CATEGORIZING CHALLENGING AND HINDERING JOB DEMANDS IN UNIVERSITY TEACHERS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The present study was an attempt to categorize job demands experienced by university teachers into challenging and hindering job demands qualitatively. In order to meet the major objective of the study, two focus group discussions and three independent interviews were conducted. The data was analyzed through five step procedure for thematic analysis given by Braun and Clarke (2006). The results revealed that seven job demands including effort reward imbalance, task related stress, working conditions, role related stress, administrative hassles, organizational politics and work-life interface could be categorized as hindering while three job demands including regulatory load, cognitive job demands and social load were categorized as challenging job demands. In the end, conclusions, limitations and suggestions are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Since its first publication by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) has widely hailed by the researchers in organizational field. The major aim of the model was to explain job burnout and later research (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) included work engagement as another outcome. The model assumes that there are certain job demands – the characteristics or aspects of the work which make an employee to put sustained mental and physical efforts hence resulting in some psychological and/or physical disturbances – and resources – the aspects of job which facilitate the path to work, reduce job demands and/or increase the level of personal growth among employees. Job demands lead an employee to develop burnout which in result, leads towards other negative health and work related outcomes. Job resources increase work engagement, reduce burnout and hence facilitate the positive health and work related outcomes (Schaufeli, 2017; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

The model is widely welcomed among researchers throughout the world because of its flexibility. Several modifications and extensions were made based on empirical and conceptual considerate. For instance, along with job resources, personal resources were also included in the model (Lorente, Salanova, Martinez, & Schaufeli, 2008; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). This was validated and extended by Waqas, Anjum, Naeem, and Anwar (2017) who along with personal demands, included personal resources among a sample of insurance company in Pakistan. Further, the researchers (e.g., Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010) found that there are certain job demands which not only produce negative effects to health but stimulate the personal growth of the employees. For instance, for a university teacher, working on a research paper can be health damaging as it needs extra time to give to job, but it positively affects the personal growth of the employee. Therefore, Crawford et al. (2010) distinguished challenging and hindering job demands. By definition, challenging job demands included those demands which, along with energy depletion, served as a source to personal growth; whereas, hindering job demands hindered personal growth and mastery along with hindering the smooth path to work. This distinction gave another stance to the researchers who began to study these two demands separately.

Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, and Witte (2009) and Van den Broeck, Cuyper, Witte, and Vansteenkiste (2010), confirmed this distinction in their empirical studies which concluded that challenge stressors were positively related with facets of work engagement and had no significant relationship with job

burnout; whereas, hindrance stressors were positively related with facets of burnout and had a negative relationship with facet of work engagement. Similarly, Pearsall, Ellis, and Stein (2009) concluded that introduction of a challenge stressor positively, whereas a hindrance stressor negatively affected the team performance of employees. Likewise, Tadic, Bakker, and Oerlemans (2014) observed that daily challenging job demands were positively, whereas daily hindering job demands were negatively related with daily positive affect and a measure of work engagement.

Although a clear distinction between challenging and hindering job demands was incorporated in the model, yet the researchers have been at controversy in deciding which job demands were to be considered as challenging or hindering. For instance, Tadic et al. (2014) studied time urgency, workload, job complexity and job responsibility as challenging whereas role ambiguity, organizational hassles, role conflict and excessive bureaucracy at work as hindering job demands. Similarly, Van den Broeck et al. (2010) studied emotional demands and work-home interference as hindering, while workload and cognitive job demands as challenging demands of the job. Further, Prem, Ohly, Kubicek, and Korunka (2017) considered time pressure and learning demands as challenging job demands. These results spare room to identify more and more challenging and hindering job demands particularly with specific samples and in specific indigenous settings.

Like researchers from all over the world, Pakistani researchers have also used JD-R model in understanding the role of job demands, resources, and job crafting in predicting health and work-related outcomes. One qualitative research was conducted by Laila and Hanif (2014) in order to explore the job demands and resources among human service professionals. After having interviews and focused group discussions from doctors, teachers, lawyers and service managers, they concluded cognitive work, competency, extra-role, long shift hours, non-defined time limits, workload, client contact, autonomy, and work-family interference as demands and resources faced by these professionals. Further, Siddiqui, Raza, and Imran (2017) studied job demands as moderator for the relationship of job crafting and psychological empowerment but could not verify job demands as moderator which gives room to understand the model in more detail in indigenous settings. Moreover, their study didn't categorize challenging and hindering job demands. Similarly, Adil and Baig (2018) studied workload, work-life imbalance, autonomy, feedback and time pressure as demands and resources in order to predict burnout.

The present study is an endeavor to categorize job demands as challenging or hindering, as experienced by the university teachers. Present study is an extensive and systematic effort to qualitatively explore and categorize the challenging and hindering job demands in universities' teaching faculty. An indigenous context will also benefit future researchers and experts to further refine and endorse the construct in various organizational settings.

Therefore the major and only objective of the study was:

1. To categorize the demands into challenging and hindering job demands.

METHOD

Research Design

The major aim of the current study was to find out the job demands as experienced by university teachers and to categorize them into challenging and hindering job demands. For this purpose the inductive thematic analysis methodology was used. The details of the research are as follows.

Participants

Five participants participated in first focus group discussion including 4 female and one male university teacher. The second focus group discussion was conducted with four university teachers including one male and three female participants. Three semi-structured independent interviews were conducted from 3 university teachers. The participants were recruited from departments of English, Education, Commerce, Earth Sciences, Physics, Psychology and Business Administration. Mostly participants were married ($n = 9$) while some were unmarried ($n = 3$). All of the participants were regular faculty members of a public sector university.

Procedure

In order to meet the study objective, two focus group discussions and three independent interviews were conducted. After collecting data, the data was analyzed through thematic analysis. In order to generate themes, a five-step

procedure of thematic analysis (along with an additional step of producing the report), suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) was conducted. First of all, the interviews and focus group discussion were transcribed with all the spoken words of the participants were written. The verbatim was read several times by the researcher and hence familiarizing with data was completed. After familiarizing with data, all the cases were individually analyzed and initial codes were generated based on objective of the study, meaningfulness and novelty of responses and similarity among them. After giving initial codes, the similar codes were clustered into themes (including challenging and hindering job demands). When initial pattern of themes emerged, the themes were reviewed in a committee which was consisted of the researcher herself, three Assistant Professors and Doctors, and two PhD scholars from department of Psychology. All the members had expertise in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and a good knowledge about Job Demand-Resource Model. At this stage, certain themes were renamed, two of the initial themes were discarded and a final list of themes in two broader categories emerged. After reviewing the themes, the themes were defined properly. The detail of these categories and their themes is presented in Results section.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the themes and initial coding of hindering job demands. The participants reported them as fatigue causing agents and/or sources of stress at organization. The Table 2 summarizes the themes of demands which are perceived as challenging by the teachers. Moreover, it summarizes the initial codes in every theme. This category included those demands, which were although stressing and energy depleting but also were perceived positively by the participants. Table 3 summarizes the frequency of hindering job demands whereas Table 4 summarizes the frequency of challenging job demands. Figure 1 & 2 depicts the frequency of hindering and challenging job demands graphically.

Table 1
Themes of Hindering Job Demands

No.	Theme	Code
1.	Effort-Reward Imbalance	Lack of Feedback (from students, colleagues and administration) Lack of Acknowledgment Lack of incentives Lack of Rewards Effort-Reward Inequity
2.	Work-Life Interface	Family-to-work conflict Work-to-family Conflict
3.	Task Related Stress	Task overload Non-cognitive/Clerical Tasks Sensitive Tasks
4.	Working Conditions	Poor Infrastructure Insufficient Funds Unavailability of Qualified Supporting Staff Unavailability of physical resources Unavailability of Sufficient Staff
5.	Administrative hassles	Ambiguity in procedures Red Tape
6.	Organizational Politics	Favoritism Manipulating Classified Information
7.	Role Related Stress	Inter-role Conflict Role Overload

Table 2
Table Showing Themes of Challenging Job Demands

No.	Theme	Code
1.	Social load	Intra-departmental meetings Inter-Departmental Meetings Interaction with Students Interaction with Colleagues Interaction with second relations
2.	Regulatory Load	Designated Long-term official duties Project based official duties Initiating load
3.	Cognitive Job Demands	Research Supervision Personal Research Projects

Table 3
Frequency Table for Hindering Job Demands

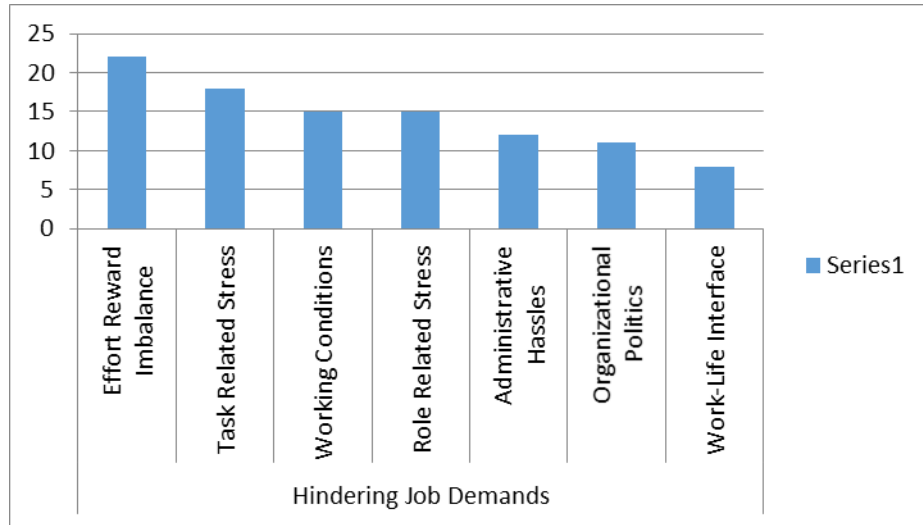| S#	Themes	FGD1 (P1-P5)	FGD2 (P6-9)	P10	P11	P12	Total
1.	Effort Reward Imbalance	14	4	2	1	1	22
2.	Task Related Stress	5	3	2	1	7	18
3.	Working Conditions	3	5	3	3	1	15
4.	Role Related Stress	2	4	2	1	6	15
5.	Administrative Hassles	1	6	1	0	4	12
6.	Organizational Politics	7	4	0	0	0	11
7.	Work-Life Interface	6	2	0	0	0	8

Figure 1. The Graphical Representation of Hindering Job Demands

Table 4
Themes of Challenging Job Demands

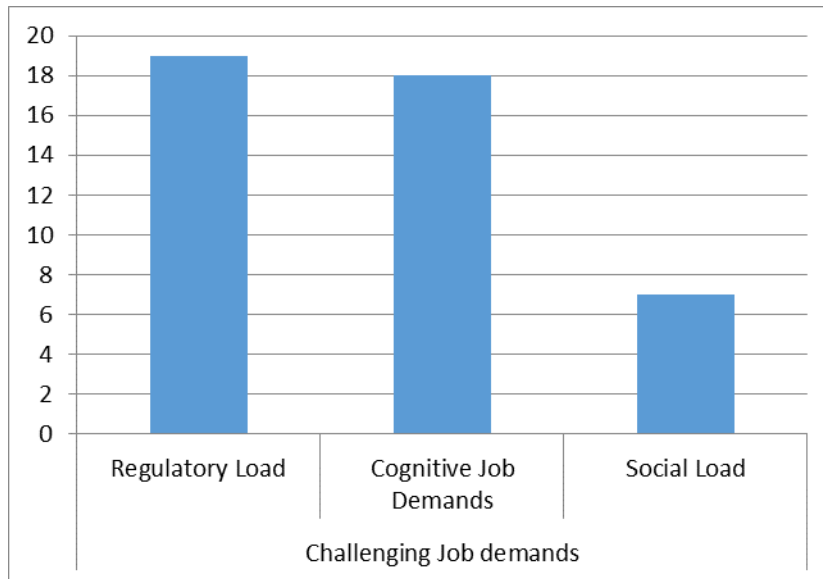| S#	Themes	FGD (P1-P5)	FGD2 (P6-9)	P10	P11	P12	Total
1.	Regulatory Load	7	4	2	3	3	19
2.	Cognitive Job Demands	4	5	4	1	4	18
3.	Social load	2	2	1	1	1	7

Figure 2. The Graphical Representation of Challenging Job Demands

DISCUSSION

The present research was an attempt to categorize job demands into two major categories viz. challenging job demands and hindering job demands. First category included hindering job demands. In this category, the stressors at job which served as energy depleting agents and hindrances in the work were included. Seven themes accumulated into this category including effort reward imbalance, task related stress, insufficient resources, role-related stress, administrative hassles, organizational politics and work-life interface (Table 1). The most prevalent theme of this category was ***effort-reward imbalance*** (Table 3 & Figure 1). The participants reported that when there were no or fewer rewards (whether monetary or verbal or physical or even psychological) in response to efforts put by the participants, it created stress to them and consequently, worked as hindrance. This theme also included stress due to inequity in rewards due to different roles performed at organization. For instance, P7 talked about the role of examination in-charge as

"........................ہمارے ڈیپارٹمنٹ میں مختلف لوگوں میں یہ جھگڑا ہوتا ہے کہ آپ لے
لیں یہ۔ .... تین credit hours ہوتے ہیں۔ .... کہ مجھے تین credit hours پڑھانے
آسان ہیں۔ یہ والا کام تین credit hours سے بڑھ کر ہے"۔

*"……………In my own department, mostly people argue
for it because it is equal to 3 credit hours. ……..
teaching three credit hours is easier than this duty. It
(requires efforts) more than that of three credit hours"*

In the first theme, most of the participants reported that inequity between
efforts and rewards was a source of stress, and thus, a hindrance to them. Previous
literature also supports this notion. One such study was carried out by Gorgievski,
Van den Heijden, and Bakker (2017), who studied the effect of effort-reward
imbalance and lack of reward on several health related outcomes. Because of their
role as health damaging variable, these constructs can be easily included in
category of hindering job demands.

The second theme of this category was ***task related stress*** (Table 3 &
Figure 1). Task related stress included continuous work for hours without breaks
(i.e., task overload), and/or performing those tasks which were non-cognitive or
sensitive in nature (where the participants had to be more alert than usual). This
stress resulted in physical as well as cognitive and psychological costs. For
instance, P12 stated:

"ہمیں کلیریکل کام کرنے میں بہت ٹائم لگ جاتا ہے۔......... یعنی وہ سارا ٹائم انرجی جو ہم اپنے کام،
ریسرچ پر لگا سکتے ہیں جس کا ہمیں بار بار پوچھتے ہیں کہ جی کتنے پیپر ہوئے، اس طرح کے کاموں پہ بہت
ٹائم لگ جاتا ہے"۔

*"Here, clerical tasks consume most of our time…..The
time, the energy which we could have used in other tasks
such as research, which they ask again and again that
how many papers you have published, such tasks
consume our whole time"*

Literature supports this notion. For example a review of stress literature,
carried out by Michie (2002) concluded that among many factors, nature of work

tasks was an important contributor to stress at work. He stated that many types of task related stressors including long hours of work, working without breaks, working under time pressures, difficult or complex tasks, and lack of variety in the tasks could result in stress (Michie, 2002). More specifically, Thackray (1981) suggested boredom and monotonous tasks as stressors. Similarly, Harju, Hakanen, and Schaufeli (2014) noted that boredom at work (which might be attributed to non-cognitive or unrelated tasks) contributes for stress symptoms, poor self-rated health and ultimately turnover intentions. Therefore, it is safer to assume task related stressors as job demands which are entirely hindrances for them.

The third theme was ***working conditions*** (Table 3 & Figure 1)**.** It was observed that poor working conditions acted as hindrance to the participants. This included lack of sufficient, appropriate and timely access to resources (including poor infrastructure, physical resources, availability of funds and man-power). The participants considered it as a major source of stress as the theme was 15 times expressed by the participants. They stated that poor infrastructure was a clear hindrance in smooth performance of their responsibilities.

"ریسورسز نہ ہونے کی وجہ سے بندہ mentally بڑا upset ہوتا ہے................. تو اس وقت آپ

mentally بھی تھکتے ہو ساتھ ۔................. physically اور emotionally بھی آپ ڈسٹرب

ہوتے ہیں"۔

"One is mentally upset due to lack of resources.....and that is the time when you physically too fatigued......both physically and emotionally disturbed"

Previous researchers, for example, when describing sources of stress that are intrinsic to job itself, Michie (2002) discussed physical working conditions at first; and then moved towards the next ones. Similarly, Demerouti and Bakker (2011) stated that unfavourable working conditions were example of job demands.

The ***role related stress*** (Table 3 & Figure 1) was also an important hindering job demand which was expressed with a high frequency of 15 by the participants. When there were too many roles, conflicting with each other, and/or were too demanding roles, the participants experienced stress. They expressed that performing more than one role in their jobs was inevitable for them as they had to serve as teachers, research supervisors, students of higher studies and had to

perform other administrative duties. Much of the time, the demands of one role were performed at the expense of the responsibilities for other roles which resulted in stress. The stress was felt even higher, when other roles were to be performed at the expense of teaching which was often perceived as being the most important role of their jobs. P6, for instance, stated:

"............. لیکچر والا کام جو آپ کا اصل کام ہے وہ اس وجہ سے ڈسٹرب ہو تا ہے"۔

"………. The task of lecturing, which is your original duty, gets disturbed"

Within the literature of job demands and resources, the theme is not entirely new. Earlier researchers (Demrouti & Bakker, 2011; Tremblay & Messervey, 2011) observed role related stressors as job demands. Particularly Demerouti and Bakker (2011), when categorizing challenging and hindering job demands, included these demands into hindering job demands.

Next to role related stress, there were ***administrative hassles*** (Table 3 & Figure 1)**,** another hindering job demand emerging from the data with a frequency of 12. The procedural hassles from the administration also resulted in stress for the participants. These hassles resulted from the procedural ambiguity and red-tape. The participants reported that for many tasks in the organization, there were no clear procedures or the procedures were unnecessarily too lengthy to be followed which resulted in the feeling of confusion and/or discrimination, which ultimately lead the participants to experience stress. For example, the problem was highlighted by P8 when he stated:

"........ ٹائم بہت زیادہ اس میں waste ہو جاتا ہے (جس کو red tapism) کہتے ہیں۔ ایک چھوٹی سی چیز purchase کرنی ہے اس کے لیئے ایک بڑا lengthy سا procedure ہے"۔

"…………..Much time is wasted here (which is termed as red-tapism) you have to go through a lengthy procedure for even if you have to purchase a smaller article"

The theme is in line with the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) who stated that hassles are those small life events which disrupt our daily functioning and thus, result in disturbed well-being and stress. Similarly,

hassles when faced from the side of administration, are perceived as a stress by the participants which not only disrupt their well-being but interrupt the smooth functioning of their work and thus act as hindrances.

Next theme was ***organizational politics*** (Table 3 & Figure 1). The participants when found that there was politics being played in the organization, and many of the benefits in the organization were being given on the bases of favoritism and not on the bases of merit, they felt stress. The participants reported that the stress was high when the administration and the people in authority used to manipulate information. Such information manipulation was a source of hindrance, de-motivation and stress for the participants. Another way of manipulating the information was providing the information to some employees and hiding from the others hence, taking the benefits from some employees while giving them to others. P4 illustrated it by stating:

"...........کہ University is not open پچھ چیزیں چھپا کر رکھتے ہیں........ کام آئے تو وہ ان لوگوں کو جن کو ہم نے نوازنا ہے، ان کو دیں"۔

"……….. university is not open. They hide some things,
……. they can benefit their favorites"

Next to organizational politics was ***work-life interface*** (Table 3 & Figure 1)**.** The conflict between the work-life and domestic life of the participants was an important factor which participants found as hindrance to their work. It was labelled as work-life interface. This conflict was in both directions i.e., work/family conflict and family/work conflict. The participants reported that if demands of the job conflicted with their responsibilities (in a sense that they had to forgo their family responsibilities) they experienced stress. Similarly, according to the participants, sometimes the problems at home also interfered with their capability to work efficiently at the organization. For instance, P2 reported:

"........ میں تھکاوٹ تبھی feel کرتی ہوں جب میرا کوئی پرسنل پرابلم ہے۔........ پرابلم مجھے گھر پر face کرنا پڑ رہا ہے .... میرے بچوں کی طرف سے تو میں جلدی تھک جاؤں گی۔ مجھے جاب burden محسوس ہو گی"۔

> *"……. I feel stressed only when I have some personal problem; …………. I am to face a problem at home particularly related to my children, I get fatigued, and begin to feel job as a burden"*

The second major category included challenging job demands which although created a feeling of burden and/or resulted in some physical or psychological costs but were perceived as beneficial and positive by the teachers. These included regulatory load, cognitive load and social load (Table 2). Among these themes, cognitive job demands have already been discussed by previous researchers as a challenging job demand. Van Den Broeck et al. (2010) for instance, when differentiating challenging and hindering job demands, observed that along with other demands, cognitive demands were positively associated with engagement and were unrelated with burnout and hence served as challenging job demands. However, social load and regulatory load were those demands which emerged as indigenous job demands from the current data.

The most prevalent among them was ***regulatory load*** (Table 4 & Figure 2). with a frequency of 19. Many of the participants reported that they had to perform extra administrative responsibilities as in-charge of that responsibility. These responsibilities were of two types, i.e., the duties which were assigned for long period of time and the duties which were related to a particular project. According to the participants, if they were assigned a designated duty for long period of time (e.g., DSA or Controller of Examination), or project based regulatory duties for a shorter period of time (for example, management of a particular conference or workshop), besides feeling stressed, many of their abilities, capabilities and potentials groomed. Although such responsibilities demanded a lot of time, and affected them both physically and psychologically, such load resulted in feeling of competence and power. For example, P5 reported:

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".........جیسے BS کا assign کیا گیا ہے وہ ایک exposure ہے، student affairs کو مینیج کرتے ہیں .... academics میں اگر کوئی چارج دیا گیا ہے تو وہ بھی آرگنائزیشن کی طرف سے exposure ہے......".-

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> *"for example charge of BS program is assigned, that is an exposure, you manage students affairs, ……. if*

*charge of academics is provided is also an exposure
from the organization"*

The second theme, i.e., ***social load*** (with a relatively high frequency of 18) (Table 4 & Figure 2). included the demands caused by interaction with others at work or regarding work. It was observed that although interaction with others was demanding in terms of time, and emotional labor, it was found as beneficial. The participants reported interaction with others as source of relationship building.

"DSA کا یہ فائدہ ہے کہ ۔۔۔۔۔ personal benefits ہوتے ہیں ----لوگ آپ کو جاننا شروع
کر دیتے ہیں"-

*"If you are a DSA… you get personal benefits…. People
begin to know you"*

Some participants expressed that interaction with students, although time demanding, was a source of joy for them. Moreover, it was found that solving the problems of students and counseling them was a source of happiness and pleasure for the participants. They extended that interaction with colleagues, seniors, juniors and the people in and outside the department (such as group discussions) was a source of learning and recognition at workplace. They reported that the intra-departmental and extra-departmental meetings, although were having some cost, were source of public relations and exposure for the participants. Similarly, contacting the second order relations, was also a source of learning social as well as administrative skills. To illustrate this, P8 mentioned:

"........ lab establish ہو رہی ہے تو.....لوگوں سے dealing کرتے ہیں quotations
وغیرہ لیتے discussions.....ہوتی ہیں کہ فلاں instrument اگر آپ لے رہے ہیں تو اس کی کیا
specifications ہیں کون سی company کس قیمت پہ آپ کو دے رہی ہے"-

*"…… while establishing a lab…..to deal with others, for
taking quotations …… we have discussions with them
about what is the instrument, what are the specifications
of the instrument; which company is giving you the
instrument on which price".*

To conclude, interaction with students, colleagues, seniors, juniors and other kind of individuals was perceived as both an additional responsibility which would in one way hindered the work e.g., by conflicting with the main role of teaching but ultimately were found as beneficial for the participants.

Finally, *cognitive job demands* (Table 4 & Figure 2) included those job demands which require activation of cognitive and intellectual functioning. Almost all the participants identified intellectually and cognitively demanding tasks as physically demanding but as a source of pleasure, joy, learning and personal grooming. The most important task of intellectual job demands was conducting and supervising research. Almost all the participants found it interesting and source of personal joy and pleasure. Although such demands required extra effort to be put, these demands stimulated the curiosities of the employees and energized them to work. Such tasks were found as innovative and thus, were included in challenges faced by employees. Describing about such demands P9, for example, elaborated that:

"....... تجسس تب increase ہوتا ہے جب supervisee کوئی ایسا کام لے کے آئے جس پہ پہلی میری command نہیں ہے.........اس پہ کل بات کریں گے، تو وہ بھی پڑھ کے آتا ہے، میں بھی اس کو پڑھ کے آتا ہوں تو اس میں curiosity بڑھتی ہے...."

"……..curiosity enhances when supervisee come with a question I haven't command on ……. we will talk tomorrow; the student studies about it and I too. It enhances my curiosity……"

In conclusion it is elucidated that several themes emerged from the data which were categorized into two main categories i.e., challenging and hindering job demands. Among hindering job demands, task related stress was newer and indigenous theme while rest of the themes have already been found in previous theory and research. Similarly, among the challenging job demands, cognitive job demands has previously been studied by the researchers but social and regulatory load emerged as newer themes in this construct.

It was further concluded that effort-reward imbalance, task related stress, insufficient resources, role related stress, administrative hassles, organizational politics and work-life interface were the hindering job demands. Whereas, the

themes of regulatory load, cognitive job demands and social load were included in challenging job demands.

Several limitations of the research could have hampered the results. For example, only faculty members from Public Sector University were interviewed. Therefore, several job demands (for example, job security) faced by private sector were ignored. Future researches should focus on private along with public sector universities. Further, the results were obtained through qualitative approach where personal interpretations by the researcher matter a lot. Further researchers should quantitatively explore these findings.

The study has important implications for theorists as it extends the literature on JD-R Model in indigenous settings of Pakistan as well as the other part of the world as it introduces new dimensions in the model. Moreover, the quantitative exploration of the findings will be helpful for organizational researchers and counsellors on one hand, and university administrations and teachers on the other hand who, by having knowledge of challenge and hindrance stressors, can solve many stress related issues, which would ultimately result in enhanced level of well-being of both the organizations and employees as well.

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