique challenges faced by teachers, enabling targeted interventions that aim to design a more favorable and supportive work environment for students. Secondly, the research highlights the significance of supporting teachers with professional support and training. Institutions should consider investing in training programs that offer teachers with effective time management skills, effective stress management strategies, and other relevant competencies. Through the provision of such training chances, institutions can give their teachers with the ability to manage workplace stress effectively, thus improving their overall happiness.

Furthermore, the study accentuates the importance of institutions prioritizing the allocation of resources and facilities that bolster teachers' work. This encompasses ensuring ample workspace, mitigating noise disturbances, and fostering a tranquil atmosphere conducive to concentration and productivity. By addressing these environmental factors, institutions can contribute to the reduction of workplace stress and the enhancement of teachers' job satisfaction. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the study's limitations. The findings may not be directly transferable to other contexts due to the distinctive characteristics of the rural university where the research took place. Therefore, future studies should endeavor to replicate and validate these findings within diverse socio-cultural settings, augmenting their applicability and relevance. Additionally, the study adopted a qualitative case study approach with a limited number of participants. While this method facilitated an in-depth exploration of the research topic, it may curtail the generalizability and representativeness of the findings. Future research endeavors could adopt mixed methods approaches with larger sample sizes to yield more robust and comprehensive outcomes.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes significantly to the existing body of literature on workplace stress in higher education. It sheds light on the distinctive stressors experienced by teachers and offers valuable insights into potential strategies and interventions that institutions can implement to mitigate workplace stress and cultivate a healthier and more supportive work environment.

6. Conclusion

The research focuses on several key factors that contribute to the workplace stress experienced by teachers in higher educational sectors. These factors include a heavy workload, delayed promotions, job insecurity, unsupportive work environment and an inadequate workspace. The study emphasizes the importance of focusing these elements to reduce workplace stress and boost the overall wellbeing of teachers. Additionally, the results highlight the essential role of timely and continuous professional assistance and training in supporting teachers in handling stress efficiently. By providing training programs geared towards stress management and apprehension,

teachers can develop the tools necessary to manage their workloads and navigate stressful situations more effectively. Furthermore, promoting a supportive work environment that recognizes and values educators' contributions can enhance their job satisfaction and commitment.

The study also underlines the significance of promptly directing promotion-associated issues. Delays in promotions can negatively impact educators' motivation and self-esteem, resulting in increased stress levels. The implementation of timely and fair promotion policies in higher education institutions can create a sense of job security and provide a clear path for career advancement. Likewise, the study emphasizes the importance of providing educators with dedicated workspaces as well as essential resources.

In conclusion, the research asserts that workplace stress among teachers in universities is a pressing concern that needs attention from both institutional management and individual educators. By employing the suggested coping strategies, including support, training, and improvements to the work environment, it is possible to mitigate workplace stress in addition foster a more productive, healthier teaching and learning environment within higher education institutions.

References

- Adewale, A. S., Ghavifekr, S., & Abdulsalam, I. (2017). Impact of stress on academic staff: Implication for higher education management and leadership. *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 5(2), 75-91.
- Ahmad, I., Gul, R., & Kashif, M. (2022). A Qualitative Study of Workplace Factors Causing Stress Among University Teachers and Coping Strategies A Qualitative Study of Workplace Factors. *Human Arenas*, 1-23.
- Ahmad, N., & Ashraf, M. (2016). The impact of occupational stress on university employees' personality. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 3(2), 178-202.
- Ahmady, S., Changiz, T., Masiello, I., & Brommels, M. (2007). Organizational role stress among medical school faculty members in Iran: dealing with role conflict. *BMC Medical education*, 7, 1-10.
- Archibong, I. A., Basse, A. O., & Effiom, D. O. (2010). Occupational stress sources among university academic staff. *European Journal of Educational Studies*, 2(3), 217-225.
- Areekkuzhiyil, S. (2014). Factors Influencing the Organizational Stress among Teachers Working in Higher Education Sector in Kerala: An Empirical Analysis. *Online Submission*, 2(2), 1-15.
- Asaloei, S. I., Wolomasi, A. K., & Werang, B. R. (2020). Work-Related stress and performance among primary school teachers. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(2), 352-358.
- Banerjee, S., & Mehta, P. (2016). Determining the antecedents of job stress and their impact on job performance: A study among faculty members. *IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(2), 7-24.

- Basak, S., & Akter, K. (2022). Work-life balance of female university teachers during COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. *Work, 14(4)*, 68-79.
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology, 2*, 17-37.
- Chaudhry, A. Q. (2012). An analysis of relationship between occupational stress and demographics in universities: The case of Pakistan. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 34(2)*, 1-18.
- Chaudhry, M. G. (2020). Employee Engagement: Antecedents and Consequences. *UW Journal of Management Sciences, 4(1)*, 21-39.
- Devi, P., & Lahkar, N. (2021). Occupational stress and job performance among university library professionals of North-East India. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 16(2)*, 2-21.
- Dewe, P. J., O'Driscoll, M. P., & Cooper, C. L. (2012). Theories of psychological stress at work. *Handbook of occupational health and wellness, 1(1)*, 23-38.
- Faisal, F., Noor, N., & Khair, A. (2019). Causes and Consequences of Workplace Stress among Pakistan University Teachers. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 41(3)*, 45-60.
- Gillespie, N. A., Walsh, M., Winefield, A. H., Dua, J., & Stough, C. (2001). Occupational stress in universities: Staff perceptions of the causes, consequences and moderators of stress. *Work & stress, 15(1)*, 53-72.
- Gunbayi, I. (2014). Job Stressors and their effects on academic staff: A case study. *International Journal on New Trends in Education & Their Implications, 5(4)*, 58-73.
- Haseeb, M. A., & Sattar, S. A. (2018). Exploring the causes of job stress and coping strategies among the faculty of public universities. *Journal of Education and Human Development, 7(4)*, 27-33.
- Hunnur, R. R., Vyas, B., Sudarshan, S., Mathad, J. M., & Pareek, P. K. (2013). A study on job stress for school teachers. *Journal of Business and Management, 7(4)*, 42-44.
- Kaur, M., & Kumar, R. (2019). Determinants of occupational stress among urban Indian school teachers. *Research in Education, 105(1)*, 3-17.
- Kavita, K., & Hassan, N. C. (2018). Work stress among teachers: A comparison between primary and secondary school teachers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 7(4)*, 60-66.
- Khan, A., Yusoff, R. B. M., & Azam, K. (2014). Factors of Job Stress among university teachers in Pakistan A conceptual review. *Journal of Management Info, 2(1)*, 62-67.
- Kodavatiganti, K., & Bulusu, V. (2011). Stress Indicators and its Impact on Educators. *SIES Journal of Management, 7(2)*, 88-96.
- Malik, N. A. A., Björkqvist, K., & Österman, K. (2017). Factors associated with occupational stress among university teachers in Pakistan and Finland. *Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology, 6(2)*, 1-14.

- Masuku, S., & Muchemwa, S. (2015). Occupational stress among university lecturers: A case of Zimbabwe. *US-China Education Review*, 5(4), 258-266.
- McCallum, F. (2020). The changing nature of teachers' work and its impact on wellbeing. *Critical perspectives on teaching, learning and leadership: Enhancing educational outcomes*, 1(1), 17-44.
- Mensah, H. K., Fosu, F. A., & Oteng-Abayie, E. F. (2017). Occupational stressors among university non-academic staff: results from a representative public university in Ghana. *International Journal of Business Excellence*, 13(2), 200-216.
- Mkumbo, K. (2014). Prevalence of and factors associated with work stress in academia in Tanzania. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 3(1), 1-11.
- Ojeka, U. I., Dickson, R. S., & Edeoga, G. (2019). Job-related stress among public junior secondary school teachers in Abuja, Nigeria. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 9(1), 136-158.
- Osibanjo, O., Salau, O. P., Falola, H., & Oyewunmi, A. E. (2016). Workplace stress: implications for organizational performance in a Nigerian public university. *Business: Theory and Practice*, 17(3), 261-269.
- Pu, J., Hou, H., Ma, R., & Sang, J. (2017). The effect of psychological capital between work-family conflict and job burnout in Chinese university teachers: Testing for mediation and moderation. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 22(14), 1799-1807.
- Quraishi, U., Aziz, F., & Siddiquah, A. (2018). Stress and coping strategies of university teachers in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Education*, 35(2), 193-206.
- Rahoo, L. A., Raza, S. A., Arain, M. W., & Memon, M. (2017). A study on occupational stress among faculty members in Private Institutes of Hyderabad, Sindh. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1-7.
- Rasool, H., & Ellahi, K. (2017). Effect of Blue Light Muraqaba Meditation (BLMM) on Stress and Performance: The Development of a Measurement Scale. *UW Journal of Management Sciences*, 1(1), 42-52.
- Sabherwal, N., Ahuja, D., George, M., & Handa, A. (2015). A study on occupational stress among faculty members in higher education institutions in Pune. *SIMS Journal of Management Research*, 1(1), 18-23.
- Shahab, H., & Ali, B. (2013). Stressors exploiting teacher's satisfaction and professional commitment the key to reduce job burnout. *African journal of business management*, 7(39), 4109-4121.
- Shrivastava, A. (2020). Identifying and Analyzing Occupational Stress Factors among Faculty of Autonomous Colleges in Madhya Pradesh. *Academic Leadership (Online Journal)*, 21(4), 1-11.

- Sidhu, A. K., Singh, H., Viridi, S. S., & Kumar, R. (2019). Identification of sources of job stress: a study among officers and supervisors. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 19(2), 147-167.
- Solanki, S., & Mandaviya, M. (2021). Does gender matter? Job stress, work-life balance, health and job satisfaction among University Teachers in India. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(7), 121-134.
- Sultana, F., Siddiqui, M. A., Kashif, M., Hanif, M. W., & Kalsoom, S. (2022). Earnings Management Cosmetics and Tricks: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Human University Natural Sciences*, 49(10), 1-17.
- Tahseen, N. (2015). Work-related stress among teacher-educators: Evidence from Punjab. Pakistan *Journal of Psychological Research*, 30(2), 357.
- Tai, K. L., Ng, Y. G., & Lim, P. Y. (2019). Systematic review on the prevalence of illness and stress and their associated risk factors among educators in Malaysia. *PloS one*, 14(5).
- Tasleem, Z. (2021). Pakistani migrant labourers and social network: Empirical evidence from Malaysia. *Pakistan*, 58(1), 27-47.
- Tasleem, Z., Muhammad, S. A., Na'eim Ajis, M., & Abidin, N. A. Z. (2022). Pakistan to Malaysia: What Expectations Behind Migration? *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 23(2), 569-590.
- Tasleem, Z., Na'eim Ajis, M., & Abidin, N. A. Z. (2020). Examining the housing experiences in Malaysia: A qualitative research on Pakistani immigrant labours. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 21, 241-251.
- Universari, N., & Harsono, M. (2021). Antecedents and consequences of work stress behavior. *Economics and Business Solutions Journal*, 5(1), 46-63.
- Usman, A., Ahmed, Z., Ahmed, I., & Akbar, Z. (2011). Work stress experienced by the teaching staff of University of the Punjab, Pakistan: Antecedents and consequences. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(8), 202-210.
- Wadhera, T., & Bano, S. (2020). The Role of Workplace Spirituality and Emotional Stability in Occupational Stress Among College Teachers. *IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19(3), 41-61.
- Yeshaw, Y., & Mossie, A. (2017). Depression, anxiety, stress, and their associated factors among Jimma University staff, Jimma, Southwest Ethiopia, 2016: a cross-sectional study. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, 13(1), 2803-2812.
- Zakaria, S., & Asmawi, A. (2015). Work responsibilities stress among academicians in private universities in Malaysia. *Journal of education and vocational research*, 6(2), 42-47.
- Zhi, A. C. H., Malek, M. D. H., & Bahari, F. (2017). Organizational Stressor of Responsibilities and Burden among Higher Education Deans: An Exploratory Multiple Case Study. *Education Sciences and Psychology*(1), 39-48.