

Job Stress and Stress Management Practices among University Faculty: An Empirical Study from a Management Perspective

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Abstract

Job stress has emerged as a critical organisational issue in higher education institutions, influencing faculty well-being, job satisfaction, and overall institutional effectiveness. University faculty members are required to balance multiple roles such as teaching, research, administrative responsibilities, and student mentoring, often under conditions of increasing performance expectations and limited resources. The present empirical study examines the level of job stress, major stressors, and preferred stress management practices among university faculty members. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, primary data were collected from 66 faculty members through a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistical tools with the aid of SPSS. The findings reveal that faculty members experience moderate levels of job stress despite reporting high levels of job satisfaction, indicating the presence of functional stress. Workload, role expectations, and work-life balance were identified as the major sources of stress. Age and experience emerged as moderating factors influencing stress perception and coping ability. The study concludes that an integrated stress management approach combining individual coping strategies with organisational support mechanisms is essential for promoting faculty well-being and sustaining academic performance.

Keywords: Job Stress, Stress Management, Faculty Members, Work–Life Balance, Higher Education, Organisational Behaviour

1. Introduction

The contemporary organisational environment is characterised by rapid change, heightened competition, and increasing performance demands, making job stress an unavoidable phenomenon across professions. In higher education institutions, faculty members are expected to perform diverse and complex roles that extend beyond classroom teaching. Academic professionals are required to engage in research, administrative duties, curriculum development, evaluation processes, and student mentoring, often within rigid timeframes and resource constraints. These expanding responsibilities have significantly contributed to the experience of occupational stress among university faculty members.

Job stress may be defined as a psychological and physiological response arising when individuals perceive an imbalance between job demands and their capacity to cope with those demands. While a moderate level

of stress can serve as a motivating force that enhances alertness and performance, excessive or prolonged stress can have detrimental effects on physical health, psychological well-being, and work outcomes. In academic settings, unmanaged stress can result in burnout, reduced teaching effectiveness, diminished research productivity, absenteeism, and weakened organisational commitment.

Universities occupy a unique position within the organisational landscape. Unlike conventional business organisations, academic institutions rely heavily on intellectual labour, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation. Faculty members often face pressure to meet performance benchmarks related to teaching quality, research output, and institutional accreditation, while simultaneously maintaining work-life balance. In the Indian higher education context, factors such as increasing student enrolment, regulatory requirements, and performance-based evaluation systems have further intensified faculty workload and stress.

Despite the growing relevance of occupational stress in academic institutions, empirical research focusing on stress levels and coping mechanisms among university faculty remains limited, particularly from a management perspective. Understanding the nature of job stress, its sources, and the strategies adopted by faculty members to manage stress is essential for designing effective organisational interventions. The present study seeks to contribute to this understanding by empirically examining job stress and stress management practices among university faculty members.

2. Review of Literature

Occupational stress has been extensively studied across disciplines such as psychology, management, and organisational behaviour. Early research conceptualised stress primarily as a physiological response to external stimuli, while later approaches emphasised the role of cognitive appraisal and individual perception. Contemporary organisational research views stress as an interaction between environmental demands and individual coping resources.

Studies on workplace stress have consistently identified workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, interpersonal relationships, and career-related concerns as major stressors. In academic institutions, faculty stress is often associated with teaching load, administrative responsibilities, research expectations, evaluation pressures, and challenges in maintaining work-life balance. Research also suggests that demographic variables such as age, gender, designation, and experience influence stress perception and coping ability.

The literature on stress management highlights the importance of both individual and organisational interventions. Individual-level strategies include physical exercise, relaxation techniques, meditation, time management, and cognitive restructuring. Organisational-level strategies focus on improving role clarity, workload distribution, participative decision-making, counselling services, and supportive leadership. Scholars increasingly advocate integrated stress management approaches that address stress at multiple levels to ensure sustainable outcomes.

3. Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of job stress among university faculty members.
2. To identify the major factors contributing to job stress.
3. To examine the influence of demographic variables on stress perception.
4. To identify the stress management strategies preferred by faculty members.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to examine job stress and stress management practices among university faculty members.

4.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample consisted of 66 faculty members drawn from a university using the convenience sampling method. The respondents represented different age groups, academic designations, and levels of teaching experience, ensuring diversity in perspectives.

4.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to faculty members. Secondary data were collected from books, academic journals, research articles, and institutional publications related to occupational stress and stress management.

4.4 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale and comprised four sections: demographic profile, indicators of job stress, factors causing job stress, and stress management strategies.

4.5 Tools for Analysis

The collected data were coded and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages were employed to interpret the data.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by its relatively small sample size and the use of convenience sampling. The findings are based on self-reported data, which may involve response bias.

5. Results

The demographic analysis revealed representation across various age groups and academic designations, with a significant proportion of respondents having considerable teaching experience. Most faculty members reported handling moderate teaching workloads.

An important finding of the study is the coexistence of high job satisfaction and moderate levels of job stress. Faculty members generally expressed satisfaction with their job roles and working conditions, indicating strong professional commitment. However, moderate stress levels were reported, particularly in relation to workload, administrative responsibilities, and time constraints.

Stress levels were comparatively higher among younger and early-career faculty members, especially guest and temporary staff. Senior faculty members reported lower stress levels, which may be attributed to greater experience, role clarity, and developed coping mechanisms.

The major factors contributing to job stress included workload, role expectations, and challenges in maintaining work-life balance. Interpersonal relationships at the workplace were not identified as significant stressors, suggesting a supportive organisational climate.

In terms of stress management, faculty members predominantly relied on individual coping strategies such as maintaining work-life balance, relaxation techniques, exercise, and meditation. At the organisational level, respondents emphasised the importance of counselling services, clear role definitions, and institutional support mechanisms.

6. Discussion

The findings of the study highlight that job stress among university faculty members is present but largely functional in nature. The coexistence of high job satisfaction and moderate stress supports the concept of eustress, where stress acts as a motivating force rather than a debilitating factor. This finding is consistent with earlier studies that emphasise the dual nature of stress in professional settings.

The moderating role of age and experience observed in the study aligns with career-stage theories in organisational behaviour. Senior faculty members appear better equipped to manage stress due to accumulated experience and enhanced coping abilities, while early-career faculty members are more vulnerable to stress arising from role ambiguity and performance expectations.

The identification of workload and work-life balance as primary stressors is consistent with existing literature on academic stress. The relatively low impact of interpersonal conflict suggests that stress in the studied institution is more task-oriented than relationship-driven. The preference for individual coping strategies highlights faculty resilience but also underscores the need for organisational interventions to prevent long-term stress-related consequences.

7. Managerial Implications

The study offers several important implications for university management:

- Workload distribution should be rationalised to prevent excessive pressure on early-career faculty members.
- Clear role definitions can reduce ambiguity and associated stress.
- Counselling and mentoring programs should be institutionalised to support faculty well-being.
- Work-life balance policies and flexible work practices can enhance faculty satisfaction and performance.
- Preventive stress management initiatives should be integrated into faculty development programs.

8. Conclusion

Job stress among university faculty members is an important organisational issue that warrants systematic attention. While faculty members demonstrate high levels of job satisfaction and professional commitment, persistent stressors related to workload and role expectations can undermine long-term well-being and performance. The findings of the study emphasise the need for an integrated stress management approach that combines individual coping strategies with organisational support mechanisms. By proactively addressing faculty stress, higher education institutions can foster a healthy work environment, enhance academic effectiveness, and ensure sustainable institutional growth.

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