Occupational Stress! A Comprehensive Analysis of Higher Education Universities of Khyber Paktunkhwa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Stress has been introduced as a creatively ambiguous term that brings detrimental consequences to both individuals as well as the organization. Stress, if left unchecked may result in burnout that is the stage where person develops feelings of exhaustion, lack of accomplishment and depression. This research study is an effort to identify the stressors causing stress in the faculty members of public and private sector universities of Khyber PaktunKhwa, Pakistan. Stressors identified were; Work Load, Reward, Student/faculty interaction, Collegial/Social interaction, Self Efficacy, Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice, Leadership Style and Organizational Politics. These stressors were pointed as the major causes of stress by faculty of 18 universities. Questionnaire instrument was designed and data was collected that resultantly showed that Student/Faculty interaction, Leadership Style, and Collegial/ Social Interaction were the most important occupational stressors identified by the faculty members of KP.
Key words: Stress, Stressors, Job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STRESS

Stress is a phenomenon which is experienced by human beings in life. The results of stress can be positive, negative, or both. Either it can motivate a person to perform better or it can de-motivate the person altogether. Teaching is a complex job which carries too much of stress dimensions [1]. Study of teachers dynamics shows, increase in the work load of the teachers, long working stay at institutions, greater number of students supervision, paper checking etc: leads to stress of teachers. Certain degree of stress is necessary, so that staff is committed and focused to achieve objectives. But when stress exceeds certain limit it becomes negative, and can demoralize and de-motivate employees in the organization.[1],[9]

The "Stress" amongst teachers is a prominent area of interest for educationists/researchers and education policy/decision makers throughout the world. Hence, they do research to find out the factors affecting stress! Teaching is an important profession globally; it does not have the place it deserves. People prefer other professions over this profession because they think; teachers have high degree of 'occupational stress' or 'work related stresses'. Teaching is a noble profession that has both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards attached to it, but still there are problems related to this profession which cause different level of stress [2]. Although internationally several researches have been conducted on this area across the globe but it is the time to find the problem related to stress in Pakistan. Teachers are unhappy with their profession; because of socialistic and as well as economic reasons. But, currently many research studies have highlighted this stress in their work. In Pakistan educational institutions are targeted and criticized because of the changing facets of the knowledge, customer's perceptions and technological advances; however, rewards of teaching job are usually smogged by the complex working conditions and the political environment that are rampant in many private and public universities. Major emotional state (psychologically) felt by teachers is reportedly stressing; higher than anxiety, angst, misery despair and depression, causing loss in confidence and motivation [2]. Teaching holistically is a dignified profession; (our prophet's profession) and people expect a lot from it. These expectations are social obligations which, in turn, will cause more stress in teachers [3].

In a comparative study, conducted in USA, observed 26 occupations and furnished that teaching was one of the most stressful occupation [4]. Stress has become a major dilemma amongst teachers due to quick changes in education system during 1980-1990 [5]. Teaching is a noble job and parents of the students have many expectations from the teachers and these expectations pose more stress on them. Nowadays, stress is a major problem of modern workforce, and modern working environment faced by regular up-downs, takeovers, and fierce competition. Researchers have explored that stress is inescapable [6]. If in the preliminary stages, stress of teachers is remain unimpeded and un-known it may leads to burnout [2].

STRESS AND STRESSORS: A review of the literature

Walter Cannon, a physiologist working at the Harvard Medical School, was a person who started work on stress in 1914. He for the first time defined that stress is a body retort; meaning, 'fight or flight response' [7]. [8] A

young endocrinologist in 1925 was engrossed to find and measure this response in his experiments using animals (rats) and divulging them to gain knowledge of different stressors. On the basis of experiments it was found that stress can be comprehensively explained in three stages. These stages are named as GAS (General Adaptation Syndrome). First is the alarm stage, in which employees are alarmed showing few symptoms of stress. Second is resistance stage in which, level of stress is now enhanced and employees resist to this stage it means employees are not accepting the changes applied by the organization (and it is difficult for them to adjust). Third stage is exhaustion stage, in which employees are now under consistent stress, and that usually results in fatigue and burnout. Research further explained two important dimensions of stress; stress and distress or (eu-stress).

Researchers augmented that, low level of stress is useful in employee performance and it make employees committed and on the track [9]. Schafer; who presented the thought of 'self esteem' and showed that it is affected by stress [10]. Further work on stress from medical point of view revealed that there is a strong connection between stress and headache. Similarly, [11] established a relationship between stress and coronary heart disease (CHD). Many studies have explained that teaching is a demanding profession and teachers are mainly affected by (professional) job stress [12], [13]

The key stressors identified by different researches are explained in detail below;

1- Workload:

In a longitudinal study stretched over 10 years period from (1984-1994) found that teachers become stressful when they are ask to work for more hours and with more work load and other management duties[14]. Stress arises as the consequence of qualitative and quantitative work overload and job demands [15]. In every organization; level of stress is different because of the different stressors. Less financial resources invest on education is another factor for the stress [14]. Most of the teachers get stress because they were asked to do things, which are not concerned with teaching [16]. These increasing management responsibilities in the form of extra work overload is causing stress in teachers.

2- Collegial/Social interaction (CSI):

Poor relation with colleagues also causes stress in employees; It suggested that strong interaction and good relation with colleagues reduce the stress in working environment [17]. Trust (belief) and distrust (disbelieve) between colleagues in the job environment, and there relationship is important to be considered while studying stress [18]. Factors which can avoid stress are; support of colleagues, security and acceptance of suggestions etc: reduce the stress and if these factors are not controlled the stress will be greater. Four stressors were identified in the researches; where, 'poor relations' was the major stressor [19]. These poor collegial relationships were also supported by the other studies [20].

3- Self efficacy (SE):

Self efficacy is the capabilities and confidence to perform the task that needs to be completed according to occupational demands [21]. Low self efficacy will cause mental stress, frustration, irritation, and anger and will in turn cause schizophrenia and dejection (depression). Greater magnitude of stress will affect the self esteem (dignity) of individuals and make them more prone to diseases. When teachers compromise on self esteem and respect, the body goes out of balance psychologically and burnout will be caused. Self efficacy is the factor which works as moderating variables between employees stress and stressors [22]. There are studies that support job-demand-control-model and explains that self efficacy help teachers to reduce the stress level [23]. One of the reasons of stress in teacher is the low level of self efficacy and the support of the organization [24].

4- Rewards:

There are motivational factors; Intrinsic and Extrinsic attraction attached to the employees working in an organization where, intrinsic factors; includes the inherent satisfaction of the employees and they are mostly qualitative and external factors which derived as there extrinsic motivation (and they are mostly quantitative) [25]. Rewards to teachers and positive interaction between students and class environment motivate the teachers to work hard and vice versa. Organizations should give performance based pay to their employees and should give additional reward to motivate employees [26]. Reward is the factors which decrease stress. Both financial and non financial compensation are important for the employee's motivation and to avoid stress.

5- Student/Faculty Interaction (SFI):

Class environment is one of the major factors for the teacher stress. Some of the issues identified by the researches are; class room problems, lack of interest of students in studies and verbal abuse are giving teachers variable degrees of strain [27]. Five prominent factors which add to teachers stress are; misbehaviour of the students, workload (WL), more working time, and lack of appreciation by the management [20]. Among these factors 'misbehaviour' was major determinant causing stress. It is difficult to control a huge class (strength) of students, and teacher has to manage the verbal and physical aggressions of students [26],[27]. Another major cause of teacher anxiety is; 'disrespect of teachers' especially for the female gender and this disrespect come in verbal and non verbal form [11].

6- Procedural Justice (PJ)

Teachers when quit, mostly blame bureaucratic nature of organization [28]. Teachers face high stress, when they have high expectations from the organization and on the other hand low stress due to the job requirements, organizational rules and policies [24]. In occupational stress category; the importance of PJ, in causing stress and frustration cannot be denied [29].

7- Distributive Justice (DJ)

Study conducted in universities of USA revealed that distributive justice is one of the important factors in causing stress along with other procedural, interpersonal, and informational injustice [30]. These factors were later identified as stressors. There is a significant relationships between health complaints, distributive and procedural justice [31].

8- Leadership Style (LS)

Leadership is 'about establishment of vision, value and creation of environment, so that the organizational objective can be achieved' [32]. The leader's ability to adapt to internal and external environment changes and lead a group of cordial subordinates to work together is the key to success. Although leaders are in a unique position to influence employee's emotion and behaviour, the impact of leadership on employee stress has received very little research attention. There is a dearth of studies that examine the influence of leadership on employee stress [33].

9- Organizational Politics (OP)

Politics in the organization and aggressive behaviour of the employees with one another or with management is also responsible for the stress [34]. Therefore job-distress is a corollary of organizational politics (OP) that exceeds other factors. In several studies organizational politics and stress were found highly correlated. Stress is a psychological condition that has a possible impact on the employee's behaviour and can lead to sufficient levels of strain and anxiety [35]. However, many research studies have not considered the organizational politics as a major factor which cause stress and can decrease the productivity level of the employees. One of the important causes of stress is OP and grouping in the organization [29].

Hypothesis:

Based on the objectives of the research study and literature review; following hypothesis were developed:

Table I: Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1	'WORKLOAD' will affect job satisfaction of the employees.
Hypothesis 2	'REWARDS' are positively related to job satisfaction.
Hypothesis 3	'STUDENT/FACULTY INTERACTION' will positively affect job satisfaction of employees.
Hypothesis 4	'COLLEGIAL SOCIAL INTERCATION' is positively related to job satisfaction.
Hypothesis 5	'SELF EFFICACY' is positively related to job satisfaction.
Hypothesis 6	'PROCEDURAL JUSTICE' is positively related to employee job satisfaction.
Hypothesis 7	'DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE' (or equitable compensation) is positively related to job satisfaction.
Hypothesis 8	'LEADERSHIP STYLE' will affect employee job satisfaction.
Hypothesis 9	'ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS' will affect job satisfaction.

Figure-1 shows that there are nine independent variables identified through literature review. These variables are the major cause of faculty stress. Where, stress is the dependent variable causing dissatisfaction in faculty if not properly controlled and adverse affects of stress can be seen as fatigue and burnout.

MEASURE AND METHODS

Nature of the research

This research study was causal in nature that revolves around stress and stressors causing dissatisfaction among faculty members of chartered universities of KP, rendering management education. There were nine prominent causes (variables) of stress identified in previous researches. The scope of the study is limited to the management universities/institutions that have got degree awarding status and are chartered by government of KP therefore the population includes eighteen universities of KP recognized by Higher Education Commission (HEC). Through Simple random sampling faculty members were selected and contacted through questionnaire instrument.

FIGURE : 1   RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Independent variables   Dependent variable
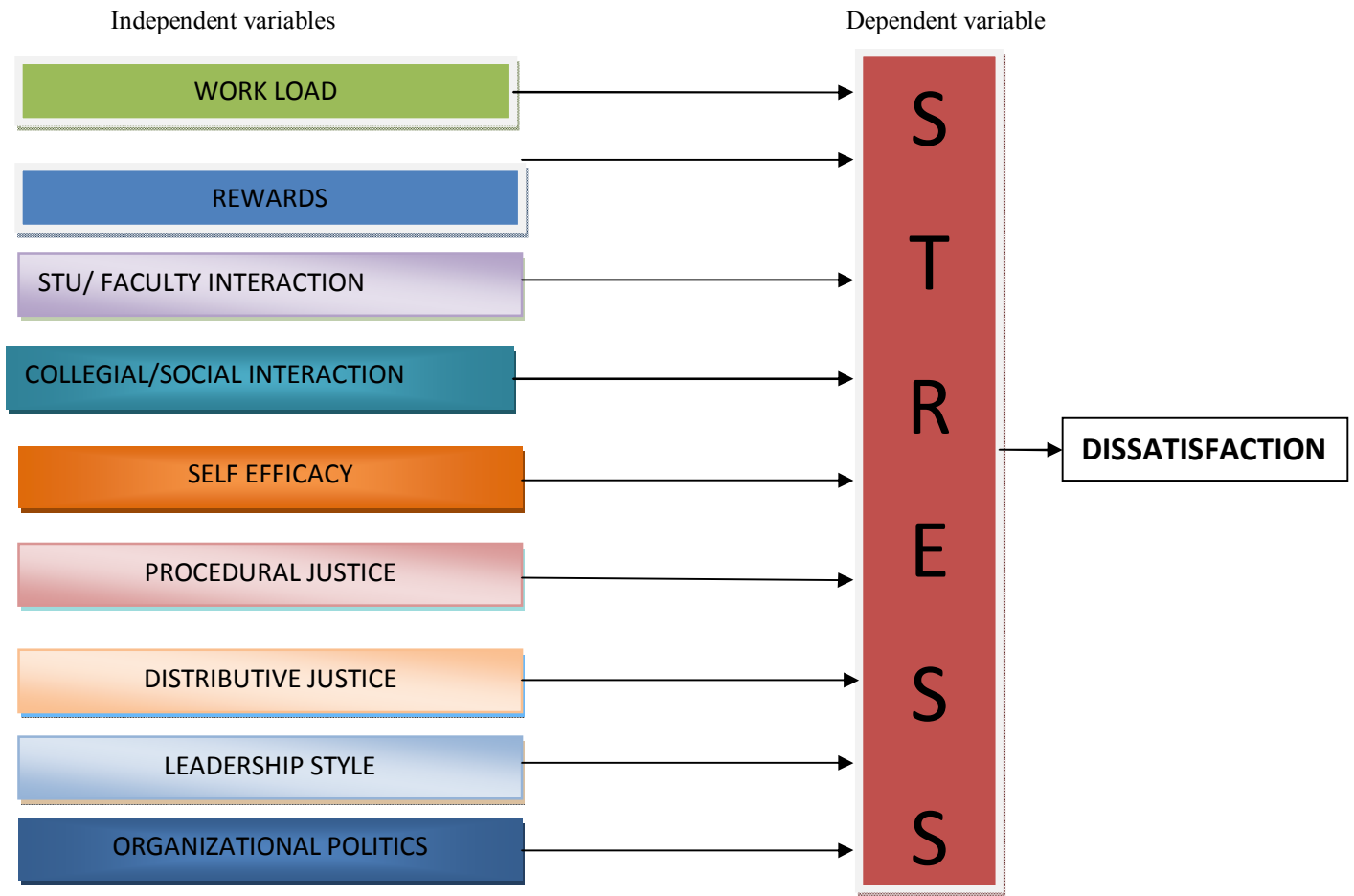
Questionnaire Design:

The research instrument 'questionnaire' was design in a manner that can be facilitative to the respondents but before that interview from the respondents was conducted to validate the items chosen for the study based on previous literature. After conducting interview and getting the response of the faculty members about the 'items' chosen; finally, questionnaire instrument was given shape. Pilot test was conducted to find limitations in the research instrument like linguistic barriers, typing errors, mistakes or any other factor which respondent wants to add, and then questionnaire was given final shape and was sent to the faculty members for getting the responses. Furthermore, for the reason of convenience, instrument questionnaire was divided into three prominent sections; demographic, sources of job stress on five point likert scale, and open ended section to rank primary source of stress.

Questionnaire technique was designed on the basis of funneling approach in which, respondents were asked questions from specific to broad. In order to find the reliability of the items used in the instrument cronbach's alpha test was conducted. There were 48 items listed and tested in the questionnaire where dependent variable Stress, is distributed on five point likert-scale; not at all stressful is = 1, somewhat stressful is = 2,Considerably Stressful = 3, Decidedly stressful = 4, and Extremely stressful is = 5.

Reliability of the instrument:

Reliability of the data is needed in any research for authenticity. Psychometric test score for a sample of examinees whose value was calculated and it showed significant reliability. Alpha value for all the stressors are greater than 0.7 showing considerable reliability of the data.

Table 2 : Individual Factors Reliability

	Dependent variable	Independent variable	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Stress	Workload	.721
2	Stress	Rewards	.726
3	Stress	Student and faculty	.807
4	Stress	Collegial	.715
5	Stress	Self Efficacy	.809
6	Stress	Procedural justice	.872
7	Stress	Distributive justice	.780
8	Stress	leadership styles	.886
9	Stress	Political environment	.811

Population and Sample

Population of the research study includes Public and Private sector universities of KP focusing on chartered universities offering business administration degrees. There were about 18 universities offering business degrees in KP, amongst them 11 were in public and 7 were in private sector. Targeted population was carefully selected, that includes all the business institution offering management education serving in KP while all affiliated institutions are eliminated from the list. To have proportionate and unbiased sample and sample size that would lead the research towards reliability and validity simple random sampling was done with 32% sample size (that equals to 398 number of teachers approximately). Where, private sector strength = 499 and public sector strength = 729.

General demographic Profile of the Respondents

Respondents are of 20 to 60 years of age mostly and are divided into categories for researcher convenience. In the research; females were given equal chance of selection so to get the exact view of the respondents for stress irrespective of the gender. But female participation was 104 against 282 males. Equal weight was given to the employees responses irrespective of the nature of their job (regular, contractual etc) or rank of the job (lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, professor). Following table show demography of the respondents;

Table 3: Demography of The Respondents

Sector	Private sector =	199	
	Public sector =	199	
Age	20-30		188
	31-40		126
	41-50		50
	51-60		22
	60+		04
Gender	male		282
	Female	104	
Marital status	Single		166
	Married	220	
Type of employment	Regular/permanent	190	
	Contract	118	
	0thers		26
Rank of the respondents	Lecturer/instructor	250	
	Assistant professor	72	
	Associate professor	30	
	Professor	14	
	Others		24

ANALYSIS

To find out level of association between stress and stressors; chi-square test was conducted. In first case, as a step 1 for data analysis; level of association was checked between the nine identified 'stressors' and the 'stress' through Pearson Chi square.

Table-4: Summarized Result of Pearson Chi Square For 9 Stressors

Pearson Chi Square	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig(2 sided)	Remarks
Work Load (WL)	47.451	12	.000	Significant
Rewards (R)	22.388	8	.004	Significant
Student/Faculty Interaction (SFI)	22.069	16	.141	In-Significant
Collegial/Social Interaction (CSI)	47.717	16	.000	Significant
Self efficacy (SE)	22.860	12	.118	In-Significant
Procedural Justice (PJ)	1.109	28	.000	Significant
Distributive Justice (DJ)	34.297	12	.001	Significant
Leadership Style (LS)	69.810	28	.000	Significant
Organizational Politics (OP)	1.587	20	.000	Significant

With the help of tables all categories (WL, Rewards, CSI, PJ, DJ, LS, OP) with values; 0.000, 0.004, 0.000, 0.000, 0.001, 0.000, 0.000 are less then (alpha $\alpha = 0.05$) showing that significant association between level of stress and categories which cause stress. Other two categories are insignificant and there is no or less association between stress and SFI, SE whose values are 0.141, 0.118. To find out contribution of each factor (stressor) on stress; anova test was conducted as step-2 of analysis.

Table-5: Anova of 9 Stressors

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	54337.517	8	6792.190	2.078E3	.000
Within Groups	10392.323	3180	3.268		
Total	64729.840	3188			

Anova test concludes that all factors taken as a category of stress are not equally contributing to the level of stress. Now to further explore which stressor is causing more stress, sum of frequencies of all the respondents were obtained.

Table-6: Sum of Frequencies of All Questionnaire Items

Items No	F1 choice (1-5)	F2 choice (1-5)	F3 choice (1-5)	F4 choice (1-5)	F5 choice (1-5)	SUM
1	4	2	0	2	2	10
2	8	2	4	4	6	24
3	16	6	2	4	2	30
4	6	4	6	2	0	18
5	8	8	6	0	4	26
6	16	14	6	2	4	42
7	6	10	16	10	4	46
8	**32**	**10**	**8**	**10**	**12**	**72**
9	8	14	14	8	0	44
10	6	6	2	4	0	18
11	6	4	10	6	4	30
12	8	2	4	6	4	24
13	8	4	6	2	8	28
14	10	14	0	6	4	34
15	**6**	**14**	**12**	**10**	**8**	**50**
16	4	12	8	8	2	34
17	10	6	6	2	6	30
18	2	6	2	6	10	26
19	2	8	2	4	2	18
20	0	6	2	4	0	12
21	6	2	2	2	0	12
22	2	4	6	4	0	16
23	6	4	12	6	0	28
24	6	6	10	4	6	32
25	6	14	4	6	4	34
26	2	6	2	8	6	24
27	4	6	4	4	4	22
28	2	2	6	4	8	22
29	4	8	8	4	2	26
30	0	6	6	10	0	22
31	6	2	14	2	2	26
32	6	4	2	6	4	22
33	0	8	6	6	4	24
34	8	4	14	8	4	38
35	12	2	4	4	10	32
36	0	2	2	2	2	8
37	4	4	4	4	0	16
38	0	4	4	0	8	16
39	**12**	**12**	**12**	**14**	**14**	**64**
40	6	4	0	4	2	16
41	2	0	2	8	0	12
42	0	2	10	4	8	24
43	8	2	2	2	2	16
44	0	2	0	0	2	4
45	0	0	2	0	2	4
46	0	0	4	0	6	10
47	4	4	4	2	0	14
48	6	6	2	6	22	42

0= Missing Value

48 questions (items) were chosen as sub factors that makes the category of nine stressors. These are the prime factors due to which stressors are present in the stress inventory. Choices were made by the respondents from level (1-5). Clearly sub factor (8) that is ; "students come unprepared in the class" under the stressor SFI is mentioned 72 times by the respondents in level 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Where, at level one it was stated 32 times, at level two it was stated 10 times, at level three it was stated 8 times and at level four and five it was stated 10, and 12 times respectively. This means that respondent's inclination towards the stressor SFI is prominent and it is causing more stress than the other stressors. Similarly, at second position sub factor (39) that is; "favouritism/nepotism" which comes under the heading of stressor LS is mentioned 64 times by the respondents irrespective of the level of stress 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.where, at level one two and three it was stated 12 times by the respondents and at level four and five it was stated 14 times. At third position, sub factor (15) that is; "not knowing, that how my performance is evaluated in

the organization" which comes under the stressor CSI, is mentioned 50 times by the respondents showing its importance. Where, 6 times it was mentioned at level one, 14 times at level 2, 12 times at level 3, 10 times at level four and 8 times at level five. Hence SFI, LS and CSI are important stressors motioned by the respondents which are causing more stress than others.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Great achievement of the research is identification, recognition and verification of four factors; (PJ, DJ, LS, and OP) other then the factors repeatedly stated in previous researches. It can be concluded that these factors can be because of context (cultural) differences and can change with diverse backgrounds. Results of Pearson Chi square clearly shows that WL, Reward, CSI, PJ, DJ, LS an OP are significant and are important in causing stress. Hence Universities should review their policies that are needed to reduce employee stress, frustration, and disappointment. Furthermore results of Anova showed that factors are not equally contributing in causing stress. So the question arises that what factors are causing more stress than the others? To answer this sum of frequencies were calculated to know respondents preference for stress.

Sum of frequencies of items showed that SFI, LS and CSI are important stressors motioned by the respondents that are causing more stress than others. As like other problems, solution to the problem of stress underlie in the ''communication'' (LS and CSI). The problem could be resolved better if both the employer as well as the effected employees mutually coordinate for its proper eradication, and could mutually devise coping strategies. Where SFI can be controlled only if students are highly cooperative and disciplined in their behaviour with the faculty members. For that student teacher interaction, training and motivation is needed from the employer perspective.

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