



A Descriptive Study on Stress among University Faculty due to NEP 2020 Implementation: An Overview

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Abstract

The Government of India has enacted the New Education Policy (2020) in India, and it has affected students, teachers, and other stakeholders in the teaching profession and increased stress among them. We are focusing on the stress among university faculty, where we see the factors contributing to faculty stress like work intensification, implementation ambiguity, research pressure, the digital divide, resource constraints, workplace dynamics, etc. It has been seen that the Government of India did not launch any specific initiatives to reduce stress among university faculty, so we look at some of the provisions of NEP 2020 that can reduce stress among university faculty, like continuous professional development, institutional autonomy, help in research and innovation, reduced bureaucratic obstacles, etc., and some strategies to cope with stress, like open communication, mindfulness practice, policy understanding, employee assistance programs, physical activity, etc., that can help the university faculty to reduce their stress level.

Keywords: Stress, University Faculty, National Education Policy 2020, NEP 2020, Stress Coping Strategies

1. Introduction

1.1 Stress

Stress is the body's response to both physical and mental demands. Stress is defined broadly as "a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily and mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Stress in the workplace has affected practically every profession, from top levels to coworkers who are directly involved in production. Job stress ultimately has an impact on employees' physical and emotional well-being. Stress has been defined in several ways over the years.

Work-related stress develops when an individual employee's job and needs clash with the demands of the workplace. Research has shown that workplace stress is not limited to specific positions or levels within an organization. Employees in management positions demonstrate stress symptoms. Individuals react differently to stress, and even the same person responds differently at different times.

Stress can have an impact on a person's emotions, conduct, capacity for thought, and physical health, among other areas of their life. Stress can manifest as behavioral, cognitive, physical, or emotional symptoms.

(a) Emotional symptoms: These signs are brought on by stress's effect on an individual's emotions. These include restlessness, impatience, loneliness, sadness, and a sense of worthlessness and isolation.

(b) Physical symptoms: Our bodies react to stress by exhibiting these symptoms. These primarily pertain to physical health conditions like headaches, sleeplessness, gastrointestinal difficulties, back and neck discomfort, recurrent infections, high blood pressure, hair troubles, etc.

(c) Cognitive symptoms: These symptoms, which include memory issues, difficulty focusing, poor judgment, worrying, negative thoughts, etc., are connected to an individual's cognitive abilities.

(d) Behavioral symptoms: A shift in a person's behavior falls within this group. Loss of appetite, excessive eating, drinking, smoking, trouble sleeping, anxiety, etc are some of these symptoms.

1.2 National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The New Education Policy 2020 in India is a comprehensive reform programme aimed at transforming the national educational system to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. It promotes holistic growth, adaptability, and trans-disciplinary learning by emphasizing early childhood care and education, foundational literacy and numeracy, and developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The approach emphasizes the use of technology to improve learning outcomes and seeks to reorganize the educational system to facilitate seamless integration across multiple stages, from preschool to higher education. To ensure educational quality and equity, it also makes improvements to assessment systems, teacher preparation, and governance structures.

Its purpose is to provide pupils with the values, information, and talents necessary for both individual and societal growth in a fast-evolving global environment.

The flexible undergraduate course and its curriculum allow for creative topic combinations, integrate vocational education, and offer many entry and exit points with relevant certifications. Undergraduate study can last three or four years, with several ways to graduate and the necessary certifications earned throughout that time. For instance, a certificate can be obtained in one year, an advanced diploma in two, a bachelor's degree in three, and a bachelor's degree with research in four years. To enable academic credits from various HEIs to be transferred and applied toward a final degree, an Academic Bank of Credit will be created and digitally stored.

2. Literature Review

(Bowling Harvey, 2001). According to them, Interaction between a person and their surroundings causes stress, which in turn causes emotional strain that has an impact on a person's physical and mental health. Stress is brought on by stressors, which are situations that put a person's body out of balance.

(Materson, 1980) contributed the same with "Causes of stress are many like workload, staff cuts, change at work, long work hours, shift work, lack of supervision, inadequate training, inappropriate working conditions, too heavy responsibilities and poor relations with colleagues." Determining the potential level of stress at work and how it affects workers' physical and mental well-being was also similar.

(Malek, 2010; Medi bank Private Inc., 2008) said that when a person's capacity to handle a problem isn't balanced with the demands of their work, they feel job stress, which is an unpleasant emotional condition. It is a well-known phenomenon that manifests variably and impacts workers in various work environments.

(Kurien, A.& Chandramana, S., 2020) studied the impact of New Education Policy 2020 on higher education and it also outlines the salient features of NEP and analyses how they affect the existing education system.

(Darbar, 2021). The study paper outlines NEP 2020's salient features and its implications for university and institutional higher education. It also discusses the role of the governing bodies in higher education.

(Padwal, 2023) observes that NEP2020 is an enhanced governance framework that will support scientific literacy and education based on values. It will take the place of the antiquated "class" system, which is brittle and susceptible to change on the spur of the moment under the clumsy regulatory framework. The NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on transforming the educational system to be comprehensive, adaptable, and in line with 21st-century learning needs.

(Jaiswal et al. 2023) discussed problems and prospects of NEP 2020. Using secondary data, the paper described the outlook of NEP 2020 i.e., multiple entrance and withdrawal in the UG educational programme, promotion of internet-based education, goal of complete youth and adult literacy by 2030, preservation of multilingual

diversification, theoretical and practical education in disciplines, etc. Further, it delved into the problems of NEP 2020 i.e., resistance to change, confusing career alternatives for vocational graduates, extreme emphasis on skill development over knowledge acquisition, lack of expertise, etc. and suggested some measures to overcome it.

3. Scope of the Study

This study helps to know about the factors causing job stress to university faculty after NEP 2020 implementation. This study has attempted to suggest the stress-managing strategies that could be followed by the faculty and other teaching staff to overcome stress and improve performance. This study is also trying to know the government initiatives for reducing stress in university faculties after NEP 2020 implementation.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To describe the major causes of stress among university teachers due to the implementation of NEP 2020
- To know the government initiatives for reducing stress in university faculty after NEP 2020 implementation.
- To suggest the stress-managing strategies to faculties for overcoming job stress.

5. Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature. The data are collected from secondary resources i.e., existing literature, websites, reports, news articles, etc. The paper talks about stress causing to university faculty after NEP 2020 implementation and what could be done to cope up with it and what government is doing to reduce stress in faculties.

6. Factors Contributing in Stress among University Faculty after NEP 2020 Implementation

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's introduction in India may bring about a number of factors that could make faculty members more stressed. Although the NEP seeks to improve the educational system, every major reform comes with constraints and uncertainties. Some factors that could cause stress among university teachers following the implementation of the NEP 2020:

Work Intensification and Competing Demands: The NEP's commendable goal of fostering well-rounded graduates translates to a more demanding workload for faculty. This encompasses managing a diverse range of teaching responsibilities, research expectations, student mentoring, meticulous assessment tasks, and administrative duties. Balancing these competing demands effectively can be overwhelming, leading to significant stress and potential burnout.

Shifting Priorities and Research Pressures: The NEP's emphasis on research output alongside teaching excellence necessitates a recalibration of priorities, particularly for faculty who have traditionally focused on pedagogy. This shift creates new pressures, especially for early-career academics navigating the often-competitive landscape of publishing in high-impact journals. The pressure to publish frequently can lead to feelings of inadequacy and hinder a healthy work-life balance.

Implementation Ambiguity and Uncertainty: The ongoing rollout of the NEP, with aspects still lacking clear guidelines, generates confusion and anxiety among faculty. This ambiguity can make it challenging to effectively plan curriculum changes, adapt teaching methods, and prepare for new assessment strategies. The lack of clear communication and official directives from university administrations regarding faculty roles and career progression under the NEP further exacerbates anxieties.

Pedagogical Transformation and Technological Integration: The NEP necessitates a multifaceted adaptation for faculty. This includes embracing revised curricula, incorporating innovative teaching methodologies, and leveraging emerging technologies in the classroom. The pressure to stay up-to-date with these changes and integrate them effectively into teaching practice can be a significant source of stress, especially for faculty who may require additional training or support in technology use.

Digital Divide and Resource Constraints: The NEP's promotion of digital learning environments may disadvantage faculty who lack experience or access to reliable technology. This disparity, often referred to as the "digital divide," can hinder their ability to effectively deliver instruction in online platforms. Furthermore, inadequate support and resources, both from the university and external organizations, can be a major stressor. This includes limitations in infrastructural development, access to high-quality learning materials, and professional development opportunities crucial for faculty to excel under the NEP.

Job Security Concerns and Financial Anxieties: The potential impact of the NEP on faculty roles, coupled with the prevalence of non-tenure-track positions in some institutions, can heighten anxieties around job security. The uncertainty regarding contract renewals, funding availability, and potential institutional restructuring due to NEP implementation can negatively impact faculty well-being and mental health.

Accountability Pressures and Performance Anxiety: The NEP's focus on continuous evaluation and outcome-based education, while aiming to enhance educational quality, can create performance anxieties among faculty. Concerns about meeting stringent and potentially unclear evaluation criteria can be a significant stressor. Open communication and transparent evaluation processes are crucial to mitigate these anxieties and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Workplace Dynamics and Stress Amplification: Existing workplace pressures, combined with the challenges brought about by NEP implementation, can create a detrimental environment. Factors like high expectations, limited autonomy, and a lack of support systems can exacerbate stress and dissatisfaction among faculty

members. Fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment is essential to mitigate these challenges and promote faculty well-being.

7. Government Initiatives to Reduce Stress in University Teachers

Following the establishment of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Indian government did not launch any targeted nationwide initiatives with the express goal of lowering stress levels among faculty members at universities. It's important to remember, though, that the NEP 2020's numerous provisions are meant to raise the standard of education as a whole. By tackling some of the system's long-standing problems, this could help teachers feel less stressed out. Some of the key provisions in the NEP 2020 that could potentially benefit university teachers and reduce their stress include:

- **Continuous Professional Development:** The NEP prioritizes ongoing training and up-skilling opportunities for faculty. This ensures educators possess the latest pedagogical approaches and are prepared to adapt to the evolving demands of the policy's implementation.
- **Increased Institutional Autonomy:** The policy advocates for greater autonomy for universities. This has the potential to reduce administrative burdens on educators, granting them greater flexibility in curriculum design and instructional methodologies.
- **Reduced Bureaucratic Obstacles:** The NEP proposes the establishment of independent bodies to manage administrative functions such as funding allocation, accreditation, and standard setting. This aims to streamline administrative processes and lessen bureaucratic hurdles faced by faculty.
- **Emphasis on Research and Innovation:** The NEP encourages universities to prioritize research and innovation. This focus can create a more intellectually stimulating environment for educators, fostering professional development opportunities.
- **Effective Implementation is Paramount:** While these NEP provisions offer a promising framework for addressing faculty challenges, successful outcomes depend on the effective implementation efforts of both institutions and policymakers.
- **Leveraging Local Initiatives:** Universities and state governments may introduce additional, context-specific initiatives. These could encompass programs geared towards supporting educators and mitigating stress levels. By staying informed about such local offerings, university educators can maximize available resources and enhance their overall well-being.

8. Stress Coping Strategies for University Teachers

University educators play a vital role in shaping young minds, but their jobs have come with significant stress due to NEP 2020. From heavy workloads to administrative burdens, the demands can be overwhelming. Some effective strategies university teachers can utilize to manage stress and maintain well-being:

Collegial Networks: The NEP's vision for a holistic educational experience necessitates collaboration across disciplines. Universities can foster a sense of community and provide invaluable support for faculty by facilitating strong collegial networks. Departmental initiatives or mentorship programs that pair senior faculty with newer colleagues can promote knowledge sharing and collaboration, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering a sense of belonging.

Open Communication Channels: Transparent and consistent communication from university leadership regarding NEP implementation plans and addressing faculty concerns is crucial. Regularly scheduled faculty forums and open-door policies can create a safe space for faculty to voice their anxieties and receive timely information, fostering trust and reducing uncertainty.

Mindfulness Practices: Integrating mindfulness techniques like meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises into the workday can significantly reduce stress and improve overall well-being for faculty. Universities could offer workshops or designated mindfulness spaces for faculty to practice these techniques during breaks or after work hours. Additionally, promoting mindfulness through campus-wide initiatives can normalize these practices and encourage faculty to prioritize self-care.

Mental Health Support: Providing readily accessible mental health resources, such as on-campus counselling services or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), is crucial for faculty experiencing overwhelming stress levels. EAPs can equip faculty with effective coping mechanisms, emotional support, and guidance in managing work-related anxieties. Normalizing the use of mental health services through workshops or campus-wide campaigns can encourage faculty to seek help without stigma.

Policy Understanding: Equipping faculty with a comprehensive understanding of the NEP 2020 and its implications for their specific roles is essential. Universities should organize workshops, seminars, or training sessions tailored to different faculty groups (e.g., teaching-focused vs. research-oriented). These sessions should provide clarity on curriculum revisions, assessment strategies, and technological integration under the NEP, addressing faculty concerns and fostering a sense of preparedness.

Work-Life Balance: Encouraging faculty to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life is vital to prevent burnout, especially given the potentially increased workload under the NEP. Universities can support this by implementing flexible work arrangements, promoting time management practices, and discouraging the expectation of constant availability. Additionally, fostering a culture that respects faculty time and personal commitments is essential.

Physical Activity: Promoting regular physical activity, such as walking, running, or participating in sports and fitness classes, can significantly reduce stress levels and improve faculty well-being. Universities could incentivize physical activity through gym memberships, on-campus fitness facilities, or offering wellness

programs that incorporate exercise. Additionally, encouraging breaks throughout the workday for movement can be beneficial.

Building on the Transactional Stress Model: The Transactional Model emphasizes a two-pronged approach to faculty well-being:

1. **Job Redesign:** This involves addressing the work environment and potentially modifying demanding aspects of faculty roles under the NEP. Universities can conduct workload analyses to identify areas of potential overload and explore solutions such as redistributing teaching assignments, providing teaching assistants, or streamlining administrative tasks.
2. **Individual Coping Strategies:** Universities can equip faculty with effective coping mechanisms through training or workshops focused on stress management techniques and fostering positive attributional styles. Additionally, screening for at-risk individuals and offering tailored support, such as mindfulness training or cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), can be highly beneficial.

Predictive and Preventative Measures: Understanding the complex interplay between job demands, control, social support, effort, rewards, coping mechanisms, and faculty attributions allows for proactive measures to reduce stress, anxiety, and job dissatisfaction. Regular surveys and assessments can identify potential stressors and inform targeted interventions to enhance faculty well-being. Universities can leverage data from these assessments to identify early warning signs of burnout and provide support to faculty before stress becomes overwhelming.

9. Suggestions

1. Effective faculty development programs are delivered in a timely manner and address the specific challenges educators face in their daily work. This ensures ongoing professional growth while directly tackling current hurdles.
2. University management should strive to create a unified environment where all faculty feel valued, recognized for their contributions, and adequately rewarded for their work. This fosters a sense of belonging and motivates top performance.
3. Ambiguity in job roles can be a significant source of stress. Providing faculty with explicit job descriptions outlining expectations and responsibilities promotes clarity and reduces frustration.
4. Overburdening faculty with extraneous tasks like admissions processing, administrative duties, and covering last-minute classes detracts from their core responsibilities and can lead to stress and burnout. Utilizing alternative strategies to manage these tasks can significantly improve faculty well-being and efficiency.

5. Universities should offer well-defined career progression opportunities for faculty. Providing clear pathways for advancement helps retain talent, keeps educators motivated, and fosters a sense of long-term investment in the institution.
6. Conducting stress audits within the faculty population can shine a light on the specific stressors impacting educators. Utilizing these insights, universities can then tailor interventions to directly address the root causes of stress and improve the overall work environment.
7. Encouraging faculty participation in social activities and leisure pursuits outside of work can significantly improve morale, foster a sense of community, and help reduce stress levels.
8. Providing faculty with competitive pay and benefits packages commensurate with their roles and responsibilities contributes significantly to job satisfaction and reduces stress related to financial pressures.
9. Integrating stress management strategies into faculty training programs equips educators with practical tools to effectively navigate the challenges of work-related and personal stress, particularly during the NEP implementation process.
10. Supporting faculty in acquiring new teaching methods and utilizing cutting-edge technologies fosters continued development of teaching efficacy, enhances student engagement, and prepares educators for future educational needs.
11. Implementing significant changes like the NEP requires flexibility and an understanding that adjustments along the way may be necessary. A university administration receptive to feedback and willing to adapt its strategies can significantly reduce the stress associated with unforeseen challenges.

10. Conclusion

A successful NEP implementation requires acknowledging and addressing potential stressors. Universities must prioritize faculty well-being by providing adequate resources, professional development opportunities, clear communication, and robust support systems. This holistic approach is crucial for a smooth transition and to ensure faculty can effectively implement the NEP's vision for a transformed Indian higher education system.

There are several difficulties facing the teaching community as a result of the workplace's rapid development. Research revealed that faculty members at institutions of higher learning are under a reasonable amount of stress. A number of factors have been identified as contributing to faculty stress, including uncertainty and role ambiguity, increased workloads brought on by a department's staffing shortage, challenges using modern technology, political dynamics at work, a lack of opportunities for professional development, and opportunities to voice grievances to management. The NEP 2020 presents a strategic framework for empowering university

educators and fostering a more enriching academic environment. However, its effectiveness hinges on the coordinated efforts of institutions, policymakers, and individual faculty members.

Union and State Governments are providing support towards its successful implementation. However, there is not any major initiatives by Government to reduce the stress of university faculties which lead to stress among them and reduce their efficiency which will eventually affect the students learning and overall implementation of NEP 2020.

By incorporating above-mentioned comprehensive strategies, universities can create a more supportive work environment for faculty, fostering both their well-being and professional development. This, in turn, will lead to a more engaged and effective teaching force, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

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