Faculty Stress at Higher Education: A Study on
the Business Schools of Pakistan

Aqsa Akbar, Waheed Akhter

Abstract—Job stress is one of the most important concepts for
the today’s corporate as well as institutional world. The current study
is conducted to identify the causes of faculty stress at Higher
Education in Pakistan. For the purpose, Public & Private Business
Schools of Punjab is selected as representative of Pakistan. A sample
of 300 faculty members (214 males, 86 females) responded to the
survey. Regression analysis shows that the Workload, Student
Related issues and Role Conflicts are the major sources contributing
significantly towards producing stress. The study also revealed that
Private sector faculty members experienced more stress as compared
to faculty in Public sector Business Schools. Moreover, females,
younger ages, lower designation & low qualification faculty
members experience more stress as compared to males, older ages,
higher designation and high qualification. The study yield many
significant results for the policy makers of Business Institutions.

Keywords—Faculty Stress, Higher Education, Stress Coping

I. INTRODUCTION

Faculty members from around the globe are
experiencing high level of stress [1,2,3]. The Proliferation
of stories and works regarding occupational stress has greatly
gained the attention of the researchers. Immense amount
of work regarding occupational stress is done in corporate world
issues concerning to low productivity, job satisfaction, high
absenteeism, hi- turnover rate and physical & psychological
disorders, yet, very less studies were conducted regarding
stress in academia. The reason of less studies of faculty stress
lies in perception that teaching is generally a low stress job as
compared to corporate world. But Research conducted by
Jhonson, cooper, Cartwright & donald taylor [4] in USA
resulted teaching as one of the most stressful occupation out
of 300 faculty members (214 males, 86 females) responded to the
survey. Regression analysis shows that the Workload, Student
Related issues and Role Conflicts are the major sources contributing
significantly towards producing stress. The study also revealed that
Private sector faculty members experienced more stress as compared
to faculty in Public sector Business Schools. Moreover, females,
younger ages, lower designation & low qualification faculty
members experience more stress as compared to males, older ages,
higher designation and high qualification. The study yield many
significant results for the policy makers of Business Institutions.

The unpleasant environmental demands or stimuli that
cause stress are referred to as stressors. Lazarus [14] defined
stressors as the experiences and conditions of daily living that
are appraised as salient and harmful or are threats to a
person’s well being. Eckert and William [15] reported that
routine duties, long hours, poor facilities, friction in intra-
faculty relations and administrative red tape were the most
important sources of stress. Another study identified personal
capacity of faculty members, inadequate organizational
resources and serious time constraints as a major sources of
stress in academe [16]. One research found teaching as
stressful and the major sources of stress comes from work
related issues [2]. Workload is considered as the most
important source of stress in education sector [17]. Many
other researches conducted on the sources of stress in teaching
professions also found that workload contributes a significant
part in producing stress [18,19]. Work load includes sheer
number of hours on the job, administrative work [20], being
frequently called by the institutional works, also found
statistically significant correlation between workload in form
of hours of work and its ill effects on physical health [21]. The
second stress generating factor is Role conflicts. Role conflict
can be defined as “ reflects incompatible demands on the
person ( either within a single role or between multiple roles
occupied by the individuals, it can induce negative emotional
reactions due to the perceived inability to be effective on the
job”[22].

Disruptive behavior by students was also found to be one of
the important stressors for faculty [23,3].Student related issues
involve faculty conflicts with students over evaluation,
advising and teaching. Organizational structural & procedural
characteristics are supported by many researches as a
considerable source of stress [24,25]. Organizational structural and procedural characteristics involve decision making process, management styles, performance appraisal, support for research, rules & regulation etc. Abouerie [26] found poor relationship with colleagues as one of the important factors producing stress.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are three folded, first; to identify the sources of faculty stress in Business schools of Pakistan. Second, To identify whether the faculty stress varies with respect to background variables such as gender, age, salaries and qualification etc. Third, to identify the leading stress coping strategies, faculty members of the Business schools of Punjab adopt to reduce or eliminate stress.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selection of variables causing stress is developed from the literature review and informal interviews conducted by the researcher with some of the faculty members of Business Schools. Firstly, heavy literature review is being studied to get the preliminary concept about the phenomena. Most of the items in the instrument is adopted by the Gmelch’s famous index [21] constructed particularly for the faculty members, Faculty stress Index (FSI). Initially, a series of around 30 informal interviews were conducted by the researcher with the faculty members of the Business Schools of Punjab to get the information about the stressors, they experiencing during their tenure. Faculty members were asked to reply to identify the stressors, they encounter during their working hours. The informal interviews with the faculty members played a significant role to structure the questionnaire. The first draft of the questionnaire was again made check by some of the senior faculty members to get valuable suggestions. After little modifications advised by those members, the final draft of the questionnaire was constructed and as a pretesting (Pilot-testing), made it fill by 30 faculty members to ensure the reliability of each independent variable entered and to consider the instrument worthy for detailed investigation. Every item in the instrument is logically linked with the objectives of the study, backed by the literature review and the responses from the interviews of faculty members, which ensures its validity (measuring what it is designed to measure). The instrument consists of three parts. First part consists of questions related to demographic variables such as age, salary, designation, gender etc. Second part involves questions related to measurement of various stressors identified as potential source of stress. The variables identified as causing stress are 1. Workload(WL); 2. Poor Peer relationships(PPR); 3. Student related issues(SRI); 4. Inadequate Organizational resources(IOR); 5. Organizational structural & procedural Characteristics (OSPC). The third part consists of questions related to coping strategies, faculty members prefer to reduce or eliminate stress, developed by Gmelch [27].The research is conducted in natural settings at cross-sectional level. Around 350 questionnaires were send to permanent faculty members of 17 Public & 14 Private Business schools/institutions of Punjab.

First the stratified random sampling is done to make two strata belonging to Public and Private sector Business Schools. Then number of faculty members from public & private universities is determined according to the proportional allocation which is 147 from Public and 203 from Private sector Business Schools. Convenience sampling technique is used to collect the data from the permanent full time male & female faculty members. Out of 350 questionnaires, 300 questionnaires were return and used for the analysis.

V. RESULTS

Multiple regression analysis is applied to determine the significance predictors of faculty stress. Table I displays the significance of F-statistics (p-value<0.05) verifying that the regression model is highly reliable to predict variance in faculty stress.

Table II shows the multiple regression model for faculty stress with independent variables. it is found that workload, student related issues & role conflicts are the factors significantly associated with faculty stress ( p-value < 0.05), whereas variables such as poor peer relationships, inadequate organizational resources and organizational structural & procedural characteristics have no impact on the faculty stress (p-value >0.05).

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123.740</td>
<td>35.623</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>72.876</td>
<td>.000²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142.247</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>.489</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>355.987</td>
<td>297</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

². Predictors: (Constant), IOR, PPR, SRI, OSPC, WL, RC

Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model (Constant) .366 .207</td>
<td>Beta 1.764 .079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload .453 .072</td>
<td>.351 6.321 .000*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Peers Relationships .081 .053</td>
<td>.073 1.545 .124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Related Issues .214 .051</td>
<td>.206 4.221 .000*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Conflicts .135 .029</td>
<td>.283 4.692 .000*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Structural &amp; procedural Characteristics -.024 .047</td>
<td>-.029 -5.07 .000*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Organizational Resources .073 .067</td>
<td>.061 1.087 .278</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, independent t-test and one-way ANOVA are applied to check whether any significant difference exists among the stress scores of faculty members of different background variables such as gender, age, salary, qualification, and designation. Table III shows that there is a significant difference between the stress scores of male & female faculty members (p-value < .05). According to the stress means, female faculty members experience more stress (mean, 3.88) as compared to male faculty members (mean 3.22). The reason behind females experiencing more stress is embedded in Pakistani cultural settings. In Pakistan, there is generally high pressure exerted on females to maintain balance between job & family demands, moreover, working in a male-dominated society is another cause of experiencing more stress as compared to male faculty members. The table also shows that faculty in Private sector Business schools experience more stress (mean 3.52) as compared to faculty in Public sector Business Schools (mean 3.26), thus significant difference exists among the stress scores of Public & private sector faculty members (p-value < .05).

### Table III
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>5.379*</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Significant at 0.05 level, 2-tailed test)

Table IV shows that there is significant difference exists among the stress scores of faculty members at different designation levels (p-value < .05). According to Table V, the average stress of faculty at lower designation is higher as compared to faculty at higher designation (Average stress scores moves in descending order), resulting that as the designation moves up, the stress level moves down.

### Table IV
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean/HoD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Significant at 0.05)

The ANOVA table VIII clearly shows that there is highly significant differences exist among the stress scores of faculty members at different salary scales (p-value < .05). Table IX shows the average stress of faculty members in different salary ranges which tells that low salary level produce more stress as compared to high salary levels.
TABLE VIII
ONE-WAY ANOVA REPRESENTS STRESS & SALARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>46.666</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.666</td>
<td>11.051</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>309.321</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>1.056</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355.987</td>
<td>297</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Significant at 0.05 level)

TABLE IX
AVERAGE STRESS SCORES WITH RESPECT TO DIFFERENT SALARY RANGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Range in Rs.(000)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Stress Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and Above</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE X
ONE-WAY ANOVA REPRESENTS STRESS & AGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>64.813</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.604</td>
<td>21.81</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>291.174</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355.987</td>
<td>297</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Significant at 0.05)

The descriptive (table XI) showing the average stress scores of faculty members with respect to various background variables. The leading stress coping strategies are also identified by the faculty members of the Business Schools. Table XII shows

The descriptive table XI shows as high average stress scores are associated with the young faculty members as compared to older ones. As the age increases, the stress decreases.

The leading stress coping strategies are also identified by the faculty members of the Business Schools. Table XII shows

The result of the One-way ANOVA (table X) shows that there is highly significant difference exists among the stress scores of faculty members because of their ages (p-value <0.05).

TABLE XII
RANKINGS OF THE COPING STRATEGIES USED BY FACULTY MEMBERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Stress Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self-management techniques</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Personal interests</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Supportive Attitude</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Measure on 5-point semantic differential scale; 1 as Most Helpful to 5 as Least Helpful)

It is found from table XII that the most helpful strategy for coping stress preferred by the faculty members is Physical activity with the highest mean, following Self-management techniques, personal interests, entertainment, intellectual stimulation, supportive attitude and social interaction.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Faculty stress at higher education is becoming one of the major issues around the world. As compared to job stress in corporate world, educational institutions were considered to be a sector with low stress at work. With the recent developments such as increased competition, high rate of return etc at the higher education in Pakistan, educational institutions are occupying great deal of attention. The study yield many significant results for the policy makers of Business Institutions. On General, stress is found to be more distracting in Private sector business schools as compared to Public sector. Moreover, female faculty experience more stress as compared to male faculty members. A big reason behind the females having more stress is embedded in working in male-oriented society which is supported by many previous researches such as Flowers [28], Jick & Mitz [29], Nelson & Hitt [30] as well as the interviews conducted by the researcher with the female faculty members of the Business Schools of Punjab. It is found that Workload is the most important stressor from males & female faculty’s point of view. The study also found significant insights in the average stress scores of faculty members in these schools with respect to various background variables. It is found that average stress scores of the faculty members in the Business Schools have significant differences due to their designation, as high stress is associated with lower designations, i.e. Lecturer, Assistant Professors. So stress & designation moves in opposite direction; higher the designation, lower will be the stress. Similarly, high stress is associated with faculty members having low qualification and as the qualification increases, stress decreases. The relationship of stress & salaries is also investigated and found that low salaried members experience
high stress as compared to high salaried faculty members. Whereas stress & age also moves like other background variables, it means that younger age members experience more stress as compared to older ages. The study findings have accomplished the objectives set at start, yet it still requires a great deal of work regarding the effects of stressed faculty on various institutional outcomes such as effects on turnover, quality education, low productivity & high-abseceneism etc. This study will invite further research to explore, implement and evaluate intervention strategies for prevention of stress and improvement in job satisfaction of faculty in other disciplines as well, such as engineering, literature etc., in Pakistan.

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REFERENCES