

Research Article

From Stress to Strength: Examining the Role of Psychological Capital in Sustainable Work-Life Quality Among Higher Education Faculty

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Abstract: Purpose: The institutional, technological and performance-related changes being experienced by the higher education sector have never been as high, which adds further pressure to the jobs and jeopardizes the long-term health and status of the faculty members against its sustainability. This paper utilizes the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) of Psychological Capital as a personal resource that is vital in reducing job-related stress and promoting sustainable work-life quality based on preliminary assumptions of the Positive Organization Behaviour and Conservative resources (COR) theory. **Design/methodology/approach:** Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to assess direct and mediating variables using survey data of 182 full-time faculty members of government and non-government and autonomous higher education institutions in India. **Findings:** The results indicate that PsyCap significantly reduces job stress and positively influences sustainable work-life quality. Job stress has a pernicious effect on sustainable work-life quality and mediates the correlation between PsyCap and sustainable work-life quality to some extent. The model accounts 18 and 46 percent of the variation in job stress and sustainable work life quality respectively. **Implications:** Theoretically, the research is a continuation of PsyCap research because it shows that it has a buffering and resource-sustaining effect on maintaining long-term work-life quality in a high-demand academic environment. Implications in the practical aspects of faculty development, institutional policy and mental health interventions are addressed. **Originality/Value:** The choices of defining sustainability in terms of psychological endurance and adaptive capacity as opposed to episodic balance make the study add to an emerging discussion on human sustainability of higher education systems that are being reformed continuously.

Keywords: Psychological Capital; Job Stress; Sustainable Work-Life Quality; Higher Education Faculty; Conservation of Resources; India.

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INTRODUCTION

The global education system in higher education is experiencing a massive restructuring of functional and organizational structure and functions due to globalization, marketized reforms, digitalization as well as the growing rigidity of accountability frameworks. Gradually the universities in the modern world are not evaluated on the quality of teaching alone, but on a blend of the research output, institutional ranking, accreditation standards, student satisfaction measure and in the broader societal sphere of influence. Although these changes are supposed to make the academic setting more competitive and educational, they have also created certain gaps in the form of expanded, more intense, and more complex academic tasks, which have redefined the psychosocial environment in which members of the faculty have to work (Kinman and Wray, 2020; Barkhuizen et al., 2023).

The jobs in academics where teaching and scholarly research were the central focus have been diversified in to include a wide range of administrative duties, curriculum redesign, student achievement-driven evaluation procedures, mentoring students, obtaining funding to carry out a research, publication agreements, and adherence to paperwork and regulation at

the institution. These demands have been cumulative, leading to increased stages of job stress, emotional fatigue, and work-family conflict among the faculty, evoking a long-running agitation regarding the mental well-being and long-term sustainability of academic professions (Sabagh et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2019).

These pressures were aggravated even during the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed the structural weaknesses that had been there before in higher education institutions. The immediate shift in online and hybrid instruction necessitated the prompt acquisition of digital skillsets by faculty members, redesign instruction, cope with technological upset, and keep students engaged due to remote learning. Such professional requirements were usually steered with issues of personal health, parental care and social isolation. According to empirical research, it can be seen that this era was characterized by a greater cognitive and emotional load, the lack of a clear line between work and life, and a greater possibility of stress and burnout among academic employees (Watermeyer et al., 2021; Aperribai et al., 2023).

These issues are further exacerbated in the context of developing countries such as India by such structural limitation as high student-teacher ratios, unequal infrastructural access, the lack of contractual security, and access to institutionalized mental health services. The academic work environment has also been changed with the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP-2020). Despite the fact that the policy suggests the promotion of multidisciplinary learning, increased digitalization, and innovation in research, as well as global orientation, it has also led into the establishment of stricter systems of performance monitoring, performance-based assessment systems, and continuous professional development, and increased documentation tasks (Government of India, 2020). There is growing evidence that these changes, though with a progressive motive, have added to the role overload and psychological burden of faculty staff (Mishra and Mohanty, 2022; Ekmekci et al., 2025).

Because of this, the perception of work-life balance has become one of the most influenced variables of academic work. Professional-to-personal-spillover has been linked with poor mental health factors, confusion with sleep, family discord, loss of job satisfaction and loss of overall work life (Van Laar et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2019). Critically, these experiences indicate something beyond episodic imbalance, this is the gradual loss of sustainable quality of work-life, as conceived here as capacity to sustain psychological well-being, role balance as performance, and engagement at work over time in the face of persistent job demands. The example of the degradation of such sustainability does not just impact individual faculty members but also a fundamental effective approach of institutions, teaching, student results, and the overall knowledge ecosystem.

Although policy reforms and organizational interventions are needed, the recent scholarship has given rise to the status of personal psychological possessions in helping one to adapt well to high-demand working settings. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a form of positive psychological capacity that can be established and comprises resilience, self-efficacy, hope and optimism in this case (Luthans et al., 2007). Depending on available research in organizational and healthcare contexts, people who have higher PsyCap ratings report to experience less stress, high job satisfaction, better performance, and increased psychological well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2014; Ekmekci et al., 2025).

Although it is current, there is empirical data that analyses PsyCap in the context of higher education which is relatively scarce, especially in non-Western settings. In addition, most studies lack on the action pathways that PsyCap plays in achieving sustained work-related well-being particularly reducing the undesirable influence of job-related pressure. The need to address these gaps is significant in order to formulate interventions that go beyond the structural change and focus on the psychological sustainability of academic work (Sadia & Khan, 2025).

Relying on the theory of Conservation of Resources (COR), the current study formulates the idea of Psychological Capital in the provisions of a constellation of interrelated resources that contribute to the capacity of people to handle the current needs and emotional regaining after experiencing pressure. In the context of higher education, reforms, accountability, and intensification of the digital era can be interpreted as the factors that result in the inability to stop the chronic depletion of resources, such as time, emotional resources, cognitive capacity, and professional autonomy. These features make higher education a highly challenging work environment where maintaining the quality of work-life is determined not just by institutional set ups, but also by the presence of inner psychological capabilities (Sadia & Khan, 2025).

It is against this backdrop that the current study will focus on psychological capital in determining job stress and sustainable work-life quality in the case of higher education faculty in India. Precisely, it exemplifies whether PsyCap is mediated by job pressures in correlating with the quality of work-life experiences, hence providing an understanding of the psychological mechanisms by which internal resources lead to a long-term professional functioning. This research aims to contribute to the current speed at which higher education is undergoing changes and propose evidence-based policies on institutional level and faculty growth through the synthesis of the insights of Positive Organizational Behavior and Conservation of Resources theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Capital (PsyCap), within the scope of nice organisational behaviour, is an individual's positive psychological state characterised by the four psychological resource capacities of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (HERO). These psychological resources are considered to be developable and have been linked with increased work performance, well-being, and organisational outcomes in a wide range of professions (Erden, 2025). PsyCap equips individuals to effectively solve problems, maintain a high level of motivation, and perform goal-directed activities even when the circumstances are unfavourable (Luthans et al., 2017). Research findings indicate that employees with a higher level of PsyCap are more flexible, mentally healthier, and more successful in achieving their goals. Therefore, it is even more crucial in stressful job roles like those of academics (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Sadia & Khan, 2025).

Quality of Work Life (QWL) essentially reflects employees' feelings relating to their happiness and health, as well as the extent of their work-life balance. In the context of universities, enduring work-life quality would thus imply continuing one's psychological well-being, feeling satisfied with one's work, being engaged and receiving one's professional fulfilment. Studies show that initiatives designed to help individuals integrate their work and non-work lives with settings that are supportive of the employees can serve to significantly increase people's motivation, commitment, and overall well-being, in addition to lessening burnout and intentions to quit (Eckardt et al., 2021; Ekmekci et al., 2025).

Faculty members roles conflicts with multitasking research, teaching, mentoring, and administrative duties may cause them to have role overload. Studies on assistant professors reveal that inadequate resources, heavy workload, and little opportunities for professional development are the main causes of their work-life quality (Eckardt et al., 2021; Ekmekci et al., 2025).

2.1 Research Problem and Rationale

The issue of job stress among faculty of higher education has become alarming because work expectations are rising out of control, administration compliance pressure, research production pressure, and constant review process. Long-term contact with stressors opens up the risk of long-term psychological health, professional interaction, and teaching efficiency. Prolonged stress has been reported to trigger burnout, emotional exhaustion, diminished organization commitment and damaged academic performance. The results of these outcomes only have negative impacts on individual faculty, but their results in terms of institutional reputation, student learning experiences, and learning sustainability (Newman et al., 2014; Erden, 2025).

The institutional demands are ever increasing whereas the psychological resources that help the faculties to effectively cope have not been explored as much. Knowledge of the mitigating role of Psychological Capital as an internal strength on the quality of sustainable work life and life overall is hence crucial to implementing evidence-based interventions to develop resilience academic systems.

2.2. Research Gap and Justification

The foundational review has already captured the study of job stress and burnout in faculty members at the university, especially in workload, role overload, time pressure, and emotional exhaustion (Kinman and Wray, 2020; Sabagh et al., 2018). Nonetheless, it still contains a number of significant gaps:

- Limited focus on Psychological Capital: Despite its growing prominence in occupational well-being research, PsyCap has received limited empirical attention in higher education contexts (Luthans et al., 2007; Newman et al., 2014).
- Absence of mechanism-based examination: Extremely modest research focuses on the operating mechanisms by which PsyCap affects sustainable working ratings, especially by means of stress decreasing pathways (Avey et al., 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018).
- Underrepresentation of the Indian context: Empirical research on faculty well-being in India remains scarce, especially in light of systemic reforms introduced by NEP-2020 and heightened accountability structures (Government of India, 2020; Mishra & Mohanty, 2022).
- To discourse these gaps, the present study examines the mediating role of job stress in the relation between Psychological Capital and sustainable work–life quality among Indian higher education faculty.

2.3. Research Objectives

- To examine the association between Psychological Capital and job stress among higher education faculty.
- To assess the influence of Psychological Capital on sustainable work–life quality.
- To analyse the relation between job stress and sustainable work–life quality.
- To inspect the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between Psychological Capital and sustainable work–life quality.

2.4. Conceptual Model

The present study proposes a parsimonious conceptual model that examines the role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in shaping job stress and sustainable work–life quality among higher education faculty. Grounded in Positive Organizational Behavior and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the model is designed to capture both the direct and indirect psychological processes through which internal resources influence sustained work-related well-being in a high-demand academic context.

In this context, Psychological Capital is understood to be one of the central individual resources that provide people with the capacity to adjust well with the unrelenting workload. PsyCap fulfils a twofold role as far as a COR is concerned. To begin with, it takes place within stress-buffering pathway whereby the faculty members exhibiting greater levels of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism will find it easier to evaluate demands as manageable, emotional responses, and even eliminate undue depletion of psychological resources and thus perceived job stress. Second, PsyCap plays a pooling role in a resource-gain pathway of positively engaging, goal-directed and adaptive functioning, which then results in increasing the degrees of sustainable quality of work-life (Sadia & Khan, 2025).

Job stress is placed as a seminal clarifying factor between Psychological Capital and sustainable work life quality. Instead of focusing on stress as a product of stress, the model theorizes job stress as a process variable that transforms the availability of resources into work-life outcomes in the long term. Based on the COR theory, chronic stress represents the persistence of the resourcing loss mechanism which sabotages well-being and minimized stress supports the increase and continuance of resources needed to uphold the quality of work-life over time.

Based on this, it is expected that the conceptual framework suggests the following relationships:

- i. Job stress is inversely connected to Psychological Capital.
- ii. The relationship between psychological capital and sustainable work - life quality is positive.
- iii. Sustainable work - life quality has negative relationship with job stress.
- iv. Job stress is an intervener of Psychological Capital and sustainable work - life quality association.

Even though these relationships could be moderated by the inclusion of moderating factors like organizational support or leadership style, in the current research, the authors intentionally make use of mediation to help elucidate the main psychological process in which PsyCap mediates. It isolates job stress as the mediating process to achieve a better comprehension of how internal psychological resources become translated into lasting work-life achievement before providing contextual contingencies into future work.

2.5. Hypotheses

However, on the basis of the theoretical foundations and the conceptual model described above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H1: Job stress is inversely linked to psychological Capital in cases of higher education faculty.
- H2: Higher education faculty members exhibit a positive relationship between Psychological Capital and sustainable work life quality.
- H3: There is a negative correlation between job stress and sustainable work-life quality.
- H4: The relationship between Psychological Capital and sustainable work-life quality is mediated by job stress where increased levels of Psychological Capital lower job stress which leads to increased sustainable work-life quality.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample Profile

The research involved the cross-sectional survey design. A total of 182 full time faculty employees working at the government, private and autonomous higher education institutions were sampled in India. The respondents volunteered to take part in the survey and the eligibility criteria included one-year experience in teaching, which was the minimum requirement since sufficient experience was needed to expose them to the academic work demands.

It comprised faculty members of varying ranks in the academic degree of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor as well as different disciplinary backgrounds such as Arts, Science, Commerce, and Management. This heterogeneity helps in increasing the applicability of the findings in relation to varying academic situations in the context of higher education.

3.2 Measures

Measurement of all study variables was carried out by utilizing standardized and validated measures and rated on a five-point Likert scale (Without any significance) (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

The 12-item Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-12) in which four fundamental dimensions of hope, self-efficacy,

resilience, and optimism are reflected was used in the measurement of the Psychological Capital (Luthans et al., 2007). The scale has widely applied in occupational studies and it shows excellent psychometric features in an intercultural setting.

Job Stress

The 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) was used to measure job stress; it is a scale that measures how unpredictable, uncontrollable and overwhelming one thinks the work environment to be. The scale has been used extensively on occupational stress studies and was found to be reliable in academic groups.

Sustainable Work–Life Quality

The Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) scale was utilized to measure sustainable work-life quality and dimensions general well-being, job satisfaction, and work balance as a measure. In the current research the construct is formulated in terms of a prolonged state of work-related well-being and not in terms of a short-term balance.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was performed with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM Her appropriateness is based on predictive models and mediation analysis as well as complex latent constructs besides that the model is robust even with intermediate sample sizes. Statistical significance of path coefficients was determined through a bootstrapping process which had 5000 resamples.

Internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model were assessed and structural model as well as mediation effects were assessed.

3.4 Assessment of Common Method Bias

Since data were self-reported and collected at one point in time, there is a possibility of the common method bias (CMB) that was addressed both procedurally and statistically, as per the standard methodological guidelines (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

To minimize the apprehension of evaluation and covariance caused by methods, procedurally, respondents were given the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, and validated scales with unique conceptual anchors.

In his single factor test, Harman applied an analysis of the exploration of all measurement items in detail, through a factor analysis. These results showed that no factor explained most of the variance, and that the most important factor explained less than half of the total variance, which shows that common method bias should not be a severe problem.

Besides, full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) were also checked in accordance with the recommendations recommended by PLS-SEM. The VIF values were all set to be lower than the conservative value of 3.3, which further supports the claim that common method effect is not of a significant impact on the study results.

An aggregate of these findings shows that the problem of common method bias cannot seriously endanger the validity of the reported relations.

3.5 Research Design Considerations

Despite the fact that the cross-sectional design does not allow causal inferences, the design suits testing of theories and mediation analysis in organizational studies especially in the process of investigating the psychological processes that would remain relatively constant over time. The design is consistent with the previous empirical research on Psychological Capital and occupational stress and gives a basis to the further longitudinal and experimental research studies.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Sample Profile

The demographic parameters of the respondents are given in Table 1. The final sample included 182 full-time members of the faculty which included government, private and autonomous institutions of higher learning. The respondents of the survey had a variety of academic levels, disciplinary courses and teaching experience, which made them heterogeneous enough to continue the analysis.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 182)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Institution Type	Government	62	34.07%
	Private	78	42.86%
	Autonomous	42	23.07%
Academic Rank	Assistant Professor	104	57.14%
	Associate Professor	54	29.67%
	Professor	24	13.19%

Discipline	Arts	58	31.87%
	Science	46	25.27%
	Commerce	40	21.98%
	Management	38	20.88%
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	72	39.56%
	6–10 years	64	35.16%
	Above 10 years	46	25.28%

Source: Authors' Calculation

4.2 Model Assessment

The measurement model was tested on the internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. Indeed, the Table 2 indicates that the value of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability (CR) of all constructs were greater than the recommended value of 0.70, and lastly, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than the recommended value of 0.50, which means that the overall reliability and convergent validity was satisfactory.

Table 2. Validity Table

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Psychological Capital	0.92	0.94	0.68
Job Stress	0.89	0.91	0.63
Work–Life Quality	0.87	0.90	0.65

Source: Authors' Calculation

Assessment of discriminant validity was done on the Fornell-larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square root of AVE of every construct as shown in Table 3 was greater than the correlation between them with other constructs. Also, all of the HTMT figures in Table 4 fell below the conservative coefficient of 0.85, and this confirms that there was sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Construct	PsyCap	Job Stress	Work–Life Quality
Psychological Capital	0.82		
Job Stress	–0.42	0.79	
Work–Life Quality	0.56	–0.51	0.81

Diagonal values (in bold) represent the square root of AVE.

Source: Authors' Calculation

Table 4. HTMT Ratios

Constructs	HTMT
PsyCap - Job Stress	0.48
PsyCap - Work–Life Quality	0.61
Job Stress - Work–Life Quality	0.55

Source: Authors' Calculation

4.3 Structural Model Results

Path coefficient of structural model was evaluated based on the statistical significance, effects size and the explained variance. Table 5 shows standardized path coefficients, t -values, and and significance levels for the hypothesized relationships.

Table 5. Structural Path Coefficients

Hypothesized Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
PsyCap → Job Stress	–0.42	7.86	< 0.001	Supported
PsyCap → Work–Life Quality	0.48	9.21	< 0.001	Supported
Job Stress → Work–Life Quality	–0.37	6.94	< 0.001	Supported

Source: Authors' Calculation

Along with the statistical significance, the effects sizes (f^2) were also tested to determine the substantive contribution of each exogenous construct. In accordance with set rules of PLS-SEM (f^2 of 0.02, 0.15, 0.35 of small, medium, and strong effects), Psychological Capital had a moderate impact on job stress and a moderate-strong impact on sustainable work-life quality. There was a medium influence of job stress on sustainable work- life quality implying that the associations are not only statistically important but also meaningful.

Table 6 shows the values of coefficient of determination (R²). Psychological Capital strongly explained 18% of the variations in job stress as well as Psychological Capital and job stress combination contributed to 46% of the variation in sustainable work-life quality which is moderate to substantial evidence.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Interpretation
Job Stress	0.18	Moderate
Work–Life Quality	0.46	Substantial

Source: Authors' Calculation

4.4 Predictive Relevance of the Model (Q²)

The predictive relevance of the structural model was determined based on the Stone- Geisser Q² value received after the blind folding process. Q² more than zero implies that the model has predictive relevance on the endogenous constructs. The findings showed both job stress and sustainable work-life quality Q²-values were positive meaning that the model has proper prediction strength. This shows that Psychological Capital and job stress are significantly useful in predicting differences in sustainable work life quality outside the scope of estimation sample hence confirming the predictive validity of the model.

4.5 Mediation Analysis

A bootstrapping procedure was used to test the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between Psychological Capital and sustainable work- life quality at a resample of 5,000. The findings of the mediation are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Mediation Results (Bootstrapping = 5,000)

Relationship	Indirect Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Mediation Type
PsyCap → Job Stress → Work–Life Quality	0.16	5.12	< 0.001	Partial Mediation

Source: Authors' Calculation

The connection between Psychological Capital and indirect impact on sustainable work- life quality via job stress had an impact. Since the direct effect was also of significance, partial mediation was set up, which proved Hypothesis H4. Such results suggest that Psychological Capital positively affects the sustainable work-life quality, including the direct mechanisms of creating a positive engagement and adaptive functioning and the indirect mechanism of minimising job stress. The identified pattern corresponds to the stress-buffering and resources-gain mechanisms of the Positive Organizational Behavior and Conservation of Resources theory (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2021).

DISCUSSIONS

The current research aimed to investigate the importance of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in influencing job stress and stable work life quality in the Indian faculty of higher education institutions, and specifically the mediating role of job stress. Within the framework of the positivistic approach, based on the Positive Organizational Behaviour and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the findings can be empirically used to support the proposed model and also offer multiple valuable theoretical and contextual conclusions regarding the well-being of the faculty in modern academic settings.

In line with Hypothesis 1, it was discovered that there was a significant and negative correlation between job stress and Psychological Capital. Faculty that recorded greater scores on hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism recorded lower scores on perceived stress indicating that PsyCap may serve as an effective psychological buffer against increasing academic pressure. This result is consistent with the previous studies that proved the stress reducing effect of PsyCap in the workplace (Avey et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2014; Avey et al., 2009). PsyCap can be construed as a series of personal resources in terms of COR that would help individuals perceive stressors as manageable, mobilize coping adaptive mechanisms, and avoid the overuse of resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Such internal resources seem to be specifically salient in the situation of higher education, where work intensity and role multiplicity tend to become the established norm.

In line with Hypothesis 2, also supporting the hypothesis was that Psychological Capital had a positive relationship with sustainable work-life quality. The finding also expands available PsyCap literature by showing that its advantages are not limited to short-term performance or job satisfaction effects but extend to the long-term work-life sustainability. With a greater PsyCap, faculty members will be more likely to keep the role balance intact, be psychologically healthy, and engaged after several years of constant job demands. Though the previous research has already had the connection of PsyCap to well-being and engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009; Salanova et al., 2010), the current study offers a contribution to the sphere by placing those results in a sustainability perspective that focuses on long-term continuity and maintaining the

balance.

Also, consistent with Hypothesis 3, sustainable work life quality was negatively related with job stress. This finding strengthens the substantial corpus of literature recording the harmful impact of chronic work-related stress on the state of faculties, work-family patterns, and work-life satisfaction (Sabagh et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Kinman and Wray, 2020). Continuous stress means continuous loss, cycle of resources, and, based on COR theory, reduces people ability to maintain psychological functioning and effectiveness of role in the course of time (Hobfoll, 1989). Academic specialization with work-life boundaries and ongoing performance assessment and analysis might become a severe risk to professional sustainability in the long run in case stress is not carefully handled, though.

More importantly, the mediation analysis supports Hypothesis 4, which discloses the fact that job stress partially mediates the relation of Psychological Capital to sustainable work-life quality. This result provides valuable theoretical explanation of the application of PsyCap in ensuring long-term work-life performance by distinguishing job stress as a major psychological process by which PsyCap is converted into lasting work-life performance. The fact that the mediation is partial implies that PsyCap affects the quality of work-life in a series of ways. On the one hand, PsyCap lessens the stress through buffering the effects of the demands and avoiding the loss of resources beyond the reasonable extent. Conversely, it has a direct positive effect, generating proactive coping, clarity in goals, regulation of emotions, and proactive engagement. This two-way route aligns with the fact that COR theory focuses on both resource-gain and stress-buffering mechanisms (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2021).

The results are especially relevant to the Indian context of higher education where a series of systematic changes (e.g., deployment of the National Education Policy (NEP-2020), post-pandemic digitalization, and increased accountability) transformed the organization of academic work. These transitions have enhanced the state of performance tracking, paperwork, and role demands, which have further added to the pressure that has remained on members of the faculty (Mishra and Mohanty, 2022). Under these circumstances, the role of Psychological Capital seems to be one of key internal resources that allow the faculty to traverse the stress caused by reform and still achieve a high level of work-life quality in the long run. This highlights the need to enhance structural and policy-level changes with interventions aimed at bolstering personal psychological resources.

In addition to its contextual applicability, the research theoretically contributes to the COR theory development in the higher education field and, more so, re-defines PsyCap as a human sustainability mechanism as opposed to a performance or satisfaction antecedent. The conceptualization of sustainable work-life quality as a progressive, long-term goal and a process determined by resource conservation and resource acquisition makes the study further a more nuanced perspective on the well-being of faculty in the highly-demand knowledge work environments. This point of view is a reflection of recent demands of an increased focus on sustainability-related deliverables in organizational psychology and higher education studies (Diener et al., 2018; OECD, 2021).

In sum, the results demonstrate that although there may be no reduction in the structural pressures caused by academia in the near future, the existence of sound psychological resources can be the deciding factor to how the faculty cope and carry on with their professional life. Psychological Capital therefore becomes a personal resource and a strategic resource that could help in creating resilience, wellbeing and long-term efficacy in institutions of higher learning.

6. Practical Implications

In order for organizations to thrive in the face of a tougher environment, they have to put the psychological well-being of their employees first and foremost. This is really just the first step towards embedding the growth of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) at the heart of a faculty life. In fact, professional development should not only be viewed through the lens of increased research output or enhanced teaching skills. What are really needed are initiatives that foster hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism in the staff. Such "HERO" traits, if embedded in the training of faculty members, will certainly become the ultimate toolkit for managing tough situations and keeping one's engagement levels high, after all, educators are humans, too.

However, one's inner strength is not capable of flourishing alone. The university area can assist human development by solidifying its structural support systems. The latter should include moving beyond "crisis-mode" counselling and, instead, enhancing the range of mental health resources that can help the faculty to deal with everyday stress in a more normal way. Hence, faculty can easily get access to wellness programs, and when they do, the whole problem of burnout is not being suppressed at a superficial level but, rather, it has just disappeared due to the fact that the community has become a place where people appreciate a sound mind as equally as they do a sound curriculum.

Nevertheless, a truly profound and thorough change that is driven by the spirit of the community is, at the same time, written down in the official university regulations. Flexible work arrangements should be set as the example by university leadership in recognition of the fuzzy boundaries between professional and personal life. Setting a realistic goal for performance and

practicing "human-scale" productivity are the ways the institution uses to relieve the constant pressure that leads to turnover on a regular basis. First of all, the success of such initiatives rests with the leaders who are in charge. Leadership development has to move forward so that it highlights the "soft" skills which in turn, lead to concrete, visible changes such as: good supervision, meaningful recognition, and the establishment of psychological safety. When leaders show empathy, teachers are empowered to innovate, take risks, and perform at their best, all within the setting of mutual respect and institutional stability, which makes them feel safe and secure.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation results from the study's cross-sectional design, which only records one moment in time. This "snapshot" technique helps us identify correlations but limits our ability to make definite causal inferences; we can't be 100% sure that one variable causes another over time. Furthermore, self-reporting instruments raise the risk of a common method bias because respondents might give socially desirable answers or subjectively interpret their psychological states. Basically, since the sample was limited to Indian universities, the findings are situated within a specific cultural and academic context and therefore their generalizability to other global academic contexts with different institutional norms is limited. The future studies should rely on the longitudinal method to develop this presumption further. Tracking faculty members over multiple semesters or years allows researchers to open more windows into the dynamics of psychological capital and burnout, thus clarifying the direction of causality. Next studies should attempt to move beyond subjective perceptions by involving objective measures of performance e.g., validated research output, peer assessments, or student achievement indicators to triangulate self-reported data.

CONCLUSION

The research offers strong empirical support of the fact that psychological capital is an important personal resource that helps to reduce job stress and establish alternative and sustainable work-quality among faculty of higher education. In a world where academic pressures are growing and whose systems are undergoing change, the reinforcement of psychological resources is not a luxury, but a necessity of viable higher education systems. When shifting the stress to the strength, institutions will develop resilient educators who will be able to flourish in their professions and stay well at the same time, which will affect the students, organizations and the society in the long run.

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