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Research Article

Exploring Psychosocial Hazards and Mental Health Challenges among Lecturers in Higher Education in Oman

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Abstract

This investigation explores the psychosocial obstacles that influence the mental well-being of academic staff at a higher education institution in Oman, emphasizing stressors including excessive workload, stringent job expectations, technological strain, and challenges related to work-life equilibrium. A quantitative descriptive methodology was employed to evaluate data collected from 105 educators across the disciplines of Business, Engineering, Information Technology, and the English Language Center through the use of structured surveys. The results demonstrate that while workload, job demands, and technological strain are generally manageable, work-life balance and mental health encounter moderate difficulties. Critical indicators of mental health are shown to be workload ($\beta = .410$, $p < .001$), job challenges ($\beta = .328$, $p = .005$), and tech overload ($\beta = .208$, $p = .044$), and the model clarifies 52.3% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 50.4\%$, Durbin-Watson = 1.97, ANOVA $F = 50.50$, $p < .001$). The outcomes point to the urgent requirement for customized actions like workload adjustments, the institution of 'tech-free' durations, the introduction of flexible timetables, and the improvement of mental health resources to advance faculty wellness and output.

Keywords: *psychosocial hazards, mental health, workload, technology overload, work-life balance.*

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, educators at a tertiary institution in Oman traverse a multifaceted and challenging milieu that transcends conventional classroom settings. This investigation underscores the frequently disregarded psychosocial risks that adversely influence their mental health and overall well-being. Teachers and professors encounter various challenges, particularly extensive workloads and the rapid pace of tech developments, which can detrimentally influence their overall health, both physically and mentally. Notwithstanding their crucial function in molding future generations, there exists a conspicuous deficiency in scholarly inquiry that addresses the distinctive challenges confronted by lecturers in Oman.

The objective of this study is to examine the psychosocial risks that afflict lecturers, thereby elevating awareness regarding the intricate realities of academic life in Oman. By delving into their lived experiences, this research aspires to champion substantial change and bolster support for educators. Utilizing rigorous methodologies and pragmatic insights, the study delineates strategies to enhance mental health and well-being, thereby cultivating a more supportive environment in which lecturers can flourish in their indispensable roles.

Purpose

The primary objective of this inquiry is to rigorously analyze the psychosocial challenges encountered by academic personnel within a higher education institution in Oman, thereby elucidating the factors that affect their psychological well-being and holistic health. By investigating the intricacies inherent in their daily experiences, including excessive workloads and the relentless demands associated with technological advancements, we aim to provide a more profound understanding of the unique stressors they encounter in their professional environments. This study aspires to bridge a notable gap in the extant literature by focusing specifically on the psychosocial hazards faced by lecturers in Oman. Our intention is to undertake a detailed inquiry and utilize analytical frameworks to uncover the essential roots of stress, anxiety, and burnout within the teaching profession, while also recognizing the aspects that demand enhanced support and intervention. By raising awareness of the thoughts of teachers and exploring their insights, we seek to play a role in the advancement of tailored strategies and support frameworks that bolster their psychological health and general welfare. Our overarching goal is to enhance a healthier and more encouraging landscape for educators at a higher education establishment in Oman, thus allowing them to prosper in their vital functions both personally and in their careers.

Statement of the problem

Academics employed within higher education institutions in Oman face significant challenges, including considerable workloads, rapid advancements in technology, and the imperative to balance their professional obligations with personal responsibilities. The existence of these psychosocial hazards profoundly impacts their emotional well-being and overall life satisfaction. Despite their crucial function in mentoring future generations, scholarly investigations that specifically address the unique challenges encountered by educators in Oman are notably inadequate. This shortfall hinders the understanding of how occupational stressors influence mental health outcomes.

This analysis aspires to scrutinize the qualities and reach of these psychosocial threats and their consequences on the welfare of instructors. By identifying key stressors such as anxiety and burnout, it aspires to develop targeted interventions and support systems. The primary objective is to cultivate a more wholesome and supportive setting that allows educators to flourish personally and professionally.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the psychosocial hazards that influence lecturers' jobs at a higher education institute in Oman
2. To assess the mental health status of lecturers at a higher education institute in Oman.
3. To understand the factors that affects mental health at a higher education institute in Oman.

Scope of the Study

This research endeavor systematically examines the psychosocial challenges encountered by academic personnel at a higher education institution in Oman during the academic years 2023–2025, with a particular emphasis on lecturers from various departments, including Business, Engineering, Information Technology, and the English Language Center. The study scrutinizes several determinants such as workload, job expectations, technological strain, interpersonal relationships, and work-life equilibrium, evaluating their ramifications on the mental health and overall well-being of lecturers.

Furthermore, the investigation delves into organizational elements that affect mental health outcomes, encompassing institutional policies, support mechanisms, workload allocation, communication practices, and leadership strategies. By focusing on this specific institution, the research offers valuable insights into the distinctive psychosocial difficulties faced by lecturers within this particular context.

Significant of the Study:

This academic investigation is notably essential for educators engaged in higher education settings in Oman, as well as for the expansive academic network. By investigating the psychosocial risks faced by educators, it highlights the often-overlooked obstacles that detrimentally impact their mental health and overall well-being. The ensuing findings will promote a deeper understanding among educators concerning the stress, anxiety, and burnout they experience, thereby equipping them to develop effective coping strategies. Moreover, the study has the potential to influence institutional policies and support systems aimed at fostering a more healthful and nurturing work environment. By tackling these psychosocial risks, there exists the opportunity to improve faculty well-being and to promote a culture defined by care and empathy. Ultimately, this research seeks to catalyze meaningful change, advocating for the requirements of educators while contributing to the formation of a sustainable and supportive academic framework in Oman.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gender-based disparities in mental health among university faculty have been extensively investigated, revealing substantial inequalities in psychological well-being. Nazir, Zamir, and Bibi (2021) discovered significant variations related to gender in the dimensions of psychological well-being, with male individuals generally exhibiting superior scores, save for the aspect of personal growth. Kinman and Court (2010) documented a concerning prevalence of work-related stress within the UK higher education sector, which exceeded the standards set forth by the Health and Safety Executive, with stressors such as role ambiguity and inadequate managerial support being particularly widespread. In yet another research analysis, Souto et al. (2018) revealed that excessive job expectations, fragile job circumstances, and insufficient help were significant sources of mental suffering among educators, thus stressing the vital necessity for aid programs. In their examination conducted in Portugal and England, Pimenta et al. (2023) explored the cultural and organizational factors influencing psychosocial risks, advocating for strategies tailored to specific contexts to improve the well-being of educators. In their study, Agrawal and Sharma (2021) underscored the pressing need to resolve the challenges to students' mental health, which encompass financial issues and academic rigors, with thorough approaches at the university level.

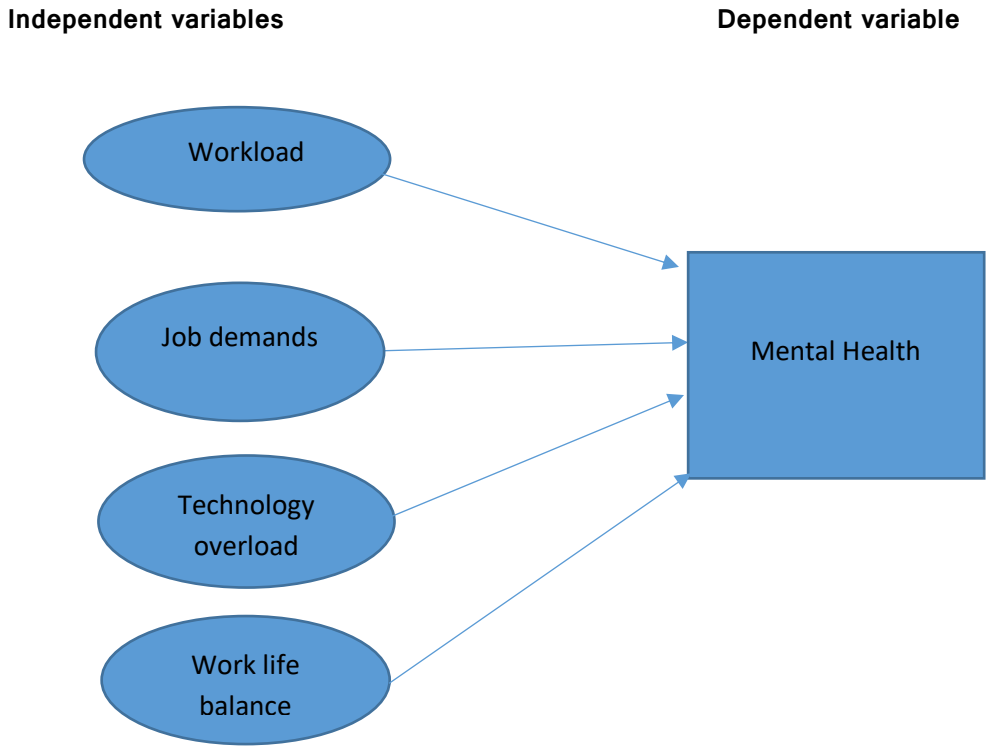
A multitude of academic investigations have focused on the management of workload and stress among scholarly personnel. The inquiry conducted by Halat et al. (2023) illuminated the significance of establishing a balance between professional obligations and personal life, receiving institutional support, and utilizing mental health resources for the enhancement of faculty well-being. Jayman, Glazzard, and Rose (2021) highlighted systemic obstacles such as overwhelming workloads and a deficient organizational culture as primary factors contributing to stress and professional burnout. Investigations performed by Fluck (2014) and Parsons and Slabbert (2001) advocated for the adoption of transparent workload models and an equitable allocation of resources to alleviate stress. Soliman (2006) and Jason Michael (2015) further underscored the tension between quantity and quality in academic outputs, proposing adaptive workload strategies to address these challenges.

The outcome of job demands and resources on phenomena such as burnout and engagement have been subjected to comprehensive investigation. Bakker, Demerouti, and Euwema (2005) elucidated that elevated job demands, in conjunction with inadequate resources, exacerbate the risk of burnout, whereas sufficient resources foster enhanced engagement among educators (Bakker et al., 2007). Research conducted by Khan et al. (2014) and Olivier (2006) reiterated the critical significance of addressing occupational stressors and fostering developmental opportunities as a means to alleviate burnout. Furthermore, Badri (2019) underscored the direct correlation between work-life balance and variables such as mental health, job satisfaction, and intentions of turnover, thereby emphasizing the imperative for the implementation of well-being management strategies.

Psychosocial hazards and the phenomenon of workplace bullying have emerged as pressing issues within both academic institutions and healthcare environments. Okeafor and Alamina (2018) delineated hazards such as excessive workload and job dissatisfaction within the Nigerian healthcare framework, whereas Nkporbu and Douglas (2016) examined the prevalence of workplace bullying in higher education, advocating for the implementation of specific intervention strategies. The research by Henderson et al. (2011) revealed a connection relating psychosocial aspects to the emergence of psychiatric disorders, consequently nurturing a wider inquiry into the distinctions between effort and reward. In this regard, Ugwuanyi et al. (2022) stressed the urgency for additional inquiry into the effects of demographic variables on experiences concerning occupational hazards.

Recent inquiries into creative strategies for education and academic work have been analyzed, with insights from Moodley (2015) and Tess (2013) showcasing how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and social media could improve student participation, yet the findings related to their success are ambiguous. Feroz and team (2021) highlight the need for caution in light of the overwhelming information from technology, urging a judicious integration to enhance educational effectiveness. To sum up, inquiries conducted by Noronha and Aithal (2020) and Ilić Kosanović (2021) underscored the urgent requirement of providing aid to educators, especially women and those handling familial commitments during challenging times such as the COVID-19 outbreak. These insights underscore the imperative for systemic interventions aimed at improving mental health and productivity within the context of higher education.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Research Gap

The existing research lacks a comprehensive focus on the effectiveness of interventions addressing psychosocial hazards in education and healthcare sectors. While numerous studies identify these hazards and their impact on teachers, lecturers, and healthcare workers, limited attention has been given to evaluating specific interventions or policies for mitigating challenges such as workload, job demands, technology overload, and work-life balance. This gap underscores the need for focused research on these factors, particularly in higher education institutions like those in Oman, to develop strategies that enhance educators' mental health and foster supportive work environments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study area selected for the research are the lecturers at a higher education institute in Oman covering Foundation, Diploma, Advanced Diploma and B.Tech.

Population and Sample

The population of the proposed research include all teaching staff of a higher education institute in Oman (population is 291 Reference: a higher education institute in Oman website) by including all the departments (BSD, ELC, Engineering and IT). The sample size is 105 with (90% confidence level) (ref: Slovin's formula). Purposive convenient sampling method is used to collect data from lecturers of higher education institute in Oman.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Convenient sampling method is used to collect data from the lecturers of higher education institute in Oman.

Department	Samples
Business	26
Engineering	25
Information Technology	26
English language center	28
Total	105

Source: University website

Data Collection Method

Data collection involves various primary and secondary resources. The foundational literature review and the theoretical framework are constructed from secondary sources. The premise of this investigation is based on the fundamental data obtained from a tertiary educational institution in Oman to fulfill the research objectives. For the collection of primary data, a meticulously structured questionnaire is disseminated through Microsoft Forms. The instrument incorporates demographic variables and utilizes a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the perceptions and viewpoints of lecturers.

Research design: The study will adopt a quantitative and descriptive approach aimed at scrutinizing and assessing the Psychosocial Hazards and Mental Health of Lecturers at a higher education institution in Oman. In this methodological framework, data is amassed via questionnaires and subjected to analysis.

Type of data:

Quantitative data is collected from respondents.

Data Analysis:

The data that is collected from the respondents was analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics- Mean, median and as well as making tables and graphs. Correlation and regression will be used for analysis.

Duration of the study:

The research is conducted between January-December 2024.

Hypotheses:

H_0: Workload and technology demands do not significantly affect the stress levels and job satisfaction of a higher education institute lecturers in Oman.

H_0: Mental health does not significantly affect the stress levels or job satisfaction of a higher education institute lecturers in Oman.

H_0: There is no significant relationship between workload, work-life balance, and mental health outcomes among a higher education institute lecturers in Oman.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria: This investigation is directed towards educators who are presently engaged in teaching roles at a higher education institution within the Sultanate of Oman. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, with only those educators who furnish informed consent being eligible for inclusion. The study encompasses lecturers who are actively performing instructional responsibilities at a higher education institution in Oman during the designated research timeframe, irrespective of their academic standing or area of specialization. All educators who consent to complete the meticulously structured questionnaire designed for data acquisition are deemed eligible for participation.

Exclusion criteria: Instructors absent from their responsibilities, including those on health-related leave or sabbaticals, will not be part of the study. Individuals who are not affiliated with a higher education institution in Oman fall outside the parameters of this investigation. Moreover, instructors who decide against involvement or do not grant permission will also be removed from the investigation.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Workload	05	.764
Job Demands	05	.751
Technology Overload	05	.792
Work-life Balance	05	.653
Mental Health	05	.628

The Cronbach alpha for all variables is above 0.60 so it is an indication of satisfactory reliability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Workload	105	1.25	5.00	2.7905	.68212
Job demands	105	1.25	5.00	2.8429	.72079
Technology Overload	105	1.00	4.75	2.7333	.78543
Work life balance	105	1.00	4.25	2.7786	.62338
Mental health	105	1.00	4.75	2.7833	.61440

The descriptive statistics reveal that, based on survey participants' perceptions, the workload is at a below-average level (M=2.79, SD=0.68), indicating that employees do not feel excessively burdened. Job demands are also relatively low (M=2.84, SD=0.72), indicating moderate expectations in their roles. Similarly, technology overload is perceived as low (M=2.73, SD=0.78), showing minimal stress due to technological demands. The work-life balance is rated slightly below average (M=2.78, SD=0.62), highlighting some challenges in managing professional and personal responsibilities. Finally, mental health is also at a below-average level (M=2.78, SD=0.61), pointing to moderate concerns among employees regarding their mental well-being.

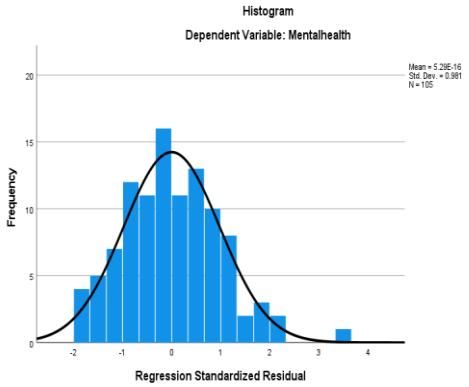
Table 4: Correlations

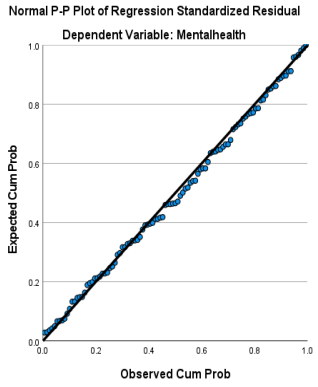
	Work load	Job demands	Technology Overload	Work life balance	Mental health
Workload	1				
Job demands	.716**	1			
Technology Overload	.632**	.622**	1		
Work life balance	.578**	.683**	.664**	1	
Mental health	.674**	.629**	.553**	.421**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis reveals significant positive relationships between the independent variables (workload, job demands, technology overload, and work-life balance) and the dependent variable, mental health. Workload shows a strong correlation with mental health ($r = .674$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher workload is linked to poorer mental health. Similarly, job demands ($r = .629$, $p < .01$) and technology overload ($r = .553$, $p < .01$) are moderately correlated with mental health, suggesting that increased job expectations and stress from technology negatively impact well-being. Work-life balance also has a significant but weaker correlation with mental health ($r = .421$, $p < .01$), showing that difficulty in balancing work and personal life can affect mental health. Furthermore, the independent variables are highly interrelated, emphasizing their combined impact on mental health and highlighting the importance of managing workplace stressors to support employee well-being.

Figure 2: Histogram & NPP Plot Regression





In histogram, the regression standardized residual is following a normal bell curve. Similarly, in NPP plot, the dotted lines are in accordance with the straight diagonal line so it is an indication that their normality of error term assumption is satisfied in our data.

Table 5: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.723[a]	.523	.504	.43283	1.966

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work life balance, workload, Technology Overload, Job demands
b. Dependent Variable: Mental health

The R Square value indicates that the independent variables, including workload, job demands, technology overload, and work-life balance, explain 52.3% of the variation in the dependent variable, mental health. The adjusted R Square value (50.4%) confirms a strong model fit even after adjusting for the number of predictors. The Durbin-Watson statistic is

1.97, suggesting no significant autocorrelation in the data. Since this is cross-sectional data, concerns about autocorrelation are minimal and can be disregarded.

Table 6: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.524	4	5.131	27.389	.000b
	Residual	18.734	100	.187		
	Total	39.258	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Mental health
b. Predictors: (Constant), Work life balance, workload, Technology Overload, Job demands

The ANOVA table indicate that the F-value is above the critical value of 4 so it is an indication that model is highly fit and significant (Fstat=50.50, P<.001). This indicates that the independent variables—work-life balance, workload, technology overload, and job demand—collectively provide a strong explanation for the variation in the dependent variable, mental health.

Table 7: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.000	.210		4.772	.000		
	workload	.370	.095	.410	3.897	.000	.430	2.325
	Job demands	.279	.096	.328	2.902	.005	.374	2.676
	Technology Overload	.163	.080	.208	2.044	.044	.461	2.170
	Work life balance	-.176	.103	-.178	-1.710	.090	.440	2.274

a. Dependent Variable: Mental health

The coefficients table indicates that three independent variables—workload (β=.410, p<.001), job demands (β=.328, p=.005), and technology overload (β=.208, p=.044)—have positive and significant effects on mental health. However, work-life balance has a negative but non-significant effect (β=-.178, p=.090). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all variables are below the critical value of 5, indicating no issues with multicollinearity in the data.

Summary of Hypotheses

H_0: Workload and technology demands do not significantly affect the stress levels and job satisfaction of a higher education institute lecturers in Oman.

Result:
The regression coefficients for workload (β = .410, p < .001) and technology overload (β = .208, p = .044) are both significant, indicating that these variables significantly affect mental health. Therefore, we reject H_0 and accept H_1, confirming that workload and technology demands have a significant impact.

H_0: Mental health does not significantly affect the stress levels or job satisfaction of a higher education institute lecturers in Oman.

Result:
Although the analysis focuses on mental health as a dependent variable, the significant predictors suggest that poor mental health (as influenced by workload, job demands, and technology overload) can impact stress levels and job satisfaction. Indirectly, this supports rejecting H_0 and accepting H_1.

H_0: There is no significant relationship between workload, work-life balance, and mental health outcomes among higher education institute lecturers in Oman.

Result:
The regression model shows a significant relationship between workload (β = .410, p < .001) and mental health. However, work-life balance has a negative but non-significant effect on mental health (β = -0.178, p = .090). Despite this, the overall model fit (R^2 = 0.523, F = 27.389, p < .001) confirms a significant relationship between the predictors and mental health. Therefore, we reject H_0 and accept H_1, acknowledging the strong influence of workload and moderate role of work-life balance on mental health.

The hypotheses testing indicates that workload, job demands, and technology overload significantly impact mental health, which in turn influences stress levels and job satisfaction. Work-life balance plays a weaker role but still contributes to mental health outcomes.

Table 8: Hypotheses

Hypothesis No.	Statement	Remarks
H1	No significant difference in stress levels and job satisfaction between lecturers facing heavier vs. lighter workloads and technology demands.	Not Supported
H2	No significant difference in stress levels and job satisfaction between lecturers with poor vs. better mental health.	Not Supported
H3	No significant relationship between workload, work-life balance, and mental health outcomes.	Not Supported

Findings and Discussion

The demographic profile indicates a strong preference for older age ranges, with 53.3% of participants situated within the 41 to 50-year-old category, compared to just 9.5% who are younger than 35, implying that age dynamics may significantly sway the observed outcomes. An overwhelming majority (97.2%) possess either a Master's degree or a PhD, indicative of the perspectives held by individuals with high academic qualifications. The ratio of genders is almost evenly matched, featuring a modest lead for males at 54.3%. More than half of the participants (51.4%) report possessing over 16 years of pedagogical experience, and the sample demonstrates a commendable balance across various academic departments, thereby ensuring a heterogeneous representation of scholarly disciplines. An important share of interviewees is wed (88.6%) and demonstrate balanced family demographics, with 50.5% revealing that they have 3 to 5 dependents. Remarkably, 73.3% of individuals responding have healthcare experience, which might impact their outlook on health-related topics. The utilization of medication is uniformly distributed, with 50.5% of participants reportedly engaged in such practices. Satisfactory reliability of the measures is confirmed, supported by Cronbach's alpha values that exceed 0.60 for each variable assessed. Descriptive statistical analyses reveal relatively low perceived levels of workload, job demands, and technology-induced overload, while simultaneously highlighting moderate challenges pertaining to work-life balance and mental health. Research findings reveal important positive connections between workload, job expectations, technology stress, and work-life harmony concerning mental health, highlighting that pressures in these areas negatively influence overall wellness. The analysis presented in the model summary indicates that the independent factors contribute to 52.3% of the fluctuations observed in mental health (adjusted $R^2 = 50.4\%$), while there are no signs of notable autocorrelation identified (Durbin-Watson = 1.97). The outcomes from the ANOVA test ($F = 50.50$, $p < .001$) validate the model's importance, indicating that workload ($\beta = .410$, $p < .001$), job demands ($\beta = .328$, $p = .005$), and stress from technology ($\beta = .208$, $p = .044$) significantly impact mental well-being, contrasting with work-life balance ($\beta = -.178$, $p = .090$) which suggests a minor negative effect that lacks statistical backing. In addition, all variance inflation factor (VIF) measurements falling under the 5 mark hint at the absence of multi-collinearity worries.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The analytical results reveal key determinants of employee mental health. Workload ($\beta = .410$, $p < .001$), job demands ($\beta = .328$, $p = .005$), and technology overload ($\beta = .208$, $p = .044$) significantly correlate with poorer mental health, while work-life harmony ($\beta = -.178$, $p = .090$) shows a weaker, non-significant effect. The model explains 52.3% of the variance in mental health (adjusted $R^2 = 50.4\%$), with a Durbin-Watson value of 1.97 indicating minimal autocorrelation and low VIF scores confirming no multi-collinearity. These findings highlight the need to address workload, job demands, and technology overload to support employee well-being and suggest further research into managing work-life balance effectively.

Recommendations

To cultivate a more supportive and sustainable pedagogical environment for academic faculty, institutions of higher education may implement targeted initiatives aimed at enhancing both mental health and instructional efficacy. The strategic redistribution of teaching responsibilities during peak academic periods, such as the commencement of semesters or examination phases, can alleviate the burdens of workload by integrating the assistance of teaching assistants or by recalibrating faculty duties. The promotion of designated "tech-free" intervals serves to mitigate the effects of technology-induced fatigue, while the provision of flexible teaching schedules-encompassing hybrid or online modalities—empowers faculty to adeptly manage their professional and personal commitments. The availability of accessible mental health resources, including counseling services and stress management workshops, particularly in

periods characterized by heightened stress, is of paramount importance. The establishment of clear delineations regarding after-hours work serves to avert burnout and to enhance the balance between work and life. Regularized check-ins between faculty members and departmental leadership facilitate the discourse surrounding workload, challenges, and mental health issues, thereby fostering an environment of recognition and support. The administration of faculty surveys at both the beginning and conclusion of semesters can yield valuable insights pertaining to workload, stress levels, and technology utilization, thereby informing necessary modifications. Furthermore, the implementation of resilience and stress management training workshops can equip faculty with essential competencies for effectively navigating academic pressures. Jointly, these strategies have the capability to considerably uplift faculty morale and output.

Scope for future research

This scholarly inquiry elucidates significant psychosocial hazards impacting academic personnel while underscoring the imperative for additional investigation. Subsequent research endeavors might encompass comparative examinations across various institutions or geographical regions to corroborate the results and utilize longitudinal methodologies to scrutinize the shifting dynamics of psychosocial variables and mental health. Using qualitative approaches like interviews or group conversations might illuminate vital insights into the sources of stress and mental health concerns. Furthermore, an investigation into the ramifications of institutional policies, cultural influences, and technological progressions on faculty well-being may inform the development of more efficacious strategies for fostering healthier academic environments.

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