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Original Article

MULTIDIMENSIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG COLLEGE TEACHERS OF MANIPUR (NORTHEAST INDIA): A CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND ORGANISATIONAL PREDICTORS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Occupational stress has become a growing issue in higher education institutions, mainly due to increased job demands, pressure to perform, and organisational changes. Research on this issue is ongoing globally, but there is limited direct empirical evidence from many geographically remote, rural, or less-connected academic contexts, particularly from Northeast India, which remains isolated from major centres of global academia. Recognising this gap, we aim to explore multidimensional occupational stress among college teachers in Manipur, converging more on the demographic profile and organisational factors.
Methodology: We conduct a cross-sectional quantitative study, collecting a sample of 400 participants from 26 colleges in the Imphal district, using a structured questionnaire based on the Employment Organisation Sources of Stressors (EOSS). Data collection was done through simple random sampling, and descriptive statistics were calculated in MS Excel to analyse stress.
Results: Our findings reveal that overall occupational stress levels within the college fraternity are predominantly low; 68% of teachers experience low stress, 27.5% moderate stress, and no cases of high overall stress. Within the multiple dimensions, organisational climate stress (39.5%) and interpersonal relationship stress (36.5%) showed the highest levels of moderate stress. On the contrary, personal development stress was the lowest, suggesting relatively stable perceptions of career advancement and professional development opportunities.
Conclusion: Our main finding is that organisational and relational factors have a greater impact on occupational stress than workload-related pressures. Therefore, the mitigation strategy should focus on improving organisational transparency, strengthening collegial relationships, and fostering supportive institutional environments. Besides these, our findings provide context-specific empirical data that can be used to formulate policy and faculty well-being initiatives within higher education institutions in Northeast India.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, College Teachers, Higher Education, Organisational Climate, Manipur

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INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is gradually emerging as a global issue throughout different sectors of the workforce, especially in knowledge-intensive workplaces, for instance, in the education sector. This type of stress is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon arising from an individual's interaction with their work environment Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Leszczyńska and Peplińska (2023), Jacobs (2024). The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines occupational stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, and needs of the worker Murphy et al. (1999). Stress is considered a psychological and physiological response to internal or external stressors, which can appear as either positive or negative responses Ismail et al. (2010), Shinde (2014). The characteristic features of stress are physical, mental, and physiological responses to work-related stressors, which can lead to serious health and performance issues for employees.

CAUSES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

1) Work Environment and Conditions

Stress arises from working settings and conditions. Undue workloads, work pressure, limited opportunities to advance professionally, and toxic relationships with associates are the main workplace challenges employees face. These external and internal issues can cause employees to feel anxious and concerned about their service, potentially leading to serious mental and physical health crises (Narban et al., 2016; Singh & Verma, 2019).

2) Communication and Cultural Barriers

Immigrant employees often encounter occupational stress. They face communication barriers, experience feelings of hostility and social discrimination, and struggle with work-life balance in a new setting, all of which lead to detrimental psychological impacts on them (Serafica et al., 2023).

3) Mismatch of Job Demands and Worker Capabilities

Sometimes stress arises from a mismatch between an employee's aptitudes, resources, and needs and job demands. This issue can increase pressure among the employees, leading to physiological, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive changes in individuals (Tsimakuridze et al., 2022; Kejriwal, 2024).

IMPACTS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

1) Health and Well-being

Continuous exposure to work-related stress can lead to a syndrome – Burnout, which exhausts the physical, mental and emotional health of an individual. Burnout, in general, is linked to depression and anxiety in an individual Jacobs (2024), Nurmukhamedova & Madjidova, 2011).

2) Organisational Performance

Increased organisational stress can greatly affect employee well-being and performance. High stress can also hinder the completion of tasks and the strategic objectives. This can lead to decreased morale, low performance, absenteeism, and elevated employee turnover, all of which are determinants of organisational success (Tsimakuridze et al., 2022).

MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1) Stress Management and Mitigation Interventions

The introduction of effective stress management strategies is essential to boost employees' well-being and organisational efficiency. Some selected strategies could include establishing a support system, strengthening communication, and cultivating a good work environment (Akanji, 2013).

2) Cultural and Individual Considerations

Developing culturally appropriate therapies and accounting for individual differences are crucial for effectively managing occupational stress, for instance, across different workplace environments (Serafica et al., 2023; Bezrukavnikova, 2023).

3) Measurement and Evaluation

Accurate measurement and evaluation of stress levels are crucial for implementing operative management strategies. Nevertheless, current stress measurement scales and indices are underdeveloped and require further study (Kejriwal, 2024).

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IN ACADEMIA

In academic institutions, rapid changes in structures, heightened accountability measures, performance-driven evaluation systems, and administrative expansion significantly shape the nature of faculty work Winefield et al. (2003), Tytherleigh et al. (2005). These developments have increased occupational pressures, rendering stress among university and college staff an increasingly significant empirical research topic.

Many empirical studies consistently reveal that academics experience significant work-related stress. Early 21st-century research from Australia and the UK has indicated an increase in psychological distress among academicians in institutions Winefield et al. (2003), Kinman (2001). Likewise, Gillespie et al. (2001) noted that time constraints, inadequate resources, and insufficient support are significant factors in stress outcomes among university staff. Watts and Robertson (2011) further confirmed, in their systematic review, that burnout is increasingly prevalent among higher education professionals, both in managerialist and publish-or-perish environments.

Beyond workload pressures, relational and structural factors greatly impact occupational stress. Key predictors of academic strain include interpersonal conflict, a lack of transparency from administration, and perceived organisational injustice Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008), Tytherleigh et al. (2005). Social support consistently serves as a protective factor that mitigates the negative impact of job demands Halbesleben (2006). Conversely, strained collegial relationships may intensify perceived stress even in relatively stable work environments.

A cross-national study shows that the prevalence of academic stress varies across different institutional and governance frameworks Shin and Jung (2014). Higher education systems in developing countries experience greater stress than those in highly competitive, research-driven universities. And the main factors are job security, cultural norms, and social support networks. While international data are growing, information about less-studied or peripheral academic settings is still limited.

In the Indian higher education sector, reforms in accreditation, ranking, and research metrics have raised professional expectations. While metropolitan institutions attract more scholarly attention, there is a lack of empirical research on occupational stress in remote areas of the country, for instance, the Northeast India. This gap is notable because the unique institutional culture, governance, and socio-cultural support systems in these areas could produce distinct stress patterns.

Furthermore, occupational stress is a complex, multifaceted concept with both theoretical and empirical dimensions. The extant literature increasingly underscores the importance of exploring stressors related to domain-specific components. Those stressors include work-related stressors, role expectations, career concerns, interpersonal relations, and organisational environment, to attain a more granular, analytically robust understanding of employees' well-being Gillespie et al. (2001), Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008). In contrast to the reliance on aggregate or unidirectional stress indicators, a multidimensional method helps delineate distinct stress configurations and latent clusters, providing context-sensitive, empirically grounded, and strategically targeted institutional actions.

Against the above background, the current study seeks to systematically evaluate the multidimensional occupational stress experienced by college professors in the Imphal region (Manipur) via a well-structured quantitative approach. Specifically, we also focus on analysing the key domains of stress, incorporating work-related, interpersonal, developmental, and organisational factors, while accounting for relevant demographic variations to find differential patterns.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of our study are:

1) To evaluate the levels of occupational stress experienced by the college teachers in the Imphal area (Manipur).
2) To identify the relative prominence of different stress dimensions and determine which domains represent higher stress concentration among faculty members.
3) To analyse disparities in stress levels across Professors of different career stages.
4) To give empirical evidence that may bolster institutional decision-making, faculty well-being initiatives, and stress management measures inside higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

Our current study adopted a cross-sectional, quantitative research design to systematically examine the multifaceted nature of occupational stress experienced by college teachers. This methodological approach is chosen because it captures variations in stress levels and demographic details at a specific point in time, thereby offering a clear picture of contemporaneous assessment of prevailing occupational stress patterns in the academic milieu.

STUDY SETTING AND POPULATION

In this study, we chose 26 colleges, all situated in the Imphal Valley. The participants were exclusively full-time faculty members (professors). There were no restrictions based on academic discipline, rank, or gender.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A total sample size of 400 college teachers was chosen to ensure sufficient representation and statistical validity for the descriptive analysis. To collect the data, a simple random sampling technique was utilised to reduce selection bias and enhance external validity. Lists of eligible participants were drawn from institutional registers, and participants were randomly selected to ensure equal chances of inclusion.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Data were collected via a standardised, self-administered questionnaire. Occupational stress was measured using the Employment Organisation Sources of Stressors (EOSS) Scale, developed by Telaprolu and George (2005), a validated tool designed to evaluate various aspects of occupational stress. The EOSS scale enables a thorough assessment across multiple analytically distinct but interconnected domains. These domains are stress-related to their work, roles, personal and professional development, interpersonal and organisational climate. This framework provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating occupational stress profiles across multiple dimensions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data via questionnaires were systematically coded and subsequently inserted into Microsoft Excel for statistical analysis. Frequency distributions and percentage analyses were two types of descriptive analysis computed using the same software. The EOSS grading system is put under four categories: very low, low, moderate, or high.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1) Age Distribution

The age profile of sampled college professors indicates a mostly mature academic cohort. The largest proportion of the sampled population is aged 51 years and over (36.5%), followed closely by those aged between 41-50 years (34.5%). There are 94 participants aged 31-40 years, accounting for 23.5%, and the smallest cohort is only 5.5% (n = 22), who were 30 or younger Table 1.

The observed age distribution indicates that the sample is predominantly comprised of mid- to late-career staff. Relatively young early-career academics (<30 years) may have significant implications for understanding stress-perception patterns that often evolve across career stages. Such variation results from factors like employment security, administrative duties, and institutional responsibilities.

Table 1

Table 1 Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30 years	22	5.5
31-40 years	94	23.5
41-50 years	138	34.5
51 years and above	146	36.5
Total	**400**	**100.0**

2) Gender Composition

The population under study consists of 61% (n=244) females and 39% (n=156) males, indicating. A relatively higher representation of women in the studied population may have analytical significance for interpreting stress-related outcomes, especially in fields of interpersonal stress and organisational climate Table 2.

Table 2

Table 2 Gender of the Respondents		
Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	156	39.0
Female	244	61.0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

3) Marital Status

Our study indicates that most college professors are married (78.5%). Only 21.5% of the studied population is unmarried. This biased married-dominant data may bias the results, as marital status can affect the professional life and elevate work-related stress because of family responsibilities Table 3.

Table 3

Table 3 *Marital Status of the Respondents*		
Status	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Married	314	78.5
Unmarried	86	21.5
Total	**400**	**100.0**

4) Family Structure

Table 4 below reveals that 58% of the studied sample belong to the nuclear category and 42% to the joint category. This composition of family structure is a salient feature in stress research. For instance, shared responsibilities and emotional support are usually found in joint families, but not in nuclear families.

Table 4

Table 4 Family Size of the Respondents		
Family	**Frequency**	**Percent**
int	168	42.0
Nuclear	232	58.0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

5) Educational Qualification

Regarding educational qualifications, the study population was highly educated, with 61.5% holding a PhD and 38.5% (n = 154) being postgraduates, which is the minimum criteria for colleges in Manipur settings Table 5. High prevalence of PhD holders (doctorate) indicates a highly qualified academic demographic. This distinction is analytically important because research obligations, publication requirements, and administrative tasks typically increase with more advanced academic degrees.

Table 5

Table 5 Educational Qualification of the Respondents		
Qualification	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Post Graduate	154	38.5
PhD	246	61.5
Total	**400**	**100.0**

6) Designation

The distribution of academic positions indicates that Assistant Professors (95%, n = 380) predominate, with only 2.5% as Associate Professors and 2.5% (n = 10) as Guest Faculty Table 6. A relatively high prevalence of Assistant Professors might lead to a

higher percentage of stress findings, mainly reflecting experiences from entry to mid-level academic ranks. Therefore, occupational stress can be greatly affected by intense pressure to achieve promotions, expectations to publish research, and requirements for performance assessments.

Table 6

Table 6 Designation of the Respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Assistant Professor	380	95.0
Associate Professor	10	2.5
Guest Faculty	10	2.5
Total	**400**	**100.0**

7) Monthly Income

The income distribution in Table 7 shows that 58% are assistant professors and college professors earning less than ₹1 lakh per month, 8.5% are associate professors earning between ₹1-1.5 lakh, and only 3.5% are professors earning between ₹1.5-2 lakh. Lower income levels may affect how secure they feel about their financial situation, which, in turn, may increase overall stress among assistant professors.

Table 7

Table 7 Monthly Income of the Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 lakh	232	58.0
1-1.5 lakh	154	38.5
1.5-2 lakh	14	3.5
Total	**400**	**100.0**

STRESS DIMENSIONS: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

From Tables numbers 8 to 13 represent the descriptive statistics of stress, which include their job stress, role stress, personal development stress, interpersonal relationship stress, work environment stress, and total (overall) stress of the studied sample.

Table 8

Table 8 Work Stress Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent
Very Low Stress	18	4.5
Low Stress	322	80.5
Moderate Stress	60	15.0
High Stress	0	0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

8) Work Stress

According to the report, the largest group in the sample has low work stress (80.5%), while 15.0% experience moderate work stress and 4.5% experience very low work stress. Notably, no case of high work stress is reported Table 8. This result suggests that the workloads given to college professors are quite manageable. Lack of high stress levels clearly indicates that their institutions are stable; otherwise, the faculty would have used effective coping strategies.

Table 9

Table 9 Role Stress Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent

Very Low Stress	40	10.0
Low Stress	270	67.5
Moderate Stress	90	22.5
High Stress	0	0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

9) Role Stress

Low role stress was reported by 67.5% of respondents. 22.5% reported moderate stress, and 10.0% reported very low stress. None reported high role stress Table 9. Role stress reflects ambiguity, overload, or conflict between professional responsibilities. Although high stress is absent, the relatively higher proportion of moderate stress (22.5%) compared to work stress suggests that role clarity and administrative responsibilities may present occasional strain.

Table 10

Table 10 Personal Development Stress Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent
Very Low Stress	20	5.0
Low Stress	338	84.5
Moderate Stress	42	10.5
High Stress	0	0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

10) Personal Development Stress

The majority of respondents (84.5%, *n* = 338) reported low personal development stress. Moderate stress was reported by 10.5% (*n* = 42), and 5.0% (*n* = 20) reported very low stress. No respondents indicated high stress in this domain Table 10.

This indicates that respondents generally do not perceive significant stress related to career growth, skill development, or promotion opportunities. Institutional support mechanisms may be effective in this domain.

Table 11

Table 11 Interpersonal Relationship Stress Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent
Very Low Stress	58	14.5
Low Stress	194	48.5
Moderate Stress	146	36.5
High Stress	2	0.5
Total	**400**	**100.0**

11) Interpersonal Relationship Stress

Regarding interpersonal stress levels, 48.5% (n = 194) experience low stress, 36.5% (n = 146) experience moderate stress, 14.5% (n = 58) experience very low stress, and 0.5% (n = 2) experience high stress Table 11. This is the only dimension that shows high stress, even at a minimal level, compared to the other dimension. Therefore, it suggests that interpersonal dynamics (colleague relations, communication issues, or departmental politics) may be a more sensitive stress trigger.

Table 12

Table 12 Organisational Climate Stress Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent
Very Low Stress	40	10.0
Low Stress	202	50.5

Moderate Stress	158	39.5
High Stress	0	0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

12) Organisational Climate Stress

Half of the college teachers (50.5%, n = 202) reported experiencing low organisational climate stress, 39.5% (n = 158) moderate stress, and 10.0% (n = 40) very low stress. No high stress is found in this category Table 12. The relatively high moderate stress level suggests that institutional policies, leadership style, governance, or bureaucratic procedures might moderately affect how stress is perceived.

Table 13

Table 13 Total Stress Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent
Very Low Stress	18	4.5
Low Stress	272	68.0
Moderate Stress	110	27.5
High Stress	0	0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

13) Total Stress Level

Regarding overall stress, 68.0% (n = 272) reported low stress, 27.5% (n = 110) moderate stress, and 4.5% (n = 18) very low stress. No instances of high total stress are observed in this category Table 13. This indicates that, although stress is present, it generally stays at manageable levels throughout the sample.

The descriptive statistics indicate that most college teachers have low stress levels across all measured dimensions. Moderate stress is more frequently observed in interpersonal relationships (36.5%) and the organisational climate (39.5%) than in other dimensions. High stress levels are rare, with only 0.5% reporting in one dimension (i.e., interpersonal stress level).

DISCUSSION

Our study explored various facets of occupational stress among the academic population in Manipur Valley. Overall, occupational stress levels are low, but moderate stress is somewhat high, associated with interpersonal relationships and the organisational climate. Our findings add regional-specific (northeastern India) data to the global occupational stress literature and provide a theoretical understanding of well-known stress paradigms.

OVERALL OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: A CONTEXTUAL CONTRAST

The current results are contrasted with many global publications, which show that 68% of the studied population reports low overall stress, with no indication of high stress levels. In general, occupational stress is highly prevalent in academia. One good example is an Australian study by Winefield et al. (2003) that focuses on organisational change and workload. Similar high-level stresses are found in the United Kingdom's academic sector due to managerialism and performance pressure Kinman (2001), Tytherleigh et al. (2005). A recent study found a strong association between workload demands and burnout among academics Sabagh et al. (2018).

Possible reasons for the low stress levels observed in our results include varying management systems, stable employment, and sociocultural support structures. On the basis of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), overall stress outcomes result from the dynamic balance between employment demands and available resources. Considering the current environment, it is reasonable to assume that the academic positions provide relatively stable employment with manageable teaching loads and research obligations, effectively balancing work demands with academic resources.

WORK AND ROLE STRESS: DEMAND-ROLE EQUILIBRIUM

Our results indicate low levels of work-related stress. This is quite notable, given extensive evidence that identifies workload and role conflict as central stressors in academia. Gillespie et al. (2001) found that role overload and insufficient recognition

significantly predicted distress among university staff. Taris et al. (2001) similarly demonstrated that role conflict and ambiguity were associated with psychological withdrawal behaviours.

Individual role stress, including excessive work, uncertainty, and conflict, has been associated with burnout Maslach et al. (2001). Moderate role stress was observed in our study, with 22.5% of respondents affecting evaluation pressures due to a high number of Assistant Professors (95%). Some studies indicate that early- to mid-career professors often face promotional stress Shin and Jung (2014), Sabagh et al. (2018).

However, the widespread occurrence of low stress suggests that the quantitative demands of employment, like teaching hours, might not be too high. According to the JD-R framework, when resources are available, employment demands are no longer a stressor Bakker and Demerouti (2007). This may be because of the manageable stress advancement of the academic accountability system.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRESS: CAREER STABILITY AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

The personal development stress domain is the lowest among the others and differs from what is observed in high research-intensive settings, where individuals under publication pressure experience distress Guthrie et al. (2017). In their review paper, Watts and Robertson (2011) found that the two factors - performance evaluation systems and publication expectations - are major contributors to academic burnout.

The low stress observed in our study is due to the well-defined career progression system, which reduces confusion. Clear, transparent promotion pathways have been linked to greater employment satisfaction and reduced occupational stress Shin and Jung (2014). Also, having a large number of doctoral-level faculty can improve professional competence and self-efficacy Xanthopoulou et al. (2007).

According to Hobfoll (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, possessing stable qualifications and well-defined career paths can lessen stress and the sense of threat.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP STRESS: A RELATIONAL VULNERABILITY

Interpersonal stress levels were quite high, with 36.5% of moderate stress and 0.5% of high stress. This supports data suggesting that social relationships are a crucial factor influencing academic well-being. Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008) stressed that poor relationships with colleagues are a key predictor of burnout in academic settings. Similarly, Gillespie et al. (2001) also found that inadequate support and interpersonal conflict are closely linked to distress.

Social support from co-workers has reliably reduced stress Halbesleben (2006). Under the COR theory developed by Hobfoll (1989), poor relationships lead to a loss of support, which heightens stress even when the workload is high. Studied population: 61% female-dominant, which may further influence interpersonal dynamics, as seen in a report of meta-analytic evidence that suggests burnout can differ in genders Purvanova and Muros (2010). Therefore, structural demands appear manageable, yet relational stressors may increasingly threaten in academia.

ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE: STRUCTURAL STRESS AND GOVERNANCE

This domain has the largest share of moderate stress (39.5%.) Organisational justice and transparency in management strongly impact the stress outcomes. Tytherleigh et al. (2005) found that management approaches and clear communication in academia significantly influenced staff stress levels. Likewise, Winefield et al. (2003) found that frequent organisational changes and perceived unfairness elevate stress responses.

According to the JD-R model, organisational environment can act as either a supportive resource or an additional source of stress Bakker and Demerouti (2007). When management appears bureaucratic or ambiguous, it can become a source of stress. In contrast, participatory leadership increases engagement and reduces stress Hakanen et al. (2006).

Our findings also indicate that institutional structure, which pertains to how the institution operates, and cultural dimensions might contribute more to increasing stress than direct workload. Implementing timely interventions in the targeted organisations, with an emphasis on clear communication and participatory decision-making, could help reduce the clustering of moderate stress in this domain.

DEMOGRAPHIC MODERATORS AND SOCIAL BUFFERING

Within the studied population, having many mature-age staff and being married might serve as protective factors against higher stress levels. A scientific study found that social support systems, like family networks, play a role in reducing burnout Halbesleben (2006). Furthermore, aged employees frequently report improved emotional regulation and stronger coping skills Gillespie et al. (2001). However, differences in stress across generations are not well understood and require more research, such as longitudinal studies through different career stages.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our study advances the understanding of occupational stress among college teachers in higher education by presenting empirical data on demographic and organisational factors from a less-represented academic region of Northeast India. By adopting a multidimensional framework, this study offers a detailed understanding of how different organisational and interpersonal factors affect stress levels among college teachers in Imphal (Manipur). Our results indicate that overall stress is low; however, variations in certain types of stress reveal underlying structural and relational dynamics within academic institutions that merit critical examination.

One significant contribution of this study is identifying organisational atmosphere and interpersonal relationships as the main factors behind moderate stress in academic environments. This sequence suggests that governance structures, modes of communication, and the quality of collegial interactions may exert a greater influence on faculty stress than factors related to workload or professional development constraints. These findings are parallel with contemporary theoretical perspectives, notably the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which emphasises the critical role of organisational resources such as supportive management, transparent decision-making, and cooperative professional cultures in mitigating occupational stress.

Low levels of stress related to workload and personal growth were seen in our study. This could be because the professors had stable employment, manageable responsibilities, and well-defined career progression opportunities within the institution analysed. Concurrently, the presence of moderate stress in social and organisational areas underlines the necessity to improve institutional frameworks that promote trust, inclusive decision-making, and strengthen constructive collegial connections. Addressing these areas is critical to improving employees' well-being and to guaranteeing continued institutional success, academic engagement, and resilience in the higher education sector.

Importantly, our study helps fill a significant gap in research on occupational stress in academic work by giving context-specific evidence from Northeast India, a region that hasn't gotten much attention. Our findings also advance understanding of how socio-cultural, organisational, and institutional settings influence academic work situations by integrating the results into broader theoretical models and global literatures.

Notwithstanding its valuable contributions, our study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design of this study restricts the ability to determine causality, and dependence on self-reported data may lead to response bias. Furthermore, the high prevalence of Assistant Professors in the studied population may constrain the generalisability of our findings across all academic positions. Future studies should consider a longitudinal design, comparisons between multiple institutions, and a mixed-methods approach (integration of both qualitative and quantitative) to better understand faculty experiences related to organisational culture and professional relationships.

In conclusion, our current research underlines that occupational stress in academia is influenced more by relational and organisational factors than by the severity of workload per se. Improving institutional openness, cultivating supportive collegial relationships, and encouraging participatory administrative practices are essential strategies for improving faculty well-being and maintaining healthy academic work environments. Our study, by emphasising structural and interpersonal aspects, will provide significant implications for higher education guidelines, institutional governance, and faculty development initiatives in nascent academic systems.

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