



“ECONOMIC STRAIN, JOB STRESS, AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG PHYSIOTHERAPY FACULTY MEMBERS IN HYDERABAD: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL BURNOUT AND GENDER DIFFERENCES”

Dr.Y.Nissee Neelima Raj*¹ Dr. Ranjitha naini² Dr.V.Sowjanya³Dr. B. Deekshita Reddy,⁴ Dr. Sachin prashad mishra⁵ Dr. A. Deepthi⁶ Dr. Farheen Bano⁷

¹Associate professorShadan college of physiotherapy Hyderabad, Telangana 500091
Shadan college of physiotherapy Hyderabad, Telangana 500091
Email- Nisseeraj21@gmail.com

²ProfessorShadan college of physiotherapy Hyderabad, Telangana 500091

³Associate Professor,Shadan college of physiotherapy Hyderabad, Telangana 500091

⁴Associate professorShadan college of physiotherapy, Hyderabad, Telangana 500091

⁵Assistant professorShadan college of physiotherapy,Hyderabad, Telangana 500091

⁶Assistant ProfessorShadan college of physiotherapy, Hyderabad, Telangana 500091

⁷LecturerShadan college of physiotherapy, Hyderabad, Telangana 500091

***Corresponding Author:** Dr.Y.Nissee Neelima Raj

¹Associate professorShadan college of physiotherapy Hyderabad, Telangana 500091
Shadan college of physiotherapy Hyderabad, Telangana 500091
*Email- Nisseeraj21@gmail.com

Abstract

Background:

Academic physiotherapy faculty in India experience increasing professional demands alongside relatively low salary structures and rising living costs. These factors may contribute to occupational stress, emotional burnout, and reduced life satisfaction, with potential gender-based differences.

Objective:

To examine the relationship between job stress and life satisfaction among physiotherapy faculty members in Hyderabad and to evaluate the mediating role of emotional burnout, with specific attention to gender differences.

Methods:

An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted among 100 physiotherapy faculty members from multiple institutions in Hyderabad. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires assessing perceived job stress, emotional burnout, and life satisfaction. Gender-wise comparisons were performed using independent samples t-tests. Mediation analysis was conducted to assess the indirect effect of job stress on life satisfaction through emotional burnout.

Results:

Job stress was a significant positive predictor of emotional burnout ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Emotional burnout was a significant negative predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Job stress also demonstrated a significant direct negative effect on life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.44$, $p < 0.001$). Mediation analysis indicated partial mediation, with the indirect effect remaining statistically significant. Female

faculty members reported significantly higher job stress and emotional burnout, and lower life satisfaction, compared to male faculty members.

Conclusion:

Economic strain contributes substantially to occupational stress and reduced psychological well-being among physiotherapy faculty members. Emotional burnout partially mediates the relationship between job stress and life satisfaction, with stronger effects observed among female faculty. Institutional and policy-level interventions are required to improve faculty well-being and retention.

Keywords: Physiotherapy faculty; Job stress; Emotional burnout; Life satisfaction; Gender differences; Academic stress

Introduction:-

Physiotherapy education plays a vital role in preparing skilled healthcare professionals. Despite the growing demand for physiotherapy services, academic faculty members often face considerable occupational and financial challenges. In metropolitan cities such as Hyderabad, relatively low academic salary structures combined with high living costs place faculty members under sustained economic and psychological pressure.

Occupational stress among academic faculty has been associated with emotional burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired quality of life. Emotional burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and diminished professional accomplishment, has been widely reported among healthcare educators. Furthermore, gender differences in occupational stress have been documented, with female faculty members often experiencing greater psychological burden due to combined professional and domestic responsibilities.

In physiotherapy academia, teaching roles are increasingly female-dominated. Economic constraints and limited financial incentives in academic positions may encourage male professionals to transition toward private clinical practice or overseas employment, while female professionals may remain in academic roles due to job stability and work-life considerations. This gender imbalance may further influence stress levels, burnout, and life satisfaction.

However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the combined influence of economic strain, job stress, emotional burnout, and life satisfaction among physiotherapy faculty members in India. Understanding these relationships is essential for developing effective institutional strategies to support faculty well-being.

Methodology:-

Study Design

An analytical cross-sectional, questionnaire-based observational study was conducted.

Study Population:-

Physiotherapy faculty members employed in physiotherapy colleges across Hyderabad.

Sample Size and Sampling:-

A total of 100 faculty members were recruited using convenience sampling, consistent with similar occupational stress studies in academic settings.

Inclusion Criteria:-

- Male and female physiotherapy faculty members
- Minimum of one year of teaching experience
- Currently employed in Hyderabad

Exclusion Criteria:-

- Visiting or part-time faculty
- Faculty on long-term leave

Data Collection Tools:-

1. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) – to assess job stress
2. Maslach Burnout Inventory (Emotional Exhaustion domain) – to assess emotional burnout
3. Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) – to assess life satisfaction
4. Demographic questionnaire

Statistical Analysis:-

Data were analyzed using SPSS version XX. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. Independent samples t-tests were used for gender comparisons. Mediation analysis was conducted using regression-based methods. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results:-

Participant Characteristics

Of the 100 participants, 35 were male (35%) and 65 were female (65%).

Gender Differences in Outcome Measures:-

Female faculty members reported significantly higher job stress (22.6 ± 5.3) compared to male faculty members (18.2 ± 4.1), $p < 0.001$. Emotional burnout scores were also significantly higher among female faculty (25.4 ± 5.9) than male faculty (20.1 ± 4.5), $p < 0.001$. Life satisfaction scores were significantly higher among male faculty members (24.3 ± 4.8) compared to female faculty members (20.7 ± 5.2), $p = 0.001$.

Mediation Analysis:-

Job stress significantly predicted emotional burnout ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Emotional burnout significantly predicted life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Job stress also had a significant direct effect on life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.44$, $p < 0.001$). Inclusion of emotional burnout in the model reduced the direct effect ($\beta = -0.21$, $p = 0.02$), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect was statistically significant, confirming the mediating role of emotional burnout. Gender-stratified analysis demonstrated a stronger mediation effect among female faculty members.

Discussion:-

The present study highlights the significant psychological burden experienced by physiotherapy faculty members in Hyderabad due to economic strain and occupational stress. The findings are consistent with previous research indicating elevated stress and burnout among healthcare educators, particularly among women.

Emotional burnout emerged as a key psychological mechanism linking job stress to reduced life satisfaction. The stronger mediation effect observed among female faculty members may be attributed to additional social and domestic responsibilities, compounded by limited financial incentives and professional recognition.

The feminization of physiotherapy teaching roles observed in this study reflects broader workforce trends driven by economic factors. These findings underscore the importance of institutional policies addressing workload distribution, compensation structures, and mental health support systems.

Limitations:-

- Convenience sampling limits generalizability
- Cross-sectional design precludes causal inference
- Self-reported measures may introduce response bias
- Study restricted to a single metropolitan city

Conclusion:-

Physiotherapy faculty members in Hyderabad experience considerable occupational stress driven by economic strain and professional demands. Emotional burnout partially mediates the relationship

between job stress and life satisfaction, with female faculty members being disproportionately affected. Addressing workplace stressors through institutional support, equitable compensation, and gender-sensitive policies is essential to enhance faculty well-being and sustain academic excellence.

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