

## Occupational Stress and Ill Health for Staff in Private Universities, Tamil Nadu

**Dr.R. Dhaneesh<sup>1</sup>, Mr. Arjun Govind<sup>2</sup>, Mr. S.Merlin<sup>3</sup>, Mr. Mrs. Iswarya V.S<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Amrita College of Engineering and Technology, Nagercoil, India. Email: rdhaneesh85@gmail.com, Contact Number:9488493231

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Coimbatore Institute of Management, Affiliated to Bharathiar University, Email:mailarjungovind@gmail.com, Contact Number:9400651418

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, Lord Jeggannath College of Engineering and Technology, India. Email: santonymerlin@gmail.com, Contact Number:9629477684

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Amrita College of Engineering and Technology, Nagercoil, India. Email:pappytvm@gmail.com, Contact Number:9629701277

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### ABSTRACT

Massive reorganization, reduction of staff, and budget cuts has taken place across the educational landscape in recent years. But data from all across indicates a worrisome rise in stress at work for those working in private higher education institutions (Academic and Support Staff). Researchers at Tamil Nadu's private universities are starting off by looking at the long-term repercussions of workplace stress. In the second phase, 372 academic and support personnel from 15 universities were surveyed about 12 occupational stress variables. Stress levels of private university staff were examined using the Stress Screening Tool (SET) and a factual questionnaire. Stressors at the university included workload, control, work relationships, and pay and perks. Survey respondents reported more physical and psychological disease and less confidence in management than the worldwide norm. All of the biographical characteristics studied were shown to have a statistically significant effect on occupational stress levels. Employee health problems were less affected by work-related stress because to organizational commitment.

**Keywords:** Occupational Stress, Academic and Support Staff, Private University, Stress Screening Tool.

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### 1. Introduction

In many developing countries, including India, government funding for public institutions has decreased significantly over the past two decades, making universities more stressful places to work. Employees are now under more pressure than ever before [7, 19] as a result. Even though an activity is physically demanding, it should not be stressful if the worker has a high degree of control or autonomy over the situation. Karasek (1979) states that (jobs with high demands and high control are considered as "active," but not stressful). According to this view, the characteristics of stressful jobs are high expectations and inadequate control. Many countries in the Western world place a high value on academic freedom as a method of ensuring that academics have the freedom to explore and spread knowledge without fear of reprisal. Since its inception, tenure has been held up as the gold standard for guaranteeing academic freedom. Teachers have always enjoyed a great deal of individuality and freedom to write and speak publicly about their views, even if they are unpopular with university administrations despite the low salary associated with academic positions. Stress With Academic Life, written by [7], a professor at a British university, states that academics used to have a lot more control over their professions, but now they don't. A number of institutions throughout the world are also reporting higher student-to-staff ratios and growing levels of workload. [19] Faculty members at universities not only instruct and educate students, but they also actively contribute to the creation of new knowledge and innovation. High levels of work-related stress are associated with an array of negative consequences, including higher healthcare costs, lower pension contributions, and a decrease in production and employee retention [6, 7], as well as their physical and mental health [8, 9]. In the event that universities fail to protect their employees from rising levels of stress, they risk jeopardizing employee well-being, organizational performance, and the national intelligence. This attempt necessitates an understanding of how university staff deal with stress. A long-term experiment is being conducted to examine the effects of workplace stress on private sector employees. Three hundred and seventy-two members of the academic and support staff from fifteen different universities took part in the second survey. An investigation of how university staff feel about occupational stress, its impact on their personal and professional life, as well as what can be done about it, is the primary purpose of this study. Academic and support staff are surveyed in a focus group format to gain information for the project."

## 2. Literature Survey

In the last two decades, there has been a shift in university professors' attitudes toward stress, from a collegial culture that prioritized participation in decision-making and cooperation toward an authoritarian one that places little value on the importance of consultation or participation in decision-making. [5] In the academic world, many people believe that these new management norms are bad since they undermine the basic foundation of university work organization. There is little doubt that university workers are under increasing levels of stress as a result of these research [9]. A lack of social support and the stress that goes along with it have been shown in several studies of university personnel. Qualitative research carried out at 15 Australian institutions, for example, suggests that staff have seen a significant rise in their stress levels in the previous five years. More than half of all university employees reported feeling stressed because of a lack of financing, resources, and support services; a high workload; inadequate leadership and management; a lack of advancement; a lack of job stability; and an inability to secure future employment. Four out of every five academics and one out of every three non-academics in a recent study conducted at 17 Australian institutions reported significant levels of psychological discomfort [4]. Twenty-four hundred general and academic university employees in Australia took part in a separate poll. According to [4,] job stress was exacerbated by a rise in workload due to funding constraints. An earlier survey conducted in 1994 showed that 40 percent of academic, support, technical, and librarian employees in seven New Zealand institutions (i.e. faculty) had frequent or near-constant stress in their jobs (Chalmers [1]. Employees in all occupational categories stated that their workload has grown during the past four years, according to Chalmers' findings. [15] revealed that, 37.7 percent of a British university's academic, administrative, clerical and technical personnel experienced significant levels of psychological discomfort in a research [15]. Academic employees reported higher levels of workload-related stress than did administrative and technical workers, according to the researchers' study. Stressors linked to their jobs affected the latter group more (e.g., feeling neglected at work, not understanding what is expected of them, and believing the company doesn't care about them) than the former. [11] identified an even greater rate of 782 academic staff employees, 53 percent of whom experienced a significant level of psychological discomfort due to extensive administrative work and extended working hours. An in-depth research of university personnel in the UK found that greater levels of workplace stress were linked to a variety of factors, including job instability, poor working relationships, a lack of control over resources, and issues with effective communication. Several studies have described the negative consequences associated with these high stress levels. A study [2] showed that 84% of respondents believe that their stress level negatively affects their productivity and performance at work. Several studies have also associated stress with job dissatisfaction, intention to change job, lost productivity and absenteeism [9]. Stress has also been related to increased absenteeism [13]. In India, up to 50% of absenteeism at work is related to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety [12]. Considering the costs involved for individuals and institutions of higher education, it is crucial that universities attempt to manage work-related stress.

## 3. Methods

We were able to meet our goals with a cross-sectional survey method [7]. Most studies utilizing the Stress Screening Tool (SET) employ a cross-sectional design as the study's primary measurement strategy. Practical for businesses, and not an issue in terms of science [8]. Academic and support personnel from a private institution in the state of Tamilnadu were in attendance. There were 620 questionnaires distributed to academic employees (N = 220) and support staff (N = 400). In all, we got 372 completed surveys. This included 105 faculty members and 267 support staff members. More over half of the surveys were received by us. (66.75% of support staff, vs. 47.75% of academic staff) The researchers employed descriptive statistics to make the data more understandable. Internal consistency of SET measurements was evaluated using Cronbach alpha values. To find the association between the variables, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were utilized. According to 95% confidence interval ( $p = 0.05$ ), this study's findings were significant. Efficacy Sizes [11] helped us evaluate the results' applicability. Correlation coefficients have been shown to have a practical impact of 0.30. (medium effect, [6]). [7] To find out whether there were any differences between the groups, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. The statistical significance of ANOVA differences was determined using Tukey's Standardized Range tests. Then there's [6,] A little impact is shown by  $d = 0.10$ ; a medium impact is shown by  $d = 0.50$ ; and a high impact is shown by  $d = 0.80$ . Researchers utilized a threshold value of 0.50 to determine the practical importance of differences in group averages (a medium effect).

#### 4. Analysis

Data in table 1 show that the SET's 12 dimensions are regularly distributed with little skewness and kurtosis in the sample. Compared to a suggestion of 0.70 (0.55 in basic research), Cronbach's alpha coefficients vary from 0.59 to 0.90, demonstrating that dimensions account for a large share of variance [4].

Dimension	Sten	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
Resources and Communication	4	12.06	4.20	0.17	0.62	0.62
Pay and Benefits	6	3.55	1.75	-0.01	-1.44	0.65
Overload	5	21.15	4.41	0.50	-0.45	0.76
Work Relationships	5	20.74	7.24	0.64	0.15	0.78
Job Security	4	11.12	3.98	0.65	0.31	0.59
Control	5	12.64	3.82	0.26	-0.78	0.81
Job Characteristics	2	21.14	6.04	0.21	0.12	0.64
Work-Life Balance	2	10.20	4.28	0.53	-0.36	0.68
Commitment from Organization	3	18.73	5.97	-0.30	-0.68	0.84
Commitment from Staff	6	14.15	3.66	-0.54	-0.33	0.79
Physical Health Issue	9	15.13	4.34	-0.21	-0.88	0.81
Psychological Health Issue	10	25.35	7.59	0.23	0.71	0.92

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients of the Set**

Table 1 shows that the SET's 12 dimensions are normally distributed in the sample under study, with negligible skewness and kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha values vary from 0.59 to 0.90, indicating that dimensions (internal consistency of dimensions) account for a large portion of variance [4], compared to a suggestion of 0.70 (0.55 in basic research).

The sten scores for Physical and Psychological Health show that both dimensions are substantial causes of strain. The sten of 3 on the dimension of the organization's commitment shows that the participants' perception of the organization's level of commitment is poor. An individual commitment score of 6 suggests that even if employees believe the company is not doing enough for them, they believe they have a level of commitment to the organization that is higher than usual (sten of 6).

Work-Life Balance and Job Characteristics SET sections with sten scores below 3 reflect less stress. SET's Job Characteristic Scale (JCS) features three items that indicate excessive stress in these areas. "Physical working circumstances are unpleasant," "Work performance is constantly inspected," and "Organization is always altering for change." "Colleagues are not pulling their weight" and "Others take credit for what I have accomplished" are two of the stress-inducing elements in the Work Relationships dimension. There is a correlation between a low score on "not appropriately trained for employment" and a high score on "Job is not permanent," which suggests that people are confident in their ability to hold down a job. 4 to 6 sten scores indicate average stress. For each SET dimension, we found PMCCs (Table 2).

Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Work Life Balance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Physical Health Issue	0.24*	0.18*	0.35**+	-0.21*	0.33**+	0.35**+	0.15*	-0.27*	0.19*	-	-
Psychological Health Issue	0.33**+	0.35**+	0.46**+	0.47**+	0.37**+	0.45**+	0.32**+	-0.46*	-0.40*	0.7**+	-
Resources and Communication	0.30**+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Overload	0.58***	0.50***	0.54***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Commitment from Staff	-0.26*	-0.50*	-0.55*	-0.39*	-0.35*	-0.49*	0.55*	-	-	-	-
Commitment from Organization	-0.16*	-0.40*	-0.36*	-0.36*	-0.20*	-0.38*	-0.45*	0.78***	-	-	-
Work Relationships	0.41**+	0.61***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Job Security	0.20*	0.45*+	0.51*++	0.43*+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Job Characteristics	0.18*	0.48*+	0.59*++	0.47*+	0.40*+	-	-	-	-	-
Control	0.37*+	0.72*++	0.66*++	0.46*+	0.50*+	0.58*+	0.32*+	-	-	-

**Table 2: Product Moment Correlation Coefficients of the Set Dimensions**

\*  $p = 0.05$  – statistically significant  
 +  $r > 0.30$  – practically significant (Medium effect)  
 ++  $r > 0.50$  – practically significant (Large effect)

Based on an examination of Table 2, it's clear that Work-Life Balance and Physical Health go hand in hand, at least statistically. Relations at work have a moderate influence on resources, communication, and control. Individual and organizational commitment are negatively correlated with overload. Mental health correlates strongly with physical health and somewhat with work-life balance, resources, communication, working relationships, workload, job security, and job features and control. Individual and Organizational Commitment have a statistically significant detrimental impact on psychological well-being. Positive (statistically significant) relationships exist between all four characteristics of individual and organizational commitment.

Dimension	0 – 5 Years	5.1 – 10 Years	10.1 – 34 Years	<i>P</i>	Root MSE
Work-Life Balance	7.5	8	8.5	0.10	3.89
Resources and Communication	8.6	10	9	0.05	3.66
Work Relationships	14	15	15	0.22	6.32
Overload	10.	10	12	0.05	4.41
Job Security	10.5	11.1	11	0.43	3.98
Job Characteristics	11.4	14	14	0.00*	4.93
Control	10.2	12.5	12.5	0.00*	4.73
Commitment from Individual	18	15.7	15	0.00*	4.67
Commitment from	21	18.5	17.5	0.00*	5.85
Physical Health	14.5	14.5	16	0.02	4.26
Psychological Health	23	2	27	0.00*	7.49

Table 3: ANOVA – Differences in Set Scores of Years of Experience Categories

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p = 0.01$   
 a Practically significant differences from category (in row) where b (medium effect.  $d = 0.5$ ) or c (large effect.  $d = 0.8$ ) are indicated

According to Table 3, personnel who have worked at the institution for more than five years have considerably higher Job Characteristics and Control ratings. There was a substantial difference in Commitment from Individual across groups with and without more than five years of expertise. This group outperformed those with less than five years of experience by a wide margin on Commitment from Organization (practically significant, medium effect). On Psychological Health, personnel with more than 10 years of experience at the institution outperformed those with less than five years of experience at the institution (practically significant, medium effect).

As a result, it was possible to assess the influence of organizational commitment on employee health. A main component analysis was first performed on the SET's nine items that comprise the Organizational Commitment scale. Two factors might be gleaned from the eigenvalues and scree plot, as shown. Extracting the variables required performing a straight oblimin rotation of the principal components. There was just one component (7 items,  $\hat{\alpha} = 0.91$ ), which showed a dedication to the organization. Two further analyses were performed on the 18 questions that make up the SET's Health subscale: principal component analysis and factor analysis. These two components might be identified by looking at the big eigen values and the scatterplot (both greater than one). The two variables, physical illness and psychological illness (9 items=.80), were extracted using principal components analysis and a direct rotation. A second-order factor analysis was performed on the SET's scales measuring how you perceive your job. All eight SET scales rely strongly on Occupational Stress (0.86), which accounts for 56.80% of the total data variance.

Structural equation modeling was utilized to determine whether job stress causes ill health and if organizational commitment moderates its effect. The final design is shown Fig. 1. GFI = 0.95, AGFI = 0.91, NFI = 0.94, IFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, CFI = 0.94, and RMSEA = 0.08 showed good model-data

fit. Stress at work may cause illness, according to the graph in Figure 1. As a consequence, excessive levels of occupational stress may lead to physical or psychological health issues, or both, in workers. Occupational stress seems to have a milder impact on health when people are personally invested in the organization, based on the data in the model. There is a correlation between the amount of stress in the workplace and the level of personal commitment to the company. Workplace stress accounts for 48% of the variance in organizational commitment, and workplace stress accounts for 28% of the variance in ill health, as shown in Figure 1.

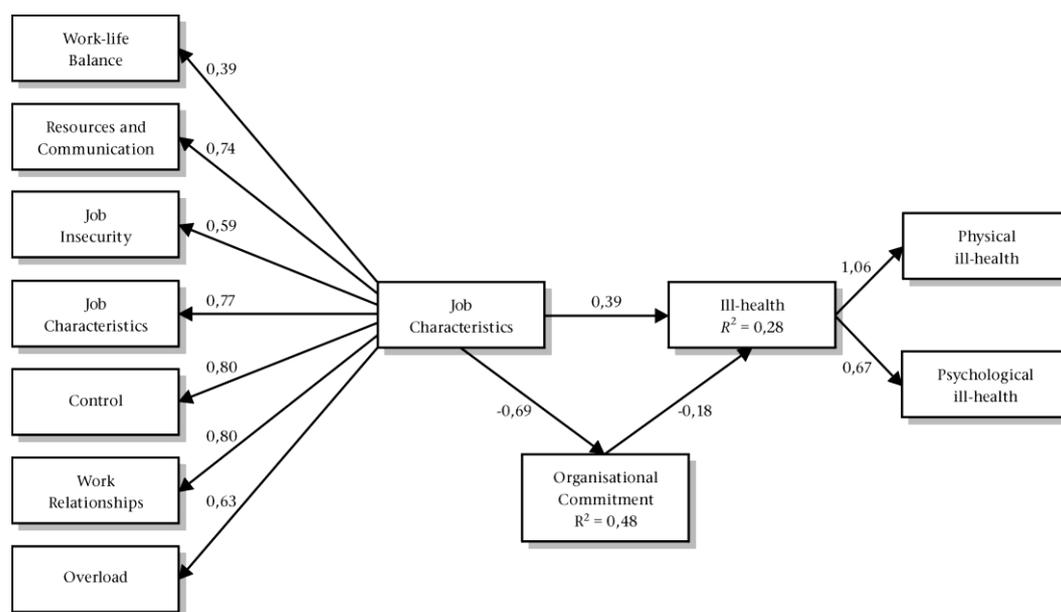


Figure 1: Commitment from the individual staff as a moderator for the effect of occupational stress

## 5. Discussion

Identifying the sources of occupational stress for faculty and staff at a private university in Tamil Nadu was one of the first goals of this research, which also sought to identify the link between stress in the workplace and health problems such as heart disease and diabetes. Each dimension had enough internal consistency, according to a reliability examination of the data set.

Intriguingly, university personnel thought that the institution didn't care about them. However, this is noteworthy given that workers felt a strong sense of loyalty towards the company. The only research that can be used as a direct comparison is [15], which employed the identical measuring tool in their investigation of 14 British institutions and colleges. Private university employees were equally concerned about the perceived and felt levels of commitment from and to their respective institutions. There may be a negative impact on university productivity and readiness to take on responsibility due to a lack of commitment and the amount of commitment measured in this study [18].

Compared to the normative group, stress-related physical and psychological effects were higher. They found that private university faculty had a 50% chance of developing mental illness, compared to only 19% for the general population; this is consistent with [3]. Several physical and psychological symptoms (e.g. headaches, nausea, muscle tension/pain, and sleeplessness) were reported; to the point that they might have a negative impact on job performance. In the community studied by [15], physical stress was found to be lower and psychological well-being was found to be at normal levels.

Employees at this institution have a higher level of stress than normal statistics shows. Their occupations just served to exacerbate their already high levels of. If these red flags are ignored, it might damage the company's commitment.

A growing amount of evidence reveals colleges no longer provide stress-free working conditions. This institution has a stress issue, according to the statistics. University personnel and researchers

indicated lower levels of perceived organization commitment than 20 other professions in a 1996 British national poll. In times of organizational turmoil, loyal employees may have reduced motivation and stress [14,2]. Most respondents said they "cannot be proud of the organization" and believed it was "changing for the sake of change." These results show that a lack of perceived commitment is a serious issue that must be addressed with promptly.

Physical health is connected to overload, organizational commitment, and individual dedication. Organizational and personal dedication lower stress. 68% of workers with more than five years' experience find their jobs and control stressful and believe the company cares less about them. Long-term workers often have mental health issues.

## 5. Conclusion

The private university should take action to alleviate the stress of its employees' jobs. According to [19], the major focus of interventions might be on either the work environment or the employee's ability to cope. As long as the physical and psychological pressures remain unaddressed, the business may expect to see a rise in absenteeism, staff turnover and decreased service levels as a result of the increased stress. It is possible to eliminate, reduce, or adjust stresses via the use of interventions. Changes to the organization's decision-making procedures, an increase in the atmosphere of support, visible proof of the organization's commitment, and the implementation of a more fair compensation and resource distribution system are all possible interventions to consider. Interventions at the secondary level may help workers and certain groups who are already displaying indications of stress avoid becoming ill and boost their ability to cope. This study's conclusions, which are based on SET data, should have their cultural comparability verified before they can be extrapolated to India's diverse population of ethnicities and religions.

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