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An Analysis of Relationship between Occupational Stress and Demographics in Universities: The Case of Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the level of occupational stress among university teachers based on age, gender and type of organization. The Questionnaire is used after pilot testing in order to accomplish the desired objective with the help of respondents' responses. Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, frequency tables, and ANOVA analysis have been used to analyze the data. Although the level of female and private sector university faculty is high, the study found that no significant difference between stress level of male and female faculty. No significant difference between stress level of faculty members of public and private sectors universities is reported. The results indicate significant difference in the mean scores of faculty members having different age brackets regarding their perceived level of stress. The statistics shows the decreasing trend of stress with the increasing of age among the faculty members.

Keywords: occupational stress, age, gender, demographics, universities type.

Introduction

The role of universities in the development of human society has accepted now beyond the bare delivery of knowledge contents to nurturing talent and fulfilling the intellectual needs of the society. Institutes of higher education are responsible to forecast the upcoming challenges to a country and provide competitive human capital to meet those challenges. Higher education due to its multidisciplinary role in the development of pure, social and applied sciences, supplies the lifeblood to societal life in various aspects. Although the material resource plays a vital role to improve the quality of education in the Universities but teachers are the key player in the teaching learning process.

Universities are the main source, responsible for human engineering and preparing human capital for all spheres of life to cater the needs of public, private and social sector. Teachers of universities are considered the key player in teaching learning process at elementary, secondary and higher level. The objectives of teaching process cannot be materialized without fully satisfied teachers. A country like Pakistan where, physical resources at educational institutions are poor, salaries are not appropriate, discipline problems are frequent, most of the teachers are not well equipped with modern methods of teaching as well as many managerial issues, which keep the teachers stressful at workplace. At the university level, expectations from teachers are very high. At the same time, they have to face very challenging and demanding tasks related to teaching and research. They face a lot of occupational stress while performing their duties. This occupational stress refers to the incapability of worker to respond to the dynamic work requirement. Work-related health problems are generally caused by occupational stress and considered as one of ten leading health problems. Stress disorders have negatively affected the industry, causing loss over $150 billion dollars because of decreased productivity, absenteeism and incapability (Blix et al., 1994). By working on occupational stress, we can make substantial improvements in teaching ability of faculty, overall graduates learning outcome and quality of education. The class sizes, conditions of classroom and academic burden of faculty contribute a lot in the productivity of university faculty (Rocca & Kostanski 2001).

The stress in faculty of higher education is one of the highly touched areas of academicians and researchers (Kyriacou, 1987; Cole & Walker, 1989; Hui & Chan, 1996; Dunham, 1992). It is reported that faculty having low level of stress with high level of satisfaction can help institutions of higher education to achieve these goals (Hayat, 1998). Dictionary delineates stress as any stimulus that disturbs the normal physiological equilibrium of human beings and as physical, mental, or emotional

strain or tension (Duke, 1990; Robbins, 1996). In addition, stress can be defined as a vibrant situation in which a person get an opportunity, or demand to achieve any objective but the results are perceived to be uncertain and imperatives. There are three interrelated aspects of stress: environmental demands; adaptive response; and individual differences (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2001). The complication of these definitions is primarily overcome by Lazarus (1999) description about the stress that it is situation, we involved when demands is perceived exceeding from the ability, we have to perform the task.

Statement of Problem

The impact of occupational stress is examined in various business and social sectors across the world. This relationship in the university settings of Pakistan is missing in the literature. The study is designed to investigate levels of work stress among private or public university teachers.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine the levels of occupational stress in male and female university teachers;
- To explore the levels of occupational stress in public and private sector university teachers;
- To scrutinize the levels of occupational stress in age brackets of university teachers; and
- To give the recommendations in the light of study.

Significance of the Study

Teachers in education sector play vital role in the human development and they are facing many types of stresses in their workplace. The stress in faculty of higher education is one of the highly touched areas of academicians and researchers but the university area is not highly touched by the researchers. In this study, a step was undertaken in order to explore the level of stress among university teachers based on category of university, and age and gender of university teachers. This step will provide initiative step for future research.

Literature Review

The academicians have shifted their attention from occupational drivers of manufacturing concerns to service oriented professions. Number of academic authors particularly attempted the occupational stress in the university settings and tried to explore the impacts on teaching performance (Sim, 1990; Wisniewski, 1990; Iiacqua et al., 1995; Wu et al., 1996; and Fatma, 2003). The multiple responsibilities lead to a stressful undertaking, which negatively affects the teaching performance and therefore, many academicians have paid attention towards teachers stress and its remedial measures (Cheuk & Wong; 1995). Mason (as cited in Greenberg, 2002) has attempted to bring forward different components of stress such as the stimulus, the response, the whole spectrum of interacting factor, the stimulus-response interaction.

As Selye (as cited in Kinicki & Kreitner, 2001) tried to construct a distinction between stressors and stress reaction of both types, positive being beneficial and negative causing harm. He used term "Eustress" for the stress having positive outcome and strengthen the person's ability to perform more effectively. He exemplified the getting of an award in front of the large crowd, accomplishing a difficult task and winning a tricky match as stressors that fabricate Eustress. Selye described the stress as foreseeable in practical life and recommended to manage it, rather than skipping it. In lieu of Selye approach, George (1995), describes Eustress as "positive or pleasing stress to which the body tends to adapt". Among the advantages of Eustress, George (1995) reported personal growth, improvement of performance at workplace, and consequently a positive outcome. Referring to the father of modern concept of stress; Moorhead and Griffin (2001) narrated "Distress" as type of stress having negative outcome. Distress is categorized with number of components as extreme pressure, perverse demand on awkward times, and unhappy news. This type of stress generally results in depressing consequences for the person. As George (1995) referred Distress as a situation in which a person tries to adjust in negative stress like poor performance disease and disturbed interpersonal relationships. A person, having failed to cope with stress; may indulged in long term harmful effects of the stress.

Academic literature showed significant concerns towards various demographical aspects of faculty and their relationship with stress. The variety exists in various human beings, demands different level of influence and responds accordingly. This variety is also experienced in various situations, times and patterns, which consequently treated in different manners. The factors influencing a male teacher might seem unrelated to his female colleagues, and a teacher having more

experience might take pleasure from something, which is least concerned with less experienced faculty. Some studies are also reported that female teacher tend to change their job more frequently as compared to men due to high work stress (Blix et al., 1994) These findings are also supported by the research of Kousar et al. in the context of Pakistan, that female school administrator take more stress as compared to male heads. Male teachers having support of their staff members can easily manage stress as compared to female heads.

According to the researcher's knowledge, Malik (1998) at doctoral level to explore the causal factors in teacher stress and moral in Pakistan has conducted only one study. According to available literature, no effort was made to find out the relationship between the occupational stress and job satisfaction of university teachers in Pakistan. Therefore, this study may fill the important literature gap, particularly in the context of Pakistan to explore relationship between the occupational stress and job satisfaction. The study may respond to the needs of literary scholars and researchers regarding contribution from developing countries like Pakistan about the factors of faculty job stress and moral. Findings of Malik's (1998) concluded that the physical and mental health of teacher is suffering and thus causing concern. The findings suggest that motivation and morale in teaching profession are at low ebb. Overloads and unreasonably set demands obviously cause great concern for teachers, especially pertaining to paperwork, meeting deadlines and consequent lack of time for teaching related issues. There are many other reasons for teachers stress, e.g. confrontation with pupils, parents, colleagues and superiors. It seems evident that many teachers feel unprotected and powerless in such situation mentioned above. Teachers' role and position is not clearly defined, and there appears to be a considerable gulf between teachers and certain management personnel.

Hui and Chan (1996) have referred various research studies, which have been undertaken to investigate the prevalence and major sources of teacher stress in England, Wales, USA, Australia, Malta and West Indies (Borg and Riding, 1991; Dunham,1992) and brought forward sources of faculty stress along with occupational stressors. University faculty faces high stress because of their dynamic responsibility to respond to social and institutional change, positional conflict and task ambiguity. Other identified sources of stress in the university setting include meager working conditions, faculty interpersonal relationships, institutional management, administrative style, and pressure posed by stakeholders. In the similar perspective, (Blix et al., 1994) explored in his research that faculty extensively involved in academic research is likely to face higher stress as compared to the faculty members involved only in teaching process. Academic researchers have brought forward many

other sources of faculty stress in their writings such as lack of interest in graduates, mismanagement of time, unnecessary documentation, ambiguous expectations of administration, poor cooperation among faculty members (Glasser, 1986, as cited in Duke, 1990). Kousar et al. (2004) identified that job-related stress has negative impact on personality of institutional heads, where male heads can better manage their stress compared to female heads citing workload as the major cause of stress.

Hypothesis of the Study

The hypotheses of this study were:

Ho1 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of male and female university teachers.

Ho2 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of public and private sector university teachers.

Ho3 There is no significant difference between occupational stresses of various age groups of university teachers.

Ho3.1 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 20-30 and 31-40 years of age.

Ho3.2 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 20-30 and 41-50 years of age.

Ho3.3 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 20-30 and 51-60 years of age.

Ho3.4 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 20-30 and 61 and above.

Ho3.5 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 31-40 and 41-50 years of age.

Ho3.6 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 31-40 and 51-60 years of age.

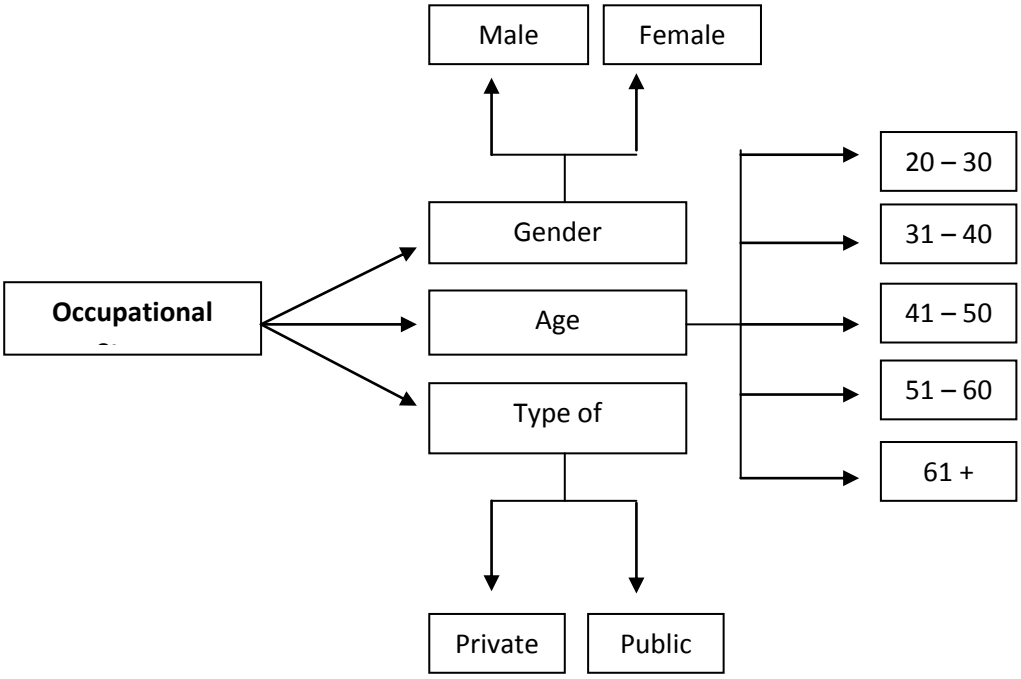
Ho3.7 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 31-40 and 61 and above.

Ho3.8 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 41-50 and 51-60 years of age.

Ho3.9 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 41-50 and 61 and above.

Ho3.10 There is no significant difference between occupational stress of 51-60 and 61 and above.

Figure 1: Hypotheses Modeling



Research Methodology

This study aimed to explore the occupational stress level among university teachers based on age, gender and type of organization. For this purpose, the views of faculty of universities in three big cities of Punjab are collected. To measure occupational stress of university teachers, the commonly used professional life stress scale adapted by Fontana (1989) from The British Psychological Society and Routlegde London. Researcher with necessary modifications according to local settings uses the same instrument. The instrument of stress includes 24 test items and

constitutes an overall stress score. The test has standardized methods as people score 01-15 falls under “low stress”, 16-30 fall “under moderate stress”, and scorers between 31-45 are in “existent of high stress” and people scoring 45-60 are in “serious stress” category. The adapted versions of standardized instruments are used with necessary modification to elicit the job stress level of university teachers. Demographic variables were also included in instruments.

The study develops an estimate of six universities of Punjab, a province of Pakistan, comprised of three public and three private universities. Five hundred (500) university teachers were included in the sample, including 150 of private and 350 of public universities. Five hundred targeted respondents were considered quite reasonable and highly representative of the university settings. From the 500-targeted sample, 310 responses of both universities private (78) and public (232) were achieved. In further securitizing process, five questionnaire were rejected due to carelessly filled up and finally 305 taken in data analysis, which constitute 60% of response rate. The 305 number of participants in an opinion generating and perception related research is considered highly satisfactory and adequate. The sampling methodology was based on geographically scattered universities in the three cities of Punjab: Lahore, Multan and Bahawalpur. Therefore, stratified random sampling procedure was used to approach the sampled faculty private and public universities.

The study uses descriptive statistics to report overall pattern of data and underlined response and behavioral pattern of sample in a specified situation. The inferential statistics are computed to test the hypothesis and draw certain conclusions based on sample statistics. Associations of demographical variables with satisfaction and stress are computed using cross tabulation. The frequency distribution is tabulated to portray the overall participation of sampled respondent. To explore the relationship, the Pearson product correlation coefficient is used. The Croan-bac Alpha score for the scale of occupational stress is 0.71, which is quite satisfactory in survey related research and sufficient for the reliability and validity of research instrument by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Data Analyses

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 01 is showing the demographic information of university teacher regarding their gender, sector of university and their age.

Table 1

The Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Across the Selected Demographic Variables

Characteristic	N	%
Gender		
Male	185	60.7
Female	120	39.3
Organizational Type		
Public Sector	229	75.1
Private Sector	76	24.9
Age		
20-30	99	32
31-40	101	33
41-50	65	21.3
50-60	33	10.8
61-more	7	2.3

Overall Faculty Stress Score

The faculty's perception towards their stress level is computed in Table 02 using accumulated scoring, directed by the author of study scale. The figures indicate moderate levels of stress (30%, 92), experienced by university teachers, which leads to majority response (67%, 206) indicating that stress is not a big problem in the environment of higher education institutions. Only (2%, 7) respondents rate stress as a real problem for them, which is negligible in the sample of 305 cases.

Table 02

Frequency, Percentage and Stress Levels of Respondents

Stress levels	N	%
Stress is not big problem	206	67.5
Moderate stress level	92	30.2
Stress is a real problem	7	2.3
Total	305	100

Descriptive and Inferential Statistical Analysis of Occupational Stress across the Selected Demographical Variables:

A total 305 university teachers responded the question of gender. Table 03 analysis three levels of stress across the gender: female and male. Majority of male (130, 70%) and female (76, 63%) respondents reported that stress is not a big problem for them. Very few respondents of both gender reported that stress is real problem for them in line to the statistics of table 03. Remaining respondents female (33%) are slightly higher than male (28%) who reported moderate stress level. Faculty do not perceive stress as big problem, might be due to their ability to handle that level of stress, which is up to moderate level.

Table 03

Frequency, Percentage and Stress Levels of Respondents across the Gender

Gender	Stress is not big problem		Moderate stress level		Stress is a real problem		Total	
Male	130	70%	52	28%	3	2%	185	60.70%
Female	76	63%	40	33%	4	3%	120	39.30%
Total	206	67.50%	92	30.20%	7	2.30%	305	100.00%

The analysis of Table 04 answers the question as is there a significant difference in the means score of stress level between male and female faculty members. To test the hypothesis as there is no difference between female and male in response to occupational stress, Independent Sample t- test is applied. H_o is accepted because ($p > 0.05$) which infers that there is no significant difference between stress level of male and female faculty members.

Table 04

Mean Difference across the Gender in Occupational Stress

Gender	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Male	12.87	7.733	-1.241	0.22
Female	14.02	8.098		

The descriptive statistics reports that among the respondents of private sector, majority (62%) reported stress as not a big problem for them, 33% reported moderated stress level and very few (5%) responded that stress is a real problem for

them (Table 05). Respondents from the public sector universities reported their level of stress in a similar fashion, 69% reported stress is not a big problem for them, 29% reported moderated stress level and negligible small percentage of respondents reported that stress is a real problem for them.

Table 05

Frequency, Percentage and Stress Levels of Respondents across the Organizational Types

Organization type	stress is not big problem		moderate stress level		stress is a real problem		Total	
Private Sector	47	62%	25	33%	4	5%	76	24.90%
Public Sector	159	69%	67	29%	3	1%	229	75.10%
Total	206	67.50%	92	30.20 %	7	2.30 %	305	100.00 %

The significance of statistical difference is computed between private and public sector institutions (Table 06). Independent Sample t- test is applied to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the means score of stress level between public and private sectors universities. H_o is not rejected because ($p > 0.05$) which concludes no significant difference between stress- level of faculty members of public and private sectors universities.

Table 06

Mean Difference in Occupational Stress across the organizational types

Organization type	Mean	S D	t	Sig.
Private Sector	14.408	9.504	1.388	0.17
Public Sector	12.96	7.257		

To analyze the levels of stress across the different brackets of respondents' age table 7 is computed. A majority of the university teachers across various age brackets responded that occupational stress is not a big problem for them (However, among these age groups, 20-30 years of age (62%, 62), 31-40 years of age (65%, 65), 41-50 years of age (72.3%, 47), 51-60 years of age (78%, 26) and above 60 years of age (85.7%, 6) reported stress as not big problem for them). In the second range of occupational stress, which has been titled as moderate stress level, 20-30 years of age

reported 33%, 31-40 years of age reported 35%, 41-50 years of age reported 26.2%, 51-60 years of age reported 18% and 61- above years of age reported 14.3%. A very small percentage of faculty members fall in the category where occupational stress is a real problem.

Table 7

Frequency, Percentage and Stress Levels of Respondents across the Age Brackets

Age	stress is not big problem		moderate stress level		Stress is a real problem		Total	
20-30	62	62.00%	33	33.00%	5	5.00%	99	32%
31-40	65	65.00%	35	35.00%			101	33%
41-50	47	72.30%	17	26.20%	1	1.50%	65	21.30%
50-60	26	78.80%	6	18.20%	1	3.00%	33	10.80%
61-more	6	85.70%	1	14.30%			7	2.30 %
Total	206	67.50%	92	30.20%	7	2.30%	305	100.00%

In order to test the significant difference among age brackets, table 8 is developed. The ANOVA statistics show that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of stress levels among faculty member in different age brackets. Ho is not accepted because ($p< 0.1$) which infers that there is a significant difference between stress level of faculty members having different age brackets at 90% confidence level.

For calculating the significant difference in stress level between different age brackets of university teachers, Post-hoc with LSD test is applied (Table 8-A). $H_{03.2}$ as ($p< 0.05$) and $H_{03.3}$ as ($p< 0.05$) are rejected, which infer that there is significant difference in stress level of faculty members between 20-30 years and 41-50 years and 20-30 years and 51-60 years age bracket at 95% confidence level. More over $H_{03.4}$ as ($p\leq 0.1$ and $H_{03.5}$ as ($p\leq 0.1$) is also not accepted at 90% confidence level, which means that there is a significance difference in stress level of faculty members having age 31-40 years with (41-50 and 51-60) years at 90% confidence level. Remaining null hypotheses are not rejected, that indicates no significant difference in stress levels in the remaining different age brackets.

Table 8

Analysis of Variance of Age Brackets in Occupational Stress (ANOVA)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
JOB STRESS	Between Groups	487.094	4	121.774	1.984	0.097**
	Within Groups	18415.42	300	61.385		
	Total	18902.51	304			

Table 8

Analysis of Variance of Age Brackets in Occupational Stress (Post Hoc)

	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
LSD	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
31-40	0.5			
41-50	0.0*	0.1		
51-60	0.0*	0.1	0.6	
61-more	0.2	0.4	0.8	1.0

*The mean difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

**The mean difference is significant at the 90% confidence level.

Conclusions

The following finding out of the analysis of descriptive and inferential statistics:

- The university's faculty in Pakistan is experiencing a moderate level of stress (Table 02) as majority's response (67%) reported stress as not a big problem The further classification of respondents into male and female faculty (Table 03) also supports the findings of pervious table showing moderate level of stress as male (70%) and female (63%) do not take stress as a big problem. Very few respondents of both genders have reported that stress is real problem for them. The hypothesis (Table 04) as there is no difference between female and male in response to occupational stress is tested. No significant difference between stress level of male and female faculty is found. Therefore, Ho1 is not rejected.

- The similar trend is observed in the category of private and public sector universities. The respondents of private (62%) and public sector (69%) do not find stress as big problem in their professions. Majority of the remaining proportion agreed with moderate level of stress and a few expressed the stress, as serious problem. The hypothesis (Table 05) claiming no significant difference between public and private sectors universities is tested. No significant difference between stress level of faculty members of public and private sectors universities is reported, which led to the acceptance of Ho2.

- The analysis (Table 7) of stress levels among teachers of different age brackets reveals that stress is reported in an incremental order as; 20-30 years old people (62%) and above 60 are (85%), who do not take stress as big problem in occupational settings. The same fashion is drawn in the other age brackets, which points out decrease in stress level with the increase of age bracket. Interestingly, the people between the age group of 30-40 (35%) are found in moderate stress, followed by decreasing stress level over the increasing age brackets. The results of ANOVA (Table 8) indicate significant difference in the mean scores of faculty members having different age brackets regarding their perceived level of stress. The ANOVA statistics led to the rejection of Ho3. The hypothesis testing of significance is done across the various age groups from 20-30 to above 60 years. The significant difference is observed of 20-30 years old faculty with 41-50 and 51-60 years old people. The figures of table 8-A, led to the rejection of H03.2 and H03.3. Among the not rejected hypotheses include (Table 8-A) Ho3.4, Ho3.5, Ho3.6, Ho3.7, Ho3.8, Ho3.9, and Ho3.10, which show no difference between different pairs of age brackets regarding level of stress, experienced by the universities' faculty.

Recommendations

The study has made an attempt quantitative analysis of occupational stress and job satisfaction of faculty members of universities. A good number occupational stress sampled respondents are analyzed through a detailed analysis framework, developed for this study. The comprehensive inquiry is supported by critical discussion of research findings of other point of regions. The detailed analysis bring forward number of suggestions for the policy makers of universities, managers/deans of universities, faculty members of universities of private and public sector universities:

- The policy makers of universities should: ensure the participation of university teachers in policy making process; take decisions in line with the input given by faculty of university; and offer market competitive salaries packages for different careers.

- The deans of universities should provide abundant research funds; facilitate supportive and collaborative culture; launch training for stress and time management; and provide leisure facilities to the faculty.

- The faculty members of universities should build a strong network of social support; aware of job descriptions and stress level; and identify their own distress factors.

- The private universities should have teachers' friendly administration; fair rewards and clear accountability system; and promote research culture.

- The public universities should launch performance based reward systems; promotion should be based on both teaching and research outcome; selection and promotion policies should be fair and transparent; develop self-motivating culture; and promote research culture should offer competitive salaries packages.

Managerial Implications:

The study explores valued guidelines for managerial perspective along with fruitful addition in scholarly work of occupational stress and job satisfaction. There are number of practical aspects of the thesis, which can help managers to improve their administrative activities and enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. The managers can make their performance better, while taking following into considerations: chalk out plan to manage with stress of faculty members; take preventive measures to avoid overwhelming stress especially in female teachers; introduce relaxation training programs; discourage work assignments after scheduled times; encourage participative culture; adequate infrastructural support; conducive learning and teaching environment; ensure appropriate teaching support in audio-visual aids; and specific facilities for female and special teachers.

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