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Article: **An Empirical Study of Emotional Distress, Motivation, and Work-related Performance among College Teachers**

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An Empirical Study of Emotional Distress, Motivation, and Work-related Performance among College Teachers

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Abstract

On account of high job demands and the minimum availability of resources, college teachers experience serious emotional distress at work. This distress reduces work motivation and adversely affects the work performance of teachers. For addressing this critical issue, the current study aims to investigate the impact of emotional distress on college teachers' motivation and work performance. It is a cross-sectional research. For gathering the required information, data was collected from 150 college teachers who were selected through convenient sampling technique. Additionally, standardized research measures were employed to collect the data from the participants. DASS-21 was used to assess emotional distress. Work Task Motivation Scale (WTMS) and Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) were used to assess the motivation and work performance of the teachers. Later, SPSS version 21 was used to carry out the statistical analysis. The results revealed that emotional distress is a true predictor of a lack of motivation and low work performance among college teachers. The findings of the current study can help policymakers in developing policies to improve organizational settings, reduce emotional distress and address other mental health issues among college teachers. Furthermore, the study also provides evidence for promoting job resources and enhancing the work performance of teachers.

Keywords: college teachers, emotional distress, motivation, work performance

Introduction

The teaching profession was once viewed as a 'low-stress occupation' and teachers have been envied for comfortable tenure, light workload, flexibility and other perks (Laybourn et al., [2019](#)). In the current time, the college teacher experiences severe anxiety depression and stress (emotional distress) owing to high workload, lesson delivery, students' learning

outcome and academic achievements (Meeks & Dreihaus, [2021](#)). College teaching is a physically and mentally challenging occupation, as the teacher spends a lot of energy in their daily work in the classroom (Shi et al., [2021](#)). Literature has suggested that college teaching is attributed to workload, as teachers plan lessons, develop curriculum, organize activities, supervise classes, manage extra-curricular activities, and provide information (Shim, & Lee, [2020](#)). Further, teachers maintain discipline, provide cover for teacher shortages and absences, maintain records, administer time-tables, evaluate and assess students' performance (You & Conley, [2015](#)). As a result, motivation, performance at work and the overall mental and physical wellbeing of the teachers deteriorate in terms of severe anxiety, depression and stress owing to high job demands (Li et al., [2018](#)).

Furthermore, college teachers strive to meet the expectations of student's guardians, which is generally found to be challenging for the student's educational progress, future career and the development of the personalities as well (Carroll et al., [2021](#)). In addition, the attitude of a teacher can adversely affect the progress of a student either positively or negatively (Pit-Ten Cate & Glock, [2019](#)). Owing to stressful workload and responsibility, the college teachers experience emotional distress (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, [2014](#)). The emotional distress refers to the anxiety, depression and stress. If emotional distress is high among teachers, it leads to low motivation level that affects the teacher work performance as well. In contrast, the low emotional distress among teachers leads to high motivation level towards work performance (Panisoara et al., [2020](#); Asaloei et al., [2020](#)).

Teachers' motivation is crucial in the academic growth of the new generation. Teacher's motivation in educational institutions is significant aspect that revolves around responsibilities, knowledge, abilities and educational development of students (Han et al., [2016](#)). The teachers who experience emotional distress in the form of emotional fatigue, depression, stress and anxiety often report a lack of motivation at work (Heinz, [2015](#)). The teacher has to be motivated in order to be more effective and productive in the profession of teaching and educating a generation (Hong, [2010](#)).

The teachers' being motivated means being satisfied and accomplished in every respect (Wanakacha et al., [2018](#)). According to the basic needs of

the motivation theory, in order to achieve the educational purposes from the teachers, the teachers' needs must be fulfilled in terms of wages, flexible time schedule and personal space (Mahmoudi et al., 2017). The teachers who have not sufficient knowledge and motivation will face difficulties in motivating their students to learn (Trigueros et al., 2020; Mahler et al., 2018). The literature has suggested the positive relationship between the teacher motivation level and work performance (Ferguson et al., 2012). Furthermore, apart from motivation, the emotional distress among teachers adversely affects their job performance.

According to Kaur (2011), teacher performance refers to duties performed by teachers at a particular period in the education system. The area of teacher work performance is very broad; it doesn't cover only educational goals, but also revolves around the healthy teacher-student and teacher-staff relationship (Chen et al., 2015; Badawy, 2015). Furthermore, it comprises of attitude, subject mastery, teaching methodology, personal characteristic, motivation, lesson delivery and designing interesting lesson plan. (Hou et al., 2014). For performing all the above duties, emotional well-being of teachers is crucial. Massive body of researches have found that emotionally disturbed teachers do not perform well at their job as performance is the product of a combination of an individual's motivation and mental well-being (Laybourn et al., 2019; Khudaniya, & Kaji 2014; Danish et al., 2019).

Recent studies have shown that anxious and depressed teachers experience difficulty in preparation and planning the effective lesson plan or lesson delivery. Furthermore, their relation with other staff members, parents and students have been found to be unstable although the student-teacher relationship is the core element behind the learning outcome (Laybourn et al., 2019). In short, it adversely affects the students learning outcome. According to the above literature, emotional distress leads to the lack of motivation and low work performance among teachers in a diverse culture. No substantial literature has been found in Pakistan, specifically, in disadvantaged areas such as Gujranwala. Therefore, the current study aimed at investigating the impact of emotional distress on motivation and work performance of the teachers.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model focuses on the fundamental aspects, any job that motivate employees for better performance, are task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback, wages and other related resources (Blanz, [2017](#)). These characteristics are proposed to lead to 'critical psychological and emotional states, i.e., depression, anxiety. It is proposed that positive or negative work characteristics give rise to emotional states such as depression, anxiety and stress, which lead to corresponding cognitive, i.e. (low motivation) and Behavioral outcome (work performance).

Figure 1

Job Characteristic Model



Method

Participants

The sample size of the present study remained N=150 college teachers, among whom both genders were equal in ratio.

Measures

The following research tools were used in the current study to collect relevant information about the variables.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale

Depression, anxiety, stresses scale DASS was used to investigate the emotional stress level among the teachers (Lovibond, & Lovibond, [1995](#)).

The DASS comprised 21 items with the four-point rating scale range from 0-3. The DASS comprised three subscales i.e., depression, anxiety and stress. Each domain comprised 7 items. Cronbach alpha for Depression Anxiety Stress Scale was .72.

Work Task Motivation Scale (WTMS)

WTMST evaluates the similar motivational possessions that consisted of 15 items covering the six domains (Fernet et al., [2008](#)). The domains of the scale are intrinsic motivation, external regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation and amotivation. Items signified possible responses to investigate the motivational construct for the respective job. Each item was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (does not agree at all) to 7 (agrees completely). The internal consistency for Work Task Motivation Scale was found to be .73.

Individual Work Performance Questionnaire

Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt&Buuren, 2013 scale IWPQ was used to measure the teachers' work performance. The scale comprised 18 and was based on a 3 dimensional conceptual framework, i.e., task performance, contextual performance, and CWB (Koopmans et al., [2013](#)). The scale comprised 5-point rating scale range from (seldom to always for task and contextual performance, never to often for counterproductive work behavior). The internal consistency for Task Performance (TP) was found to be .73.

Procedure

The current study was conducted to measure the relationship between Emotional Distress, Motivation and Individual Work Performance among College Teachers. Three standardized scales were used in the present research. Permission had been obtained from college teachers of Gujranwala. The data have been collected from college teachers: male and female teachers of Gujranwala. The questionnaire had been given to the participants by personal approach following ethics. Initially, the teacher signed the informed consent to ensure their active participation. The research ensured the participants about the confidentiality of the data. The researcher informed the participants that they were free in making choice to

participate or withdraw from the study in case of any physical, psychological or emotional discomfort, threat or humiliation. Then the instruments of the study were distributed among the participants. The criteria of scoring keys were also introduced to the participants to obtain authentic, valid and reliable information.

Lastly, the participants were heartily and warmly thanked for their co-operation. Then data were collected and analyzed. SPSS-21 version was used for statistical analysis of data.

Results

Table 1

The Following Table Indicate the Inter-Correlation for all Three Scales

Subs	Das	Dep	Anx	Stres	Intri	identi	intro	Ext	Amo	ITP	CP	CWB	
Das	1	.885**	.897**	.784**	-.545**	-.549**	-.547**	-.482**	.807**	-.766**	-.794**	.621**	
Dep	--	1	.764**	.663**	-.528**	-.530**	-.530**	-.463**	.753**	-.715**	-.703**	.537**	
Anxi	--	--	1	.756**	-.559**	-.564**	-.562**	-.497**	.755**	-.746**	-.776**	.558**	
Stre	--	--	--	1	-.506**	-.509**	-.509**	-.464**	.699**	-.708**	-.713**	.592**	
Intr	--	--	--	--	1	.995**	.995**	.872**	-.463**	.593**	.578**	-.477**	
Identi	--	--	--	--	--	1	.998**	.892**	-.465**	.591**	.573**	-.472**	
Intro	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.898**	-.468**	.587**	.570**	-.470**	
Exter	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.440**	.515**	.487**	-.391**	
Amot	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.709**	-.690**	.514**	
ITP	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.890**	-.675**	
CP	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.716**	
CWB	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	
Total	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.621**
M	33.9	11.57	11.70	11.53	14.65	14.57	14.60	15.57	32.35	15.81	21.47	17.95	
SD	11.5	4.512	4.145	4.390	7.723	7.567	7.534	7.632	12.191	4.534	8.144	5.231	

Note. ITP= Individual task performance, CP= Contextual Performance, CWB= Counterproductive work behavior, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 1 depicts that depression anxiety and stress have negative correlation with four domains of work task motivation i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, introjections, identifying, and two dimension of work task performance i.e., individual work task performance and contextual task performance. The emotional distress has positive correlation with motivation and counterproductive task performance.

Table 2

Regression Analysis between Depression (DASS) and Amotivation and Work Task Performance

Dependent Variable	R-Square	R	Adjusted R Square	B	Standard Beta	F-test	P
Intrinsic	.272	.522	.267	-.924	-5.22	55.1	000
Identity	.275	.524	.270	-.910	-5.24	56.14	000
Intro	.274	.523	.269	-.905	-5.23	55.86	000
Extrinsic	.207	.455	.202	-.797	-.455	38615	000
Amotivation	.105	.324	.099	3.27	.324	17.36	000
ITP	.518	.720	.515	.749	.720	159.29	000
CP	.537	.733	.534	-1.36	.733	171.40	000
CWB	.310	.557	.305	.668	.577	66.42	000

The above table shows the impact of depression on each dimension of motivation, as per confidence level 0.095, so all the dimensions of motivation found to be significant as the P-value is 000($p < 0.05$).

Similarly, the impact of depression on each domain of work task performance is significant as ($p < 0.05$). Depression has significant negative impact on motivation and CP. In contrast depression has been found to have positive impact on CWP, ITP and amotivation ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3

Regression Analysis between Anxiety (DASS) and Amotivation and Work Task Performance

Dependent Variable	R-Square	R	Adjusted R Square	B	Standard Beta	F-test	P
Intrinsic	.303	.550	.298	-1.07	-.550	64.23	000
Identity	.308	.555	.304	-1.058	-.555	65.23	000
Intro	.306	.553	.301	-1.05	-.553	65.27	000
Extrinsic	.236	.486	.231	-.935	-.486	45.82	000
Amotivation	.073	.270	.067	3.00	.270	11.67	000
ITP	.607	.779	.605	-.890	-.779	228.96	000
CP	.667	.816	.664	-.674	-.816	295.91	000
CWP	.415	.644	.411	.849	.644	105.02	000

According to the above table anxiety has significant negative impact on motivation as p-value ($p < 0.05$). While anxiety impart significant positive impact on amotivation subscale of motivation with the significance level of 0.05. Anxiety has significant negative impact on ITP and CP. In contrast anxiety has been found to have positive impact on CWP ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4

Regression Analysis between Stress (DASS) and Motivation

Dependent Variable	R-Square	R	Adjusted R Square	B	Standard Beta	F-test	P
Intrinsic	.299	.547	.294	-1.09	-.547	63.17	.000
Identity	.303	.551	.298	-1.080	-.557	64.35	.000
Intro	.302	.549	.297	-1.07	-.549	64.01	.000
Extrinsic	.249	.499	.244	-.987	-.499	49.00	.000
Amotivation	.042	.204	.035	2.32	.204	6.41	.000
ITP	.568	.754	.565	-.886	-.754	194.58	.000
CP	.606	.779	.604	-1.64	-.779	228.04	.000
CWB	.392	.626	.388	.849	.626	95.44	.000

According to above table, stress is a negative predictor of motivation, while positive predictor of motivation ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, stress is a negative predictor of ITP and CP while impart positive impact on CWP ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviation, t and p-value of Gender

Factors	Male (N=70)		Female (N=80)		t	P	
	M	SD	M	SD			
DAAS {	DASS	36.05	12.04	31.75	10.687	2.316	.022
	Dep	13.07	5.06	10.20	3.624	3.985	.000
	Anxiety	12.57	4.27	10.83	3.846	2.632	.009
	Stress	12.33	4.82	10.72	3.765	2.282	.024
WTM {	Intrinsic	11.05	5.49	18.24	8.032	-6.422	.000
	Identify	9.05	5.42	18.09	7.795	-6.421	.000
	Intro	10.05	5.42	18.15	7.707	-6.519	.000
External	7.05	5.42	18.08	7.928	-6.335	.000	

	Factors	Male (N=70)		Female (N=80)		t	P
		M	SD	M	SD		
TP	A motive	12.72	11.80	28.97	11.699	3.516	.001
	ITP	20.33	7.80	22.60	8.365	-1.716	.088
	Context	36.05	12.04	31.75	10.687	-.062	.950
	Counter	13.07	5.06	10.20	3.624	2.316	.022

The above table indicates the significant difference among males and females on depression and stress as significant level <0.05 . Statistically significant difference was found in motivation level of both gender and according to mean values the male teachers found to be more motivated compared to the female teachers. No significant difference was found in task performance of both the genders in ITP and Contextual performance domain, while counter task performance was similar among the male teachers and female teachers.

Discussion

In the current time, the college teacher experience severe anxiety, depression and stress (emotional distress) owing to high workload, lesson delivery, students learning outcome and academic achievements. Therefore, the aim of this research was to investigate the predictive relationship between emotional distress, motivation and individual work performance among college teachers.

The primary objective of the current study was to investigate the relationship between emotional distress, work motivation and work task performance among teachers. The findings of the study suggested emotional distress found to be negatively correlated with all four domains of the work task motivation except motivation. Furthermore, the emotional distress has been found to be negatively correlated with individual task performance domain of work task performance and positively correlated with the counterproductive task. Literature has also suggested the significant negative relation between emotional distress (stress, anxiety and depression), motivation and work performance among teachers (Danish et al., [2019](#); Laybourn et al., [2019](#); Yüce et al., [2013](#); Li et al., [2018](#)).

Another objective of the current study was to investigate the impact of emotional distress on motivation and work performance of the teachers. The study findings have suggested that all the domains of emotional distress have a negative impact on motivation and work performance of the teachers. Literature has supported the findings of the study as Wanakacha et al. (2018), has suggested that depression, stress and anxiety negatively impact the teacher motivations. The recent researches have reported that anxiety, depression (Ferguson et al. 2012) and Work-related stress negatively impact the work performance of the teachers (Danish et al., 2019; Laybourn et al., 2019).

As has been indicated earlier, the sample of the present study consisted of 150 Participants. Male teachers and female teachers were found to be significantly similar on Individual Task Performance, Contextual Performance and Counterproductive Work Behavior. Male teachers and female teachers were not dissimilar in respect of individual task performance domain with a significance level of .816. Male teachers and female teachers were not significantly dissimilar in respect of performance, and Counterproductive Work behaviour domain as the significant level is > 0.05 . Male teachers and female teachers were significantly different on work task motivation as the significant level is $< .05$. According to literature gender difference did not affect the motivation and work performance of the teachers (Wanakacha et al., 2018). The study findings indicate significant difference among male teachers and female teachers regarding depression and stress and anxiety; both genders have been found to be statistically different < 0.05 . The literature has suggested that male teachers and female teachers differ in respect of anxiety, depression and stress (Ferguson et al., 2012, Chen et al., 2015). Although the Pakistani literature has also depicted that female teachers and male teachers significantly differ regarding stress, anxiety and depression (Aslam & Fareed, 2011). Motivation level has been found to be similar among both the genders, and literature contradicts the findings of the current study. Lepper et al. (2005) has depicted that male teachers and female teachers are different in respect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation level. The study's findings contradict literature owing to multiple factors; the study has been carried out in the backward area of Pakistan; therefore, the male teachers and female teachers have exhibited the same level of motivation. According to the current study the work

performance has been found to be different among both the genders. The literature provides the contradictory finding as men perform better at job compared to women (Li et al., [2018](#)).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the current study, it was observed that motivation and task performance of teachers are critically affected by their emotional distress. The teaching profession is becoming more complex in the contemporary world. In particular, after the pandemic, e-teaching, mixed method, and flipped classrooms have given rise to more challenges for teachers. Therefore, emotional well-being of teachers is crucial for better student performance. Further research should be carried out to design intention-based studies in order to promote the emotional well-being of teachers.

Limitations and Recommendations

Teachers exhibit a high prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress, which consequently affects their motivation and work performance. Although the findings do not reveal the true impact of emotional distress on motivation and work performance owing to several limitations. This cross-sectional study conducted with a limited sample size does not represent the actual incidence of the issue. Furthermore, the follow-up sessions also depicted periodic fluctuations in the nature and level of emotional distress. Therefore, further studies are needed to periodically screen emotional distress, including follow-up sessions on a large sample size, in the context of Pakistan.

Implications

The findings can help policymakers, organizational employers, and the government to take steps for promoting mental health and emotional well-being of teachers through reward management. The possibility of a reward would help in enhancing the emotional well-being, motivation, and work performance of teachers.

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