

Analysing the Causes of Stress Among Non-Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Non-academic staff members are the backbone of higher educational institutions. But they are not properly recognised in educational institutions due to various reasons. The purpose of this research is to examine the various factors causing stress to non-academic staff in higher educational institutions. The study was confined to 120 sample respondents working as non-academic staff in arts and science colleges located in the Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. The study indicates long working hours, over workload, organizational changes, deadline pressure, shifts in responsibility, poor employee management relations, lack of appropriate skills, lack of adequate resources and bias among co-workers are the major causes of work stress to non-academic staff in the higher educational institution. This research indicates that every non-teaching staff has stress and they are following some techniques to cope with the stress to burnout and refresh themselves. It is suggested that higher education institutions should take care of the non-teaching staff to improve the productivity and pleasant work environment in the institution.

Keywords: Stress, Non-academic staff, Work stress, Higher educational institutions, Sustainability.

Introduction

Work-related stress is likely the most significant factor in the working environment in both service and non-service sectors. There are certain workplace elements, called job stressors, that make jobs difficult and burdensome for personnel. Additional stressors involve workplace interpersonal dynamics, such as disagreement with supervisors, co-workers, management, and subordinates (Gauttam Jena & Kumar Acharya, 2021). Also due to multitasking type of job in the higher educational institutions. Non-academic staff are assigned with many duties, in particular emphasis on monitoring the work environment, salaries, working hours, overwork, the monotony of work, and expertise, and yet they are expected to accomplish their tasks within their specified time frame (Verma & Kumar, 2014). Eustress, or positive stress, motivates people to pursue excellence. (Dhakate et al., 2022). When work needs are not satisfied, it results in extreme stress or stress brought on by lack of productivity, decline in confidence, or the incapacity to carry out daily activities. (Dhakate et al., 2022). The American Medical Association has determined that stress is the underlying cause of more than 60% of all human diseases and conditions. So, stress isn't just a component or trigger of illness; it literally brings illness (Ibrahim, 2016). The working sector has changed significantly, just like a higher education institution. In recent times, the increasing changes in all aspects of life, including social interactions, lifestyle, mentalities, beliefs, and technology, as well as in the economy and ideas have caused unavoidable pressure on non-academic staff. These pressures, combined with a rapid changing work environment, are causing an increase in work-related stress (Shrivastava, 2017).

Today's workplace provides more challenges than ever before. Work certainly serves non-academic staff in terms of social standing, giving them the ability to recognize chances for personal growth and integration as well as enough money to get by. Results, however, indicated that work schedules and contracts have resulted in workers working harder and having less time for their personal and social lives (Mutiu, et al.,). In today's world, non-academic staff's jobs can be an important component in higher educational institutions. Because people occupy themselves with certain occupations, they spend more time doing other things than getting enough rest. Those who work in educational institutions may experience anxiety and uncertainty due to a variety of unpleasant, stressful, and dangerous workplace circumstances (Ahmad, 2015). As a result, the stress of work may be affecting non-academic staff, which might result in a lack of job satisfaction. Work stress affects non-

academic staff's job happiness and overall performance. This is due to the fact that most educational institutions are increasingly demanding higher work outcomes (Mutiu, et al.,). The concept of coping with stress is balanced. They have a close bond, whether to employ intentional and conscious stress management strategies to cope up stress. It is defined as people's efforts and behaviours to cope with stress and pressure and to develop a sense of control over their environment (Shrivastava, 2017). The aim of the research is to examine the stress among non-academic staff, identify the various causes of stress that affect non-academic staff in higher education, and find methods of managing stress that helps reduce stress.

Causes of stress

Non-academic staff are exposed to variety of hazards and hazardous circumstances in their workplaces, which can damage their health and lives. Yet, some dangers are less likely to occur in some educational institutions than others, so it is important to analyse which hazards are the most harmful to educational institutions and non-academic staff. If non-academic staff spends one-third of their daily lives at work, it is not only essential to be aware of the reasons but also to take action based on this information to control unpleasant situations. Hence, in order to deal with these issues at work and promote healthy non-academic staff in higher educational institutions, it is essential to tackle the existence and causes of poor mental health and well-being (Sanjay Kumar, 2018). Audit of stress-related hazards are increasingly being integrated into health and safety systems in general. This is related in part to the fact that stress affects mental health, physical illness and absence in work, and occupational health in general. When non-academic staff are under pressure, they behave differently especially in the workplace, there are worried about certain issues, but they choose to keep their concerns to themselves. Meanwhile, some non-academic staff may behave poorly due to stress, but they are unaware that their actions are a result of it. However, there are individuals who react calmly to challenges and feel unafraid and relaxed when dealing with them. On the other hand, some people are highly self-aware and claim to enjoy challenges that do not stress them out. Finally, there are those who have a low tolerance for stress and feel threatened by even small demands, causing them to feel stressed immediately. Understanding these different responses to stress can help employers support their staff and create a healthier work environment (Vishnu P M, 2018).

Work-life changes cause stress. These days, it seems that non-academic staff members talk about stress in daily conversation, as well as on television, radio, in the newspaper, at

conferences, at the stress relief facility, and in university courses on the topic. It's interesting to note that few people define the phrase in the same way, and even fewer are looking for a specific, unambiguous meaning. Stress generally occurs when external expectations and pressures outweigh the capacity of non-academic personnel to adapt to biological and physiological needs. (Ahmad, 2015). Workplace stress is caused by a number of things, such as personal problems, an excessive amount of work, the physical workspace, the nature of the job, disagreements with coworkers, and management. In the worst circumstances, a large proportion of non-academic staff members feel stress, which can lead to uncertainty and cause issues with their performance and health. (Vishnu P M, 2018).

Long work hours, a heavy workload, and organisational changes are just a few of the variables that can lead to workplace stress. Stress at work can also be caused on by pressure to meet deadlines, changes in responsibilities, and increased workplace stress from supervision. An atmosphere that is stressful can also be caused by poor management-employee relations.. Additionally, a lack of appropriate skills and inadequate resources can add to the stress, as well as bias among co-workers. It is important for employers to recognize and address these stress-inducing factors to ensure the well-being of their employees and promote a healthy work environment. Providing necessary resources, improving communication, and offering support and training can all help to reduce workplace stress and promote a more positive work environment (Vishnu P M, 2018).

Stress and work performance

Performance evaluation should be viewed from both behavioural and results of standpoint. The behaviour component has to deal with what a person performs at work. (Maxwell Azila-Gbettor et al., 2017). Stress is an environmental circumstance in which a person is forced to execute tasks that threaten to be more than the person's capabilities and facilities for fulfilling them, under situations in which Non-academic staff expects a significant difference in reward for meeting versus not meeting demand. Employees will try to avoid significant stress at work by withdrawing psychologically i.e., Disinterest or lack of commitment to the task, etc physically like often lateness, absenteeism, or laziness, etc, or by abandoning the job entirely. Occupational stress was found to have positive influence on the performance of university non-academic staff. It was also discovered that job-related demands such as carrying work home, interpersonal connections, and career growth were drivers of occupational stress. It was determined that there was an immediate need to address the harmful effects (Chinenye et

al., 2017). So, it is important to measure the causes of stress among non-academic staff in the workplace because it affects their work performance.

Materials and Methods

Both primary and secondary data were used in this investigation. Primary data were collected using a pre-structured questionnaire. For the study, 120 non-academic staff members from arts and science colleges in Thoothukudi were chosen using purposive stratified random sampling. Secondary information were gathered from books, journals, and online resources.

Sample and Data collection

The sampling frame for the study was female non-academic personnel working at women arts and science colleges in Thoothukudi City. The sample pool includes four colleges that were chosen purposively as women colleges situated in Thoothukudi City. All junior, senior, and senior members were considered in terms of staff status. Respondents were chosen for the survey using stratified random sampling. This sampling procedure recognises the population of various colleges and employee status. Each college was classified as a stratum. The questionnaire was circulated to non-academic staff members in various departments inside the institutions, to aid in the circulation and acquiring of the surveys that had been completed. When practical, face-to-face questionnaire administration was done to ensure a high response rate. There were 120 participants in the study. This was made up of 30 respondents from four different colleges. In statistical terms, the sample sizes remained large, and the results can be extremely trustworthy dependent on the analytical and sampling processes used. (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997).

Instruments for data collection and measurement techniques

Respondents were instructed to use Likert scales to respond whether they agree or disagree with a list of survey items (Price (1997)). Each factor has five responses: "strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree". On a scale from five to one, five points are given for strongly agreeing. The total score for a scale is determined by adding the item scores and dividing the result by the scale's number of components. Scores improve as stress levels rise. For each of the different stress dimensions, the mean and standard deviation were also computed and interpreted. The identified stress symptoms were employed in the questionnaire to assess the level of stress among non-academic staff. Anxiety, insomnia, depression, absenteeism, difficulty concentrating, and a lack of time for oneself were some of

the symptoms of stress. In accordance with the study's goals, background data on the employees was also acquired. According to the research, stress may vary depending on factors including age, job position, commute time, number of children, length of employment, and annual leave. These were believed to be able to identify differences across groups.

Data analysis procedure

The data analysis methods used in the study were both descriptive and inferential. The results were presented in percentage and described in-depth using mean and standard deviations.

Results and Discussions

Distribution of respondents by background information

Table 1 Distribution of respondents by background information

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age (in years)		
Up to 30	23	19.2
31-40	52	43.3
41-50	25	20.8
51-60	20	16.7
Total	120	100
Level of education		
SSLC	28	23.3
HSC	29	24.2
Graduate	41	34.2
Postgraduate	-	-
Professional course	12	10
Diploma/ITI	10	8.3
Total	120	100
Marital status		
Married	84	70
Single	29	24.2
Divorced	7	5.8

Total	120	100
Current work status		
Junior staff	40	33.3
Senior staff	40	33.3
Senior Member	40	33.4
Total	120	100
Length of Services		
Upto 5 years	27	22.5
6-10 years	39	32.5
Above 10 years	54	45
Total	120	100

The provided information describes the distribution of respondents based on their background information, including age, level of education, marital status, current work status, and length of services in their current position. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents (43.3%) were between the age from 31 to 40 years, 20.8% were between the age group between 41 to 50 years, 19.2% were between the age group from up to 30 years, and 16.7% were between the age group between 51 to 60 years. When it comes to educational qualification, the majority of the respondents (34.2%) are graduates, followed by HSC (24.2%) and SSLC (23.3%), 10% of respondents completed professional course, and 8.3% had a diploma/ITI. It is noted that the no one completed post graduation among the selected sample for the study. Regarding marital status, most of the respondents (70%) are married, while 24.2% are single and 5.8% are divorced. In terms of current work status, the respondents were evenly split as junior staff (33.3%), senior staff (33.3%), and senior members (33.4%). Regarding the length of service in their current position, the respondents (45%) had been in their position for more than 10 years or more, followed by 6-10 years (32.5%), and up to 5 years (22.5%). These findings provide insight about the background of the respondents and can be used to deduct conclusions about the population from which the samples were taken.

Causes of Stress among Non-Academic Staff

Table 2 Causes of Stress among Non-Academic Staff

Causes	Mean	Std. dev.
Job uncertainty		
Understanding of responsibility	3.64	1.437
Expectations from my job	2.97	1.269
Ambiguity in criteria for performance		
My performance on the job is deemed satisfactory by my supervisor.	3.16	1.124
I am aware of what my superior deems to be acceptable performance.	2.91	1.012
My level of performance is considered acceptable	2.82	1.119
Ambiguity in the work-method		
I am confident in the approach I'll take to finish my assignment.	3.12	1.142
I am aware of the ideal procedure for finishing my task.	3.01	1.039
Scheduling uncertainty		
knowledge about how to perform a specific task for my job	3.17	1.181
I am confident in the order of my job's tasks.	3.20	1.193
Knowledge of doing the work given to me	2.97	1.111
Job conflict		
Conflicting requests for jobs from multiple administrators	3.93	1.391
Conflicting requests for work from my direct supervisor	3.97	1.432
Workload		
There is not enough time for me to complete everything.	4.11	0.971
My workload is excessive for my position.	4.30	1.132
I have to do my work quickly.	4.03	1.102
Resource inadequacy		
No proper restroom	1.113	1.491
Inadequate equipment was given to me	3.49	1.127
I have enough support service	2.98	1.113
Hazards		
My work rarely puts me in danger physically.	0.971	1.325
I work in an unhealthy environment.	3.21	1.213
Serious incidents frequently occur.	1.117	1.125
Transfers		
Transfers in the colleges between departments are timely	3.56	1.139
Staff should serve a quite number of years	3.17	1.121
Promotion		
For the past six years, I have received promotions.	2.43	1.032
Promotion in the college is subjective	3.71	1.381

I did not face problems with the promotion	3.92	1.417
Interpersonal connection		
My boss and I get along nicely.	3.13	1.129
I often socialise with my colleagues	3.28	1.233

The ranking for the workload component appears to indicate that non-academic female staff members are stressed due to over workload. In regard to the total job ambiguity, it is understood that non-academic staff are more likely to experience stress. On average, job hazards promotions, conflicts, transfers, and insufficiency of resources did not appear to cause stress among non-academic staff . It shows that non-academic staff members are not happy at their workplace due to workload and conflicts. Physical dangers are very less when compared to other jobs but mental health is getting affected due to stressors at the workplace.

Conclusion

The study indicates that every non-academic staff member has stress, and there are some techniques to cope with stress. Every non-academic staff is struggling to overcome their stress, and they need solutions. If the stress level increases more than the basic level, it will lead to unhealthy conditions to the individual and to the workplace. In other words, it might be claimed that non-academic staff experience more stress than academic staff in higher educational institutions. They are responsible for all the accounts, which are managed by higher educational institutions. Workplaces with effective communication, respectful relationships, and a healthy work system can help non-academic staff identify and manage the types of stress that can have different causes. When it comes to creating a staff that is healthy and productive, such workplaces produce the best results. It is concluded that higher officials should take care of the non-academic staff. If they are depressed or stressed, the higher authority should notice and offer a solution, counselling, or suggestion. There should be a good relationship between the higher authority and non-academic staff, and it will be credited with good management. Proper training should be provided to the non-academic staff in the institutions to manage stress due to work. So that the non-academic staff will get job satisfaction and it increases the work performance. Happy employee will be the real asset to the institution.

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