

Self-Determination, Workplace Stress And Job Satisfaction Among Elementary School Teachers During Covid-19

Saira Maqsood¹, Fatima Salman¹, Marva Sohail^{1*}, Asia Bibi², Shehla Aslam¹

¹Department of Psychology, Lahore Garrison University, Lahore, Pakistan.

²Department of Management Sciences, Lahore Garrison University, Lahore, Pakistan.

*Corresponding Author: Marva Sohail, marvasohail95@hotmail.com.

Abstract: COVID-19 has disrupted education systems across the globe, forcing them to shift to distance learning modes of teaching and learning. The teachers were not prepared to deal with such a situation and it added to their work-related stressors. Stemming from Self-Determination Theory the objectives of the study were to investigate the relationship among self-determination, work place stress and job satisfaction among elementary school teachers. It also aimed to explore the predictive role of self-determination and work place stress for job satisfaction among the elementary school teachers. Correlation research design was used in the study. A sample of 142 female elementary school teachers (M=28.76, SD=9.17) were recruited for the study. To measure the variables Perceived Choice and Awareness of Self Scale, General Work Stress Scale and Job Stress Scale were used. Results showed that a positive relationship was found between self-determination and job satisfaction; negative relationship was found between workplace stress and job satisfaction; and Self-determination positively while job stress negatively predicted job satisfaction. The research has implications for administration of educational institutions, human resource departments as well as policy makers and psychologists. It adds to the literature related to primary school teachers during COVID-19, which is scarce.

Keywords: Self-determination, work stress; job satisfaction, teachers, COVID-19

Introduction

COVID-19 brought with it high fatality rates accompanied with economic crisis, losses and great panic, all of which together created a universal psychosocial impact on the people (Dubey et al., 2020). It tremendously effected education systems across the globe. In Pakistan, the authorities announced a nationwide closure of educational institutions on 13th March 2020, leading to educational crises. Globally the dependence on virtual modes of teaching increased to counter the educational crises (Bajwa, 2020; Rabaglietti et al., 2021). In Pakistan, the tele-density, or the penetration of telecom facilities is at 78 % per 100 households,

only 38 percent of the population uses broadband internet, that too mostly in cities. This digital divide puts over 50 million students at risk of falling behind (Malik, 2020). As Pakistan is among the last quartile ranking 76th out of 100 countries with poor quality of networks, low affordability, and lower levels of digital literacy the worries and stress associated with education system also increased (Sohail & Zafar, 2022; Baloch & Musyani, 2020).

Academics including elementary school teachers and institutional management faced varying issues related to the transformation from physical to online platforms as the methodologies to be employed by the teachers in online classes

differ from the conventional systems especially in such a situation where the core attention of everyone shifted to healthcare and survival (Agnoletto & Queiroz, 2020). Major challenges experienced by the teachers included those of readiness for online teaching and learning, digital literacy, availability of equipment (Almazova et al., 2020; Hassan et al., 2020), collaboration with parents, planning and assessment of learning (Fauzi & Khushuma, 2020).

Uncertainty, constantly changing environment (Navas & Vijayakumar, 2018) and the pressure to immediately shift to distance learning increased the job stress for teachers as they are primarily trained to teach using traditional methods (Winter et al., 2021), especially in developing countries like Pakistan. Job stress encompasses physical, behavioural and psychological deterioration owing to workplace issues or stressors that basically stem from a difference in organizational demands and an individual's personal resources (Steven et al, 1999; Rosch, 1984; Sabbarwal et al., 2017). Communication with professional community and being involved in the teaching activities were also a source of support during isolation (Talidad & Toquero, 2020) as interpersonal support lowers levels of job stress (Maqsood et al., 2021).

Organizational factors and resources are constant across the board for all the employees so, how an employee effectively copes with job stress has more to do with personal resources or individual factors (Karatepe et al., 2018). One of these factors is self-determination which encompasses domains of perceived choice and self-awareness (Sheldon et al. 1996) when these basic psychological needs are not met the work-related stress increases (Olafsen et al., 2016). Transversal skills like self-efficacy and self-determination became crucial for dealing with the stressful situation during the pandemic (Rabaglietti et al., 2021) because the teachers' satisfaction levels also dropped owing to excessive online workload (Li & Yu, 2022).

Job satisfaction is crucial as it leads to a better holistic health, commitment to the organization, general contentment with life (Singh et al., 2019) and better work performance (Baluyos et al., 2019). Additionally, the determinants of job satisfaction are also completely different during digital and physical work environments (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021). Demographic characteristics like gender, education level and teaching experience influence job satisfaction (Shaukat et al., 2018) whereas other factors like self-efficacy (Chan et al., 2020) and core self-evaluation (Akosile & Ekemen, 2022) also influence job satisfaction.

A lot of research is available on teachers of higher education system, their challenges, wellbeing and satisfaction during the pandemic while little research is available on elementary school teachers and the variables affecting them during the pandemic lockdowns. While universities have big budgets and they employ technology casually in the classrooms, elementary schools especially in the public domain have limited resources and their teachers have less exposure to dealing with online modes of teaching and technology utilization in classroom. Hence, this study aims to investigate the relationship among self-determination, work place stress and job satisfaction among elementary school teachers. It also aims to explore the predictive role of self-determination and work place stress for job satisfaction among the elementary school teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are explained using Self-determination Theory (SDT) given by Deci and Ryan (1985). The theory postulates that an individual's motivation lies on a continuum from external to internal motivation. External motivation is aligned with social values while internal motivation is aligned with personal needs of mastery and curiosity. Satiation of these internal needs like autonomy,

perceived competence and relatedness with others results in self-determined behaviours and better outcomes. Inclination towards satiation of intrinsic motivation needs leads to lower levels of stress and better ability to cope with high demand situations (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011; Manganelli et al., 2018) and increase employee job satisfaction (Battaglio et al., 2021).

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Research on academicians in primary schools has shown that self-determination has a relationship with job satisfaction and in the model of the study it contributed to 27.1% variance in job satisfaction of the employees (Hambali et al., 2020). Another research on Australian teachers during the pandemic has shown that nurturing of self-determination in the academicians is associated with lower levels of stress (Collie, 2021). In university faculty self-determination factors mediated the relationship between environmental factors and job satisfaction of the teachers (Crick et al., 2019). Similar results have been seen in school teachers where self-determination factors like perceived choice was positively associated with employee job satisfaction (Kengatharan, 2020).

Research on employees belonging to different organizations like educational institutions (Ahsan et al., 2009; Rana & Soodan, 2019; Pepe et al., 2019), banks and (Kurniawaty et al., 2019) healthcare facilities (Khamisa et al., 2015; Grunfeld et al., 2004; Chichra et al., 2019).) across the globe has shown that there is a significant relationship between job stress and outcomes like job satisfaction (Singh et al., 2019; Uysal, 2019; An et al., 2020; Parveen & Bano, 2019). Here, the job stress can be attributed to an array of reasons. Similar association between job stress and job satisfaction has been found among the teachers during COVID-19 pandemic (Chitra, 2020).

Another research has shown that workplace

stressors as well as individual factors like self-determination domains predict job satisfaction in different work conditions (Xiang et al., 2014). Based on the literature, it is hypothesized that:

H₁: There is likely to be a significant positive relationship between self-determination and job satisfaction among elementary school teachers during the COVID 19 pandemic.

H₂: There is likely to be a significant negative relationship between workplace stress and job satisfaction among elementary school teachers during the COVID 19 pandemic

H₃: There will be predictive role of self-determination and workplace stress on job satisfaction among elementary school teachers during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Methodology

Research Design: This research is quantitative research that uses correlational research design to find the intercorrelations between the variables as well as the prediction of dependent variables by independent variables.

Sample: The sample comprises of 142 school teachers that were teaching during COVID-19 pandemic. Both married and unmarried teachers from public as well as private schools were considered for the research. Only those teachers were included who were teaching in that particular institute for at least 1 year. Initially, data was collected from 170 teachers but 28 responses from male teachers were excluded to avoid confounding. Data was gathered using convenient sampling strategy as online mode of data collection was used and as it was initial phase of the pandemic, data availability was limited.

The demographic characteristics of participants were analyzed by calculating mean and standard

deviation of continuous variable i.e., age while frequency and percentage were calculated for categorical variables. According to the analysis, the mean age of sample was 28.76 along with a standard deviation of 9.17. Out of 142 participants, 94 participants were graduates which implies that they had BA/BS degree while 48 participants were postgraduates which implies that they had MS/MPhil degree.

Perceived Choice and Awareness of Self Scale-

PCASS: Perceived Choice and Awareness of Self Scale developed by Sheldon et al. (1996) was used to measure self-determination. It is a 10-item scale with each item comprising of 2 statements A and B. It has a 5-point Likert scale where 1= Only A feels true while 5= Only B feels true. It has two subscales namely “perceived choice” and “awareness of self” each of which comprises of 5 items. Items 1,3,5, 7, and 9 were reverse scored. Average is taken to get the total score on each subscale. The score range for each subscale is between 1-5. Sample items include: ‘A= I am free to do whatever I decide to do, B=What I do is often not what I'd choose to do’. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the perceived choice scale is ‘.70’ while that for awareness of self-subscale is ‘.61’,

General Work Stress Scale: General Work Stress Scale developed by de Bruin and Taylor (2005) was used to measure work stress. It has 9-items with a 5-point Likert scale where 1= Never and 5=Always. The scale has a continuous scoring which implies that higher score means higher level of stress at work. The score range is between 9-45. Sample items include: ‘Does work make you so stressed that you wish you had a different job?’ and ‘Does work make you so stressed that you lose your temper?’ The Cronbach alpha reliability of the scale is ‘.77’

Job Satisfaction Scale: Job Stress Scale developed by Spector (1985) was used to

measure job satisfaction. It has 36 items with a 6-point Likert scale where 1= disagree very much and 6=agree very much. The scale comprises of 9 dimensions with 4 items each. The domains are pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work and communication. Items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34, and 36 are reverse scored. Each subscale can be continuously scored to get a score between the range of 4-24. Total score can be calculated by summing up scores of all the responses and lie in the range of 36-216. Sample items include: ‘I like my supervisor’ and ‘The benefit package we have is equitable.’ The Cronbach alpha reliability of the perceived choice scale is ‘.86’

Procedure: At first the research was approved from Departmental Board of Research and Advanced Studies. Permission was taken from the authors of the assessment measures to use those in the present study. Survey questionnaire was developed using Google forms. The questionnaire was disseminated among the teaching fraternity using WhatsApp groups and other platforms on social media. During collection of data research ethics were taken into account. Informed consent was taken from the participants. Data was reported correctly and precisely. Participants were given full freedom to withdraw from the research if they wanted to. Once the data was collected it was screened for duplicate responses and those responses were deleted. Data was transferred to SPSS and analyzed using parametric statistics.

Results

This chapter includes analysis used in the research along with their results. The correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between self-determination, workplace stress and job-satisfaction in elementary school teachers.

The correlation of demographic variables along with study variables is shown in the table 1.

According to analysis, age showed positive relationship with job satisfaction and relationship with job stress. Qualification has a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction. Marital status has a significant positive relationship with workplace stress and negative relationship with job satisfaction. Salary and experience in years has a positive relationship with job satisfaction

while nature of job has a negative relationship. Experience in years has a negative relationship with workplace stress. Perceived choice subscale of self-determination has a significant negative relationship with subscale of self-awareness. Perceived choice as well as self-awareness subscales have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction. Workplace stress has a significant negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Table 1 Intercorrelation of Demographic Variables, Self-determination Subscales, Workplace Stress and Job-satisfaction in Elementary School Teachers (N=142)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Age	-	.14	-.56**	-.21**	.59**	-.44**	.91**	-.02	.04	-.17*	.29**
2 Qualification		-	-.23**	.10	.24**	-.36**	.06	-.02	.03	-.01	.26**
3 Marital Status			-	.19**	-.38**	.42**	-.50**	-.09	.05	.15*	-.22**
4 Job Type				-	-.22**	.03	-.20**	.00	-.01	.07	.17*
5 Salary					-	-.42**	.61**	-.09	.09	-.11	.23**
6 Nature of Job						-	-.37**	-.03	.04	.13	-.40**
7 Experience Yrs.							-	-.01	.04	-.15*	.25**
8 Perceived Choice								-	-.78**	.03	.61**
9 Self-awareness									-	-.08	.36**
10 Workplace Stress										-	-.46**
11 Job Satisfaction											-

Note. Only significant findings are reported; *p<.05, **p<.01; Job type= Contract and Permanent; Nature of job= Public and Private

Multiple hierarchical regression was done to show the prediction of job satisfaction by independent variables i.e., self-determination and

workplace stress. The results of the analysis are shown in table 2.

Table 2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression showing prediction of Job Satisfaction in elementary school Teachers (N=142)

Predictors	β	SE
Step 1		
Age	.19	.49
Qualification	.09	3.11
Marital Status	.03	4.48
Salary	.05	.00
Job Type	.20***	3.56
Nature of Job	-.30***	4.31
Step 2		
Perceived-Choice	.22*	.71

Self-Awareness	.25*	.76
Step 3		
Workplace Stress	.43**	2.64
F	4.92***	
R	.49	
R ²	.24	
Δ R ²	.24	

Note. SE= Standard Error, β= Standardized, coefficient of beta; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; Job type= Contract and Permanent; Nature of job= Public and Private

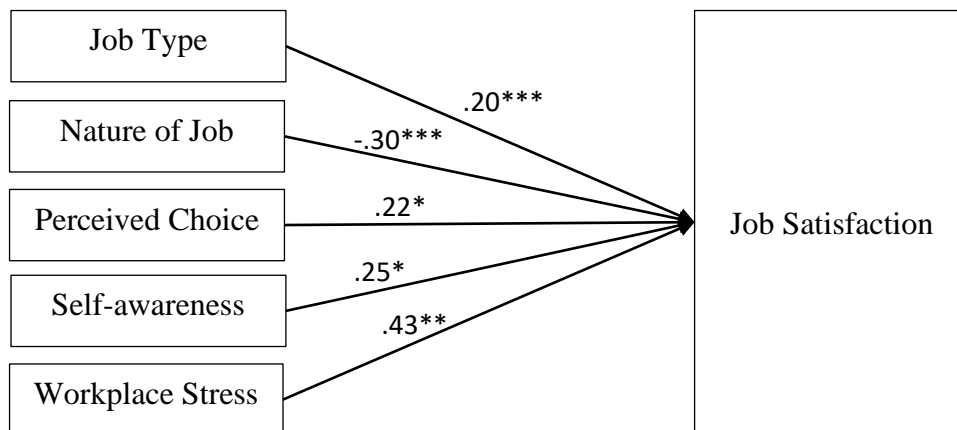
The overall model of regression showed significance which implies that both subscales of self-determination and work stress positively predict job satisfaction. Additionally, job type positively while nature of job negatively predicted job satisfaction. Age, qualification, marital status and salary did not have any predictive role in this study.

Figure 1 shows the emerged statistical model of the study. It shows that job satisfaction was significantly predicted by job type, nature of job, self-determination subscales and workplace stress.

owing to experience to cope with stressors.

Discussion

The research tested three hypotheses all of which are accepted. Based on results a positive relationship was found between self-determination and job satisfaction (H1). These findings are backed by previous literature (Hambali et al., 2020; Collie, 2021; Crick et al., 2019; Kengatharan, 2020). Self-determination comprises domains of perceived choice and self-awareness (Sheldon et al. 1996). When an individual is more aware about their individual capacity and has more autonomy or choice at the work place, they tend to have higher levels of composite self-determination. This high level of flexibility and competence in form of self-determination hence makes an employee more satisfied with their work irrespective of the environmental factors and stressors. It was also found that individuals who had more age, more salary and had higher levels of education, were more satisfied. This is due to the reason that such teachers are more equipped cognitively as well as



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Job type= Contract and Permanent; Nature of job= Public and Private

A negative relationship was found between workplace stress and job satisfaction (H2). These findings are supported by previous researches (Ahsan et al., 2009; Rana & Soodan, 2019; Pepe et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2019; Uysal, 2019; An et al., 2020; Parveen & Bano, 2019; Chitra 2020). The more demanding a job gets, the less likely is an employee to feel satisfied with it especially when the employee has limited resources. Such situation is worsened when there is an additional stress from unprecedented events like COVID-19 that change the whole dynamics of work.

Self-determination positively while job stress negatively predicted job satisfaction (H3). Prior research supports these findings (Xiang et al., 2014). As explained before, self-determination is an individual resource that helps an individual cope with stressors and perform well at workplace which leads to job satisfaction. Alternatively, job stress results when workplace demands are not met and in such conditions the levels of satisfaction with the job lowers.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education systems across the globe and has created numerous challenges. To ensure the continuation of regular studies educational institutions have shifted to online modes of

teaching. The teachers were not prepared to adopt the change quickly and hence this shift added to their stressors. This is particularly true for elementary school teachers because they were not tech savvy. The study examined the relationship between self-determination, work stress and job satisfaction. It was found that positive relationship exists between self-determination and job satisfaction; negative relationship was found between workplace stress and job satisfaction; and Self-determination positively while job stress negatively predicted job satisfaction. The research has implications for administration of educational institutions, human resource departments as well as policy makers and psychologists. It adds to the literature related to primary school teachers during COVID-19, which is scarce, particularly in context to developing countries like Pakistan.

Limitations and Suggestions:

Convenience sampling was done and data was collected using google forms owing to the pandemic, which resulted in a low response rate. Data of male teachers was excluded as it was very small in number and thus caused confounding. Teachers were not asked whether they were teaching completely online or hybrid. Teachers were not asked if they lost a family member or close friend

to COVID-19, which would have been an additional source of stress.

For future studies it is recommended that data should be collected using purposive sampling, in person. Comparative groups of male and female teachers should be made and data should be collected accordingly. Other stressors should be accounted for and controlled during the study in order to avoid confounding.

Implications: This research has implications for administration of educational institutions, human resource departments as well as policy makers and psychologists. It highlights the importance of self-determination as an individual characteristic to battle against stress and cope with it. The research recommends to include training to inculcate self-determination in the staff, so they may be well equipped to handle stressful situations like the pandemic. It adds to the literature related to primary school teachers during COVID-19, which is scarce.

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Contribution: Saira Maqsood conceptualized the study, developed basic framework and compiled results section, Fatima Salman and Asia Bibi conducted the analysis and prepared data sheet, Marva Sohail wrote the manuscript, Shehla Aslam did data collection and conceptualized the study. All the authors finalized the manuscript for publication.

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