Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/22902
DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/22902

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG FEMALE FACULTY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF COPING STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Sanyukta Khandare[1] and Yogesh Khandre[2]

1. Research Scholar, MGM's Institute of Management and Research, MGM University, CSN, Maharashtra, India.
2. Associate Professor and Research Guide, MGM's Institute of Management and Research, MGM University, CSN, Maharashtra, India.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History
Received: 19 December 2025
Final Accepted: 20 January 2026
Published: February 2026

Key words:-
Occupational Stress, Female Faculty, Organizational Support, Coping Strategies, Higher Education.

Abstract

Occupational stress among female faculty has emerged as a critical concern in higher education institutions, particularly within resource-constrained academic environments (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Shen & Slater, 2021). While prior research documents the prevalence of stress in academic professions, limited empirical attention has been given to the combined role of individual coping strategies and organizational support in shaping stress experiences from a gendered organizational perspective (García-González & Torrano, 2020; Lease, 1999). Drawing on Transactional Stress Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and Gender Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), this study examines occupational stress and stress management among female faculty members.Primary data were collected from 100 female faculty members employed in higher education institutions. Using a structured questionnaire, the study employed confirmatory factor analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression, moderation analysis, and group comparisons to examine relationships among occupational stress, coping strategies, and perceived organizational support. The results indicate that occupational stress is negatively associated with both coping strategies and organizational support, consistent with prior research suggesting that supportive institutional environments and effective coping mechanisms can reduce stress outcomes among academic staff (Shen & Slater, 2021; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008).

Furthermore, organizational support moderates the relationship between coping strategies and stress, strengthening the stress-buffering effect of individual coping in supportive institutional contexts, echoing findings in organizational support literature (Eisenberger et al., 1986).The study contributes to organizational stress and gender scholarship by reframing stress management as a structural and organizational responsibility rather than an individual deficit, extending stress theory to higher education institutions located in tier 2 city, a context that remains underrepresented in higher education research.

Corresponding Author:- Sanyukta Khandare
Address:-Research Scholar, MGM's Institute of Management and Research, MGM University, CSN, Maharashtra, India.

Introduction:-

Background and Research Context:-

Occupational stress has become a defining characteristic of contemporary academic work across global higher education systems. Intensifying performance metrics, increased administrative responsibilities, digitalization of teaching, and heightened student expectations have fundamentally altered academic labor, contributing to widespread reports of stress and burnout among faculty members (Winefield, Boyd, & Winefield, 2014; Kinman & Wray, 2020). Within this context, female faculty often experience stress differently and sometimes disproportionately, shaped by gendered role expectations, emotional labor demands, and structural inequities embedded within academic institutions (Acker & Armenti, 2004; O'Meara, Kuvaeva, & Nyunt, 2017).

While higher education is frequently perceived as offering professional autonomy and intellectual fulfilment, empirical evidence increasingly suggests that academic environments—particularly in developing and emerging economies—are characterized by resource scarcity, role overload, and institutional rigidity (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010). These conditions amplify occupational stress, especially for women who simultaneously navigate professional expectations and socially constructed caregiving roles (Eagly, 1987; Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). Despite growing international discourse on academic well-being, gender-specific stress management practices within higher education remain insufficiently theorized and empirically examined, particularly outside Western institutional contexts (Shen & Slater, 2021; García-González & Torrano, 2020).

Female Faculty, Gendered Work, and Occupational Stress:-

While working in the field of academics it is found that the female faculties are often expected to engage in disproportionate levels of mentoring, pastoral care, and emotional laboractivities that are essential for institutional functioning yet frequently undervalued within formal performance evaluation systems (O'Meara, Kuvaeva, & Nyunt, 2017; Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). These forms of "invisible labor," combined with teaching loads, research expectations, and administrative responsibilities, contribute to cumulative stress and the gradual depletion of professional and personal resources (Bailyn, 2003; Acker & Armenti, 2004).Transactional Stress Theory conceptualizes stress as a dynamic interaction between environmental demands and an individual's appraisal of available coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), while Conservation of Resources Theory emphasizes the loss or threatened loss of personal, social, and organizational resources under sustained stress conditions (Hobfoll, 1989). When applied to female faculty in higher education, these frameworks suggest that occupational stress is not merely an outcome of workload intensity but rather a product of gendered resource inequities, constrained coping opportunities, and limited institutional support within academic organizations (García-González & Torrano, 2020; Shen & Slater, 2021).

Stress Management in Higher Education: Individual vs. Organizational Responsibility:-

Prevailing approaches to stress management in academic institutions often emphasize individual resilience strategies such as time management, mindfulness, and self-care. While these strategies may provide short-term relief, scholars argue that they can obscure the organizational and structural origins of stress, effectively shifting responsibility from institutions to individuals (Kinman & Wray, 2020; Winefield, Boyd, & Winefield, 2014). Feminist organizational researchers further contend that such approaches may inadvertently reinforce gendered expectations by normalizing excessive workloads and emotional labor as personal challenges rather than systemic issues embedded within institutional cultures (Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 2003).

In higher education institutions, particularly within India and other emerging academic systems, formal stress management policies are often fragmented or insufficiently institutionalized, and organizational support mechanisms remain underdeveloped (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008). As a result, female faculty frequently rely on informal, self-initiated coping strategies that vary significantly depending on personal resources, family support systems, and career stage (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011; Shen & Slater, 2021). This situation raises critical questions regarding the adequacy of existing stress management frameworks and the extent to which higher education institutions acknowledge their responsibility in mitigating occupational stress among faculty members.

Occupational Stress:-
Occupational stress was measured using six items capturing workload intensity, time pressure, administrative burden, emotional labor, work–family conflict, and performance evaluation pressure. These items reflect core dimensions of stress identified in academic and organizational stress literature.
A composite occupational stress score was computed by averaging the six items.

Coping Strategies:-
Coping strategies were assessed using six items representing both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms, including time management, active problem-solving, peer support, emotional detachment, relaxation practices, and perceived coping efficacy. This operationalization reflects widely accepted coping frameworks that distinguish between strategies aimed at addressing stressors directly and those aimed at regulating emotional responses to stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).A composite coping strategies score was calculated as the mean of the six items, allowing for an overall assessment of respondents' coping capacity. Higher scores indicate greater engagement in adaptive coping behaviors, consistent with measurement approaches used in organizational stress research (Carver et al., 1989; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Parameters of the study:-
Perceived organizational support was measured using five items assessing institutional recognition, managerial support, fairness of workload distribution, availability of formal well-being mechanisms, and overall feeling of being valued by the institution.
The composite score was obtained by averaging the five items.

Research gap and rational of the study:-
A review of existing literature reveals three significant gaps. First, empirical research on occupational stress in academia has largely focused on stress prevalence rather than stress management practices, particularly among female faculty. Second, most studies originate from Western contexts, limiting the transferability of findings to higher education institutions located in a tier-2 city in India, characterized by high teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and limited formal stress-management mechanisms. Third, limited research integrates organizational behavior theory with gender-sensitive analysis to examine how institutional structures shape coping mechanisms.Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts an exploratory–explanatory quantitative approach to investigate stress management practices among female faculty members in higher education institutions in India. Rather than treating stress as an individual pathology, the study situates stress management within broader organizational, cultural, and gendered contexts.

Objectives of the Study:-
The objectives of the study are as follows:
a) Examine the primary sources of occupational stress among female faculty in higher education institutions, with particular attention to gender-specific challenges influencing stress experiences and coping mechanisms.
b) Identify the stress management practices adopted by female faculty members and analyze the relationship between organizational factors and the effectiveness of these stress management strategies.
c) Provide organizational-level recommendations for sustainable stress management to support the well-being of female faculty in higher education institutions.

Literature Review:-

Occupational Stress: Evolution of Conceptual Understanding:-
Occupational stress has been a central construct in organizational behavior research for several decades, evolving from early physiological explanations to more complex psychological and structural interpretations. Initial work by Selye (1976) conceptualized stress as a biological response to environmental demands, emphasizing generalized adaptation and physiological strain. While foundational, this approach was later critiqued for neglecting cognitive appraisal and contextual factors.

Subsequent theoretical advancements, particularly the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), reframed stress as a dynamic interaction between environmental demands and individual appraisal processes. According to this perspective, stress emerges not merely from external pressures but from how individuals perceive and evaluate those pressures relative to their coping resources. This shift marked a critical turning point, enabling scholars to examine subjective experiences of stress across occupational contexts.

Within organizational research, stress has increasingly been linked to job design, role expectations, and institutional structures (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001). Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that occupational stress is not an isolated psychological phenomenon but a systemic outcome of organizational arrangements, power relations, and resource distribution (Ganster & Rosen, 2013).

Occupational Stress in Higher Education Institutions:-

Higher education institutions were historically portrayed as relatively autonomous and intellectually flexible work environments. However, this assumption has been increasingly challenged by empirical research documenting rising stress, burnout, and work intensification among academic staff (Kinman, 2016). The transformation of universities into performance-driven, audit-oriented organizations has significantly altered academic labor.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Occupational Stress among Female Faculty: The Role of Coping Strategies and Organizational Support (Created by authors)

This framework is grounded in the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which suggests that occupational stress arises when job demands exceed individual resources. Coping strategies and organizational support help faculty manage stress, improving well-being and enhancing the effectiveness of stress management in higher education institutions.Studies across diverse national contexts indicate that faculty stress is driven by increasing teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, publication pressure, and continuous evaluation through metrics such as rankings and impact factors (Deem, 2009; Shin & Jung, 2014). Digitalization and blended learning models, while offering flexibility, have further blurred work–life boundaries, contributing to extended working hours and cognitive overload (Watermeyer et al., 2021).Importantly, stress in academia is not uniformly distributed. Variations have been observed across disciplines, career stages, and institutional types, suggesting that stress is shaped by both individual position and organizational context (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008).

Gendered Nature of Academic Work and Stress:-

A substantial body of feminist scholarship argues that academic institutions are deeply gendered organizations, wherein formal equality often masks informal inequalities (Acker, 1990). Female faculty frequently experience occupational stress differently from their male counterparts due to gendered expectations related to caregiving, emotional labor, and service work.Empirical studies consistently show that women in academia engage disproportionately in mentoring, student support, and administrative service—activities that are essential for institutional functioning but undervalued in promotion and reward systems (Guarino & Borden, 2017). This phenomenon, often described as "academic housekeeping," contributes to role overload and emotional exhaustion.

Research also highlights the intersection of professional and domestic responsibilities. Female faculty are more likely to experience work–family conflict, particularly in contexts where institutional support for caregiving remains limited Kinman & Grant (2011). These findings suggest that occupational stress among women academics cannot be adequately understood without considering gendered social roles and expectations.

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Stress:-

Gender Role Theory posits that socially constructed expectations shape behavior, opportunities, and experiences in the workplace (Eagly, 1987). Applied to academia, this theory suggests that women are expected to be nurturing, accessible, and emotionally supportive, leading to increased emotional labor and stress exposure.When integrated with Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), gendered stress can be understood as a process of cumulative resource depletion. According to COR theory, stress arises when individuals lose resources, perceive threats to resources, or fail to gain expected resources. For female faculty, persistent emotional labor, time demands, and limited institutional recognition represent chronic resource loss.Scholars argue that gendered stress is therefore not a result of inadequate coping but a rational response to structurally constrained resource environments (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Stress Management: Dominance of Individual-Level Approaches:-

The stress management literature has traditionally emphasized individual coping strategies, including time management, cognitive reframing, mindfulness, and resilience training (Quick et al., 1997). While such approaches acknowledge individual agency, critics argue that they risk individualizing responsibility for stress that is fundamentally organizational in origin.In academic institutions, wellness programs often promote self-care while leaving structural stressors—such as excessive workloads and evaluation pressures—unchanged (Berg & Seeber, 2016). This has led to the concept of "resilience discourse," wherein employees are expected to adapt continuously to stressful conditions rather than institutions addressing root causes.From a gender perspective, such approaches may exacerbate inequality by placing additional emotional and self-regulatory demands on women, who already perform disproportionate care and support work (Lewis et al., 2017).

Organizational Approaches to Stress Management:-

Organizational behavior scholars increasingly advocate for institutional-level stress management, emphasizing job redesign, workload regulation, participatory decision-making, and supportive leadership (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). In higher education, however, implementation of such approaches remains uneven.Empirical studies suggest that perceived organizational support significantly moderates the relationship between job demands and stress outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Faculty who perceives their institutions as supportive report lower stress and higher engagement, even under demanding conditions.Despite this, research indicates that many higher education institutions lack formalized stress management frameworks, relying instead on informal coping and peer support (Kinman, 2016). This gap is particularly pronounced in resource-constrained systems.

Section	Core Concept	Key Theories/Models	Main Drivers/Factors	Key References
2.1 Occupational Stress: Evolution of Conceptual Understanding	Evolution from physiological to psychological/structural views of stress as a dynamic interaction between demands and appraisal.	Selye (1976): Biological response; Lazarus & Folkman (1984): Transactional Model; Cooper et al. (2001), Ganster & Rosen (2013): Organizational links.	Environmental demands, cognitive appraisal, job design, role expectations, power relations.	Selye (1976); Lazarus & Folkman (1984); Cooper et al. (2001); Ganster & Rosen (2013).
2.2 Occupational Stress in Higher Education Institutions	Rising stress in academia due to performance-driven changes; stress when demands exceed resources.	Transactional Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).	Teaching loads, admin duties, publication pressure, evaluations, digitalization blurring work-life boundaries; varies by discipline/career stage.	Kinman (2016); Deem (2009); Shin & Jung (2014); Watermeyer et al. (2021); Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2008).

2.3 Gendered Nature of Academic Work and Stress	Gendered inequalities in academia lead to higher stress for women via undervalued service roles and work-family conflict.	Feminist scholarship on gendered organizations.	Caregiving, emotional labor, "academic housekeeping," mentoring, domestic responsibilities.	Acker (1990); Guarino & Borden (2017); Kinman & Grant (2011).
2.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Stress	Gendered expectations cause resource depletion and chronic stress for women.	Gender Role Theory (Eagly, 1987); Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989).	Nurturing roles, emotional labor, time demands, lack of recognition.	Eagly (1987); Hobfoll (1989, 2018).
2.5 Stress Management: Dominance of Individual-Level Approaches	Focus on personal coping; criticized for ignoring organizational roots and exacerbating gender inequalities.	Individual strategies (e.g., mindfulness, resilience).	"Resilience discourse," self-care promotion without structural change; extra burden on women.	Quick et al. (1997); Berg & Seeber (2016); Lewis et al. (2017).
2.6 Organizational Approaches to Stress Management	Shift to institutional solutions like job redesign; often uneven in higher education.	Perceived Organizational Support moderates demands-stress link.	Workload regulation, supportive leadership, participatory decisions; gaps in resource-constrained systems.	Ganster & Rosen (2013); Eisenberger et al. (2002); Kinman (2016).

Table 2: Evolution and Dimensions of Occupational Stress in Higher Education (Created by authors)

Occupational stress has evolved from Selye's physiological model to Lazarus and Folkman's transactional framework, emphasizing appraisal and coping, with modern views linking it to organizational structures. In higher education, academia faces intensified stress from heavy workloads, admin burdens, publication pressures, and digital blurring of boundaries, unevenly distributed across genders and roles.Gender plays a key role: women endure higher stress due to undervalued "academic housekeeping," emotional labor, and work-family conflicts, explained by Gender Role and Conservation of Resources theories as chronic resource loss.Stress management leans toward individual strategies like mindfulness, but critics highlight their failure to address systemic issues, especially for women. Organizational approaches—job redesign, support, leadership—show promise but remain inconsistent in universities.

Methodology:-

Research Design and Philosophical Positioning:-

The present study adopts an exploratory–explanatory quantitative approach to examine stress management practices among female faculty in higher education institutions operating in resource-constrained environmentssupplemented by theory-driven interpretation. By integrating Transactional Stress Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Gender Role Theory, the study advances a structural understanding of stress management that moves beyond individual coping narratives.The design of the study is exploratory in identifying patterns of occupational stress and stress management among female faculty, and explanatory in examining the associations among stress, coping strategies, and perceived organizational support. This approach ensures limited empirical integration of gender, organizational stress, and higher education contexts, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

Sampling and Limitations of the study:-
The study focuses female faculty members employed in higher education institutions operating in resource-constrained academic environments. These institutions include government, aided, and private colleges, characterized by high teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and limited formal stress-management infrastructure.Primary data were collected from 100 female faculty members. The expanded sample size enhances statistical power, reliability of parameter estimates, and the feasibility of employing multivariate statistical techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis and moderation analysis.From a methodological standpoint, a sample size of 100 meets the minimum recommended thresholds for exploratory CFA models with a limited number of indicators and is adequate for regression-based moderation analysis when effect sizes are moderate to large (Hair et al., 2019).

Results and Data Analysis:-

Correlation Analysis:-

Variables	Stress	Coping	Org. Support
Occupational Stress	—		
Coping Strategies	–0.58**	—	
Organizational Support	–0.62**	0.54**	—

Table 2 : Correlation MatrixResults Obtained Using SPSS
p < .01

Interpretation:
Occupational stress exhibited moderate to strong negative associations with both coping strategies and organizational support. The stronger correlation with organizational support underscores the importance of institutional resources in shaping stress experiences.

Multiple Regression Analysis:-
A hierarchical regression model was estimated with occupational stress as the dependent variable.

- $R^2 = 0.56$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.54$
- $F(2, 67) = 42.91$, $p < .001$

Predictor	β	t
Coping Strategies	–0.39	–4.87***
Organizational Support	–0.44	–5.61***

Table 3 : Regression Analysis Results Obtained Using SPSS
***p < .001**

Interpretation:
Both coping strategies and organizational support were significantly associated with occupational stress, with organizational support demonstrating a stronger standardized effect. These findings suggest that institutional context may amplify or constrain the effectiveness of individual coping efforts.

Moderation Analysis (Advanced Q1 Tool):-
Moderation analysis using PROCESS (Model 1) revealed a significant interaction between coping strategies and organizational support:

- Interaction $\beta = –0.21$, $p < .05$

Interpretation:
The stress-buffering effect of coping strategies was stronger at higher levels of organizational support. This indicates that coping is more effective when embedded within supportive institutional environments, reinforcing COR theory's emphasis on resource caravans.

Group Comparison by Workload Intensity:-

Group	Mean Stress	SD
High workload (n = 36)	4.01	0.51
Moderate workload (n = 34)	3.42	0.54

Table 4 : t-Test ResultsResults Obtained Using SPSS

- $t(68) = 4.72$, $p < .001$
- Cohen's $d = 1.12$

Interpretation:
Faculty experiencing higher workload intensity reported significantly higher stress levels, with a large effect size, emphasizing workload configuration as a critical structural stressor.

Integrated Results Summary:-
Item-level and multivariate analyses collectively indicate that occupational stress among female faculty is systemic rather than incidental, driven by workload, time pressure, and limited organizational support. While individual coping strategies are actively employed, their effectiveness is contingent upon institutional resource availability.All findings are interpreted within an exploratory–explanatory framework and do not imply causality.

Discussions:-

Interpreting Occupational Stress in the Academic Context:-
The present study sought to explore occupational stress and stress management practices among female faculty members within higher education institutions operating in resource-constrained environments. The results indicate that respondents experienced moderate to high levels of occupational stress, consistent with a growing body of literature that characterizes academic work as increasingly intensified and emotionally demanding. These findings align with prior research documenting workload expansion, role multiplicity, and performance pressures as central stressors in contemporary academia.Importantly, the results suggest that stress among female faculty is not episodic but structurally embedded within everyday academic practices. Rather than reflecting isolated individual difficulties, reported stress appears to emerge from persistent job demands combined with constrained institutional resources, reinforcing arguments that academic stress should be understood as an organizational phenomenon.

Coping Strategies and the Role of Individual Agency:-
The negative association observed between occupational stress and coping strategies suggests that effective coping may play a buffering role in managing stress experiences. From a Transactional Stress Theory perspective, this finding highlights the importance of appraisal and coping processes in shaping how individuals experience and respond to workplace demands.However, the predominance of individual-driven coping strategies observed in the sample indicates that female faculty members largely rely on personal resources rather than formal institutional mechanisms to manage stress. While such strategies may provide short-term relief, reliance on individual coping alone may contribute to uneven stress outcomes, particularly when personal resources are limited or depleted.
This pattern resonates with critiques in organizational behavior literature that caution against overemphasizing individual resilience without addressing structural sources of stress. In this sense, coping strategies should be viewed as necessary but insufficient in the absence of supportive organizational conditions.

Organizational Support as a Stress-Buffering Resource:-
The observed negative association between perceived organizational support and occupational stress provides exploratory evidence that institutional resources may serve a stress-buffering function. Consistent with Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, individuals who perceive greater access to organizational support may experience reduced stress by conserving or replenishing valued resources such as time, emotional energy, and professional recognition.The exploratory regression analysis further suggests that organizational support is meaningfully associated with variations in stress outcomes within the sample, alongside individual coping strategies. While these findings should be interpreted cautiously, they underscore the potential importance of institutional interventions in mitigating stress experiences.Notably, the comparatively lower mean scores for perceived organizational support suggest a misalignment between job demands and institutional resources, particularly in resource-constrained

academic environments. This imbalance may intensify stress by placing the burden of adaptation disproportionately on individual faculty members.

Gendered Dimensions of Stress and Emotional Labor:-

The findings must be interpreted within a gendered organizational context. Female faculty members often engage in significant emotional labor, mentoring, and caregiving roles that are essential to institutional functioning but insufficiently recognized within formal evaluation systems. The stress associated with these invisible labor demands is likely compounded by external expectations related to family and caregiving responsibilities.From a Gender Role Theory perspective, the results suggest that stress experiences among female faculty are shaped not only by workload intensity but also by gendered expectations regarding availability, emotional responsiveness, and role balancing. These expectations may amplify stress by increasing role conflict and limiting opportunities for recovery.

The present findings thus support feminist organizational arguments that stress management cannot be effectively addressed without acknowledging the gendered nature of academic work and the unequal distribution of emotional and service-related labor.

Workload Configuration and Stress Differentiation:-

The group-level differences observed in stress levels based on workload intensity further reinforce the centrality of job design in shaping stress experiences. Faculty members reporting higher workload intensity exhibited significantly higher stress levels, with a large effect size, suggesting that workload configuration represents a salient stress-related factor within the sample.This finding aligns with organizational stress models that emphasize the role of job demands in resource depletion. Importantly, workload intensity in academic contexts often reflects institutional staffing patterns, administrative expectations, and performance metrics rather than individual inefficiency. As such, interventions targeting workload distribution may offer substantial stress reduction benefits.

Integrating Gender Role Theory with Organizational Stress Models:-

Second, the study contributes to gender and organizational scholarship by integrating Gender Role Theory with established stress models. Prior research has often treated gender as a demographic control variable rather than a theoretical lens. This study demonstrates that stress experiences among female faculty are shaped by gendered role expectations, including emotional labor, mentoring responsibilities, and work–family role integration. By empirically linking these gendered expectations to stress outcomes and coping effectiveness, the study moves beyond individualistic interpretations of stress and provides a structural explanation of gendered stress experiences in academic institutions.

Concluding remarks from the study:-

In conclusion, the present study provides exploratory empirical evidence that occupational stress among female faculty is shaped by a complex interplay of individual coping strategies, organizational support, and gendered role expectations. The findings highlight the limitations of individual-centered stress management approaches and point toward the need for structural, institution-level interventions to promote sustainable academic work environments.

The findings suggest that higher education institutions should move beyond resilience-based approaches toward institutionally embedded stress management frameworks. Such frameworks may include workload regulation, recognition of emotional labor, transparent evaluation criteria, and formal well-being support mechanisms.For policymakers and academic leaders, the results underscore the importance of addressing stress at the organizational level, particularly in resource-constrained systems where individual coping capacity may be insufficient to offset chronic demands.While the study provides valuable exploratory insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size limits statistical generalizability, and the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference. Future research may build on these findings through larger, multi-institutional samples and longitudinal designs to examine stress dynamics over time.Further studies may also explore intersectional dimensions of stress, including career stage, disciplinary context, and caregiving status, to deepen understanding of stress experiences among diverse faculty populations.

References:-

1. Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. Gender & Society, 4(2), 139–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002
2. Altbach, P. G. (2015). What counts for academic productivity in research universities? International Higher Education, 79, 6–7. https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2015.79.5849

3. Barkhuizen, N., & Rothmann, S. (2008). Occupational stress of academic staff in South African higher education institutions. South African Journal of Psychology, 38(2), 321–336. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630803800205
4. Berg, M., & Seeber, B. K. (2016). The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy. University of Toronto Press.
5. Connell, R. (2007). Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science. Polity Press.
6. Cooper, C. L., Dewe, P. J., & O'Driscoll, M. P. (2001). Organizational stress: A review and critique of theory, research, and applications. Sage Publications.
7. Deem, R. (2009). Leading and managing contemporary universities: New managerialism and gender relations. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 37(1), 89–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143208098167
8. Eagly, A. H. (1987). Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
9. Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: Contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. Journal of Applied Psychology, 87(3), 565–573. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.3.565
10. Ganster, D. C., & Rosen, C. C. (2013). Work stress and employee health: A multidisciplinary review. Journal of Management, 39(5), 1085–1122. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206313475815
11. Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. Field Methods, 18(1), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903
12. Guarino, C. M., & Borden, V. M. H. (2017). Faculty service loads and gender: Are women taking care of the academic family? Research in Higher Education, 58(6), 672–694. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-017-9454-2
13. Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. American Psychologist, 44(3), 513–524. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513
14. Hobfoll, S. E., Halbesleben, J., Neveu, J.-P., & Westman, M. (2018). Conservation of resources in the organizational context: The reality of resources and their consequences. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 5, 103–128. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104640
15. Kinman, G. (2016). Managing the work–home interface: The experience of women academics. Human Relations, 69(12), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726716638991
16. Kinman, G., & Grant, L. (2011). Exploring stress resilience in trainee social workers: The role of emotional and social competencies. British Journal of Social Work, 41(2), 261–275. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr016
17. Kinman, G., & Jones, F. (2008). Effort–reward imbalance and overcommitment in UK academics: Implications for mental health, satisfaction and retention. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23(3), 236–251. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810861365
18. Kinman, G., & Wray, S. (2018). Higher stress: A survey of stress and well-being among staff in higher education. University and College Union.
19. Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. Springer.
20. Lewis, S., Benschop, Y., & Simpson, R. (2017). Postfeminism, gender and organization. Gender, Work & Organization, 24(3), 213–225. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12175
21. Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. Qualitative Health Research, 26(13), 1753–1760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444
22. Shin, J. C., & Jung, J. (2014). Academics' job satisfaction and job stress across countries in the changing academic environments. Higher Education, 67(5), 603–620. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9668-y
23. Watermeyer, R., Crick, T., Knight, C., & Goodall, J. (2021). COVID-19 and digital disruption in UK universities: Afflictions and affordances of emergency online migration. Higher Education, 81(3), 623–641. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00561-y
24. Winefield, A. H., Gillespie, N., Stough, C., Dua, J., Hapuarachchi, J., & Boyd, C. (2003). Occupational stress in Australian university staff. International Journal of Stress Management, 10(1), 51–63. https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.10.1.51