

Antecedents and consequences of Burnout in Visiting Faculty

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Abstract

During the past decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of part-time faculty in academic institutions. In the current climate of decreasing funding and increasing enrollment for academic institution, it is likely that contingent faculty will continue to play a major role within these institutions. One common feature of such temporary academic jobs is the lack of support and commitment from the hiring institutions. Although there is much debate in developing countries regarding work and employment conditions of this contingent academic labour force, relatively less is known about the situation of these academics in developing countries like Pakistan, where decades of market-driven managerialist reforms have changed the entire landscape of higher education. Not many studies have explored the antecedents and consequences of stress in academia and the number of studies focusing on visiting faculty is even less. This study intends to fill this gap in literature by focusing on this understudied group. We conducted a qualitative case study to get an in depth understanding of the problem. A group of 30 respondents, consisting of both males and females, was selected for in-depth interviews using purposive sampling from a newly established public sector university of Pakistan. The findings of this study clearly indicate that visiting teachers are not paid fairly, have almost no job security, have little or no institutional support, and are treated as “second-class citizens” of academia, resulting in burnout.

Key Words: Burnout; Higher Education; Employment Relations; Visiting Faculty

Introduction

During the past decades, there has been a significant rise in the number of part-time faculty in academic institutions. Existing research shows the importance of this contingent academic workforce for the operation of modern universities. However, the number of part-time faculty, commonly known as adjunct faculty, varies across discipline and location (Austin & Trice, 2007). There are many factors that have led to the trend of hiring adjunct faculty. Since adjunct faculty is typically hired on short-term contracts, it helps the universities in dealing with the issue of fluctuating student enrolment. It is easier and more cost-effective for the university administration to increase or decrease the number of adjunct faculty rather than adjusting the size of the full-time faculty. In the current climate of decreasing funding and increasing student enrollment, it is likely that contingent faculty will continue to play a major role within these institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Due

to budgetary constraints, universities are more inclined towards hiring part-time teaching faculty (Gail, 2013). However, this contingent academic labour force is no longer just an arm of the institution, rather, it has become one of its cores, and it contributes significantly to the organizational culture of universities.

Since the number of part-time faculty is on rise, it is desirable to explore how they contribute to the fulfillment of universities' missions (Gappa et al., 2007). It is evident from the review of exiting literature that people are motivated to opt for this type of academic positions for a variety of reasons. Some of them desire to continue as an adjunct after retiring from their primary employment and agree to work for less salary. There is another group of adjunct faculty that is teaching-part time, either in one or at multiple institutions simultaneously, due to their financial needs. There are also individuals who hold full-time employment outside academia but choose to work as a part-time teacher due to a passion for teaching rather than financial gain. There are also some adjunct teachers who see their position as a means to get a full-time faculty position. They view their part-time academic position as a "stepping stone" to a full-time position (Eagen & Green, 2007).

Despite the fact that, institutions frequently choose to hire part-time faculty instead of full-time faculty, the use of part-time faculty is still contentious and highly debated. There are two contradictory positions taken by scholars regarding the impact of part-time teaching on the organizational culture and quality of teaching in universities. The more common view is that the challenges faced by adjunct faculty have the potential to negatively impact their instructional quality and retention potential. The critics also claim that as regular faculty is substantially replaced by visiting faculty, the quality of higher education in many countries will decrease. Adjunct faculty works under strenuous employment conditions. They are not paid fairly, have almost no job security, have little or no institutional support, and are treated as "second-class citizens" of the academia, resulting in burnout.

Those who are against the idea of hiring part-time teachers further argue that since they are not part of the regular academic staff, they don't have the same tenacious relationship with the institutions as the full-time faculty. They do not have a vested interest in the overall welfare of their respective organizations. Visiting faculty doesn't usually participate in the more important areas of academic life such as committee assignments, curriculum development, and the supervision and counseling of students. Consequently quality of the academic program might be compromised. Therefore, increased reliance on the visiting faculty not only affects the organizational culture, but it also seriously affects the intellectual life and experience of the students (Smith, 1990). Proponents of adjunct faculty, however, claim that the recruitment of visiting faculty helps to absorb economic shock and is thus essential to the survival of the institutions.

Although this is a widely researched area, most of the studies regarding adjunct faculty are conducted in the context of advanced countries. Relatively less is known about the conditions of part-time faculty in developing countries. This study intends to fill this gap

and extend the discussion into the context of Pakistan by exploring the perceptions of visiting faculty regarding their work and its associated conditions. The major goal of this study is to find out why people hold these part-time academic positions and how their employment conditions contribute to burnout.

Burnout in Academia: A Review of Relevant Literature

Burnout is a unique type of stress syndrome. Since last decade, the term burnout has become a catchphrase that is used to explain multiple social and personal issues. The term burnout was first used during the 1960s to explain the effects of drug use on an individual. However, it lacked clarity till the development of a broadly recognized instrument for its measurement. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment. A variety of reasons for burnout have been cited in literature. For example, Maslach and Leiter (1999) showed that burnout is caused due to factors such as workload, lack of personal control, insufficient rewards, unfair treatment, the breakdown of the working community, or conflicting values. According to Friedman et al., (1991), burnout among academic faculty is often associated with excessive time pressure, poor working relationships, large classes, a lack of resources, fear of violence, behavioral problems among students, and abstruseness in decision-making.

There are also some personality factors, such as irrational beliefs and vulnerability, which might foster burnout in the teaching community. Over-ambitious people are often in danger of burnout, whereas endurance and sociability show a negative correlation with burnout. In their study, Peeters and Rutte (2005) found that time management, work demands, and autonomy cause emotional exhaustion. According to Julieta (2005), over-commitments influence burnout among university professors. Some researchers have also found an association between demographic variables and burnout. For example, Russell et al., (1987) showed that the teachers' characteristics, such as age, sex, and grade level taught, were predictive of burnout. Other social factors, such as stressful events experienced by an individual and the perceived lack of social support and positive feedback, were reported to have a positive correlation with the self-efficacy of teachers, which in turn caused burnout (McClenahan et al., 2007).

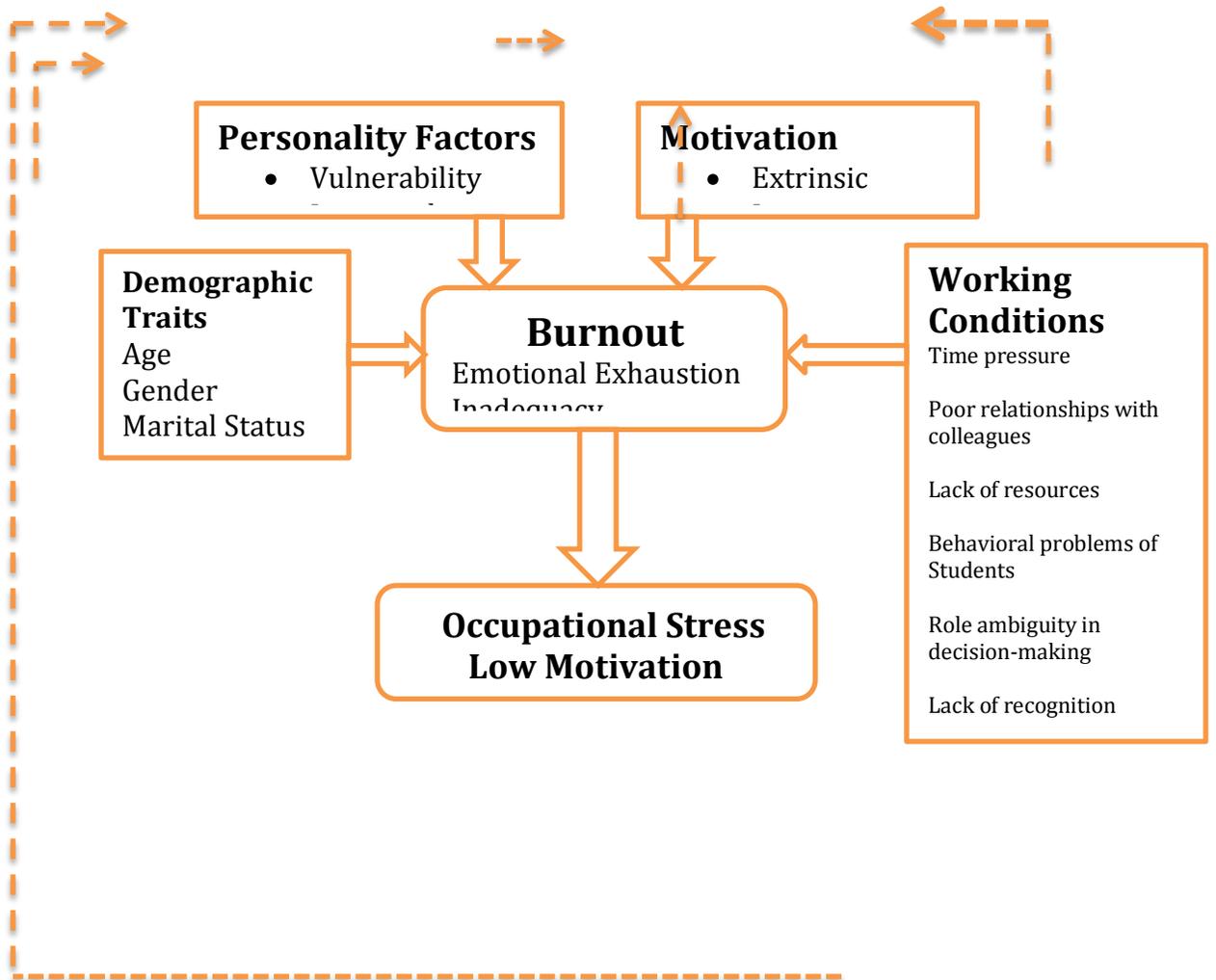
Empirical evidence suggests that lack of clarity, excessive group and political pressure, pressing working conditions, and deep-seated impoverishment cause both emotional exhaustion and reduce personal accomplishment -- these are major determinants of occupational stress. It has been established decades ago (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978) that persistent occupational stress can damage mental and physical health of part-time teachers. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) further contended that stress and burnout might significantly impact the working relationship between the students and the teacher. Burnout is most common in helping professions that demand intense involvement with other people and a high sense of ideals, such as education, health, and social services (Paine, 1984; Freudenberg, 1997; Evers et al., 2005; Ozdemir, 2006). Based on the findings of the above-

mentioned studies, it can be safely concluded that teachers are more likely suffer burnout as compared to other professions that involve less human interaction. According to Blandford (2000), teachers' burnout can lead to a decline in their quality of teaching, which in turn influences the students' academic performance. Since teaching is a profession that is important for building up future generations, it should be of interest to investigate burnout issues among teachers. Teachers interact with a large number of students on a regular basis and influence a large portion of society (Schwab, 1986). Therefore, teaching is considered a key profession in solving social problems . Researchers have listed many reasons for burnout in teaches, for example, excessive work demand, lack of agency, insufficient reward and work related stress(Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Another important reasons for burnout among teachers is continued stress due to excessive time pressure, weak interpersonal relationship. However, as Lamude and Scudder (1992) noted, the effects of burnout vary from person to person depending on availability of social and institutional support. Due to excessive job demands, some teachers choose to quit the profession and look for alternative job. Whereas those who are not in a position to switch their career often become exhausted due to the challenges they face in their professional life on daily basis (Ozdemir, 2006).

Since part-time university teachers are subject to high professional demands without any emotional or professional reward, the chances of burnout among them are very high. According to Harrison (1999), the major challenge faced by university teachers is the unrealistic goals and expectations that are set for them without their input, causing frustrations among them regarding their professional growth and development. Adjunct faculty is a potential candidate for burnout syndrome due to their relationship with a large numbers of students, personnel, and administrators. In addition to this, university teachers with higher levels of burnout are more likely to quit their job. That's why burnout among academic staff is a major issue around the world (Blix et al., 1994).

Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work



Source: Authors elaboration based on review of literature

Visiting Faculty in Pakistan: Context of the Case

There has been considerable growth in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Pakistan during the past fifteen years. The numbers of universities, faculty members, and students has increased. There exist 177 or more universities and degree-awarding institutions in Pakistan. As the number of institutions has increased in Pakistan, there has been an increasing trend of hiring part-time faculty to deal with the issue of increasing student enrollment. The higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has started quite a few initiatives to reshape higher education over time. These included a number of reforms, which aimed at improving the overall performance of public sector universities. The visiting-teaching system was among one of these reforms (Jabeen & Khan, 2019). The introduction of the visiting faculty system in the public universities of Pakistan can partially be explained as a coercive isomorphism, or pressure from the central regulatory body. This system was put in place in higher education institutions to attract qualified people, increase the performance of academic faculty of the concerned institutions, and to fulfill the need of learning which is not possible by full-time faculty. Initially, many universities rejected this system of hiring visiting faculty, but later, universities adopted it reluctantly. Faculties of old universities were against the reform due to the effect of this form of governance on universities as cultural institutions. However, new universities quickly coupled this system due to their transition state. The visiting system is still considered an alien in the culture of old universities. Although visiting faculty serves as a buffer against fluctuating demand, it is often criticized on the grounds that inducting visiting faculty divides the teaching faculty into groups. Under the new bureaucracy, visiting faculty is treated as workers who need to be supervised, rather than as professionals who are trustworthy (Gumport, 1997).

In Pakistan the process of selecting visiting teachers is similar to what is often used to hire unskilled labor. Universities and colleges appoint visiting faculty without paying sufficient attention to their passion and teaching skills. They are appointed through personal and familial connections. Often MS & PhD scholars, and graduates who either fail to get a regular job or are trying to enter some reasonable career job are hired as part-time teachers. However, increased reliance on part-time teaching faculty affect teaching quality and the academic experience of students. Visiting teachers in most of the cases have limited or no access to institution's resources. They are not allowed to supervise research students due to lack of time and temporary nature of their work contract. This has adverse effects on organization culture and on academic performance (Hazir ullah, 2018).

As universities are increasingly hiring increased percentage of part-time faculty, scholars have started raising their concerns. All HEIs (Higher education institutions) in Pakistan increasingly rely on visiting faculty; it has become a part of the organizational culture in tertiary academic institutions. There is a lack of empirical research in this area, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the trend of hiring visiting teachers is not only watering down the quality of academic performance in Pakistan, but it also has negative repercussions for those who are hired for these positions.

Research Methodology

This study intends to investigate the causes and consequences of burnout in visiting faculty hired by universities. In order to achieve our research goal we have adopted a qualitative case study as our research design. The qualitative is a preferred research strategy for many social scientists; it is especially useful in discovering the meaning that people give to events that they experience in their life. A qualitative case study help to investigate a research puzzle within its real-life context. Detailed contextual analysis within a bounded system is a defining feature of case study research (Yin, 1981). A case study research can consist of single or multiple case studies. They include quantitative evidence, rely on multiple sources of evidence, and benefit from the prior development of theoretical propositions. For this research, we selected a newly established public sector university as our instrumental case in order to explore the causes and consequence of burnout in visiting faculty. Existing literature (Winefield et al. 2003; Tytherleigh et al. 2005) suggest that institution age can have significant impact on academic occupational stress. To ensure anonymity of our respondents we have used their pseudo names. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling. In-depth interviews of visiting faculty were conducted. The sample included both males and females. A total of 30 interviews were conducted. All interviews were recorded with prior consent, and each interview lasted approximately sixty to sixty-five minutes. All recorded interviews were transcribed. The data was analyzed manually using thematic qualitative analysis techniques. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data that is mostly used to analyze text, such as interview transcripts. We closely examined the data to identify major themes. The following major themes emerge from our analysis of the data:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Name & Gender	Work experience	Age of Respondents	Qualification	Marital Status	Family type
Faiza (F)	1 year	24	MPhil English	Single	Nuclear
Khanam (F)	8 years	32	MS IT	Single	Nuclear
Alishba (F)	6 month	23	BS English	Single	Nuclear
Amina (F)	1 years	25	MPhil Education	Single	Nuclear
Anosh (F)	5 years	23	MA English	Single	Joint
Anjum (F)	2 years	25	BS Mathematics	Single	Nuclear
Attiqa (F)	1 year	22	BS English	Single	Nuclear
Aneka (F)	1 year	24	MPhil Education	Single	Nuclear
Atiqa (F)	4 years	28	PhD Sociology	Single	Nuclear
Hijab (F)	2 years	26	MPhil Statistics	Single	Nuclear
Iqra (F)	3 years	28	PhD Botany	Single	Nuclear
Monika (F)	2 and half years	29	MPhil Sociology	Single	Nuclear
Sadia (F)	3 years	26	MPhil Urdu	Single	Nuclear
Sidra (F)	4 years	29	MS IT	Married	Joint
Sana (F)	1 years	29	MPhil Pak Studies	Married	Joint
Saba(F)	2 years	25	MBA	Single	Joint
Shahana (F)	2 years	40	PhD History	Married	Joint
Sabaht (F)	3 years	27	MPhil Sociology	Married	Nuclear

Tahira (F)	3 years	25	MPhil English	Single	Nuclear
Zeenat (F)	3 years	29	MPhil Sociology	Married	Joint
Maryam (F)	1 years	27	MPhil Social Work	Single	Nuclear
Saba(F)	4 years	28	MS Computer Science	Married	Joint
Abid (M)	3 years	24	MPhil English	Single	Nuclear
Salik (M)	5 years	31	PhD Sociology	Married	Joint
Usman(M)	2 years	26	MPhil Statistics	Single	Joint
Aslam (M)	1 years	30	PhD Botany	Married	Joint
Tayaba (F)	2 Years	24	MA Economics	Married	Nuclear
Zahra (F)	4 Years	27	MPhil Social work	Single	Nuclear
Kamal (M)	3 years	39	PhD History	Married	Joint
Arzoo (F)	4 years	27	LLB	Married	Joint

Antecedents of Burnout: Work and Employment Conditions

The analysis of the qualitative data that was gathered for the purpose of this research speaks volumes about the problems and concerns of visiting faculty. As is reflected from the demographic profile of our respondents, most of them are young, unmarried females with high qualifications. Most of the respondents are continuing their studies, and some of them are also doing another job because their expenses are difficult to manage with a single job -- especially for those who are married. It is evident from the data that the majority of them are working under strenuous work conditions. They have to face multiple challenges at their work place. Most of the respondents reported a work overload. Along with their regular job requirements, they are also expected to perform extra unofficial, unpaid duties. Since they are hired temporarily, they are not considered a part of the institutions. They occupy a lower status in the institutional hierarchy. Being junior faculty, they have to perform lots of extra duties on behalf of their senior colleagues and management. For example, they are assigned various management tasks in departments, which include exam duties, event management, seminars, etc. It was evident from the verbatim of one of our respondents that he has to perform extra duties, such as managing classes of permanent faculty during their absence.

Many times, the chairman of department assign me his personal assignment like he asked me to collect data for HEC funded projects, conduct focus group discussions, qualitative interviews, exam conduction and many other task". (Interview Transcript)

Another respondent, who reflected a deep resentment towards the permanent faculty, raised the same issue.

There are so many challenges. Most important is our unpaid workload and even they don't consider our efforts and hard work. They think that visiting faculty is just hired to compensate their extra workloads". (Interview Transcript)

Our respondent also complained about the bad behaviour of university administration. They are treated as outsiders and they have to face issues in matters such as clearance of their pay bills and other job-related tasks. The biggest challenge that they face is a sense of

job insecurity. Visiting teachers are hired on semester basis and there is no guarantee for the continuation of their job in the next semester. Since there are no clear performance evaluation criteria for visiting faculty, it further creates a feeling of insecurity in visiting faculty. Visiting faculty is not involved in the decision-making processes of the department; they are not even allowed to choose the subject that they teach. They have to follow the decisions of the management, which in turn creates stress.

It was also reflected in our data that visiting faculty is highly dissatisfied with their work environment. They reported that they have to face inequalities and biasness at a department level. Nepotism and favoritism was a problem witnessed by the wide majority of our respondents. Those who are able to develop good relations with the administration are able to get extra benefits and relaxations. Our respondents also talked about the gender bias, both in the selection criteria as well as in the allocation of extra, unpaid responsibilities. Female visiting faculty member reported issues of work life balance. Male faculty members reported that they have to do more work to get the same rewards as the female faculty. Regarding workload, the majority of our respondents say that they have to spend extra hours fulfilling their job demands -- and that they don't paid for that.

We have to organize all the events, conferences, walks, sports programs, dinners, meetings, conduct exam, administrative duties, management duties, even manage personal projects of higher authorities, takes classes of permanent faculty in their absence and many more to do. And we are not in a position to bargain or refuse to take extra workload due to insecure nature of our work.
(Interview Transcript)

Burnout in Visiting Faculty

There are a number of factors related to the workplace that can cause burnout. Burnout is a condition, not a medical issue. Some individuals are more prone to this condition than others due to personal traits or their demographic profile. There are three major components of burnout: a feeling of exhaustion, a lack of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization (Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Feeling of exhaustion

Teachers associated with HEIs have always had a demanding work routine, which often leads to a feeling of exhaustion. This is especially true for visiting faculty as their unique working conditions further contribute to a feeling of exhaustion and stress. They have to perform multiple jobs and duties at the same time and they reported job mismatches in their day-to-day routine. As reported in a study by Maslach and Leiter (1999) burnout occurs when workload is combined with a lack of personal control and insufficient rewards. For example, one of our respondents complained that the visiting faculty has no choice when it comes to the subjects they teach, and that they have to teach multiple subjects. They are

not assigned subjects based on their interest or level of expertise; rather, the head, on a need basis, assigns them. Since most of the visiting faculty combines their job with PhD studies or some other part-time job, it becomes an uphill task to manage a variety of courses in which they have limited interest or expertise.

I think mismatches between job and studies and other jobs make us stressful like people who are doing PhDs so their studies compromise due to this job people who are married their families suffer. (Interview Transcript)

They don't have enough resources to fulfill their job demands and lots of issues contribute to a feeling of exhaustion in visiting faculty. The majority of respondents say that they don't have much interaction with senior faculty members (or even with their colleagues) due to clashes of timing. They just take their class and leave afterwards because they don't have any proper sitting-place in the departments. Visiting faculty doesn't find much appreciation from the departments, and has a low level of satisfaction due to its poor working conditions.

According to a respondent

I am not satisfied with this job because I serve much more than I am paid back. (Respondent). Pay package is very low and we always have a fear of losing our job. This job has many issues. (Interview Transcript)

The majority of respondents say that they have inadequate compensation and job security due to which they always live under fear and pressure. They don't have any union or organization to call for help to submit their complaints to. Their job often does not convert into a permanent academic position. They are not paid on a monthly basis. They get their paycheck at the end of a semester, and payments are often delayed causing financial issues for visiting faculty.

Visiting faculty faced lots of problems due to their job conditions, which makes them feel exhausted. The majority of visiting faculty interviewed joined with little or no experience and when they joined they had to teach different subjects. Most of the time, they teach minor subjects in which they lack expertise. Due to this, the quality of teaching and academic quality suffer. They aren't even provided with resources to fulfill their job demands.

We are not properly facilitated regarding our job. So sometime I am not able to teach the way I actually want to because I don't have proper lab facilities for practical. In my case HEC design this subject as theoretical. I try to teach this subject as practical because this subject has practical application. I use my personal laptop and my all students use their personal laptops. They don't provide us any facility, which is necessary for teaching (Interview Transcript).

All these condition contribute to feeling of stress and exhaustion.

Lack of personal accomplishment

The majority of respondents agree that due to the temporary status of their job, they feel detached from their job and workplace. They have little interaction with other people at their workplace. Our respondents shared a common feeling of being outsider in the department. They are treated like *visitors*. They are not considered a part of the department. They have very little interaction with the permanent faculty, the administration, and even with their own colleagues because they don't have proper offices or a designated place where they can stay after their class. Due to non-availability of working space, visiting faculty has limited interaction with their students after class. Another important concern that was raised by most of our respondent was that they don't get any appreciation for their effort, which keeps their morale down. Low appreciation and limited possibility for upward mobility result in lost of enthusiasm which might result in decline in quality of teaching. All above-mentioned factors lead to a sense of alienation in visiting faculty, which in turn may lead to lower job satisfaction.

Depersonalization:

Depersonalization is an important factor contributing to burnout. It is a condition in which one disengages himself / herself from the surrounding environment. According to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001), depersonalization is related to effectiveness and self-efficacy. Previous researches also show that low personal accomplishment and exhaustion are closely linked with the feeling of depersonalization in individuals (Dyrbye, et al., 2009). As mentioned earlier, visiting faculty has inadequate compensation and job security. They have low pay packages and don't get paid for their extra work. They don't have any full-time job opportunities. They don't have any decision making power in the department or any right to select the subjects that they teach. All these factors create anxiety and depersonalization at the workplace.

The bad thing is that I have to spend lot of time to perform extra duties that are not part of my job description. But we as visiting faculty don't become a part of department like a permanent faculty, no matter how hard we try (Interview Transcript).

This sense of depersonalization varies from person to person based on their personal history and urgency of their economic needs. Those with strong financial background show less resentment as compared to those who have family responsibilities and dire economic needs.

What Lesson did we learn from our Case?

The use of part-time faculty in higher education is quite pervasive around the world. The trend of hiring visiting faculty is also increasing in Pakistan. Currently, all the educational institutions of Pakistan are increasing their reliance on visiting faculty. As the number of institutions increased in Pakistan, regular faculty started getting replaced by visiting faculty. The use of part-time faculty, especially their impact on academic quality, is contentious. The findings of this study clearly indicate that visiting teachers are not paid fairly, have almost no job security, have little or no institutional support, and are treated as “second-class citizens” of academia, resulting in burnout. Yet, for a variety of reasons, institutions often choose to employ them instead of full-time faculty. The majority of respondents have 3-4 years of experience as visiting faculty members. They have to face many workplace challenges in this job. They don't have any job security and clearly assigned set of responsibilities. They just follow the oral instruction given by department authorities. They don't get the same respect and recognition as other permanent faculty members. Our respondents reported Excessive work demand that according to Harrison (1999) might cause frustration. Their work conditions are causing burnout in visiting faculty regardless of their gender. Both male and female respondents reported high levels of stress and dissatisfaction with their work and employment conditions. Most of them are waiting for a better job and using the job as a transitional phase to their real employment. Faculty burnout is a serious problem that cannot be ignored as it might lead to decreased job performance. Burnout takes a toll on both the mental and physical health of teachers.

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