

**EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONGST FEMALE
ACADEMICS IN THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES AT THE DURBAN
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Mercillene Perrene Mathews, hereby declare that this dissertation, submitted for the Degree of Masters in Management Sciences, specialising in Human Resources Management within the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology, is my own investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or to any other institution of higher education. I further declare that all sources were cited, referenced and acknowledged as indicated in the bibliography.

Signed: _____ Date: _24/11/2021_

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DEDICATION

But the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits (Daniel, 11:32)

This thesis is dedicated to Abba Father, as I try to use my talents as He created me to...

This work is dedicated to my sons, Liam, Byron, Marlon and Lewis-who always told me to not give up because they knew I could do it. I pray that God continues to bless the work of their hands. With God, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

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ABSTRACT

Stress and stress-related problems have severe human resource and financial implications for organizations in terms of absenteeism, productivity, organizational effectiveness, employee morale and medical aid subsidies. For a tertiary institution like the Durban University of Technology (DUT), the impact of stressed academics on core business activities relating to students and examinations are far-reaching. The study established that female academics at the institution perceive themselves to be experiencing occupational stress and consequently defined the types of stressors that these academics are facing. Furthermore, the researcher attempted to establish the role of DUT, if any, in the management of stress amongst its female academics. A qualitative research methodology was adopted with a focus group of purposely selected female academics from the Faculty of Management Sciences. The findings of this study demonstrated that female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology are indeed experiencing high stress levels as defined in the background to the study. Recommendations on possible effective interventions were also made in order to manage the stress that these female academics are experiencing, thereby reducing the negative impact thereof on themselves and DUT.

Key words: stress, occupational stress, female academics

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	2
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS	4
1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY	4
1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	4
1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY	6
1.9 SIGNIFICANCE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	6
1.9.1 Significance of the study	6
1.9.2 Rationale of the study	6
1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW	7
1.10.1 Occupational stress	9
1.10.2 Factors that lead to occupational stress	10

1.10.3	Theoretical framework	12
1.11	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....	13
1.11.1	Research design.....	13
1.11.2	Target population.....	13
1.11.3	Sampling techniques	13
1.11.4	Selection of the sample	14
1.12	CONSTRUCTS OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	14
1.13	DATA COLLECTION.....	17
1.14	DATA ANALYSIS	18
1.15	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	19
1.16	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	19
1.17	STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS.....	20
1.18	CHAPTER SUMMARY	20
	CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
2.1	INTRODUCTION	21
2.2	CONCEPTUALISING STRESS	22
2.3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	25
2.3.1	Job Demand Control Model	26
2.3.2	Demand Control Support Model.....	27
2.3.3	Transactional Model of Stress and Coping	29
2.4	OCCUPATIONAL STRESS.....	30
2.4.1	Causes of occupational stress	31
2.5	TYPES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS	35
2.5.1	Acute stress	36

2.5.2	Post-traumatic stress	36
2.5.3	Chronic stress	36
2.5.4	Acute episodic stress	36
2.6	OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG FEMALE ACADEMICS	37
2.6.1	Effects of stress on academics	37
2.7	BURNOUT	39
2.7.1	Symptoms of burnout in academics	40
2.8	CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS	40
2.8.1	Physiological problems	42
2.8.2	Psychological problems	42
2.8.3	Behavioral problems	42
2.9	COPING WITH OCCUPATIONAL STRESS	43
2.9.1	Stress reduction interventions	44
2.10	STRESS MANAGEMENT	44
2.10.1	Stress coping strategies	45
2.11	MANAGING STRESS	47
2.11.1	Organisational stress management	48
2.11.2	Individual stress management	49
2.12	CHAPTER SUMMARY	49
	CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	50
3.1	INTRODUCTION	50
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	50
3.2.1	Mixed methods research design	55
3.3	TARGET POPULATION	56

3.4	SAMPLING TECHNIQUES	57
3.4.1	Justification of probability sampling technique	58
3.5	RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	58
3.5.1	Interviews.....	59
3.5.2	Focus groups	59
3.6	DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES.....	62
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS	64
3.8	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.....	65
3.8.1	TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	66
3.8.2	PLAUSIBILITY AND COHERENCE.....	66
3.9	ETHICAL ISSUES	67
3.10	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	67
	CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	68
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	68
4.2	RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY	69
4.3	THEMES	70
4.4	THEME ONE: CAUSES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS (STRESSORS).....	73
4.4.1	SUB THEME 1: WORKLOAD AND PERFORMANCE.....	73
4.4.2	SUB-THEME 2: COVID-19 PANDEMIC	88
4.4.3	SUB-THEME 3: SUPPORT DEFICIENCY	98
4.4.4	SUB-THEME 4: BULLYING AND IMPOSITION.....	105
4.4.5	SUB-THEME 5 :POWER DYNAMICS	110
4.4.6	SUB-THEME 6: RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION	112
4.5	THEME 2: IMPACT AND SYMPTOMS	113

4.5.1	Physical	114
4.5.2	Emotional.....	117
4.5.3	Impacts on quality of life	119
4.5.4	Resentment towards institution.....	122
4.5.5	Online strain.....	124
4.6	THEME 3: COPING MECHANISMS.....	125
4.6.1	Holistic wellbeing	126
4.6.2	Relaxing activities	129
4.6.3	Health	133
4.6.4	Working from home.....	134
4.6.5	Technology	136
4.6.6	Not utilising DUT support.....	138
4.7	THEME 4: RECOMMENDATIONS- EMPLOYEE STRESS MANAGEMENT .	143
4.7.1	Top VS Bottom.....	144
4.7.2	Empathy.....	148
4.7.3	Separate teaching and learning and research	152
4.7.4	Feedback and listening.....	154
4.8	CHAPTER SUMMARY	156
	CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	157
5.1	PREAMBLE.....	157
5.2	CONCLUSIONS ON THE STUDY OBJECTIVES	157
5.2.1	Objective One	158
5.2.2	Objective Two	158
5.2.3	Objective Three.....	159

5.2.4	Objective Four.....	160
5.3	RECOMMENDATIONS	161
5.4	LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY	162
5.5	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	163
5.6	CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY	163
	REFERENCES	164
	ANNEXURES	183
	ANNEXURE A: LETTER OF INFORMATION	183
	ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT	185
	ANNEXURE C1: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION.....	187
	ANNEXURE C2: IREC CLEARANCE	188
	ANNEXURE D: SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS	189
	ANNEXURE E: TURNITIN	190
	ANNEXURE F: EDITING LETTER.....	194

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Criteria and methods to ensure trustworthiness	17
Table 3.1 Key Areas of the Qualitative Approach	54
Table 4.1 Definitions of key terms in this chapter	69

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Demand-Control Support Model	28
Figure 2.2 Types of Stress.....	36
Figure 2.3 Consequences of stress	41
Figure 2.4 Organisational Stress Management	48
Figure 2.5 Individual Stress Management	49
Figure 3.1 Key Steps in Qualitative Research	56
Figure 3.2 Data Analysis Process.....	64
Figure 4.1 Word Cloud of Key Themes	72
Figure 4.2 Cluster Diagram Depicting Stressors.....	73
Figure 4.3 Hierarchy Chart Depicting Causes of Occupational Stress	75
Figure 4.4 Hierarchy Chart of Impact and Symptoms.....	114
Figure 4.5 Word Cloud Summary of Coping Mechanisms.....	125
Figure 4.6 Cluster Bubble Depicting Key Coping Mechanisms.....	126
Figure 4.7 Recommendations- Employee Stress Management.....	144
Figure 5.1 Causes of Stress Amongst Female Academics.....	159

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is one of the most frequent work-related health concerns in the world, and it is becoming a major concern in a variety of industries. It has been shown to have a negative influence on employee productivity and job satisfaction in a variety of occupations. It is also thought to be a significant factor in absenteeism and low staff morale, as well as having severe consequences for profitability and organizational development. As a result, many organizations have recognized the significance of addressing the issue of workplace stress (Leung, Liang and Olomolaiye, 2014).

Academic staff at higher education institutions bear a tremendous degree of responsibility, not only to their administration, but also to their students' parents and sponsors, who are constantly demanding good performance ratings for their children, which can be a source of stress for academics. The Higher Education Commissions' (HEC) responsibility, according to Raza (2012), is to increase the progress of institutes that direct the country towards appropriate progress. Moreover, Universities are largely responsible for supporting research and development as well as increasing instructional capacity. These elements have an impact on university performance, putting academics under much stress. Additionally, other variables such as strained peer relationships, insufficient working infrastructure and poor economic conditions can all contribute to stress.

Stress should not be dismissed as a trivial issue since stressed academics will be unable to achieve the criteria of higher educational institutions, lowering the country's educational quality. Job satisfaction is also an important factor to consider when discussing stress issues, because a stressed academic cannot be regarded as a job satisfied individual, since job contentment and stress levels are closely linked. As the female staff complement at DUT is around 51%, one may assume that half of the success of the

institution depends upon them. Consequently, it becomes necessary to make the job environment stress free for the future success of educational institutions like DUT.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Omoniyi and Ogunsanmi (2012:126), “stress seems to have become a popular concept for explaining a wide range of behaviours that appear to defy explanation.” Job-related or occupational stress may be said to occur when an individual feels some kind of dissonance at having to change their behaviour in response to work-related goals and demands. However, Werner (2012:233) states that whether it is work-related or any other stress that is being experienced, variables such as personality type; self confidence in one’s ability; the degree of control over the situation; whether the events were expected; and the importance of the situation are all moderating variables in stressful situations. Barkhuizen and Rothman (2008) state that academia is a highly stressful occupation, with academics around the world dealing with substantial amounts of stress. This is quite paradoxical, since teaching in higher education is often perceived to be a “stress-free” job. The authors even label higher education institutions as “stress factories” (Barkhuizen and Rothman, 2008). Female academics at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), a population to which the researcher belongs, are expected to perform at increasingly higher levels in all areas of the institution (teaching, research, learning, administration, etc.). With the merger and the new status of the institution as a University of Technology, these expectations may be creating stressful conditions for academics.

A review of literature shows increasing research being conducted in the area of stress in the higher education context. For example, Gunbayi (2014) showed that there were intensive and various kinds of stress originating from stressors in academic settings and the effects of such stress might be either negative or positive. Thus, the outcome of the research addresses important implications for the professional work life of academic staff in understanding how stress influences academic staff’s performance negatively and positively, identifying where negative and positive stress exist in academic settings and knowing how to overcome stressors originating from academic settings. Fisher’s (1994) work also showed that academic life is becoming increasingly stressful, with academics facing stress from trying to balance their teaching, research and administration roles.

Masuku and Muchemwa's (2015) Zimbabwean study revealed that most of the lecturers at the Christian university in question were stressed.

Despite many studies having been conducted globally on this phenomenon, there is a dearth of research in this area in South Africa, especially in the University of Technology sector, and specifically on female academics. Therefore, the researcher was motivated to address this gap in the body of knowledge with this study. It is against this background that this research is premised.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Any organization needs to have healthy and well employees in order for it to achieve strategic goals. Employees who are stressed are not well and will negatively impact the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. "Stress seems to have become a popular concept for explaining a wide range of behaviours that appear to defy explanation." (Omoniyi and Ogunsanmi, 2012:126). Female academics at Higher Education Institutions, a population to which the researcher belongs, are expected to perform at increasingly higher levels in all areas of the institution (teaching, research, learning, administration, etc.). With the merger and the new status of the institution as a university of technology, these expectations may be creating stressful conditions for academics who have to deal with disrespectful students who lack respect and belittle them, as is evident in Exam Board reports to the Executive Dean of the Faculty. Fisher (1994) posits that universities have become places where sources of stress are indeed a cause for concern and stress comes from a wide variety of sources, such as increasing workload, poor government policies in education, lack of autonomy and decrease in the quality of academic standards. Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008) found that two stressors, namely overload and work-life balance, contributed significantly to the ill health of academics. Four occupational stressors, namely overload, job control, resources and communication, and job characteristics, contributed significantly to the commitment of academics to their institutions (Barkhuizen and Rothman, 2008). In light of these ramifications of stress for the post-school sector, the researcher identified a need to explore this phenomenon in the University of Technology (UoT) space.

1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Stress

The definition of stress used in this study is the one proposed by Werner (2012:232), which defines stress as the body's reaction to demands and changes that requires the individual to adapt physically, mentally and emotionally.

Occupational stress

Occupational stress is described by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (2012) as the negative physical and emotional responses that occur when the demands of the job exceed the worker's capabilities, needs or resources.

Stressor

Stressor refers to an event or set of conditions that cause a stress response in the individual. As Merriam-Webster states, it is a stimulus that causes stress (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2021).

Academics

Academics, in the context of this study, refer to individuals who teach/lecture in a higher education institution.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to explore perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics at the Durban University of Technology. Furthermore, the research will establish whether female academics at DUT perceive themselves to be experiencing occupational stress; the main sources of such stress; and the role of the university in mitigating the impact thereof on female academic employees.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives, which will assist in achieving the overall aim cited above:

- To establish levels of stress amongst female academics within the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology;
- To determine whether perceived stress is occupationally related amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology;
- To identify the causes of occupational stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology; and
- To recommend possible interventions that can mitigate stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study endeavors to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of stress amongst female academics within the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology?
- Is perceived stress occupationally related amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology?
- What are the causes of occupational stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology? and
- Which possible interventions can mitigate stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology?

1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is confined to female academics employed at the Durban University of Technology in the Faculty of Management Sciences. The study will therefore be an in-house study and will not include other faculties or UoTs.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.9.1 Significance of the study

This study will provide information on how female academics experience their work situation and what changes they believe need to be made in order to improve their work-life balance, as there is little evidence showing and describing the experiences of female academics in terms of occupational stress, work pressure and inadequate support. This study will provide information and understanding on how these female academics perceive their workplace and how it affects their stress levels and overall well-being, which can be utilized to prepare for future attempts to address this issue. Educational interventions could be useful in informing other academics and workers about occupational stress and burnout, with the goal of increasing understanding about these issues and how to deal with them.

1.9.2 Rationale of the study

The argument prevails that people working in occupations involving high levels of personal interaction are susceptible to occupational stress. Such occupations include healthcare workers and educators - a category to which lecturers/academics belong. According to Devonport, Biscomb and Lane (2008:70), there is an increasing body of research evidence suggesting that lecturers are exposed to high levels of work-related stress. Moreover, the researchers posit that the exposure of lecturers to maladaptive levels of stress results in lecturers experiencing impaired physical, social and psychological functioning. Kinman (2001) iterates that most research in the body of knowledge on stress amongst teachers/educators excludes the “post-compulsory sector”, which refers to lecturers /academics. Interestingly, Caplow and McGee (1958) are cited by Kinman (2005) as stating that the methods of social research have been applied by university professors to every important institution, except their own. This statement,

along with the changing milieu in higher education, led the researcher to pinpointing a pressing disruptive issue in academia, giving impetus to the study. According to Chetty (2010:7), the magnitude of academic, administrative, legal, governance and student processes present within Higher Education (HE) makes HE complex. It is this study's contention that such complexity is disruptive and contributes to the platform from which a stressful environment develops.

1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW

Work is an essential component of human existence. A satisfying and fulfilling job is a sufficient and beneficial element of people's lives, allowing them to feel satisfied and meaningful at work. When a job does not allow an individual to perform to his full potential, however, tension will occur. When individuals are faced with work expectations and pressures that are not suited to their abilities and knowledge, they may experience occupational stress. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2017), workplace stress can occur in a variety of situations, but it is frequently regarded as being exacerbated when employees receive little or no support from their bosses and coworkers. Pressure at the workplace is inevitable and can be seen as a natural feature of human life. However, Kavitha (2009) cited by De Silva and Samanmali (2017), postulates that stress beyond a particular level can lead to both psychological and physiological issues, which in turn can have a negative impact on the employee's performance in the organization. Furthermore, the causes of work-related stress come from both inside and outside the organization.

Stress is described as "the damaging physical and emotional responses that arise when the requirements of a job do not meet the capabilities, resources or demands of the worker", according to Patching and Best (2014:683). Internal and external factors can both cause stress. Patching and Best (2014:684) state that Objective stress is attributed to external factors, while Subjective stress is attributed to internal factors. Subjective stress is defined as the type of stress that is sensed by individuals based on their own judgment. This is mostly determined by one's level of pleasure with the surroundings, which might include feelings of sadness or happiness, as well as one's level of confidence

in an organization (Patching and Best 2014:684). Additionally, there are two sorts of subjective stress: burnout and physiological stress. For a long time, burnout has been recognized as a major concern. Burnout is defined as "an emotional and mental state of weariness produced by long-term chronic, emotional, and interpersonal stress while performing a role" (Enhassi *et al.*, 2016:45). Many cognitive elements influence the perceived objective stress of female academics in real-life settings, such as the number of project deadlines, the amount of duties, such as lectures, frequent documentation submissions and marking, site visits, phone calls, and so on (Enhassi, El-Rayyes and Alkilani, 2015:45).

Stress has a negative connotation, and stress that has a negative influence on employees can lead to psychological and physiological issues, which can affect the employee's performance in the workplace. Workplace stress not only has a negative influence on company productivity, but it also has a negative impact on human health and well-being. (Wadesango, Gudyanga & Mberewere, 2015:31-35). As a result, stress management is a requirement in today's workplace. Leaders must be able to handle stress and create resilience in employees in today's highly competitive and tough corporate environment. The stressors in this thesis are workplace variables that affect employees, and the particular results of stress are referred to as strains (Beehr, 2014). Furthermore, in the thesis, the terms occupational stress, work stress, work-related stress and job stress will be used interchangeably.

Work-life balance has been identified as a source of stress in academic personnel in a number of recent research studies (Barkhuizen and Rothmann, 2008:321 cited by Sliskovic, 2011:300). With rising job demands forcing university professors to work evenings and weekends, the line between work and personal life blurs, and most of them fall far short of their ideal level of work-life balance. The invasion of the work domain into the private domain occurs not only due to a lack of physical boundaries between these two domains, but also due to a psychological commitment to work that interferes with other duties, does not allow for relaxing during leisure time and interrupts sleep (Barkhuizen and Rothmann, 2008:321 cited by Sliskovic, 2011:300).

Kinman and Jones (2012:238) found that teaching professional who felt they had less control over their work, had inflexible schedules and received less support from their superiors had a higher level of work-life imbalance and stress, which was linked to lower

psychological wellbeing, job dissatisfaction and the intention to leave the academic profession. Aside from working circumstances, other aspects of the academic career have evolved as well.

The number of people working in science and higher education has increased compared to other sectors, particularly amongst women. When one talks about the experiences and implications of stress at work in academics, most research shows that women are more vulnerable. This means that women in higher education have higher levels of work and family stress than males (O'Laughlin and Bischoff 2015:79), and that women are more likely to consider quitting their jobs owing to stress (Blix, Cruise, Mitchell & Blix, 1994 2013:157). Women in higher education are more likely to cite work-life balance as a major source of stress, and they face greater pressure to publish scientific publications.

The extremely hierarchical system of authority driven by the power distance culture (Hofstede 2004), described by Sliskovic (2011:301), is one classic elements of labor in higher education institutions that may favor stress. The hierarchical structure of higher education is based on more legitimate authority of professors in higher positions, according to the power typology proposed by French and Raven in 1960. The formal authority/position is the source of legitimate power. Since advancement to higher academic positions is based in part on scientific achievement, legitimate power may be derived in part from expert power (Sliskovic, 2011:301). Expertise is built on a certain set of skills and information. The amount of control, autonomy, work content and job security distinguish two types of employees: assistants and professors (assistant professors, associate and full professors). These jobs come with a variety of stressors and varied levels of exposure to stressors that are similar to both groups.

1.10.1 Occupational stress

Occupational stress refers to the unpleasant physiological and psychological effects that individuals experience as a result of their inability to cope with the obligations that are placed on them (Miller, 2014). According to the researcher, when workplace stress levels rise, employee turnover rates rise as well. As a result, occupational stress contributes to a variety of issues and hindrances in businesses, such as absenteeism, inefficiency and inadequate health resources (Miller, 2014). Occupational stress can be caused by too much or too little work, time pressure, deadlines and physical strain in the workplace.

Negative employment environments also cause social and psychological stress (Wadesango, Gudyanga & Mberewere, 2015:31-35).

1.10.2 Factors that lead to occupational stress

Attempts to pinpoint the causes of occupational stress have turned up a slew of suspects. According to Breakwell (2015), Cary Cooper (Cooper, 1983) produced a concise yet comprehensive list of six sources of work stress, namely:

- i. Workplace Conditions - i.e. quantitative and qualitative job overload, people decisions, physical risk, and technological stress;
- ii. Role Stress - Role ambiguity, gender prejudice and gender-role stereotypes are all examples of role stress;
- iii. Interpersonal Factors - Inadequate work and social support systems, a lack of management concern for employees, political rivalry, jealousy or wrath are all examples of interpersonal factors;
- iv. Professional Development – Under-promotion, over-promotion, job security and unfulfilled ambitions;
- v. Organizational Structure - rigid and impersonal structures, political struggles, insufficient supervision or training, and a lack of participation in decision-making; and
- vi. Home-work interface- Spillover, lack of support from spouse, marital conflict and dual career stress.

The section below provides further discussion on the factors that lead to occupational stress.

1.10.2.1 Peer relationship factors

Workplace stress can also be exacerbated by personal relationships with co-workers. Poor connections with subordinates, bosses and coworkers at work, according to Bickford (2005), cited by Nambei and Mefi (2020:5), can lead to job-related stress. Workplace stress is sometimes worsened by conflicts with co-workers or managers. When workers are under pressure to succeed or believe that there are high expectations due to long

hours, large volumes or perceived management pressure, tensions can arise, resulting in increased workplace conflict.

According to Malik (2011:3063), uncertain procedures for dealing with work concerns, as well as poor, uncaring and unsupportive supervision at work, , can lead to occupational stress. Additionally, Khamisa, Peltzer, Ilic and Oldenburg (2017:252) aver that individual variations of the worker, namely age, education, experience and coping style, , are most relevant in determining whether certain job demands will result in stress.

1.10.2.2 Work environment factors

Insecurity and a lack of job advancement are two more sources of workplace stress. Davis (2012) states that employees who believe they are being promoted too slowly, who are insecure about their career prospects, or who believe that their objectives are being hindered are more likely to be stressed. External controls from superiors, according to Pabru (2015:63), are another source of workplace stress. Since he or she is the only one who makes decisions, the Head of Department, for example, may cause stress for a member of his or her department. Occupational stress is also caused by a top-down approach within an organization. Employees may believe that their rights are being violated since they are not involved in decision-making, despite the fact that they are the ones who labour.

Employees are additionally stressed by delayed remuneration or paychecks since they would be unable to meet their needs as breadwinners. Bickford (2005) describes Autonomy as a term that refers to both participation and control. It occurs when a worker lacks control over his or her assigned responsibilities, or has no say in the decision-making process that influences how these tasks are completed. This frequently results in workplace stress (Bickford, 2005), which Nambei and Mefi also highlight (2020:8). Lack of control is the most stressful factor in the workplace. Nambei and Mefi (2020:8) mention that when employees believe that they have little control over their participation or the outcome of their work, they become extremely agitated.

Another kind of work stress is the 'treadmill syndrome' (Hudson-Allez, 1999), which occurs when employees have too much or too little to perform on a regular basis. Workplace stress can also be caused by having too much or too little work to do because it puts

pressure on an employee. Bickford (2005) posits that when a worker's talents, expertise and capacities are outmatched or exceeded by the volume of labor, stress results.

Some employees are overworked as a result of having too many duties. Others work around the clock, not necessarily at the same time every day, but at various times throughout the day and at home. Employees with too much to do and too many duties fall into this category. Employees are unable to complete their tasks due to unplanned interruptions, putting them behind schedule.

1.10.3 Theoretical framework

The study will adopt the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping for the theoretical framework. This model is explained below:

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984)

The model argues that one's experience of stress is ultimately a system of appraisal, response and adaptation. It is the most widely used theoretical framework for stress and coping (Frydenberg and Lewis in Devonport *et al.* 2008:71). The proposition of the Transactional Model is that coping with stress is a result of one's situational appraisals and emotional responses or cognitive appraisal of stressors. According to the model, a primary appraisal of the impact of a stressor on well-being will give rise to a secondary appraisal in which the person will assess the potential harm and how to mitigate it, or the potential gains from the stressor and how to maximise those. Hence, a cognitive underpinning for coping with stressors is created. However, coping would only be necessary should the appraisal indicate a stressful, negative or malignant stressor. If the appraisal is positive and the stressor is appraised as benign, coping responses will not be required. Tertiary appraisal or re-appraisal occurs when a coping response is reviewed, upon which another coping response may follow. The transactional model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) postulates that coping was seen as mainly a REACTIVE response to stress, whereby the strategy is used after the stress is experienced. However, the model has been adapted by various authors like Greenglass (2002) and Schwarzer

and Renner (2002), who posit that coping is something that is exhibited BEFORE stress occurs, that is, a PROACTIVE strategy.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

According to Smith and Scott (2010:1), research is a methodical and unbiased investigation of a subject or situation in order to discover important facts or philosophies. It is primarily regarded as applied or fundamental. The research technique and design used in this study are the focus of this chapter. It discusses the reason for the research approach used, which is guided by the study's objectives.

1.11.1 Research design

A research design is a blueprint that provides a framework for data collecting and analysis in a research study, according to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2015:38). Gravetter, Forzano and Rakow (2021:23) state that the process of selecting a research design comprises the researcher picking certain methodologies and processes for the research project. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research are the three types of study designs. Quantitative research, according to Neuman (2000:126), focuses on objective tools such as statistics, numbers, measurement and reproduction.

1.11.2 Target population

Daniel (2015:514) refers to a target population as the elements/individuals to whom the researcher wants to apply the research study's findings. A research study's target population might be large or narrow in scope, and the researcher seeks knowledge or information on it (Allen, 2017:1284). The target population for this research is N = 80, which represents the total number of female academics at Durban University of Technology's Faculty of Management Sciences (Faculty Board mailing list ,n.d).

1.11.3 Sampling techniques

The process of selecting a sub-set of a population to participate in a research project is known as sampling (Graveter, *et al.*, 2021:115). Probability and non-probability sampling are the two most common forms of sampling techniques. Non-probability sampling involves the odds of being selected to participate being unknown because the researcher

does not know the population size and cannot enumerate the members of the population, whereas probability sampling involves each and every member of the population having a determined and equal chance of being selected (Bell, *et al.*, 2019:239). For the purposes of this research, the researcher will use non-probability selection and purposive sampling to pick the sample. Allen (2017:1538) states that Purposive sampling is when a researcher selects aspects of a research study depending on the population's characteristics or expertise. This means that when selecting the sample for the research study, the researcher identifies the inclusion or exclusion criteria.

1.11.4 Selection of the sample

Oliver (2015) states that purposive sampling represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques. Also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, purposive sampling relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied. Usually, the sample being investigated is quite small, especially when compared with probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is therefore a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Oliver, 2015). The researcher will select one permanent female academic from each of the departments under the Faculty. In the case where departments have multiple programmes, like Public Management and Economics, two participants will be selected to ensure representivity. The Faculty has 8 departments, 4 of which have multiple programmes. Hence, 12 staff members will be selected to participate in the focus group.

1.12 CONSTRUCTS OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Creswell (2017:201) outlines procedures to validate the findings of the study in terms of reliability and validity. These refer to the steps undertaken by the researcher to check the accuracy and credibility of their findings. Qualitative validity is described by Creswell (2017:201) as the researcher checking the accuracy of the findings by employing certain

procedures, whilst qualitative reliability refers to the researcher's approach being consistent.

In the current study, the researcher will ensure qualitative validity and reliability by:

- TRIANGULATING and deriving themes based on converging several perspectives from participants in the focus groups;
- MEMBER CHECKING by participants of the final report to determine if participants felt that descriptions and themes were accurate;
- USING RICH, THICK DESCRIPTIONS to convey the findings and transport readers to the setting so that they can share in the experience;
- CLARIFYING THE RESEARCHER'S BIAS through her self-reflection (reflectivity) and acknowledgement of how her background may have shaped the study;
- PRESENTING OUTLIERS OR NEGATIVE INFORMATION/DISCREPANCIES that are counter to the themes. As a qualitative study, this research acknowledges that in real-life, different perspectives are the norm. By presenting these outliers, the researcher hopes to create a more authentic and accurate account of the study; and
- USING AN EXTERNAL AUDITOR/PERSON to review the entire study.

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019: 89) recommend that qualitative research be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria, to which this study will adhere:

- Trustworthiness and authenticity through ensuring the following:

That the study is a CREDIBLE and PLAUSIBLE account of the social reality of female academics' perceptions of occupational stress; that the results may be TRANSFERABLE in terms of thick descriptions and rich accounts by participants, which would allow the study to be transferable to other milieu; that the study will be dependable in that it will be auditable through keeping complete records of the data collection in the form of recordings as well as all written documents pertaining to the study; and finally, that the research is confirmable.

Table 1.1 Criteria and methods to ensure trustworthiness

Aspect	Naturalistic Term	Method
Truth value	Credibility	Member checks. Taking the final report back to participants to establish their agreement on the accuracy of the findings.
		Triangulation. Check evidence from different sources and verify.
		Peer debriefing. Approach other academics who are willing to question and discuss.
		Discussion of any negative or contrary information improves credibility.
Applicability	Transferability	Use description that is rich and thick and will take readers to the scene.
Consistency	Dependability	Code/re-code procedure. Coding and then repeating the procedure later.
Neutrality	Confirmability	Ensure objectivity. Reflect on any possible bias and remove it if evident.

Source: Adapted from Creswell (2003: 85) and Guba (1981: 80)

1.13 DATA COLLECTION

The qualitative interviews took the form of a Focus Group with unstructured and generally open-ended questions as per the protocol in the attached annexure (Annexure D). According to Stangor (2011:110), a focus group is a type of face-to-face unstructured

interview in which a number of people are interviewed simultaneously, sharing ideas with the researcher and each other. The focus group size in this study comprises 12 female academics in one faculty of DUT. The researcher will purposefully select both the SITE (the UoT) and participants (12 female academics in the same faculty) for this study as they are believed to best help the researcher to understand the problem and research questions. The focus group was kept to a reasonable size (12) (Creswell, 2017:190) in order to elicit the views and opinions and perceptions of participants on stress. The Interview protocol was used for asking questions and recording answers during the focus group. As a precaution, the researcher audio recorded the focus group and took manual notes.

Measuring instrument (Interview Schedule/Protocol)

The proposed interview schedule with prompting questions to be used for the focus group is attached (Annexure D). A cover letter and a consent form (Annexure A) will accompany the proposed interview schedule, which will be disseminated to the participants prior to the focus group being conducted. A facilitator/moderator who has a PHD and experience in qualitative research and the use of focus groups will facilitate the focus group discussion. The proceedings will be recorded, and the researcher will also be taking handwritten notes. The data generated will be transcribed and captured on NVIVO software for analysis. Standardization is a project-level design issue that concerns the extent to which the same questions and procedures are employed.

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews with the study participants are tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and then analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The analysis performed describes common experiences of the whole data set, as well as comparisons that can be made between individuals of various ages, gender and backgrounds (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Moreover, theoretical frameworks were used to broaden the conceptual understanding when discussing the results of the study. The outcomes of the data analysis were combined with the purpose to gain a clear and distinct insight into the current situation at the DUT.

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019: 198) caution that qualitative research generates large and complex datasets, emanating from the focus group transcripts in this case. Thematic analysis using NVIVO software will be utilized to analyze the data. Themes will be generated from frequencies of the words, phrases and categories used by focus group participants. Various diagrams like word trees, cluster diagrams, hierarchy tables and word clouds will be used to illustrate the data.

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bryman and Bell (2011:122) advise researchers not to ignore ethical issues as they relate directly to the integrity of the research. The researcher will take cognizance of the following four main areas, as espoused by Bryman and Bell (2011:128):

- Not to harm the participants, in this case academics;
- To ensure that informed consent is obtained;
- Not to invade the academics' privacy and to maintain confidentiality; and
- Not to deceive the academics.

The researcher also undertakes not to misconduct herself by fabricating, falsifying or plagiarizing the research results (Christensen, Burke, Johnson and Turner, 2011:97).

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the relevant Ethics Committees, namely IREC (DUT's Institutional Research Ethics Committee) and Gatekeepers.

1.16 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation, according to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2011:115), is a feature of a research project that the researcher cannot control and which has a negative impact on the study's outcomes. This study is exploratory and descriptive and confined to one faculty at DUT. No prior studies of this nature have been conducted at DUT. Therefore, the results may not be generalised to other faculties in the institution. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown rules may impact the conducting of the focus group. The researcher plans to conduct the focus group face-to-face, but may have to resort to an

online focus group if necessary. As there are only 12 participants in the study, sample size and time limits were problems that limited the study. The representativeness of the data acquired was also condensed due to the limited time and financial resources available to conduct research in Durban and within a specific timeframe.

1.17 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS

This thesis comprises five chapters, which are outlined as follows: **Chapter 1: The Introduction** chapter explains what the research is about, including the research aim, problem statement, objectives and limitations of the study. **Chapter 2: Literature Review** The theoretical framework is concerned about the background of the study area, in order for the reader to understand the research and the current theories concerning the study area of occupational stress. Hence, this chapter includes relevant history, current knowledge, theory and practice, and prior work on the topic under study. **Chapter 3: Research Methodology** – this part of the thesis is concerned with the design of the thesis, target population, sample size and selection, sampling technique, instrument design, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. **Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation** - the chapter will present and analyze empirical findings from the study. A discussion of the results will then follow in this chapter. **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations** - conclusions on the findings of the study and recommendations for further studies will also be suggested in the final chapter of the thesis.

1.18 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a background and introduction to the research study, the problem statement, the significance of the research, as well as the scope and limitations. The chapter also provided insight into the aims, objectives and research questions on the perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The next chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the topic under study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress has emerged as a serious concern in today's society, and it is one of the most common work-related health issues. It has become a growing concern in a variety of industries, including in tertiary education. Furthermore, the post-compulsory education sector is recognized for being difficult and competitive as each institution wants to be amongst the best. Hence it is critical to guarantee that employees are capable of performing at their best. Workplace stress has been highlighted as a crucial element affecting an organization's success, as it has a detrimental impact on productivity and efficiency, which is costly to the organisation. Besides this, it is also believed to be a large contributor to reduced work satisfaction and increased absenteeism.

Is workplace stress a modern-day global epidemic? Some argue that it is. Regardless, stress has become an increasing worry in the modern world, with major economies such as Europe and the United States reporting significant occupational health concerns. Given that most people spend a significant amount of time at work, their behavioural, physiological, and psychological health has a significant impact on both the organization and the employees. Nonetheless, organizations face a complex and difficult task in controlling work-related stress.

The argument prevails that people working in occupations involving high levels of personal interaction are susceptible to occupational stress. Such occupations include healthcare workers and educators, a category to which LECTURERS/ACADEMICS belong. According to Devonport, Biscomb and Lane (2008:70), there is an increasing body of research evidence suggests that lecturers are exposed to high levels of work-related stress. Moreover, the researchers posit that the exposure of lecturers to maladaptive levels of stress experience impaired physical, social and psychological

functioning. Kinman(2001) iterates that most research in the body of knowledge on stress amongst teachers/educators excludes the “post-compulsory sector”, which refers to lecturers /academics. Interestingly, Caplow and McGee (1958) are cited by Kinman(2001) as stating that the methods of social research have been applied by university professors to every important institution, except their own. This statement, along with the changing milieu in higher education, led the researcher to pinpointing a pressing disruptive issue in academia, giving impetus to the study. According to Chetty(2010:7), the magnitude of academic, administrative , legal, governance and student processes present within HE make sit complex. It is this study’s contention that such complexity is disruptive and contributes to the platform from which a stressful environment develops.

The lack of empirical study in the field makes it difficult to comprehend how demands and occupational stress affect workers especially female academics. This study therefore explores perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics. Furthermore, in the thesis, the terms occupational stress, work stress, work-related stress, and job stress will be used interchangeably. The previous chapter provided an introduction and background to this study and highlighted the problem statement and the study’s significance. This chapter provides the presentation of the literature reviewed for this study where the researcher used journal articles, periodicals, newspapers, academic theses and dissertations as well as textbooks in gathering secondary data. The concepts of stress and occupational stress are amongst female academics are discussed as well as the different models underpinning this study.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING STRESS

The origination of the term ‘stress’ as used in modern times has its origins in the engineering field, according to Kruger et al.(2015: 92), referring to when an external force puts tension on an object. The term is applied daily in the workplace by people who are stressed out and who seek alleviation from their stress. The term was coined by Selye in 1984 to refer to “a non-specific response of the body to any demand, whether caused by or results in, pleasant or unpleasant conditions”. This definition highlights that stress is not necessarily negative. Luthans(2011) is cited by Kruger et al (93) as distinguishing

between DISTRESS and EUSTRESS, where the former refers to stress caused by negative factors and the latter to the pleasant side of stress caused by positive factors. Small doses of stress push one out of one's comfort zone to higher levels of performance.

When most people talk about stress, they are usually referring to the pressure they are feeling as a result of anything that is occurring to them or around them. Students discuss how they are stressed out as a result of low exam results or a looming deadline for a significant paper. Parents discuss the challenges of raising teenagers as well as the financial strains of operating a home. Teachers discuss the pressures of staying current in their field while also trying to stay on top of classroom responsibilities. Doctors, lawyers, and therapists discuss how they deal with their patients' and clients' never-ending demands (Dewe *et al.* 2012:23).

Stress, according to Heery and Noon (2001:190), is a condition where an aspect/aspects of a person's life causes mental and/or physical problems. Fincham and Rhodes (2005:735) postulate that this condition is a result of an interaction between the person and their environment, whereby the environment makes demands on the individual which they cannot meet effectively due to a lack of physical and intellectual resources. The causes of this condition (STRESSORS) vary as they are either work-related or of an individual or personal nature. As with the varying nature of the causes of stress, the symptoms also vary, depending on one's tolerance for stress.

Heery and Noon (2001:191) further contend that stress is on the increase as contemporary expectations demand that people cope with ever-increasing levels of stress. The implication thereof is that employees are facing a wider range of stressors in both their personal and organisational environments. Stress and stress-related problems have profound human resource and financial implications for organisations in terms of absenteeism, presenteeism, empty labour and compensations costs like medical aid. For tertiary/higher education institutions, the impact of stress amongst academics/lecturers has consequences for students, examinations and the core business of higher education institutions. Devonport *et al.* (2008:70) contend that high levels of unresolved

organisational stress could undermine work in terms of quality, productivity and creativity, as well as detracting from their well-being, health and morale. The authors further contend that preventing chronic stress is advantageous for employee well-being and organisational performance.

Patching and Best (2014:683) define stress as “the detrimental physical and emotional responses that arise when the requirements of a job do not meet the capabilities, resources, or demands of the worker. According to the authors, stress is controlled by a section of the brain that deals with emotional memory and hides neuro-hormones, which controls specific functions of the autonomous nervous system. Furthermore, stress is controlled by a portion of the brain that is primarily responsible for how humans respond to strong emotions like fear and violence. Important bodily functions like heart rate, body weight, sleep, and alertness are controlled and regulated by this area of the brain. Furthermore, it governs and controls the pain and pleasure areas, which are crucial in determining how people react to stress. To put it another way, the portion of the brain that deals with stress receives data from our senses, recognizes it, and then categorizes it (Patching and Best, 2014).

Internal and external factors can both cause stress. Objective stress is attributed to external factors, while subjective stress is attributed to internal factors. Subjective stress is defined as the type of stress that is sensed by individuals based on their own judgment. This is mostly determined by one's level of pleasure with the surroundings, which might include feelings of sadness or happiness, as well as one's level of confidence in an organization. Additionally, there are two sorts of subjective stress: burnout and physiological stress. For a long time, burnout has been recognized as a major concern among academics. Burnout is a state of emotional and mental weariness produced by long-term chronic, emotional, and interpersonal stress while performing a role,” (Enhassi *et al.*, 2016:45). Physiological stress can manifest itself in the form of headaches, back discomfort, loss of appetite, and so on.

In contrast to subjective stress, objective stress refers to a person's assessment of threat as a result of cognitive variables such as events occurring around them. Furthermore, objective stress is determined by the difference between an individual's expected and actual ability to complete tasks. Many cognitive elements influence academic professionals' perceived objective stress in real-life scenarios, including the number of deadlines, the amount of tasks, such as lectures, frequent student documentary submissions, meetings, phone calls, and so on (Enshassi *et al.*, 2016).

Sources of stress

Humans are exposed to a wide range of stimuli. Some are biological (toxins, heat, cold), others psychological (threats to self-esteem, depression), others sociological (unemployment, a loved one's death, the birth of a kid), and yet others philosophical (use of time, purpose in life). In each scenario, the body's response will be the same regardless of the stressor (Babar, Hasan, Ooi *et al.* 2015:56). The adaptation to change or the experience of daily inconveniences are two of the most typical stressors in our lives. According to Aytac (2015:6421), the more important changes a person experiences in his or her life, the more likely he or she is to develop a medical or psychiatric illness. Because they saw stress as a response to change, Holmes and Rahe (1967:213) saw greater change as equal to more stress, and so more illness and disease. In his research, Skaalvik (2015:181) discovered that daily problems are more destructive to a person's health than the huge life transitions that Holmes and Rahe (1967) were concerned about. These daily events, according to Lazarus, are so harmful to one's health because they happen so constantly, as opposed to the significant life events studied by Holmes and Rahe (1967), which occur extremely infrequently.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory underpinning this study comprises three models of stress, namely the Job Demand Control Model, the Demand Control Support Model as well as the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. These models are discussed in the section below.

2.3.1 Job Demand Control Model

According to Kain and Jex (2021), the Job Demand-Control Model was developed by Karasek in 1979 and has become one of the most widely used and studied models of occupational stress and learning in the workplace. According to Bowen, *et al.* (2014), occupational stress develops when employees are faced with an imbalance between the demands of their jobs and the resources available to meet those expectations. Occupational stress is linked to low productivity at work, excessive absenteeism, and poor job performance, and it has now become the most widely used paradigm to assess employee health and well-being. Job demands are quantifiable aspects of work such as time pressures and workload, whereas job control is defined as the ability of employees to regulate and manage their tasks throughout the working day (Bowen, *et al.*, 2014b).

The Job Demand-Control model of occupational stress (JD-C) was created to predict and explain work-related stress and motivation, and so focuses on two of the most essential aspects in the workplace: job demands and job control. It is a model that boils down a variety of work-related stressors into just two dimensions: psychological job demands (workload-related stressors) and job control or job decision latitude which are the options available to a person in deciding how to satisfy these demands (Verhofstadt *et al.*, 2015). According to the paradigm, employment with high demands (such as job overload and time pressure) and poor control (such as restricted autonomy) produces the greatest stressful responses, and is hence unhealthy and harmful to one's health. Physical or mental stress levels that are lower than the average can be expected in employment with modest demands and high control, for example. Another key prediction of the JD-C model is that in jobs with high expectations and low control, motivation, learning, and personal growth will be the most important variables.

As a result, the JD-C model proposes four different kinds of occupations:

- High-strain jobs and low-strain jobs (high demands and low control),
- Jobs that don't put one under a lot of stress (low demands, high control),

- Active occupations (jobs with a lot of demands and control) and passive jobs,
- Occupations that are not active (low demands and low control).

Furthermore, researchers claim that there is evidence of reactions to direct job demands and job control on work-related stress.

Due to the individual's limited work experience, Verhofstadt *et al.* (2015) believe that the strongest association between job demands and stressors can be discovered in the early stages of a person's career. Employees, they believe, adapt to their difficult situations over time as they learn and develop new techniques to deal with pressures. Furthermore, they claim that the relationship between job demands and learning is comparable, and that the link between these two elements is strongest at the outset of a career due to the lack of work experience. Scholars have realized that work control is also an adaptability that will take place over time. The results suggest that the relationship between autonomy and (dis)satisfaction measures has weakened over time. Workers needed better job descriptions in order to achieve a level of satisfaction at the start of their careers (Verhofstadt *et al.*, 2015).

2.3.2 Demand Control Support Model

The most prominent complaint of the Job Demand-Control (JD-C) model, according to Dawson and O'Brien (2016:397), is that it is too basic. They claim that job control isn't the only option for coping with job demands, and that social support from co-workers or managers is another function that can help with the relationship between job demands and stress reactions. As a result, the JD-C model was reformulated to include work-related social support as a third and crucial aspect in the working environment resulting in the Demand-Control Support Model shown in Figure 2.1 below.

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graph LR; JD[Job Demands] --> POH[Perceived Occupational Health]; JC[Job Control] --> POH; JC --> Path; SS[Social Support] --> Path; SS --> POH; style Path width:0px,height:0px,stroke-width:0px;
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Role overload
Role conflict
Role ambiguity

Job Demands

Skill discretion
Decision authority

Job Control

Perceived Occupational Health

Social Support

Co-workers support
Supervisor support

The Demand-Control-Support (DCS) model, which has been recast and enlarged, proposes eight different sorts of jobs. The four jobs in the JD-C model that do not provide much social assistance are representative of these jobs. The four JD-C working circumstances, in which employees receive a lot of social support, characterize the other four. Work settings with employees who do not receive much social support from their superiors are thought to be more demanding than those with a lot of support. According to the Demand Control-Support model, the most unfavourable and allegedly stressful working environment has high job demands, poor job control, and insufficient social support (Dawson and O'brien 2016:400).

28

Job control and social support both act as moderators, meaning that high levels of control and support mitigate the negative impacts of high job demands. However, the combination of high job demands, low job control, and minimal social support creates a synergistic adverse effect. Each of these elements – (high) job expectations, (low) job control, and (bad) social support – can create greater stress reactions, but when they are combined, they produce an additional or synergistic effect that may be better than the total of the individual effects (Dawson and O'Brien, 2016:410).

2.3.3 Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

The model argues that one's experience of stress is ultimately a system of appraisal, response and adaptation. It is the most widely used theoretical framework for stress and coping (Frydenberg and Lewis in Devonport *et al.* 2008:71). The proposition of the Transactional Model is that coping with stress is a result of one's situational appraisals and emotional responses or cognitive appraisal of stressors. According to the model, a primary appraisal of the impact of a stressor on well-being will give rise to a secondary appraisal in which the person will assess the potential harm and how to mitigate it, or the potential gains from the stressor and how to maximise those. Hence, a cognitive underpinning for coping with stressors is created. However, coping would only be necessary should the appraisal indicate a stressful, negative or malignant stressor. If the appraisal is positive and the stressor is appraised as benign, coping responses will not be required. Tertiary appraisal or re-appraisal occurs when a coping response is reviewed, upon which another coping response may follow. The transactional model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) postulates that coping was seen as mainly a REACTIVE response to stress, whereby the strategy is used after the stress is experienced. However, the model has been adapted by various authors like Greenglass (2002) and Schwarzer and Renner (2002) who posit that coping is something that is exhibited BEFORE stress occurs - a PROACTIVE strategy.

This contention has led to a further 3 coping functions being conceptualised, namely:

- Anticipatory coping refers to coping efforts that deal with critical events that are fairly certain to occur
- Preventative coping refers to preparation for the uncertain event in order to reduce the consequences of the stressful event
- Proactive coping refers to efforts to develop general resources that facilitate growth

Winefield (2000) in Devonport *et al.* (2008:72) states that coping effectively with work-related stress is important to all lecturers involved in HE. Taugis (2002) in Devonport *et al.* (2008:72) highlights that research indicates that identifying sources of stress and understanding how to manage stress can positively influence the stress levels of professional employees, in this study this would refer to female academics at the selected HEI.

2.4 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

According to one definition of occupational stress, job stress is caused by employment characteristics that constitute a threat to the individual (Singh and Sharma 2017:86). Excessive job demands or insufficient supplies to meet employee needs may pose a threat. Job overload occurs when a job involves too much effort in too little time. Employees anticipate certain things from their jobs, such as a good wage, job satisfaction, and opportunities for advancement or growth (Singh and Sharma 2017:86).

Attempts to pinpoint the causes of occupational stress have turned up a slew of suspects. Cooper (1983) cited by Breakwell (2015) developed a concise yet comprehensive list of six sources of work stress:

- Professional Development - Under promotion, over promotion, job security, and unfulfilled ambitions.
- Organizational Structure - rigid and impersonal structure, political struggles, insufficient supervision or training, and non-participatory decision-making.

- Work-life balance- Spill over, lack of support from spouse, marital conflict, and dual career stress.
- Working Conditions - Quantitative and qualitative work overload, personnel decisions, physical danger, and technological stress.
- Role Stress - Role ambiguity, sex prejudice, and sex-role stereotypes
- Interpersonal Factors - Inadequate work and social support systems, a lack of management concern for employees, political rivalry, jealousy, and/or wrath

Professional worries, child behaviour and attitude, and professional tasks are identified as three elements of occupational stress by Chaplain (1995) cited by Nagar 2012. Chaplain indicated that professional issues and occupational stress seem to have the strongest connections.

Although the term stress has a negative connotation, stress reactions may not necessarily be destructive. Instead, some levels of stress can help people grow and develop by increasing motivation (Daenzer and Phoenix, 2009). Stress that has a negative influence on employees can lead to psychological and physiological issues, which might affect the employee's performance at work. Workplace stress not only has a negative influence on company productivity, but it also has a negative impact on human health and well-being. As a result, stress management is a requirement in today's workplace. Leaders must be able to handle stress and create resilience in today's highly competitive and tough corporate environment (Beehr, 2014).

2.4.1 Causes of occupational stress

Work is an essential component of human existence. A satisfying and fulfilling job is a sufficient and beneficial element of people's lives, allowing them to feel satisfied and meaningful at work. When a job does not allow an individual to perform to his full potential, however, tension will occur. When individuals are faced with work expectations and pressures that are not suited to their abilities and knowledge, they may experience

occupational stress. Workplace stress can occur in a variety of situations, but it is frequently regarded as being exacerbated when employees receive little or no support from their bosses and co-workers (WHO, 2017).

Workplace pressure is unavoidable and might be considered a natural part of life. However, stress that exceeds a certain threshold can cause psychological and physiological problems, which can have a detrimental impact on an employee's performance in the workplace (Harmsen *et al.* 2018:626). Working in a tertiary education sector is a demanding career with a lot of responsibilities. Work overload, job demands, job control, tight timetables, remuneration imbalance, position ambiguity, and conflict are all common stressors that academics face (Leung *et al.*, 2014). As Leung *et al.* (2014) point out, the majority of academics have experienced stress, anxiety, or depression as a result of their jobs. Job stress can come from a variety of sources which are listed below:

2.4.1.1 Individual stressors

There are many different types of stressors that can be generated on an individual level in the context of personal or organizational life. Individual stressors are greatly influenced by a person's personality qualities and change restrictions. Individual stresses include the following:

Characteristics of the role: Role stress can develop as a result of role conflict or ambiguity. Role conflict happens when two or more roles are incompatible (work and family). In some cases, an individual's many responsibilities may have conflicting demands, causing stress as a result of issues meeting the conflicting role needs (Hitt, Miller and Colella, 2018).

Changes in one's life and career: Changes in one's life and career cause stress. Stress is more prevalent in higher education categories, according to research.

Personality type: Personality traits can be a cause of stress, with persons with a strong work ethic at risk of burnout. These people have a pattern of activity that includes frequent movement, multitasking, and experiencing time pressure, all of which contribute to a higher level of stress.

2.4.1.2 Group stressors

The group can also be a cause of stress, with the following key group stressors:

Lack of group cohesion: group cohesiveness is critical for an individual's interaction in a group. When people are denied this sense of belonging, it can be stressful.

Lack of social support: People who obtain social support from other members of their group are able to meet their social needs. They feel better about themselves when they can talk about their troubles and joys with others. However, for people who do not have this social support, it might be stressful.

Conflict: Conflicts that emerge in group interactions can cause a lot of stress for the members of the group (Champoux 2010).

2.4.1.3 Organisational stressors

Devonport et al (2008:71) describe organisational stress as an outcome of the interplay between an individual's personal characteristics, the environment, the demands placed upon them and their ability to cope. Organisational stress, or any type of stress for that matter, does not always imply deleterious consequences. Optimal levels of stress can have functional/positive rather than dysfunctional outcomes as employees work more effectively and may experience greater satisfaction. Such an occurrence is referred to as EUSTRESS. However, when stress levels surpass these optimal levels, people become DISTRESSED and dysfunctional outcomes like reduced performance result. Research by a number of researchers like Lazarus and Folkman (1999), Costa and McCrae (1992), etc. reveals that mitigating or moderating factors exist, which reduce or eliminate the negative effects of organisational stress.

Because an organization is made up of both groups and people, individual and collective stressors can occur in the workplace. The following are the key organizational stressors:

Policies of the organization: Whereas ambiguous or unfavourable policies may cause tension among employees, organizational policies provide instructions for action. Unrealistic work descriptions, rigid standards, and unequal incentives are just a few examples of stressors.

Organizational structure: An organization's organizational structure establishes formal relationships among its members. Because of the insufficient relationships between individuals and groups, any flaws in an organization's structure act as pressures. Lack of

promotion opportunities, participation in decision-making, and line and staff friction are all sources of stress.

Organizational processes: Inadequate organizational processes, such as poor communication or an insufficient flow of information, induce stress among employees.

Physical conditions: Work performance is influenced by physical conditions. Individuals are stressed by poor physical conditions such as excessive noise, a lack of privacy, or an indoor temperature that is either excessively hot or cold (Champoux 2010)

Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) in Kruger et al. (2015:96) expound on the following six stressors in the organization:

- **Unpleasant work environment:** stress amongst workers may be triggered by conditions such as noise pollution, poor ventilation, unsafe or unhealthy work conditions, to name a few.
- **Inappropriate job design:** workload in terms of work overload or underload, lack of training, no participation in decision-making are examples of stressors that fall into this category of organizational stressors.
- **Management/leadership style:** poor management style, autocratic leadership, inconsistent decision-making and a lack of trust are examples of stressors in this category.
- **Poor work relations:** poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues or supervisors, workplace harassment or bullying are stressors in this category.
- **Uncertainty about the future:** issues like job insecurity and ambiguity about one's future in the organization are stressful factors.
- **Type of career:** some professions, by their very nature, are stressful. For example, emergency workers, protection services personnel are more prone to stress.

2.4.1.4 Extra-organisational stressors

External influences have an impact on an organization, which might have serious consequences for its people. Workplace stress is caused not only by events that occur during working hours, but also by extra organizational pressures such as family, economic, and financial circumstances. The family of an employee can have a significant impact on the individual and cause stress in his life. A brief family crisis, such as illness in the family or family disagreements, can cause undue stress for the employee (Arnold, Fletcher and Daniels 2017:694).

2.5 TYPES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Neu-stress, Distress, and Eustress are the three forms of stress described by Walt (1996). Arousal has neither negative or positive effects on the mind or body, hence it is called neutral stress. When arousal levels are too high or too low, it causes distress and injury to the mind and body. Eustress is a type of beneficial arousal or pleasant stress that enhances health, vitality, happiness, and peak performance. Eustress is beneficial because it allows us to respond swiftly, strongly, and physically in situations, as well as to plan ahead for deadlines. Acute, traumatic, chronic, and episodic acute stress are the four types of stress (Rozman and Grinkevich 2019). Figure 2.3 shows the types and or levels of stress.



Figure 2.2 Types of Stress

Source: Rozman and Grinkevich (2019)

2.5.1 Acute stress

This is the most prevalent and easily diagnosed type of stress. The sources of stress are obvious, and one can describe his or her problem with ease. This form of stress is simple to deal with. The body suffers short-term and transient harm as a result of the effects. After the stressor has been removed, recovery is usually swift. Anyone and everyone can experience acute stress at some point in their lives. Acute stress is situational and is linked to concerns that come and go. It's the kind of stress that only lasts a few minutes and can actually be enjoyable. While it's exhilarating to take on a new and exciting project, the feelings connected with acute stress need our attention.

2.5.2 Post-traumatic stress

This is a significant stress response that occurs as a result of a traumatic incident or harsh experience for example, Natural disasters that causes losing of loved ones (earthquakes), rape, and sexual assault. After the problem is fixed or after a series of counselling sessions, the victim gradually recovers. However, the victim may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Flashbacks, nightmares, anger, tension, and over-vigilance are all possible symptoms.

2.5.3 Chronic stress

Chronic stress is a sort of stress that grinds an individual down on a daily basis, making a normal working day feel absurdly endless. This has been going on for years with no intervention. Because of the constant demands and pressures, it appears as if there is no visible way out. This could cause serious harm or even death. According to Robert Maurer (2014), stress is more like dread disguised for some people, particularly supervisors. He goes on to say that the signs we associate with stress include muscle tension, a change in appetite, and difficulty sleeping, to name a few.

2.5.4 Acute episodic stress

People who are workaholics, very competitive, impatient, always in a hurry, and easily get furious and strong in speech are more likely to experience acute episodic (Ekundayo, 2014). These kind of people are often frantic, late, and try to take on more work than they

can handle. These people aren't aware of or willing to confess that they are stressed. These individuals have an impact on their co-workers.

2.6 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONGST FEMALE ACADEMICS

Role conflict and ambiguity in female employees, according to Dhar and Magotra (2018) are two characteristics that can contribute to increased stress levels in women. Aamodt (2004) claims that when people have many roles, it might cause them a lot of stress. "A female employee's job as a manager, for example, may compel her to work on Saturdays, while her job as a mother demands her to attend her daughter's soccer game on the same day" (Aamodt, 2004:478).

2.6.1 Effects of stress on academics

Kinman (2016) discovered that academics who reported higher levels of stress were less content with their jobs, had higher absenteeism, and were more likely to leave teaching. They also discovered that lower levels of stress are linked to improved teaching technique efficacy. According to Fisher (1994) cited by Tight (2012), educators are stressed by the new outcomes-based education method, the high crime rate in the country, having to deal with current political change, and corruption in state departments.

2.6.1.1 Low teacher morale

"The degenerating manner of teachers is a sign of the stressful conditions of work and the disappointment they suffer because of unmet expectations," (Gold and Roth, 2013). Several studies have labeled this low morale as "Education in Crisis," or "A Profession in Crisis". Female academics' morale is low, according to empirical research, because the benefits they receive are insufficient to meet their needs, and outcomes-based education has caused teachers to be uncertain.

2.6.1.2 Job dissatisfaction

"Research evidence supports the concept that sources of stress in a particular work, coupled with individual characteristics, might be predictive of stress symptoms, which may manifest themselves in the form of job dissatisfaction," (Travers and Cooper, 2012). One

of the most common behavioral manifestations of stress in the workplace is job discontent.

Kyriacou (2001) cited by Collie and Shapka (2012:1189) conducted research that revealed a significant level of unhappiness with teaching as a profession. Female academics mentioned compensation, career structure, advancement chances, and occupational standing as some of the factors that contributed to their dissatisfaction.

“Teacher discontent appears to be a key reason in teachers leaving the profession in many countries,” according to Kryiacou (2011:161). They also believe that teacher satisfaction is linked to how they feel about their teaching jobs, or their motivation levels. According to Kryiacou (2011:165), “more administrative support and leadership, good student behavior, a great school culture, and teacher autonomy” are some of the factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction.

2.6.1.3 Physical absenteeism

Another issue that arises from professional stress is absenteeism, which occurs when lecturers are seriously ill and believe they require frequent breaks from a demanding job (Bhui *et al.* 2012). According to the authors, a secondary issue resulting from teacher absenteeism is that it might lead to a higher rate of pupil dropout. Brown and Uehara (2008) state that “when a quality academic is missing from the classroom, student success suffers.” They further claim that research has shown that teacher stress is directly proportional to the total number of days that teachers are absent from school.

2.6.1.4 Attrition

The internal (recognition, sense of achievement, fulfillment) and extrinsic (working environment, management policy) rewards have been the most commonly mentioned predictors of withdrawal (Travers and Cooper, 2012). “Fatigue, routine, irritation, and nervous tension” were among the reasons given by educators for leaving the profession before retirement, according to Huberman (1993:49) cited by Skaalvik (2011). According to Brown and Uehara (2008) cited by King, Rucker and Duncan (2013), a research study found that teachers in seven out of ten regions claimed they were considering leaving the profession due to high levels of stress and burnout. These 'possible leavers' showed signs of increased emotional weariness, depersonalization, and a lack of personal success in their occupations (Brown and Uehara, 2008). Teacher education does not fix the problem

because few students are interested in teaching. Unfortunately, schools are unable to recruit adequate replacements, and serious teacher shortages can be found all across the world. Given the foregoing, limiting teacher attrition is both an educational and economic need.

2.7 BURNOUT

Burnout, according to Maslach and Leiter (2016:103), is a psychological stress reaction that is common among people who work in jobs that require a lot of emotionally charged interaction with others, and it consists of three interrelated components: emotional exhaustion, de-personalization of relationships with those they serve, and a low sense of personal accomplishment at work.

Burnout is a reaction to certain job features that are tied to the performance of specific work responsibilities that make up the job. Work complexity, variety of tasks, amount of precision and control that individuals have over their work, pace and timing of the work, and the physical environment in which the work takes place are all examples of job characteristics that can lead to burnout if people are unable to meet their demands (Schaufeli, 2017).

Burnout, according to Salvagioni *et al.*, (2017) is a distressed psychological state that a person suffers after working for a long time at the same job, with symptoms such as decreased motivation, emotional tiredness, low energy, and reduced excitement for the job. Burnout causes emotional tiredness, a loss of feeling and care, a loss of trust, a loss of interest, and a loss of spirit, as well as irritation, diminished idealism, feelings of helplessness, a negative reaction to oneself, and retreat.

The effects of stress are an increase in performance up to a point, after which additional stress decreases performance and leads to burnout and feelings of being trapped, with the end result being poor health manifested in life-threatening ailments such as heart disease and strokes (Greenberg and Baron, 2000) cited by Ajayi (2013:75-82). Academic burnout is defined by Lin and Huang (2014:77) as a result of prolonged stress caused by poor time management, insufficient relationships with colleagues, large classes, a lack of resources, isolation, a fear of violence, role ambiguity, and limited promotion opportunities. A lack of support and participation in decision-making, difficult students,

behavioural issues, equipment shortages, excessive paperwork, and demands on extracurricular activities all contribute to academic burnout.

2.7.1 Symptoms of burnout in academics

2.7.1.1 Emotional exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined by Skaalvik (2014) as the "sense of being emotionally overextended and having spent one's emotional resources." Similarly, Wood and McCarthy (2012) define emotional tiredness as a state in which a person's personal emotional resources have been depleted, leaving them vulnerable to pressures.

2.7.1.2 De-personalisation

De-personalization, according to Thompson and Jaque (2018:143), is a negative, callous and aloof attitude toward the individuals with whom one works. Teachers who are burnt out, according to Travers and Cooper (2012), are less receptive of outstanding work by students, do not give praise, and do not push students to strive for higher results.

2.7.1.3 Low levels of accomplishment

Reduced personal accomplishment, as defined by Maslach and Jackson is one of the most critical signs of burnout. According to research (Hastings and Bahm, 2003) cited by Steenkamp (2013), academic' sense of accomplishment is influenced by their ability to manage the classroom and student behaviour.

2.8 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

The working structure has over the years changed. This has resulted in increased staff demands as well as decreased job security, both of which are likely to be stressful for employees. Higher levels of stress among professionals have had severe consequences for both businesses and individuals (Schaufeli, 2017) Stress might be temporary at times, but it can also be long-term. Chronic stress can have a significant impact on a person's life and can result in a number of medical issues, such as headaches and stomachaches.

Kruger *et al.* (2015:98) postulate that stress can be either episodic or chronic, depending on certain factors or moderators, namely one's physical and mental condition(fatigue or illness inhibits one's ability to cope with stressful situations); one's cognitive appraisal or thoughts in assessing a stressor (familiarity of the stressor; measure of control over events; measure of predictability over events; and the inevitability of the threat); and one's degree of hardiness or resistance to stress. These moderating factors will impact a person's evaluation of the stressful situation and their subsequent reaction and coping with the stressor (Kruger *et al.* 2015: 99).

The authors contend that stress affects everyone differently. Individual effects of stress can manifest physiologically in terms of health impacts like headaches, high blood pressure and heart disease, to name a few; psychologically in the form of strong emotional reactions like anger, anxiety and depression, amongst others; and behaviourally (sleeplessness, drug abuse and disrupted eating habits, for example). Organisational effects of stress can have damaging consequences (Kruger, *et al.* 2015:101) like increased absenteeism and staff turnover rates; accidents; grievances; and labour unrest.

Figure 2.3 below highlights the major consequences of stress and these are explained in the section that follows.

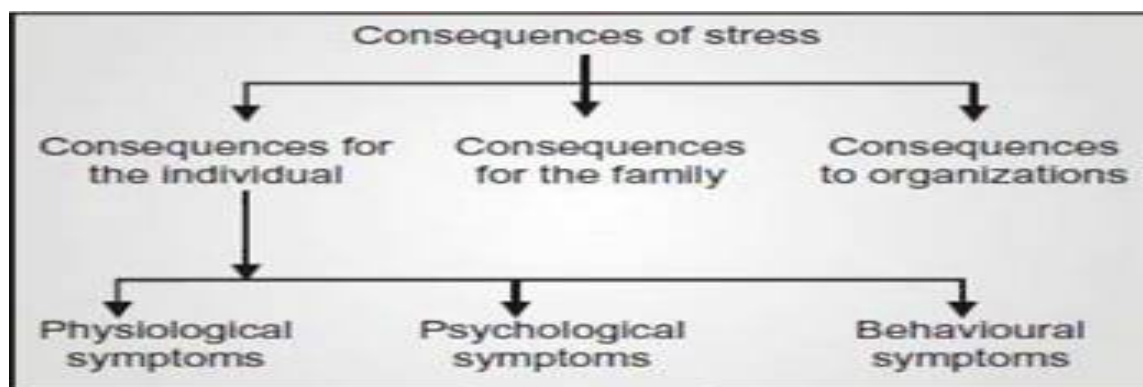


Figure 2.3 Consequences of stress

Source: Academic Library (2014)

2.8.1 Physiological problems

The influence of stress on physical health has been studied extensively throughout the years. According to studies, there is a link between high stress levels and high blood pressure, as well as heart disease (Ahmad and Darzi, 2008). Aside from these symptoms, extreme stress is linked to respiratory problems, panic attacks, and excessive perspiration (Hellriegel and Slocum, 2010). Stress, can influence people's immune systems by decreasing their ability to fight illnesses.

Poor self-rated health, sleep problems are other physiological issues identified by Leka *et al.* (2004). According to Cooper (2017), there are numerous risk factors at a person's workplace that can exacerbate the link between musculoskeletal injuries and stress. To begin, the authors define burnout as a condition that occurs as a result of long-term work stress. Burnout raises muscle tension, which in turn triggers various bodily processes and, in many cases, promotes other stress-related diseases. Tension-type headache and chronic migraine, both of which are linked to muscular tension in the shoulder area, could be the cause of these symptoms.

2.8.2 Psychological problems

Workplace stress can lead to unhappiness with one's job. Aside from job unhappiness, job stress can lead to rage, anxiety, sadness, impatience, tension, and boredom” among employees (Ahmad 2008:165). Another source of concern is burnout, which is a serious problem that must be addressed.

2.8.3 Behavioral problems

Changes in productivity, absence, and turnover are all behavioral outcomes of job stress. It may also include increased smoking, alcohol misuse, or dietary changes (Ahmad and Darzi, 2008). Overeating and unhealthier eating habits can lead to obesity and diabetes according to studies (Walker, 2015).

Stress and eating disorders, such as anorexia and binge eating, have been linked in various studies. However, such eating disturbances can be “causal, due to confounding, or spurious, due to methodological weaknesses” (Cooper and Quick, 2017:191), implying that some of the stated connections could be due to publication biases. As a result, spurious positive associations may occur. Furthermore, a review of both human and

nonhuman studies found that prolonged stress enhances the consumption of food that a person finds agreeable.

2.9 COPING WITH OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

It is incongruous for one expect to be able to eradicate stress from his/her personal or professional life completely. Female academics do not have to be victims of stress because they can identify how it affects them and make choices about how to think, feel and act in difficult situations- they can become more conscious of their negative reactions to stress and learn to cope in a more positive way. In other words, rather than being controlled by stress, academics can learn to manage and control it.

A large study by Reed (2016) attempted to consolidate the literature on coping mechanisms. They describe coping as any effort, conscious or unconscious, to avoid, or weaken stresses, or to tolerate their effects in the least detrimental way possible. Their strategy incorporates both preventative and confrontational elements.

- Avoiding or minimizing stresses, such as physically removing oneself from a stressful environment,
- Changing stress-inducing behaviour patterns, such as diminishing "Type A" tendencies and self-destructive thoughts, and
- Developing coping resources, to include a sense of physical health, cognitive assets, and social support.

The integrative model of coping also outlines five combative strategies as suggested by Matheny (1986) cited by Lambert (2009):

- Monitoring stressors and symptoms, being aware of those situations that one finds stressful and how one reacts to them,
- Marshalling one's resources, drawing on one's resources and developing an effective plan of attack for the stressor,
- Lowering stressful arousal, relaxation methods, and leisure can be very useful in resolving stressful arousal

- Learning to tolerate those stressors that cannot be eliminated, cognitive restructuring can be used to combat one's negative self-talk and "catastrophic" thinking.

2.9.1 Stress reduction interventions

Recognizing that perceptions of occupational stress are just as essential as the event that causes it, it's critical to interfere in these views.

Greenberg (1990) offers the following suggestions as cited by Regehr, Glancy and Pitts (2013:1-11):

- i. Find the humor in one's workplace stresses. A savvy teacher, fed up with inane notes from the administration, kept a file of them and eventually created a very funny and popular book based on them.
- ii. Make an effort to perceive things for what they are.
- iii. Recognize the difference between necessity and desire.
- iv. Distinguish oneself from the task. Failure to complete a task does not imply that one is a failure.
- v. Recognize situations and apply the appropriate coping strategy. Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping have been distinguished by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) cited by Biggs *et al.*, (2017:351). Problem-focused coping involves actions aimed at completing the work whereas emotion-focused coping involves activities aimed at making the task feel better.

2.10 STRESS MANAGEMENT

People can become stressed as a result of difficulties at work or at home. Employers cannot normally protect these employees from stress that occurs outside of the workplace, but they can protect them from work-related stress. Workplace stress may be a serious problem for both an organization and its personnel. Many businesses have realized that an overworked employee is not only less productive and effective, but also less motivated and healthier (Magtibay, 2017:391). Additional repercussions on

businesses may include a negative influence on employee recruitment as well as a negative image, both internally and internationally (Leka *et al.*, 2012). As a result, several businesses have decided to implement stress management programs (Robbins, 2007).

According to Leka, *et al.* (2012), the goals of stress management are to prevent stress from developing, or to protect persons from suffering major health consequences as a result of stress. According to research, firms can incur additional costs as a result of negative stress, making it critical to design the best stress management program possible. Stress management programs can include a variety of activities, such as teaching people how to relax or redesigning their jobs. Researchers have proposed three different types of stress management interventions: situation-focused interventions that aim to reduce potential stressors, employee-focused interventions that aim to change the employee's emotional thinking about the situation, and employee-focused interventions that aim to help employees cope more effectively with the effects of stress by increasing coping resources (Banerjee and Mehta 2016:7).

2.10.1 Stress coping strategies

When the detrimental effects of stress on humans were discovered, studies on stress coping strategies were conducted for a long time. The major focus of these studies has been how people perceive diverse experiences as stressful, and whether or not that stress surpasses their coping resources and skills (Hardy *et al.*, 1998). People react to life challenges in different ways. For example, one person may react differently to a supervisor's scolding than another. Some people may dispute with the supervisor, become agitated, or cry, while others dismiss the situation. The goal of researching diverse coping techniques for stressful circumstances is to figure out why people's reactions varied so much and how that relates to their overall health. One reason people react differently to a scenario is because of their unique personality traits, but it can also be influenced by the individual's previous experiences with the supervisor or if the reprimand is deserved (Aldwin and Werner, 2012). Despite the fact that many studies on stress coping strategies have been conducted, there is no approach that works for everyone or that can be applied to all stressful situations. Instead, there are a variety of stress-reduction approaches available (Robbins, 2007).

Coping techniques can be separated into individual and organizational strategies, according to stress literature. Individual coping techniques can be classified as work-focused, emotion-focused, escape/avoidance coping strategies, and approach strategies. Employees can reduce stress by modifying their work settings or routines, according to the first technique outlined. Role definition, time management, and delegation, for example, are all work-related coping techniques. Unlike work-focused coping methods, emotion-focused coping strategies do not alter the employee's working environment; rather, they assist the employee in better coping with stress. Social support, relaxation techniques, and a greater tolerance for ambiguity are among these strategies. Family, friends, and coworkers can provide social support to assist these people feel less anxious. The usage of alcohol and drugs to relieve stress levels is referred to as escape/avoidance techniques. These coping mechanisms have been found as being both unhealthy and inefficient. The approach plan, on the other hand, is considered as a successful strategy since it treats stress as a problem and increases the capacity to deal with it. Physical, mental, and creative activities, such as music or painting, are used in approach tactics. There are organizational tactics that have been employed to help employees deal with stress in addition to individual strategies. "Health maintenance, leadership training, and stress reduction workshops, which are widely used" are among the organizational tactics (Anbazhagan and Soundar Rajan, 2013:167).

Furthermore, Lazarus and Folkman distinguish between problem-focused and emotionally oriented coping techniques, the first of which is aimed at problem resolution. Actions to erase the stressor's appearance or decrease its physical impact may be included in problem-focused coping techniques (Steptoe *et al.*, 2010). The emotionally-focused coping techniques, on the other hand, focus on dealing with emotional suffering rather than confronting the problem. This can be done in a variety of ways, but it is geared on managing the emotions that come with stress perception. Both of these methods can help a stressed person feel better, but they may not be equally helpful when it comes to dealing with a given stressful scenario.

When stressors appear to have controllable parts, problem-focused strategies are appropriate, whereas emotion-focused strategies are more suited for stresses that appear to be uncontrollable to an individual. For example, a person may be required to undergo a painful dental procedure. Distancing oneself from negative feelings may be the greatest

method to cope with the procedure, which is a problem-focused strategy. Many coping mechanisms fit into one of these two categories, such as taking steps to fix the problem and enlisting the support of others to solve the problem. Emotion-focused techniques include venting emotions or seeking the company of others for solace (Brannon and Feist, 2010).

2.11 MANAGING STRESS

Stress as an intrinsic part of education was discussed in the preceding sections of this study. “In order to appropriately manage stress, it is necessary to understand what generates stress and learn to handle that stress,” according to Seaward (2017). Seaward (2017) also feels that stress can be prevented by implementing specific routines into one's everyday routine. Laughter, exercise, a balanced diet, support groups, and self-empowerment are just a few of the approaches that can be used. According to Armstrong (1996) cited by Greenglass (2005:503), there are four main reasons why employers should admit that their employees are stressed and take action: first, because it is their social responsibility to provide a good quality of working life; second, because excessive stress causes illness; and third, because it can result in an inability to cope with the demands of the job, which leads to morbidity.

The following are some of the reasons, according to why stress assessment and management is not a luxury, but a requirement for businesses: “Stress management can only be effective if the focus is on the organization's specific problems and people's needs. People may be motivated to become involved in stress management if scientific stress measurement is conducted and the results are made public in a discreet and responsible manner. It enables businesses to respond in a proactive manner to issue situations and locations. To avoid a situation where organizations deal with pressures in a symptomatic and reactive manner, more proactive steps can be used. The following are listed as possible stress management strategies by Armstrong (1996).

Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) in Kruger *et al.* (2015:101) make the following suggestions in terms of coping strategies to reduce the negative impact of stress on both the individual and the organization:

- Individual emotion-focused strategies that include self-awareness and accepting responsibility for one's behavior and actions; lifestyle changes like diet and exercise, etc.
- Organizational problem-focused strategies that include selection and training; employee assistance programmes (EAPs); communication; job redesign; improved physical work conditions; fairness and equity.

These are further explained below.

2.11.1 Organisational stress management

Teacher training, and workplace reorganization, counselling are all options for assisting academics in coping with stress. Policies and programs can being developed or implemented. Redesigning of work for example team teaching and allowing for open parent/teacher meetings and a safer work environment such as improving the lighting and use of access cards so as to reduce the risk of role ambiguity and conflict.

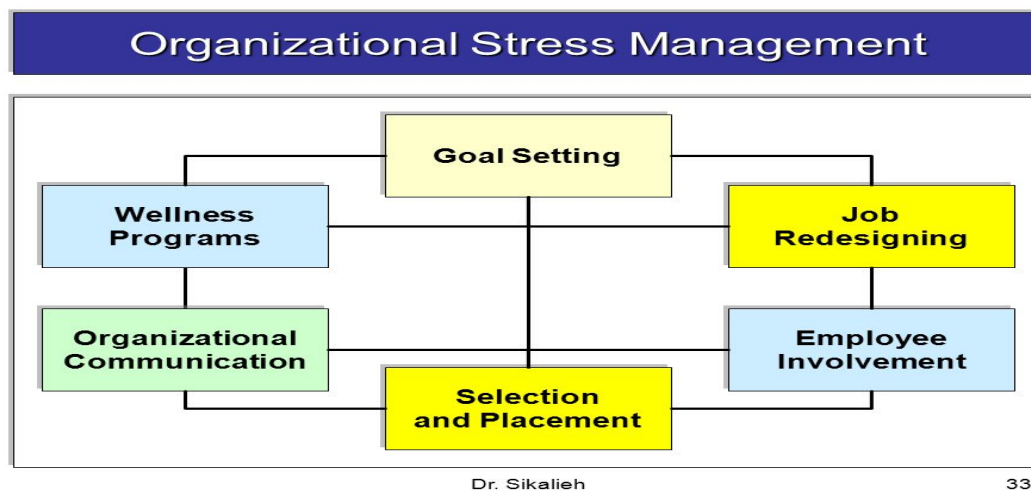


Figure 2.4 Organisational Stress Management

Source: Organisational Change and Stress Management by Dr Sikalieh (2015)

2.11.2 Individual stress management

Academics must be encouraged to improve their time management skills both at work and at home in order to reduce the stress they face. Any other type of physical activity that promotes calmness within an individual should be promoted. Fig 2.5 depicts ways in which an individual can manage their stress levels.

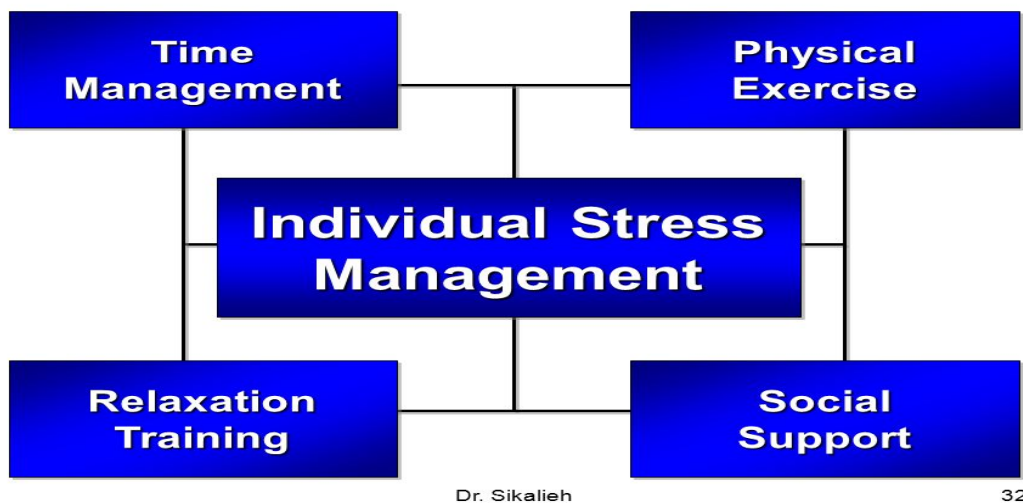


Figure 2.5 Individual Stress Management

Source: Organisational Change and Stress Management by Dr Sikalieh (2015)

2.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the literature relevant to occupational stress in various industries and particularly amongst female academics. Occupational Stress as a concept was clarified and its types, effects, and management strategies were explored. The literature confirmed that occupational stress has a huge impact in how academics deliver their work and how they live their day to day lives. Furthermore the literature highlights factors that management ought to look at in order to improve the way academics perform and thus overall improvement of the organisation. The next chapter discusses the research methodology and design.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology that was employed by the author in developing this research project. According to Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2019), research methodology is a systematic approach to solving a problem that specifies the techniques by which researchers go about describing, explaining and forecasting occurrences in order to gather knowledge. Trochim, Donnelly and Arora (2016:5) define research as a type of systematic investigation that is empirical in nature and that is designed to contribute to public knowledge. The current study alludes to this definition in that it explores female academics' perceptions of stress and stressors in their professional lives, attempting to establish the nature thereof in order to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on stress amongst female academics in higher education in South Africa.

The research technique for the project is detailed in this chapter. The research design and some reasons for the selected research design are also highlighted in the chapter. The population sample for the research project and reasons for the chosen population sample are equally discussed. The preferred population sample is also described in this chapter. Additionally, the preferred methods of data collection are explained and their strength and weakness highlighted. In order to explore the perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology, unstructured open-ended questions in a focus group were used to gather data.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Pandey and Pandey (2015) define 'research design' as a strategy for gathering and analyzing data in order to acquire the desired results. A study design, according to Bryman and Bell (2007), is the structure that allows for data collection and analysis. A

research design is the overall strategy for answering the study questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). According to Punch (2007:63), the research design encompasses all aspects of planning and conducting a research project, from identifying the problem to reporting and publicizing the results. The research design is a strategy that dictates how an answer to the research question will be developed. Moreover, the research design is particularly useful since it directs the researcher's procedures in the study, as well as the logic by which the researcher interprets the study once it is over (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011:53). Furthermore, according to Maggetti, Gilardi and Radaelli (2013:10), the research design minimizes or eliminates bias.

Cooper and Schindler (2006:150) emphasize the need of a well-designed research study, which involves a time-based strategy. It must be founded on research questions; guide the selection of sources and data kinds; and define the procedures for all research activities. When selecting a research design, the researcher must consider the investigation's rationale, research questions and the nature of the research as well as the data needed (Nishishiba, Jones and Kraner, 2014:49). The study design must be in line with the research aims and questions, allowing the researcher to gather relevant data that answers the research questions (Dornyei, 2014:35).

This study falls under the ambit of social research (Trochim *et al.*, 2016:5) in that it is based on the academe as a society; the things that are done within; and how people interact, live, feel and see themselves in this 'society' in terms of their experiences of stress. The authors state that social research is THEORETICAL in that it pertains to the exploration of theories- in this case, theories about occupational stress and stressors.

Another facet of social research as a sub-class of research is that it is EMPIRICAL, being based on the direct observations and measurements of reality (Trochim *et al.*, 2016:13). The current study is a blend of theoretical and empirical research in that it compares theories on how female academics experience stress with observations through interviews a focus group on how they operate within the HE context.

The current study is also DESCRIPTIVE in nature /type as it attempts to document WHAT IS GOING ON/ WHAT EXISTS? (Trochim *et al.*, 2016:14) in terms of stress and stressors experienced by female academics at a HEI. Due to time constraints, the study is also CROSS-SECTIONAL in that it takes place at a particular point in time (Trochim *et al.*, 2016: 14). The researcher is looking at only a few female academics at a point in time,

instead of all female academics over a long period of time. Jackson (2009:362) states that a cross-sectional research design is one where subjects are studied in a short period of time or at the same time. Jackson (2009:362) cautions against the COHORT EFFECT, whereby factors like age differences could impact the outcomes of a study. On this note, the researcher does not explore demographics in her analysis in order to minimize the cohort effect.

Qualitative and quantitative research designs are the two most popular types of research designs (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative research defines a study topic through a description of trends or a requirement for an explanation of the relationship between variables, according to Creswell (2012:13). Exploring a problem and obtaining a deep grasp of a central phenomenon is what qualitative research is all about.

- **THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

In the study of social phenomena, quantitative research methods generally rely on the collecting and analysis of numerical data. In educational research, this methodological technique has been widely used. Quantitative research methods, which are based on the positivist paradigm, stress empirical investigation to better understand social processes. Internal validity (i.e., accurate interpretability of research results), external validity (i.e., generalizability of research results) and reliability (i.e., consistency and replicability of the procedures and results) are all required in research using these research methodologies (Leung and Shek, 2018).

- **THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

Qualitative research is a type of social science that involves decoding meaning from non-numerical data in order for the researcher to gain a social understanding of the target population in its natural setting (Mohajan, 2018). According to Walliman (2011), qualitative research uses data in the form of words, such as views, descriptions, or feelings, rather than numbers. Similarly, Levitt, et al. (2018) explained that a qualitative research study analyses data expressed in the form of words (natural language) and from participants' social interactions and

engagements. Qualitative data cannot be precisely measured or counted, so it is usually expressed in words rather than numbers.

- **THE MIXED METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN**

In a research project, mixed methods entails blending or integrating qualitative and quantitative research and data. Quantitative data usually comprises closed-ended replies, such as those found on questionnaires or psychological tests, whereas qualitative data is frequently open-ended with no predetermined responses. Mixed methods research is a relatively recent field, with significant development work beginning in the middle to late 1980s. Its origins, on the other hand, are older. Campbell and Fisk studied psychological qualities using a variety of ways in 1959, however their methods were all quantitative. Others were inspired by their work to combine traditional surveys with qualitative data such as observations and interviews (qualitative data) (Sieber, 1973). Early ideas on the importance of several approaches—known as mixed methods—were based on the assumption that all methods had biases and flaws, and that collecting both quantitative and qualitative data balanced out the flaws of each type of data. The concept of triangulating data sources arose as a technique of achieving convergence between qualitative and quantitative methods (Jick, 1979). By the early 1990s, mixed methods research had evolved to include the systematic convergence of quantitative and qualitative databases, as well as the concept of integration in various study methodologies.

Open-ended questions in a focus group was the qualitative strategy used in this study. This was utilized to identify sources and examine female academics' views of occupational stress at DUT. The qualitative study design was chosen by the researcher because it allowed for a better understanding and description of people's personal feelings and professional behaviour. This design was used to investigate the behaviour, viewpoints and performance of female academics at work, using the focus group as a research tool.

The RESEARCH APPROACH adopted in this study is generally oriented towards qualitative research as it satisfies the criteria espoused by Bryman and Bell (2017:31), namely:

- The researcher emphasizes the use of the words expressed by participants in the focus group in the collection and analysis of data. The words of female academics will be used to generate themes on stress;
- The emphasis is more towards generating rather than proving theories. The researcher is not pre-empting by adhering to one theory on stress. Rather, she is hoping that novel information will emerge;
- The study explores the ways in which participants explore and interpret their social world. In this case, female academics will explore their academic work environment; and
- The study acknowledges that the social reality of participants is constantly in flux. In the HE environment, there is an exponential rate of change; and
- The qualitative approach, which seeks a better understanding of complex situations and is exploratory in nature, whereby observations could build theory from the ground up (Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 95).

The following table illustrates the preceding discussion:

Table 3.1: Key Areas of the Qualitative Approach

AREA	
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Inductive with the generation of theory from the data
Epistemological orientation	Interpretivist
Ontological orientation	Constructionist

Source: adapted from Bryman and Bell (2017:31)

Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 46-47) explain that qualitative researchers often attempt to objectively study the subjective states of their participants (interviewees). This form of

research approach is instigated by the respect for the creative and unique manner in which research participants understand the world. Thus, researchers aim to conduct interviews that are responsive and flexible, whilst interviewees are treated with utmost courtesy, reciprocity and sensitivity. The data was collected in the field, at the location where participants were exposed to the issue/concept under investigation: natural settings. Female academics took part in the DUT focus group. Face-to-face engagement allowed for up-close information to be collected. The data was gathered by the researcher herself, who recorded and transcribed the focus group information. As a result, the researcher was the most important tool.

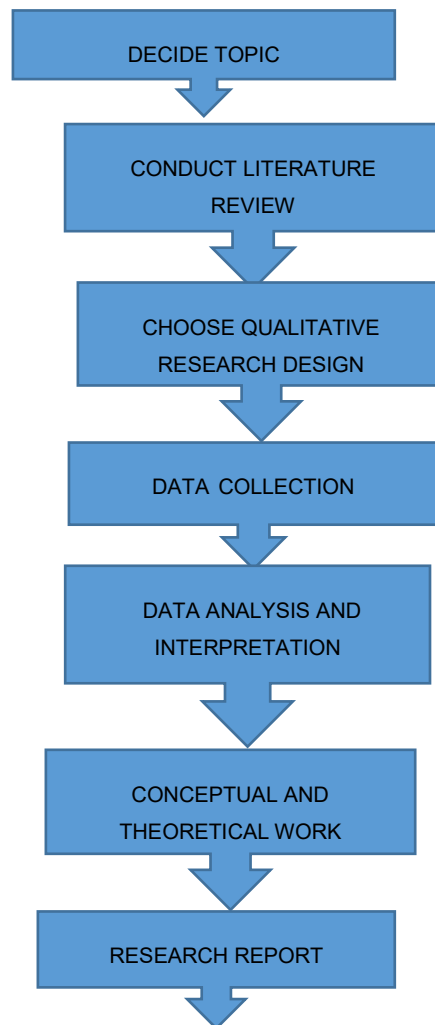
By arranging the data into abstract pieces of information, the researcher established patterns, topics and categories from the bottom up (Creswell, 2017:186). A thorough list of themes was developed by the researcher. The researcher was more interested in knowing what participants thought about the problem of stress in their academic lives than in bringing her own meaning to the study. As a result, the feature of participant meanings was maintained. Because she is also a female professional in the same faculty at the same HEI, the researcher evaluated how her background may have impacted the path of the study in terms of the themes advanced and the meanings she may have attributed to the data.

3.2.1 Mixed methods research design

The mixed method research design is a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Also referred to as the Convergent research design, the mixed methods research design is used when the investigation is both qualitative and quantitative, according to Dornyei (2014:35). Interviews and questionnaires are used to collect data in a mixed methods study approach. The mixed method research approach enables the researcher to investigate trends that are discovered via quantitative research but that can be further investigated through qualitative research.

The researcher will employ Bryman and Bell's (2017:41) guide to the main steps in qualitative research, as depicted in Fig. 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Key Steps in Qualitative Research



SOURCE: BRYMAN AND BELL (2017:41)

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

Curwin and Slater (2008) define a target population as any group of people who share one or more traits that the researcher is interested in. The term "target population" refers to the total group of people for whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions. According to Creswell (2012), a target population is a group of people (or a group of organizations) that share a common attribute that the researcher can identify and examine. A population is a collective phrase that describes the total number of individuals in a research study (Creswell, 2009). According to Creswell, not everyone in a population will be of interest to the researcher, and only a chosen grouping will be targeted for involvement in the study. In qualitative research, just a sample, or a subset of a population, is chosen for

each experiment. According to Luck and Rubin (2005), the population is critical in every study since it decides how sampling will be done and drives the entire research approach. The Faculty of Management Sciences was the study's focus area. The study concentrated on female academics in this faculty because they are all susceptible to stress. The population for this study is $N = 80$, which is the number of female academics at the Durban University of Technology's Faculty of Management Sciences, which is the target demographic for this study (Faculty Board mailing list). They are also susceptible to occupational stress because they will be in the spotlight, balancing and meeting targets, as well as responding to developing difficulties affecting the institution.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

A Non-probability convenience sampling technique is used because the individuals were readily available to participate in the study (Stangor 2011: 116).

The primary premise of sampling, according to Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014) is to draw conclusions about the entire population by selecting some of its individuals. In addition, they claim that only qualitative methodologies based on a positivist research style are concerned with illustrative samples. Mazzocchi (2008) explains that sampling helps researchers to gather a reasonable approximation of data on huge target populations by performing a survey on a smaller division of parts. According to Quinlan (2011), the total population of a study in social science research is huge and hence beyond the capabilities of the researcher, so the planned study is usually conducted on a sample rather than the full community. It is possible that a sample is more accurate than the total population (Zikmund and Babin 2010). According to Bless and Smith (2008), data from the complete population is more reliable, hence a full population study rather than a sample study is better. This study, however, only used a sample of the population due to time, money and researcher experience limits.

The probability sampling approach and a simple random sample methodology were utilized in this study. A random sampling method is classified under the probability sampling approach. A random sampling method is a sampling technique in which every member of the target population has an equal chance of being included in the sample.

According to Agbaje and Alarape, this eliminates bias from the sampling procedure (2006). Simple random sampling entails selecting elements of the population at random using either a computer or random numbers, with or without replacement to ensure that each subject of the sample that has not been selected has an equal chance of being chosen. Only 12 female academics who are found within the mailing list of the Faculty of Management Sciences at DUT were eligible to participate in this study. These subjects were purposively chosen to represent each of the departments and clusters in the Durban FMS population.

The justification for the sample size is based on the focus group size espoused by Morgan (1996), in which Morgan (1996) quoted in Bryman and Bell (2017:233) suggests 6-10 participants. Time and resource constraints also dictate that the sample size/ focus group size be manageable.

3.4.1 Justification of probability sampling technique

The researcher used the probability sampling method in order to eliminate bias in the selection of respondents. Simple random sampling was used since it reduces bias and simplifies analysis. Individual variance within the sample, in particular, is a good predictor of variance in the total population, making calculating the accuracy of results a breeze. Every sample element has an equal chance of being chosen. Given the investigation's time constraints, the sampling method is less time-consuming and exhausting. The sample was homogeneous; thus, a sampling procedure was applied. This technique is also an accurate representation of the larger population.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This section describes the techniques used to acquire primary and secondary data for the study. Data collection, according to Creswell (2012), include finding and selecting persons for a study, receiving their consent to study them, and capturing information through

asking people questions or observing their behaviors. Primary data is information gathered from first-hand experience that has not previously been published and is more dependable, authentic, and impartial than secondary data (Baker 2020). Primary data, according to Hox and Boeijs (2007:593), is data acquired for a specific research aim. Questionnaires, field observations, and interviews will be used to gather this information. For this study, secondary data was gathered from secondary data sources such as historical documents (documentary analysis), published books, and journals. The data gathered by someone other than the user is referred to as secondary data (Moore, 2006).

3.5.1 Interviews

An interview, according to King, Horrocks and Brooks (2018), is a conversation between two people (the interviewer and the interviewee) in which the interviewer asks questions to elicit information from the interviewee. In this study, focus group interviews were performed because they allow for more thorough inquiries, more questioning to acquire more data during the session, and a greater response rate as compared to administering questionnaires. Non-verbal data can also be collected through observation.

Focus group interviews allowed the researcher to create strong bonds with the participants. This allowed both parties to express their anxieties, and the interviews were conducted in an open and honest manner, resulting in the correct information being gathered.

3.5.2 Focus groups

3.5.2.1 A brief history

Morgan's (1996) seminal article on focus groups describes the re-emergence of focus groups as a widely used technique for assimilating qualitative data. Focus groups have been employed as both a self-contained technique, as well as being used in conjunction with other methods in order to add robustness to the research. Morgan (1996) cites the use of focus group-type methods by Bogardus in as early as 1926, in addition to its use by the likes of Merton in 1987, Knodel in 1987, Krueger in 1988 and Morgan in 1988. More recent research searches show an exponential growth in the application of the focus group as a data collection technique in qualitative studies.

3.5.2.2 Focus groups conceptualised

Definitions of focus groups abound, but there is a golden thread that runs through these. Some definitions are:

“...focus groups are a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. This definition has three essential components. Firstly, it clearly states that focus groups are a research method devoted to data collection. Secondly, it locates the interaction in a group discussion as the source of the data. Thirdly, it acknowledges the researcher’s active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes.” (Morgan, 1996:130). The focus group has been defined as a “carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger and Casey, 2000 cited in Larson, Grudens-Schuck and Allen, 2004).

Some researchers, such as Hughes and DuMont (1993: 776) characterize focus groups as group interviews: 'Focus groups are in-depth group interviews employing relatively homogenous groups to provide information around topics specified by the researchers'. Others define them as group discussions: 'a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined environment' (Kreuger 1998: 88), 'an informal discussion amongst selected individuals about specific topics' (Beck et al., 1986). These definitions show a tension between participant-researcher interaction and interaction between participants. It is stated that the interaction within groups generates a particular type of data: 'Focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method' (Kitzinger, 1995: 299). This paper uses the definition of focus group as a controlled group discussion, on the basis that the group interaction generated through discussion is of prior importance to this methodology (Smithson, 2000).

Focus groups have been chosen as the data collection method by the researcher. Focus groups, according to Bryman and Bell (2017:420), are "interactions between several respondents through assisted, structured, or unstructured talks." A focus group, according to the authors, is a sort of group interview with numerous participants and a moderator or facilitator in which questions and conversations revolve around a predetermined theme,

with an emphasis on group interactions and joint construction of meaning (Bryman and Bell, 2017:377). In a focus group, the researcher examines how members of the group express themselves, their ideas and perspectives, and their thoughts on a topic. A moderator or facilitator is present in focus groups to lead the discussion in an unstructured and non-intrusive manner. It is essentially an approach that allows the researcher to have a better knowledge of how people feel and why they feel the way they do. Participants in focus groups can investigate one other's perspectives by disputing and confronting one another (Morgan, 1996).

Participants are free to bring up problems that they believe are significant since the moderator or facilitator relinquishes power to the group. Participants' interactions in focus groups are thought to lead to more accurate accounts of beliefs, opinions, perceptions, and so on (Morgan, 1996). Focus groups allow researchers to investigate how people make sense of events and generate meanings. This is referred to as 'symbolic interactionism' by Bryman and Bell (2017:232), which means "knowing that social phenomena arise in interaction and conversation with others."

In line with Bryman and Bell's (2019:233) precept, the researcher will consider the following practical issues when performing the focus group interaction in the current study:

- There will be a limited number of focus group participants due to time and resource constraints, which necessitates effective management;
- Focus group sizes will vary. Morgan (1996) quoted in Bryman and Bell (2017:233) suggests 6-10 participants, whilst Faria, Mabaya and Jordan (cited in Bryman and Bell, 2017:233) suggest 15-20 participants. The focus group for this study will consist of 12 participants.
- Qualitative research strives to gain insight into the viewpoints of individuals being studied, as stated in the chapter's opening discussion. As a result, qualitative research is neither overly structured nor overly intrusive. In terms of the degree of probing that must be done, the level and types of interaction of participants will define the extent of moderator engagement.

- Female academics who find the topic relevant and interesting are purposefully chosen by the researcher.
- In order to generate conversation in the focus groups for this study, the researcher employed an open-ended approach.
- The focus group conversations were recorded and then transcribed in terms of recording and transcription. The researcher understands that transcribing of focus groups is difficult because she must consider what is said, who said it, and how they said it. The focus group began with an introduction to the group's "rules," such as greetings, introductions, a summary of the topic, the study's aims, the format of the session, and so on.

Wilkinson's claim, as noted in Bryman and Bell (2017:237), that focus groups offer the potential for feminist research is of anecdotal interest to the researcher. According to the authors, focus groups are more compatible with feminist ethics and politics since members interact in a group that is relatively natural to them. This allows the researcher to integrate his or her understanding with the lived realities of women. Individuals in a comparable social environment to the focus group are studied in feminist research. Because there is less likelihood of power relationships between researchers and participants, participants' opinions are more likely to be aired, and they give marginalized female voices a chance to be heard.

Regardless of the benefits of focus groups, the researcher is well aware of their limits. Focus groups are difficult to set up. Recordings take time, and data can be difficult to evaluate because so much data is generated so quickly. Group effects, such as dominating members or groupthink, can occur in focus groups, and participants may feel uncomfortable because personal information is generally exposed in focus groups (Bryman and Bell, 2017:238).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The focus group was 2 hours in duration. The researcher had to apply a hybrid approach using both face-to-face and online methods because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some participants could not attend physically and had to be accommodated via the MS TEAMS

online platform. The data was collected in October 2021. All Covid-19m protocols such as the wearing of face-masks, social distancing and sanitizing were observed. The language medium of communication was English because all the participants lecture in English.

The researcher purposely chose the study's location (DUT) and participants (12 female academics from the same faculty) because they were thought to be the most helpful in understanding the problem and research objectives. The qualitative interviews took the form of a focus group with unstructured and largely open-ended questions.

The “acknowledged participant approach was used in this study. Stangor (2011: 133) explains this concept as one in which the researcher is unable to hide his or her identity. The researcher of this study was actively involved in the data collection process. The perceived disadvantage of this approach is, participants may be reactive, wherein interviewees change their attitude and behavior. However, this established disadvantage did not have any adverse effect, as the researcher had a working relationship with interviewees who considered her as part of the focus group participants (Stangor 2011: 134).

To extract the views, opinions and perceptions of participants on stress, the focus group was kept to a moderate size (Creswell, 2017:190). During the focus group, the Interview technique was utilized to ask questions and record responses. The researcher audio recorded the focus group and took manual notes as a precaution. A major advantage of this approach is that the researcher is able to study the participants in a natural setting whilst trying to understand them collectively and holistically. Thus, the reliance is more on descriptive and not quantitative information. More so, through this adopted approach, the researcher was able to gain significant insights into the complexity of participants' behaviour (Creswell, 2017). However, the disadvantage is the qualitative approach is often painstaking and considerably more time consuming when compared to the quantitative approach (Creswell, 2017).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is carried out, according to Afsaw, Argaw and Bayissa (2015), to guarantee completeness and logical groupings. The presentation of data gathered from the investigation is known as data analysis (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2012), the researcher will analyse the data in order to answer the research questions. Data analysis is described as the process of ordering and organizing disorganized or incomplete data in order to highlight relevant information. Data analysis is the process of converting raw data into actionable knowledge, which is frequently given in the form of a published analytical article (Statistics Canada 2014).

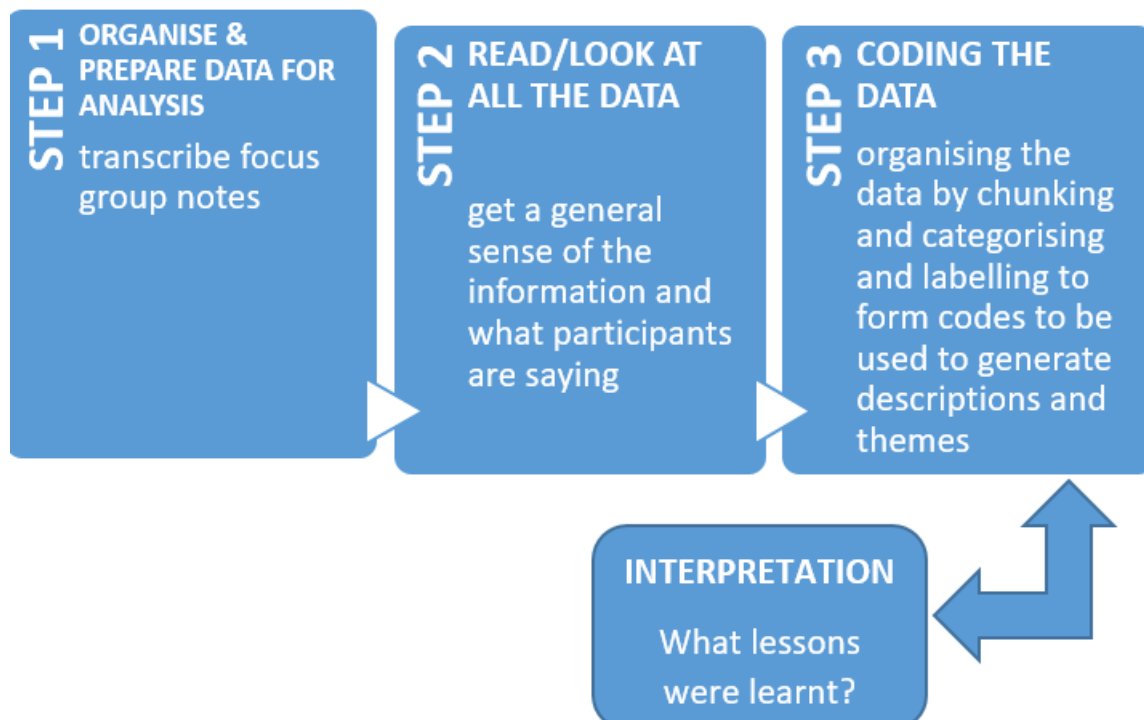


Figure 3.2 Data Analysis Process

SOURCE: Adapted from CRESWELL (2017: 197)

In line with Creswell's (2017:197) guidelines, the data was analyzed in the following steps:

- The researcher organized and prepared data for analysis, and transcribed focus group notes.

- Reviewed all the information jotted during the interview, as well as those from the recordings in order to grasp the flow of thought of interviewees.
- Coding the data entails chunking, categorizing, and labelling the information to create codes that may be used to construct descriptions and themes.
- Interpretations were derived from the extracted information.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Creswell (2012:159), an instrument's scores should be reliable and consistent. When the researcher administers the test numerous times at different times, the results should be substantially identical. Creswell (2017:201) outlines procedures to validate the findings of the study in terms of reliability and validity. These refer to the steps undertaken by the researcher to check the accuracy and credibility of their findings.

Qualitative validity is described by Creswell (2017:201) as the researcher checking the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, whilst *qualitative reliability* refers to the researcher's approach being consistent.

In the current study, the researcher ensured qualitative validity and reliability by:

- TRIANGULATING and deriving themes based on converging several perspectives from participants in the focus groups;
- MEMBER CHECKING by participants of the final report to determine if participants felt that descriptions and themes were accurate;
- USING RICH, THICK DESCRIPTIONS to convey the findings and transport readers to the setting so that they can share in the experience;
- CLARIFYING THE RESEARCHER'S BIAS through her self-reflection(reflectivity) and acknowledgement of how her background may have shaped the study;
- PRESENTING OUTLIERS OR NEGATIVE INFORMATION/DISCREPANCIES that are counter to the themes. As a qualitative study, this research acknowledges that in real-life, different perspectives are the norm. By presenting these outliers, the researcher hope to create a more authentic and accurate account of the study.
- USING AN EXTERNAL AUDITOR/PERSON to review the entire study.

A recurrent issue that vexes realist reviewers is the concept of rigour of relevant data used in realist reviews. Rigour may be defined as whether the methods used to generate the relevant data are credible (or plausible) and trustworthy. In effect, rigour is about the 'quality' of data. But there is more than meets the eye on the issue of 'quality' or rigour and this is addressed in this section. However, there is not a short answer to this issue, but an understanding of the nature of the 'product' of a realist review may help. Realist reviews are much more about explaining phenomena than calculating the size of their effects (Creswell, 2017).

3.8.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In many review approaches, judgements about the trustworthiness of data are carried out using rating scales that assess the rigour of the processes that have been used to produce the data

3.8.2 PLAUSIBILITY AND COHERENCE

However, the trustworthiness of data is just one narrow but important dimension of the judgements needed regarding 'quality'. In an ideal world, any realist programme theory is underpinned by arguments that are based on the most trustworthy data. However, this is often not achievable and data of varying trustworthiness are all that we can find for use in a realist review. In such situation, even data of limited trustworthiness can make some contribution to building arguments underpinning a realist programme theory which are plausible. To judge plausibility we need to introduce another concept here – coherence (how logical and consistent an argument is). When making judgements about the coherence of programme theory (or any theory), one approach is to apply the reasoning set out in 'Inference to the best explanation'. This reasoning is based on the belief that a theory is more likely to have coherence because it offers a good explanation (Haig and Evers, 2016). Using this reasoning, coherence may be judged by the following criteria:

- Consilience (or explanatory breadth) – the ability of the theory to explain as much as possible data;

- Simplicity – the theory is simple and does not have to have special (or ‘ad hoc’) assumptions made to it to explain data;
- Analogy – the theory fits in with what we currently know and/or substantive theory.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

According to Creswell (2012), data collecting should be ethical and respect individuals and sites. The ethics of research planning, conduct and reporting are specified here, and research ethics should encompass human and animal subject protections, connections between researchers and people who may be affected by their research, and choices for supporting ethical conduct in research (Resources for Research Ethics Education, 2013). Before beginning to collect data, permission was requested; this is not only a part of the informed consent procedure, but also an ethical practice. The researcher secured the anonymity of individuals throughout data collection and maintaining the identification of individuals, providing confidentiality and privacy to participants. To protect the respondents, this study did not distort, misunderstand or invent any data. It was also objective because no bias was present in the data display analysis. Data was regarded as confidential by the researcher, who did not share it with other participants or persons outside of the study.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research methods used to collect the primary data for this study. The research design and methodology used to collect data were also discussed. This chapter included a full description of the research instrument, the data collection method employed, ethical considerations, validity and reliability, as well as data analysis. The results are summarized in the following chapter, which also analyses the findings from the fieldwork.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The comprehensive findings from the qualitative data are hereby presented in light of the objectives articulated in Chapter One, namely:

- To establish levels of stress amongst female academics within the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology;
- To determine whether perceived stress is occupationally related amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology;
- To identify the causes of occupational stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology; and
- To recommend possible interventions that can mitigate stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

These objectives were elucidated as part of the researchers attempt to address the overall aim of this study, which was to explore perceptions of occupational stress among female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

To analyse the qualitative data emerging from the study, the researcher used the Nvivo software package. Bergin (2011) highlighted that Nvivo is used by qualitative researchers to analyse extensive levels of data. In addition, Cropley (2019) postulated that analysis procedures that are computer-assisted are committed to faster coding of data, a more detailed description of internal interactions within the mass of data, much more nuanced perspectives when constructing categories and concepts, a systematic framework for

formulating rules that direct the various analytical measures, and more detailed and differentiated data interpretation

The researcher was of the view that the most relevant approach for this research, in order to gain an understanding of the perceptions of the participants on occupational stress at DUT was Thematic Analysis, as mentioned in Chapter three of this study.

The results yielded by the qualitative data analysis will be presented in the form of the key themes that emerged, along with relevant sub-themes that add rigour and robustness to the findings. The researcher includes relevant quotations from the focus group participants that highlight the various themes and sub-themes. Various relevant diagrams and pictures are included in order to emphasise the findings of the qualitative data analysis.

In order to fully appreciate the results and the pictorial representations of the themes, a brief explanation of some terms is necessary to assist the reader of this chapter.

4.2 RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY

Table 4.1 Definitions of key terms in this chapter

Word clouds-	Word Clouds demonstrate the most frequently used words. The larger the font, the more frequently the word was used. This helps to identify key areas/themes.
Cluster analysis –	Bubble diagrams are used to illustrate the data (key words) in the form of ‘bubbles’. The larger the size of the bubble, the higher the frequency of the words/references. Furthermore, the degree of closeness of the bubbles shows that there was a relationship between those words.

Tree Maps-	These show the data (frequently used words) in terms of the size of the blocks. Hence, the larger blocks reflect those words mainly used. The entire map gives a holistic view of how data is placed in terms of size of reference.
Word Trees-	Word Trees are used to depict key words and the words/sentences connected to that word. It allows you to see how these words connect to other words and sentences/views.
Hierarchy Charts-	These reflect the size of the nodes. The larger sizes imply a greater volume/concentration of responses in that area.

Source: Suknunan (2021)

4.3 THEMES

The themes generated by the data analysis overwhelmingly support the researcher's contention in the overall purpose of this study, namely that female academics indeed perceive themselves to be stressed; that this stress has a significant occupational linkage; that female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology experience a myriad of workplace stressors; that these participants apply various coping and mitigating strategies in order to reduce the negative impact of stress; and that there are possible interventions that DUT can implement to reduce the negative impacts of occupational stress on the institution in the future. Five major sources of stress were identified by Winefield et al. (2008:175) in their study on job stress amongst Australian university staff, namely: insufficient funding and resources, work overload, poor management practice, job insecurity, and insufficient recognition and reward.

The chapter will allude to these findings, as the thematic analysis yielded similar factors in this study.

The following excerpts from the focus group highlight the preceding discussion:

Yeah. I think the personal stress is actually going hand-in-hand with the work or occupational stress. Why do I say that? It's because, you know, whatever we do is work is too much, for us like that you cannot be able to handle.

Delta 7: *“Work has impacted in some way or the other. Stress level is increased.”*

Sam: *“Yes, I do think that the occupational stress definitely impacts on my personal life.”*

Lion: *“Okay. Yeah. I think the personal stress is actually going hand-in-hand with the work or occupational stress. Why do I say that? It's because, you know, whatever we do is work is too much for us like that you cannot be able to handle...”*

Nick: *“I will say that my stress level has actually increased occupational stress since last year...”*

J-Lo: *“I think it the first objective is saying I'm stressed and very stressed. I'm very stressed and very unhappy employee in DUT. Because I feel like I'm just a number, because I feel like I'm nothing but a slave.”*

Lunga: *“In terms of the yes, we are stressed and well because we also carrying stress as females.”*

The preceding discussion supports Barkhuizen and Rothman's (2008) assertion that academia is a highly stressful occupation, with academics around the world dealing with substantial amounts of stress. This is quite paradoxical since teaching in higher education is often perceived to be a “stress-free” job. The authors even label higher education institutions as “stress factories” (Barkhuizen and Rothman, 2008). Additionally, Gunbayi (2014) showed that there were intensive and various kinds of stress originating from stressors in academic setting and the effects of stress might be either negative or positive. Masuku and Muchemwa's (2015) Zimbabwean study revealed that most of the lecturers at the Christian university in question were stressed.

The qualitative analysis has generated 4 key themes, namely:

These key themes are highlighted by the following word cloud, in which the larger sized words allude to the most commonly occurring themes and sub-themes for this study.

Figure 4.1 Word Cloud of Key Themes

❖ OVERALL WORKLOAD

Overall workload was very high. Staff felt exhausted and highly stressed. Some felt that workload was imposed upon them with no cognisance or consultation. Some respondents were teaching many online classes. Staff were also lecturing courses that they were not familiar with. It appeared that workloads were being dumped onto staff.

Reference 2

“One is this thing called workload.”

Reference 3

“The issue of workload was forced upon us. And then you ask yourself, why is it that the policy or the issue of workload will differ in the Faculty of Management Sciences as compared to the accounting department?”

Reference 4

“So I can just feed back into that. I think what's happened is our workload has increased over COVID and we don't, we have higher workloads than we did before, which is adding to the stress.”

Reference

“Tutors are not paid is very difficult. So now we have to take the workload. Having more than 800 students and we are less than 15 in the department. So yeah, I'm not counting the servicing department. We are servicing other departments. So the workload is too much.”

Kiki

“Now I want to know for me, I'm now picking this up over and above my workload, and I feel quite resentful and it stresses me out all the time.”

Um, I find myself now trying to grapple with um with the workload.”

“Yes, this is Delta 7. I would like to agree with the other two respondents as well. I think its most definitely the workload has impacted us some way or the other, um I think.”

Reference 3

“heavy workloads as well.”

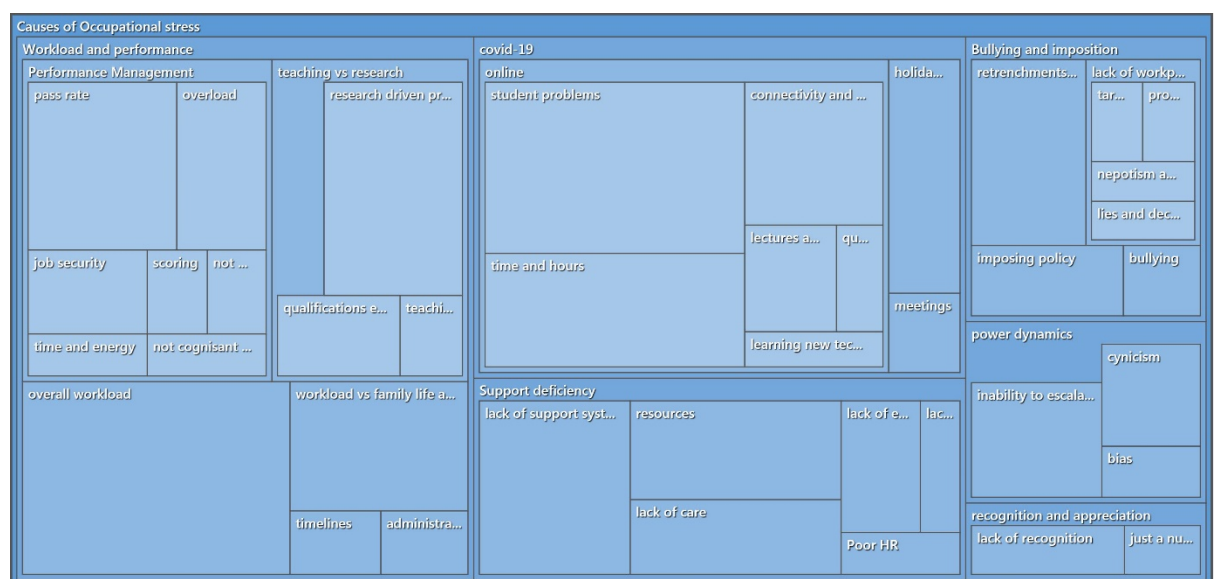


Figure 4.3 Hierarchy Chart Depicting Causes of Occupational Stress

The figure above depicts the key areas of occupational stress for the participants in this study. The larger the size of the blocks in the hierarchy chart, the more the participants had mentioned these stressors. For example, Workload appears twice in larger blocks,

implying that workload was a major cause of stress identified by the participants in this study. The elements depicted herein verify Fisher's (1994) research, which showed that academic life is becoming increasingly stressful, with academics facing stress from trying to balance their teaching, research and administration roles.

❖ **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

Oyewole, Adegoke and Atoyebi (2020) found that stress has a significant impacts on the academic performance of lecturers when performance management is considered from the points of view of teaching, publication and community service.

Building on the above, it seems that Performance Management (PM) was a key cause of heavy workloads and stress. This was informed by the following factors:

Reference 2

"I just want to touch on some of the points that the colleague have highlighted in some of the elements of performance management. It comes with a lot of not only stress, but job security. But there's always this fear of what are they going to say? Am I doing well? You know, you are always stressed and all that has been happening in terms of retrenchment, of policies, the pressure, all those webinars and workshops of today to feel like people just want to tick the boxes."

➤ Overload

Staff were overloaded due to the PM KPIs and targets.

- **KPIs**

The KPIs needed to be maintained by staff but this was contaminated by extra work of publications and high levels of admin and meetings. This made

it difficult to focus. New rules were being introduced all the time, e.g. a student must send article for publishing before research submission. All of these collectively created overload.

Crazy One:

“uh trying to address the KPI’s um with regard to my job description and post description and then also find that erm I’ve basically taken an overload in terms of supervision and aligned to that is the publications because now a new requirement.”

Wacky Wine-head

“Also, trying to maintain KPI’s which has changed over the years um like the first respondent indicated we have to now look at KPIs look at performance.”

- **Lecturing, supervision and publications**

Relating to the above, staff had to now lecture, supervise and publish and this created high levels of overload and stress. Isa and Palpanadan’s (2020: 312) study found that lecturers’ job scope related to teaching and learning, research, publication, consultancy and community services may cause stress in lecturers. This study’s findings also indicated these factors as significant causes of stress in the participants.

Delta 7

“In terms of post-graduate students in terms of research in terms of doing your normal uh lecturing and the 90% of administration that goes with it um and now beside it tending of FRC’s, DRC’s, faculty boards and a whole host of other meetings I think all of this has definitely impacted um on the value of life and

yes it most definitely impacts on personal lifestyles and even health um yeah I think that's about it."

Crazy One

"I've basically taken an overload in terms of supervision and aligned to that is the publications because now a new requirement as students graduate or even before graduation they are required to submit evidence of um pub um publication or a submission into a journal hence it's becoming erm multiple areas of demands being placed um on me as an academic uh in terms of managing."

➤ **Pass rate**

As part of performance management, lecturers are meant to achieve an 80% pass rate for the modules. This has severe implications because it means that if one does not achieve that, then lecturers are seen as 'underperforming'. If students performed poorly, the blame was allocated to the lecturers. This meant that lecturers had to work harder to get students to pass. Furthermore, there was a risk of the quality of education dropping as students could be forced to pass just to meet the 80% pass rate.

Reference 1

"And I think what was mentioned earlier on by Leopard was that one of the things that stresses me the most is this 80% pass rate that we are subjected to, and then with COVID on top of it, we are I'm I have very high standards and maybe I'm old school, but you know, I expect my students to get to their standards, and I'm prepared to do the work to help them get there."

Reference 4

“if I don't, I'm a bad lecturer. So what must we do? Must we just pass one pass all, or must we? - And I was knocked in my department because of saying this.”

Reference 5

“But at the same time, you are expected to produce 80% pass rate or more.”

➤ Job security

The PM system impacted on Job security, whereby if one did not perform then their job security could be threatened.

J –lo

“And yet, if I don't perform, maybe eventually in future and then obviously in terms of performance management, I'm going to suffer. But it seems as though we are working for one institution, but we don't have the same mother or father. So those are the issues that really stress me.”

Reference 2

“I just want to touch on some of the points that the colleague have highlighted in some of the elements of performance management. It comes with a lot of not only stress, but job security. But there's always this fear of what are they going to say? Am I doing well? You know, you are always stressed and all that has been happening in terms of retrenchment.”

➤ **Not cognisant of work done**

The PM system does not consider the work and commitment done in the past/historically, but starts measuring one from the present movement. This becomes undermining and makes one feel underappreciated. Engle (2012: abstract) found that job insecurity, isolation from colleagues, a lack of institutional recognition of worth and work politics were more salient for women as occupational stressors. The lack of recognition finding concurs with this study's finding of the lack of appreciation for work done.

Patient X

"so the point is nobody care what we do um we just um appear to want or they appear for us to want to be doing more because we inadequate and not doing enough. Uh, it's not just demotivating but it just gives us impression that now just do your bare minimum because basically nobody bother anybody else."

Sam

"But in the actual core business of this institution, which is teaching and learning, there is absolutely no recognition of how fundamentally important that is. And I find that very stressful."

Kiki: *"And anyway, just I've just had my mind jogged on the PMS system and, obviously taking in things that are going on about it. And from a personal stance, I have a problem with it because I really say that I'm not trying to be boastful or anything because I know plenty of other people around here that on the same situation as I am, that I've given my heart and soul to this institution for the last umpteen years and more than most and held positions of leadership, basic tracing trapped on that particular play system."*

➤ **Not quantifiable**

In addition, the PM system does not have the ability to 'quantify' EVERYTHING that an employee does. Hence when it comes to scoring, scores are usually not a true reflection of how much the employee has really done. This again causes undue stress and is demotivating.

Kiki

"There's no where we can put those actual things that I am doing, the things that are beneath the nitty gritty of teaching and doing and what you've done, you know, to improve the program and your students."

➤ **Scoring**

Even when one scores themselves accordingly for their efforts, HR still queries it and says that scores are too high and review is needed. There seems to be a catch 22 situation and one would rather hence score themselves acceptably. This is again motivating

Delta 7

"If your managers even approve of your scores it comes back from HR to say those scores are too high, so one it's not it's demotivating, HR seems to know more what we doing than what we doing ourselves. And then we are asked to reduce scores the third time around."

➤ **Time and energy**

Overall, the PM system just takes up too much time and energy trying to do the administration aspect of the system inclusive of filling in, scoring and justification.

Crazy one

"Um, and that's also evidenced not only with the workload documents but it's also evident with this whole new performance management document that we need to have meetings and filling in and sit and sort out, it takes a lot of time, it's very time consuming."

❖ TEACHING VS RESEARCH

The whole concept of 'research' has overshadowed teaching and this has become a stressful area for those academics that are more inclined to 'teaching'.

➤ Research-driven pressure

There is considerable research-driven pressure. This can be very stressful for those that are not research-driven. Many academics prefer to just teach, but now are compelled to do research.

- **Research qualifications**

The first stressful aspect is to have a minimum of a Master's degree and even PHD qualifications, or face penalties and even retrenchment.

J-Lo

"the shift on every five years in terms of your qualification. So if you are not a research-based person to, you are not important. You are just going to be slave driven. But your main purpose is to make sure that your students are taken care of."

Lunga

"And this pressure to do Ph.D as I think J-Lo mentioned that because now that people have to go into a Ph.D. and not many people with Ph.Ds want to do teaching – they want to focus on research. So now I wonder what's going to happen with the undergrads if the teaching that's going to be done, and what's going to be doing the modules now?"

- **Publish or perish**

Secondly, the pressure to publish is now mandatory, which means that academic staff must compromise teaching in order to publish. Failure to publish may mean that there is no future in the organisation.

Leopard

“And they will tell you, even in departmental meetings, they would tell you that if you don't publish papers, if you don't do your research, there is no future for you at DUT. But yet you've got people who have those qualifications or don't want to take a student at a lower level.”

According to Omoniyi (2013), one of the key activities of an academic staff in any university is research, which necessitates time, energy and financial resources and is a primary source of stress for academic employees.

- **Still need practical skills**

The institution is also formerly a Technikon, which meant that practical skills are still needed by students who come to study Diploma programmes. Hence, too much focus on research will kill the pragmatic aspect.

Lion

“But what they forgetting about is that you have to have somebody down the bottom, we need students to do those diplomas – so we need teachers for the diploma students - so that when they graduate with a diploma, they can then carry on. So that should actually recognize the important contribution that those of us who aren't interested in research make towards DUT's coffers.”

- **Time for research**

Lots of time is also needed for research and such time is not given as staff still have to carry teaching workloads.

Reference 1

"I just want to add to what the colleague had said about the research thing. I think the problem is the - Like in our department, we don't have the capacity in terms of people because we are like seven permanent staff, seven or eight and with the help of those contract staff we are around eleven and having it handled more than 800 students. So we don't have the time the workload is too much for us to actually go to research. So the point is I think we don't have the recommendation yet. I don't want to jump the gun. But I think the fact that we are short staffed is also a problem. It's a big problem. And then they expect us to do everything. How can you be 7 in the department and now even to appoint those part-time is a problem."

Kiki

"So I'm a person who is involved in research, but I just want to say that I'm carrying probably the biggest workload in our department this semester, so I have more classes than anybody else. Granted, some of my courses are postgraduate courses, so they are smaller, but I have one new module, so I'm building a module at the same time and I have seven master's and doctoral students and I am being approached by the dean to say that I should be applying for a post of Associate Professor, but I need to publish seven papers in three years. Now, and every year leaves you lose those two papers you have already published."

➤ **Qualifications equals workload**

Even when one aspires to obtain a Masters or PHD, nothing much changes to benefit the employee, except an increase in workload. This means that life becomes more stressful.

Kiki

“There's always something else on. And then as you do more and become more highly qualified, you get, you know what? He thinks it's really nice to become a doctor, but the more highly qualified you are, the more responsibilities you are expected to handle”.

Sam

“We've never actually made that transition at DUT, so we are expected to, I mean, I've just got my doctorate and I'm finding I'm expected to carry exactly the same teaching and learning workload that I've always had. Plus, I must still do administration.

Plus, on top of that, there's an expectation now to research and it's completely unmanageable.”

➤ **Teaching no longer the focus**

Teaching seems to no longer be the focus, which can lead to a drop in teaching quality.

Lion

“Right. So if I have a passion about teaching and learning, but I don't have the support because the expectations of management are way different than the expectation at the ground level. So that seems to be that gap between the higher authorities and us at the lower level.”

❖ Administration

The administration components weighed heavily on workload and causes added stress. Academics were seen as administrators because a majority of their work seemed administrative, especially during chaotic registration periods.

Sam

“There's been no communication, and I think that feeds into, I think as an academic, I feel completely unsupported by management within this institution. I think specifically, for example, the absolutely chaotic registration period at the beginning of the year that left us academics picking up the pieces. There were no systems put in place to capture students that registered late onto Moodle onto teams we were sitting, especially if you've got classes of two- 300, you're sitting for hours and hours and hours now and trying to correlate all these students with no system put in place to catch that.”

❖ WORKLOAD vs FAMILY LIFE AND PERSONAL LIFE

Workload compromises personal and family life. Staff members have less time for their families due to meeting work commitments. Sometimes, family members have to be quiet when staff members are in meetings at odd hours, which can impact on relationships. Staff members also have children to attend to. Isa and Palpadan's (2020) finding that instructors' stress levels were also found to be influenced by family issues is relevant to the current sub-theme on work-life balance and family/personal responsibility as a source of occupational stress.

Lunga

"It's because, you know, whatever we do is work is too much for us like that you cannot be able to handle. I find it so hard to cope with my work and at the same time, taking care of my family because the workload..."

Kiki

"Yeah, and I actually deliberately do not go near my computer on Sunday because I do have a husband who is retired and is rather fed up because his wife is working 24/7. So his first few years of retirement are going to be that he has to mute himself. And he's not bad at doing that."

Wacky wine-head

"I would say family as well but but when I say on my family I mean I find I have less time for my family Umm there's many days where I find I can't make supper for my family or I might not have tidied up because there's just no time in the day to do all of that."

Patient X

"it just puts the added pressure and trying to juggle workload with the home front with kids with school, with their homework, with cooking and cleaning that normally goes with the chores with the responsibilities of a female."

❖ TIMELINES

Timelines are continuously changing, which adds pressure on academics as initial dates get changed at the 11th hour.

Kiki

“And then also this continual changing of the timelines because at the end of last term, I'd worked to the initial dates when things had to be in and then a month before suddenly everything changes and now you've got extra time. But if you'd known you'd had extra time earlier, it would have been helpful. So I find that we, as academics, are expected to be quite sort of roll with the punches and make a plan.”

In their article, Barkhuizen and Rothman (2008) refer to international studies that have been conducted in the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand which have identified several stressors associated with stress amongst academic staff, namely: work overload; time constraints; changing job roles; inadequate resources and funding; lack of opportunity; management variables; lack of performance feedback, inequalities; etcetera.

The analysis of 12 academics' perceptions on stress as a result of stressors originating from the academic work setting showed that “100% of academic staff complained about workload, 83% the intensity of emails, 67% the problems with ICT, 58% working with large number of students, , 42% meetings without agenda and planning and changing profile of students and generation, 33% lack of time to do things due to deadlines and having to work extra at home, 25% lack of enough supporting personnel, lack of effective management and no job guarantee, 17% combination of many different tasks, difficulty on cooperation with others, meetings of strategic and importance, teacher centered education, teaching students in their first year, impolite students, fewer staff for increasing work volume of work, insufficient financial support for college, not knowing what to do for some duties and being observed by managers at lecturers, having no authority on responsibilities and 8% the effect of problems out of work”.

Gunbayi's (2014) findings resonate with the findings of the current study.

4.4.2 SUB-THEME 2: COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A recurring topic that arose during the focus group discussions was the COVID-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has brought added stress in the following ways:

❖ ONLINE

Isa and Palpadanan's (2020) study identified sources of stress, such as work-related technology to be common amongst Malaysian University lecturers. The Covid-19 pandemic saw a sudden and unexpected transition for lecturers from contact classes to online platforms for teaching. This situation was unprepared for and the participants were overwhelmed by moving to online.

The transition to sudden online working has brought about stressors for the female academics in the form of:

➤ Student problems

Student-related issues primarily caused stress for the the academic staff in the following ways:

- **Student participation**

There is a lack of participation of students, this leads to academic and learning issues. Academics become stressed about whether students are actually attending courses and/or grasping the lecture content, as well as whether they are able to access and complete online assessments.

Reference 1

"But the stress of having to have an 80% pass rate when students don't come online. When you look at the Teams registers, we have our classes of 225 or a class of 175, there might only be between 50 and 60 students participating or attending class."

Reference 2

“And if I look at Moodle and you see how many of the students haven’t participated or haven’t logged on to Moodle at all or any time recently, that to me is kind of where the stress would come in.”

- **Cheating**

This was a very serious issue. Due to online learning, students were cheating and finding excuses to get tests and assessments postponed. This was evident when all of them were obtaining very high marks for academic tasks, which compromises quality and knowledge.

Reference 1

“We have to have a test. The test must be open for a number of hours and which in turn facilitates cheating. Then they say there was loadshedding, so they couldn’t do or finish the test. According to Eskom, they did not have loadshedding at that time but just in case there was a problem with loadshedding, we have to set another test. No kidding. OK.”

Reference 2

“Where do you get every single student? I mean, every group, every class group having pass rates higher than 90%? In seven different qualifications... Seven different things. With a pass rate of over 90% for every different group of students. And how is that possible?”

- **Dictating and harshness**

Students tend to dictate to lecturers on terms and conditions of tests and assessments and if lecturers do not adhere, then they are accused of being harsh.

Lion

“What I have found is that my students are whingeing about how I'm assessing them and they think that I'm being too hard. I mean, we've had guidelines. We know that students cheat. In these online tests. We know that.”

Reference 2

“So when I say to my students, Well, this is a thing. Oh, I'm the worst lecturer in time because I want to bet is harsh. They're not English first language students, so they really need at least a minute to read the question before they answer it. That type things for the students actually try to dictate to me what the assessment should be, how long they should be. I have tried to, especially with second and third year students.”

- **Explaining**

Explaining content to students becomes difficult online, which means more work and more stress as well.

Reference 1

“It's really, really too much....explaining to students. It becomes so very, very hard. So you find yourself being stressed too much that you cannot even think.....”

- **Want answers**

Student want answers to be given to them, which compromises quality.

Leopard

“These are students who should be able to think for themselves to try to get to that stage. And what I'm finding is that the students, they want multiple choice questions. They want me to give them the answers and for them to select from.”

➤ Time and hours

Work time and hours was also a key stressor because the move to online teaching and learning meant that working hours were blurred. Firstly, students and even colleagues expected feedback 24/7. Emails and text queries are received at odd hours. Even meetings and workshops are held at odd hours and staff must attend virtually. Furthermore, students are not adhering to timelines. This means that assignments and tasks are given with a due date and are not returned accordingly. This then impacts on the next task. Eventually, academics are stressed as it impacts on the academic timelines.

Nick

“I'd like to add to what they've already mentioned in terms of this stress, and there's no time to do anything and even these workshops, the meetings that we have, they just are at odd hours. Usually one leaves campus at 4:00 you leave work, but no, now you still have meetings that ends, maybe it's six or even seven.”

Kiki

“And then you have a body count of all the students that you supervising because you only tops off at five. So if you happen to have a few more because you're too soft to say no, you end up with those students calling on you all the time.”

Sam

“And there's also an expectation that we're available to staff and students 24-7.”

Lion

Another thing that stresses me a lot is the feeling of not being able to manage time. I think time management is a problem to me. Why do I say this is because, you know, when you give students a test online, you are expected to give results within ten days, of which I am unable to ensure that if you are going to mark it manually, I am unable to just cope with that more, especially if in one subject you have three assessments, you will find that the first assessment is given to you, but you are failing to give back feedback to students. And yet another second assessment is coming. So it becomes a major problem that you are unable to cope with time because you are not only dealing with one subject, there are various subjects that you have to attend to, which becomes a major issue.”

Delta 7

“um I think especially now also during the COVID times and working remotely where there’s no core hours for working the hours have been extended into day and night um this is both within the department and more respect even with students.”

Patient X

“um seeing that students have access to mobile numbers and whatsapp um and our emails and all electronic platforms um and they have a right to speak to us anytime of the day or night and I know we do have we can decide to respond but knowing that somebody needs your assistance it just puts the added pressure and trying to juggle workload with the home front with kids with school.”

➤ Connectivity, loadshedding and data

There are data and connectivity issue stressors impacting participants in this study. Students often complain to their lecturers that the areas they come from have poor network coverage. In addition, the data limit is inconsistent as some

students get more than others, as this is dependent on network provision. The Institution needs to give equal amounts of data because participants are burdened when not all students can attend class or write assessments online.

Reference 1

“What I'm also concerned about that's kind of what I'm also finding now, is these issues with connectivity or loadshedding or things like that. When we have assessments and classes, it comes. It bounces back to us. It makes it that we have to make up for problems that because they live in a rural area and have to walk 5 km, it becomes our problem.”

Reference 2

“Data for students. We have been given data as staff members, but student data, they get like ten gigs. I believe that they get whatever data that whatever package that providers give it.

So Telkom gives 20Gb. Students are happy. Vodacom gives 10Gb. Students are not happy. OK, so the data is an issue. And that again means that students don't come to class. They don't get to do the assessment because they don't have data.”

Reference 4

“This data issue is something that I've been on about because I don't think it's fair for the students. I've been on it for a while. And I actually wrote a memo to our director of ITSS and I said, you know, we had an issue with data. This is how it impacts on us because the data gets loaded for different students by different providers at different times, means that like, how do we schedule a test? We have to, we don't know when the data's loaded so that we can have a test when the students have got data.”

➤ Lectures and assessments

Lectures and assessments have become stressful, especially in terms of conducting via online platforms. Time is limited and lectures must be conducted to the satisfaction of the students' understanding. If not, then one has to go back and re-explain content. Marking and assessments have also become challenging in terms of marking online.

J-Lo

“that we have online now is like too much because we trying to cope with a setting of tests, with conducting lectures at the same time, we making sure that students are available when you meet them or maybe in this Teams or Moodle, and mostly so it becomes so much and spend lot of time doing marking and more, especially if you are teaching mathematical subjects and you set the maths tests and mark maths online.”

Leopard

“And before you start in the next class, they'll be going back to the previous classroom to ask questions on whatever clarity that they need on the previous session so that you do feel under pressure and you're not going to be able to even...you are delayed to finish our syllabus. And already we have limited time to finish the whole content that we usually finish in about five months. So now you have about three months to finish everything. So the pressure is mounting.”

➤ Quality of education is dropping

Quality of education is dropping due to pass rates being imposed and this will lead to students passing but not having relevant knowledge.

“You need to go back and revise and do the check of this thing is really working, like Leopard said. You cannot have all those students and we'll just have a 90%

pass for the gened modules on paper. They're going to have to say that, you know, this is very good because which means that our students is passing.

But it means that the work is so saturated that it's at a primary level of education. And what they do is they will tell you, you know, we can recalculate. And it's therefore playing cards all you do is just shuffling around. You still having those modules and you just shuffling them around, put them in a second year, you put them in the first year. But the reality is this thing is not working. So why should we have it?"

➤ **Learning new technology vs age**

It becomes difficult for 'aged' lecturers to transition to online, especially when the change was sudden and there is a lack of support. This causes more stress.

Lion

"On the other hand, and I suppose I'm showing my age now, but it's just we're learning all the new technologies and sometimes my load is so big that I don't have time to learn the technology, so I just resort to my old habits."

❖ **Holidays and leave**

Holidays were now shifted due to the new academic schedule and this affected leave time. Leave was important for one to relax and recharge, and now one takes leave at odd times, if one has the rare opportunity to.

Sam

“And on top of which we have not had a proper holiday since COVID started because last year, we didn't have a proper holiday this year, that the semester now goes until the 28th of December.”

Leopard

“So previously we had that time we had the time when the entire institution shut down. You would go for up three weeks or whatever. Now you've got people that are on leave at different times. You still getting emails when you're on leave. There is no rest period, that's been given to us.”

Kiki

“I'm exhausted and probably one of the more conscientious members of staff when we entered lockdown. My understanding was although we were not seeing the students that we had to carry on working and some people did take leave, but I didn't because I just kept on preparing my slides and preparing my coursework and everything. And then suddenly we leaped into lecturing and then there literally has not been an opportunity for a break since then, really, besides a little time over Christmas, and they made us take during that lockdown. Last week. Funny enough, you talk having this thing now.”

Wacky wine-head

“I think for me personally one of the major thing is no proper leave or time off for someone to refresh and rejuvenate, so we find that we are extremely fatigued and fatigue leads to stress and again affects one's health so I'll just leave it there.”

❖ Meetings

Meetings take place throughout the day and even after hours. This compromises lecture time and preparation.

“So these extended working hours at night, and we still have to be preparing and doing many other things because during the day, there's not enough time for you to do preparations except for attending classes and also for these meetings that are taking place throughout the day. So it has added a lot of stress.”

4.4.3 SUB-THEME 3: SUPPORT DEFICIENCY

According to the results, participants perceive that there is a severe deficiency of support mechanisms to help staff, which adds to their stress.

❖ LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

There is a clear lack of support systems in place to support employees. Staff require teaching and learning support, but management does not provide same. Staff are expected to performance at their optimum but the support is not there. This leads to staff becoming frustrated and stressed. Winefield et al.'s (2008:175) study found that lecturers were not happy with “five aspects of their job (in rank order, university management, hours of work, industrial relations, chance of promotion and rate of pay)”. All these stressors relate to a lack of support, which is also perceived as a stressor by the participants in the current study. The following excerpts from the focus group highlight this finding:

Reference 1

“So my attitude is surely - in the time, and again, it's a lack of support from management in terms of as if you have a laptop problem or computer from surely there should be a system in place that when you take it in, you get another one that you can use for however long it's going to take to fix yours. But in all of this we have webinars on this and webinars on that and this and this and this. But these are fundamental

issues that affect us as academics doing the core business, and there is no strategy in place If your laptop breaks or something goes wrong with it.”

Reference 2

“OK, so it also looks like you said it's not just the upper management, it's the departments that service us. That support us, or lack of support. But the only support service that seems to work is the exams department.”

Reference 3

“So can I just pick up on something that you said, that phrase do your job. So and I think that's what I'm finding is missing. And I made this point earlier that so many of the issues that we have and the support that we need as academics is actually not there. There's all sorts of stuff that really doesn't help us at all. And we're not being supported in what we need to do our job.”

Crazy one

“This is crazy one once again, I think the lack of a support system if I may say um its excepted that you have to observe ad follow what is expected in terms of your performance, in terms of your ratings, in terms of output. Um, when you find what you are doing is not probably understood and not really supported and and uh not really understanding that uh there is a differentiation in terms of what is expected, from individuals in different posts levels.”

Reference 2

“there with lack of support both from superiors and management as a whole.”

Gibbons (1998:324) found that there was a significant relationship between insufficient administrative support and emotional exhaustion/stress in academics in Northern Ireland and England and that institutional management styles correlated with emotional exhaustion and stress.

❖ RESOURCES

Staff are not given adequate teaching resources especially from a technological perspective. Laptops are old and new computers are not provided. This hinders teaching ability. Furthermore, funding resources are not given to obtain additional assistance for teaching and staff become overloaded. Engle's (2012) research revealed that academics report significant levels of stress related to work relationships, control, resources, and communication, as well as job uncertainty, excessive overload, and work-life balance. This study also found resources and the lack thereof to be a stressor for participants.

Reference 1

"But in order to get something in certainly, in our offices that you need to improve your job, be it a new laptop or - I ordered the whiteboard for my office two years ago. I'm still waiting. And nobody seems to care. And after a while, you give up asking, and so you make do and you make a plan. And so, so many people are working in situations where - my laptop speaker, doesn't work at the moment. So I went out and bought myself some headphones to override the speaker because although IT people are actually very friendly and nice, but I'm told it has to go to the workshop. And if you go to the workshop and can be there for three weeks, how can you teach online without a laptop for three weeks?"

Reference 2

"Can I just add exactly that and say my laptop stopped working, the charging port at the beginning of in August? They had it for six weeks, and nobody actually worried

that I had to work online, and I had no laptop to work with, and I've never had a desktop in my office.

I had to make a plan and I said to my colleagues this is similar to employing somebody as a delivery person. Giving them a motor vehicle and when the motor vehicle breaks down, saying to them, Oh sorry, we don't have a plan to help you, but you must continue making your deliveries.”

Reference 3

“They put. OK. OK. first of all, a couple of years back, we put in a request for new computers. So what does our dean do? He goes and he buys us desktop computers. Now we're expected to take our computer into the classroom to plug it into all this fancy equipment we've got. So does that mean that I must now take my desk along to my lecture venue, switch on my desktop, and there kind of went ten minutes for it to boot up to be able to teach the catch that showed, in his wisdom, he bought us this talks. Maybe they were cheaper than laptops, but they're not as functional. So now what happens is in lockdown we're still supposed to do work. How must I do that? So must I take my desktop home with me now? So what do I do? I go and buy myself a laptop so that I can do my work for DUT. OK, so we're supposed to do the work as they say, we must provide the cars or, you know, kind of maintain the cars, but I'm using my own equipment in order to do DUT work. So that's one of the coping strategies is, yeah, buy your own stuff that you can carry on doing your work.”

Reference 4

“And that's also one of my big - I would like to support you in that. I've been involved in gened since we started. I remember the issues that we, as academics, raised when we went to the olive tree when it was first introduced to us and we were told these are not issues that we must discuss now. We'll discuss them later, and we cannot tell you that five, six, seven years later, we are still dealing with those issues. For me, over and above my workload, I coordinate law for life, which is across the whole year. In the second semester, there are 14 classes about 15 hundred students, seven or eight

part-time lecturers, and I have to do that over and above my workload. And every time we ask, where is the money, where is the funding, why the funding not following the student into our department. The part time lecturers are paid pathetically for the qualifications that they have, it's embarrassing to actually see how much they get paid or how little they get paid. And every time we actually say we need a full time academic coordinator for this subject, which was put in the budget that we submitted when we said it will come back to our department, they're telling us there's no money available."

❖ LACK OF CARE

There is a lack of care exercised by the institution. The concerns of staff are not being heard or addressed. Management seems to do their own things and impose conditions and mandates. Staff feel helpless and stress mounts.

Sam

"But when we voiced that as legal professionals from our department, most of us being attorneys or advocates, the institution takes absolutely no notice of us whatsoever and says we're not even going to listen to you.

And I find it quite stressful because we now have to carry that extra stress, which is not what we agreed to at the time that we took on post-grad students so the sort of top down approach. So, whatever they want to do, they do without a lawyer.

And if we do get to input, it's more ticking box exercise. We nobody really takes us seriously. They just make it look as if they've engaged with us, but they haven't actually engaged with us."

Reference 1

"I mean the fact that designing the calendar the way they are goes to show that nobody cares. We literally have about if I'm saying 10 days of for the year um it might be a lot you know people are sitting with 50 days of leave left at the end of the year, it just goes to show that nobody cares. I mean who we not used to working like this um I've always said every year you know there's just certain times the year where our bodies know it's that time and so when it gets to the second week in December you start feeling sluggish because you know It's time to slow down and shut off and you know it's just just not happening now, it didn't happen last year and it's not gonna happen again this year so I dunno I feel that nobody cares."

Reference 2

"I would like to also say that the whole like the previous speaker indicated about management and senior management are aware of this and and literally don't care so what's the point in informing people when you gonna have meeting and people will listen but there's action."

❖ LACK OF EMPATHY

Relating to the above, there is a lack of empathy. This means that management does not bother to understand what is it that staff are going through. They seem to have an 'if one is not happy, then leave' type of attitude.

Lion

"Can I support what has just been said, because remember when the new VC came in? What was his whole story about? He's the bus driver and all these people on the bus? OK, all these people on the bus. And if you don't belong on this bus, get off. If you don't want to fall in with what we want to do, get off the bus. And every time, like when we went on strike, it was all about the bus driver. And I mean, all these iminingos

and things that he puts out is about being on the right bus. And that's, you know, that sort of stuff does not make the staff feel secure. So, you know, it makes you think, do I want to be here, number one and number two, even if I want to be here, I may not be good enough to be here because he's going to get rid of me. So, yes, I fully agree with him. But that statement, that comment.”

“we have very little empathy that comes from management and even executive management as well um it's almost as if they know or see what's going on, you know on an operational level so for example workload um you know I think everyone in this meeting is from the same faculty so we aware of the workload model, um we filled in a workload model in the beginning of the year, the year is over and we still don't know we still haven't received responses so that just goes to show that nobody actually cares, you know so you spoke earlier on about um like surveys and things like that, what's the point of filling a survey because nobody cares.”

❖ **LACK OF LEAVE**

There is no proper leave system in place especially during the current situation of online teaching. Hence staff cannot take leave easily which leads to burnout.

“I think for me personally one of the major thing is no proper leave or time off for someone to refresh and rejuvenate so we find that we are extremely fatigued and fatigue leads to stress and again affects one's health so I'll just leave it there.”

❖ **POOR HRM**

The Human Resources Department also does not seem to play a role in taking care of staff. The existence of any HR is to put staff needs first and harness human capital. However, the HR does not do such at the institution and seems more focused on their own promotions.

“Don't you think that's a sad indictment about the institution? When one of the senior HR directors said to us that HR was in critical care and ICU. Then after him we got Ngidi in after him – Ngidi didn't make any improvement; all that he did was he re-constituted the department that everybody got promotions to senior managers or to director level and all that jazz. We're not getting any more work out of them. They're not performing any better. In fact, some of them were even suspended.”

“Now we've got a new senior director HR and things are still not working. So how do they get to? I think this was kind of mentioned. How did they get to bumble along and not perform? And it we have to perform. We've got all these things against us, like 80% pass rate. The PMS. So we are expected to perform, and they get away scot free.”

4.4.4 SUB-THEME 4: BULLYING AND IMPOSITION

This seems to be evident and a key cause of occupational stress.

❖ BULLYING

Workplace bullying was a reality and this was primarily due to HODs not being able to balance mandates from management and staff interests. This means that mandates are imposed on staff and staff are bullied into complying.

“Can I support that because I think what's happened as well is that that critical function of HODs, that is a communication between the staff and the interests of the staff and the interests of management. I think there's been such bullying tactics that so many of them have been overwhelmed by the bullying tactics that have happened, that that representation of what staff need. That's been shut off now. We don't have a voice because they've been bullied into submission.”

❖ IMPOSING POLICY

Relating to the above, the imposing of policy on staff was seen as stressful as staff were not heard and had to comply irrespective if it was legal or ethical or not.

Reference 1

“And so while I'm also just on this, I think as well, I'm finding what's also stressful in this institution is this top down approach to management with policies of change that impact us directly as academics. And when we put input into that, we basically told they're not listening to us.”

Reference 2

“And I think for me that this retrospective application of policies in this faculty regarding the post-grad students now with having to publish in order to get masters and doctorate, that from a legal perspective that its unlawful, it's unethical and it's on so many levels, contractually in terms of the Consumer Protection Act.”

Omoniyi (2013) found that the university administration has caused stress amongst academic employees (63.00 percent). As stated by Ofoegbu (2006) in Omoniyi (2013), the key to stress from university management may be regarded from the interface between the expectation has often resulted in strikes owing to delayed and irregular salary payment, poor work environment, lack of feedback, and social supports.

❖ RETRENCHMENTS AND STABILITY

This was a serious issues as it related to exactly a current reality of what staff were going through. Staff without certain qualifications (such as Masters Minimum) were being retrenched. This again related to the above where conditions were imposed on staff. Job security therefore became a key stressor.

Reference 1

“and I am not a trade unionist at heart. I am, and I've heard the term social justice and all that sort of thing. I believe in fairness, whether it's for the institution or for the staff. When I see that somebody is doing the wrong thing, whether it's management or staff, I don't have a problem with that. Now what they have done in terms of this retrenchment of people who don't have Masters, I am not - kind of there's two camps to this.”

Reference 2

“Because, as Kiki has said, and given you go all to the institution, that all sorts of things to the detriment of your further studies, perhaps whereas there is another side to the story, if DUT want people with higher qualifications that they can supervise more because that's where the more money comes from. Not an issue, you know, I'm guessing that they've got the right to do that. But what they kind of forgetting is that the people who don't have the master's, we have given the order to the university. I just kind of kicked out like a sack of potatoes is gone. We don't want you anymore. I have an issue with it. But at the same time, as I say, is this this whole concept of fairness? And I don't believe that DUT is seeing the staff as important to the organization that they are not.”

Reference 3

“So it comes with a lot of insecurity in terms of the job and a lot of stress.”

Reference 4

“I hear it's talking about job security again, looking at what is happening just now, about people without masters and also also now being afraid that what if they come to people without Ph.Ds now? What if they go to people with other publications

now? So again, there's that insecurity and instability that within myself, that something might happen."

❖ **LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM**

There was also poor workplace professionalism, as indicated by participants' responses:

➤ **Nepotism and favouritism**

There appears to be nepotism and favouritism amongst staff which is not addressed.

"linked to that is erm when you find nepotism or favouritism glaring and um it could be noticeable amongst colleagues but nobody really wants to talk out, nobody wants to say anything."

➤ **Lies and deceit**

Some staff deliberately spread lies and false information about others and then try to retract statements. This leads to mistrust and undermining.

"and more especially in the face where individuals would deliberately communicate mistruths and then forget subsequently that this was what was said um the retract statements. So that can be quite destabilising but um you can't fight to be respected um expect uh the uh personality constitution of individuals that behave like that and continue being the person you want to be."

➤ **Targeted**

Some staff feel targeted whereby when they speak out, or stand up for themselves then they somehow are labelled and targeted.

Crazy One

“either you choose to stand up for yourself and if choose to stand up for yourself um I think when it comes age people kind of take it very personally so you either choose to stand up for yourself and you know you kind of have a like a target on your back from that particular person or a particular group of people or you kind of just have to go with the flow take on the chin and you know just keep on moving. Yeah, thanks.”

➤ **Professional Jealousy**

There is also professional jealousy between colleagues and this leads to barriers being imposed which prevents staff achievement and progress.

Crazy one

“I think another consideration is subtle not something very profound is the prevalence of a sense of profession jealousy and accompanied with that is deliberate barriers or uh subtle barriers which may not be very um noticeable amongst others but you could see continuous barriers established um to try a mitigate success to try and to break your spirit down um and I think that as well that can contribute to a sense of stress.”

4.4.5 SUB-THEME 5: POWER DYNAMICS

There are various power dynamics at play especially from management/senior management.

❖ INABILITY TO ESCALATE

It becomes difficult to escalate issues to senior management. Grievances lodged are not taken seriously and are not addressed. This leads to frustration. Even operational issues remain unresolved for long periods. Staff then feel demotivated and would rather not escalate matters and just work in their silos.

Reference 1

“So this is what I did. As I said to them, you know, this is what the issue is. This is how we are being affected as academics and this is what we could do about it. So we could find out from the networks, from the providers how long it takes the time between us giving them the instruction to load the data and actually loading it so we know we can plan, when to load the data so that the students don't run out of data. That's in effect what I said. His response was that he forwarded my message to the DVC teaching and learning, and he said what I suggested was this person could be given a job of provisioning data for the students, as she seems to have come up with things that we haven't thought about. But the DVC's response to him was that no, AEM or EMC, or whatever committee gave you the job to do it, so you must do it. But just make sure you do it properly. And what happens? We're still sitting with the same problem a year later.”

Crazy one

“you sometimes either throw in the towel, except the situation or you can escalate it to a higher level in terms of lodging a grievance and it will become stressful as well, so you need to make a choice go with the flow in terms of excepting not respected as a professional. It is open knowledge when issues are recurring, example the workload

it's been escalated eh but it comes back down to the line manager taking responsibility and when that line manager is deliberately manipulating situations eh and nobody wants to say anything and the rest know exactly what's happening. What do you do? As I've indicated earlier you either toe the line and continuing doing and working in your own silos and little corner rather than challenge but that's the choice one has to make you either escalate or continue fighting or just withdraw and stand back and continue doing what you are doing. Thank you."

❖ CYNICISM

The senior management such as the VC was also cynical in their approach. They occupy the high position and make promises that don't materialise. After their terms ends, nothing much changes and staff feel cynical at the end because they had hoped for positive change which doesn't happen.

Reference 1

"I feel the same. I mean, I've been here for almost 30 years. I've seen vice chancellors come and go each one with their own vision. To be quite honest with you, a lot of them are here for the five years or whatever to beef up their CVs to make it look good so that they can get a better job somewhere. And we, as the people in the trenches, has our job, actually changed that much. Is it any better than it was? It is we still doing the same job? It's now worse because we've got no support. But we've seen these vice chancellors come in and it's made me very cynical. Who's the last vice chancellor came in? We did re-curriculum. We did gened. We're still struggling with those gened issues and now we must envision - we must embrace envision one."

Reference 2

Yes, because my job is still the same, I'm still doing, trying to actually lecture students and get them through the system, and nobody's supporting me in that. So I think it makes you quite cynical eventually.

❖ BIAS

There can be some occurrences of biasness which is based on gender and number of years in the department.

“I’ve so and so has been here for X amount of years then you know they should be given so of carte blanche when it comes to personal things and because you slightly younger or even sometimes I think in terms of your of your sex as well because you’re a female when you should kind of um go with certain routes it in terms of how you are perceived within the department.”

4.4.6 SUB-THEME 6: RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION

Staff were not being recognised nor appreciated for their hard work.

❖ LACK OF RECOGNITION

Staff are not recognised for their hard work. Staff carry heavy workloads and aspire for quality education but they are overwhelmed with other tasks to attend to. They are also told that if they are not happy, then can leave which makes them feel demotivated.

Reference 1

“And there’s no recognition for how hard it is to kind of have gone on to Moodle and Teams and learned all of this. And it’s just, yeah, it’s not even important in anybody’s life. And as other people have said, you continue being bombarded with webinars on this and webinars on net and webinars on the next thing. But in the actual core business of this institution, which is teaching and learning, there is absolutely no recognition of how fundamentally important that is. And I find that very stressful.”

Reference 2

“But that's right. That's exactly the point that I was making earlier is that they almost treat you as if you actually don't know what you're talking about. So there's no value for the expertise that each of us in our own field actually carry. There's no respect for that. It's almost as though we are - If we don't like it, we must leave and will replace you tomorrow with another person - you have no value to this institution. And I think when I look at some of the people that have been retrenched in this last round of not having masters, I find it fairly horrifying that a lot of them are people that have been really hard working, loyal members of DUT staff and. And for me, it makes me sit back and look and think, Well, you know, what's the point now?”

❖ JUST A NUMBER

Some staff feel as if they are just a number despite their commitment to the institution.

“I think it the first objective is saying I'm stressed and very stressed. I'm very stressed and very unhappy employee in DUT. Because I feel like I'm just a number, because I feel like I'm nothing but a slave.”

4.5 THEME 2: IMPACT AND SYMPTOMS

Impact and symptoms of occupational stress revolved around the following key areas, highlighted by the Hierarchy Chart in Figure 4.4. The chart shows key areas of impacts on participants' quality of life; work-life balance; physical and overall health.

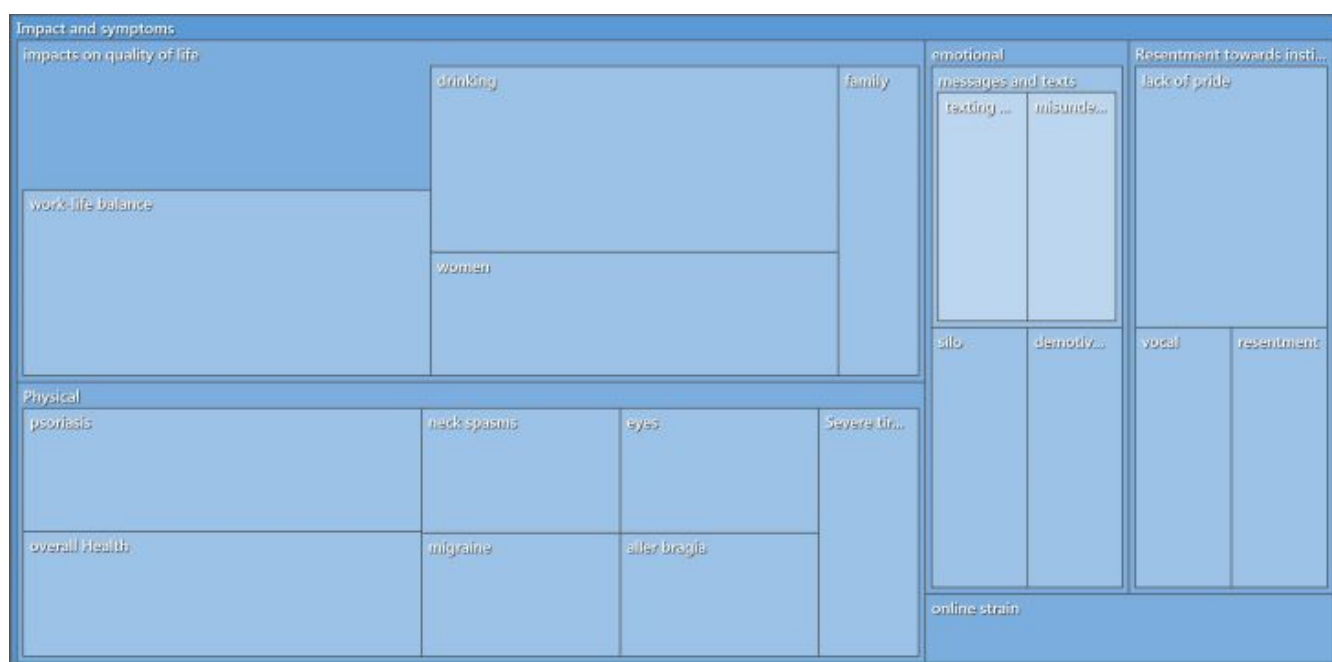


Figure 4.4 Hierarchy Chart of Impact and Symptoms

4.5.1 Physical

Sisley, Henning, Hawken and Moir (2010) state that “Physiological and social consequences of workplace stress are given a wide exposure in the literature. Problems with personal and professional relationships, insomnia, headaches, anxiety, panic attacks, and depression”. Moreover, Ejue (2013) asserted that job stressors are related to strain, and mental and physical ill-health amongst employees. The sub-themes below highlight these previous studies’ findings.

Physical symptoms dominated this theme. These are outlined below.

❖ OVERALL HEALTH

Overall health is affected by stress. One staff member even stepped down from a leadership role due to the stress and impact on her health.

Wacky wine-head

“Um but I do find The stress of work is impacting on my health and quality of life. I had last year applied to um to be a program team leader in my department. And that was successful but I found that with in about 9 months of that I’ve had to step down

because of health reasons and to me it's that was definitely stress that impacted on my health. So I was just not coping um and had to you know take a step back so that I could um have a lesser workload and have something that I could actually cope with so I'm just gonna leave my answer there."

❖ ALLER BRAGIA

More specifically, one respondent gets recurrences of Aller Bragia due to stress.

Wacky wine-head

"I was diagnosed about 6 years ago with aller bragia something it's not something I remember everyday but I looking at your objectives it doesn't really speak about online or remote work so just work in general I find that the stress of work triggers the fibro so you know when I'm really stressed about something then I'll have this major flair out for a week or two weeks, and it and some days my feet are swollen, wrists are swollen, fingers are swollen but you know you I still get by, I still do my work, I still meet my deadlines."

❖ EYES

Some are suffering from eye strain due to staring at computers for too long.

Lion

"And my eyes are a problem now, staring at that computer screen. How about you? Yeah, so we're not going to have much chit chat, she said to me. Do that. The rule of 20-20-20 – After 20 minutes looking at the computer, you look away for 20 seconds for a distance of 20 meters.

And yesterday I was setting my tests and I didn't do the 20202020 thing. I was kind of setting my tests and moderating assignments and things like that, and I wondered why I couldn't see out of my eyes. And then I realized I actually hadn't done what the optometrist has said I should do."

❖ MIGRAINE

Migraines are also a physical symptom for one respondent and is triggered by stress.

“I can’t tell my boss that I can’t type today or I have a migraine today, basically it will be an everyday story if I had to do that, so um I definitely find that you know things like the workload and stress triggers it 100%.”

❖ NECK SPASMS

Another suffered from neck spasms due to stress.

“that I noticed my stress levels also increase because of neck spasms, etc.”

❖ PSORIASIS

Flare- ups of Psoriasis also occurred due to stress.

Reference 1

“um it can become a bit much uh and also notice it’s taken a toll in terms of um health and I ended with psoriasis and a whole lot of other kind of things uh related to the health which is very much stress related uh and flairs up during stressful times.”

Reference 2

“Can I just add as well, its Wacky Winehead again son in times of um anything physical like you mentioned somebody earlier mentioned I think psoriasis.”

❖ SEVERE TIREDNESS

Another respondent had severe exhaustion and this impacted on their family time as they no energy for anything else. Work and stress drained out their energy levels.

“But on Friday, last week I was so tired and my eyes were aching. I was exhausted. And then we went out on Friday evening and I could hardly keep my eyes open. My husband’s been saying, That’s it, You are not doing anything this whole weekend. You are not working. You need to take a break and yes I need a break. And now we’re going through to the 24th of December and when everything that’s. This this semester ends on the 28th of December, any chance for a break will be ruined.”

4.5.2 Emotional

Emotional stress was also brought about by the current work environment of the participants. This agrees with Fevre and Kolt’s (2010) assertion that stress may be perceived physically, psychologically and as emotional states.

❖ MESSAGES AND TEXTS

In the digital world, communication was reduced primarily to texts and messages.

➤ Misunderstandings

Due to such communication methods, it was easy for misunderstandings to occur due to lack of face-to-face.

“so if I really need to speak to somebody I will obviously via email again just work related so so I mean generally I would somebody that would speak to everybody

friendly with everybody and no issues I just feel there's too much misunderstanding with chats and emails etc, times are not taken in the correct way so definitely less communication."

➤ **Texting tone**

Some people did not know how to write a proper text and their 'tone' could cause undue emotional stress.

Delta 7

"just to add onto the last speaker point I 100% agree with that something find as well with remote working is that tend to communicate with our colleagues a lot via email, Whatsapp, etc. There a lot of misunderstanding takes place you know um it's very difficult gets somebody's tone to when they emailing."

❖ **DEMOTIVATED**

Staff felt demotivated due to lack of support but continuation of workload and stress thereof. Their commitment was not being appreciated.

Crazy One

"When there is a lack of support um hypothetically from your line manager and from seniors then you find that obviously going to contribute to a sense of breaking down your morale and your sense of commitment but then again it requires one to be resilient and uh and be able to understand that in the absence of such support you still need to persevere especially of you have an established career goals and you on a trajectory of what you want to achieve in the next few years."

❖ **SILO**

People avoided teamwork and worked in silos.

“uh and especially if you are not working as a team I think um and you now you become like a lone ranger and working in silos uh that as well can be demotivating. Thank you.”

4.5.3 Impacts on quality of life

Stress was impacting on the overall quality for life for many respondents.

Reference 1

“more the occupational stress not necessarily feeding into the personal life but impacting in terms of quality of life.”

Reference 2

“Um but I do find The stress of work is impacting on my health and quality of life.”

This finding concurs with Ismail et al's (2013) study, which demonstrated that conflict, work burden, and time pressure have a strong and direct impact on lecturers' job-related stress. Job-related stress, in turn, has a considerable and direct impact on lecturers' HRQoL.

❖ DRINKING

A concerning finding was that some respondents were resorting to 'drinking,' which included alcohol. Some also drank other beverages that increased energy (e.g. Coffee)

Leopard

“And I wasn’t kidding about being driven to drink the other day.”

Kiki

“I can see – you’re hyped enough. So coping again, I think I also agree with Leopard because the way I drink coffee now, I have always been a coffee person, but it’s even worse now. So sometimes at the end of, I know that my Thursdays afternoon session is my last for the week, I don’t have class on Friday, so it would be my wine night.”

Lion

“So last night I did something different. I had a whisky instead, but now I mean, I drink whatever I drink I drink ice and then I have some alcohol with my ice. So if I poured a whiskey, I mean, like, there’s whiskey glass that is one size, and the ice cubes are very large so don’t fit into the whisky glass, so now I drink whisky out of the bulbous gin glasses, so it’s difficult to know how much you are drinking.”

❖ FAMILY

Family life was being compromised and people are not able to give relevant attention to family members.

Kiki

“And I’ve had a grandchild with Covid over this period. And I’ve barely seen him. I’ve seen him four times and he’s 14 months now; and he’s in South Africa. It’s not like he’s in England, because I’m working and they’re not in Cape Town. It’s very difficult to see him. Because I can’t get away.”

❖ WOMEN

Women were also really feeling the pressure due to them having multiple roles inclusive of work, home and family. They needed to be able to still work, and look after kids and family needs. This caused added pressure and stress on their minds and bodies. Due to a lack of role models, less socialization from women in their own rank, gender stereotypes, and higher role conflict as they attempt to combine roles at work and at home, Engle 92012:abstract) avers that female academics may face more stress and strain than their male colleagues.

Reference 1

“Yeah, yeah. When comparing us women with men, we have our family. We have to take it off our husbands. We have to take care of our children and so forth. So unlike men, you know, they are just there for work. And then that's it. I don't know. But I don't know. You know, as a family, as African lady, you know, I have to take care of my house. I have to take care of my children. And then at the same time, I have to work.”

Reference 2

“And I think as women and especially we've got families and children, it definitely has become more difficult because of this 24-7 mentality that has arisen in this institution.”

Adeoye's (2002) research work believed women to be more stressed, which agrees with the participants in this study.

❖ WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work life balance was also compromised. People had to use personal time to adhere to work deadlines. Late hours and early mornings are pressurising and leaves little time to do anything else.

Delta 7

“Like I said in the beginning, you don't have your personal life. And then life, you cannot balance your work life and your family life. We work up to Saturdays, Sundays. You know, you don't have the rest.”

Crazy one

“Uh hence trying to address requirements um in terms of multiple areas the requirements really has an impact in in terms of time uh in terms of managing a work life balancing and having to make choices, obviously the choices now in my situation is more leaning towards addressing the requirements with regards to the work situation while the on the personal life can be managed but it entails much sacrifices. That would be my input in respect to your question, thank you.”

“And it does affect my personal life. I don't have I don't have in life, I must say, because I woke up too late. I wake up very early with all the calls queries. The pressure is very, very high.”

4.5.4 Resentment towards institution

It leads to staff being resentful to the institution.

❖ LACK OF PRIDE

Staff are no longer proud to be affiliated with the institution and to be working there. Furthermore, the drop in education quality can mean that qualification will not be as high ranking as before.

Reference 1

“Years ago, I used to be proud to tell people where I work our work. Now, when people say to me, What do you do? I say, Oh, I don't go out and tell them, Oh, I'm a lecturer. When people ask me what I do I tell them that I talk for my living. What do you mean? What do you mean when you lecture university? Not because it is OK in that kind of stuff. I have no pride in this institution, and I think it's good for the institution that I'm

retiring soon. Because, yeah, you know, if you don't love what you're doing, you rather don't do it. And that's kind of ..."

Reference 2

"That is why I'm saying I'm glad I'm going on pension because the qualification that we are issuing is not going to be worth the paper it's printed on. That's why I say I have no pride because I don't want to say, I work at DUT. Do you want people to say is this one of the people that you taught? I don't want to employ them? What have you been doing and doing? No, no, no, no, no."

❖ RESENTMENT

Staff also feel resentful towards the institution due to the environment created by management.

"I think for me, I'll get a little bit resentful because I think a lot of these issues that we have are created by the management of DUT that things could have actually been a lot easier and a lot less stressful during this Covid period. But I also do find that I walk a lot because some days you just actually feel if you can't get out into the bright sunshine and walk or run, you actually going to go completely mad in this situation."

❖ VOCAL

Some staff resort to becoming vocal during meetings. This is because many items are not discussed and leads to built-up anger. Therefore one tends to be more vocal at meetings about key issues and towards people who behave unprofessionally.

"we had a staff meeting for example yesterday and um every time there is a meeting and I would raise an issue and um refer to previous meetings and um the approach of deflection is adopted which individuals may say yes, um and then keep quiet not challenge because obviously that's not a strategy that's being adopted to silence you

or not pursue the discussion eh it tends to evoke a lot of anger and I found that upon personal reflection that I should not be handling it that way so hence I become quite vocal I say what I want to say um somebody reminded me Crazy 1 remember these meetings are being recorded and I did indicate erm that erm whether it's recorded or not I would repeat it in any forum um if I find any injustice being perpetuated I think I have a right to say it in the forum where it should be said and without any hesitation in terms of mentioning names whether you present there or not because it's glaring um if it doesn't affect you individuals supposedly keep quiet uh so each person for himself so hence say what you have to say and even it's not having any impact come of changed behaviour amongst certain individuals so I have now I've decided that I will continue um vocalising my opinions but I need to contain my sense of anger towards such individuals who behave so unprofessionally and deceitfully."

4.5.5 Online strain

The online environment also causes stress and strain, which impacts on staff. Online marking and other factors (as reported in preceding themes) causes severe strain.

"when its marking time and I think our faculty and it's large number of students um during assessments and marking is when a lot of stress is added on and now particularly is now done online so that is a lot more strain online uh with regards to online marking um and the others everybody else has already commented on and I thought to add that it's the volume of work that is done specifically with the faculty of management sciences that is also not looked at as compared to other faculties."

Stress is a key source of stress, according to Adeoye (2002), who studied the correlates of stress among female professors. According to research, while men unwind at clubs and other relaxation centers, the female professor stays at home to work, attend to household tasks, and care for the children. Stress and stress-related results, he claims, have substantial negative effects on people's mental, psychological, and physical health.

Especially among women, this results in nagging mothers, difficult and uncooperative coworkers, and extreme intolerance against everyone.

4.6 THEME 3: COPING MECHANISMS

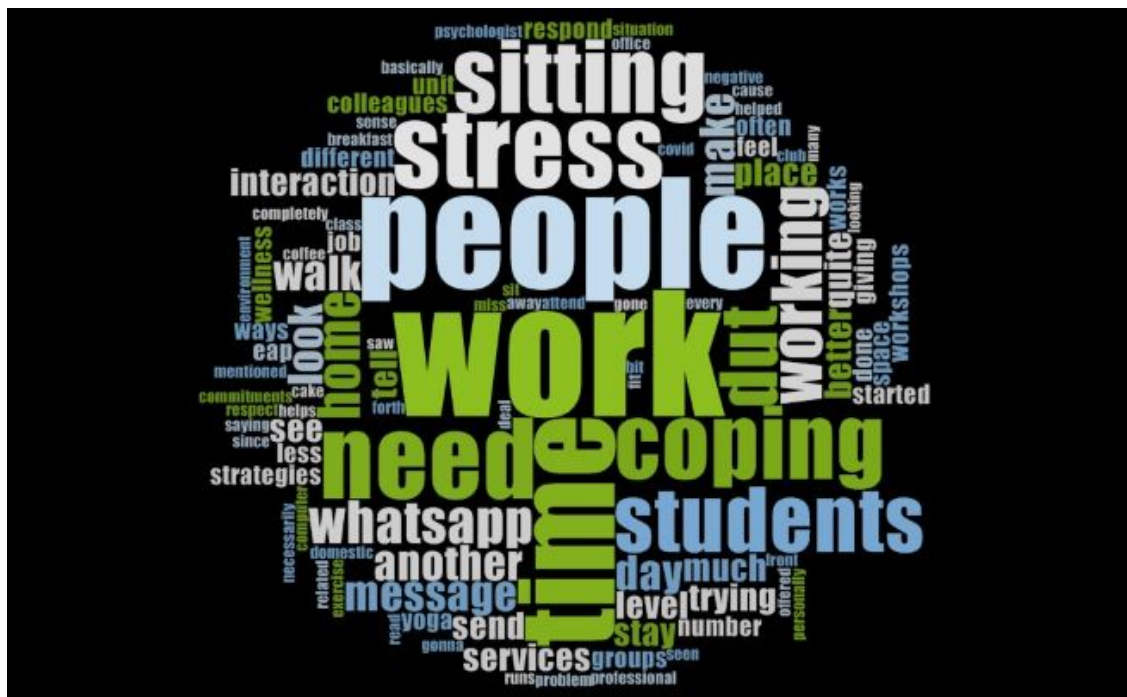


Figure 4.5 Word Cloud Summary of Coping Mechanisms

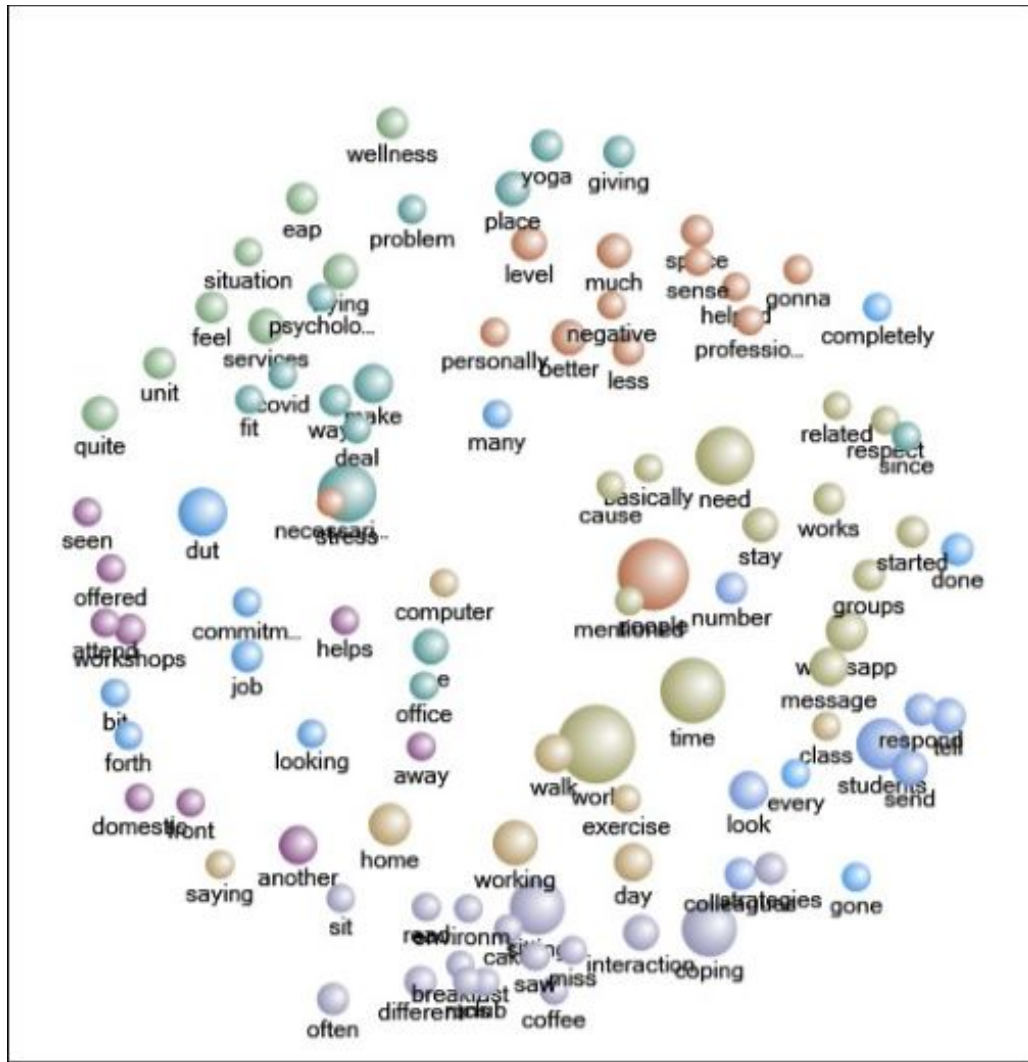


Figure 4.6 Cluster Bubble Depicting Key Coping Mechanisms

This important Sub-theme examined how respondents were coping with stressful situations.

The figures above (word cloud and cluster bubble) show the key words in larger size, alluding to the frequency of use of such mechanisms. For Example, participants mentioned walking, exercise, yoga as coping strategies that they employ.

4.6.1 Holistic wellbeing

An important subtheme of holistic wellbeing was found. This was informed by the following. Ismail, Rahman and Abidin (2014) urged Employees to make a commitment to living a healthy lifestyle and to engage actively in the health promotion initiatives available. It include cultivating healthy personality traits and behaviours, avoiding recognized

stressors, identifying and restructuring cognitive distortions linked to stressful events, planning and prioritizing, and maintaining good physical and mental health. The participants in this study indicated that they were making efforts to apply strategies to cope with their stress. The following excerpts highlight these coping mechanisms:

❖ DISTANCE FROM NEGATIVITY

Many respondents chose to distance themselves from negativity. This included negative people, situations, conversations (including gossip) and relationships. By distancing themselves, it allowed for them to focus more on positive aspects and cope with stress.

Reference 1

“The other coping mechanism that I have adopted is not necessarily a healthy and conducive approach especially in terms of holistic well-being is distancing myself from colleagues engage with individuals um on a professional basis without being rude maintain respect but not going beyond the parameters of a professional relationship. I think that has helped to really cope because the less said um to the malicious ones uh the better uh is in terms of safeguarding your own space um if one wants to really look at well-being in the work place it is not the best strategy that has actually worked for me.”

Reference 2

“also distancing from you know staff members we don’t all get along so I learn to distance myself from people that sort of trigger is a bad word but people that sort of trigger you, those that kind of give of bad vibes you just know this person is gonna gossip too much, they gonna talk about other people not really work related um I not really cared about it.”

Reference 3

"I think what has emanated a few of the speaker have in terms of how we manage relationships. Some have chosen not to become too friendly uh distance ourselves from those we need to be circumspect about and continued with our daily chores in terms of maintaining getting a sense of professionalism um when you very cautious about the trouble makers in your circle in your space um uh then you always watching over your back. So rather than becoming embroiled uh in such toxic relationships in these associations step back and only engage when it's necessary. Thank you."

❖ SELF AND TIME-MANAGEMENT

Since one could not help the external unpredictable timelines, one had to then focus on creating their own time management schedule. This time management schedule involved focus on both work and self.

"So support at a higher level or from a higher level would be appreciated but in the absence that it does add to a sense of uh demotivation but then again it comes back to how do you manage it as an individual and uh personally um when I find there are such challenges I just need to ignore it except what is being said and done and just move on and work around my own personal space."

Reference 2

"I'd like to add and I think I'd also like to take in last respondent in terms of uh putting in time frames especially for students and asking them to only consult or message during a certain time so I think I'm gonna adopt that as well."

❖ SPIRITUALITY

One respondent turned to spirituality through meditation and prayer which helped to calm their minds and deal with stress.

"I think we have to use multiple coping mechanisms um one of my strongest strategies is um adopting a high level of spirituality Um in that respect I find that um medication has really helped and and I started with that quite early in the morning and linked to this spirituality is um prayer um a firm believer in the forces of the universe will take its due course in whatever happens to you whether its negative or positive there is a reason and you need to develop the strength and the resilience to handle that."

❖ NOT SAYING TOO MUCH

It also helped not to say too much in order to prevent words from being used against you.

"Um I found that too much of interaction, saying too much is not necessarily used in a very positive light and sometimes works against you."

4.6.2 Relaxing activities

Many respondents resorted to engaging in relaxing activities. These included.

❖ EXERCISE

Exercising was found to be effective. This is scientifically proven as exercise released endorphins which alleviates stress. It was also good for health and mind.

"So I do think that we need to find ways to deal with our stress. And I don't, I haven't been exercising that when I'm on campus, you kind of walk around, walk around the office, you walk to your lecture. Then you might walk up and down a few flights of stairs to get to class or something like that because you can't get into the lifts. I'm sorry, I have to get that in there."

“But that’s one of the reasons that I like working from home is that I don’t have to try and fight students to get in a lift so I don’t have to walk up and down six flights of stairs. But anyway, my husband keeps saying to me, You got to exercise, you’ve got to exercise because you’re sitting in front of that computer the whole day is not doing this body any good.”

“Another coping I think on terms of physical activity um it’s crazy to be sitting at a computer from 7 and well after sunset so I make it my duty go to the gym every day without fail. And I find that helps to clear my mind and come back rejuvenated and then continue my work.”

❖ SOCIALISING AND ESCAPISM

Some respondents enjoyed socialising out of work and/or even working from social space such as restaurants as this provide escapism from stress.

“So I kind of have outside interests that kind of keep me sane, that’s a good bunch of people, so the interaction that I’m missing here with my colleagues, I’m making it up with the motorbike guys.”

Reference 1

“Totally toxic, but seriously, the other day I had been sitting working and then I saw a WhatsApp message - our golf club that does take away meals, does cakes and things like that. And I was in the meeting, I think. And then I saw, Oh, here’s a photograph of some cake.

So I phoned some friends and said we’re going down to the golf club, for coffee and cake. And I just needed to get out because I mean, I was sitting, I was sitting in my office looking out the window and thinking, It’s such a nice day. I’m here, I’m sitting cooped up and I thought, bugger it. So I just made the time to go out and interact with

people, and that's what I miss. There's that interaction with people. I really do miss it. So coping strategies for me is to go out for coffee and cake or breakfast runs or toots."

Reference 2

"Another coping strategy is that on Fridays I don't have classes, so what I do on Fridays, I just take my laptop and go to a restaurant and work from there. So it is. I see different faces."

Reference 3

"Not because I like to see different faces, and I want to be eating while I'm working."

Reference 4

"Look at my bag. I brought my Kindle. So if I'm sitting there, I thought, if I'm sitting here with nothing to do, I'll sit and read. So that's escapism - reading when where you get out of this kind of forget about the stress I read, as I say, I do the breakfast runs, but rather motorbikes. We often go out for dinner because that again takes me out of my work environment because work is home, so it gets me out of my work environment."

❖ CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

One respondent was a member of a club and this was a good distraction from workplace stress.

Lion

"I'm a member of a couple of different clubs and I have time. I'm making time. I will sit up till 01:00 in the morning doing the minutes – I'm the secretary of the motor bike club. The fact that I don't often ride, but we go on breakfast runs, sometimes more often than not, I drive by car, not a motorbike. Doesn't matter."

❖ FAMILY

Focusing on family also helped to reduce stress.

Lion

“Yeah. So I kind of have interests outside of DUT that are kind of personal that I make time to pursue because that was is where my husband's interest is so if I want to spend time with him, that's what I have to do.”

❖ WALKS

Long walks and even walks on the beach helped to clear one's head.

Reference 1

“And also exercise like somebody also mentioned a well, lots of walks in the beach sort of working out just to get those endorphins yeah, thanks.”

Reference 2

“But, other coping mechanisms I have adopted was also taking a walk on the beach I think we need some fresh air.”

❖ YOGA

One respondent found yoga to be effective.

Crazy One

“um a little bit of yoga and meditation in between when I can but perhaps I need to do that more often as well.”

❖ LAUGHING

Sometimes, even engaging in simple things such as laughter was helpful to alleviate stress.

Lion

“Coping strategies. Driven to drink, whether it’s coffee or alcohol, doesn’t matter. And laughter. But this is that we have to do - laugh. If we don’t laugh we’ll be crying.”

4.6.3 Health

From a Health Perspective, people looked at:

❖ MESSAGE

Massage therapy for joints and muscles.

Lion

“Yeah, if I didn’t have this focus group on today, I would have been for a massage today. Seriously, I do. If I tell you how tight this is, you won’t believe me.”

❖ MOVEMENT

Another respondent utilised a chiropractor for all sorts of stretching and movement exercises due to sitting for long periods.

Lunga

“As a little girl I know that I always had like the back problem, but since we started working online it’s even worse now since we’re always sitting down. And I’ve been to the chiropractor, I don’t know how many times. So every now and then I have to

go for this stretch and everything, and I also have to make sure that now when I'm teaching and not just sitting in the same place. I had to buy the headphones so that I can move around and not be sitting at the same place."

4.6.4 Working from home

Working from home, though a change from the norm, was seen as a strong coping mechanism in the following ways.

❖ MAKING THE BEST OF COMFORT ZONE

Some respondent felt that as bad as the environment was, it was still a stable comfort zone. One could work from home and run errands and do chores all during the day. Many workplaces would not allow for such.

Reference 1

"Um not necessarily a healthy consideration but um in terms of job security I think all of us um have commitments, financial commitments, um and we do need our jobs. And also in terms of the fear that's currently prevailing I don't think any of us are really prepared to compromise job security and even practice that they prevent us from even considering relocating because of family commitments and so forth. So uh for me personally despite the level of dissatisfaction, disconcertment with thw how we are being managed as women, as employees uh I've made a decision to stay at DUT and make the best of what you have."

Reference 2

"we also there is a little bit of positivity when you look at our jobs at DUT, we are privileged with many things umm and I would say work hours are flexible even though we find ourselves overworked we can run to the shop quickly if we need anything etc

so you find that you will leave DUT looking for greener pastures and find it that you are forced to sit at a desk where you literally have to work 8-5 and you have a 10 minutes tea break etc. and I come from there you work and I will still choose DUT over that life basically so just like you said looking at everything else you probably just stick it out for the next 30 years if we have to.”

❖ SEEING LESS OF PEOPLE

Seeing less of those people that add to your stress was key advantage. Less interaction with negative people allowed for one to be progressive in their work.

Wacky wine-head

“The less I see people the less I speak to people and the less interact with people the better for me you know personally I feel you know these interactions, the conflict, the disrespect, it does cause its own stress and it’s obviously going to affect your work going forward so for me just staying in my corner basically works for me.”

Delta 7

“Um but most definitely working from home um has it’s challenges trying ti balance however I think it’s it’s so much better because it like many of the other respondents have indicated that it’s so much better in a sense it helps to stay away from negative vibes, negative people and you only communicate on a professional level with people when you need to and other that you don’t uh so that has actually helped a lot as well.”

❖ SYSTEM IN PLACE

One could have a well organised system at home which could help in effective and conducive working.

Crazy One

“Uh, another factor is I think on the domestic front um having a well organised system at home really helps in terms of um laying out the responsibility of the domestic helper and um fortunately there’s no kids around at the moment to take care of so that has diminished the responsibility of homework and so forth, on the domestic front that’s quite well organised and has taken away a lot of pressure of me as well.”

❖ TRAVEL

People did not have to worry about the stress of travelling/driving.

“So that’s an added stressor, especially as you get older. Um, I think the stress as most of us, the ladies have been saying it’s been very different during COVID to what it was before, and I’m not really sure which way you want us to go. So I really enjoy working from home and that has alleviated a little bit of stress, because it saves me time not having to travel back and forth to campus.”

4.6.5 Technology

Despite the negative of too much technology, it also was beneficial in the following ways.

❖ WHATSAPP

➤ Continuous communication

Due to remote working, WhatsApp became a cost-effective, efficient and convenient method of communication. This allowed for people to stay informed and in the loop.

Lion

“Can I tell you? Coping strategy, this (holding up a cell phone) has kept me in touch with these people, even with my students. My students don’t have this number, they have another number, but it keeps me in touch with everyone. So if I don’t want to talk to my students, I’m just don’t look at that for a few days, but I’m always going to look at this at least once a day.

And this is kind of I’m as guilty as my colleagues or students. If I think of something and it’s like 11:00 at night I’ll send a WhatsApp. I don’t expect the people to respond to it at that stage. But at least I won’t forget. So if this had gone through and if you respond to it tomorrow, that’s great.”

Reference 2

“texts or I don’t do the calls at 2:00 a.m., but I’ll send the message whenever I remember. But if maybe I have to send something, but I tell my class rep, don’t respond to this, but please tell my students this and this and this, so I send it out there, or the tutors.”

➤ Boundaries and cut-off times

However, it was important to set boundaries and have cut-off times. One respondent muted WhatsApp groups when necessary. Another also set time boundaries to receive and reply to messages.

Crazy One

“um my coping strategies are similar to what was mentioned but the one thing I do sort of I’ve done it maybe from last year is that I’ve started muting Whatsapp groups, I find that I’m part of maybe 10 Whatsapp groups right now whether it’s either for work um whether it’s fro like the kids and all of that. What I do, I basically mute the Whatsapp groups because I think it’s far too people don’t fully understand the point Whatsapp groups sometimes um and they don’t sort of stay within the parameters of work hours or is it work related or anything like that.

Um, I've also started cut off times in terms of student students interaction so whether it's the class rep or whether it's somebody messaging me on Teams, whether it's a Whatsapp message whatever it is you know somebody sends me a message the first time and we sort 9 'o clock in the evening I ignore their message and I respond sort of the next day um during works and I tell them that if you need to communicate with me you need to do it between the set time and I find that kind of works if you put that, if you stay the course with that, it does really help cause people sort of respect your sort of time."

4.6.6 Not utilising DUT support

Lastly, it appeared that tall respondent did not seem keen to utilise DUT Support Services.

❖ CONTRADICTION

It was a contradiction to the institution for the following reasons.

➤ Caused by same Organisation

The stress was caused by the same organisation offering the support. Hence the organisation should strive to eradicate the stress rather than creating it and offering support.

Patient X

"with regards the EAP unit um I've never used any of their support even if they have been advertising extensively during the past 2 years especially. And I think one of the reasons for that is because its affiliated with DUT and knowing most of the stresses come from the same platform as in the work environment it's still seen as one of the work related workshops or conferences that you need to attend or seminars and therefore I've just refrained from even attending any of those."

➤ **Not solving root cause**

The organisation was not solving the root cause of the stress. Hence offering support was equivalent to just disguising the root problem.

“There’s a silence there, and now I understand the silence. What the wellness centre is doing is not solving the problem – it’s just putting a bandage over it.

This means binding up the wounds and sending you back into the trenches again and say, I could look and say.”

❖ **LACK OF FEEDBACK**

For those that did consider EAP, there seemed to be a lack of feedback and follow up from the service providers.

J-Lo

“I’m just want to talk about this EAP and the wellness. I’m just I’m in a very dark place, but I was trying to reach the right people for EAP. You know, and I haven’t had any response.”

Crazy One

“Thus far the psychologist has not come back to him and given any kind of feedback, so that’s quite concerning for me especially in such a vulnerable situation where um continuity of such service especially with mental wellness issues are critical to ensure a full recovery of such potential um clients or patients. Thank you.”

❖ **LIMITATIONS**

There were also limitations such as number of consults/visits and this caused confusion on how effective the service would be. Also one may not have the necessary space resources to carry out programmes in their office space.

Reference 1

“But is there something wrong with finding ways ... they’re acknowledging that we have this stress? So they're trying to find ways that we can deal with it to make it kind of to make us cope better with it.

At the same time, I mean, I don't know how I'm going to have to fit in, in my little office, how I'm supposed to fit in the yoga mat so that I can watch it on my computer and do the exercises – there is just no space.

But yeah, you're just trying to say they acknowledge that we have stress. So this I mean, because the Covid is giving us stress, you know, the whole thing around COVID is stressful. So yes, this is ways that you can deal with stress. I don't see a problem with that.”

Reference 1

“just to share am little experience one of my students, an employee at DUT had secured the services of EAP unit um he did see a psychologist there and then he was asked to till they could find a um place at a hospital and subsequently he is still waiting and there is a limitation I think on the number of visits they would allow or DUT would pay for such consultations, so um I did not know such information until he had shared this with me. So it makes you wonder um if individuals want help out of desperation and want to secure the services um ow productive is it, if there’s a limitation in terms of services that the psychologist can would offer, in terms of lack of feedback and monitoring of the entire situation.”

❖ DURING LECTURE AND MEETING TIMES

Wellness workshops and programmes were offered during lecture and meeting times and it becomes strenuous and tedious to fit the programmes into work schedule.

“And so because I don't have time to attend all the workshops, which is already being mentioned because these workshops being offered all the time, but they always do offered in your lecture periods or there's a staff meeting or a faculty board, or FRC –“

*“This is **Patient X**, yeah I have to agree with the with the previous speaker, I've seen the adverts, I delete them cause to me it just seems like another workshops gotta I haven't even read them to be honest but it just seems to me like another workshop that I've got to attend and yeah, I just can't fit it into my schedule.”*

❖ TICKING BOXES

Some felt that the services offered was just an so management could 'tick boxes' that they were taking care of staff. There was no real substance of care behind it.

“But we've got a management that is completely unsupportive of the stresses that we have.

And to be quite honest with you to get that thing, that workplace, whatever it is, stress management email every now and again, I just delete. But that's ticking somebody's box to say actually on their PMS system, they've done that, but it's not actually helping me as an academic because I really feel that we are completely unsupported, especially within the teaching and learning sector of our job.”

❖ USELESS

One respondent was frank and felt that the services offered were useless and a waste of time.

“The wellness programme. Completely useless – you get an email that says this and this and this, and it's not actually dealing with it. To me, it's not addressing any of the core causes of what is giving us stress.

It's just, as I say, it's on somebody's PMS and now they just bombarding us again with these messages."

❖ **COMFORTABLE WITH PRIVATE SERVICES**

One respondent was more comfortable utilising their own private practitioners.

"um I've seen a number of on the DUT pin board but I've not really solicited the services offered by the AP unit. Um, currently I feel that I am coping quite well and obviously if the situation gets out of control I think I'll feel more comfortable first um soliciting the support of maybe my medical practitioner, before actually trying to secure the services of the AP unit."

❖ **GOOGLE AND YOUTUBE**

One could also easily google similar videos and programmes and watch via YouTube.

Reference 1

"That, but any of those things that are coming up. You can Google that and get YouTube videos that do exactly the same thing. So to me, it's not giving me anything more than what I can Google on YouTube and what I can do yoga on YouTube. I can do this. I can do that is nothing additional that it's giving me."

Reference 2

"I think for me, that was just an awareness that, Oh, I can I can do this because all know like, I haven't been doing it. And then when I saw that there's going to be yoga talking and we can just do this. And then after that, then I Googled and I have downloaded it on my phone, so I do that as well."

Present treatment regimes advocated by counselors may include the following:

- “Medication. This may include drugs to control blood pressure or other physical symptoms of stress, as well as drugs that affect the patient’s mood (tranquilizers or anti-depressants).
- Stress management programs. These may be either individual or group treatments, and usually involve analysis of the stressors in the patient’s life. They often focus on job or workplace-related stress.
- Behavioral approaches. These strategies include relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, and physical exercise programs including walking.
- Massage. Therapeutic massage relieves stress by relaxing the large groups of muscle in the back, neck, arms, and legs.
- Meditation and associated spiritual or religious practices. Recent studies have found positive correlations between these practices and stress hardiness” (Wiley, 2005 in Ominiya, 2013).

4.7 THEME 4: RECOMMENDATIONS- EMPLOYEE STRESS MANAGEMENT

According to Armstrong (1996) cited by Greenglass (2005:503), there are four main reasons why employers should admit that their employees are stressed and take action: first, because it is their social responsibility to provide a good quality of working life; second, because excessive stress causes illness; and third, because it can result in an inability to cope with the demands of the job, which leads to morbidity. Recommendation were made as below. However it should be noted that some of recommendations may/will involve significant policy change.

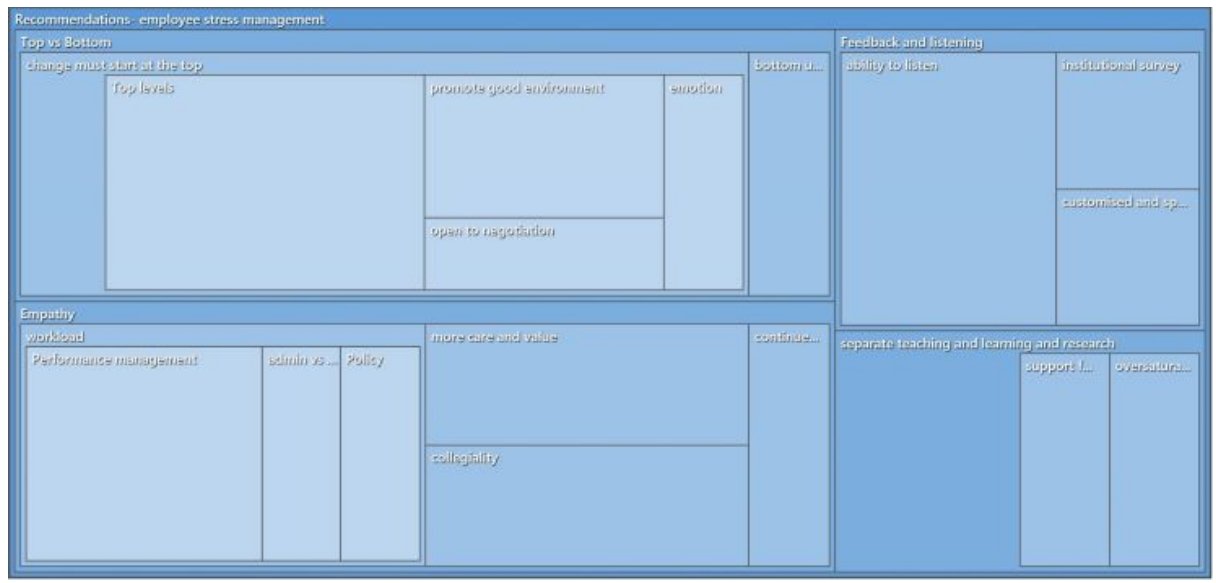


Figure 4.7 Recommendations- Employee Stress Management

The hierarchy chart in the figure above highlights the key recommendations as depicted by the size of the blocks. These are briefly described below.

4.7.1 Top VS Bottom

Like with any change, it must come from the top and there must be engagement with staff at the bottom.

❖ CHANGE MUST START AT THE TOP

As leadership, they are meant to be the drivers of change. Change must happen in the following ways.

➤ Top level

The Vice Chancellor seems to be creating much unhappiness for staff. If the top does not change then there will be no real positive change for employees. Furthermore, HODs do not promote a good environment because they are busy

trying to fulfil senior management mandates. Senior management and management must focus on employees and provide support thereof.

Reference 1

“And so, yeah, that's so I think within departments, we happy, but I look at our heads and I would not do that job for 2 million rand a month because of the stress that they carry as they are sitting in between with the management that's completely disinterested in understanding staff and staff, you can't. So stressed, as you say, because of the shifting sand that you sort of say to your HOD, actually, no, no, no. But that puts them in a difficult position because they're being told yes, you have to. So, you know, that's my closing shot.”

Reference 2

“As long as you still have the existing VC there won't be happiness, if I may say so. So obviously as was said, it must be up to us to try and adapt to the whole situation. We may only be happy once a new one is appointed.”

Reference 1

“I'm sorry to not be seeing the positive but you know what this is like. It's like politics – the top is not about to change. They will always be as arrogant as they are. So I think we have to be selfish enough to focus on you as an individual and try to do what works best for me. And where do I see myself and you detach yourself from everything else that is happening around.”

Reference 2

“I think on paper yes, it's easy to ignore everything but in reality it's not going to be easy. But I think if we try our best and if we can just get support from management, then it can be easy because it has to be a two way process. Otherwise, it is just as trying to change and staying away from everything is very difficult to distance

yourself from something that you see that is not working, especially if it's going to affect students as well. Because if you weren't motivated, then students will also be affected.”

➤ **Open to negotiation**

Management must be open to negotiation from staff. They should not impose policy and conditions without such negotiation. Unfortunately, the current VC and management follows an iron-fist approach and this does not support staff welfare.

“You know, I'm sorry, many years ago when Dr Thabede was still our vice principal admin or whatever he was. I saw him the one day and he asked what was wrong – union type of issues. He told me if I didn't like something, I could always leave. And I thought to myself, You bastard. But anyway, I say, No, no, no, no. I said, Look, obviously, when you buy a house, and after moving in you find the house doesn't quite suit your needs, you don't go and sell it, you do alterations until the house suits your needs.

And it's the same thing with DUT. We can try and do alterations to the place that will help us be happy here. Unfortunately, with our V.C. and his hard-headed approach, no, no - negotiations to do that alteration is going to be very, very difficult, if not impossible. So unless we can do something about that, I don't think that we're going to have happy staff.

That's, so that's my recommendation. Change must start at the top.

I'm not saying get rid of him. I'm not saying that at all. I'm just saying if we can get them to change their attitude, their management style.”

➤ **Promote good environment**

It is up to top management to promote a good working environment for staff. The current environment is pressurised, busy and overloaded, political and not

healthy for staff. Only management can change that which they urgently need to do.

Reference 1

“I think the management had to do something because you cannot work on that particular environment where you don't know this, there's so many uncertainties, you don't know what to expect, if you are doing your job right. There's always something like someone is watching you or, you know, is, I don't think is actually healthy, you have to review that environment where we feel secure.”

Reference 2

“Let me make here my last thought is to the management to change their approach, they push change, though as much as they pressurize us to publish and so forth, is also for own good. But I think that that is the tactic that they use or the strategy that they use is not is not good. So they have to review the tactics. And at the same time in our department, we don't have problems. We don't have those politics. You know, we get along very well. But outside, like I said, you know, there's this fear. So there's this fear that we don't know there's so much uncertainty. So if they can just make sure that the working environment is OK, then will they just use the word justice?”

➤ Emotion

The management need to develop emotions towards staff. As mentioned staff are human beings. An example was quoted where the VC seemed to disregard a student when the student shook hands with him at graduate (pre-covid-19). The VC immediately sanitised his hands which could come across as condescending. With such an attitude towards people, then things would certainly not improve for staff at the organisation under such management.

“OK, the current VC, the closest I've gotten to him, apart from the fact that I was on his interview panel. We won't mention that. The closest that I've gotten to him

was on the stage at graduation one year he was there and I was like here. Know, I carry things around with me. Our researcher will know that. And some students came and wanted to shake his hand so he shook their hands. After that, he looked at his hands like - the look on his face like, What do I do with these germs? And this was pre-Covid, and what would I do with these germs? And I actually had some hand sanitizer and I passed it across to him. He looked at it, took some and then handed it back to me and didn't acknowledge me. Nothing. I mean, we have been in the same venue, kind of a different type of fora, and he just, I don't exist. So, yeah, if that's the type of person that we have heading in the institution. No wonder the institution has gone the way that it has gone. I'm sorry. And that's on record, that's fine."

❖ **BOTTOM-UP APPROACH**

A bottom-up approach where management is informed and guided by staff should be considered.

"In terms of recommendations like the other colleagues have said that they had to leave should the management style, maybe the bottom-up approach should be considered."

4.7.2 Empathy

There definitely needs to be more empathy exercised by the institution towards employees.

❖ **MORE CARE AND VALUE**

There must be more value and appreciation placed on staff. Staff are human beings and not machines. They hence require care and support. The institution must treat staff the same way they encourage staff to treat students. Hence management must practice what they preach. Without staff, there can be no institution.

“Demoralized and motivated? And I think that my recommendation is that there needs to be more value placed on us as staff members. I think that if we are seen for who we are.”

Patient X

“one of the benefits also is the students um that’s why I always say that if I was in the kitchen today when you see the progress that the students make I think for me it definitely outweighs the others prove negative aspects that come with this job but I think that we do need I don’t know if it’s ever gonna happen I think management also needs to kind of treat encourage us the same way we treat students in the same way we supposed to be students and put the student first kind of outlook I think if management uh sort of paying attention the employee as well you would find that um there wouldn’t be this fear that we all have, this tiredness this worrying attitude that we all sort of have um currently at the moment.”

❖ COLLEGIALLY

As mentioned, performance management is promotion individualistic silo based working. This kills cohesiveness and teamwork. Collegiality must be promoted for a happy department.

“So the other thing I’m hearing on the workload and performance management is making people individualistic.”

“I’ve got to say as much as I’ve been mouthing off about the institution and their policies. I mentioned it earlier, I think within our departments we are happy. I think, yeah. You know, so when you mention collegiality, this is happening within the departments, how we are working together? But outside of that? No.”

❖ **CONTINUE WORKING FROM HOME**

The institution should consider allowing people to continue working from home even post-Covid-19. This can alleviate stress especially for those who are in a toxic environment.

Wacky wine-head

“speaking from um the last speaker a possible consideration that if um DUT management are really empathetic and sensitive towards the friction especially help the frictions certain staff members, would they not be considered or given the opportunity to work from home even post lockdown situations I think that would an importanty consideration in terms of showing some kind of sensitivity towards situations that can be quite debilitating especially if you are so much not well and you cannot come to lecturers and these individuals can be afforded the opportunity to work from home. But that could be a long in terms of consideration and you looking at such insensitivity that prevail it would be a dream.”

❖ **WORKLOAD**

Workload must be addressed in the following ways.

➤ **Performance management**

The PM system must be reviewed and possibly eradicated. The system has been reduced to just ticking of boxes rather than performance. Employees' performance can never quantified by the system. Instead the system is frustrating and demotivating to a point where people only do what is required of them and nothing else. Furthermore, it leads to a introverted working rather than teamwork.

Reference 1

“because less stress would be to get rid of PMS because I think it's turning everybody into just a ticking box exercise. We just tick boxes. I personally have

refused to participate, but I see that other people, it's just about ticking boxes. If you want help from somebody you often, I find in the support things you're just passed from one person to the other, and you come back to the original person five days later, and you've literally got to say, can you or can you not help me? Because I think part of their PMS must be to do stuff or get it off the desk within five minutes. So there's no problem- solving anymore. There's no let's actually resolve an issue. Find a way to find a solution. It's let's tick the box, get it or producing and move on to go to meet. It's really counterproductive."

Reference 2

"one of my colleagues, always says how you're measured will determine your performance. And I don't think that they're going to get the best performance out of an individual if they're not measuring what that individual is capable of. But if the individual is performing to what he's supposed to be doing for PMS purposes, tick those boxes, that is not going to be worth anything."

Reference 3

"So the other thing I'm hearing on the workload and performance management is making people individualistic."

➤ Policy

The policy on workload must be reviewed to accommodate and balance of teaching and research.

"Yeah, yeah. And then the issue of workload, the policy should be reviewed, you know, like the other colleague had said, those who would like to do research, you have to have their own kind of policy in terms of the workload and those who are interested in teaching, they should also do the same. And then the issue of, because I don't know if I'm the only one, but I think I'm not the only one. But this year, you know, we that job insecurity that is around it all that has been happening."

➤ **Admin vs teaching**

Administrative loads should be reviewed as this takes up too much time and compromised academic time. It also leads to a lot of stress.

“I also like to add at DUT starts focusing on the academic and the core responsibilities of the institution and is not run by the administration of the institution I think that in itself will take a lot of stress away from because personally I think we do more admin than we actually we do teaching in the class.”

4.7.3 Separate teaching and learning and research

Teaching and research should ideally be separated. Two streams should be created whereby those interested in teaching only should stick to teach and those interested in research can shift towards that. Research should not be imposed on everyone because not everyone is a researcher.

Reference 1

“I just wonder if this one could be a good recommendation. You can advise. I wonder if it's possible for the institution to separate maybe two separate treatments, for some people to focus on teaching and learning and those that have to focus on research things.

If that is possible, maybe because some of the people are not interested in research and most of the people are doing research because they're forced to do research. But their focal point is more into teaching and learning, so I'm not too sure whether that can stand as a recommendation or not.

And another thing we are a UOT, not a pure university. I really don't know whether we can be able to differentiate between the two and say that the UOT is more supposed to be technical than into research. So that's everything. I don't know whether they can recommend that. If maybe you are more interested in teaching and may focus of it.”

Reference 2

"If you look overseas, they will advertise economics (teaching) or economics (research) so you immediately know that if you going into teaching, then you'll be doing a lot of teaching. But even within the teaching overseas, and they put this whole thing about SOTL - scholarship of teaching and learning so, you know, there's a whole thing that's written about teaching and learning, it's about the action research and practice of teaching and learning, which is not something that is thought about here because as you said, the focus is not on teaching and learning but the on research and the research is out there. And it's not relevant to your own teaching. It's not in your subjects that you specialise in. Whereas in other institutions they tend to say okay, this is your strand, you run with that. You know you're doing the education stream so you're doing more teaching and the other guy that is doing research is doing nothing else but research. And then you don't have the problem of a disinterested person in the classroom. The last thing you want to have is a guy with a Ph.D teaching your first year subject..."

❖ OVER-SATURATION

In addition, too much research will lead to an oversaturation of theoretical knowledge and research opinion rather than 'reality' based learning.

"I think in future, what's going to happen, I always think about that somehow I like to be an author of the book, you know, that is aligned with my career, but not in a research based, but in the topic in terms of teaching and learning. And that is why what we are finding now, in class is that we are unable to get South African authors that you can refer our students to because I think as an entire country, that is not our focus. That is not the focus. The focus is based on research, opinion, research."

"It's like an assignment, basically. And you do you make an analysis of those assumptions based on assignment, but it's got very different. It differs from, in terms of what's happening with reality. So in that case, we are going to have a shortfall in terms of, we're not going to have so many authors and so many writers who can be able to write those academic books that students, undergraduate and

other graduate students can actually use. Because we have not been given that platform.”

❖ **SUPPORT FOR CORE FUNCTION OF TEACHING**

The core business of the institution is teaching and learning and hence support should be given for this rather than research.

“they need to support the core function. The core function is teaching and learning, and that's what they're not doing.”

4.7.4 Feedback and listening

The institution must find ways to listen to staff concerns and address them.

❖ **ABILITY TO LISTEN**

The institution must provide platforms for staff to voice their concerns. They must then listen to what exactly are the key concerns. Management must be open and receptive to ideas and suggestions. Currently, staff suggestions are not being taken into account even when it comes to future strategy, such as Envision 2030. Departmental concerns are also not taken into account and issues remain unresolved.

Reference 1

“And also be receptive, maybe to ideas.”

Reference 2

“We had to participate in some workshop to do with Envision 2030 strategy, wasn't it? And we were given that those three questions are those three things. And what about none of this is what be focusing on?”

So in other words, if we wanted to bring up something that was not included in those things, it wasn't listened to. And this is what happens is everybody talks with the same voice because that's what we have to do. I can't remember. You can obviously see Envision 2030 means squat in my life. OK. But we were asked to do that and only that. I mean, it's taken as though we are embracing this whole Envision 2030 thing because we participated in this. But we only got to give input on a small section."

"Currently, I think each one of us present here would indicate the innumerable problems that we are experiencing be it with leadership, be it with student issues, administrative issues but nobody has come forth kind of formal response to say okay, this is A, B, and C that's afflicting members in this specific department and let's see at ways in which we can try and mitigate such impactful um challenges that has not happened. And, I'm yet to see any kind of with us in terms of listening what our complaints are."

❖ INSTITUTIONAL SURVEY

The institution should run an institutional survey to determine the key concerns of staff. This then needs to be analysed and addressed.

"I would have found on that seeing that almost every individual that I've interacted with has indicated a much higher workload obviously because of no time constraints in terms of our official working hours. At the thought of within each faculty or within the departmental level, they should have been some kind of survey um that should have went out in terms of trying to ascertain what are the issues that we are experiencing."

❖ CUSTOMISED AND SPECIFIC

If feedback is properly acknowledged, then programmes for staff can be developed in a more specific and customised way.

Crazy One

“try to respond with more specific programmes that could help us to cope um even bringing it down to the departmental level, Having these workshops that are so generic without being responsive to any kind of empirical evidence I think is an absolute waste of time.”

Adeoye (2002) stated that because both male and female lecturers associated their stress experience to being work-related, educational planners and administrators should look into ways to offer infrastructure that alleviates stress in the university. In order to enhance productivity and efficiency in their work, measures such as increased salary, availability of relaxation facilities and lecturers being mandated to meet the university Counsellor from time to time should be offered (Adeoye, 2002).

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Ismail, Mohd Fauzi, Shamsuddin, Abd ul Hadi and Mohd Razali (2013) state that it is critical that higher education administrators play their roles in managing, controlling and assisting lecturers in reducing their stress levels. This will contribute to the well-being of lecturers and their job performance, thus sustaining the nation's intellectual health. Collins and Parry-Jones (2000) state that lecturers have long been one of the most important groups of individuals, but according to the findings, pressure and stress should be viewed as a result of interactions at the team, departmental and institutional levels, as well as at the home/work interface, as they are also one of the professions with the highest risk of job-related stress. In addition, Lin and Huang (2014:87) advise that Stress management training should be included in college orientation programs by college administrators. An intervention program could be established to help people manage with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy by reducing life stress and/or helping them cope with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and inefficacy.

This chapter has presented the key themes that emerged from the qualitative data analysis.

The next chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 PREAMBLE

The scourge of occupational stress has far-reaching consequences for individual employees and organisations, with systemic ramifications for the nation at large. According to Fisher in Collins and Perry-Jones (2000), the academic today has to teach from a decreasing resource base and in the face of an explosion of hitherto unseen information and abilities. “The time and effort required to research, administrate, and teach has grown to be significant and, for many, intolerable... The majority of academics will readily confess that their lives have grown stressful” (Fischer, 1994:ix). The study has provided sufficient evidence that occupational stress is affecting female academic staff in the Faculty of Management sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

This chapter synthesizes the entire research study by drawing conclusions based on the study objectives, linked to the relevant literature, as well as by making recommendations for the mitigation and management of work-related stress in the tertiary education sector. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research in the area of occupational stress in the post-compulsory education sector.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS ON THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the study was to explore perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. Furthermore, the research sought to establish whether female academics at DUT perceive themselves to be experiencing occupational stress; the main sources of such stress; how they coped; and the role of the university in mitigating the impact thereof on female academic employees.

5.2.1 Objective One

The first objective of this study was to establish levels of stress amongst female academics within the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. **The findings of the study confirm that female academics acknowledged that they were definitely stressed at the time of the focus group interventions.** The results presented in Chapter Four revealed that the focus group participants were indeed experiencing stress, and that they indicated that this stress was primarily work/job-related. This finding resonates with Barkhuizen and Rothman (2008), who state that academia is a highly stressful occupation, with academics around the world dealing with substantial amounts of stress. According to Devonport, Biscomb and Lane (2008:70), there is an increasing body of research evidence suggesting that lecturers are exposed to high levels of work-related stress. The findings of this study agree with the assertions of these authors.

5.2.2 Objective Two

The study's second objective was to determine whether the perceived stress found in Objective One was occupationally related amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The results in Chapter Four overwhelmingly indicate that female academics perceived their stress to be occupationally related as they identified a multitude of work-related stressors, as shown in the figure (FIGURE 5.1) below. The cluster bubble in Figure 5.1 highlights the words used by participants in relation to the causes of their stress. It is apparent that words like "workload, performance, meetings, students, work and teaching" amongst others are job-related, thus illustrating the occupational nature of the participants' stress. Due to a lack of role models, less socialization from women in their own rank, gender stereotypes, and higher role conflict as they attempt to combine roles at work and at home, Engle (2012: abstract) avers that female academics may face more stress and strain than their male colleagues.

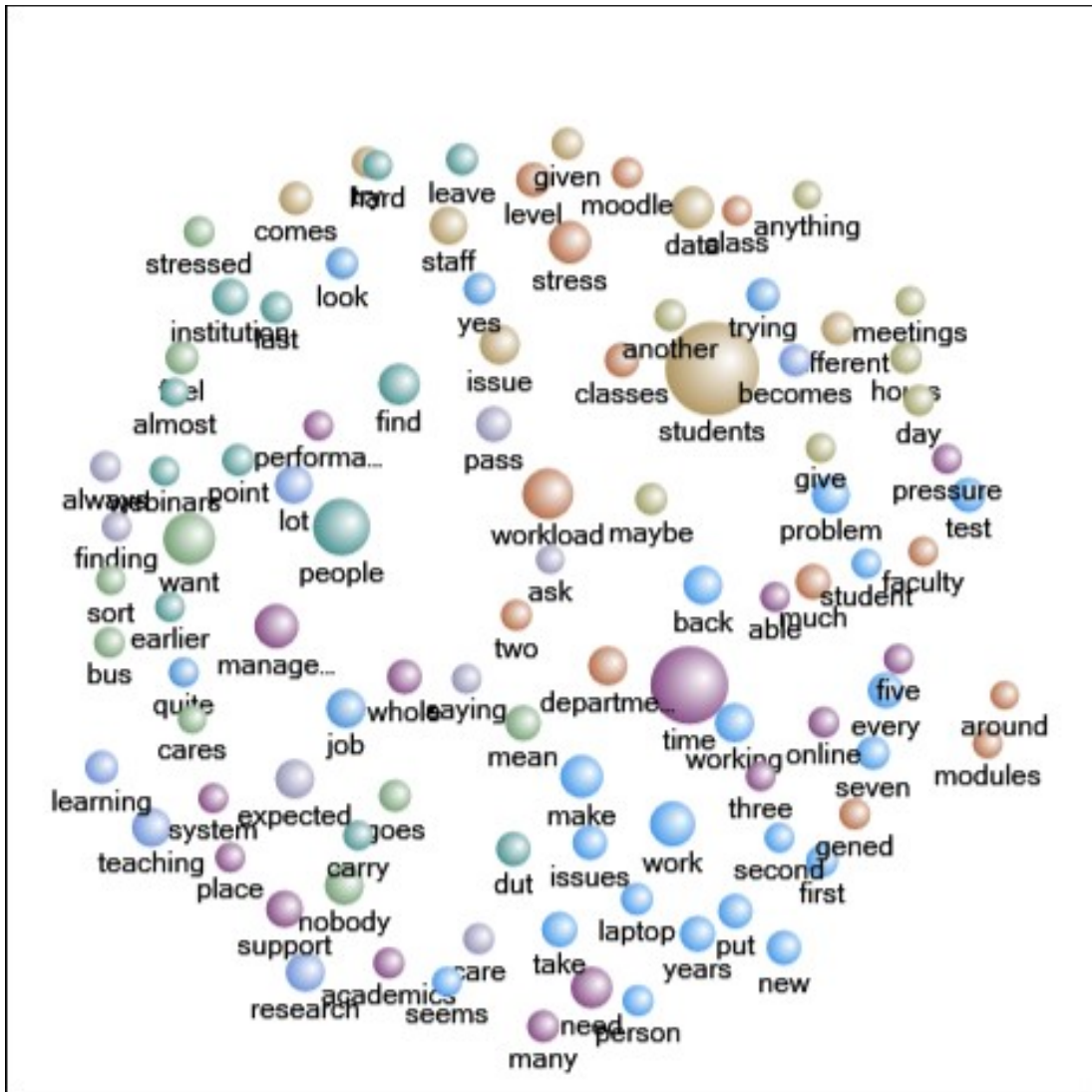


Figure 5.1: Causes of Stress amongst Female Academics

5.2.3 Objective Three

The third objective of this study was to identify the causes of occupational stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The findings presented in Chapter Four show that stressors identified by the participants included: **Workload and performance; Performance management; Teaching vs research; Administration; Workload vs family life and personal life; Timelines; Covid-19; Online teaching and learning; Holidays and leave; Meetings; Support deficiency; Lack of support systems; Resources; Lack of**

care; Lack of empathy; Lack of leave; Poor HR; Bullying and imposition; Retrenchments and stability; Lack of Professionalism; Nepotism and favouritism; Lies and deceit; Targeted; Professional Jealousy; Power dynamics; Inability to escalate; Cynicism; Bias; Recognition and appreciation; Lack of recognition; and Just a number.

The myriad occupational stressors identified by the participants in this study has the potential for deleterious consequences for the institution (DUT). Dandona (2014) cautions that high levels of occupational stress, if not monitored and regulated, will undermine the quality, productivity and creativity of employees' work and well-being.

Kruger *et al.* (2015: 99) contend that stress affects everyone differently. Individual effects of stress can manifest physiologically in terms of health impacts like headaches, high blood pressure and heart disease, to name a few; psychologically in the form of strong emotional reactions like anger, anxiety and depression, amongst others; and behaviourally (sleeplessness, drug abuse and disrupted eating habits, for example). Furthermore, organisational effects of stress can have damaging consequences (Kruger, *et al.* 2015:101) like increased absenteeism and staff turnover rates, accidents, grievances and labour unrest.

5.2.4 Objective Four

The final objective of this study was to recommend possible interventions that can mitigate stress amongst female academic employees in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. Hoel, Sparks and Cooper (2001) state that the costs of stress are incurred by individuals, organisations and society. For individuals, there is a potential loss of income whilst dealing with mental health issues like stress. Additional costs impact private and social life as well, like suffering and loss of relationships (Hoel, Sparks and Cooper 2001).

Moreover, Hoel, Sparks and Cooper (2001) state that there are costs for organisations related to sickness, absenteeism, reduced productivity, replacement costs and additional retirement costs. "There may also be further costs due to damage in production or equipment as well as costs in connection with grievances and litigation". Finally, from a broader context, there are costs to society related to medical costs and possible

hospitalisation, benefits and welfare costs in connection with premature retirement, as well as potential loss of productive workers. On the basis of figures from the number of countries, Hoel, Sparks and Cooper (2001) estimate that the total stress and violence at work may account for 1-3.5% of GDP.

However, it is possible to counteract the problems of stress and there may be significant cost savings for the individual, organisation and society in doing so. Winefield et al. (2008:180) posit that the challenge for universities lies in ensuring that their staff are motivated to perform at a high level, without being exposed to unreasonable and excessive job demands and pressures.

The participants indicated their ideas on how DUT can mitigate work-related stress amongst their female academics: **Leadership must drive change at DUT to decrease unhappiness and stress of staff; Management structures must be open to negotiation, rather than impose policies on staff; DUT needs to provide a good working environment that is not pressurised and stressful; Management should apply a bottom-up approach, with empathy for staff challenges; Collegiality needs to take precedence to create a conducive working environment; Workload and Performance Management policies need to be re-visited; there should be a separation of Teaching and Learning and Research, as well as greater support for the core function of teaching; and DUT needs to listen to staff concerns and address them.**

These main themes and sub-themes yielded a wide variety of other key issues per theme and sub-theme, as presented in Chapter Four-all of which support the achievement of this objective and the study in its entirety.

In this context, the following section makes some suggestion on managing stress at the UoT.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature illustrated that occupational stress has a significant impact on how academics deliver their work and how they live their day-to-day lives. The findings of the study affirm the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, the literature highlights

factors that management ought to look at in order to improve the way in which academics perform, thereby improving the organisation overall. It must be noted that the researcher recognises that occupational stress cannot be eradicated, but she believes that it can be mitigated in an attempt to reduce the risk impacts thereof on staff, which will have ramifications for students, management and the institution as a whole if not managed.

Therefore, the researcher recommends the following to university policy-makers:

- Adopt a systematic approach to Stress Management with employees playing an active role in the process, since it is directly related to them;
- Conduct a climate survey in order to determine the prevalence of occupational stress amongst staff;
- Engage with academics on how they deal with stress and advise on the steps that they should take, as recognition of the academics as 'experts or professionals';
- Universities' policy-makers should devise a variety of solutions in a well-balanced package that places responsibility on both the DUT and staff to manage occupational stress;
- to deal with the situation by, for example, having a specific policy on mental health and an active Employee Assistance Programme which staff will definitely utilise;
- making stress sensitisation training mandatory for Heads of Department and other line managers who are the first point of contact for lecturers, as well as for all staff in order to empower them to identify mental health issues that may arise for themselves and their colleagues;
- Re-visit communication channels so that open and clear, trustworthy channels exist;

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- The scope of this study was narrow in that it only included female academics;
- The study was also limited to one UoT (DUT) in the vast HE sector;
- The study employed a qualitative methodology only; and
- The study was conducted over a very short time-frame, with a limited budget.

- The Covid-19 pandemic rules and regulations presented challenges in terms of participant reluctance to engage.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Commensurate with the aforementioned limitations, the researcher suggests the following for future research:

- Future studies should employ a broader scope by including other sectors of staff, namely males, administration and management;
- Future studies can be conducted in other HEIs in order to ascertain the prevalence of occupational stress in the sector;
- A convergent methodology should be conducted because mixed methods will lend rigour to the findings; and
- A longitudinal study over a longer time-frame will allow trend analyses to be conducted, enabling a more informed approach to the challenge of occupational stress in the Higher education sector.

5.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Academically, this study has addressed a gap in extant literature on occupational stress amongst female academics in Universities of Technology. No previous studies of this exact nature have been conducted. Therefore, this study is pioneering in the field.

In Practice, this study has initiated research on a neglected area in the UoT sector which may inform institutional practices and policies regarding stress management in Higher Education in South African UoTs.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: LETTER OF INFORMATION

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Exploring perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Mercillene Perrene Mathews (B.Soc.Sc-Honours)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Supervisor: Prof B.I. Dlamini; Co-Supervisor: Dr N. Khumalo

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The study focuses on occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. It aims to ascertain the level of work-related stress amongst female academics and to make recommendations on mitigation strategies to alleviate such stress.

Good Day,

I trust you are well. I am a Lecturer in the Department of Human Resource Management, in the Faculty of Management Sciences. I am currently registered for my Masters in Management Sciences (HRM) at DUT.

You have been selected as one of the respondents and your participation in this study will be valued. I humbly request your participation in my focus group.

Please note that participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation will be highly appreciated.

Outline of the Procedures:

You are requested to participate in a focus group. By agreeing to participate in the focus group, it is assumed that you are aware of the purpose of the study and have given consent to participate in the study.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

The risk involved in this research is minimal. If any of the questions are found to be embarrassing, offensive or of a sensitive nature, you may choose not to answer them. However, the responses to the focus group questions are confidential (see confidentiality section) and the interviewed participants will be anonymous.

Benefits:

The information that is obtained from the study will be used for academic purposes only. It is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject and create opportunities for further research.

Attached is the Information Letter for the study and the Gatekeeper's letter granting permission to conduct the study.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw or terminate their participation at any time.

Remuneration: Respondents / participants will not receive any remuneration for taking part in the study.

Costs of the Study: Respondents / participants will not be expected to cover any costs towards the study. The researcher will fund the study.

Confidentiality: The data obtained from the focus group will be coded per respondent to ensure anonymity and researcher and her statistician are the only persons who will see the results of the focus group interaction. Data from the study will be presented in the thesis. However, at no time will be name of the department, respondent or any identifying information be reported in the presentation of the research unless permission is obtained in writing to do so.

Research-related Injury:

The study will not cause any harm whatsoever since it is not injury related.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher, Mrs MP Mathews (083 676 4778), her supervisor Prof BI Dlamini (072 556 2801) or the Institutional Research Ethics administrator on 031 373 2900. Complaints can be reported to the DVC: RIE, Prof S Moyo, at dvcrie@dut.ac.za or [the](#) Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Langaniso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recording:

All recordings and transcripts will be stored in a secure encrypted file for a period of five years. Only the researcher will have access to the original data.

General:

Please note that due to the COVID_19 pandemic, all necessary protocols will be adhered to in conducting this study, namely social distancing, sanitizing and wearing of face masks.

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT



CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: Exploring perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

Names of Researcher/s: MP MATHEWS

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, _____ (name of researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant Thumbprint	Date	Time	Signature / Right

I, _____ (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully

informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

ANNEXURE C1: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION



*Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946*

15th October 2021
Mercillen P Mathews
c/o Department of Human Resources Management
Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

Dear Mrs Mathews

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Gatekeeper Permission** for you to conduct your research "Exploring perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology" at the Durban University of Technology. **Kindly note that this letter must be issued to the IREC for approval before you commence data collection.**

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

ANNEXURE C2: IREC CLEARANCE



18 October 2021

Ms M P Mathews
696 Clare Road
Clare Estate
Durban
4091

Dear Ms Mathews

Exploring perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology
Ethical Clearance number IREC 222/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Dr K Padayachy
Deputy Chairperson: IREC

ANNEXURE D: SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Would you say that you are feeling stressed currently?
2. What prompted you to respond as you did in the previous question?
3. Is your stress work or personal in nature?
4. What are your main stressors?
5. How do you cope with your stress?
6. How do you mitigate the effects of your stress?
7. Recommendations to DUT to manage stress?
8. Any other related comments?

ANNEXURE E: TURNITIN

rm^{dy}
by Mathews 10 Mathews

Submission date: 20-Nov-2021 01:09PM (UTC+0200)

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File name: DRAFT_WHOLE_DOC.docx (1.02M)

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**EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONGST FEMALE
ACADEMICS IN THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES AT THE DURBAN
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

By

MERCILLENE PERRENE MATHEWS

STUDENT NUMBER: 20722401

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree:

Master of Management Sciences: Human Resources Management

Durban University of Technology

Faculty of Management Sciences

Department of Human Resources Management

Supervisor: Prof B.I. Dlamini

Co-Supervisor: Dr N Khumalo

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ANNEXURE F: EDITING LETTER

EDITOR'S LETTER

Researchers Beyond-Borders (PTY)
Umhlanga, Durban
South Africa
24 November 2021

To whom it may concern

Editing of Master's dissertation: Mercillene Mathews

Title: Exploring perceptions of occupational stress amongst female academics in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

This letter serves as confirmation that the aforementioned dissertation has been language edited.
Any queries may be directed to the author of this letter.



Regards

Maleni Pillay
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