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Mapping The Path to Job Performance: Understanding Occupational Stress Among Teachers in Higher Education

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Teachers often endure occupational stress, which may impair their job effectiveness. The investigation sought to assess the link between teachers' occupational stress and work performance in Higher Education Institutions in South Punjab, Pakistan. The descriptive co-relational method was used for collecting data from a sample of (203) participants through online questionnaires, including the Teachers' Occupational Stress Questionnaire (TOSQ) and (IWPQ) the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire. The results of the study suggested a significant connection between occupational stress and teacher job performance. The study recommended that there is a need to perform the stress inventories to explore what specifically triggers stress among teachers and provide a holistic approach to their well-being to improve work quality in educational institutions This study offers valuable insights shedding light on the factors giving rise to high-stress levels, allowing for the development of effective measures and support systems for teachers in the profession.

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1. Introduction

The psychological stress associated with one's employment is known as occupational stress. It is a chronic illness that can be controlled by being aware of the stressful work environment and taking action to improve it. Stress at work can arise from various factors, such as feeling unsupported by managers or colleagues, having little influence over their work, or believing that their efforts at work do not match the benefits they receive (Quick, 2016). Occupational stress encompasses negative psychological and physical effects from workplace responsibilities, the environment, or other pressures. It is influenced by the individual employee, their specific role, and company culture, among other factors. Various types of occupational stress include new job stress, role conflict and ambiguity, and financial stress (Islam, 2019).

It has been proven that occupational stress is linked to a variety of behavioral, emotional, and medical illnesses and disorders. It may be lessened by practicing preventative stress management, which is figuring out what stresses people out and then doing something about it. Premature mortality and disability are only two of the far-reaching effects of occupational stress (Lundberg, 2010).

Occupational stress may occur when a worker's requirements, resources, or talents are not matched by the demands of their job. This can lead to negative physical and emotional effects. Health problems and even injuries can result from job stress. Though they are not the same, challenges and job stress are sometimes used interchangeably. Stress at work may be detrimental to one's well-being, yet challenges mentally energize us. (Sharma,2012).

A major issue that affects the well-being and quality of life of Pakistani teachers is occupational stress. Numerous studies on occupational stress conducted in various countries and professions provide valuable insights into the factors that have led to this issue. In particular, a high level of occupational stress has been connected to a higher risk to one's physical and psychological wellness as well as a worse quality of life and work performance. (Wu et al., 2010). Organizational, environmental, and individual variables may be used to determine the factors that lead to the stress that comes with being a female secondary school teacher. Similarly, Khalid et al. (2023) also indicated that professional stress significantly decreases instructors' capacity to perform their responsibilities well in educational institutions. Furthermore, Ahmad et al. (2022) identified workload, working space, employment stability, promotion delays, and work environment as key determinants.

Psychological illnesses, including anxiety, sadness, and drug abuse disorders, can also result from it. Moreover, job performance, productivity, involvement at work, communication, and physical capabilities can all be adversely impacted by occupational stress.

According to the American Psychological Association (2021), extended periods of stress at work can lead to hypertension, cardiac problems, and poor mental health, all of which can result in deadly illnesses that claim the lives of over 120,000 individuals annually. As evidenced by medical personnel and other professions, prolonged exposure to high levels of occupational stress can result in a variety of related work-related health issues, both physical and mental. (Maulik,2017). As early indicators of stress at work, the National Institute for Occupational Safety

and Health (NIOSH) has identified symptoms: headaches, sleep disturbances, inability to concentrate, brief explosions, dissatisfaction at work, and a sad attitude (McLellan et al 2009). When burnout is recognized and addressed early on, it may be stopped from getting worse for both employees and employers (Campbell, 2021).

Workplace stress can have long-term consequences for mental health illnesses like anxiety, depressive disorder, and drug use disorders. Suicide, especially workplace suicide, can be caused by mood disorders and ailments brought on by increased exposure to unsafe work environments (Shkembi, 2015). Understanding the long-term effects of occupational stress on mental health and creating suitable support structures and therapies are essential to improving the work environment and general job satisfaction among female teachers. Occupational anxiety-related conditions can also be common, causing excessive, unreasonable, and ongoing tension that makes it difficult to go about regular tasks (Yi, 2022). Occupational stress has a very negative and adverse effect on teachers' performance at work, prompting poor attitudes and lower output (Levantini et al., 2021). Furthermore, the research found that teachers feel that their positions are more difficult than other professions (Subair et al., 2021).

Teaching is one of the most important professions in society because it shapes society's future by providing us with socially responsible and capable citizens. Teachers have the crucial task of molding the intellect and moral character of the young generation. However, it is undeniable that the teaching profession is not easy due to the strict requirements and great responsibilities that come with the job, which can sometimes lead to a significant amount of stress on the part of the teacher.

The stress could arise from many aspects, such as work overload, students' behavior, administrative tasks, and the constant pressure to meet educational goals and objectives. Certainly, every individual experiences some level of stress and pressure, which may damage his or her health. Stress negatively affects mental health by causing anxiety, depression, and burnout, which can have a considerable effect on the life quality of an individual. In the domain of employment, occupational health has established work-related stress as an extremely serious risk. It affects job contentment, reduces efficiency, and contributes to increased levels of truancy and attrition.

An understanding of how stress in the workplace affects the performance of teachers is therefore important in developing support structures that may enhance the general welfare of these professionals. This is especially important in Pakistan's educational sector, which is constantly evolving and facing new challenges. This study therefore seeks to investigate the relationship between occupational stress and work performance in the higher education sector in Pakistan. It aims to show the complex relationships that occur in various settings of education. It is hoped that this will identify exactly what causes occupational stress in teachers and how these contributing factors impact teachers' performance and overall health.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to offer insights that can help in formulating guidelines and strategies that will assist in minimizing the effects of occupational stress on teachers. By addressing these issues, educational institutions can create a healthier and more motivating working environment for teachers, which can not only improve their well-being but also raise the

quality of education they offer. Work-related stress is one of the most prevalent problems facing teachers in higher education institutions, leading to serious consequences such as low productivity and institutional quality.

2. Literature Review

Occupational stress is defined as negative emotions resulting from any aspect of their work, such as tension, anger, concern, frustration, or even sadness (Zhao et al., 2021). Students' comprehension and retention of the information may suffer when teachers are under pressure because they may find it difficult to stay creative and exciting in their classes (Kreuzfeld, 2022).

Numerous studies indicate that the pressure that female educators experience at work can significantly impact their children's academic success. Increased levels of stress in teachers have been associated with poorer overall standards of instruction. (Altemani,2017). Furthermore, Malik et al. (2017) investigated the impact of psychological factors and working conditions on occupational stress among university instructors in Pakistan and Finland, finding that both instructors had stress symptoms. Similarly, Selvavinayagam and Kaviarasu (2019) defined occupational stress as any force that pushes a psychological or physical aspect beyond its range of stability, causing strain inside a person.

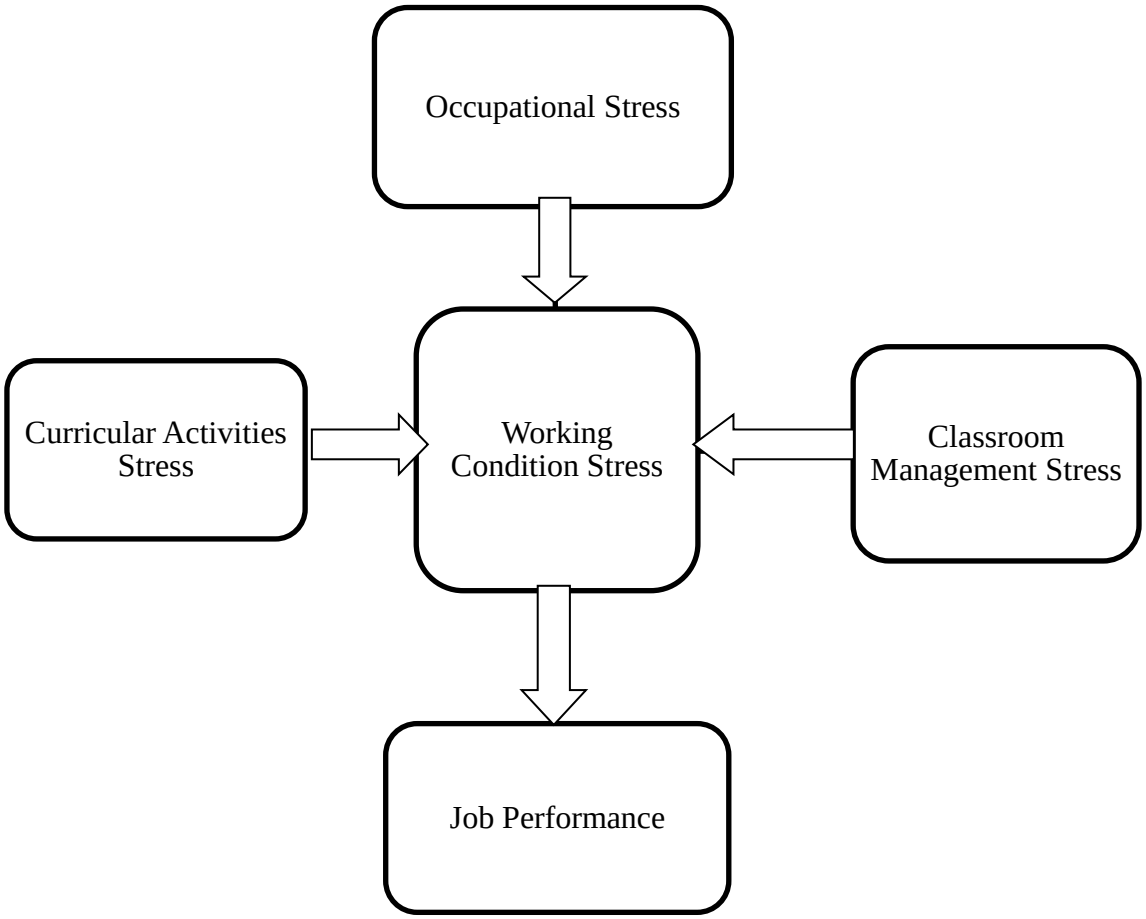
Furthermore, Dhar and Magotra (2018) concluded that across the number of categories of occupations, teachers were at the leading edge of the list of the most stressful occupations. Furthermore, Malik and Björkqvist (2018) found a correlation between increased occupational stress and a higher frequency of anxiety, hypertension, headaches, psychological issues, and cardiovascular diseases among instructors in China.

Teachers' work-related stress can have a big effect on what pupils learn. An impulse to leave teaching positively correlates with prolonged teacher stress, while job fulfillment negatively correlates with it. (Agyapong et al., 2022). Researchers have linked high levels of occupational stress among teachers to poor mental and physical health, strained relationships between teachers and students, and decreased field attendance rates, all of which may be detrimental to children's school performance and general well-being. (Metrailer,2022). Additionally, research by Maqsood et al. (2022) found that factors including student challenges and behaviors, professional development, social and school assessment, and female instructors may all contribute to higher levels of occupational stress among teachers. According to Xhelilaj's (2021) study, particularly female instructors may encounter a greater degree of administrative support deficiency compared to their male counterparts, thereby exacerbating their occupation-related stress. A study on high school teachers found that male instructors were more stressed at work than female instructors, and teachers with less than ten years of teaching experience were more stressed than those with a minimum of ten years of expertise (Jahan, 2017). Stress can have psychological and professional consequences for teachers.

To create a supportive work environment for educators, it is critical to address the various factors that might lead to occupational stress among female instructors. Role ambiguity affects the connection between competing identities and professional stress, according to a study on the effects of COVID-19 on teachers, particularly female instructors (Syarifah, 2023).

Extensive work hours, excessive workload, time constraints, and insufficient breaks are examples of workload and job demands. Uncertainty and conflict in the workplace can be caused by uncertain job conditions and conflicting duties. Managing student behavior is one of the primary causes of stress for teachers (Zamir, 2012). Workplace stress has been linked to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and unfavorable cardiovascular events, including heart attacks and strokes. Studies have indicated that these factors are substantial risk factors (Goh, 2015).

Figure No 1: Research Framework



2.1 Material/Methods

The present study seeks to examine the link between occupational stress and work performance among teachers in higher education institutions. The researchers conducted a quantitative correlational inquiry, representing the population of 311 teachers from the Faculty of Social Sciences at four universities: The Women's University of Multan, The University of Education Lahore, Multan Campus, Emerson University Multan, and Bahuddin Zakriya University, Multan. The current research investigation's sample consisted of 203 total male (98)

and female (105) respondents selected through simple random sampling. The Teachers' Occupational Stress Questionnaire (TOSQ), originally designed by Hendres et al. (2014), served as the scale for data collection, measuring occupational stress among teachers. This TOSQ scale includes 20 statements.

The participants were guided to read each item and reflect on their feelings about it. The scale was rated on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (this activity does not stress me at all) to 6 (this activity bothers me a lot). The TOSQ scale has three subscales: Subscale one, "Curricular and extracurricular activity stress," comprises elements numbered (5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). Questions such as "to make trips with students" and "to have inspections or evaluative situations in the classroom" are used to determine this form of stress. A minimal score of 11 implies moderate curricular and extracurricular stress, while a maximum score of 66 indicates high levels of stress. Subscale two "classroom management stress" items, numbered (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 20), quantify this form of stress with questions such as "to keep quiet in class" and "to maintain discipline and order in the classroom.

A minimal score of 6 suggests little classroom management tension, while a maximum score of 36 indicates severe levels of stress. The three "working conditions stress" subscale items, numbered 6, 7, and 9, assess this type of stress by asking questions like "To teach in noisy conditions (e.g., too much noise outside on the street)" and "To teach in unsuitable thermal conditions (e.g., too cold)." A score of 3 suggests minimal levels of work-related stress, while a score of 18 indicates severe levels of stress. In terms of scale reliability, Hendres et al. (2014) observed a reliability score of 0.88 for the first subscale, 0.83 for the second subscale, and 0.62 for the third subscale, respectively.

Secondly, the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) was employed to determine the job performance of the teachers. This questionnaire has three subscales: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. The instrument (IWPQ) was developed by Koopmans (2014) and consists of 18 items. This scale demonstrates an acceptable fit and meets important measurement specifications with values of 0.81, 0.85, and 0.74, which fall within the range of Cronbach's alpha and show reliability. Furthermore, the researchers conducted the pilot study to identify potential issues with the research instruments. This study focused on concerns such as ethical norms and standards and safeguarding the participants' rights and privacy throughout the research process. It was assured to all participants that their responses would remain anonymous, and they were effectively informed that they were completing an anonymous questionnaire, ensuring the complete confidentiality of the information provided**.**

H1: There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and the job performance of teachers in Higher Education Institutions.

H2: There is no significant difference between the level of occupational stress among the male and female teachers in Higher Education Institutions.

4. Data Analysis

To examine the study's findings, the data was processed utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The data was analyzed using the Pearson coefficient of correlation and the t-test.

Table No 1: Correlations Matrix of Occupational Stress and Job Performance

		Occupational Stress	Job performance
Occupational Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	203	203
Job performance	Pearson Correlation	.450**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	203	203

Table 1. The data presented in the above table indicates that there is a significant correlation between occupational stress and the job performance of teachers. P value is (p= 0.05) which shows a positive significant correlation between the variables.

Table No 2: Gender-Wise Occupational Stress

	Factors	Teacher's Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	P-value	T- value
1.	Curricular Activities Stress	Male	98	75.5	10.2	203	.030	2.15
		Female	105	68.3	9.8			
2.	Classroom Management Stress	Male	98	79.2	11.5	203	.045	1.98
		Female	105	72.4	10.4			
3.	Working Conditions Stress	Male	98	82.1	12.1	203	.500	.67
		Female	105	81.0	11.7			

Table 2 indicates that gender disparities are quite significant in occupational stress levels at the workplace. Female teachers have an average of 68.3, while male teachers have higher levels of stress in curricular activities, 75.5 on average. This is evidenced by t = 2.15, p = .030. In addition, the mean value in Classroom Management for males was 79.2 and for females 72.4. This is yielded by a t-value of 1.98 and a p-value of .045. However, in terms of working conditions both males and females were almost equally stressed with 82.1 and 81.0 respectively on average. An illustration surfaces with a t-value of .67 and a p-value of .500.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

Professional stress is one of the most widespread occurrences in modern society and the workplace since it might be driven by any aspect of human activity. Workplace stress is becoming increasingly prevalent in the teaching profession as teachers face higher educational expectations and demands. The key objective of the investigation was to gain an understanding of the nature of

the connections between work stress and job performance in higher education institutions. Subsequently, this research study stresses the necessity of decreasing workplace stress in educational settings, not only to improve the effectiveness of teachers but also to enhance educational quality. Educational institutions could produce more resilient and thriving teachers by addressing the intricate relationship between stress and performance on the job. From the above study, the researcher has concluded that stress among teachers is common and exists everywhere. So, teachers should be allowed to participate in training, social services, and other stress management-related programs in educational institutions.

Working environment gender also affects teacher stress. The study highlights the need for administrators to provide more social support, and it also emphasizes the necessity for teachers to be trained in how to cope with stress to successfully reduce stress. The research reveals that teachers are feeling stress, which has a positive relationship with their work performance at educational institutions. The study results align with the study undertaken by Ubogu and Oghounu (2022), which similarly found that stress has a significant correlation with teachers' work performance in educational institutions. Similarly, in their study, Ali et al. (2013) found that occupational stress significantly influences the job performance of teachers at educational institutions in Pakistan.

The study revealed that occupational stress had an important effect on the work performance of university instructors. The study outcomes indicated that gender has a statistically significant impact on teachers' levels of occupational stress, as shown in the current research inquiry. In their investigation conducted in 2023, Khalid et al. observed significant gender disparities in occupational stress. Male teachers have a higher level of occupational stress compared to their female colleagues.

5.1 Suggestions for Future Researchers

The current study aimed to obtain comprehensive information, but it has some limitations and gaps. One potential suggestion for future research is to gather additional data on the stressors that exacerbate occupational stress. These stressors can vary from the teachers' health conditions to specific environmental stressors in their home and work environment. Furthermore, this integration would be useful in identifying the main causes of stress both within and outside of the workplace which could assist in designing preventative measures. Future researchers might gain advantages by using a mixed-method strategy including qualitative data to gain more in-depth insights about the phenomena.

5.2 Recommendations

- *Universities should take strategies to establish a robust framework for social support of teachers to minimize stress among the teachers.*
- *Administrators need to focus on taking proactive measures to prevent excessive stress, particularly for female teachers.*

- *Educational institutions should implement relaxation training programs and create a pleasant working atmosphere for teachers.*

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