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Work-related stress in teachers: a comparison between male and female teachers

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Abstract

Teacher's stress can become problematic and even hazardous, according to research. Teacher stress is a reaction to a negative effect, such as a reaction to workload, it is typically accompanied by potentially pathogenic, physiological and biochemical changes resulting from the demands of the job and its mediated by the teacher's perception that the demands pose a threat to their well-being and sense of self-worth. Compared to other occupations, teaching is the most demanding job in the world, according to numerous studies. The definition of teacher stress is discomfort or an unpleasant emotion and teacher stress can become problematic and even hazardous. The purpose of the study was to determine and compare the main causes on work-related stress experienced by male or female teachers. Two public sector universities of Faisalabad. University of Agriculture and GC University. Faisalabad have been selected conventionally. Sixty (60) teachers were selected for each university (30 male or 30 female) conventionally. A sample size of 120 teachers were selected purposely. The data collected through questionnaire will be analyzed by using SPSS. The study revealed that male university teachers reported significantly higher levels of work-related stress than their female counterparts, particularly in areas such as workload, tight deadlines, and lack of autonomy. However, both genders exhibited similar levels of job satisfaction and experienced comparable physical and mental health impacts due to stress, with only a few statistically significant differences. These findings emphasize the urgent need for gender-sensitive stress management strategies in public universities of Pakistan. It is recommended that institutions introduce tailored stress management programs, improve

the availability of teaching resources, and reduce excessive workloads by hiring more staff. Additionally, enhancing institutional support through counseling services, transparent promotion policies, and recognition of teachers' efforts is crucial. Professional development opportunities and time management training should also be prioritized to help teachers cope with organizational demands. Moreover, promoting work-life balance—particularly for female faculty through flexible working hours and family support initiatives can contribute to a healthier and more productive academic environment.

Key Words: Stress, Education, Performance, Impact

Introduction

Stress is a psychic response that influences an individual that is instigated by events affecting the well-being of the person. Any inner motivation or external event that interferes with the balance state of the body can be termed as stress. It can be either due to external events like social and organizational pressures, or internally, due to personal character, coping mechanism or personal views. Stress related diseases are proving to be very serious on the international stage (Yusuf et al., 2015). Stress has now been described as one of the greatest enemies to the mental healthy state of mind and is believed to be an element that accompanies the present-day modern living. It may be provoked by numerous reasons such as work pressure, interactions with other people, economical instability, and other trouble-some situations. In a nutshell, stress may be caused by anything that poses a physical or emotional danger or perceived danger to the person in question (Felman, 2023).

Teacher stress is commonly defined as adverse physical and psychological reactions, like anger or depression, to events related to teaching that arise from an imbalance between protective and risk variables (Prilleltensky *et al.*, 2016). The effects of teacher stress can be far-reaching. Short-term consequences include exhaustion, burnout and a decline in job satisfaction. It could eventually lead to serious health problem like heart disease, high blood pressure, and depression. Over time, it may result in major health issues like depression, high blood pressure and heart disease. In addition to being less productive in the classroom, stressed teachers may also negatively affect student's learning. Overwhelmed teachers many find it difficult to maintain order in the classroom, which can result in issues with discipline and a breakdown in the rapport between the teacher and the students (Sultana, 2023).

The teaching profession is widely recognized as one of the most emotionally demanding and intellectually intensive careers, requiring consistent mental, emotional, and physical effort. In Pakistan, the role of university teachers in public sector institutions is crucial for shaping the academic and professional competencies of students (Winkelhaus et al., 2022). However, the pressures associated with their responsibilities—such as teaching, research, administrative duties, mentoring, and academic development—often expose them to multiple stressors. These include excessive workloads, long working hours, strict deadlines, bureaucratic inefficiencies, scarce resources, and frequent changes in institutional policies (Sarabia and Collantes, 2022). Stressors can significantly affect the physical and psychological well-being of teachers, reducing their job satisfaction and potentially leading to burnout, absenteeism, and decreased

performance (Johnson et al., 2005) In Pakistan's developing context, these challenges are further intensified by systemic issues such as limited professional growth opportunities, low salaries, lack of recognition, political interference in university governance, and uncertainty regarding career advancement. These structural problems not only hinder the quality of education but also exacerbate work-related stress among faculty members (Khan et al., 2012)

Importantly, the experience and expression of work-related stress are often influenced by gender, particularly in socio-cultural settings like Pakistan, where traditional gender roles are deeply embedded. Male and female teachers may experience stress differently due to societal expectations (Asaloei et al., 2022). Female teachers frequently balance their academic responsibilities with domestic obligations, creating a dual workload that heightens stress levels. Conversely, male teachers may encounter stress related to financial pressures, maintaining professional authority, and cultural limitations on emotional expression (Afral et al., 2018). While gender disparities in occupational stress have been explored in international literature, there remains a lack of localized studies focusing on how these stressors specifically affect male and female university teachers in Pakistan. Existing research often generalizes stress factors without addressing how they may impact genders differently within academic environments. As such, it is critical to examine the gendered dimensions of work-related stress to develop a more contextual and nuanced understanding of the issue (Bhatti et al., 2011).

This study aims to bridge that gap by comparing the causes and effects of work-related stress between male and female teachers in public sector universities in Faisalabad. It further investigates the implications of this stress on job satisfaction, physical health, and mental well-being. The findings will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on occupational health in the education sector and provide valuable insights for policymakers and academic institutions. Ultimately, the research seeks to support the development of gender-sensitive workplace interventions and policies that promote a healthier, more productive academic environment for both male and female educators.

Methodology

The present study, conducted in Faisalabad, Pakistan, focused on assessing work-related stress among male and female teachers from two public sector universities: the University of Agriculture Faisalabad and Government College (GC) University Faisalabad. A total of 120 respondents (30 male and 30 female teachers from each university) were selected using purposive sampling due to their relevance to the study. A structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale was used for quantitative data collection. Prior to full-scale administration, the instrument was pre-tested with six teachers to ensure clarity and reliability. The questionnaire was validated with input from the research supervisor and yielded a high Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.907, indicating strong internal consistency. Data was collected in person by the researcher with adherence to ethical considerations. After coding and editing, data were entered and analyzed using SPSS software.

Table 1. Comparison between Male and Female Teachers of Public sector according to their causes of stress

| Causes of stress | Mean | | Standard Deviation | | T test | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|------|--------------------|-------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | T value | d.f | sig |
| Long hours | 3.76 | 4.03 | 1.226 | .843 | -1.388 | 118 | .003** |
| Heavy workload | 3.65 | 4.06 | 1.286 | .756 | -2.163 | 118 | .000** |
| Changes within the organization | 3.51 | 3.60 | 1.171 | 1.092 | -.403 | 118 | .410 _{ns} |
| Tight deadlines | 3.05 | 3.70 | 1.383 | .907 | -3.044 | 118 | .000** |
| Job insecurity | 3.00 | 3.11 | 1.426 | 1.450 | -.444 | 118 | .573 _{ns} |
| Lack of autonomy | 3.23 | 3.66 | 1.345 | 1.068 | -1.954 | 118 | .005** |
| Low salary | 3.66 | 3.81 | 1.323 | 1.127 | -.668 | 118 | .121 _{ns} |
| Boring work | 3.26 | 3.11 | 1.205 | 1.180 | .689 | 118 | .615 _{ns} |

Table 4.5 presents a comparative analysis of work-related stress causes among male and female public university teachers. The findings reveal that both male and female teachers agree that “long hours” and “heavy workload” are significant stressors, with male teachers reporting notably higher stress levels. This is supported by significant t-values and p-values ($p = .003$ and $p = .000$, respectively), indicating a statistically meaningful difference in their perceptions. Similarly, “tight deadlines” and “lack of autonomy” were found to be more stressful for male teachers, with both variables showing statistically significant differences between genders ($p = .000$ and $p = .005$, respectively). In contrast, stress related to “changes within the organization” and “job insecurity” was perceived similarly by both groups, with non-significant differences; however, male teachers still reported slightly higher stress levels. Regarding “low salary,” both genders agreed it was a cause of stress, though the difference was not significant ($p = .121$). The only exception observed was for “boring work,” where female teachers reported slightly higher stress than male teachers, but again, the difference was not statistically significant. Overall, the results indicate that while both male and female university teachers experience stress from various workplace factors, male teachers generally perceive and report a higher level of stress across most causes, except for boring work, which slightly affects female teachers more.

As reported by Doss et al. (2018) that professional stress takes an inconsistent form such as burnout, in some cases involve depression, anxiety, anger, irritability and/or substance abuse. This later influences the personal, interpersonal and quality of life are conceptually termed as social wellbeing of an individual. Gillespie et al. (2001) report that teachers perceive the under-funding of universities and the lack of human and material resources as the major obstacles to

improved work efficiency and quality standards. They also see their autonomy and control downsized and are dissatisfied with bureaucratic management based on free market values and with the existing organization of work. Job insecurity and a lack of promotion opportunities, poor interpersonal relationships, particularly the lack of support from colleagues and/or superiors, and the feeling that their work is not adequately recognized and paid still further lower the morale of university teachers.

Table 2. Comparison between Male and Female Teachers of Public University according to their causes of work related stress

| Causes of work-related stress | Mean | | Standard Deviation | | T test | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|------|--------------------|-------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | T value | d.f | sig |
| Lack of basic teaching material | 3.06 | 3.48 | 1.549 | 1.321 | -1.585 | 118 | .024* |
| Lack of human resources | 3.16 | 3.48 | 1.404 | 1.033 | -1.407 | 118 | .004** |
| Difficulty in organizing work | 3.61 | 3.71 | 1.222 | 1.059 | -.479 | 118 | .171 _{ns} |
| Managing disruptive behavior | 3.56 | 3.66 | 1.253 | 1.052 | -.473 | 118 | .157 _{ns} |
| Paperwork requirements | 3.50 | 3.88 | 1.255 | .975 | -1.867 | 118 | .011* |
| Difficulty engaging students | 3.00 | 3.40 | 1.402 | 1.152 | -1.707 | 118 | .137 _{ns} |

Table presents a gender-wise comparison of work-related stress factors among university teachers. The findings reveal that both male and female teachers perceive factors like lack of basic teaching materials, lack of human resources, difficulty in organizing work, managing disruptive behavior, paperwork requirements, and difficulty engaging students as sources of stress. Statistically significant differences were observed in perceptions related to lack of basic teaching materials ($p = .024$), human resources ($p = .004$), and paperwork requirements ($p = .011$), with male teachers generally reporting higher stress levels than females. While both genders agreed on most stress factors, male teachers consistently perceived them as more severe—except for paperwork requirements, which female teachers found more stressful. These results highlight the need for gender-sensitive stress management strategies and better resource provision to enhance teacher well-being in universities.

Gillespie et al. (2001) affirm that the issue of underfunding and unavailability of human and material resources is seen by university teachers as a major obstacle to the improvement of work efficacy and its quality standards. They are also worried about decreased autonomy and authority of their jobs and displeasure with the bureaucratic forms of management developed with the principles of the free market and extreme organizational forms. Also job insecurity, no

possibility to be promoted, bad relations with colleagues or supervisor, no feeling that they are paid and valued are among the causes of the low morale of the academic staff. According to Aslam and Ishaq (2025) Work-related stress arises as a result of wads and wad of paper work, lack of learning materials and the behavior of the students. Their salaries are low, they experience job insecurity and are forced to adhere to the standards of their performance that are used to lengthen their stress. Naghieh et al. (2015) stated this situation caused by administrative burdens, professional stagnation, work-life imbalance, as well as the lack of support by school leaders or parents. All these influences have an impact on the motivation, the job satisfaction, and the mental health among teachers.

Table 3. Comparison between Male and Female Teachers of Public sector according to their views about their job satisfaction

| Sr No | Job satisfaction | Mean | | Standard Deviation | | T test | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|--------|------|--------------------|-------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| | | Female | Male | Female | Male | T value | d.f | Sig |
| 1 | Job security | 3.28 | 3.36 | 1.263 | 1.220 | -.367 | 118 | .452 _{ns} |
| 2 | Prospects for advancement | 3.73 | 3.75 | .971 | .932 | -.096 | 118 | .831 _{ns} |
| 3 | Flexible working | 3.56 | 3.51 | 1.212 | 1.255 | .222 | 118 | .786 _{ns} |
| 4 | Chances of extra leave | 3.08 | 3.10 | 1.356 | 1.336 | -.068 | 118 | .847 _{ns} |
| 5 | Growth and learning opportunities | 3.65 | 3.68 | 1.232 | 1.185 | -.151 | 118 | .702 _{ns} |
| 6 | Recognition and praise | 3.43 | 3.41 | 1.125 | 1.078 | .083 | 118 | .747 _{ns} |
| 7 | Award presentation | 3.60 | 3.50 | 1.440 | 1.371 | .389 | 118 | .656 _{ns} |

Table 4.7 presents a comparison of job satisfaction factors between male and female university teachers. The findings indicate no statistically significant gender differences across all measured dimensions of job satisfaction, including job security, prospects for advancement, flexible working arrangements, chances of extra leave, growth and learning opportunities, recognition and praise, and award presentation. Both male and female teachers generally expressed satisfaction with most of these aspects, particularly in areas such as prospects for advancement, flexible working, and growth and learning opportunities. However, in the case of chances of extra leave and job security, both groups tended to feel neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Overall, the results suggest that male and female university teachers share similar perceptions of job satisfaction, with no major differences between them.

Wanous and Lawler (1972) wrote about such variations. Overall, job satisfaction can be defined as positive emotional response of a person towards a specific job. It is an emotional response to a job that is brought about by the individual comparing reality of consequences with the desired, expected or warranted consequences. The issue of job satisfaction is a crucial topic due to its

application in the well-being of employees both physically and mentally i.e. job satisfaction relates to human health. Work is a major dominant part of human life and most human beings constituent a significant proportion of their working careers at their work places. The knowledge of the aspects concerning job satisfaction is applicable to enhancing the well-being of a substantial number of individuals. Although the maximization of the satisfaction sought is a humanitarian one, Smith and others have claimed that ``trite as it is, satisfaction is a goal in itself.

Table 4. Comparison between Male and Female Teachers of Public University according to their impact of work-related stress on the physical health

| Sr No | Impact of work-related stress on the physical health | Mean | | Standard Deviation | | T test | | |
|-------|--|--------|------|--------------------|------|---------|-----|--------|
| | | Female | Male | Female | Male | T value | d.f | sig |
| 1 | Headache | 2.38 | 2.38 | .640 | .640 | .000 | 118 | .000** |
| 2 | Muscular pain | 2.33 | 2.36 | .680 | .712 | -.262 | 118 | .561ns |
| 3 | Fever | 2.26 | 2.25 | .606 | .600 | .151 | 118 | .821ns |
| 4 | Weakness of eyesight | 2.36 | 2.30 | .882 | .907 | .408 | 118 | .746ns |
| 5 | Eating habits | 2.20 | 2.20 | .798 | .776 | .000 | 118 | .707ns |
| 6 | Sleeping disruption | 2.31 | 2.28 | .812 | .804 | .226 | 118 | .849ns |

Table 4.9 presents a comparison of the impact of work-related stress on the physical health of male and female university teachers. Both groups reported that they sometimes experienced physical symptoms such as headaches, muscular pain, fever, weakness of eyesight, and sleeping disruption due to work-related stress. The results showed no statistically significant gender differences in these health issues, except for headaches, where a highly significant difference was reported ($p = .000$), despite both genders having the same mean score (2.38). Overall, the study indicates that both male and female teachers occasionally experience stress-related physical health problems, with similar patterns across symptoms. Supporting this, Bogaert (2014) highlighted the use of the SF-36 Health Survey as a valid tool for assessing perceived physical and mental health, emphasizing the relevance of domains like bodily pain, physical functioning, and role limitations due to health issues in evaluating the overall impact of stress. Parray et al. (2016) Research comparing male and female teachers in publicly funded universities can conclusively reveal that stress related to work affects both the sexes differently but in other cases, equally. Teachers of the female gender are more likely to report increased physical symptoms like tiredness, headaches, and sleep problems. Sexually, male teachers, although they are also victims, exhibit less physical complaints but more health risks related to stress such as

hypertension. Generally, the female teachers seem to be susceptible to the physical impact of work stress. Von et al.(2020) said that physical health and the effects of work-related stress differ due to gender among the teachers in a public university. Imbalance of workload, dual work and lack of support are some of the reasons as to why female teachers find it more stressful on their physical condition. There is also increased reporting of stress-related symptoms in women due to social demands and as a result of adopting health seeking behaviors. By comparison, male teachers can report the symptoms insufficiently, at the risk of unidentified long-term health problems.

Table 5. Comparison between Male and Female Teachers of Public University according to their impact of work-related stress on the mental health

| Sr No | Impact of work-related stress on the mental health | Mean | | Standard Deviation | | T test | | |
|-------|--|--------|------|--------------------|------|---------|-----|--------|
| | | Female | Male | Female | Male | T value | d.f | sig |
| 1 | Decrease concentration ability | 2.13 | 2.15 | .791 | .755 | -.118 | 118 | .593ns |
| 2 | Reduce thinking skills | 2.08 | 2.05 | .787 | .790 | .231 | 118 | .921ns |
| 3 | Struggle to control emotions when stressed | 2.26 | 2.31 | .841 | .791 | -.335 | 118 | .419ns |
| 4 | Increase the negative feeling of fear | 1.93 | 1.93 | .756 | .756 | .000 | 118 | .000** |
| 5 | I often worry about how others perceive me | 1.73 | 1.76 | .804 | .767 | .116 | 118 | .555ns |
| 6 | I worry about illness or injury impacting my life | 1.88 | 1.81 | .783 | .700 | .491 | 118 | .318ns |
| 7 | Frustration | 1.86 | 1.85 | .769 | .708 | .123 | 118 | .374ns |
| 8 | Develop uncontrollable anger | 2.00 | 1.96 | .802 | .758 | .234 | 118 | .548ns |
| 9 | Decrease the attention span | 1.95 | 1.91 | .832 | .787 | .225 | 118 | .502ns |

Table 4.9 compares the impact of work-related stress on the mental health of male and female university teachers. The findings reveal that both groups reported similar levels of mental health effects, with all responses tending toward "sometimes" across various indicators such as decreased concentration, reduced thinking skills, emotional struggles, negative feelings of fear, worry about illness or injury, frustration, uncontrollable anger, and decreased attention span. Only one indicator, worry about how others perceive them, tended toward "never" for both groups. All differences between male and female teachers were statistically non-significant,

indicating that both genders experience mental health challenges from work-related stress at comparable levels. These results underscore the need for mental health support interventions that address the shared psychological impacts of job stress across genders in university settings. As Kataoka (2014) points out, teachers belong to some of the most stressed professions, and in Japan, the psychological well-being of the teaching personnel has become a certain cause of concern. According to report by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, in 2011, overall number of teachers of public schools, middle, and high schools who went on leave ran into 5,274 and included 62 percent of all the cases of sick leave being taken due to mental conditions. Even though this figure experienced marginal decrease in the next two years it stood eight times higher than during the initial period when the survey was first carried out in 1979 and this fact shows the ongoing seriousness of the matter. As a result, there have been previous studies targeting mental wellbeing in teaching personnel in schools at different study levels.

Conclusion

The results indicated that work related stress is a strong issue with teachers at a public university with some disparities in the causes of the stress and physical health effect, but no major difference involving job satisfaction and the effects on mental health between genders. Stress due to the lack of human resources, paperwork, and teaching materials was more frequently reported by male teachers and suggested that lack of work-life balance and the burden of responsibility at work and home contributed to physical manifestations of stress (such as headaches and fatigue) in female teachers. Nonetheless, male and female teachers indicated that their mental health outcomes were similar, such as diminished concentration, frustration, and emotional problems. A lack of substantial variations in employment enjoyment indicates common encounters in areas like appreciation, surge, and employment security. These observations reflect the complexity of academic stress and highlight the importance of gender-sensitive interventions.

Recommendations

A number of specific recommendations are required in resolving work-related stress amongst teachers in the public universities. Proper provision of resources, including teaching resources, human resource and administrative service, can go a long way in eliminating stress- especially to the male teachers who expressed concerns linked to the above. The policies that are sensitive to gender should be applied in the sense that female teachers tend to be under more stress even physically because they have multiplied roles and are exposed to more stress in society. Periodical mental healthcare in the form of check-up, coaching, stress management sessions, and availability of counseling services is crucial to all personnel. It is also crucial to distribute the workload fairly and openly so that nobody is overloaded with work, in particular, with paperwork task and administrative responsibilities. To prevent the stagnation, enhance motivation and as a best practice, institutions should encourage equal chances when it comes to professional development. A work-life balance can also be achieved through flexible working arrangements such as remote work and adjusted hours to allow teachers to balance work and their other

commitments. Alongside that, physical and mental health could be improved through wellness programs including yoga, physical activities, and stress-relief programs. Rewards and appreciation of teaching activities through recognition systems will enhance morale and job satisfaction between the genders. It is possible to build mentorship and peer support networks to clarify collegiate relations and limit isolation, particularly among female faculty. Finally, it is essential to revise and review institutional policies to ensure that they keep in touch with emerging needs and well being of the teachers.

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