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University Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy and Its Relationship with Workplace Stress

Abstract   'The efficacious attitude of a person plays a vital role to develop psychological well-being, interpersonal and self-esteem. An individual with high level of self-efficacy is able to regulate and balance thoughts over actions. The basic purpose of the current study was to find out the relationship between self-efficacy and workplace stress of university teachers. A quantitative co-relational research design was followed to achieve the research objectives. 180 faculty members working in three different public sector universities in Pakistan were selected using multiphase sampling technique. Self-developed self-efficacy scale (based on two factors; general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy) and workplace stress inventory were used to collect the required data. Data were analyzed applying mean score, t-test and Pearson's correlation. Findings of the study reveal indirect correlation between the level of teachers' self-efficacy and their perceived stress at workplace. Few recommendations were made on the basis of the findings of this study.

Key Words: Environment, Knowledge, Motivation, Management, Teaching beliefs.

Introduction

The efficacious attitude of a person plays vital role to develop psychological well-being, interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities, and self-esteem. An individual with high level of self-efficacy and perceived capabilities able to regulate and balance thoughts over actions. With self-efficacy a pattern of intended actions is emphasized on cognitive and meta cognitive execution. Social cognitive theory (Bandura,) circumambulates belief of self-efficacy and its effect on behavior functioning; As Bandura is first to describe the belief of self-efficacy in social cognitive theory. The prediction of individuals' performance and outcomes is constructed under this "belief". Based on this belief, a formed, organized, and expressed behavior to achieve assigned task is a set of higher-level efficacy course. In prospective situations, self-efficacy belief implies in social and specific domain called perceived social self-efficacy. This perceived social efficacious level raised confidence and motivation of individual to interact and perform in working place.

In educational setting, a confident and self-efficacious teacher transfers knowledge, skills, and capacities to students remarkably. Self-efficacy in another way, is the potential and necessary skills to carry out the tasks in academic situation (Bandura, 1997). It is one's belief to overcome the problems and achieve tasks successfully. Self-efficacy level is considered an important indicator to determine how to defy the demanding situations. In educational institutions, students and teachers are considered major stakeholders; they are supposed to be efficacious in their tasks. With high level of self-efficacy, teachers handle the institutional situations comparatively better (Tschannen & Woolfolk, 2001).

The state of productive mutual relationship between teachers and students is not only linked with students' overall development and motivation, but it is also associated with teachers' academic performance. However, teaching depends on knowledge, experience, motivation, capabilities, aptitude, and professionalism. Teachers' understanding of psychological factors that affect their performance has extensively been investigated by the researchers. The core elements of teaching are the amount of intensity to perform well in class within students' engagements to reach educational

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goal (Bal-Taştan et al., 2018). With reference to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy was originally presented by Albert Bandura (1977). Self-efficacy is ones' confidence to perform specified task for desired outcome (Avalos, 2017; Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy directly relates to the domains of teaching-learning process. Teachers' self-efficacy is the belief of teachers that enhance their capabilities to execute patterns of actions to achieve the given tasks (Bandura, 1977). Basically, perceived self-efficacy is teachers' personnel evaluation of their capabilities that express in conventional manners.

Bandura (1997) formulated four classifications of self-efficacy level as physiological and emotional state, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and enactive mastery experience (van Blankenstein et al., 2018). The rate of self-efficacy belief differs in individuals. Some people have higher level, some have moderate, while some people have low level of self-efficacy. There are several elements and factors that influence this self-confidence. These factors are internal and external like personal problem and issues, over all development, psychological distress, psychological well-being, academic, organizational, social, and remuneration (Alyami et al., 2017).

The professional exposure through expertise, subject knowledge, and skills raises the level of self-efficacy. The lesser experiences found it difficult to sustain in difficult situations. However, studies suggested that productive experiences can increase the potential of self-efficacy (Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986). People's experience and intellectual abilities are main sources to predict level of self-efficacy. The organizational setting demonstrated that people with enactive mastery experience undertake proactive approaches to face stress and burnout and perform their role (Bal-Taştan et al., 2018; Bandura, 1977). Meanwhile, teachers perceived self-efficacy can be used as self-evaluation technique regarding their capabilities to perform well to achieve desired learning outcomes and improve academic performance. Substantial studies have been conducted that establish hypothetical relationship of self-efficacy with academic attainments (Avalos, 2017; Schöber et al., 2018), motivation (van Blankenstein et al., 2018), academic performance (Tiyuri et al., 2018), and barriers and factors that affect the teachers' perceived self-efficacy (Tiyuri et al., 2018).

Efficacious teachers handle institutional issues, and tasks better as compared to less efficacious teachers. It can be observed that teachers with lower efficacy show lower level of commitment Tschannen & Woolfolk, 2001). Although, job stress, personal issues, and burn out associate with the situation in which teachers perform. In this context, self-efficacy belief is an important characteristic to perform and control the stressful situations. Teachers use two types of efficacies during teaching; that is general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy. General teaching efficacy is based on teachers' expectations about their students' learning. It is also an ability to overcome social and economic factors in their students' lives. On the other hand, personal teaching efficacy is the teachers' own belief about their ability to influence students' learning (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke-Spero, 2005).

Stress in teaching is a complex phenomenon and has diverse meanings. Generally, stress can be a body response to the unwanted demand of the environment. Teachers' stress means a situation where they are exposed to unwanted factors in environment. These factors may be internal (institutional) and external (outside the institution). These factors negatively affect teachers' performance at work and vary among institutions.

Certain factors exist inside and outside the institution. Internal factors are related to fewer rewards, overload of work, tight policies and relationship with colleagues etc. (Boyd, Lewin, & Sager, 2009; Forlin, 2001). The external factors are demanding parents, ever changing policies and rules and downsizing etc. (Kyriacou, 2001). The teachers with higher level of stress may reduce their teaching effectiveness, and cause lower morale, absenteeism and less professional commitment. An associative stress at working place with efficacious behavior is important to identified especially for newly inducted teachers. Being able to overcome different situations arouses satisfaction. Yet, low efficacy can lead low morale and negative feelings with stress and anxiety. Most of efficacious teachers are more motivated to control stressful environment through self-belief (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

In addition, gender is another factor that affects the belief of efficacy. Level of work stress has an inverse relationship in terms of male and female performance (Cox, Griffiths, & Leka, 2003; Robbins & Judge, 2013). Male teachers due to having higher level of efficacy were better coping with the stressful situations. It also indicates that male teachers use active behavioral and inactive strategies to manage stress at their workplaces. Teachers' stress has a negative effects like depression and anger and also

accompanied by psychological changes that threaten their self-efficacy, self-esteem or well-being. There is no universal definition of stress. It may be defined as arousal in psychological functioning when expectations exceeded more than adaptive attributes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, an unforeseen and mishappening during planned implementation caused stress. The extremal expectations and intrinsic demands required potential performance. Failure in task achievements sources amount of low confidence and acute anxiety. Job stress also disturbs personal and home environment of individual. These effects, factors, and resources are changed individual to individual. There are three types of stress demonstration; it reacts through psychological, physical, and behavioral aspects. In psychological expression, mental interaction with stress directly or indirectly forecast organizational determinants whether stress is related to content or context of working place. Every person tries to perform well in both areas (content & context). Content of work defines in terms of work, tasks workload, timeframe, participation, assignments, and achievements. Besides this, context is related to professional development, interpersonal relationships, decision making, identity within organization, and work-home balance (Cox, Griffiths, & Leka, 2003). Both areas are responsible to influence an employee. Every employee tries to access optimum level or appreciation.

In an organization, teachers play active involvement in organizational duties and do effort to establish relationships with colleagues if they feel sense of security and belonging at workplace. Therefore, self-efficacy of the teachers correlates with their academic achievements and organizational related tasks. Research findings also indicate that teachers 'self-efficacy belief also correlates positively with the motivational constructs if they are working in stress free environment. A stronger belief of efficacy promotes collaborations with colleagues and commitments to the profession. It also contributes positively to building learning environment for the students. High efficacious teachers use new approaches to teaching and learning and cope with various unwanted situations successfully. Gupta and Kumar (2010) conducted a study on teachers of United States and Zimbabwe and found that teachers feel greater sense of dissatisfaction and self-efficacy due to poor institutional support. They also displayed minimal performance in their routine activities due to working more hours per week and handling more students.

In academic, every teacher plays a crucial role on daily bases to perform in content and context of teaching-learning. The balanced interaction of self-efficacy belief and job stress in drastic situation can execute pursued actions. The consequences of belief of efficacy enable people to deal with psychological variations. So that, people with efficacy act as per abilities and skills accurately. A belief of self-efficacy in professional life is negatively correlated with teacher stress in many research studies. Research study conducted by Tahir, (2011); concluded that stress at workplace has many negative effects on teaching quality, teacher morale, students' satisfaction, teacher efficacy and decreases overall performance of the teachers.

On the other hand, perceived inefficacy was a source of workplace stress among teachers. It is an individual's perception that influences his/her course of action, efforts towards goals, levels of stress, perseverance through diverse situations, level of depression and the level of success they can achieve. They might be ready to initiate new practices to the system of education. It is also an indication that self-efficacy of the teachers has not only its role in job satisfaction, occupational commitment, quality of teaching, job performance and academic achievement of the students but it has a greater role in coping with stressful situations at workplace. The teachers with higher efficacy are better able to control stressors in their professional life.

The teachers in Pakistani universities generally teach four to six courses per semester. Each course is different on analytical grounds. They are supposed to perform other university tasks as well. It creates over workload and they have to work for long hours per day. Many of the teachers in public and private sectors are not sure about their job future. In the public sector universities, staff having contract positions is always tense about their job security. Educational reforms are not properly implemented due to lack of mechanism. Sometimes new rules and regulations are incompatible with the routine matters of the teachers and the existing system of education. Performance evaluation of the academic staff is based on confidential annual reports and lacks feedback which makes them under pressure. All these situations are stressful for the teachers and affect their self-esteem.

The theoretical framework reviewed above is an indication that the teachers' self-efficacy and the workplace stress is an area that must be investigated at higher level. Very few studies (especially in

Pakistan) investigate importance of self-efficacy belief in academic situation, most of studies are limited to subjective achievements, special education, depression, mathematical confidence, and gender. Keeping the crucial role of teachers in teaching learning process, the present study explores the levels of self-efficacy belief of teachers in association to stress of working place. It is very important to find out the level of stress of employees at their workplaces and to find out its relationship with their self- efficacy.

Objectives

This study has achieved following objectives:
1. Find out the difference in the level of self-efficacy and workplace stress with respect to demographic variables
2. Study the relationship between self-efficacy and stress at workplace

Research Questions

The primary research questions of the study are:

What is the level of teachers' self-efficacy and stress with respect to different demographic variables?

What is the relationship between the measure of teachers' efficacy and workplace stress?

Research Methodology

Correlation research design was used to check whether there is a relationship between the two variables after measuring them quantitatively. The correlation between the variables was verified using Pearsons' correlation coefficients. Independent sample t-test was applied to find out the difference in demographic variables.

Participants

180 teachers teaching post graduate classes in three public sector universities of Pakistan participated in the study. Three public sector universities in first phase of the sampling were selected following convenient sampling technique. 3 faculties from each university were selected using random sampling technique. In last phase of the sampling 20 teachers from each selected faculty were randomly selected. It constitutes the sample comprising 180 teachers in total.

Research Instruments

Researcher developed two research instruments in this study. Teachers' efficacy scale; this scale consisted of two variables: general teaching efficacy (GTE) and personal teaching efficacy (PTE). General teaching efficacy scale consisted of these types of items; 'I expect that my lecture influence students' learning'. Personal teaching efficacy scale consisted of these types of items; 'I can complete my task well in time'. Stress at workplace was measured using teacher stress inventory. This inventory addresses the uncomfortable subjective experiences of the employees at workplace. These characterized by numerous and varied challenges: administrative burdens, long hours, classroom management difficulties, and lack of autonomy. The reliability of self-efficacy scale was .76 (alpha coefficient) for GTE and .72 for PTE (alpha coefficient). The Alpha coefficient of reliability was .78 for teacher stress inventory.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS to find out differences and relationship between variables. Data to answer the second research question were analyzed using Pearsons' correlation coefficients.

Findings

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Self-Efficacy and Workplace Stress (N=180)

Variable	Mean	SD
General teaching efficacy	18.98	5.40

Variable	Mean	SD
Personal teaching efficacy	10.58	3.06
Total teacher efficacy	29.56	5.99
Total workplace stress	80.78	14.61

Table 2. Mean Difference of Self-Efficacy and Demographic Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	t
Gender			
Male	3.12	.29	3.11**
Female	2.85	.39	
Marital Status			
Married	3.05	.36	-.61
Unmarried	3.15	.38	
Residential Status			
Rural	3.10	.25	-.26
Urban	3.13	.32	
Teachers' belief of self-efficacy	3.00	.28	

P- value is significant at 0.05

Research shows that the university teachers' self-efficacy belief is more than average. Self-efficacy of male teachers is greater than that of females. The effect of gender differences on mean scores presenting teachers' self-efficacy is significant (t=3.11) at the level of .05. It may be due to the family set up, household responsibilities, societal norms and the role conflicts that female teachers have lower expectations for success than their fellows. These findings are also related with a study conducted by Gupta and Kumar (2010). Table 2 also displays that unmarried teachers' self-efficacy is greater than that of unmarried teachers. It can be said that marital status does not matter a lot for self-efficacy. Location of the teachers has also its effects on their self-efficacy beliefs. It is observed that self-efficacy of teachers living in urban areas is greater than that of rural teachers but this difference is also not significant. Analysis for self-efficacy on different demographic variables revealed that only gender has significant effect on self-efficacy however mean difference on other two variables (marital status and location) is insignificant.

Table 3. Correlation between Two Variables

Stress total		
Teacher self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	0.046
Scale Sig. (2-tailed)	0.545	
N	180	

Correlation analysis in table 3 indicates that there is no significant relationship between the teachers' self-efficacy and workplace stress.

Table 4. Relationship Between General Teaching Efficacy and Stress

Stress		
General Teaching efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.105
Scale Sig. (2-tailed)	.155	
N	180	

Analysis indicates in table 4 that general teaching efficacy and workplace stress has no significant relationship.

Table 5. Personal Teaching Efficacy and workplace stress

Stress		
Personal Teaching efficacy	Pearson Correlation	-0 .42
Scale Sig. (2-tailed)	.545	
N	180	

Analysis indicates in table 5 that no significant correlation exists between personal teaching efficacy and workplace stress.

Discussion

People's experience and intellectual abilities are main sources to predict level of self-efficacy. The rate of self-efficacy belief differs in individuals. Some people have higher level, some have moderate, while some people have low level of self-efficacy. Peoples' pursued set of actions and their consequences are influenced by their belief of self-efficacy. In working place, every individual expects that he/she can perform with all potential and abilities. This amount of efforts and belief affected by internal and external factors. People with physical issues, and psychological stress are found difficulties to express their inner abilities. In internal factors of psychological actions, stress is a widespread problem in all types of settings. The teachers may face stress of any type during their professional lives. The reasons may be different due to different educational settings. It is natural to be stressful encountering painful settings, but some teachers seem more vulnerable as compared to others even if they are experiencing same type of stress at their workplaces. Some teachers have more responsibilities and over workload than others therefore they cannot manage themselves in their stressful situations. They display lower level of morale because lower professional self-efficacy increases the stressful environment at educational settings.

Teacher self-efficacy may decrease if teacher believes that external factors like ability and background of students etc. are more important for the learning of the students than the teaching of the teacher. Majority of the studies indicate that there is a negative correlation between the above-mentioned variables. Other studies indicate that self-efficacy can moderate work-related stress at the departments (Grau, Salanova & Peirò, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Betoret, 2006; Friedman & Kass, 2002). Klassen and Durksen (2014) also conducted a study on efficacy and burnout of university teachers and found the similar results that there is negative correlation between the variables. Similar research findings were found by (Lin & Gorrell, 2001). It means that if level of self-efficacy is higher, it develops the greater power of controlling the stressful situations at workplace. The lower level of self-efficacy results in the lesser power to handle stressful conditions at job places.

The findings of recent studies conducted by Sayed et al. (2014) on same variables indicate that majority of the teachers who were having lower level of self-efficacy have had more stress. It means that teachers' efficacy and workplace stress was negatively correlated with each other which are in accordance with the current study. After studying self-efficacy, Hoy (2000) found three important factors that can play a vital role in increasing self-efficacy i.e. positive teaching experience especially at the beginning of the profession. Second, the practices of other teachers at workplace which motivate them to do what others do. Third factor is receiving feedback on good practices by others and criticism on bad practices by others. Self-efficacy can play a role of buffer to reduce work stress (Salanova et al. 2002). Studies conducted by Grau et al. (2001), Kumar (2010) and Attri (2014) displayed self-efficacy in favor of male teachers to reduce stress and have optimistic thoughts to accomplish their tasks as compared to the females. Efficacious teachers are supposed to be more committed to their organizations and have more power to handle the painful situations as compared to less efficacious teachers (Johnson, 2010). Findings of all these studies are in accordance with the current study finding that less efficacious workers have less power to control the unseen pain and stressors in their professional lives and efficacious workers have higher level of stress control. Teacher stress has a negative effects like depression and anger and also accompanied by psychological changes that threaten their self-efficacy, self-esteem or well-being.

Conclusions

A person with higher level of self-efficacy has full confidence and competency to control worse situations at workplace. These types of individuals are always motivated and energetic with their knowledge and skills. In the current study, excluding gender variable, no other variable has a significant relationship with self-efficacy belief. This study also concludes that an increase in the level of self-efficacy has positive effect on controlling the stress at workplace. It is concluded -that teachers' self-efficacy is an important indicator to enhance the work performance and to reduce stressful

situations. The educational administrators need to consider this variable as a challenge keeping in view that "the higher the level of self-efficacy, the greater the power to control the stressful situations".

Recommendations

Self-efficacy is an important indicator for individuals in their professional lives. When employees are in a stressful situation and feeling unable to control the situation; their work performance is decreasing drastically. They are losing their energy and efficiency for work and are less motivated. The organizations are suggested to use motivational strategies to improve their self-efficacy belief. The institutions should design training programs for the employees to make them aware of their skills and capabilities. Self-efficacy can be improved by the institutions to introduce tailor made exercises and games. Interventions such as coaching, sensational modeling, verbal persuasion, counseling and enactive mastery are helpful sources to increase employees' self-efficacy beliefs.

Findings of the study can be helpful to elucidate a mechanism to protect the teachers from experiencing workplace stress and make them capable of controlling stressful situations. Teachers' optimistic beliefs are needed to be strengthened to avoid the downward spiral.

Teachers' self-efficacy and its continuity are important areas of research. Data should also be collected while using qualitative tools; interview and observation along with quantitative data for a deeper understanding of the variables.

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