OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
MGT-2026-14019263

Volume: 14

Issue: 1

Month: July

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-4643

E-ISSN: 2581-9402

Received: 25.05.2026

Accepted: 20.06.2026

Published Online: 01.07.2026

Citation:
Dadariya, Shubham, et al. "A Study on Exploring Occupational Stress Triggers and Stress Management Practices among Faculties of Higher Education." *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2026, pp. 8–15.

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v114i1.9263

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A Study on Exploring Occupational Stress Triggers and Stress Management Practices among Faculties of Higher Education

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Abstract
Occupational stress has become a major issue for faculty members in higher-education *institutions because of rising academic, administrative, and professional pressures. This* study investigates *the primary sources of occupational stress faced by faculty in higher education and* analyzes *the stress management techniques employed to address these issues.* This *research* utilized *a qualitative method by conducting a narrative review of the available literature. A systematic review and thematic analysis were conducted on 23 national and international empirical and theoretical studies published from 1990 to 2024 to identify shared stressors, coping mechanisms, and institutional factors impacting faculty*'s *well-being.*
The results indicate that faculty members experience occupational stress due to external and internal factors. Key external stressors include *heavy workloads, administrative duties, job instability,* technology-related *difficulties, workplace dynamics, and* classroom management issues*, while internal stressors encompass procrastination, perfectionism, emotional fatigue, and lack of engagement. The analysis emphasizes that successful coping methods encompass time management, physical wellness activities, mindfulness techniques, positive self-talk, organizational support and initiatives for work-life balance. The* study determined *that work-related stress notably influences faculty welfare, job fulfillment, and professional performance, highlighting the necessity for supportive organizational policies and organized stress reduction strategies. Future studies* should *emphasize* the *empirical analysis of stress-related mental health issues, such as burnout, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors, alongside comparative research in various educational and cultural settings to create more tailored stress management strategies.*

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Higher Education Faculty, Stress Triggers, Stress Management, Coping Strategies, Faculty Well-being.

Introduction

Fink (2017) Hans Selye describes "Stress as the body's nonspecific reaction to any demand." A type of stress in which an individual experiences mental anguish and pressure from specific influences. Stress exists in every aspect of life and in all workplaces. It is universally found in humans, ranging from students to retirees. Stress is as significant as any illness, inviting other diseases that lead to both physical and mental health issues. Stress has become a widespread issue in work settings, and higher education is no exception. Faculty members encounter growing academic pressures, expectations for research productivity, expanded teaching obligations, and administrative tasks.

These pressures lead to increased psychological and physical stress, which can adversely affect job performance, job satisfaction, and individual well-being.

While stress in teachers has been extensively examined, the experiences of university faculty are significantly different from those of school educators because of additional duties like curriculum development, research output, student interaction, accreditation requirements, and adapting to technology. Nevertheless, relatively limited research consolidates the various occupational stress factors impacting university and college faculty members.

This study aimed to identify the key stressors affecting higher education faculty, investigate their coping strategies, and examine the wider effects on their personal and professional lives. Through the analysis of current research, this study highlights the importance of establishing institutional frameworks and personal coping methods to enhance faculty well-being and productivity.

Although there is an expanding amount of research on teacher stress, a significant portion of the current literature concentrates on educators at the school level or analyzes individual stressors. Few studies have thoroughly combined internal psychological stressors and external organizational stressors affecting higher education faculty. Additionally, the rapidly evolving educational landscape, marked by technological advancements, outcome-focused assessment systems, and increasing administrative duties, has heightened workplace stress worldwide. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis is required to identify significant occupational stressors and evaluate the stress management techniques used by faculty in higher-education institutions.

Significance

The need to study the occupational stress triggers or examine the Stress Management Practices of Faculties of Higher Education is crucial, as faculties of higher education play a key role in academics and make major contributions in shaping the future of the country and the importance of their own self in their occupation. Faculty members in higher education often face significant pressure. Balancing teaching, research, administrative tasks, and personal responsibilities can be overwhelming. In addition, there are high expectations from students, colleagues, and institutions. All of this stress can take a serious toll on both mental and physical well-being, making it crucial for educators to find effective ways to manage their stress levels. When an individual is stressed, it automatically reflects or has an impact on their work performance, and that impact is negative, which degrades the individual's position and performance. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the stressors, their causes, and the methods, techniques, or processes to overcome such stress for mental and physical well-being and to have work-life balance, which enhances the job satisfaction of an individual, leading to a positive impact on personal life and boosting productivity in faculties when they receive institutional support.

Review Matrix

S. No.	Author	Year	Key Components
1.	Musibau Adeoye	2018	This study examined on the coping strategies of stress used by the management staff of colleges. A descriptive research has been done which consisted the sample study of 1500 respondents. This study found that that the level of stress among management staff was high during the period of understudy which means the specific timeframe or duration of particular focused activity. The findings also reveal the major strategies of coping with stress like by sleeping well, proper planning, and by maintenance of cordial relationship.
2.	K. Gracy Saila Sree	2019	This study examined the stressors and its coping mechanism which concluded into the finding of major factor that causing stress are Workload, Student behaviour and orientation, lack of professional recognition, Inadequate academic resources and teaching aids, role ambiguity and work life balance issues. So, the coping strategies are Physical exercises, Time & workload management, etc.
3.	Myrna A. Sunga-Kiram	2023	Study on stress related to work and coping mechanisms among faculty members of Higher Education Institutions in Sulu concluded the study with the stressors like occupational climate, lack of reward, job instability, etc. the coping strategies are Spiritual practice, Wellness practices like physical activities for maintaining healthy lifestyle.

4.	Srinivasan P	2021	This study is done to study on level of work stress and effective stress management process among the Faculties in Private and Government Universities and colleges in Southern Region which concluded that the faculties of Private Universities and colleges are doing administrative jobs other than teaching. As after the working hours, the faculties are compelled to work for admission related activities which resulted in work life imbalance and lead to stress.
5.	Einar M. Skaalvik	2021	The study uses a qualitative interview approach with six teachers in Norway which find the causes of stress are Organizational issues, Lack of autonomy, Workload and time pressure. The study uses the Job Demand Resources Model, which says that stress arises when job demand exceeds available resources.
6.	Dr. A. Varadaraj	2021	The study uses a descriptive research approach and collects data from 250 college teachers through a questionnaire which investigates the factors which lead to stress among college staff in Chennai and the factors are Job insecurity, Poor wok life balance, Negative attitude of colleagues, Hinders Career Growth. And, recommendations to cope with such stress causing factors are Training programs, Work-life balance initiatives, supportive leadership, Counselling services, etc.
7.	Florian Klapproth, Lisa Federkeil	2020	The study reveals that how teachers experienced medium to high level stress during distance teaching which causes due to increased workload, lack of digital skills and inadequate technological support and the gender differences, where female teachers reported higher stress levels compared to their male colleague. And, also find the barrier to effective distance teaching were technological challenges, students engagement issues and organizational barriers like lack of clear guidelines, etc.
8.	Dr. Nasir Mustafa	2020	This study examined the Stress management for teachers which focuses on understanding the nature of stress like teachers experience stress due to Perfectionism, Overexertion and Emotional suppression due to work life balance and to cope up with such stress, Mustafa focus on psychological factors like Positive self-talk, Daily reflection, Learning to say No. And, also focus on Institutions should provide professional development on stress management techniques.
9.	Zermina Tasleem, Sohail Ayaz Muhammad	2023	This study highlights the multifaceted nature of workplace stress in higher education and the importance of targeted interventions. Enhancing Job security, reducing workloads, and creating supportive environments are crucial for improving university teachers' well-being
10.	K. Saravanan, K. Muthulakshmi	2018	Study has been done on college teachers in which it is concluded to the extent that 37.5% of teachers exhibited poor stress management skills and the teachers from semi urban areas reported higher stress levels compared to those from urban and rural areas and also the factors of stress are workload and interpersonal conflicts.
11.	Sonal Sharma, Mohd. Shakir	2017	The article 'Stress management among Teachers: The Bhagavad Gita's Approach,' puts forward a perception of how stress impacts teachers and offers a solution of the Bhagavad Gita to combat stress. The indicator of stress to which the study makes a reference includes workload, financial hardships, job security, lack of appreciation and work politics. Additionally, it examines the psychological and physical effects of stress such as anxiety, depression and illness. The Bhagavad Gita is portrayed as a timeless guide to stress management based on detachment from outcomes, balanced living, self-control and a positive mindset. Teachers can develop resilience and mental well-being by following its principles, including the cultivation of equanimity towards success and failure, the overcoming of fear and jealousy, and the exercise of selfless action.
12.	Stevie-Jae Hepburn	2021	A Pilot Study that investigates level of stress, mindful awareness, wellbeing and coping mechanism of pre- service teachers (PSTs). The objective is to find out the efficacy of a six hour Complementary Intervention (CI) of yoga based mindfulness techniques to mitigate stress and enhance awareness. The research was carried out in two phases through surveys and self-reported measures. Findings indicate PSTs to have uniformly high stress during the academic year with a subsequent decline in wellbeing. However, the CI intervention group experienced lower perceived stress and higher mindful awareness than the control group. The research identifies the importance of integrating stress management skills into teacher training to help support teachers' mental health and professional resilience.

13.	N.Arunagiri, Dr. Jeya Prabha	2019	The research demonstrates the importance of work environment, workload, and support system in determining teachers' stress, with organizational policies serving as determinants of either reducing or increasing stress. Overall, the literature suggests that effective stress management interventions such as emotional intelligence training and work-place interventions are essential in improving teacher's mental health and job satisfaction. Stress negatively impacts their job satisfaction, health, and overall teaching performance. However, the study finds that resources—both personal (like self-esteem and hardness) and work-related (like administrative support and decent working conditions)—act as buffers. In examining the literature, authors identify that schools need to support teachers by listening to them and providing them with the necessary resources. Teachers themselves also need to develop coping strategies for dealing with the pressures of their work. There is a call for collaboration between teachers, institutions, and society to maintain high- quality education and foster individual and institutional growth.
14.	Waqar M Parray	2016	A Theoretical Examination discusses how teaching, which has long been a low- stress profession, has turned into a stressful one. The study outlines a number of stressors faced by teachers across different levels of education, for example, university, secondary, and primary teachers. Some of the most frequent sources of stress are workloads, pressure from school administration, social demands, and the need to cope with rapid change in education.
15.	Anwar Khan	2012	It emphasizes that stress is a product of both internal factors such as overwork, bureaucratic regulation, and conflictive relationships and external factors such as government regulations and strict parental expectations. The studies explore theoretical frameworks, which explains how job resources including autonomy, feedback, and professional support, as well as individual resources like self-efficacy and optimism, empower teachers to deal with stress. Furthermore, personality, particularly that falling under the Five-Factor Model, shapes how teachers respond to stress. Empirical evidence suggests that teachers with an availability of adequate resources and effective coping skills experience less burnout and perform more effectively at work. The study concludes that having a positive work environment with necessary resources is essential in reducing stress, improving teacher effectiveness, and thus bettering educational outcomes.
16.	Shaifali Garg	2017	The stress of any work is such a problem that it can physically and mentally make any ordinary person unhealthy. Sometimes, due to reduction in the allotted time for completing a task, one has to face stress. This problem is also type of mental burden. We can also call it work stress- the fear of doing something or the fear of not doing it properly. According to study, It is found that work efficiency of employees in private universities is higher, and their work stress is lower. This is because despite having more work stress, they always complete their tasks on time in a systematic manner.
17.	Bonnie G. Berger	1994	This study discuss about the use of exercise as a technique of managing stress. It suggest that exercise can improve the mood, self- esteem and reduces stress. Stress is a part of daily life. It affects us in many ways. It can make a task easier, but excessive stress can also be harmful. That is why stress management is very necessary. Therefore, psychologists believe that stress should be reduced. For this, we need more knowledge about exercise, diet, study, and environment factors that can help relieve stress. Stress affects the enjoyments of life and has a very negative impact on health. It reduces efficiently in performing any task. That is why exercising, dieting and relaxation techniques are essential for stress management.
18.	Girija, C., Dr. D. Ramani	2024	This study looks an existing research on stress level in teachers, explore how teachers manage their stress, and aims to identify any gaps in the research related stress in college teachers. In teaching, stress is very common issue that teachers face because of the unique challenges that comes in their job. Important point of this research is developing and applying programs that provide teachers with effective tools and strategies to manage stress.
19.	Ms. Jiny Jacob, Dr. Neha Mathur	2020	This research shows that faculty of higher education institutions experiencing a moderate level of stress. Factors that contribute to stress includes unclear job roles, extra workload, adapting to new technology, and workplace politics. To address these factors, organization should implement effective HR practices that motivate and energize faculty members. Management should foster a sense of belonging among employees, creating an environment where they feel motivated to perform their best.
20.	Raheleh Salimzadeh, Nathan C. Hall	2021	Research shows that many aspects of academic careers can be highly stressful, triggering strong emotional responses in faculty members. Job-related stress among post- secondary staff negatively affects both their well-being and productivity. This review summarizes empirical studies which is use to manage these challenges. It highlights effective, adaptive techniques that help them handle the emotional demands of their work. The review also discusses how these strategies are linked to improved well- being and suggests directions for future research.

21.	Ruchi Jain, Dr. Amita Chourasiya	2022	Occupational stress has become a significant concern, as excessive stress negatively impacts mental health and job performance. While a certain level of stress can motivate employees, excessive work- related pressures, unmanageable responsibilities, and lack of proper training contribute to occupational stress. This study reviews 25 journal articles from the past seven years using text mining techniques to identify common stressors faced by faculty members in India. The findings suggest that teaching is no longer a low-stress profession, highlighting the need for strategic stress management interventions. Further research on occupational stress in academia is recommended to develop effective coping mechanisms.
22.	Panshuo Shen, Paul Slater	2021	This report talk about stress at work and how it affects teachers in colleges and universities. Things like a person's gender, age or job type can also affect how stress impacts them. Fixing these problems can help teachers feel happier, stress free, enjoy their jobs more and work more better.
23.	Panshuo Shen, Paul Slater	2021	The study explores occupational stress, coping strategies during the COVID- 19 pandemic. It looked at their stress from work, how they dealt with it and how it affected their mental and emotional health. However, thinking positively and accepting the situation helped them feel better.

Objectives

- To determine the stress triggers that cause stress among the Higher Education faculty.
- To study the solutions of stress triggers among faculty members of Higher Education.
- To know the impact of stress on the faculties of higher education personnel as well as on their professional life.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design and a narrative literature review approach. This study aimed to analyze existing research studies related to occupational stress and coping mechanisms among faculty in higher education.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Relevant studies published between 1990 and 2024 were sourced from academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ERIC, and Scopus-indexed journals. A total of 23 research papers were selected based on the following criteria:

- Focus on occupational stress among higher education faculty
- Inclusion of coping strategies or stress management practices
- Empirical or theoretical contribution
- Published in peer-reviewed journals

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used. Each study was examined for the following:

- Identified stress triggers
- Reported coping strategies
- Institutional factors
- Psychological dimensions

The codes were developed and grouped into themes such as workload-related stressors, personal psychological stressors, coping mechanisms, and institutional influences.

Limitations of Methodology

This study relies solely on secondary data and therefore lacks primary empirical validation. The findings depend on the accuracy and quality of the reviewed studies.

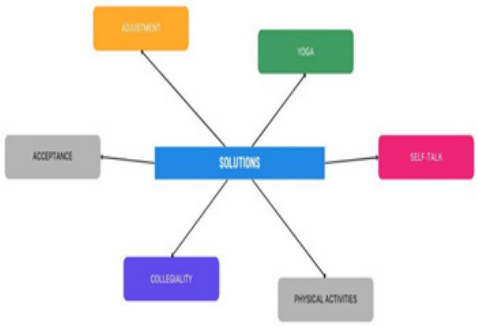
Analysis and Discussion

Stress is something that cannot be seen, but the person who is going through stress can feel the pain. It causes both mental and physical pain. Stress can be both internal and external. Internal means that the stress can be caused by the person himself through certain activities, such as a faculty member in higher education having the bad habit of procrastination, showing disengagement in the work, and always completing tasks authorized by higher authority at the moment of deadline; due to such activities, the person automatically welcomes the stress.

External factors are those stressors or triggers that cause stress among faculty members of higher education or any institution, such as work overload, classroom discipline, working environment, job insecurity, which leads to monetary stress, etc. These are external factors that cause stress among individuals.

There are several ways to overcome certain types of stress in the occupational life, as collegiality impacts stress, which means a clan culture that

basically talks about teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation among the faculty members can have a positive impact on an individual. As there is a saying that the officers are more in contact with the diseases than the laborers, the reason is found to be the impact of physical activities on their respective lives. A person who engages in more physical activity is more stress-free and disease-free. The nature of being adjusted to the environment can decrease the possibilities of stress occurrence. Yoga is determined as one of the best medicine to the stress so the workplace or institutions for their faculties' member must organize the yoga session to improve the work efficiency of faculty members.



Personal aspects of stress outcomes include self-talk, which is vital, accepting, and understanding the impact of stress on their lives can only make them realize the stress and the solutions to overcome that stress. These can be the stress management techniques that the faculty of higher education must practice.

A comparative analysis of 23 studies indicates that workload, administrative duties, job insecurity, and technological issues are the primary sources of occupational stress among higher education faculty. Although many studies have identified organizational elements as the main triggers of stress, certain studies have also highlighted personal aspects such as perfectionism, procrastination, and emotional fatigue. Throughout the examined literature, time management, physical wellness activities, mindfulness techniques, and institutional support were identified as the most effective stress management strategies. The results indicate that occupational stress can be minimized most efficiently by integrating personal coping strategies with supportive organizational policies.

Recommendations

To help reduce stress among higher education faculty, it is important that teachers learn proper time management so that they can finish their work without last-minute pressure. Breaking big tasks into smaller and easier steps can also make work feel lighter and less stressful. Colleges should support their faculty by creating a friendly environment, reducing unnecessary administrative work, and communicating instructions clearly to them. Regular activities, such as yoga, exercise, or simple relaxation sessions, can help teachers stay healthy and calm. Institutions should also provide counseling or guidance for those who feel overwhelmed and encourage faculty to think positively and believe in their abilities. Finally, helping teachers maintain a good balance between their work and personal lives will improve their overall well-being and reduce stress.

Conclusion

This study examined 23 national and global studies to determine the primary causes of occupational stress and stress management strategies among faculty in higher education. The results indicate that faculty face stress from elements such as workload, administrative duties, job insecurity, technological issues, and personal aspects such as procrastination and emotional fatigue. The research also emphasizes that coping techniques such as time management, engaging in physical activity, practicing mindfulness, maintaining positive self-dialogue, and receiving institutional support can aid in lowering stress and enhancing overall wellness. This research adds to the field by offering an extensive overview of the current literature related to occupational stress among higher education faculty. Nevertheless, it is restricted to secondary data and lacks primary empirical evidence. Future studies should concentrate on gathering primary data and analyzing stress-related psychological disorders, such as burnout, anxiety, and other mental health challenges faced by faculty members. Future studies should concentrate on investigating the stress resulting from mental conditions such as OCD.

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