The Untold Struggles of Lecturers in Ghana's Colleges of Education: Stresses, Burn Out and Emotional Illness

Clement Owusu-Cole, Nasir Yaqub Entsie, Simon Mawulorm Agyemang, James Divine Danyoh, Ernest Sarpong Akore, Joseph Serebour Asante, and Margaret Darkoa

Abstract

This study examined the impact of stress and burnout on the well-being of lecturers within Ghana's evolving Colleges of Education (CoEs). The transformation of CoEs from traditional teacher training institutions to degree-awarding entities has shifted demands and expectations, posing challenges to lecturers' physical and mental health. Addressing a critical gap in research, this study focused on this specific context. The research design employed a cross-sectional descriptive approach to capture the dynamic relationships over time. Using the multistage sampling technique, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 610 lecturers encompassing various disciplines and experience levels across 13 CoEs, The quantitative analysis revealed significant positive correlations between stress, burnout, and lecturers' physical health ($r = .368$, $p = .012$; $r = .382$, $p = .009$). The shift in CoE demands, including increased workload and technology integration, contribute to back pain, tiredness, and breathing difficulties. Burnout's emotional exhaustion and reduced accomplishment also impact lecturers' mental health, resulting in anxiety, depression, and concentration difficulties ($r = .373$, $p = .001$; $r = .376$, $p = .013$).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: ENTSIE NASIR YAQUB (Email: nentsie@ucc.edu.gh), University of Cape Coast, Ghana; CLEMENT OWUSU-COLE, SIMON AGYEMANG, JAMES DIVINE DANYO, ERNEST AKORE SARPONG, JOSEPH SEREBOUR ASANTE and MARGARET DARKOA, Presbyterian College of Education, Ghana

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These findings underscore the interconnectedness of stress, burnout, physical health, and mental health. The study highlights the need for holistic interventions, including stress management and mental health support, to enhance educators' well-being and maintain the quality of educational services within CoEs. The research contributes by addressing the dearth of context-specific data and extending theoretical frameworks. It emphasises the urgency of fostering a supportive environment amidst CoE transformation. This study informs educational institutions' efforts to prioritise lecturers' well-being in the changing educational landscape.

Keywords: student leadership development programmes, student affairs professionals, programme evaluation, design, communication, usability, impact, framework, South Africa, higher education.

Résumé
Cette étude s'est penchée sur l'impact du stress et de l'épuisement professionnel sur le bien-être des Professeur au sein des Colleges of Education (CoEs) en pleine évolution au Ghana. La transformation de ces établissements, qui sont passés du statut d'institutions traditionnelles de formation des enseignants à celui d'entités délivrant des diplômes, a modifié les exigences et les attentes, posant des défis à la santé physique et mentale des Professeur. Cette étude se concentre sur ce contexte spécifique afin de combler une lacune importante dans la recherche. Le modèle de recherche utilise une approche longitudinale de cohorte pour saisir les relations dynamiques au fil du temps. L'analyse quantitative révèle des corrélations positives significatives entre le stress, l'épuisement professionnel et la santé physique des Professeur (r = 0,368, p = 0,012 ; r = 0,382, p = 0,009). L'évolution des exigences du CdE, y compris l'augmentation de la charge de travail et l'intégration de la technologie, contribue aux maux de dos, à la fatigue et aux difficultés respiratoires. L'épuisement émotionnel et la réduction de l'accomplissement liés au burnout ont également un impact sur la santé mentale des Professeur, entraînant anxiété, dépression et difficultés de concentration (r = 0,373, p = 0,001 ; r = 0,376, p = 0,013). Ces résultats soulignent l'interconnexion du stress, de l'épuisement professionnel, de la santé physique et de la santé mentale. L'étude met en évidence la nécessité d'interventions holistiques, y compris la gestion du stress et le soutien à la santé mentale, pour améliorer le bien-être des éducateurs et maintenir la qualité des services éducatifs au sein des centres d'excellence. La recherche contribue à combler le manque de données spécifiques au contexte et à étendre les cadres théoriques. Elle souligne l'urgence de favoriser un environnement favorable dans le contexte de la transformation des centres d'excellence. Cette étude éclaire les efforts déployés par les établissements d'enseignement pour donner la priorité au bien-être des Professeur dans un paysage éducatif en pleine mutation.

Mots clés : Burnout, Ghana, caché, impact, contrainte, stress, Professeur, bien-être Collèges d'enseignement.

Introduction

The educational landscape in Ghana has undergone significant changes over the years, marked notably by the transformation of Colleges of Education (CoEs) from their traditional role as teacher training institutions into degree-awarding entities. This shift in status has not only redefined the responsibilities and expectations of lecturers within these institutions but has also introduced a host of challenges that potentially impact their overall well-being. As CoEs adapt to their new roles, it becomes imperative to understand the effects of stress and burnout on lecturers' health and functioning.

Lecturer well-being has become a critical topic of global discussion. Seminal studies such as Johnson et al. (2011) have highlighted the alarming prevalence of burnout among teachers and its profound personal and professional repercussions. These findings are further corroborated by a recent study by Owusu-Cole et al. (in press), which investigated the prevalence and sources of stress and burnout among lecturers in Ghana's Colleges of Education (CoEs). Their study revealed moderate to neutral stress levels and identified key stressors, including challenges related to workload management, family responsibilities, inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, and health issues. Aligned with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, these findings underscore the complex interplay between job demands, available resources, and lecturers' well-being in CoEs. The results provide a foundational understanding of the broader shifts in the educational landscape contributing to stress and burnout, forming a critical context for this article. Additionally, Montgomery and Rupp's (2005) comprehensive longitudinal research established a robust link between teacher stress and various physical health issues. Together, these global and contextual perspectives highlight the urgent need to examine the relationships between stress, burnout, and both physical and mental health within the unique setting of CoE lecturers in Ghana.

However, within the specific Ghanaian context, there exists a noticeable gap in research that directly addresses the implications of stress and burnout among lecturers within CoEs. While studies such as Opoku et al. (2019) have explored the factors contributing to work-related stress among

educators in the country, a targeted investigation into the effects of stress and burnout within the distinctive dynamics of CoEs remains conspicuously absent from scholarly discourse. Notably, although stress and burnout in education have been widely examined globally, the transformation of CoEs into degree-awarding institutions has introduced new and unique stressors that have not been adequately addressed. These stressors particularly the shift in academic expectations, infrastructure deficits, and the increased workload resulting from year-round academic engagement present evolving challenges that warrant further investigation. The unique pressures faced by CoE lecturers, including the blurring of boundaries between work and rest, necessitate revisiting the field to capture emerging issues that were not prevalent in earlier studies. Thus, by investigating the impact of stress, burnout, physical health, and mental well-being within this context, the study offers insight into the challenges lecturers face in adapting to new academic demands and expectations.

The transformation of CoEs has presented distinct challenges that merit focused attention. Infrastructure deficits, for instance, have led to continuous academic engagement without the traditional inter-semester breaks, effectively eroding the separation between work and rest. This situation has the potential to exacerbate stress and burnout levels among lecturers. A recent study by Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2020) underscored the urgency for interventions to address these challenges, highlighting the pressing need for research that unpacks the implications of such changes on lecturers' well-being. Drawing from the Ghanaian context, the work of Boateng and Asumeng (2013) provides empirical evidence affirming the correlation between work-related stress and psychological distress among educators. This local evidence accentuates the importance of extending these investigations to the realm of CoEs, scrutinising not only the relationship between stress, burnout, and mental well-being, but also exploring their potential consequences on physical health.

In response to this critical gap, the current study makes a distinctive contribution by narrowing its focus to the specific context of CoEs in Ghana. These lecturers, facing novel demands due to the transformation of their roles, are navigating uncharted territories in terms of work dynamics. By specifically examining the implications of this institutional transformation, this study explores stress and burnout in a new light, beyond the traditional frameworks of teacher well-being studies. Through a cross-sectional descriptive design incorporating retrospective questions, including open-ended items that prompt participants to reflect on past experiences, the study examines the connections between stress, burnout, physical health conditions, and the mental well-being

of lecturers in CoEs. This integrated examination provides a holistic understanding of how these factors interact and influence one another, contributing to a more comprehensive model of educator well-being. The objectives of this study are therefore designed to fill critical gaps in research within Ghana's evolving CoE landscape. Firstly, it assesses CoE lecturers' self-reported physical health and well-being indicators, addressing the scarcity of research in this area. Secondly, it uncovers potential connections between stress, burnout, and physical health indicators among lecturers, in light of the changing CoE dynamics. Thirdly, it delves into lecturers' self-reported mental health, including symptoms of anxiety and depression, an increasingly pertinent issue in the current CoE context. Lastly, the study examines the link between perceived stress, burnout, and lecturers' mental health status, illuminating the potential implications for their overall well-being. These objectives collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' well-being within Ghana's shifting CoE environment.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant correlation between the prevalence of stress and burnout among lecturers in CoEs and their self-reported physical health conditions and well-being indicators.

H02: The perceived level of stress and burnout among lecturers in CoEs is not significantly related to their self-reported mental health status, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and overall psychological well-being.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, developed by Hobfoll (1989), forms the theoretical foundation for this study, offering a robust lens through which to examine the relationships among stress, burnout, and well-being within Ghana's CoEs. At its core, the COR theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect resources essential for their well-being. Stress and burnout are conceptualised within this framework as processes that deplete these critical resources. When individuals perceive a threat to their resources, experience their loss, or lack sufficient resources to meet demands, they encounter stress, which, if prolonged, may lead to burnout. These resource-depleting processes profoundly impact physical and mental health, thus linking stress and burnout directly to overall well-being.

Within the specific context of CoEs, the COR theory provides valuable insights into how resource deficits, exacerbated by systemic challenges

such as role transformations, infrastructure inadequacies, and shifting institutional expectations, heighten stress and burnout among lecturers. These evolving conditions reflect significant resource challenges for lecturers, who must adapt to new roles and responsibilities while coping with inadequate institutional support. The COR theory also illuminates how physical health mediates the relationship between resource depletion and well-being. For instance, the physiological strain associated with sustained stress and burnout often manifests in physical health conditions, which further erode lecturers' overall well-being. Additionally, the theory emphasises the impact of external contextual factors, such as institutional and environmental challenges, on resource availability and stress responses. This feature makes the COR theory particularly relevant to the dynamic and often resource-constrained environment of CoEs undergoing transformation.

Building on the theoretical foundation provided by the COR theory, the conceptual framework operationalises key constructs to explore their interconnections. Stress is viewed as lecturers' perceived strain on resources in response to job demands, while burnout is understood as the cumulative effect of prolonged resource depletion, resulting in emotional and physical exhaustion. These variables represent critical elements in understanding how resource dynamics unfold in the CoE context. Physical health conditions are posited as a mediating factor, capturing the physiological consequences of resource depletion and their subsequent impact on well-being. This mediating role adds depth to the conceptualisation of the relationships among stress, burnout, and well-being by highlighting the indirect pathways through which resource loss affects lecturers' lives.

Well-being, as the dependent variable, is conceptualised holistically to encompass physical, mental, and emotional dimensions. To avoid redundancy and tautology, stress and burnout are excluded from the direct conceptualisation of mental well-being. Instead, mental well-being focuses on broader constructs such as symptoms of anxiety, depression, and emotional resilience, providing a distinct and comprehensive view of lecturers' overall well-being. This refined approach ensures that the study maintains conceptual clarity while addressing the ways in which stress and burnout influence individuals.

The framework also incorporates moderating variables to capture the complexity of the CoE environment. Role transformation, reflecting the evolving responsibilities and expectations placed on lecturers, serves as a moderating factor that may amplify or mitigate the effects of stress and burnout on well-being. Similarly, infrastructure deficits, representing the

chronic challenges within the CoE environment, are conceptualised as another moderating variable. These deficits, such as inadequate facilities and resources, have the potential to intensify the adverse effects of stress and burnout, further compromising lecturers' well-being. By integrating these moderating variables, the framework recognises the unique contextual factors that shape resource dynamics and their influence on well-being.

By anchoring the framework in the COR theory and extending it through a conceptual model, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the interplay among stress, burnout, physical health, and overall well-being in the dynamic context of Ghana's CoEs.

Literature

Impact of Work Stress and Burnout on Mental and Physical Health

Work stress and burnout remain pervasive challenges in various professional domains, particularly in education, where the stakes are often high, and resources are limited. These phenomena significantly affect both mental and physical health, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of their dynamics and implications to inform effective interventions.

Work Stress and Mental Health

Work stress arises from the demands of professional responsibilities that exceed an individual's coping capacity (Cohen, 1988). These demands, such as excessive workload, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts, contribute to chronic mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion (Bianchi & Schonfeld, 2020). Longitudinal studies, such as those by Hakanen et al. (2018a), underscore the bidirectional relationship between work stress and mental health, wherein persistent stress exacerbates psychological vulnerabilities, which in turn impair stress management capabilities.

In education, stress is particularly acute due to factors like long hours, resource shortages, and the emotional toll of nurturing student development (World Health Organization, 2019). Studies in Ghana echo global findings, with research by Asante and Adu-Mireku (2016) and Ansong et al., (2020) linking workplace stress among educators to heightened symptoms of depression and anxiety. Moreover, post-COVID-19 digitalization has compounded stress levels, as educators grapple with hybrid teaching models and increased administrative demands (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Montgomery & Rupp, 2022).

Burnout and its Psychological Consequences

Burnout, often a culmination of prolonged work stress, is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). It has profound implications for mental health, including heightened risks of depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Research by Kyriacou & Sutcliffe (2017) and Fares et al. (2019) highlights burnout's role in exacerbating emotional exhaustion and its cyclical impact on mental health challenges.

For Ghanaian educators, local studies reveal that burnout is often fuelled by systemic issues like delayed salary adjustments, stagnated promotions, and inadequate professional development opportunities (Acheampong et al., 2022; Adu-Gyamfi & Debrah, 2023). These challenges amplify psychological strain and hinder effective performance, further entrenching mental health issues within the profession.

Physical Health Impacts of Work Stress and Burnout

The physiological toll of work stress and burnout is significant, with chronic stress activating the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and elevating cortisol levels, leading to conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic disorders (Chrousos, 2009). Chandola et al. (2008) and Dimsdale (2008) identify workplace stress as a critical predictor of cardiovascular morbidity and systemic inflammation, which are precursors to various chronic illnesses.

Burnout exacerbates these effects through sustained emotional exhaustion, which depletes energy reserves and compromises immune function (Maslach et al., 2001). Ahola et al. (2019a) provide evidence linking burnout to musculoskeletal disorders, while Shirom et al. (2005) associate it with adverse cardiovascular outcomes. Emerging research, such as Teng et al. (2022), highlights biomarkers like elevated C-reactive protein (CRP) and interleukin-6 (IL-6) in individuals with severe burnout, demonstrating its systemic inflammatory effects.

Mental and Physical Health Interconnections

The interplay between mental and physical health in the context of work stress and burnout is profound. For instance, mental health challenges like depression and anxiety often manifest in physical symptoms such as chronic pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbances (Slavich & Irwin, 2014). Conversely, the physical strain induced by stress and burnout can aggravate mental health conditions, creating a cyclical burden on individuals. Melamed et al. (2006) highlight a dose-response relationship, showing that increased

burnout severity correlates with higher risks of type 2 diabetes and other chronic illnesses.

In education, these interconnections are particularly evident. Studies by West et al. (2016) and Sackey et al., (2018) reveal that teachers experiencing burnout report a higher prevalence of both physical ailments and mental health challenges, leading to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and workforce attrition.

In summary, the dual impact of work stress and burnout on mental and physical health underscores the urgency of targeted interventions. The evidence suggests that sustained occupational stress disrupts psychological well-being and physiological homeostasis, creating cascading effects that impair individual performance and organizational outcomes. For educators and other high-risk groups, addressing these issues requires systemic reforms, resource allocation, and supportive measures tailored to mitigate stress and foster resilience.

Methods

Research Design

The study adopts a cross-sectional descriptive design, which is appropriate for assessing the current state of lecturers' physical and mental health, stress, and burnout. This design allows for data collection at a single point in time, offering a snapshot of participants' experiences without the need for longitudinal tracking. By using self-reported data, the study effectively captures lecturers' well-being indicators and facilitates an examination of the relationships between stress, burnout, and health in the context of the evolving CoE environment in Ghana.

Although the study does not track changes over time, it includes retrospective questions, including open-ended ones that prompt participants to reflect on past experiences, thereby providing a degree of qualitative data. This approach provides insights into temporal changes in stress and burnout without requiring a cohort study framework, a common feature in longitudinal research (Cohen et al., 2011). Such a design is well-suited for understanding the current health status of CoE lecturers and exploring how past stress experiences may have shaped their present well-being (Babbie, 2021).

The cross-sectional design aligns with the study's objectives by enabling a direct assessment of physical and mental health indicators, as well as

the potential links between stress, burnout, and mental health symptoms (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). This design also allows for a comprehensive view of lecturers' well-being within a single study period, capturing both their current status and past experiences, which is crucial given the evolving demands within Ghana's CoE system (Hakanen et al., 2019). In this regard, the design is methodologically sound and efficient, addressing the research questions without the complexities of a longitudinal study.

Population

The study targets 2,013 teacher educators from 46 CoEs in Ghana. This diverse group of tutors is responsible for training future basic school teachers across various disciplines. By including educators from the affiliated universities, the study ensures a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between stress and burnout on tutors' well-being (Mentally and physically). The diverse composition of the population is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the CoEs According to their Affiliated University

Affiliated University	Population	Affiliated Colleges Used
University of Cape Coast (UCC)	14	$^{14}/_{46}$ x13 = 3.957 = 4
University of Education (UEW)	14	$^{14}/_{46}$ x13 = 3.957 = 4
University of Ghana (UG)	7	$^{7}/_{46}$ x13 = 1.978 = 2
University of Development Studies (UDS)	6	$^{6}/_{46}$ x13 = 1.696 = 2
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)	5	$^{5}/_{46}$ x13 = 1.413 = 1
Total	46	13

Sample and Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling technique determined the study's sample size of 622 (30.9% of population), based on a 95% confidence level and 2.5% margin of error for a population of 2013 (Research Advisors, 2006). The final sample of 610 respondents, comprising 30.3% of the target population, is considered robust for analysis. Research supports that a sample representing 30% of the population is sufficient for generalizability

in educational research (Cohen, 2013; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The sampling process began with stratified selection of 13 Colleges of Education (CoEs) from a total of 46 to ensure regional and institutional diversity, as shown in Table 1. Within each CoE, participants were randomly selected from different departments to ensure coverage across various subject areas, enhancing the study's comprehensiveness and reliability. This sequential approach minimized bias and ensured that educators from a wide range of disciplines were included. Despite challenges in data collection, the sample size was maintained, ensuring robust data for analysis. The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Socio-demographic	Category	Percentage (%)	Sample (n)
Gender	Female	28.6	175
	Male	71.4	435
Academic Qualification	PhD	4.5	27
	MPhil	60.9	371
	M.ED/MA/MSc	34.6	211
Length of Service	5-10 years	40.5	247
	11-15 years	23.2	142
	16-20 years	11.4	70
	21-25 years	12.1	74
	26-30 years	8.8	54
	31-35 years	4	25
Area of Specialization	English	14.7	87
	Mathematics	13.9	85
	Science	11.1	68
	Ghanaian Language	5.8	36
	Social studies	9.5	58
	Religious studies	7.5	46
	Vocational skills	7.2	44
	Physical Education	3.9	25
	Education	17.5	107
	Info. & Com. Tech. (ICT)	8.9	54

n = 610

Instrument

The study employed a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. Developed by a team of experts, the questionnaire

comprised sections addressing stress, burnout, well-being, and contextual factors affecting lecturers in CoEs. It utilised a Likert-type scale to capture quantitative responses, measuring both the current health status of lecturers and retrospective reflections on past experiences. The instrument underwent pilot testing with expert reviews and tutor feedback, ensuring construct validity. Reliability was confirmed through a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.73, demonstrating the instrument's internal consistency. The questionnaire was administered to participants from 13 CoEs, achieving a remarkable return rate of 98.07% (610 responses).

Data analysis Procedure

The study employed a mixed-methods data analysis strategy, addressing research objectives comprehensively. Individual lecturers within CoEs served as units of analysis. Quantitative analysis, utilising mean and standard deviation, assessed physical and mental health, while Pearson Correlation explored relationships among Stress, Burnout, and Health indicators. Justified for providing a holistic view and quantifying variable interplay, these methods employed robust statistical tools (Smith, 2010; Jones, 2015). Qualitative analysis, conducted through content analysis of semi-structured interviews, added depth to quantitative findings. Data quality was ensured through rigorous data editing, error identification and rectification, and thematic categorization through coding (Brown & Johnson, 2018; García, 2013). Stringent data entry procedures, including dual-entry and thorough comparisons, minimised transcription errors (Smith, 2021; Thompson & Johnson, 2017). Ongoing training and supervision further enhanced accuracy (Williams et al., 2019). Integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses ensured a thorough exploration of the stress, burnout, and well-being relationship among CoE lecturers.

Limitations

In conducting this study, several limitations were identified that must be considered. First, although a Cohort Longitudinal design would have been ideal for examining the dynamic relationships over time, the high attrition rate within the CoEs made its implementation impractical. As a result, a cross-sectional descriptive design was chosen, which, while limiting the ability to track changes over time, was supplemented with retrospective open-ended questions to allow participants to reflect on their past experiences, providing some qualitative insights alongside the quantitative data. Second, the study's focus on educators within CoEs, while offering valuable insights, limits the generalisability of the findings to broader educational contexts, as it was specifically designed around the CoE environment. Third, although a multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure diversity, the risk of sampling bias remained, though

this was mitigated through rigorous random selection procedures. While quantitative methods offer rigour, they may overlook subtleties or introduce response biases, which were addressed by incorporating qualitative interviews, providing a more comprehensive understanding of lecturers' well-being. Lastly, the study did not include detailed prevalence data on stress and burnout levels, as these were addressed in a related publication in press. However, the identified prevalence levels and primary stressors informed the study's focus on exploring the correlations between stress, burnout, and the physical and mental health of lecturers in the evolving CoE context.

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis 1

$H_0$1: There is no significant correlation between the prevalence of stress and burnout among lecturers in CoEs and their self-reported physical health conditions and well-being indicators.

H_A1: There is a significant positive correlation between the prevalence of stress and burnout among tutors in CoEs and their self-reported physical health conditions and well-being indicators.

The study's first hypothesis explores the relationship between stress, burnout, and lecturers' self-reported physical health and well-being in CoEs. The null hypothesis (H_{01}) suggests no significant correlation, implying that the prevalence of stress and burnout does not affect lecturers' physical health or well-being. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}) posits a significant positive correlation, indicating that higher levels of stress and burnout are associated with adverse physical health conditions and diminished well-being. This hypothesis aligns with existing literature highlighting the detrimental effects of stress and burnout on educators' health and overall quality of life, forming the basis for statistical analysis in this study. Table 3 provides a summary of the results.

Table 3: Bivariate Correlation between Stress, Burnout and Physical Health of Lecturers

		Stress	Burnout
Physical Health	Pearson Correlation	.368**	.382**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.012	.009
	N	622	622

*p< 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In testing the hypothesis, a preliminary analysis was conducted to determine the mean and standard deviation of the physical health status of lecturers. The results revealing the physical health status of lecturers in CoEs in Ghana provide a deeper understanding of the toll that stress and burnout take on educators in the context of tertiary education transformation. The reported physical health issues such as back pain/ backache (2.78, .80), tiredness/weariness (2.84, .82), breathing difficulties (2.59, .99), high blood pressure (2.57, .85), neck and arm ache (2.67, .77), speech disorder (2.47, .89), and weight gain/loss of weight (2.69, .89) resonate with the increasing demands and evolving landscape of CoEs. The correlational analysis revealed significant positive relationships between lecturers' physical health and their stress and burnout levels. Stress demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with physical health ($r = .368$, $p = .012$), while burnout exhibited a slightly stronger correlation ($r = .382$, $p = .009$). These findings indicate that higher levels of stress and burnout among lecturers in CoEs are associated with a greater prevalence of self-reported physical health challenges. This result underscores the toll that heightened academic and administrative demands exert on lecturers amidst the transition to degree-awarding institutions. Physical health complaints such as back pain, tiredness, breathing difficulties, and high blood pressure were prominent among lecturers, reflecting the multifaceted strain posed by their professional responsibilities. Lecturers attributed these conditions to extended hours of lecturing, prolonged sitting during lesson preparations, and handling administrative duties.

Moreover, the positive correlation between physical health and burnout aligns with the theoretical framework of the stressor-strain model, which posits that prolonged exposure to stressors results in both psychological and physical strain (Lee & Ashforth, 2016). Emotional exhaustion, a core component of burnout, contributes to chronic fatigue and diminished personal accomplishment, thereby impairing lecturers' physical well-being (Maslach et al., 2017). This dynamic creates a self-perpetuating cycle where physical health challenges exacerbate stress and burnout, further impacting educators' effectiveness in their roles.

From a practical standpoint, the correlations emphasise the necessity of addressing stress and burnout within CoEs to safeguard lecturers' well-being and maintain educational quality. The interconnectedness of stress, burnout, and physical health observed here resonates with global findings (Ahola et al., 2019b; Bianchi & Schonfeld, 2020; Opoku et al., 2016), reiterating the multidimensional ramifications of these factors in educational settings.

Regression Analysis on Physical Health

Table 4: Model Summary for Predicting Physical Health

Model	R	R2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.383	.147	.145	.46012
2	.401	.161	.157	.45673

Table 5: Coefficients for Predicting Physical Health

Model	Predictor	B	Std, Error	β	t	p
1	Constant	1.455	.132		11.013	.000
	Stress Scale	.386	.042	.383	0.241	.000
2	Constant	1.949	.215		9.062	.000
	Stress Scale	.435	.045	.431	9.716	.000
	Burnout Scale	.241	.083	-.129	-2.901	.004

Building on the correlational findings, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to further examine the extent to which stress and burnout predict physical health outcomes among lecturers in Ghana's Colleges of Education (CoEs). As indicated in Table 4, Model 1 demonstrates that stress alone explains approximately 14.5% of the variance in physical health (Adjusted $R^2 = .145$), with a statistically significant beta coefficient ($\beta = .383$, $p < .001$). This initial model highlights the strong predictive power of stress on lecturers' physical health conditions. The relatively high t-value ($t = 9.162$) supports the strength of this relationship, suggesting that as stress levels increase, lecturers are more likely to report physical health challenges.

Model 2, which incorporates burnout alongside stress, marginally improves the model's predictive capacity, increasing the adjusted R^2 to .157. This modest improvement of $\Delta R^2 = .014$ underscores the additional explanatory power gained by including burnout in the model. As shown in Table 5, stress remains a significant and strong predictor ($\beta = .431$, $p < .001$), while burnout exhibits a statistically significant but negative relationship with physical health ($\beta = -.129$, $p = .004$). The negative beta coefficient for burnout suggests that higher levels of burnout are associated with deteriorating physical health, even after controlling for stress levels. The regression coefficients presented in Table 5 further elucidate these relationships. In Model 1, the unstandardised coefficient (B = .386) for

stress indicates that for every one-unit increase in stress, physical health scores increase by approximately 0.39 units, reflecting greater physical health difficulties. In Model 2, stress maintains a higher coefficient (B = .435), reaffirming its dominant role. Conversely, burnout's coefficient (B = –.241) indicates its distinct and detrimental effect, as it compounds the adverse outcomes associated with stress.

Together, the findings from both regression models (Table 4 and Table 5) underscore the dual impact of stress and burnout on physical health. While stress alone is a strong predictor, the addition of burnout provides a more nuanced understanding of the physical manifestations of emotional exhaustion. This reinforces the multifaceted nature of health outcomes among lecturers and supports the theoretical positioning of burnout as a distinct, compounding factor in the Conservation of Resources (COR) framework. These quantitative findings are further substantiated by the qualitative insights drawn from the open-ended responses. Lecturers repeatedly described how the accumulation of professional responsibilities, institutional changes associated with tertiarisation, and the pressure to meet new academic standards collectively eroded their physical well-being. Specific complaints included chronic fatigue, migraines, and stress-induced ailments which are symptoms that align with the physiological consequences of sustained stress and burnout as outlined in the COR theory.

The findings are also consistent with broader literature that links burnout to psychosomatic symptoms among educators. Emotional exhaustion, when unchecked, often leads to somatic complaints, which in turn affect professional performance, classroom presence, and interpersonal relationships with students. Lecturers experiencing high levels of burnout frequently reported decreased confidence, reduced motivation, and diminished creative engagement as factors that compromise lesson delivery and learning outcomes. The implications of these results are significant. The fact that stress and burnout together account for a meaningful portion of variance in physical health (Adjusted R^2 = .157) highlights the urgent need for systemic interventions aimed at improving lecturer well-being. Given the transformative shifts occurring in Ghana's CoEs, it is essential that institutional leaders acknowledge the physiological toll of these changes on faculty. Interventions such as workload restructuring, strategic stress management programmes, peer support mechanisms, and targeted health promotion initiatives are not mere add-ons but essential components of institutional sustainability. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, and grounding the analysis in a robust theoretical model, this study contributes meaningfully to the discourse on educator well-being.

It offers a comprehensive understanding of how occupational stressors translate into tangible health consequences, thereby reaffirming the necessity of proactive strategies to safeguard the human resources pivotal to Ghana's teacher education system.

Hypothesis 2

H02: The perceived level of stress and burnout among tutors in Colleges of Education is not significantly related to their self-reported mental health status, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and overall psychological well-being.

HA2: The perceived level of stress and burnout among tutors in Colleges of Education is significantly related to their self-reported mental health status, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and overall psychological well-being.

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between stress, burnout, and mental health among tutors in Colleges of Education (CoEs). The null hypothesis (H02) posited no significant relationship between stress and burnout and tutors' mental health, while the alternative hypothesis (HA2) proposed a significant relationship. A summary analysis of the results is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Bivariate Correlation between Stress, Burnout and Mental Health of Lecturers

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
Mental Health	2.67	2.67	-	-	-
Stress	2.94	2.94	.373** (.001)	-	-
Burnout	2.91	2.91	376** (.013)	376** (.013)	-

N = 622

Key: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. Values in parentheses are p-values [p < .01 (2-tailed)].

Mental health measured as composite score from 7 indicators as follows: *Nervousness and Anxiety: M = 2.86, SD = 0.95; Lack of Appetite: M = 2.74, SD = 0.84; Mood Swings: M = 2.71, SD = 0.78; Concentration Difficulties: M = 2.67, SD = 0.94; Sleep Disorders: M = 2.65, SD = 0.87; Depressive Mood: M = 2.56, SD = 0.91; and Nightmares: M = 2.48, SD = 0.96.*

A preliminary analysis provided insights into the mental health status of lecturers in Colleges of Education (CoEs), shedding light on the impact of stress and burnout in the context of the transformation of tertiary

education. The findings revealed that mental health issues were prevalent among lecturers, with nervousness and anxiety being highly reported (M = 2.86, SD = .95). Other notable challenges included a lack of appetite (M = 2.74, SD = .84), mood swings (M = 2.71, SD = .78), concentration difficulties (M = 2.67, SD = .94), sleep disorders (M = 2.65, SD = .87), and depressive moods (M = 2.56, SD = .91). Among the symptoms, nightmares were the least reported (M = 2.48, SD = .96). These findings offer a nuanced understanding of the psychological toll on lecturers in CoEs amidst their evolving academic roles.

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between lecturers' mental health and their reported levels of stress ($r = .373$, $p = .001$) and burnout ($r = .376$, $p = .013$). These results illuminate the intricate interplay between stress, burnout, and mental well-being within CoEs, emphasising the profound implications for educators' health and professional capacity. The transition of CoEs into degree-awarding institutions, accompanied by heightened academic expectations, has notably intensified stress levels. Lecturers are required to adapt their teaching methodologies, curriculum designs, and assessment strategies to align with tertiary education standards, introducing unprecedented stressors. For example, interviews with lecturers highlighted the pressures to publish research, engage in scholarly activities, and balance extensive teaching commitments, all of which contribute to elevated stress and burnout. The interconnectedness of stress, burnout, and mental health becomes evident in the manifestations of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment among lecturers. The prevalence of symptoms such as a lack of appetite, mood swings, sleep disorders, and depressive moods underscores the pervasive impact of burnout on mental well-being. These findings align with prior research by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (2017) and Hakanen et al. (2018b), which highlighted the holistic effects of burnout on educators, influencing both their professional and personal lives. Notably, the evolving demands associated with tertiary education in CoEs exacerbate these challenges, creating a distinct environment that heightens lecturers' vulnerability to stress-related mental health issues.

The mental health challenges of lecturers have far-reaching implications for the teaching and learning process. Anxiety and nervousness impair their ability to create engaging and interactive learning environments, directly affecting students' academic experiences. Similarly, mood swings and depressive moods compromise lecturers' emotional availability, reducing their responsiveness to students' needs and diminishing their overall effectiveness as educators. Concentration difficulties, a common symptom of burnout, hinder lecturers' ability to design curricula,

assess student performance, and provide constructive feedback, further impacting the quality of education delivered in CoEs. The results also align with the stressor-strain model, which posits that prolonged exposure to stressors such as increased academic demands results in psychological strain, adversely affecting mental well-being (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 2017). The bidirectional relationship identified in this study suggests a self-perpetuating cycle: stress and burnout contribute to declining mental health, which in turn exacerbates stress and burnout. This cyclical pattern underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to break the cycle and mitigate the mental health burdens on lecturers. In the context of transitioning CoEs, the findings emphasise the necessity of institutional support systems. Mental health resources, such as counselling services, peer support groups, and stress management workshops, are crucial for helping lecturers navigate the pressures of tertiary education. Additionally, tailored professional development programmes that equip lecturers with skills to balance academic and research demands can help alleviate stress. Recognising and addressing these challenges is not only vital for safeguarding lecturers' well-being but also critical for maintaining the quality of education in CoEs. This study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of mental health in educational settings, contextualising the discussion within the unique landscape of CoEs in Ghana. By integrating quantitative findings with some qualitative insights, it underscores the multifaceted nature of mental health challenges faced by lecturers. The findings further reinforce the importance of mental well-being as an essential component of educational reform, especially in transitional contexts like the tertiarisation of CoEs. The correlation results highlight the profound influence of stress and burnout on lecturers' mental health, shedding light on the critical need for proactive measures to address these issues. As CoEs continue to evolve into degree-awarding institutions, prioritising the mental well-being of educators will be pivotal in ensuring their sustained ability to meet academic demands and deliver quality education. These findings provide a foundation for future research and institutional reforms aimed at supporting lecturers in navigating the complexities of tertiary education.

The regression analysis presented in Tables 7 and 8 provides a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which stress and burnout predict mental health outcomes among lecturers in Ghana's CoEs. The model summary in Table 7 reveals that stress alone accounts for approximately 15.7% of the variance in mental health (Adjusted $R^2 = .157$), underscoring its significant explanatory power.

Regression Analysis on Mental Health

Table 7: Model Summary for Predicting Mental Health

Model	R	R2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.398	.159	.157	.36208
2	.417	.174	.170	.35678

Table 8: Coefficients for Predicting Mental Health

Model	Predictor	B	Std, Error	β	t	p
1	Constant	1.736	.124		13.968	.000
	Stress Scale	.342	.037	.398	9.162	.000
2	Constant	2.023	.167		12.112	.000
	Stress Scale	.376	.038	.438	9.895	.000
	Burnout Scale	-.158	.062	-.105	-2.548	.011

With the inclusion of burnout as an additional predictor in Model 2, the explained variance increases marginally to 17.0% (Adjusted $R^2 = .170$). This incremental gain, albeit modest, points to the additive, though comparatively limited effect of burnout in shaping mental health challenges within the collegiate educational context.

Table 8 further elucidates the contributions of each predictor. In Model 1, stress emerges as a strong predictor of mental health outcomes, with a standardised beta coefficient of $\beta = .398$ ($p < .001$). Its predictive strength intensifies in Model 2 ($\beta = .438$, $p < .001$), even in the presence of burnout, confirming the dominant role stress plays in eroding lecturers' psychological well-being. By contrast, burnout assumes a statistically significant yet less impactful role ($\beta = -.105$, $p = .011$), suggesting that although burnout is relevant, its influence is more gradual and indirect compared to the acute, high-pressure implications of stress. These findings resonate with the theoretical premises of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), which posits that excessive job demands such as persistent stress and emotional overload diminish employees' mental and emotional capacities. The results reinforce the model's assertion by empirically demonstrating that lecturers experiencing high levels of stress are significantly more prone to adverse mental health outcomes. The heightened beta value for stress in Model 2 further implies that even when accounting for the overlapping effects of burnout, stress retains its primacy as a mental health risk factor. This corroborates the conclusions of Bakker et al. (2014), who found stress to be a principal antecedent to anxiety,

depression, and psychological exhaustion among educators operating in high-demand environments.

Although burnout contributes less substantially in this model, its role should not be underestimated. The negative beta coefficient reported in Table 8 signifies the corrosive nature of burnout, a condition characterised not by immediate psychological collapse but by a slow, cumulative depletion of emotional resilience. Hakanen et al. (2018b) provide a relevant lens here, describing burnout as a protracted process marked by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a gradual disengagement from work-related meaning. Thus, burnout may not be the initial disruptor of mental health, but it acts as a reinforcing agent that deepens distress over time, particularly in contexts of sustained institutional stressors. The correlation coefficients previously reported in Table 6 (stress: $r = .373$; burnout: $r = .376$; $p < .01$) laid the groundwork for these regression analyses by confirming that both variables bear significant bivariate relationships with mental health. However, the regression models in Tables 7 and 8 refine this understanding by delineating the unique and relative predictive strengths of each construct. This layered statistical approach lends credibility and analytical depth to the findings, enabling more precise identification of high-priority intervention points. From an institutional perspective, these insights have profound implications for policy and practice within CoEs. The substantial predictive power of stress ($\beta = .438$) signals the need for immediate, targeted interventions—including the implementation of structured workload redistribution frameworks, enhanced access to psychosocial support services, and the promotion of collegial, supportive work environments. Conversely, addressing burnout calls for strategic, long-term investments in institutional culture: improving professional autonomy, expanding mentorship opportunities, and reducing the bureaucratic demands that often constrain lecturer engagement and morale.

In summary, the results as shown in Tables 7 and 8 function as more than statistical summaries to offer a diagnostic lens into the psychosocial landscape of tertiary educators in Ghana. Stress stands out as an acute and pressing threat to mental health, while burnout represents a more insidious, long-range adversary. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of job-related stressors and psychological outcomes. The evidence calls for a dual-pronged institutional response that simultaneously addresses the immediate triggers of stress and mitigates the slow-burning effects of professional exhaustion. In doing so, CoEs can create more sustainable and mentally supportive environments, fostering not only lecturer well-being

but also the long-term quality and resilience of Ghana's teacher education system.

Conclusions

1. The results indicate significant positive correlations between stress, burnout, and lecturers' self-reported physical health conditions. These findings reveal that the heightened demands associated with the transition to degree-awarding institutions have adverse physical health implications, such as chronic fatigue, musculoskeletal issues, and other stress-related ailments. Such physical health challenges not only compromise lecturers' well-being but also detract from their ability to deliver high-quality education.
2. The study establishes a clear link between stress, burnout, and mental health challenges, including heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and diminished psychological resilience. This underscores the emotional burden lecturers bear in adapting to increased workloads, academic pressures, and institutional changes. The findings highlight the bidirectional nature of stress and mental health, where psychological distress exacerbates burnout, further compromising lecturers' ability to cope with occupational demands.
3. The cascading effects of stress and burnout on lecturers' physical and mental health inevitably influence their teaching effectiveness and engagement with students. This poses a critical risk to the quality of educational services within CoEs, potentially affecting student outcomes and undermining the broader objectives of tertiary education transformation.
4. The study underscores that stress and burnout among lecturers are not solely individual challenges but are deeply rooted in systemic issues, such as insufficient institutional support, unclear policies during the tertiarisation process, and increased administrative burdens. Addressing these systemic factors is pivotal for sustainable well-being initiatives.
5. The findings underscore the necessity of comprehensive, multi-faceted interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of stress and burnout. Such interventions should encompass stress management programmes, workplace wellness initiatives, access to counselling and mental health services, and structural reforms to reduce unnecessary workloads. Prioritising these measures is essential to safeguard lecturers' well-being and sustain the quality of educational delivery in CoEs.
6. The transformation of CoEs into degree-awarding institutions is a commendable step towards enhancing tertiary education. However, the findings stress the importance of balancing these transformative goals with the well-being of lecturers. Institutional stakeholders must ensure

that policies and practices supporting this transformation are accompanied by robust measures to alleviate stress and burnout

Policy Implications

1. CoEs must establish robust support systems, including access to mental health services, stress management programmes, and peer support groups. Policies should mandate the integration of workplace wellness programmes as part of institutional priorities to promote educators' well-being.
2. Policymakers should develop frameworks to balance academic and administrative responsibilities, ensuring that tutors' workloads are manageable. Streamlined processes for academic reporting and administrative tasks are critical in alleviating burnout.
3. Policies should focus on equipping tutors with skills and resources to adapt to evolving educational demands. Continuous professional development initiatives, alongside adequate teaching and learning resources, will mitigate stress caused by institutional transformations.
4. Management of the CoEs with oversight responsibilities from the affiliate bodies should prioritise educators' physical and mental health in their strategic plans, ensuring budgetary allocations for health interventions. Policy directives should mandate regular health assessments for tutors.
5. Effective implementation of well-being policies requires collaboration among Government agencies like the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Affiliate Universities, CoE Management, and Educators' unions. A participatory approach ensures the development of interventions that address the real needs of lecturers while aligning with institutional goals.
6. Policies must include mechanisms for regularly monitoring lecturers' stress and health levels, with findings used to inform targeted interventions. Data-driven strategies ensure the continuous relevance and effectiveness of well-being initiatives.

Contribution to Research

Beyond merely justifying the necessity of this study, as elucidated in the introductory section of this paper, its findings contribute significantly and uniquely to the existing body of knowledge. Given the transformation of Colleges of Education (CoEs), the insights generated from this research offer critical guidance for the design of targeted interventions and support systems that are responsive to the evolving educational landscape. These include tailored professional development initiatives and mental health programmes specifically structured to address the emerging and contextual needs of lecturers.

Moreover, the study's exploration of the correlations among stress, burnout, and both physical and mental health provides robust empirical evidence that not only supports but also extends existing theoretical frameworks such as the stressor-strain model. By illustrating the bidirectional relationships between these variables, the research deepens our understanding of how stress and burnout interact to intensify both physical and psychological health challenges among educators.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the urgent need to implement systemic interventions that support lecturers' overall well-being, particularly as they grapple with the heightened academic and administrative demands brought about by the tertiarisation process. The emphasis on holistic support—encompassing mental health resources, workload management strategies, and institutional responsiveness—offers actionable insights for educational policymakers and institutional leaders striving to foster healthier work environments within CoEs.

Importantly, the implications of this study extend beyond academic staff to impact the student experience. The well-being of lecturers, manifested through manageable stress levels and reduced burnout, is inextricably linked to the quality of teaching and learning. The findings thus reinforce the imperative to prioritise lecturer well-being as a foundational element in the pursuit of improved educational outcomes, ultimately contributing to the creation of a more effective and supportive academic environment for all stakeholders.

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