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Occupational Stress Among Teaching Faculty In VTU-Affiliated Autonomous Colleges: An Empirical Study In North Karnataka.

Dr. Rashmi R. Hunnur, Ms. Soujanya A. Jambagi
(Associate Professor, Department Of Management Studies, Basaveshwar Engineering College, Bagalkote, Karnataka State)
(Student, Department Of Management Studie, Basaveshwar Engineering College, Bagalkote, Karnataka State)

Abstract:
Occupational stress has emerged as a growing concern in the education sector, significantly affecting the performance, motivation, and well-being of teaching professionals. The present study aims to examine the causes, levels, and effects of occupational stress among teaching staff in autonomous colleges affiliated with Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) across North Karnataka. Using a descriptive research design, primary data will be collected through structured questionnaires from 100 faculty members across four districts—Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Belagavi, and Dharwad. The study also incorporates secondary data from published research articles and reports. The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) framework developed by Srivastava (1981) is adopted to assess key stress dimensions such as role overload, role ambiguity, powerlessness, and lack of participation in decision-making. Data will be analyzed using statistical tools like SPSS and Excel to identify major stress factors and their relationship with demographic variables. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for developing institutional strategies and policies to reduce stress and enhance faculty well-being in higher education institutions.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Teaching Faculty, Autonomous Colleges, Role Ambiguity, Workload, Organizational Support, Occupational Stress Index (OSI).*

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I. Introduction

Stress is a physical, mental, or emotional response occurs when an individual perceives a mismatch between the demands placed on them and their ability to meet those demands. In workplace, stress often arises from excessive workload, time pressures, conflicting responsibilities, or lack of control over job-related decisions. The sector of Educational, particularly higher education, is undergoing rapid changes driven by technological advancement, policy reforms, student diversity, and rising academic expectations. Teachers are no longer confined to delivering lectures; they are now responsible for curriculum development, research, mentoring, administrative work, and adopting new teaching methods. In autonomous colleges, including those affiliated with VTU, faculty members face additional pressure to meet both university standards and internal academic goals.

II. Literature Review

Occupational stress has become a significant concern in modern workplaces, particularly in educational institutions. It refers to the harmful physical and emotional reactions that occur when job demands exceed an individual's capabilities, resources, or needs (U.S. Department of Health). In higher education, increasing administrative duties, research expectations, and academic performance pressures have heightened stress among faculty members. Understanding occupational stress in academic settings—especially within autonomous colleges affiliated with Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU)—is essential for promoting faculty well-being and institutional effectiveness.

According to Hunnur et al. (2014)[1], stress can be classified as *eustress* (positive) or *distress* (negative). Occupational stress arises when there is a mismatch between environmental demands and an individual's coping capacity. In their study *"Cause and Effect of Workplace Stress among Police Personnel: An Empirical Study,"* the authors identified several major dimensions influencing occupational stress, including role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, powerlessness, under-participation, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, and unreasonable political pressure. Although their study was based on police personnel, these dimensions provide a strong conceptual framework applicable to educational settings, where faculty face similar multi-

dimensional challenges such as heavy workloads, conflicting roles in teaching, research, and administration, and limited involvement in decision-making processes.

Further, Hunnur, Bagali, and Sudarshan (2014)[2], in their work *"Workplace Stress – Causes of Work Place Stress in Police Department,"* utilized the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava (1981) to measure stress across 12 dimensions. They found that role overload (85–90%) and unreasonable political pressure (65%) were the most dominant stressors, while powerlessness and under-participation diminished autonomy. Strenuous working conditions and intrinsic impoverishment—manifested as low motivation and lack of recognition—were also identified as key psychological stressors. Similar conditions are prevalent in higher education, where faculty members often face excessive workloads, limited decision-making authority, and inadequate institutional support. The OSI framework, therefore, provides a valid and comprehensive model for analyzing occupational stress among teaching staff.

In the study *"A Study on Job Stress for School Teachers,"* Vyas et al. (2013)[3] reported that excessive workload, co-curricular responsibilities, inadequate pay, and lack of decision-making authority were major contributors to stress among school teachers. The findings indicated moderate to high levels of stress primarily due to work overload, role ambiguity, and limited institutional support. The authors suggested interventions such as clearer task allocation, participative management, and motivational initiatives to alleviate stress. These insights are equally relevant to higher education, where similar stressors affect teaching, research, and administrative performance.

Hunnur (2014)[4], in *"A Study on Relationship Between Occupational Stress Index Dimensions and Demographic Variables of Police Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors,"* examined the relationship between stress and demographic factors such as age, education, and experience. The study revealed that younger employees exhibited higher role ambiguity and stress related to responsibilities, while higher qualifications, though associated with greater expectations, enhanced coping capacity. Experienced employees demonstrated better adaptability and lower stress levels. Translating these findings to academia, it can be inferred that experienced faculty members are better equipped to handle academic pressures, whereas early-career educators are more prone to uncertainty regarding roles, performance, and career progression.

Hunnur et al. (2014)[1] further emphasized that workload, lack of autonomy, unclear roles, insufficient participation in decision-making, and poor peer relations are primary causes of occupational stress. These factors lead to reduced job satisfaction and motivation, strained interpersonal relationships, decreased performance, higher absenteeism, and physical and psychological health issues such as fatigue and anxiety. Among teaching staff in autonomous colleges, similar outcomes manifest as academic burnout, reduced teaching quality, and lower research productivity, particularly under pressures from accreditation processes, publication demands, and administrative duties.

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that occupational stress among teaching professionals arises from multi-dimensional factors including workload, role ambiguity, lack of autonomy, and limited institutional support. Frameworks developed by Hunnur and co-authors provide a strong empirical and theoretical foundation for assessing occupational stress in academic contexts. The present study seeks to apply these validated constructs to teaching staff in autonomous colleges affiliated with VTU in North Karnataka, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of stress determinants and their implications for faculty well-being and institutional performance.

Most previous studies on occupational stress, such as those by Hunnur et al. (2014)[2] and Vyas et al. (2013)[3], have focused on police personnel and school teachers, identifying factors like workload, role ambiguity, and lack of autonomy as major stressors. However, limited research has explored occupational stress among teaching staff in higher education, particularly in autonomous colleges affiliated with VTU. Few studies have examined how autonomy, academic workload, and institutional responsibilities influence faculty stress in the North Karnataka context. This gap highlights the need for an empirical study focused on understanding occupational stress among teaching staff in VTU-affiliated autonomous colleges.

Objective of the study:

1. To study the causes of stress among the faculty of Autonomous Colleges Affiliated to VTU.
2. To understand the stress on different demographic Profile.

III. Research Methodology

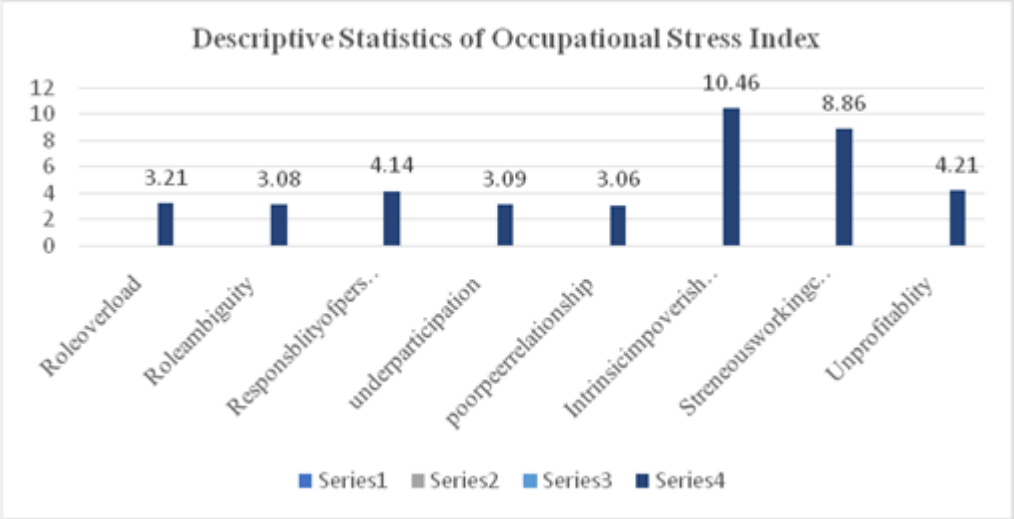
The present study employs a descriptive research design to assess occupational stress among teaching staff in autonomous colleges affiliated with VTU in North Karnataka. Primary data will be collected using a structured questionnaire based on the Occupational Stress Index (OSI)[5] developed by Dr. Srivastava and Dr. Shastri, administered to faculty members from four autonomous colleges located in Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Belagavi, and Dharwad districts. Secondary data will be gathered from relevant research articles, journals, and published reports to strengthen the study framework. The sampling frame includes autonomous colleges across

these four regions, with the teaching faculty serving as the sampling unit. A total of 100 respondents will be selected through a random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation. The collected data will be analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel to derive meaningful interpretations and insights from the findings.

Scope of the Study: The study focuses on understanding the main causes of stress among faculty in Autonomous Colleges affiliated to VTU.It also covers how stress levels vary based on different personal and professional backgrounds like age, gender, experience, etc. Further study can compare stress levels between faculty in Autonomous and Non-Autonomous Colleges and also look at how support systems like counseling and workload policies help reduce stress.

Limitations: The findings are limited to Autonomous Colleges under VTU and may not apply to other institutions. The data is based on what faculty report, which may not-always reflect their actual stress levels or coping habits.

IV. Result Analysis And Interpretation



Analysis:

The bar chart presents average scores of various occupational stress dimensions among respondents. Among all the stressors, Intrinsic Impoverishment records the highest mean value of 10.46, indicating it is the most significant source of stress. This is followed by Strenuous working Condition with a mean of 8.86, and then Unprofitability and Under participation with mean values of 4.21 and 4.14, respectively. The other factors Role Overload (3.21), Role Ambiguity (3.08), Responsibility of Personnel (4.14), Poor Peer Relationship (3.09), and Intrinsic Impoverishment (3.06) show relatively lower mean values, suggesting moderate to low levels of occupational stress from these dimensions.

Interpretation:

The analysis can be interpreted that Intrinsic Impoverishment is the major cause of stress among faculty, followed by Strenuous Working Conditions. This means teachers feel stressed mainly due to lack of meaningful work, monotony, and heavy workloads. Other factors like Unprofitability, Under Participation, and Responsibility for Personnel cause moderate stress, while Role Overload, Role Ambiguity, and Poor Peer Relationships contribute less. Overall, the results indicate that most stress comes from limited job enrichment and demanding work environments.

Age and stress										
		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									lower	upper
Role overload	Equal variances-assumed	.315	.576	-.417	98	.678	-.07077	.16986	-.40785	.26631
	Equal variances not-assumed			-.404	46.307	.688	-.07077	.17526	-.42349	.28196
Role ambiguity	Equal variances-assumed	.003	.960	.153	98	.878	.02183	.14228	-.26053	.30418
	Equal variances not-assumed			.152	48.179	.880	.02183	.14385	-.26738	.31103
Responsblity Of personnel	Equal variances-assumed	.185	.668	-.044	98	.965	-.00529	.12153	-.24647	.23589
	Equal variances not assumed			-.041	44.691	.967	-.00529	.12781	-.26277	.25218
Under participation	Equal variances-assumed	.657	.420	-.593	98	.555	-.06101	.10288	-.26518	.14315
	Equal variances not-assumed			-.556	43.603	.581	-.06101	.10969	-.28213	.16010
Poor peer relationship	Equal variances-assumed	.331	.567	-.096	98	.924	-.00893	.09348	-.19443	.17657
	Equal variances not-assumed			-.092	46.110	.927	-.00893	.09667	-.20350	.18564
Intrinsic impoverishment	Equal variances-assumed	.153	.697	.012	98	.991	.00595	.50656	-.99930	1.01120
	Equal variances not assumed			.012	48.335	.991	.00595	.51131	-1.02192	1.03383
Streneous working condition	Equal variances-assumed	.014	.907	.089	98	.929	.05109	.57458	-1.08914	1.19132
	Equal variances not-assumed			.086	45.732	.932	.05109	.59680	-1.15039	1.25257
Unprofitablity	Equal variances-assumed	.041	.839	.628	98	.531	.22222	.35368	-.47964	.92408
	Equal variances not-assumed			.625	48.708	.535	.22222	.35562	-.49254	.93698

Analysis:

From the above chart it can be analysed that for all eight dimensions of occupational stress, the calculated p-values were greater than 0.05, which means the differences observed between-two age groups are not statistically significant.

Interpretation:

It can be interpreted from the above analysis that occupational stress among teaching faculty is not influenced by age, as both younger (≤35 years) and older (≥35 years) groups reported similar levels of stress across all eight dimensions.

Designation and Stress										
		Levene's-test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% -confidence interval of the difference	
									lower	upper
Role overload	Equal variances-assumed	7.043	.009	1.866	98	.065	.31532	.16896	-.01998	.65062
	Equal variances not-assumed			1.955	51.059	.056	.31532	.16128	-.00845	.63909
Role ambiguity	Equal variances-assumed	59.591	.000	2.347	98	.021	.32864	.14004	.05074	.60654
	Equal variances not-assumed			3.747	82.354	.000	.32864	.08771	.15418	.50310
Responsibility of personnel	Equal variances-assumed	1.646	.203	1.801	98	.075	.21783	.12093	-.02215	.45780
	Equal variances not-assumed			1.489	34.483	.146	.21783	.14634	-.07941	.51506
Under participation	Equal variances-assumed	5.249	.024	-2.440	98	.016	-.24696	.10121	-.44780	-.04611
	Equal variances not-assumed			-3.326	93.148	.001	-.24696	.07425	-.39439	-.09952
Poor peer relationship	Equal variances-assumed	14.118	.000	-.608	98	.545	-.05733	.09436	-.24460	.12993
	Equal variances not-assumed			-.810	89.632	.420	-.05733	.07078	-.19795	.08329
Intrinsic impoverishment	Equal variances-assumed	9.381	.003	1.961	98	.053	.98529	.50255	-.01201	1.98258
	Equal variances not-assumed			2.482	80.081	.015	.98529	.39690	.19544	1.77514
Strenuous working condition	Equal variances-assumed	9.728	.002	5.060	98	.000	2.61821	.51745	1.59135	3.64508
	Equal variances not-assumed			7.282	97.947	.000	2.61821	.35953	1.90473	3.33169
Unprofitability	Equal variances-assumed	13.122	.000	1.695	98	.093	.59893	.35327	-.10211	1.29998
	Equal variances not-assumed			2.159	81.212	.034	.59893	.27735	.04711	1.15076

Analysis:

Data shows that occupational stress differs between Assistant and Associate Professors in certain dimensions. Significant differences were found in Role Ambiguity, Under Participation, and Strenuous Working Conditions, where designation clearly influenced stress levels. In contrast, no significant differences emerged

for Role Overload, Responsibility of Personnel, Poor Peer Relationship, Intrinsic Impoverishment, and Unprofitability.

Interpretation:

From the above analysis it can be interpreted that while some stressors such as role clarity, decision-making participation, and working conditions are sensitive to faculty designation, other stressors like workload, peer relations, and financial dissatisfaction are common across both Assistant and Associate Professors.

Experience and stress										
		Levene's -Test for Equality of -Variances		t-test for Equality-of Means						
									95%-Confidence Interval of Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Role overload	Equal variances-assumed	.315	.576	-.417	98	.678	-.07077	.16986	-.40785	.26631
	Equal variances not-assumed			-.404	46.307	.688	-.07077	.17526	-.42349	.28196
Role ambiguity	Equal variances-assumed	.003	.960	.153	98	.878	.02183	.14228	-.26053	.30418
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Responsibility of personnel	Equal variances-assumed	.185	.668	-.044	98	.965	-.00529	.12153	-.24647	.23589
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	Equal variances not-assumed			.625	48.708	.535	.22222	.35562	-.49254	.93698

Analysis:

The data revealed reveal that for all eight occupational stress dimensions, the p-values are greater than 0.005, indicating no significant difference between faculty with less than 10 years of experience and those with more than 10 years of experience.

Interpretation:

The results show that teaching experience does not have a major impact on stress levels. Faculty with less than 10 years of experience and those with more than 10 years' experience similar levels of stress across all dimensions. This means that the number of years a teacher has worked does not significantly influence how much occupational stress they feel.

V. Discussions

The findings of the study reveal that Intrinsic Impoverishment emerged as the highest occupational stressor among teaching faculty, with a mean score of 10.46. This indicates that many faculty members experience stress due to the lack of meaningful work, limited opportunities for personal growth, and insufficient recognition of their contributions. The second-highest stressor identified was Strenuous Working Conditions, with a mean score of 8.86, reflecting the challenges posed by physically and mentally demanding work environments. These findings suggest that while teaching is intellectually rewarding, the repetitive nature of tasks, administrative burdens, and inadequate support systems contribute significantly to psychological strain.

The analysis further indicates that age does not play a significant role in determining occupational stress levels, as both younger (≤35 years) and older (≥35 years) faculty members reported similar stress levels across all eight occupational stress dimensions. This suggests that stress is a widespread issue among teaching staff, influenced more by institutional and job-related factors than by age. Additionally, significant differences were observed between Assistant Professors and Associate Professors in the areas of role ambiguity, under-participation, and strenuous working conditions. This implies that hierarchical differences and varying responsibilities may affect the perception and intensity of stress. However, for other dimensions such as role overload, responsibility for personnel, poor peer relationships, intrinsic impoverishment, and unprofitability, no significant differences were observed, indicating that these stressors are common across all designations. The

results also show that teaching experience does not significantly influence stress levels; both early-career and experienced faculty reported similar levels of occupational stress, suggesting that institutional factors outweigh experience in shaping stress patterns.

Based on these findings, several strategies can be implemented to reduce occupational stress among teaching faculty. Firstly, job enrichment is essential to address intrinsic impoverishment. Institutions should redesign roles to make work more meaningful by providing opportunities for skill utilization, autonomy, and recognition. This can be achieved through job rotation between teaching, research, and administrative duties, encouraging faculty participation in curriculum design, and assigning mentorship roles to enhance engagement. Secondly, improving working conditions is crucial to mitigate stress arising from strenuous work environments. Institutions must ensure ergonomic and well-equipped workplaces, balanced workloads, and a supportive organizational climate. Providing digital teaching aids, research facilities, and administrative assistance can reduce both physical and mental strain. Lastly, balanced workload distribution is necessary to prevent role overload. Effective manpower planning, fair task allocation, and proper time management systems should be established to ensure equitable distribution of responsibilities. Colleges can introduce teaching assistants, limit non-academic duties, and rotate administrative roles among faculty to maintain balance.

Overall, the study emphasizes that occupational stress among teaching staff in autonomous colleges is largely influenced by institutional structures and job design rather than individual demographic characteristics. Addressing intrinsic impoverishment, improving work environments, and promoting equitable workload management can significantly enhance faculty well-being and institutional productivity.

VI. Conclusion

This study on occupational stress among faculty members of autonomous colleges affiliated to VTU in North Karnataka reveals that teaching staff experience moderate levels of stress across various dimensions. Key stress factors identified include high responsibility for student performance, lack of clarity in job roles, limited participation in decision-making, and inadequate recognition. Participation in institutional processes and compensation satisfaction were found to be low, especially among those in higher-responsibility roles. To mitigate stress, the study recommends clear role definitions, inclusive decision-making, improved working conditions, career advancement opportunities, and structured wellness initiatives. Addressing these areas can enhance faculty well-being, motivation, and effectiveness, ultimately contributing to a healthier academic environment

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