

## JOB STRESS AND THE PERFORMANCE OF TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF DISTRICT KARAK, KHYBERPAKHTUNWA

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### Abstract

*The present study was conducted to measure the level of stress, examine the sources of stress, and explore the effect of stress on the performance of female teachers at the secondary level in District Karak. The study was carried out using explanatory-sequential mixed-methods research design and was guided by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. For quantitative part of the study, the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI-Urdu), originally created by Fimian (1984), translated and modified by Hanif and Pervez (2003), and the Teachers' Job Performance Scale (TJPS), developed by Hanif and Pervez (2004), were adapted. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The respondents for the quantitative part of the study included teachers and students; while for the qualitative part, teachers participated in the interviews. Of the 600 respondents for the quantitative data, 200 were female teachers and 400 were female students of grades 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> selected through random sampling. For the qualitative data, 20 female teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique from the same government girls high schools of District Karak. Quantitative data were treated through statistical techniques including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation alongside, test of regression analysis. In the analysis of qualitative data, thematic analysis technique was employed. The study found a significant correlation between teacher stress and job performance. The results of quantitative data revealed that teachers displayed a moderate level of stress, which affected their performance. The result also found a correlation between teacher stress and some demographic variables, i.e., teacher education, monthly income, job experience, and family system. Qualitative data found poor attitude of students towards learning, adjustment period stress, heavy workload and meeting deadlines, administration related issues, teachers' financial problems, and social role (marital status) as major sources of moderate to severe stress amongst the respondents.*

*The study recommends that the government should employ professional counselors in schools to help the teachers cope with, manage and mitigate factors leading to stress. Teachers should be given the opportunities to participate in self-awareness programmes such as stress management training, goal-setting instructions, time management instructions, and wellness training. Similarly, the study also establishes some implications for teacher education such as content and techniques on stress management.*

**Key words:** Job stress, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, secondary schools, teachers' performance.

### 1. Introduction

Job stress has been one of the century's most common 'occupational diseases' for humanity that has impacted individuals physically and mentally (Grag, 2010) Stress and job performance are correlated. Stress is the abnormal reaction of the organism exhibited against threatened environmental components (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). It is the body's non-specific reaction to any demand that causes the individual's equilibrium to be disrupted (Selye, 1976). Stress is the mental and physical state of an individual that affects one's output, performance and personal health (Comish & Swindle, 1994). It also affects the morale and health of workers (Mimura & Griffiths, 2003). Garg (2010) postulated that job stress is the product of the disparity between an individual's abilities and professional demands.

Teaching is considered a demanding profession (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Johnson et al., 2005). In the process of teaching and learning, stress affects both the teachers and the learners (Far, 2017). In order to meet the goals of effective learning, teachers have to be healthy physically, mentally and emotionally (Vaghn, 1990). In the process of achieving their goals, teachers often experience stress (Comish & Swindle, 1994). Siyaba (2002) observed that teachers face high level of stress at their work place.

Stress, sometimes occurs when teachers have trouble managing multiple tasks (Hepburn & Brown, 2001), meeting deadlines and resolving work place conflicts (Blasé, 1986).

Similarly, many stressors are related to work place condition such as heavy work load, authoritative heads, access to limited facilities, and staff conflicts (Kyriacou, 2001; Hepburn & Brown, 2001). Additionally, noise at

work place, overcrowded classrooms and managerial pressures also contribute to job stress (Hasting & Bham, 2003).

According to Bacharach, Bauer & Conley (1986), teachers' responses to stress are diverse. Stress stimuli carry out types of responses that are institutional features that provide stress reactions in a given situation. Patterns of stress coping strategies fall in physical, psychological and behavioral reactions (Blasé, 1986). These coping strategies affect teachers' well-being and performance (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999).

Extensive research has been undertaken over the past few decades to investigate teachers' levels of stress and its relationship with their working conditions in the educational setting (Gardner, 2010; Hanif, Tariq, & Nadeem, 2011; Klassen, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). It is evident from literature that teachers' stress is becoming widespread. This may have significant consequences for teachers' physical and emotional wellbeing (Van Wyk, 1998).

Van Dick, Phillips, Marburg & Wagner (2001) stated that stress is the main factor which contributes to job dissatisfaction, work-related sickness and initial giving up work in England. Similarly, the findings of a research conducted in the context of China found that Chinese teachers' poor self-efficacy and depressive disposition led to their mental health problems (Tang, 2001). Likewise, job pressures, student misbehavior, and staff criticism were found to be major contributing factor to teachers' stress in Sweden (Jacobsson, Pousette & Thylefors 2001). According to Pithers (1998), the same goes with Scottish and Australian teachers. He commented that there are more stress correlations than variations in the foreign teachers' performance. Hanif, Tariq, and Nadeem (2011) found teachers' stress, school environment, gender role and number of students as significant predictors of stress among Pakistani teachers.

Teachers' wellbeing plays a crucial role in maintaining students' performance. The present study, therefore, intended to investigate sources of stress and its effects on teachers' job performance at secondary school of district Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The study also aimed to explore the relationship between stress factors such as unrealistic deadlines, heavy workloads, logistical issues and stress reactions such as pressure, anger and other adverse feelings.

## **2. Methodology**

The present study was carried out through a mixed-method explanatory sequential design. The use of a qualitative guided method along with a quantitative sequential dimension includes vivid and in-depth explanations of job stress and confirmatory evidence. According to Richards and Morse (2007), a single approach will not be appropriate in explanatory studies to offer in-depth answers to the issue under investigation. Therefore, a mixed method design was considered appropriate to explore the phenomenon under study that was exploring the levels and sources of stress among secondary school teachers and its effects on their job performance.

### **Population and Sample size**

The population of the study was 438 Teachers and 4548 students from government girl's high schools, district Karak, from which the sample was drawn. The calculated sample size from students was 400 and from 438 teachers, 200 were the sample size for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used for selecting quantitative data while for qualitative data, purposive sampling technique was adapted.

### **Data Collection Tool**

For quantitative data collection, Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI-Urdu) originally created by Fimian (1984), translated and modified by Hanif and Pervez (2003), and the Teachers' Job Performance Scale (TJPS), developed by Hanif and Pervez (2004), were adapted. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Personal and Demographic Information Sheet were also employed. For qualitative data collection, a self-developed semi-structured in-depth interview protocol was used.

### **Data Collection Process**

For quantitative data collection, the researcher visited the respondents personally in their respective school. Copies of the questionnaire were handed over to them at their staffroom. Selected students were asked to evaluate the teaching performance of their teachers on job performance scale given to them. For qualitative data semi-structured in depth interviews of approximately 30-45 minutes were conducted face-to-face with each respondents. The interviews were recorded manually.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Quantitative data analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed. To determine the significance of scores from two groups on TSI and TJPS, regression analysis was computed. For qualitative data, thematic analysis guided by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied.

### 3. Findings

This section presents the findings obtained from quantitative data. These findings are presented in three tables. Table 1 shows levels of stress among the participants on Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI-Urdu), Table 2 shows sources of stress while Table 3 presents correlation between teachers' stress and job performance.

**Table-1** In order to know the levels of stress in female teachers at secondary level, the mean scores on total and subscales of TSI-Urdu was computed. The mean scores depict that participants show moderate level of stress.

**Table 1: Means and Standard deviation on the subscales of TSI-Urdu.**

Sub-Scales	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time Management (TM)	200	17.52	4.03
Work-Related Stressors (WS)	200	12.82	3.82
Professional Distress (PD)	200	15.67	4.97
Discipline and Motivation (DM)	200	7.84	3.02
Professional Investment (PI)	200	8.58	2.86
Emotional Manifestations (EM)	200	10.63	3.27
Fatigue Manifestations (FM)	200	6.49	2.85
Cardio-Manifestations (CM)	200	5.57	2.57
Gastro-Manifestations (GM)	200	7.93	1.99
Behavioral Manifestations (BM)	200	23.24	5.12

The findings of table-1 show on the Behavioral Manifestations (BM), Time Management (TM), Professional Distress (PD), Work-Related Stressors (WS), and Emotional Manifestations (EM) mean scores are high. Results also indicate that the strength of the subscales varied to a degree. Behavioral Manifestations (BM) and Time management (TM), and Cardio-Manifestations (CM) the lowest.

**Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation on Sources of Stress Model Summary**

Sources	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
WRS	200	2.9198	.67264	1
TM	200	2.9083	.64076	2
DM	200	2.6117	.82856	3
PD	200	2.5640	.76527	4
PI	200	1.9613	.75692	5

Table 2 indicates the mean scores of teachers. Teachers have scored high on work related stress (WRS) with mean of 2.91 and ranked 1 The mean of Time Management (TM) is 2.90 with rank of 2, Discipline and Motivation (DM) mean is 2.61 with rank 3, Professional Distress (PD) mean is 2.56 with rank 4 and Professional Investment (PI) mean is 1.96 with rank 5.

In order to know the job performance of female teachers at secondary level, the mean scores on total and subscales of TJPS was computed which showed that the performance of teachers is good.

**Table- 3.1: Means and Standard deviation of TJPS and its subscales.**

Sub-Scales	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teaching Skills (TS)	400	34.91	6.21
Management Skills (MS)	400	18.70	4.18
Discipline & Regularity (DR)	400	25.27	3.89

Interpersonal Skills (IS)	400	27.87	4.44
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The findings of table-3.1 show the mean scores for the subscales. There are highest scores on Teaching Skills (TS), and then Interpersonal Skills (IS), Discipline & Regularity (DR) and lowest scores fall on the subscale Management Skills (MS).

**Table-3.2: Regression Analysis for Teachers Stress (TSI-Urdu) and Teacher Job Performance Scale (TJPS) Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Beta	F	Sig.
1	.117 <sup>a</sup>	.014	.009	.117	2.732	.100 <sup>b</sup>

For exploring whether there is a positive correlation between teachers' stress on job performance, regression model was run. Result showed insignificant analysis ( $F=2.732$ ) with ( $P=.100$ ). The result also revealed that the linear combination of two variables i.e., teachers stress and job performance have low correlation coefficient ( $R=.117$ ) which shows weak influence between teachers stress and job performance. Thus the model has significant influence. Moreover, ( $R^2=.014$ ) indicates that about 14% difference is found in the model for the respondents, with a beta value of .117.

Results presented in the above tables show that secondary school female teachers experience high levels of stress. The major sources of their stress included work place and related issues, problem of time management, professional distress and lack of motivation. It further shows participants' abilities to manifest good teaching skills. Though they were found possessing good interpersonal skills, however, become impatient sometimes. Majority of the respondents shared they over commit their responsibilities. They have to meet deadlines with a limited time. Similarly, multi-tasking was found another challenge. As a result, they get less time to relax. Though they never waste their time in school gossips and irrelevant conversation, still they find it difficult to complete all the tasks in a relaxed manner. It is also revealed that although participants are stressed, yet they managed to show good performance.

#### **Major findings from qualitative data**

The findings of this part are divided into two broader themes: 'workplace stresses and 'domestic stresses. The detail is presented below.

#### **Workplace Stress**

In this section, stresses routed in participants' workplaces are discussed along with relevant quotes emerged during the interviews. These include poor attitude of students, adjustment period stresses, heavy workload and meeting deadlines and administration- related issues.

#### ***Poor attitude of students towards learning***

Majority of the respondents shared that students do not take interest in their studies. According to them, there are students who learn at a very slow pace. They face difficulties in learning new concepts despite of teachers' hard work. Students with such attitude sometimes proved to be challenging. As one of the participants stated:

*"I always try hard to make my students learn better and grasp the concepts effectively but they make me disappointed. Worrying about my students' performance make me stressed". (Teacher participant-13)*

#### ***Adjustment period stress***

Respondents shared their experiences of being novice teachers. According to them almost every teacher experiences stress in the beginning of their job due to a lack of adjustment in the new school environment. With the passage of time, the level of stress minimizes. For example, a participant stated:

*"In my view, a teacher faces hurdles in the beginning due to a lack of experience but with the passage of time he/she learns how to overcome the problems". (Teacher participant-11)*

#### ***Heavy workload and meeting deadlines***

The data revealed that majority of the respondents experienced stress due to heavy workload and meeting deadlines. They were found struggling with multi-tasking also. For example, a single teacher has to manage

discipline matters, students' enrollment record, books distribution and celebrating national and international days besides, carrying teaching responsibilities. As one of the participants shared:

*"Besides teaching, we have other responsibilities as well for which we have to meet deadlines. Work load and meeting deadlines with teaching responsibilities, sometimes, make me over stressed."* (Teacher participant-1)

### **Administrative Issues**

Some of the respondents faced conflict with administration. They shared that the head teachers were not cooperative. Sometimes they face lack of administrative support, or have to face mismanagement from administration. For instance, a respondent stated:

*"I'm satisfied with my job because I have joined this field by personal choice but sometimes I feel stressed because of administration and management issues"* (Respondents Teacher-5).

### **Domestic Stresses**

In this section, domestic stresses such as financial problems, social role problem (marital status) and lack of recreational activities are presented and discussed.

#### **Financial problems**

Majority of the teachers replied that their socioeconomic status keep them stressed. Since they belonged to lower middle class families, financial problems were a common issue to face. Socioeconomic problems were found hindering their work. As some of the respondents stated:

*"Sometimes, I stressed due to financial constraints. For example, running household, kids' fee and their school expenses and medical expenses are hard to manage with monthly salary"*. (Participant-teacher 7) Similarly, another participant shared that *financial problems keep me over stressed and I find myself helpless*. (Participant-teacher 18)

#### **Social Role (Marital-Status) problems**

Some of the respondents shared that marital-status-related stress affects their job performance. They shared that a married woman is a mother and a wife, too. Therefore, they face problems in managing household with professional responsibilities. For example, a participant stated:

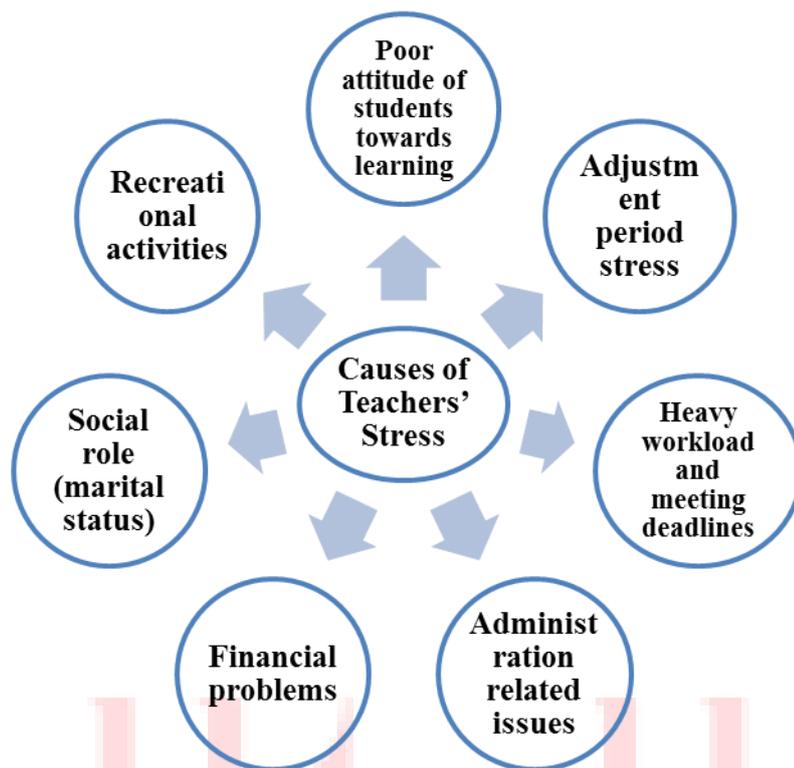
*"Sometimes my family needs are taking priority over teaching. I still try hard not ignore my professional responsibilities."* (Participant- teacher 17)

#### **Recreational Activities**

It was revealed that participants get bored sometimes. Since there was no chance of getting out of daily routine work, job becomes a monotonous activity hence boring. Almost all of the participants suggested recreational activities of some kind. For example, trips and visits to historical places, school and community gatherings etc. As some of the respondents stated:

*"Teachers need to refresh their minds. To reduce teachers' stress, there is a need of some kind of recreational activities in school. It could be a one day tour to a hilly area, an educational institute or another school in the locality"*. (Participant teacher-14)

Diagrammatic show of qualitative data



#### 4. Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to investigate job stress and its impact on teachers' performance. The study also aimed to explore levels and sources of stress among female secondary school teachers of KP province of Pakistan. Participants, in the light of findings were found experiencing moderate level of stress. This finding is in contrast with previous research (Munandar, *et al.*, 2019) which concludes that female teachers at secondary level experience high level of stress that makes their job stressful with a poor performance. It was revealed that participants faced stressful situation but they did not let it to negatively affect their teaching responsibilities. The study found work related stress such as heavy work load and meeting deadlines, lack of head teacher's support and lack of professional progress as some of the major causes of stress. These findings support previous research conducted by Dayan, Parveen and Khan (2018) in the same region (KP, Pakistan). Their findings regarded lack of head teachers' support and heavy tasks as a big challenge for female teachers which lead them to experience stress. Moreover, as novice teachers, participants face adjustment problems that resulted in stress. Similarly, transfer to another school and lack of guidance by the head and senior staff also left them in a state of confusion in the beginning (Dayan, Parveen & Khan (2018). Teaching tough is a demanding profession, yet incentives like timely promotion and progress in professional career help teachers stay energized. Contrary to this, as evident from the current study, teachers of secondary schools took a long to get promoted to the next grade. As a result, teachers were found experiencing anxiety and stress. Students were found less motivated towards learning. Teachers tried their best to make them learn new concepts effectively, but in vain. Such attitude of students also proved to be one of the causes of stress for the teachers. Previous research, conducted in context of Sweden also supports this finding. For example, Jacobsson, Pousette & Thylefors (2001) argued that job pressure and student misbehavior add to teachers' level of stress. Similarly, these findings also support Hanif, Tariq, and Nadeem (2011) who found teachers' stress and work experience, school environment, gender, and number of students as significant predictors of stress among Pakistani teachers.

Findings from qualitative data revealed that participants had no recreational opportunities. They were in favor of field trips or small get-together but schools did not provide such opportunities. As a result, monotonous routine sometimes, resulted in boredom. Lack of timely promotion also created financial problems for them. This is consistent with previous research that work place and domestic issues cause stress that impact their job performance. Research also shows that job stress may have psychological and social effects. These effects may be expressed in teachers' poor performance (AliGaber & , 2021; Friedman, 2000). The present study, however, revealed that despite of being in a stressful situation, the performance of teachers remained good. Participants faced the challenge of keeping balance between job and marital responsibilities successfully as opposed to previous literature (e.g., Premalatha & Subramanian, 2020; Kamper & Steyn, 2003; Antoniou, Polychroni &

Walters, 2000) whose findings showed that marital status has significant contribution to teachers stress. It is evident from the current study that their personal and domestic problems didn't hinder their way of performing duties. They were struggling hard to perform well which resulted in their poor health condition.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

This paper documented evidence about the relationship between female teachers' stress and job performance. Based on the findings, it has been concluded that female teachers of secondary schools of KP, Pakistan are moderately stressed. Despite of facing challenging and stressful situation, they performed well. Teachers were found satisfied with their job. Although they felt stressed sometimes due to meeting deadlines, heavy work load, financial and promotion problems and students' poor performance. However, they remained positive towards their teaching and other responsibilities. It might be interesting to explore their major coping strategies in stressful situation. This calls for further research. Based on the findings; the study recommends that professional counselors may be employed in public sector schools. Teachers should be given the opportunities to participate in self-awareness programs such as stress management training, goal-setting instructions, time management instructions, and wellness training. Similarly, the study also establishes some implications for teacher education such as content and techniques on stress management.

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