

# Mental Well-Being among University Faculty: An Exploratory Study to Raise Awareness

**Dr C. Sunanda Yadav**

*Faculty Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth*

*Email: sunandayadav@yahoo.com*

**Dr Chetna Jethwa**

*Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth*

*Email: drchetnajethwa@gmail.com*

## ABSTRACT

*Mental well-being of university faculty has become an important yet often overlooked aspect of academic life.[1] Faculty members are required to manage multiple responsibilities such as teaching, research, administration, and student engagement, which shape their everyday mental and emotional experiences. Many of these experiences remain normalized within academic culture and therefore go unnoticed. These include reduced ability to focus on daily tasks, diminished enjoyment in routine academic activities, recurring feelings of stress or tension, disturbed sleep due to work-related worries, occasional doubts about usefulness or decision-making ability, and fluctuations in confidence and overall contentment. The present exploratory study is based on primary data collected from university faculty members using a structured questionnaire designed to capture everyday mental well-being experiences. The findings reveal that while faculty members largely remain professionally engaged and capable of managing their responsibilities, subtle emotional challenges are commonly experienced across daily academic work life. Rather than presenting as extreme concerns, these experiences reflect gradual and often unrecognized shifts in emotional balance.[2]*

*The study emphasizes the need to raise awareness about mental well-being in academic settings by drawing attention to these every day, often unnoticed experiences. Recognizing such patterns can encourage open dialogue, reduce stigma, and support the development of more empathetic and responsive academic environments.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Mental well-being; University faculty; Higher education; Academic work life; Everyday emotional experiences; Stress and balance; Awareness*

## INTRODUCTION

Mental well-being is an essential dimension of professional life, particularly in higher education, where faculty members face continuous intellectual and emotional demands.[1] Academic roles today extend far beyond classroom teaching and include responsibilities related to research

productivity, administrative duties, student mentoring, institutional engagement, and professional development. These multiple expectations require sustained focus, emotional balance, and decision-making capacity on a daily basis.

While faculty members often meet institutional expectations and continue to function professionally, their everyday

emotional experiences are rarely discussed openly. Experiences such as ongoing stress, difficulty maintaining work–life balance, fluctuating confidence, and emotional fatigue are frequently normalized as part of academic responsibility [4]. As a result, these experiences may remain unnoticed, even though they influence overall well-being and professional engagement.

Mental well-being in academic settings is not limited to extreme conditions or visible distress. It is reflected in everyday experiences such as the ability to concentrate on routine tasks, derive satisfaction from academic work, cope with challenges, and maintain emotional stability over time [3]. Understanding these subtle aspects is important, as they shape how faculty members experience their work and sustain long-term engagement.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on understanding everyday mental well-being experiences of university faculty members and drawing awareness to often overlooked aspects of academic work life. By adopting an exploratory and awareness-oriented approach, the study seeks to contribute to ongoing conversations around mental well-being in higher education without framing these experiences in diagnostic terms.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To understand mental well-being experiences of university faculty members.
2. To identify commonly experienced yet often unnoticed aspects of faculty work life related to mental well-being.
3. To promote awareness about mental well-being within the academic community.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts an exploratory and descriptive research design. Primary data were collected from 61 university faculty members using a structured questionnaire. Respondents included assistant professors, associate professors, and professors from central, state, private, deemed, and open universities. Convenience sampling was adopted due to accessibility and voluntary participation. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage analysis [10]. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Faculty Members

| Age Group          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 25 – 33 years      | 21        | 35.59          |
| 34 – 42 years      | 18        | 30.51          |
| 43 – 51 years      | 8         | 13.56          |
| 52 – 60 years      | 10        | 16.95          |
| 60 years and above | 2         | 3.39           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

### Analysis:

The majority of respondents belong to the 25–42 age group, indicating strong representation of early- and mid-career faculty members in the study.

Table 2: Type of University / College

| Type of Institution       | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| <b>Deemed University</b>  | 44         | 75.86          |
| <b>State University</b>   | 8          | 13.79          |
| <b>Private University</b> | 5          | 8.62           |
| <b>Open University</b>    | 1          | 1.72           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>58*</b> | <b>100</b>     |

\*Responses reflect available valid entries.

### Analysis:

A large proportion of respondents are associated with deemed universities,

indicating concentrated representation from this institutional category.

Table 3: Feeling Sad or Depressed

| Response                | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Not at all              | 19        | 31.15          |
| Sometimes, but I manage | 39        | 63.93          |
| Most of the time        | 1         | 1.64           |
| All the time            | 2         | 3.28           |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

While most faculty members report managing occasional low mood, a small proportion experiences persistent emotional difficulty, reflecting subtle but important mental well-being concerns.

Table 4: Thoughts of Worthlessness

| Response     | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Not at all   | 36        | 60.00          |
| Very rarely  | 15        | 25.00          |
| Sometimes    | 9         | 15.00          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

The majority of faculty members do not experience such thoughts; however, occasional occurrences among some respondents highlight emotional experiences that often remain unspoken.

Table 5: Ability to Focus on Daily Tasks

| Response           | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very well          | 35        | 57.38          |
| Moderately well    | 24        | 39.34          |
| Not at all         | 1         | 1.64           |
| I feel overwhelmed | 1         | 1.64           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

The table indicates that a majority of faculty members are able to focus well on their

daily tasks. However, a small proportion experiences difficulty or feelings of being overwhelmed, suggesting variations in everyday cognitive engagement.

Table 6: Enjoyment of Daily Academic Tasks

| Response                                  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| Yes, I am happy doing my tasks            | 40        | 65.57          |
| Able to get through tasks without hiccups | 14        | 22.95          |
| Not too much                              | 3         | 4.92           |
| Tasks feel like a burden                  | 3         | 4.92           |
| No response                               | 1         | 1.64           |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

Most faculty members report enjoyment or smooth completion of their daily academic tasks. A small segment, however, experiences reduced enjoyment or perceives tasks as burdensome, reflecting subtle emotional strain in routine work life [8].

Table 7: Sense of Usefulness in Everyday Activities

| Response                        | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes, I feel satisfied           | 34        | 55.74          |
| Mostly yes                      | 21        | 34.43          |
| Sometimes I doubt my usefulness | 5         | 8.20           |
| I feel I am not adding value    | 1         | 1.64           |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

The majority of respondents feel satisfied with their role, indicating a strong sense of purpose. However, a small proportion occasionally doubts their usefulness, highlighting unnoticed emotional concerns.

Table 8: Ability to Make Sound Decisions

| Response               | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes, almost every time | 30        | 49.18          |
| Yes, sometimes         | 25        | 40.98          |
| Not too many times     | 4         | 6.56           |

|                  |           |            |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| I rely on others | 2         | 3.28       |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Analysis:**

Most faculty members feel capable of making decisions, though some experience occasional difficulty, indicating fluctuations in confidence during everyday professional functioning.

Table 9: Ability to Deal with Problems

| Response                            | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes, with ease                      | 27        | 44.26          |
| Yes, I am able to manage            | 28        | 45.90          |
| I need help on most days            | 4         | 6.56           |
| I am not able to deal with problems | 2         | 3.28           |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

While most faculty members report effective problem-handling abilities, a small proportion requires frequent support, reflecting underlying emotional or mental load.

Table 10: Difficulty in Dealing with Difficulties

| Response                        | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Not at all                      | 26        | 42.62          |
| Yes, but I overcome the thought | 21        | 34.43          |
| Sometimes                       | 10        | 16.39          |
| All the time                    | 4         | 6.56           |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

The data suggests that while many faculty members manage difficulties effectively, a notable section experiences recurring difficulty, which may remain unspoken.

Table 11: Frequency of Stress or Tension

| Response                  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Rarely                    | 12        | 19.67          |
| Sometimes, but manageable | 42        | 68.85          |
| More often than I should  | 6         | 9.84           |
| All the time              | 1         | 1.64           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

Stress is commonly experienced at manageable levels, indicating normalization of tension within academic work life [4].

Table 12: Sleep Disturbance Due to Worry

| Response              | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| I feel well-rested    | 10        | 16.39          |
| Sleep desired amount  | 34        | 55.74          |
| Sleep less than usual | 16        | 26.23          |
| Do not sleep well     | 1         | 1.64           |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

A significant proportion of faculty members experience reduced or disturbed sleep, reflecting the impact of work-related concerns beyond working hours [7].

Table 13: Reduction in Confidence

| Response                  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Not really                | 35        | 57.38          |
| Sometimes, but manageable | 22        | 36.07          |
| Most of the time          | 4         | 6.56           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

**Analysis:**

Most faculty members maintain confidence, though occasional reductions are experienced by many, indicating emotional fluctuations [9].

Table 14: Overall Contentment and Happiness

| Response                   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very content               | 19        | 31.15          |
| Content with some bad days | 36        | 59.02          |
| Tough, but push through    | 6         | 9.84           |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>61</b> | <b>100</b>     |

### Analysis:

The majority of faculty members report overall contentment while acknowledging difficult days, reinforcing the coexistence of professional functioning and emotional challenges.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings indicate that mental well-being concerns are present among university faculty members across age groups, particularly among early- and mid-career professionals [2]. These concerns are not limited to any specific type of institution, suggesting that they stem largely from the nature of academic work rather than institutional differences.

Most faculty members reported being able to focus on their daily tasks and remain professionally engaged. However, a section of respondents experienced reduced enjoyment and occasional feelings of burden in routine academic activities. Continuous workload, repetitive administrative duties, and limited recovery time appear to contribute to this gradual emotional strain [4].

While a majority of respondents expressed confidence in their usefulness and decision-making abilities, some reported occasional self-doubt. This seems to be influenced by constant performance expectations, frequent evaluations, and pressure to meet high academic standards [6].

Stress emerged as a common and normalized aspect of academic life [4].

Factors such as deadlines, research output demands, administrative responsibilities, and blurred work–life boundaries contribute to ongoing stress. This is further reflected in sleep disturbances reported by several faculty members, indicating difficulty in mentally disengaging from work-related concerns [7].

Overall, faculty members reported general contentment with their professional lives, though many acknowledged difficult days. The findings suggest that professional functioning often coexists with subtle emotional challenges that remain largely unrecognized within academic environments.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study provide meaningful insight into the everyday mental well-being experiences of university faculty members. The ability of most respondents to maintain focus, perform academic duties, and experience a sense of usefulness reflects resilience and professional commitment within academic roles. However, the presence of recurring stress, disturbed sleep, emotional fluctuations, and occasional self-doubt suggests that mental well-being challenges are embedded within routine academic life [2].

One of the key observations of the study is the normalization of stress and emotional strain [4]. Many faculty members reported experiencing stress and low mood occasionally but considered these experiences manageable. This normalization allows faculty members to continue functioning professionally but may also prevent early recognition of mental well-being concerns. Over time, persistent but unaddressed emotional strain may influence overall well-being and job satisfaction [8].

Sleep disturbance due to worry highlights the continuous cognitive engagement

associated with academic responsibilities. Teaching demands, research expectations, administrative pressures, and institutional accountability may blur the boundaries between professional and personal life [7]. Reduced rest and recovery, even when perceived as temporary, can gradually affect emotional balance and well-being [9].

Variations in confidence, decision-making ability, and feelings of usefulness further indicate that mental well-being is not uniform among faculty members. These experiences often remain internalized, as academic culture tends to value competence and self-reliance. The findings reinforce the importance of viewing mental well-being as a continuum, shaped by everyday experiences rather than extreme conditions alone.

By adopting an awareness-oriented perspective, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on faculty well-being by highlighting subtle and often unnoticed experiences. Recognizing these patterns can encourage more open dialogue and foster empathetic academic environments that acknowledge the human aspects of academic work.

## CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to understand mental well-being experiences of university faculty members, identify commonly experienced yet often unnoticed aspects of academic work life, and promote awareness of mental well-being within the academic community. The findings indicate that while faculty members largely remain professionally engaged and capable of managing their responsibilities, subtle emotional challenges are widely present across different age groups and institutional contexts.

Everyday experiences such as manageable stress, disturbed sleep, emotional fluctuations, occasional self-doubt, and the

need to push through difficult days reflect gradual shifts in mental and emotional balance [2]. These experiences are frequently normalized within academic culture and therefore remain unnoticed or unaddressed.

By bringing attention to these everyday patterns, the study emphasizes that awareness is a crucial first step toward supporting faculty well-being. Encouraging open conversations and acknowledging mental well-being as an integral part of academic life can contribute to more responsive, supportive, and sustainable academic communities. The study does not seek to diagnose or generalize but aims to sensitize stakeholders to the importance of recognizing everyday mental well-being experiences in higher education.

## REFERENCES

- [1] World Health Organization. (2014). *Mental health: A state of well-being*. World Health Organization.
- [2] Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(2), 207–222.
- [3] Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081.
- [4] Kinman, G. (2008). Pressure points: A review of stressors and strains in UK academics. *Educational Psychology*, 28(4), 461–478.
- [5] Kinman, G., & Johnson, S. (2019). Well-being in academic employees: A critical review. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 26(2), 159–161.
- [6] Gillespie, N. A., Walsh, M., Winefield, A. H., Dua, J., & Stough, C. (2001). Occupational stress in universities: Staff perceptions of the causes, consequences, and moderators of stress. *Work & Stress*, 15(1), 53–72.
- [7] Tytherleigh, M. Y., Webb, C., Cooper, C. L., & Ricketts, C. (2005). Occupational stress in UK higher education institutions. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 59(1), 41–55.
- [8] Singh, P., & Bhushan, P. (2018). Occupational stress and job satisfaction among college teachers. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8(2), 46–58.

- [9] Kumar, S., &Deo, J. M. (2011). Stress and work life of college teachers. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 37(1), 78–85.
- [10]Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd ed.). New Age International Publishers.

## List of Tables

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Faculty Members

Table 2: Type of University / College

Table 3: Feeling Sad or Depressed

Table 4: Thoughts of Worthlessness

Table 5: Ability to Focus on Daily Tasks

Table 6: Enjoyment of Daily Academic Tasks

Table 7: Sense of Usefulness in Everyday Activities

Table 8: Ability to Make Sound Decisions

Table 9: Ability to Deal with Problems

Table 10: Difficulty in Dealing with Difficulties

Table 11: Frequency of Stress or Tension

Table 12: Sleep Disturbance Due to Worry

Table 13: Reduction in Confidence

Table 14: Overall Contentment and Happiness