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Burnout and frustration among college lecturers and its impact on students and the quality of education in the post-Covid era

¹Madzore Rosemary · ²Gasa Velisiwe

University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria, South Africa, madzor@unisa.ac.za)

University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria, South Africa, gasavg@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

The study explored the impact of burnout and frustration among college lecturers on the quality of education. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with three principals and three focus groups comprising five college lecturers each. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to collect relevant data. The study revealed that the high prevalence of burnout and frustration negatively impacted college lecturers, leading to absenteeism, stress-related diseases, and other issues. The Occupational Stress Model and Self-Determination Theory were used as a theoretical framework to explain the causes and consequences of burnout among lecturers. The study recommends that colleges must address burnout and frustration in their departments. They can provide more support and resources for teachers, offer professional development opportunities, and promote work-life balance. Without action, colleges risk losing skilled lecturers. Significant causes of burnout and frustration include low wages, poor living conditions, and large classes. The study recommends that the government provide better salaries, pay teachers' fees, offer adequate materials for post-pandemic teaching, and provide medical aid for their families.

Keywords: student, burnout, frustration, quality of education, post covid era

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. COVID-19 caused the world to shut down, and most countries implemented a "lockdown" mode (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020; Reshi, 2023). While the lockdown strategy was necessary to control the spread of COVID-19, its effect on mental health is not well understood (Grover et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the higher education sector (Fray et al., 2023), with college lecturers facing unprecedented burnout and frustration. These challenges can potentially affect the quality of education and could lead to long-term consequences for students (Buonomo et al., 2022). This problem formed the basis for this study that analysed the adverse effects of burnout and frustration on college lecturers and the repercussions on their job satisfaction and work-life balance. The research employed qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. It is essential to conduct further research to better understand the extent of the issues and how they affect the quality of education.

The period after the global COVID-19 pandemic subsided is called the "post-COVID era". This period is characterised by recovery and rebuilding and will likely entail adapting to the changes and challenges caused by the virus in society and on the economy. According to Chen (2023) and Zhang and Chen (2023), the pandemic has led to exploring novel approaches to healthcare, education and work, and has altered social and cultural norms. The extent to which society will return to its pre-pandemic state remains uncertain; however, experts suggest that the post-COVID era will require increased attention on public health and greater resilience and adaptability in the face of future global challenges (Pendergast & O'Brien, 2023).

Multiple studies have consistently reported burnout as a significant issue among college lecturers. The evidence suggests that burnout among college lecturers is caused by high workloads, a lack of administrative support, and perceived lack of recognition and respect (Ghiasvand & Banitalebi, 2023; Ghods et al., 2023). As a result, burnout has been found to lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and lower motivation levels among college lecturers (Namaziandost et al., 2023). Moreover, female lecturers and those early in their careers appear to be at a higher risk for burnout (Ramos et al., 2023).

According to Garwood (2023), burnout and frustration can adversely affect college lecturers, students, and the quality of education in various ways. This can lead to lower levels of motivation and job satisfaction and higher absenteeism rates. Ultimately, this can impair the quality of teaching and the learning experience. Research suggests that, when students experience frustration and become disengaged, they may lose motivation and struggle to achieve academic success (Robinson et al., 2023). This can lead to burnout and frustration, negatively impacting the overall quality of education. Both students and lecturers may become less engaged and find it difficult to enjoy their teaching and learning experiences (Moè & Katz, 2020). Additionally, burnout and frustration can contribute to a hostile school climate, adversely affecting students' and lecturers' mental health and well-being.

Burnout and frustration among college lecturers is not new. According to DeMatthews et al. (2023), teacher training lecturers face an increased risk of burnout and frustration while teaching online due to limited resources and support. Additionally, supervising student teachers in a virtual setting presents specific demands that further contribute to decreased motivation, job satisfaction, and overall well-being for teacher training lecturers. Finding effective strategies to reduce burnout and promote well-being among this population is crucial. Research has indicated that burnout can negatively impact job satisfaction, productivity, and staff turnover (Raasch, 2023; Ramos et al., 2023; Wood & Happé, 2023).

A recent article by Belay et al. (2023) confirms the prevalence of burnout and frustration among college lecturers in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. Lecturers in Zimbabwe have raised several issues and challenges as causes of burnout and frustration, including poor salaries, poor working conditions, poor accommodation, a lack of respect, political harassment/victimisation, overworking, health-related issues, such as HIV/AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic (Koner et al., 2023), the absence of refresher courses, teachers who are not trained to cater for special needs children, and incompetency in terms of technological advancement.

Limited research has been conducted on the impact of burnout and frustration on the quality of education in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe (Chireshe & Shumba, 2011; Den Brok et al., 2017). However, a recent study by Gkontelos et al. (2023) highlights the need to examine the associations between burnout, frustration, and other relevant factors affecting the quality of education in these colleges. The study emphasises the challenges faced by Zimbabwe and their contribution to burnout and frustration among college lecturers.

Gkontelos et al. (2023) describe the unique obstacles that educators have faced recently. These challenges include the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to online learning, and the sudden transition to remote work. These changes have put a significant strain on lecturers, particularly those who have struggled to adapt to virtual teaching. The country's social and political unrest has further added to the lecturers' stress, leaving them feeling burnt out or frustrated, especially if

they have a personal connection to these issues. Financial instability is another challenge. Budget cuts and tuition decreases have led to job insecurity and financial stress, contributing to burnout and frustration among the lecturers.

As we move towards a more technology-driven world, it is essential to anticipate the potential challenges that may arise. For instance, the isolation of online learning and remote work may lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnection, contributing to burnout. Additionally, according to Mohammed et al. (2020), in the future, burnout and frustration may have economic and political causes that must be proactively addressed to ensure the well-being and productivity of individuals. This study aimed to identify factors contributing to burnout and frustration among teacher training lecturers and to develop interventions to improve their well-being and job satisfaction. It provides valuable insights into the unique challenges of online teaching and remote supervision in education. The article explores factors contributing to burnout and frustration among teacher training lecturers, the impact of online teaching and remote supervision on their well-being and motivation, and strategies to improve their performances. The research questions aimed to identify lecturers' specific needs and challenges and provide interventions to support them in the context of online teaching and remote supervision. The findings will inform policy and practice in teacher training programmes and retain and recruit high-quality lecturers.

Literature review

Burnout is an undeniable state of emotional, mental, and physical depletion caused by prolonged stress and frustration (Wang et al., 2015). Extensive research has revealed that burnout and frustration are often the results of a combination of factors, such as a heavy workload, a lack of control over one's work, feelings of ineffectiveness or a lack of recognition (Raasch, 2023; Robinson et al., 2023). The symptoms of burnout include fatigue, cynicism, and feeling detached from one's work. Frustration is the annoyance or disappointment resulting from unmet needs or expectations (Wood & Happe, 2023). In the context of lecturers, frustration can arise from a lack of support, administrative demands, or issues with students or colleagues.

Students enrol in an educational institution, such as a school, college or university, to learn. They can be young people or adults preparing for a career or vocation, returning to education, or pursuing new interests (Stogner et al., 2020). Students' primary responsibilities are to learn and develop their skills, knowledge, and understanding through various educational experiences such as lectures, assignments, and exams. Therefore, students are typically expected to participate actively in their education by completing assignments, participating in class discussions, and engaging in critical thinking.

Quality education encompasses many factors that collectively contribute to the effective delivery of meaningful education that caters to the needs of students and prepares them for future success. The core elements of quality education encompass a relevant, challenging, and engaging curriculum that fosters the development of critical thinking skills. In addition, having well-trained and qualified teachers who are supported and empowered to deliver high-quality instruction is crucial for achieving quality education (Kurnia & Supriatiningsih, 2023). Furthermore, creating a safe and supportive learning environment promotes student well-being, provides collaboration and hands-on learning opportunities, and emphasises student-centred learning that recognises and respects individual differences and needs (Doghonadze, 2021). Developing 21st-century skills, such as creativity, communication, problem-solving, and focusing on lifelong learning, are essential for quality education. However, all the qualities mentioned above can be significantly impacted when lecturers do not perform their duties effectively due to burnout and frustration. Thus, educators need to be adequately supported and equipped.

Occupational stress (Cooper, 1988)

The study was based on Cooper's (1988:37) model of occupational stress, which shows the causes of stress in teachers. These causes lead to symptoms such as ill health, job dissatisfaction, increased alcohol consumption, sickness,

absence, and intention to leave the profession. The model suggests that undesirable responses to work pressures result from a mismatch between the individual lecturers and their jobs (McHugh et al., 2011). Existing literature also indicates that COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation by becoming a significant cause of stress and burnout among college lecturers (Belay et al., 2023). The personal characteristics, behaviour style and social support a lecturer seeks play a crucial role in the model (Charles et al., 2021). Understanding these factors makes it easier to identify potential stressors in the work environment and to design methods to alleviate them (Chen et al., 2023). The model highlights stressors from job content, work conditions, relationships with co-workers, promotional opportunities, financial rewards, resource adequacy, and organisational role as categories of stress. Furthermore, the theory identifies the causes and effects of stress and the coping strategies that can be applied to mitigate stress and its aftermath (Sohail et al., 2023).

The Self-determination theory (SDT)

The study also used the self-determination theory to underpin the research. Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the 1980s, this theory suggests that individuals have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This theory could therefore be used to predict and understand the motivation and engagement of individuals in the future workplace and provide insight into the causes of burnout and frustration among professionals in various fields. Understanding the psychological needs of individuals in the workplace can lead to work environments that promote productivity, engagement, and well-being. The SDT may offer a valuable framework for anticipating and addressing the challenges of the modern working world as we move forward.

Exploring the challenges brought by burnout and frustration in teachers' colleges

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed how we teach and learn, with a shift to online education across the globe. However, the transition has not been without its challenges, both for students and educators, despite the support provided by colleges. Many faced difficulties due to a lack of computer skills and an increased workload, preventing them from fully experiencing the benefits of this new teaching mode (Bliźniewska-Kowalska et al., 2021). Furthermore, the fear of contracting the virus and concerns about the health of family members, coupled with disruptions to study plans and future careers, as well as financial difficulties, have led to burnout and frustration among college lecturers in the post-COVID era (Song et al., 2022).

According to Stogner et al. (2020), burnout and frustration in the public sector can lead to feelings of anger, loneliness, and depression. Absenteeism, lateness, shouting, and other behaviours indicate a lack of motivation and drive (Tquabo et al., 2021). In addition to the above, factors such as poor health, disputes with coworkers and the community, financial strain, and a desire to leave the profession can also contribute to stress (Yanbei et al., 2023). Addressing these issues can create a more positive and supportive work environment.

According to Menaldi et al. (2023), some educators have developed unhealthy coping mechanisms to manage stress, such as excessive drinking and smoking, frequent absenteeism, and conducting extra lessons for a fee. The literature further suggests that some teachers have resorted to generating income through entrepreneurial ventures, resigning, or absconding from duty, operating classroom tuck-shops, displaying general apathy, and abusing sick leave (Hartney, 2020; Hussain & Zulfquar, 2019; Kanzada & Lodhi, 2016). Chireshe and Shumba's (2011) study on demotivated Zimbabwean teachers reveals that poor salaries, working conditions, a lack of accommodation, respect, and refresher courses, political harassment, victimisation, overworking, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, incompetence in technological advancements, and a lack of training for special needs are the contributing factors. Consequently, the Zimbabwean government must restore the dignity of educators by providing better salaries and improving social, economic, psychological, and political services (Chireshe & Shumba, 2011; Den Brok et al., 2017).

Hiremath et al. (2020) maintain that there are different ways to prevent stress recurrence among college lecturers that include: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping aims to solve the problem

or change the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping aims to manage the emotional distress associated with the situation (Azim, 2020; Menaldi et al., 2023). However, college lecturers in Zimbabwe face stress for various reasons, such as a lack of recognition, poverty, low wages, and a loss of status (Chireshe & Shumba, 2011). Burnout and frustration affect the quality of education, leading to high drop-out and failure rates. Measures, such as establishing clear expectations, prioritising work-life balance, providing necessary technology and support for effective online teaching, encouraging collaboration and support, offering professional development opportunities, creating safe spaces for lecturers, and promoting self-care and resilience, should be taken to curb burnout and frustration. However, lecturers face unique challenges in teacher training programmes. The study assumed that reducing burnout and frustration would lead to better mental health, job satisfaction, and effectiveness in teaching.

Research approach and selection of participants

This study examined how burnout and frustration among college lecturers in Zimbabwe affect the quality of education. By exploring the experiences of college lecturers, identifying the factors that contribute to burnout and frustration, and making recommendations for reducing these issues, this study aimed to enhance the educational experience for students and create a more supportive and inclusive environment.

The study was based on the interpretive paradigm, which aims to understand the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. The qualitative approach and case study research design were used in this study, allowing the researcher to understand the events and individuals in their natural state (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017). Qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups and case studies, were used to gather rich, in-depth data about the experiences of teacher-training lecturers. The study used purposive sampling to select 18 participants, including three principals and eighteen head lecturers from three teachers' colleges. Interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data on the experiences and perspectives of teacher training lecturers. Three focus groups, each with five lecturers, were also used to gather data allowing for a more dynamic discussion of the topic. The observation was done with teacher training lecturers in their natural settings, providing insight into their behaviours and interactions with students.

Data analysis

The qualitative data collected from this study were analysed thematically in a comprehensive manner. Face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to collect data on the impact of burnout and frustration among college lecturers and the effects on the quality of education that emerged. The data were summarised and organised based on the emerging themes, general ideas, and related features of interviewees' responses. The themes were transcribed verbatim into textual data, coded and categorised, and the two researchers generated themes. Six themes emerged: (1) The prevalence of burnout and frustration among lecturers in teachers' colleges; (2) Major causes of burnout and frustration among lecturers; (3) The effect of burnout and frustration on job satisfaction and the retention of lecturers; (4) The role of institutional support in preventing burnout and frustration; (5) The impact of burnout and frustration on the health and well-being of lecturers; and (6) What can be done to support college lecturers and prevent burnout and frustration? The ethical considerations for this study mainly focused on the confidentiality of the participants and informed consent. Thus, the researchers observed confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and consent to uphold research ethics in this study. The themes that emerged are discussed below.

Research Findings

The prevalence of burnout and frustration among lecturers in teachers' colleges

Burnout and frustration among lecturers in teachers' colleges are common. The study's findings revealed the prevalence of burnout and frustration among college lecturers, as shown by the responses of both the interviews and focus group participants in answering the question, "Is there any prevalence of burnout and frustration among college lecturers at your college?".

P1 said: “Yes, almost every lecturer is stressed. Everyone has been affected by the prevailing economic and political situation.”

The respondents concurred that burnout is any circumstance threatening our well-being and our coping abilities (Hartney, 2020). The findings confirmed that the lecturers were aware of stress, burnout, and frustration, and most were stressed (Buonomo et al., 2022; Fray et al., 2023).

Significant causes of burnout and frustration among lecturers

The study's findings revealed that lecturers were affected by burnout and frustration that affected the quality of education.

P1 said: “Burnout and frustration could be caused by poor salaries, working conditions, status, community and government hatred, lack of career advancement, teaching materials, and employer advancement, and the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have intensified these issues.”

The respondents agreed that most stressors are work-related (Chen, 2023; Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020) and that many talented men and women with high expectations of achievements are dispirited and disillusioned. While some leave the profession, others stay but are plagued by a multitude of physical, emotional, and behavioural stress-related manifestations (Ghiasvand & Banitalebi, 2023). Burnout and frustration can lead to dissatisfaction with the job, making lecturers less motivated and engaged in their work.

“Burnout has decreased a lecturer's ability to be an effective teacher, which can negatively impact student learning and outcomes. Burnout can lead to higher rates of turnover, as lecturers may leave their positions in search of a more satisfying and fulfilling work environment, negatively affecting lecturers' mental health, including increased stress, anxiety, and depression.” (P2)

According to the participants, it is evident that many teacher-training lecturers struggle to balance their teaching responsibilities with personal and family obligations. Teacher training lecturers often feel undervalued and unappreciated by their institutions or students (Pendergast & O'Brien, 2023). Moreover, they may lack the resources and support they need to be effective in their roles. Virtual teaching has added to their stress levels, as the transition to online teaching during the pandemic may have created new stresses for teacher training lecturers, such as technical difficulties, challenges engaging students virtually, and concerns about equity and accessibility.

The significant causes of burnout and frustration are high workloads, including teaching, research, and administrative duties; limited opportunities for professional development and advancement; a lack of support from administrators and colleagues (Namaziandost et al., 2023); poor work-life balance, including long hours and heavy workloads; ineffective communication and leadership within the institution; and unclear or conflicting expectations and goals for lecturers. The adverse effects of burnout and frustration can impact the lecturers and the students they teach, which is detrimental for the education system. Teacher training lecturers therefore require the respect, support and resources they deserve to excel in their roles.

The effects of burnout and frustration on job satisfaction and the retention of lecturers

Regarding the effects of burnout and frustration on job satisfaction and the retention of lecturers, the responses from the three focus groups were:

“Burnout and frustration can cause lecturers to feel disengaged from their work, leading to a decline in job satisfaction.” (F1)

“Burnout and frustration can raise the lecturers emotions and these negative emotions can also cause lecturers to feel exhausted and overwhelmed, which can lead to decreased motivation and increased absenteeism. In turn, this can lead to lower retention rates among lecturers, as they may seek other job opportunities that provide a more positive and supportive work environment.” (F2)

“High rates of burnout and frustration can harm the overall culture and reputation of the institution, which can make it more difficult to attract and retain high-quality lecturers in the future. It is important for the government and all stakeholders to support the lecturers in the form of incentives to motivate them to have positive outcomes.” (F3)

The role of institutional support in preventing burnout and frustration among lecturers

The study's findings have shown that burnout and frustration are common among college lecturers in Zimbabwe, negatively impacting the quality of education. The respondents from Fgrp3 argued that:

“institutional support plays a critical role in preventing burnout and frustration among lecturers since some of the ways that institutions can support lecturers include providing access to resources and training that can help lecturers manage stress and improve work-life balance.”

Furthermore, Fgrp2 stressed that the college authorities should encourage open communication and collaboration among lecturers and administrators. According to a study by Kurnia and Supriatiningsih (2023), all participants agreed that colleges should prioritise mentorship programmes and opportunities for professional development to make lecturers feel more valued and supported in their roles. These initiatives will ensure that workloads are reasonable and that lecturers have the necessary resources and support to carry out their teaching and research responsibilities. Additionally, flexible work arrangements and other benefits can be provided to help lecturers balance their personal and professional commitments.

The impact of burnout and frustration on the health and well-being of lecturers

Regarding the impact of burnout and frustration on the health and well-being of lecturers, the following comments were recorded:

“Symptoms of stress are frequent absenteeism from duty, repeated lateness for duty, withdrawal, shouting at students, anger towards students and other staff members, idling at work, lack of self-motivation and self-drive.” (P2)

“Alcoholism, drunkenness, and resignation from the profession. Poor health, frequent clashes with colleagues, and the community, huge indebtedness, and intention to leave the profession are the results of burnout and frustration among college lecturers.” (F1)

“Excessive smoking, untidiness in presenting of self, un-updated records, and secondments from duty and resignation [are] major behaviour patterns of teachers who are stressed.” (F1)

Participants concurred that burnout and frustration can have serious negative effects on the health and well-being of lecturers:

“Increased stress and anxiety could contribute to physical health problems such as high blood pressure, headaches, and digestive issues as well as decreased self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy, which can lead to depression and other mental health concerns.” (F1)

Recent studies suggest that burnout and frustration are significant factors that can negatively impact the productivity and efficiency of employees in the workplace. This can result in job dissatisfaction, high turnover rates, and strained relationships with colleagues and students, ultimately leading to a less supportive and collegial work environment. In addition, low morale and job dissatisfaction can harm students' overall quality of education. The research indicates that burnout and frustration can significantly affect the health and well-being of lecturers, with far-reaching consequences for themselves, their students, and the institutions. Therefore, organisations and academic institutions must prioritise strategies that support their employees' mental and emotional well-being to mitigate such adverse outcomes.

What can be done to support college lecturers and prevent burnout and frustration?

Among coping strategies given by lecturers included the following issues, as expressed by respondents:

“Lecturers are seen by excessive drinking and smoking, repeated and frequent absenteeism from work, conducting extra lessons for a fee and embarking on income generating project.” (L2)

“Some lecturers resign or abscond from duty, operating classroom tuck-shop, general apathy and abusing sick leave. The employer should create flexible scheduling, remote work options, and resources for stress management.” (F3)

“The college should provide opportunities for professional development and growth, such as training programmes, mentorship and research opportunities, and offer clear and achievable goals and expectations for lecturers, with regular feedback and support to help them meet these goals.” (P2)

“Creating a positive and supportive work environment, with opportunities for collaboration and recognition of accomplishments will encourage the lecturers to work hard and avoid burnout and stress.” (Fgrp1)

The participants agreed that the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education should ensure that lecturers have manageable workloads and the necessary resources and support to carry out their duties effectively. There is a need to encourage open communication and a feedback culture where lecturers feel comfortable expressing their concerns and needs.

According to a study by Hoffman et al. (2020), several strategies can be implemented to create a positive environment for college lecturers to prevent burnout and frustration, increase job satisfaction, and enhance performance. However, the government of Zimbabwe, the employer of lecturers, has failed to implement sufficient measures to address the prevalence and effects of burnout and frustration among college lecturers.

The study confirmed that some teachers earn more than their lecturers. The college lecturers want the government to pay their salaries in foreign currency, eliminate school fees for their children, and provide a non-contributory medical aid for them and their dependents. The government should also help lecturers obtain residential properties and stands

and provide construction services. Those who attain higher levels of education must be rewarded by promotions and increases in their salaries and allowances.

Discussion

The prevalence of stress, burnout, and frustration among college lecturers is alarmingly high, as indicated by the study's findings. This aligns with the research by Aristovnik et al. (2020) and Johan and Satrya (2023), which suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown have caused significant human stress. Furthermore, numerous studies, including Hiremath et al. (2020) and Hoffman et al. (2020), have discovered that the fear of COVID-19 has increased burnout and frustration among lecturers and the general public. Low morale, poor delivery, and brain drain are some of the problems that have resulted from burnout and frustration, as reported by some lecturers (Belay et al., 2023; DeMatthews et al., 2023; Garwood, 2023; Hussain & Zulfquar, 2019). Grover et al. (2020) also found that burnout and frustration cause stress, which negatively affects the teaching and learning process. Lecturers' performances are lower when stressed and they tend to resort to cyberloafing.

This is consistent with the findings of Gkontelos et al. (2023) and Johan and Strya (2023), who reveal that burnout and frustration negatively affect lecturers' home and work interactions. The causes of burnout and frustration among college lecturers in Zimbabwe, according to Koner et al. (2023) and Mohammed et al. (2020), include low salaries, poor working conditions, large classes, a lack of teaching and learning materials, lowered status in the community, the use of hate language by the media, and denigration by employers. These issues have been exacerbated by HIV/AIDS and the fear of COVID-19 and lockdown. As a result, the quality of education and student learning has been severely affected. Therefore, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and the Public Service Commission must implement consistent and robust coping strategies to curb the prevalence of burnout and frustration among lecturers. To curb the prevalence of burnout and frustration, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and the Public Service Commission should put in place consistent, robust coping strategies even though, since 2019, lecturers and teachers have received cushioning allowances which have been devalued due to high inflation rates in Zimbabwe (Doghonadze, 2021; Kanzada & Lodhi, 2016).

Conclusion

The research study established that college lecturers in Zimbabwe are experiencing high levels of stress, leading to burnout and frustration. The negative impact of stress on lecturers has resulted in alcoholism, absenteeism, and resignation from work. In some cases, burnout and frustration have caused premature deaths among lecturers, with COVID-19 and the lockdown exacerbating the situation. The study revealed that lecturers' ability to deliver their instruction has been compromised by stress, leading to a loss of highly qualified and experienced staff. The study's findings contribute to our understanding of the impact of social support and organisational ethos on college lecturers' psychological stress levels. From an administrative perspective, the study provides valuable insights for administrators regarding policy and implementation that can mitigate the psychological effects of this crisis on college lecturers. The Planning and Development Amendment Act, which aims to promote the development and implementation of Higher and Tertiary Education Policy 5.0, is a crucial power that administrators can leverage to address the challenges college lecturers face. Overall, the study highlights the urgent need for support and intervention measures for college lecturers in Zimbabwe to enhance their well-being and maintain quality education standards.

Recommendations

The government of Zimbabwe should improve the social standing of college lecturers by awarding living wages that are above the poverty line. The study recommends providing better working conditions for lecturers, expanding mental health services and reviewing and updating policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive and supportive of all students and lecturers.

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