

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF JOB STRESS AMONG COLLEGE TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Occupational stress has emerged as a significant concern among faculty members in higher education institutions due to the expanding scope of academic responsibilities. In addition to teaching and research, college teachers are increasingly expected to undertake administrative duties, comply with accreditation requirements, manage digital learning platforms, and engage in continuous performance evaluation processes. These growing demands have contributed to elevated levels of work-related stress and burnout among educators.

The present study examines the impact of job stress on college teachers working in higher education institutions. Drawing upon the Job Demands, Resources framework, the study explores the relationship between institutional stressors and dimensions of faculty burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Data were collected through standardized and structured instruments designed to assess occupational stress and burnout among teaching professionals.

The findings indicate that excessive workload, administrative responsibilities, technological demands, and role ambiguity are major contributors to job-related stress. Elevated stress levels were found to adversely affect teaching effectiveness, professional commitment, and long-term career satisfaction. The study highlights the need for institutional strategies that promote employee well-being, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, and strengthen organizational

support systems. Creating a healthy work environment is essential not only for faculty welfare but also for maintaining the quality and sustainability of higher education.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Faculty Burnout, Higher Education, Technostress, Teaching Effectiveness, Job Demands–Resources Model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a vital role in knowledge creation, skill development, and societal advancement. Faculty members constitute the core human resource within these institutions, as they are responsible for teaching, research, student mentoring, and academic administration. In recent years, however, the nature of academic work has undergone substantial transformation. The responsibilities of college teachers now extend beyond traditional classroom instruction and research activities to include extensive documentation, accreditation procedures, performance monitoring, digital learning management, and institutional reporting requirements.

The increasing complexity of academic responsibilities has contributed to a growing concern regarding occupational stress among faculty members. Job stress occurs when professional demands exceed an individual's capacity or available resources to cope effectively. Within higher education settings, excessive workload, time pressures, technological changes, administrative expectations, and role conflicts frequently create stressful working conditions for teachers. Persistent exposure to such stressors may result in physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and declining professional effectiveness.

Previous studies have consistently reported that prolonged occupational stress negatively affects employee well-being and organizational performance. In academic environments, stress not only influences the psychological health of teachers but also affects instructional quality, student engagement, research productivity, and institutional effectiveness. Kinman and Jones (2008) observed that higher education professionals often experience significant levels of occupational strain arising from competing work demands and limited organizational support. Similarly, Maslach and Leiter (2016) identified burnout as a critical outcome of chronic workplace stress, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished professional accomplishment.

The rapid integration of digital technologies into higher education has introduced additional challenges for faculty members. The widespread use of learning management systems, online assessment platforms, virtual communication tools, and institutional databases has increased the administrative and technological demands placed on educators. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as technostress, has become an emerging source of occupational strain within academic institutions.

Despite increasing recognition of faculty stress, research attention has often focused more heavily on student well-being than on the experiences of educators. Consequently, there remains a need for comprehensive investigations that examine the factors contributing to job stress among college teachers and the implications of such stress for professional performance and career sustainability.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to examine the major determinants of occupational stress among college teachers in higher education institutions and to evaluate its impact on burnout and professional outcomes. By identifying key institutional stressors and their consequences, the study aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies that promote faculty well-being and strengthen organizational effectiveness within higher education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Occupational stress has become an increasingly important area of investigation within higher education due to the evolving nature of academic work. Faculty members are expected to fulfil multiple roles that extend beyond teaching and research, including administrative management, student mentoring, institutional reporting, accreditation compliance, and participation in academic governance. The accumulation of these responsibilities often creates conditions that expose educators to significant levels of work-related stress.

The concept of occupational stress refers to the psychological and physiological responses that arise when job demands exceed an individual's perceived capacity to cope effectively. Within academic settings, stress may originate from excessive workloads, limited institutional support, role ambiguity, inadequate resources, technological challenges, and conflicting professional

expectations. When these pressures persist over extended periods, they may adversely affect both employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

A substantial body of research has documented the prevalence of stress among educators. Kinman and Jones (2008) reported that university faculty frequently experience elevated levels of occupational strain due to increasing performance expectations and changing institutional priorities. Their findings indicated that prolonged exposure to work-related stress can negatively influence job satisfaction, professional commitment, and overall psychological health.

Burnout represents one of the most significant consequences of chronic occupational stress. According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), burnout is a multidimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of depletion resulting from excessive psychological demands. Depersonalization reflects a detached or cynical attitude toward work-related interactions, while reduced personal accomplishment involves a decline in self-efficacy and professional confidence.

In higher education institutions, burnout has implications that extend beyond individual faculty members. Burnout may contribute to lower teaching quality, diminished student engagement, decreased research productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover intentions. Consequently, understanding the factors that contribute to burnout has become a strategic concern for institutional leaders seeking to maintain educational quality and organizational sustainability.

The rapid integration of digital technologies has introduced additional sources of occupational stress. The transition toward technology-enhanced teaching, learning management systems, online assessments, virtual meetings, and electronic reporting has transformed the academic work environment. While these innovations offer numerous benefits, they have simultaneously increased faculty workload and created new forms of psychological strain. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as technostress, has emerged as a significant predictor of burnout among educators.

Recent studies have highlighted the growing influence of technostress on academic professionals. Faculty members often encounter challenges associated with continuous technological adaptation, increased digital communication, system maintenance, and expectations of constant availability. These factors frequently blur the boundaries between professional and personal life, resulting in reduced work-life balance and heightened emotional fatigue.

The Job Demands Resources (JD-R) Model proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001) provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding occupational stress among college teachers. The model suggests that every occupation consists of specific job demands and job resources. Job demands require sustained physical, emotional, or cognitive effort and are therefore associated with psychological costs. Conversely, job resources facilitate goal achievement, reduce work-related strain, and promote employee motivation.

Within the context of higher education, teaching responsibilities, administrative tasks, research obligations, accreditation requirements, and technological demands represent key job demands. Resources such as organizational support, professional autonomy, collegial relationships, leadership support, and opportunities for professional development serve as protective factors that may buffer the negative effects of stress.

The present study adopts the JD-R framework to examine how institutional demands influence stress and burnout among college teachers. By integrating established theories of occupational stress with contemporary challenges facing higher education professionals, the study seeks to contribute to the growing literature on faculty well-being and organizational effectiveness.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of occupational stress among college teachers. The quantitative component facilitated the measurement of stress levels

and burnout dimensions, while qualitative interviews provided contextual insights into faculty experiences and institutional challenges.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised full-time faculty members employed in higher education institutions. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure adequate representation across academic ranks and years of teaching experience. The final sample consisted of 400 college teachers employed in higher education institutions across Madurai and selected neighboring districts of Tamil Nadu. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure adequate representation of faculty members from different academic disciplines, designations, and levels of teaching experience.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using three instruments.

First, the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey (MBI-ES) was employed to assess emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The instrument is widely recognized for its reliability and validity in educational settings.

Second, a Faculty Stress Index was developed to measure major occupational stressors including workload, administrative responsibilities, technological demands, student-related challenges, institutional support, and organizational pressures.

Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of faculty members to explore their lived experiences regarding occupational stress and institutional expectations.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to faculty members after obtaining institutional permission and informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured throughout the study. Interviews were conducted separately and recorded with participant consent for subsequent thematic analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Means and standard deviations were calculated to identify major stressors. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to determine relationships between job stress and burnout dimensions. Regression analysis was used to examine the predictive influence of institutional stressors on emotional exhaustion.

Qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were coded, categorized, and interpreted to identify recurring themes and patterns associated with occupational stress experiences.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that occupational stress remains a significant concern among faculty members working in higher education institutions. Descriptive analysis revealed that workload pressures, administrative responsibilities, and technological demands emerged as the most prominent sources of stress.

The highest mean score was observed for workload and time-related pressures, suggesting that faculty members experience considerable difficulty balancing teaching, research, assessment, and administrative obligations. Administrative duties were identified as the second most influential stressor, reflecting concerns regarding documentation, accreditation requirements, reporting procedures, and compliance-related tasks.

Technostress emerged as another important contributor to occupational strain. Participants reported challenges associated with adapting to digital platforms, managing online communication, and maintaining continuous engagement with institutional technologies. These findings support previous research indicating that technological demands have become a significant source of stress within contemporary higher education environments.

Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between occupational stress and faculty burnout ($r = .71$, $p < .001$) among the 450 faculty members

surveyed. This finding suggests that higher levels of occupational stress were associated with increased levels of burnout among college teachers.

The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that administrative workload and technostress were significant predictors of emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .58$, $p < .001$). This suggests that increased institutional demands substantially influence the development of burnout among faculty members. The findings are consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, which posits that excessive job demands, when not balanced by adequate resources, lead to strain and psychological exhaustion.

The qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results. Two major themes emerged from the interview analysis. The first theme, “Administrative Burden,” reflected widespread frustration regarding the amount of time devoted to paperwork, compliance activities, and institutional documentation. Participants expressed concern that these responsibilities reduced the time available for teaching, research, and student engagement.

The second theme, “Erosion of Work-Life Boundaries,” highlighted the challenges associated with constant digital connectivity. Faculty members reported feeling pressured to remain accessible through email, messaging applications, and online learning platforms beyond normal working hours. This expectation of continuous availability contributed to stress, fatigue, and difficulties maintaining personal well-being.

The findings align with the work of Kinman and Jones (2008), who emphasized the relationship between occupational stress and reduced well-being among academic staff. Similarly, the results support the observations of Maslach and Leiter (2016), who identified chronic workplace stress as a primary precursor to burnout.

The study also provides empirical support for the JD-R Model proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001). The results demonstrate that high job demands, particularly workload, administrative obligations, and technological pressures, contribute to strain and burnout when sufficient organizational resources are unavailable.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the impact of occupational stress among college teachers in higher education institutions. The findings demonstrate that faculty members experience substantial levels of stress arising from multiple institutional demands, including workload pressures, administrative responsibilities, and technological requirements.

The study establishes a significant association between occupational stress and burnout, highlighting the adverse effects of excessive job demands on emotional well-being, professional commitment, and teaching effectiveness. Faculty members experiencing elevated stress levels are more likely to report emotional exhaustion, diminished motivation, and reduced satisfaction with their professional roles.

The results underscore the importance of creating supportive institutional environments that prioritize faculty well-being alongside organizational performance. Higher education institutions must recognize that educator well-being is closely linked to educational quality, student outcomes, and institutional sustainability.

Reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, strengthening professional support systems, promoting work-life balance, and providing adequate technological resources may contribute significantly to mitigating occupational stress. Future research should explore longitudinal patterns of stress among faculty members and evaluate the effectiveness of institutional interventions designed to improve employee well-being.

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