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Examining stressors' influence on job satisfaction among engineering college faculty: a cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the various dimensions of stress experienced by engineering college teachers and their impact on job satisfaction. The research specifically examines the relationship between stress factors and job satisfaction among faculty members in engineering colleges in the western region of Tamil Nadu. A cross-sectional research design was used in this study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire from 210 faculty members between June and December 2023, employing a convenient sampling method. The questionnaire comprised three sections: demographic details, stress dimensions, and job satisfaction variables, which were adapted from previous studies. Reliability testing ensured data consistency and factor analysis identified core stress dimensions. Multiple regression analysis was applied to assess the influence of stress dimensions on job satisfaction, while correlation analysis examined relationships between the variables. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. Key findings revealed that organizational climate, role conflict, professional and personal growth, and role ambiguity significantly influence job satisfaction. However, role overload did not show a notable impact. A strong correlation between professional growth and job satisfaction was observed, highlighting a critical area for targeted interventions. These insights provide valuable guidance for policymakers in academic institutions to develop effective strategies to mitigate faculty stress and enhance job satisfaction within the academic environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a crucial role in societal development by disseminating knowledge and shaping the character of students. Their responsibilities go beyond teaching; they are tasked with nurturing well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society. This role requires subject expertise and the ability to cultivate students into responsible and ethical citizens. In addition to their educational duties, teachers must keep up with evolving teaching methods, use effective instructional strategies, and motivate students to succeed. In today's complex educational landscape, teachers face numerous challenges. These include issues of professional autonomy, role ambiguity, overload, and clarity. Furthermore, the increasing administrative

responsibilities, student behavior management, extracurricular integration, strained relationships with peers and administrators, limited promotional opportunities, and diminishing societal respect for the profession add to their burdens. These challenges significantly contribute to stress among educators, leading to serious consequences such as anxiety, depression, and burnout [1]–[3]. Teacher stress is a growing concern worldwide. In Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, nearly 50% of educators report experiencing job-related stress, and 25% indicate that this stress affects their physical and mental health [1]. Studies from the past decade have shown a sharp rise in teacher stress and burnout, leading to adverse outcomes like diminished performance, increased teacher turnover [4], and strained relationships among colleagues, parents, and students [5]. Stress, both physiological and psychological, affects mental health and can lead to long-term conditions like anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder [6]. Prolonged stress exposure may cause burnout, exhaustion, and vulnerability to health problems, including cardiovascular issues, and it also affects the relationships of working environment [7], [8]. In this study, work-related stress among teachers is defined as a state of discomfort characterized by tension, nervousness, restlessness, and sleep disturbances caused by job-related factors [9], [10]. Stress is an unavoidable reality in the workplace, and its severity varies depending on the profession's nature and individual coping strategies.

Contrary to the perception that teaching is a low-stress profession, educators face unique challenges driven by the fast-paced changes in pedagogy, technological advancements, and administrative expectations [11]. Research highlights numerous factors contributing to stress in teaching, including heavy workloads, extended hours, lack of recognition, disruptive student behavior, limited resources, role ambiguity, and low salaries [12]. These stressors adversely affect teachers' productivity, leading to physical, psychological, and behavioral problems such as muscle tightness, headaches, sleep disturbances, and digestive issues [13]. Increased stress in teaching has been linked to reduced job satisfaction, burnout, and decreased work performance [14]. While stress is a normal response to challenging circumstances, it becomes harmful when it becomes chronic [15]. Understanding the factors that contribute to stress in teaching—such as professional autonomy, administrative burdens, and interpersonal dynamics—is essential for developing effective strategies to alleviate these stressors.

This study aims to contribute to the discourse on teacher well-being by examining the challenges faced by educators and identifying interventions that can reduce stress and improve job satisfaction. The findings are expected to guide the development of strategies that foster a supportive and conducive work environment for teachers. Ultimately, this research aspires to make the teaching profession more sustainable and fulfilling, benefiting both educators and society. While previous research offers valuable insights into the stressors faced by teachers and other professionals, gaps remain in the understanding of stress dynamics across different environments. More comprehensive studies are needed to explore the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing stress and promoting well-being [16]. Future research should focus on addressing these gaps to offer a holistic understanding of stress and provide evidence-based strategies for fostering resilience and job satisfaction in challenging work environments. Based on the problem statement of the study, the following objectives are proposed: i) to analyze the relationship between key stress dimensions (organizational climate, role conflict, professional growth, role ambiguity, and role overload) and job satisfaction among engineering college faculty in the western region of Tamil Nadu; ii) to identify the most significant stress factors influencing job satisfaction and explore their differential impacts on faculty well-being and performance; and iii) to provide actionable insights for policymakers and academic administrators to develop targeted interventions for mitigating faculty stress and enhancing job satisfaction.

The evolving landscape of education and work environments, exacerbated by the unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted a surge in research to understand the multifaceted challenges faced by students, teachers, and professionals. This literature review delves into several studies that explore stressors, challenges, and factors influencing individuals in the realms of online learning, teaching, and occupational settings. A study on Saudi Arabian university students during the pandemic highlighted the impact of time constraints, technical challenges, and deficits in technical skills on the online learning experience, stressing the need for tailored interventions in online education [1]. Similarly, research on teachers during the pandemic revealed struggles with burnout, stress, and maintaining work-life balance, particularly when compared to professionals in similar fields, emphasizing the urgency for stress-management interventions specific to educators [17]. Another study examined the role of organizational support in reducing occupational stress among teachers, showcasing the importance of support mechanisms in fostering a supportive teaching environment [18]. Expanding the scope, research on academic and industry employees explored stress personalities, revealing the complexity and individual nature of stress responses, which can inform more targeted interventions [19].

In private engineering colleges, workload was identified as a predominant stressor for teachers, with additional factors such as salary concerns, role ambiguity, and lack of social support contributing to stress levels [20]. Similarly, research in a Chinese university found that work overload, extended hours, and insufficient coworker support were key stress-inducing factors for faculty [21]. In the healthcare sector,

studies identified income, work overload, and patient misinformation as primary stressors for hospital workers, suggesting strategies such as yoga and meditation for alleviation [22]. Research on educators also explored the impact of accountability and fairness from superiors on stress levels, finding that fair treatment correlated with lower stress, while transparency and participation in organizational democracy did not significantly affect stress levels [23]. Furthermore, studies have shown that demographic factors like age, gender, and position play critical roles in shaping stress experiences among educators [24], with similar findings emerging from research in other sectors like banking [25] and healthcare [26].

Additional research on police officers and their coping strategies emphasized the complex dynamics of occupational stress in high-risk environments [27]. Studies focusing on Generation-Y employees in education during COVID-19 revealed that coworker support, work-life balance, and role expectation conflicts were significant stress factors [28]. Moreover, the mediating role of organizational support in teacher well-being profoundly impacted stress management [18]. Investigations into job satisfaction and occupational stress among primary school principals identified a complex interplay of factors influencing their professional experiences [29]. Lastly, research on stress and work motivation among primary and secondary school teachers, particularly in relation to financial concerns and work obligations, uncovered surprising associations, while studies on occupational stress and burnout in Greek teachers emphasized key demographic differences in stress experiences [30], [31]. Thus, it is evident from the reviewed literature that there is a significant research gap to execute the present research.

2. METHOD

The conceptual framework of the study is depicted in Figure 1. The figure illustrates the relationships between these independent variables and the dependent variable, job satisfaction. This study investigates the impact of organizational climate, role conflict, role overload, professional and self-growth, and role ambiguity on the job satisfaction of college teachers in the western region of Tamil Nadu, India.

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to capture data from faculty members at a single point in time, focusing on their experiences within engineering colleges. Utilizing convenience sampling, 20 engineering colleges were selected, and 210 faculty members participated, forming the sample size. The research instrument, a structured questionnaire based on several works [32]–[34] was divided into three sections: demographic profiling, independent variables (organizational climate, role conflict, role overload, professional and self-growth, and role ambiguity), and the dependent variable, job satisfaction, measured using a five-point Likert scale. A pilot study was conducted to test and refine the questionnaire, ensuring clarity and relevance, with feedback incorporated into the final version. Data was collected between June and December 2023, with 210 fully completed questionnaires used for analysis. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 20, employing descriptive statistics to summarize demographic data, factor analysis to identify latent constructs, multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of stress dimensions on job satisfaction, and correlation analysis to examine relationships between the key variables. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha ensured internal consistency of the questionnaire. This comprehensive methodology provided valuable insights into the factors shaping job satisfaction among college faculty, contributing to a deeper understanding of the challenges and stress dimensions influencing teachers in the western region of Tamil Nadu.

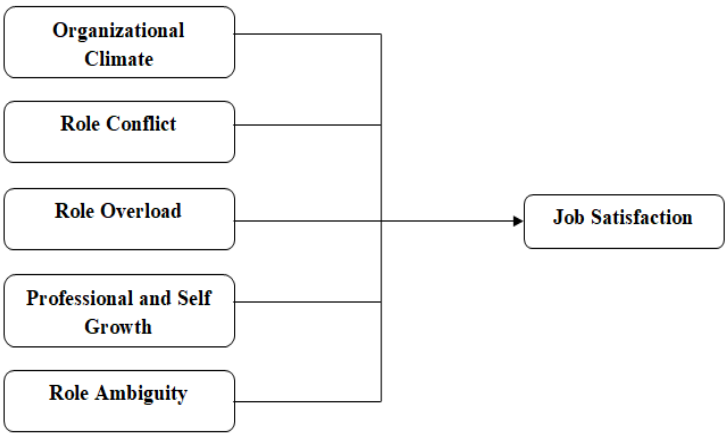

Figure 1. Research model of the study

3. RESULTS

3.1. Internal consistency of the data

In order to assess the internal consistency of the collected data, Cronbach's alpha, a widely recognized reliability measure, was employed. The findings are presented in Table 1, elucidating various stress dimensions, the initial number of variables, the retained variables post-analysis, and the associated Cronbach alpha values. The internal consistency of the data is examined with the help of Cronbach's alpha.

The Cronbach alpha values, ranging from .775 to .816, indicate substantial internal consistency for all stress dimensions. Notably, each dimension surpasses the widely accepted threshold of .70, affirming the reliability of the selected variables in measuring their respective constructs. This robust internal consistency enhances the credibility of the dataset, instilling confidence in the subsequent analytical and interpretative phases of the study. The meticulous examination of stress factors among faculty members benefits from the methodological rigor employed in ensuring data reliability. The internal consistency and structure of faculty stress were assessed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), employing the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test. The results, as presented in Table 1, illustrate distinct stress dimensions observed among engineering college teachers.

Table 1. Analyzing the internal consistency of stress dimensions among engineering college teachers

S. No.	Dimensions	No. of variables	No. of variables retained	Cronbach alpha
1	Organizational climate	5	5	.775
2	Role conflict	5	5	.811
3	Role overload	5	5	.816
4	Professional and self-growth	5	5	.798
5	Role ambiguity	5	5	.801

3.2. Identified stress dimensions

Table 2 presents the results of the factor analysis, identifying five distinct stress dimensions among engineering college teachers. The study employed EFA to elucidate the dimensions of stress experienced by engineering college teachers. The KMO measure, indicating sampling adequacy, yielded a value of .866, signifying a good fit for factor analysis.

Table 2. Identified stress dimensions

S. No.	Stress dimensions	No. of items included	Eigenvalue	Percent of variance explained	Cumulative percent of variable explained
1	Organizational climate	5	11.242	21.253	21.253
2	Role conflict	5	2.864	19.149	40.042
3	Role overload	5	1.566	11.015	51.417
4	Professional and self growth	5	1.135	9.028	60.444
5	Role ambiguity	5	1.042	5.658	66.102
KMO measures of sampling adequacy: .866			Bartlett's test for sphericity: 1763.138		

3.3. Factor analysis details

This study explores the impact of workplace stressors on job satisfaction among faculty members in engineering colleges through a cross-sectional approach. Factor analysis is applied to identify the core dimensions shaping these experiences within the academic environment. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the identified factors, they have been categorized as:

- Factor 1 (F1): organizational climate, consisting of five items, accounts for 21.253% of the variance.
- Factor 2 (F2): role conflict comprising five variables related to stress, this factor explains 19.149% of the total variance.
- Factor 3 (F3): role overload, which includes five items, contributes to 11.015% of the variance.
- Factor 4 (F4): professional and self-growth with five variables, this factor explains 9.028% of the total variance.
- Factor 5 (F5): role ambiguity consisting of five items, this factor accounts for 5.658% of the variance.

3.4. Impact of faculty stress dimensions on job satisfaction

A thorough multiple regression analysis was undertaken to unravel the intricate interplay between faculty stress dimensions and job satisfaction. This analysis incorporated five factors, namely organizational climate, role conflict, role overload, professional and personal growth, and role ambiguity, which were

identified through factor analysis and served as independent variables to predict job satisfaction. Table 3 explains the impact of faculty stress dimensions on job satisfaction.

Table 3. Impact of faculty stress dimensions on job satisfaction

Factors	Standardized coefficients	T	Sig	Collinearly statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Constant	-	1.879	.065	-	-
Organizational climate	.304	5.314	.000**	.395	2.533
Role conflict	.239	4.654	.000**	.490	2.042
Role overload	.034	.666	.508	.505	1.979
Professional and Self-growth	.412	6.481	.000**	.319	3.131
Role ambiguity	.183	3.413	.001**	.449	2.228
R Square					.922
Adjusted R square					.916
F statistics					142.606
Significance					.000

**Significant at 1 percent level.

Prior to executing the multiple regression analysis, a meticulous examination was conducted to identify multicollinearity concerns. The results affirmed that tolerance values exceeded the .10 threshold, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) adhered to the recommended limit of 10. This indicates the absence of multicollinearity issues in the dataset, ensuring the reliability of the subsequent regression results. The regression model unveiled a substantial relationship between stress dimensions and job satisfaction (F=142.606, probability F statistics <.00). The R2 value of .922 indicates that the independent variables collectively explain 91.6% of the variance in stress dimensions, with an adjusted R2 of 91.6%, reinforcing the robustness of the model. Exploring the individual dimensions, professional and self-growth emerged as the most potent influencers on job satisfaction (β=.412, t=6.481, p=.000. Following closely, organizational climate displayed a substantial impact (β=.304, t=5.314, p=.000) followed by role conflict (β=.239, t=4.654, p=.000 and role ambiguity (β=.183, t=3.413, p=.001. Intriguingly, role overload did not emerge as a significant predictor of job satisfaction (β=.034, t=.666, p=.508. These nuanced findings contribute valuable insights into the differential impact of specific stress dimensions on the job satisfaction of faculty members within the unique context of an engineering college. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between faculty stress dimensions (F1: organizational climate; F2: role conflict; F3: role overload; F4: professional and self-growth; and F5: role ambiguity) and job satisfaction, as depicted in Table 4. The results underscore a robust correlation between professional and self-growth and job satisfaction, particularly demonstrating a strong association with organizational climate.

The correlation matrix presented in Table 4 reveals noteworthy associations between faculty stress dimensions and job satisfaction. Particularly, a substantial correlation is observed between professional and self-growth and job satisfaction (r=.754, p<.01), underscoring the crucial role of continuous professional development in influencing the overall job satisfaction of faculty members. This robust correlation is further accentuated by its noteworthy association with organizational climate (r=.754, p<.01). The positive correlations observed across various stress dimensions and job satisfaction emphasize the intricate interconnection of these variables. Role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity also exhibit significant positive correlations with job satisfaction, suggesting that addressing and mitigating these specific stressors could contribute to overall job satisfaction among faculty members. These findings enrich our understanding of the nuanced interplay between faculty stress dimensions and job satisfaction, providing valuable insights for educational institutions seeking to enhance their teaching staff's overall well-being and job satisfaction. The positive correlations underscore the importance of strategic interventions to address specific stress dimensions, foster a conducive environment for faculty members, and promote job satisfaction within academic settings.

Table 4. Correlation analysis of job stress dimensions and job satisfaction in the workplace

Factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	JS
F1: Organizational climate	1					
F2: Role conflict	.715**	1				
F3: Role overload	.631**	.592**	1			
F4: Professional and self-growth	.754**	.665**	.706	1		
F5: Role ambiguity	.641**	.647**	.670	.729	1	
JS: Job satisfaction	.752**	.709**	.720	.766	.716	1

**Significant of .01 level (2-tailed)

4. DISCUSSION

In this study, the researchers have focused on uncovering the various stress dimensions experienced by college teachers in engineering colleges and examining their impact on job satisfaction. Through the analysis of 210 valid responses, we identified five key stress factors: organizational climate, role conflict, role overload, professional and personal growth, and role ambiguity. Together, these factors explained 66.102% of the total variance. The multiple regression analysis revealed that organizational climate, role conflict, professional and personal growth, and role ambiguity significantly influence job satisfaction among college teachers. However, role overload did not have a significant impact on our analysis. These findings shed light on the complex interplay between stress dimensions and job satisfaction within the academic setting. Specifically, they highlight the importance of addressing certain stress factors to enhance faculty well-being. Notably, the strong correlation between professional and personal growth and job satisfaction suggests a promising area for targeted interventions aimed at improving overall job satisfaction among college teachers. Previous literature has also emphasized the significance of organizational climate as a precursor to stress. Additionally, reports, such as the State of Workplace Productivity Report and study by Brown *et al.* [35], underscore the prevalence of feelings of overwork and overwhelm among employees, aligning with our findings regarding role overload.

Furthermore, theoretical frameworks such as the cognitive energetical theory [36] elucidate the detrimental effects of role overload on employee well-being and organizational performance. Consistent with previous research, our study underscores the negative impact of role overload on job performance and organizational outcomes. The literature review reveals substantial evidence linking stress in higher education to various adverse outcomes, including job dissatisfaction, reduced performance, poor health, compromised psychological well-being, and strained relationships [37]. Notably, role overload has been identified as a precursor to poor work performance, supported by seminal works [38], [39]. Role overload and role conflict emerge as a significantly influential dimension of organizational stress contributing to overall faculty stress levels [40], [41]. Previous research underscores the detrimental effects of role conflict and ambiguity, which are shown to create job-related strain among employees, leading to the development of routinized behavioral patterns and hindering more complex aspects of the job [42], [43]. Ibem *et al.* [44] identify work overload, tight budgets, and ambitious deadlines as key stressors in academic settings, further reinforcing the importance of addressing these factors to mitigate faculty stress. Overall, the analysis of existing literature highlights the multifaceted nature of stress in higher education and underscores the critical importance of addressing factors such as role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity to promote faculty well-being and enhance organizational performance. These insights inform the design and interpretation of our study, providing a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between stress dimensions and job satisfaction among college teachers in engineering colleges.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the stress dimensions experienced by college teachers in engineering colleges and their impact on job satisfaction, offering valuable insights for improving faculty well-being and fostering a supportive academic environment. The key findings identified five critical stress factors—organizational climate, role conflict, role overload, professional and self-growth, and role ambiguity—significantly influencing job satisfaction levels. However, the study's limitations must be acknowledged, such as its specific context, cross-sectional design, and convenience sampling method. To strengthen future research, longitudinal designs, random sampling, and the inclusion of additional dependent variables are recommended. The findings carry important managerial implications for educational institutions, administrators, and policymakers. Targeted support mechanisms like mentorship programs, stress management workshops, and counseling services can help address faculty stress. Continuous professional development initiatives, including training, conferences, and collaborative projects, should be prioritized to empower faculty members, foster growth, and enhance job satisfaction. Institutions must focus on creating opportunities for faculty to develop their skills, stay updated on evolving educational practices, and engage in meaningful professional growth activities, contributing to a more fulfilled and motivated academic workforce.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study.

INFORMED CONSENT

Prior to data collection, all faculty members (participants) were clearly informed about the purpose and process of the study. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and confidentiality of their responses was strictly maintained throughout the research.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study followed established ethical research practices and received approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [HA], upon reasonable request.

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