

The Effect of Workplace Stress on Job Performance of University Teachers: The Mediating Role of HappinessSadaf Iqbal¹, Syeda Safa Tahoor¹, Sultan Shah¹, Tahir Farid¹¹ Department of Psychology, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan.**Abstract**

Workplace stress is a significant concern in the higher education sector, with the potential to negatively affect the job performance of university faculty. Common stressors include high teaching loads, administrative duties and ongoing pressure to publish scholarly work. This study explores the relationship between workplace stress and job performance among university teachers in Pakistan, with a specific focus on the mediating role of happiness. Using a purposive sampling method, data were collected from 280 registered university faculty members. Validated scales were employed to assess workplace stress. Happiness and job performance. The data were analyzed using SPSS, including regression and mediating analysis. Findings revealed that workplace stress is negatively associated with job performance and significantly reduces levels of happiness. In contrast, happiness was found to have positive association with job performance and partially mediated the relationship between workplace stress and performance. These results suggest that enhancing faculty happiness may buffer the adverse effects of stress on professional effectiveness. The study contributes to organizational and educational psychology by emphasizing the importance of emotional well-being in academic settings. Practical implications include the need for institutional policies and support systems aimed at reducing stressors and fostering a positive work environment to enhance faculty productivity and well-being.

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1. Introduction

The 21st-century workplace provides its employees with many advantages and chances (Al-khasawneh and Futa, 2013). With the increasing demands of job requirements, organizational stress has become a prevalent issue in workplaces. Research suggests that excessive job stress negatively impacts the physical and emotional well-being of employees, leading to decreased productivity and job satisfaction (Rao & Chandraiya, 2012). Kapoor and Khanka (2013) state that stress responses are triggered by unfamiliar or threatening factors at work, often stemming from a fear of failure. Considering the diverse work environments across organizations, stress is almost inevitable in various projects (Dar, Akmal, Naseem, & Khan, 2011).

Stress is felt as a pressure or burden often caused due to change in policies, higher performance requirement, and continuing further studies for career growth. Workplace stress reduces competence and adversely affects creativity and innovation (Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996). A significant portion of research on job stress and its impact on production originates from Western countries (Maslach, 2003). Researchers recognized a knowledge gap in the field and decided to investigate the impact of job stress on individual and organizational performance in Pakistani workplaces (Dar et al., 2011).

In teaching professional, the stress is also being undertaken as influential factor which effects the performance of teachers. In Pakistan, both teaching and research are the professional career requirements of university teachers (Sarwar, Aslam & Rasheed, 2010). Studies in literature indicate that teachers are more stressed than members of other professional clusters (Winefield, 2000; Kinman & Jones, 2006). Stress at work is caused by a number of factors identified by many researchers such as insecurity of job (Jordan, Ashkanasy & H'artel, 2002), role conflict (Alexandros-Stamatios et. al., 2003), role ambiguity (Yousef, 2002), pressure of time (Salas & Klein, 2001), interpersonal conflicts (Narayanan, Menon & Spector, 1999), work overload (Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). According to research, 36% of teachers said they felt pressured virtually all the time, while 41.5% reported feeling stressed more frequently. 58.5% of teachers reported having low levels of stress. These concerning figures suggest that seeking professional psychological assistance to manage stress may be necessary, or that leaving one's employment altogether may be a significant cause (Smith, Brice, Collins, Matthews & McNamara, 2000).

Job stress is known to have an impact on job performance. According to Kazmi, Amjad, and Khan (2008), working environment, effort, and skill levels have the biggest effects on how well a job is performed. When an employee puts in effort and receives support, their capacity increases and they perform better. As a result, when one component is reduced or eliminated, performance will suffer (Pawirosumaro et al., 2017).

In this competitive world, organizations are trying to have a competitive advantage over a rival by bringing better products and services for their customers (Porter, 1985). With an aim to have a better position in the global market sometimes, firms forget that their competitive position depends on the performance of their employees (Antoniou, Cooper & Davidson, 2016). Another researcher states that when employees are under stress, they became frustrated and led to poor performance of the employees (Palmer, Bonzini, Harris, Linaker, & Bonde, 2013). Stress during the job is a critical factor that shapes the performance of employees (Wu et al., 2021). The working environment provided by the firms to their employees is having a strong impact on the employee's satisfaction and as well as job performance (Akhtar, 2018).

In a stress-free environment, employees can perform better as compared to the stressful environment (Uysal, 2019).

Globally, the idea of happiness management is becoming more and more popular (Awada & Ismail, 2019). The core idea of happiness in the workplace seems to be a state of comfort, security, and safety for employees (Al Maktoum, 2017). By fostering employee well-being, organizations can enhance team engagement in work activities. Interestingly, workplace happiness can also be linked to spirituality, where employees seek meaning, self-discovery, and a sense of purpose that contributes to higher performance (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Ultimately, when employees find meaning and purpose in their work, they experience greater well-being, leading to increased productivity and, consequently, improved profitability for the company (Awada & Ismail, 2019).

Ginting et al. (2020) suggested interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that determined the high level of happiness. Those factors were pleasant, good life, freedom, and the opportunities to share knowledge and values. Additionally, Arora (2020) also suggested that fringe benefits, personal growth, job security, salary, and social endeavors are factors impacting a lecturer's happiness. In sum, happiness can cultivate a positive teaching and learning environment for both students and lecturers (Applasamy et al., 2014), which will bring an increased performance for lecturers. In the researches, employee happiness is mostly explained depending on the characteristics of the job and the conditions of the workplace (Atan et al., 2021).

Positive psychology aims to raise an understanding of how psychology may improve human functioning, increase happiness, and make life more satisfying (Seligman 2002). Stress has been shown to have detrimental impacts on well-being in certain studies (Chatters 1988), but not in others (Feist et al. 1995). Lyubomirsky et al. (2006) compiled research documenting that positive affect is associated with multiple positive outcomes including better performance ratings at work, higher salaries, and improved health.

Prior research on stress management has concentrated on workers in banks, elementary and secondary schools, and police departments, revealing stress elements specific to each of these domains. In the Mardan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there aren't many university studies on stress management. Thus, the current investigation was started. Given the importance of the topic, the current study was created to add to a wealth of knowledge already available in Pakistani literature.

The purpose of this study is to examine the complex relationship that exists between university instructors' job performance and workplace stress. The research attempts to reveal the possible mitigating effects of positive emotions on the established relationship between stress and job performance by including happiness as a mediating variable. The study's findings may contribute to the development of evidence-based practices that improve university instructors' job performance and well-being. These interventions could also optimize learning environments and foster a supportive and productive work culture in academic institutions.

The theoretical framework of this study can lead the researchers to work further in Organizational psychology and Positive psychology, most probably in developing countries where research in this domain at the university level is limited. This study can be used to find the effects of workplace stress on the job performance of university teachers and how happiness plays a significant role in increasing employee performance.

Literature Review and Hypothesis development Theoretical Support

This research has followed The person-environment (P-E) model of stress, formalizes how both the individual and the environment contribute to stress (Caplan, 1993). At its heart, Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory proposes that stress isn't caused by individual traits or the environment alone, but by the match (or mismatch) between the two. This straightforward yet impactful idea is echoed in many theories related to stress and happiness (Cummings & Cooper, 1979) and is mostly to blame for P-E fit theory's broad application in stress research (Edwards & Cooper, 1990).

Relationship between Workplace Stress and Job Performance

It needs to be researched since, Noor and Ismail (2010) state that "one of the significant outcomes of strain is on performance at work." Beehret al. (2000) discovered a substantial correlation between workplace stress factors and job performance, as well as the psychological and emotional effects on employees. Nevertheless, there hasn't been much testing of this approach in the actual workplace. One exception is the Lowe and McGrath (1971) "little league play" research, which found a positive linear association between job stress and performance. According to Luthans (1989), stress is necessary for everyone to function normally. Accordingly, he believes that employees may benefit from modest levels of stress to perform better at work.

A rise in work-related stress may be the catalyst for an employee's undesirable behavior (Emslie and Hunt, 2009). School teachers have become a group of workers especially vulnerable to a range of psychological, emotional, and physical issues, partly because of the pressure and loss they deal with daily (Benevene & Fiorilli, 2015). Consequently, throughout the past century, teachers' health has gotten a lot more attention (Skaalvik, 2011). Numerous academic studies have consistently demonstrated that stress is a major factor in teacher absenteeism, retirement due to illness, and changeover (Fiorilli et al., 2015). Despite significant cultural, organizational, and educational variations between Western and non-Western nations, there are high rates of teacher attrition in both (Fiorilli et al., 2015).

H1: Workplace stress is negatively associated with job performance.

Relationship between Workplace Stress and Happiness

Research on the link between happiness and stress has investigated both the detrimental impacts of stress on well-being and the protective role that pleasant emotions play against stress. While some researches (Chatters 1988) have shown the detrimental effects of stress on wellbeing, other studies (Feist et al. 1995) have not.

Fredrickson and Levenson 1998 researched, In order to mitigate the detrimental effects of negative feelings on the cardiovascular system, happy emotions are essential, which may support psychological resilience (Tugade and Fredrickson 2004). When Van der Werff and Sanderman (1989) used self-report rather than physiological evaluations of stress, they could not find any evidence for the moderating effects of happiness on stress. However, Lightsey (1994) found that positive innate views about one's own value did function as a shield against claimed stress.

Employee happiness and job stress have an inverse relationship (F. F. Chiang, T. A. Birch, & H. K. Kwan, 2010). The detrimental impacts of stress on wellbeing as well as the protective function of happy emotions against stress have both been studied concerning the correlation between happiness and stress. Numerous studies have shown how stress negatively impacts one's well-being. (Zika and Chamberlain, 1987; Chatters, 1988). Positive (such as happiness) and negative (such as stress) effects were found by Watson

and Tellegen (1985) to be two parallel dimensions, indicating that it is okay to experience both feelings at the same time. Most agree that happy employees will eventually do more work (Joo and Lee, 2017).

H2: Workplace stress is negatively associated with happiness.

Relationship between Job Performance and Happiness

A meaningful work life is a prerequisite for happiness at work, which goes beyond simply having a pleasant sense of pleasure, positive emotional experience, pleasant sentiments, and satisfaction. In addition, someone is considered happy if they consistently experience cheerful feelings. Positive feelings indicate that a person's life is going well and that there are no obvious hazards in their path (Sammani, 2014).

A research conducted in 2008 by Edmunds and Pryce-Jones defined contentment at work as using available resources wisely to overcome difficulties. If everyone actively recognized their highs and controlled their lows, maximizing their performance and reaching their maximum potential would be easier. One can then assess their level of happiness as well as that of others. In another study, Edmunds and Pryce-Jones (2008) defined happiness at work as feeling valued and treated well in addition to the joy that comes from advancing one's career and having good working connections.

A study defined happiness at work as taking pleasure in one's career advancement and nice working relationships, as well as in feeling appreciated and well-cared for (Edmunds and Pryce-Jones, 2008). According to the findings of Gholami et al. (2013), there is a noteworthy and affirmative correlation between the contentment of employees and their job performance in their educational office. According to Salari-Nahand's (2010) research, contentment in the workplace can result in increased productivity, superior output, and a sense of pride and dignity among staff members.

H3: Happiness is positively associated with job performance.

The Mediating Role of Happiness

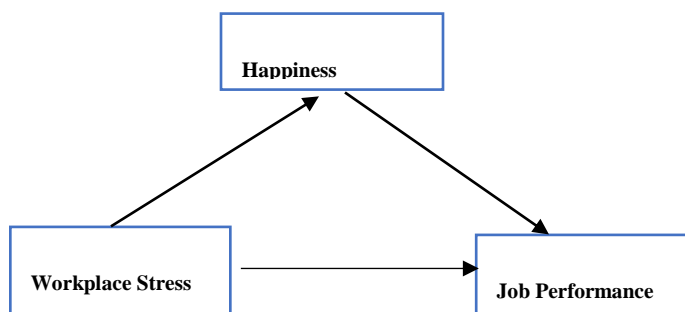
Happier people are more open and secure to the outside world, which enables them to create and maintain strong social networks and make wiser decisions in life. They also have a lower propensity to become one-dimensional thinkers under stress, which could lead to poor judgment (Veenhoven, 2008). According to Al Maktoum's (2017) research, societal and personal happiness are not the same things. Furthermore, it was mentioned that a state of contentment is when team members feel safe, secure, and at ease in any situation, including the job. In the study by Hosie and Sevastos (2009), It has been observed that happiness is a personal experience that requires customization to fit everyone's needs and preferences.

The field of positive psychology has developed in recent years to emphasize how psychology may improve human functioning, make life more fulfilling, and increase happiness (Seligman 2002). Research indicates that increasing happiness has a number of benefits. Fredrickson (1998) proposed the broaden-and-build paradigm, which suggests that positive emotions expand one's thought-action potentials, boost one's own resources (such as knowledge and social connections), and enhance one's own functioning (Fredrickson 1998). A compilation of studies by Lyubomirsky et al. (2006) researched that positive effects are linked to a few favorable outcomes, such as increased pay, better job performance evaluations at work, and better health. According to a study by Edmunds and Pryce-Jones (2008), being happy at job is defined as wisely utilizing the tools at hand to deal with obstacles in a wise way.

There is still more research to be done on the relationship between employee satisfaction and productivity at work. Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that contented workers would eventually become productive workers (Joo and Lee, 2017).

H4: Happiness positively mediates the relationship between workplace stress and job performance.

Theoretical Framework



Proposed Research Model (Figure 1)

2. Method

Quantitative research method was used which is relying on statistical data to study the association between independent and dependent variables. The participants of the study were the teachers enrolled in Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan. The researchers in person approached those teachers. They explained the study importance and objectives to the students. After their agreement to participate in the study, questionnaire was distributed among them along with consent letter enlightening the aims of the study. The study has been approved by the Ethical Research Committee of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan. By following, purposive sampling technique the questionnaire was distributed among 320 teachers, 295 questionnaires were received back, among them, 15 questionnaires were found incomplete and hence excluded from the study. Finally, 280 completely filled questionnaire were included in the study for analysis. The data were obtained between January 2024 and April 2024. As presented in table 1, out of the total 280 respondents, 210 respondents (75%) are men while 70 (25%) are women. 41 respondents (15%) were aged between the ages of 21 and 30. 138 participants (49%) were aged between the age of 31 and 40 and 101 respondents (36%) were aged 40 and above. In term of education 108 (39%) of participants are MPhil degree holders while 172 participants (61%) are PHD degree holders. 234 participants (84%) are married while 46 participants (16%) are unmarried. 49 participants (17%) are from faculty of arts and humanities, 55 participants (20%) are from faculty of business and economics, 54 participants (19%) are from faculty of chemical and life sciences, 67 participants (24%) are from faculty of physical and numerical sciences while 55 participants (20%) are faculty of social sciences. 49 participants (17%) have 1 to 5 years of job experience, 74 participants (26%) have 6 to 10 years of job experience while 157 participants (56%) have 10 years and above job experience.

2.1 Measurement

The responses were measured by Likert scale based on 5-point varying from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

2.1.1 The Workplace Stress Scale

Amtul Khair, Nadia Noor, and Farida Faisal designed the Scale (2019). The topics derived from the interviews serve as the foundation for the

quantitative research. The first quantitative research tool comprised forty statements that were scored on a Likert scale with five points to gather feedback on eight different constructs. We used using three constructs workplace stress, work overload, and role conflict of fifteen items. Each construct has five more items. Sample items are “In my daily work, often I am tense and get annoyed, my working hours are too long, and it is difficult to take a break, I work with people that expect unrelated things from me”.

2.2.2 Job Performance Scale

Carlos and Rodrigues established the job performance scale in 2015. Nine items on the original job performance measure were responded to on a five-point frequency scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." Sample items are “I achieve the objectives of the job, I meet criteria for performance, I demonstrate expertise in all job-related tasks”.

2.3.3 Subjective Happiness Scale

Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1997) developed the 4-item Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) as a self-report instrument to measure an individual's overall happiness based on self-evaluation. Some items are “In general, I consider myself happy, compared with most of my peers, I consider myself happy, some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you as happy?”

3. Results

Table 1

Demographic information of the Respondents (N=300)

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	210	75%
Female	70	25%
Age		
21-30	41	15%
31-40	138	49%
40& above	101	36%
Marital Status		
Married	234	84%
Unmarried	46	16%
Education		
MPhil	108	39%
PhD	172	61%
Department		
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	49	17%
Faculty of Business and Economics	55	20%
Faculty of Chemical and Life Sciences	54	19%
Faculty of Physical and Numerical Sciences	67	24%
Faculty of Social Sciences	55	20%
Job Experience		
1-5 Years	49	17%
6-10 years	74	26%
10 Years and above	157	56%
Total	280	100%

Table 2
Descriptive statistics, Mean, Standard deviation (SD) and correlation of the variables (N=300)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
WPS	3.1295	.77825	1		
JP	3.8472	.69257	.548**	1	
SH	3.8812	.97801	.522**	.490**	1

Note: N=280 *p<0.05, **P <0.001

Table 3
Regression Analysis Regression Analysis of workplace stress, job performance and happiness (N=300)

Variable	SH	JP
Constant		
WPS	.522***	.548***
SH		.490***
R2	273	.300

Table 4
Mediation Analysis (N=300)

Testing Paths	Unstandardized		T	Sig	Bootstrapping	
	Coefficient	Std error			LLCI	ULCI
IV→M (a)	.656	.064	10.209	.0001	.530	.783
M→DV (b)	.199	.040	4.968	.0001	.120	.277
IV→M→DV(c')	.357	.050	7.103	.0001	.258	.456
IV→DV (c)	.487	.045	10.915	.0001	.399	.575
Indirect effects	.130	.038			.061	.210

Note: IV (workplace stress) MV (subjective happiness), DV (job performance)

9 The mediating hypotheses were examined using Hayes (2013)'s process software for SPSS. To determine the mediating role of happiness in the relationship between job performance and workplace stress, we chose model 4 from Hayes templates. Furthermore, a sample estimate of 5,000 bootstrapping procedures with a 95% accurate bias CI was used. The hypothesis put forth in study states that the relationship between workplace stress and happiness is positively mediated by happiness. The outcome (Table 4) confirms our hypothesis 4 by showing that job performance and workplace stress are positively and partially mediated by happiness (b = 0.357, p < 0.0001)

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that stress at work negatively impacts the academic and research performance of Pakistani university staff.

According to the current study, job performance and workplace stress are negatively correlated. Hypothesis 1 is supported by the analysis that showed lecturers have greater levels of stress, which has a negative impact on teachers' job performance (Farida Faisal et al., 2019). This vacuum was filled by the current study, which discovered how university workplace stress affects teachers' job performance and links it to subjective happiness.

In addition, with our expectations and previous research findings, (Saenghiran,2014, Joo and Lee, 2017, Holly H. Schiffrin S. Katherine Nelson, 2008) the current study findings indicate the negative effect of workplace stress on happiness of teachers supporting our hypothesis 2. Moreover, in line with expectations and previous research findings, happiness is positively associated with job performance of university teachers supporting our hypothesis 3.

Besides, our results also support the person-environment (P-E) theory of stress (Caplan, 1983), which claimed that a person's level of congruence or fit with their surroundings rather than their circumstances alone is what causes stress. Stress at work can stem from a person's

ΔR2	270	.297
F	104.225	119.132

Note: N=280 *p<0.05, **P <0.001 ***p<0.0001,

To investigate the primary hypotheses of the research, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The findings displayed in Table 3 demonstrate the impact of control variables, such age and gender, and workplace stress on job satisfaction and performance. Our first hypothesis is supported by the result shown in Table 3, which shows a negative correlation between workplace stress and job performance (β = 0.548, p < 0.0001). The negative correlation between workplace stress and happiness was predicted by hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 is likewise fully supported, as the results show a negative connection between workplace stress and happiness (β = 0.522, p < 0.0001). Likewise, the positive correlation between job performance and happiness was predicted by Hypothesis 3. As a result of the findings, which show a significant correlation between job performance and happiness (β = 0.490, p < 0.0001), Hypothesis 3 is fully supported.

incompatibility as well as an unsupportive work environment. Therefore, the results of our study lend credence to the hypothesis that workplace conflict and problems might have a detrimental impact on instructors' job performance in higher education.

The pioneering research looked at how pleasure mediates the relationship between workplace stress and university instructors' job performance. Our findings also show that happiness positively mediates the association between workplace stress and job performance, confirming hypothesis 4, which is consistent with previous research on workplace stress (Farida Faisal et al., 2019) and job performance (Buonomo et al., 2019). From the standpoint of person-environment fit, our research also reveals the sources of workplace stress, how it impairs workers' job satisfaction and performance, and how important it is to preserving work-life balance. To put it another way, by taking into account the reasons behind and effects of occupational stress, (Farida Faisal et al 2019) to determine the causes of stress and its consequences at workplace, our study makes the new contribution to the workplace stress and employees happiness.

Practical Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Suggestions

The results of the current study established the important role of workplace stress in decreasing job performance and its negative effect on employee happiness. Establishments that offer instruction and training in a broad range of areas are included in the educational sector. These teachings are given by specialized institutions including colleges, universities, and schools. The university's teaching staff is its most valuable asset. It is imperative to give priority to addressing problems that have a negative impact on the performance of teachers.

Based on these findings, upper management should focus more on lowering staff stress levels in order to optimize productivity.

Additionally, employee satisfaction is a critical factor in lowering workplace-related stress. Given the significance of stress, senior management have to take employee well-being into account when formulating policies, conducting assessments, and choosing candidates. To further their concern for workplace difficulties, they might, for example, place a stronger priority on the training of both senior academics and their subordinates. Teachers demonstrate improved job performance as a result, and their pleasure is increased. Top management should create a department dedicated to development and provide several degrees of training. It would be best to hire a human resource management specialist who can help the faculty with career development, classroom instruction, and motivational techniques. The results of this study can be used to help employees in the educational sector come up with new ways to raise awareness among instructors and staff. Additionally, the study's conclusions emphasize the necessity of relieving them of stress rather than overloading them.

The present investigation is not without limits. Initially, information is gathered from a single Pakistani university inside the country's educational system. Second, the current study was carried out in Pakistan, a collectivistic society. Future research should replicate the findings in individualistic societies, where the importance of subjective satisfaction to organizational success is lower. Third, because of the data's high degree of generalizability and its collection from a specific industry—the education sector, for example—it can be applied to various businesses and cultural contexts. In conclusion, further studies are urged to examine the reasons behind workplace stress and the ways in which different forms of happiness impact workers' job performance.

Conclusion

The latest research looks at pleasure as a mediating variable and the impact of workplace stress on university instructors' job performance. By demonstrating the critical role that stress plays in affecting the link between job performance and happiness, it significantly adds to the literature on workplace stress. The person-environment fit theory plays a critical role in integrating the relationship among stress, job performance, and happiness, as this study demonstrates. The results of the study should spur researchers to look more closely at how stress affects job performance and satisfaction, which in turn affects behavior at work

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