

Abstract

This qualitative study aims to understand how a university professor's mental health influences their perceived attitudes toward adopting adaptive assessment practices. It studies the various intrinsic and extrinsic factors that may affect their mental health and, thereby, their perceived attitudes toward adaptive assessments. Intrinsic factors are individualist characteristics like physical health, perceived job satisfaction, and experience levels. Extrinsic factors are related to their work environments, like university resources, university support, political environment, or any external factors that can influence a professor's mental health. Existing literature suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic factors can affect a person's mental health, but the extent to which they influence their attitudes toward assessments is unknown. A series of one-on-one interviews with R1 university professors was conducted to explore this phenomenon. The information collected was coded using Atlas.ti software and themes were generated. Finally, practical and theoretical implications are discussed at both institutional and professor levels.

Literature Review

Multiple factors can influence a person's mental health, and they could be affected by individualist personality traits. Gary et al., (2017) explain mental health as "a state of well-being" in which individuals cope with everyday stresses of life, enabling them to work productively and thereby contribute to their student's learning process. External factors can have a significant influence on a teacher's mental health and, thereby, their assessment practices. The authors explained personality characteristics as psychoticism, neuroticism, and introversion; school climate as the state of belonging teachers and students associated with the institution; and university assessment policies as the mandatory assessments an institution may have.

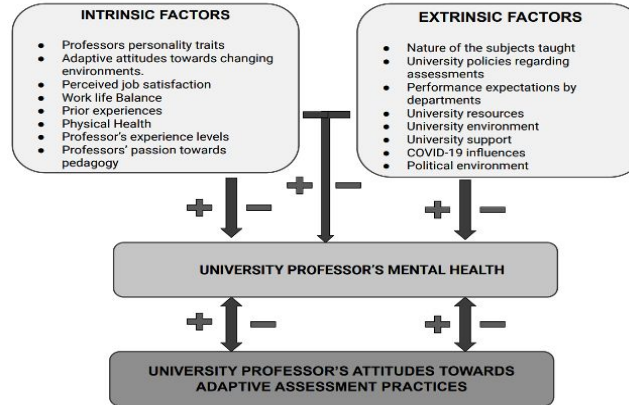
Research Questions

RQ1: How do university professors perceive intrinsic factors like perceived work-life balance, personalities, and physical health influence their mental health?

RQ2: How do university professors perceive extrinsic factors like the global pandemic, university policies regarding assessments, university resources, and perceived job expectations influence their mental health?

RQ3: How do the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence the professor's mental health and their perceived attitudes towards adaptive assessment practices?

Conceptual Framework



Themes Identified

- Professors' passion and willingness to adopt overpower their personal mental health and well-being.
- Universities lack adequate resources and support for their professor's mental health.
- Rigid University policies for changing assessments are still prevailing, which can tremendously affect their mental health.
- There is a lack of relevant professional developments to change assessments which demotivates them to learn more.
- Recent Past Experiences of faculties had influenced their mental health.

See here for references!

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Discussion

This paper argues that, as educational researchers, we should create a safe space for our professors to nurture their mental health and thereby help them deliver their classes. It is evident through the interviews that professors had an immense passion for helping their students, and many prioritized their students' well-being over their own. Similarly, even when faced with quite some resistance from their departments, they continued to work towards the betterment of their students. As educators, we need to consider a professor's mental health along with students' mental health.

Theoretical Implications

A lack of literature focuses on a university professor's mental health and how it influences their assessment practices. As demonstrated in the findings section, it is clear that a faculty with poor mental health issues will not be motivated to implement any new strategies and vice versa. Research suggests a need to improve our existing pedagogical practices; however, it isn't clear how we can do so. The findings of this study can be used to build the foundations for the research. It is also unclear why a professor feels obliged to cater to their student's needs even when it affects their mental and physical health. The findings of this study prove that professors feel obliged to serve their students beyond their capabilities and power.

Practical Implications

This study proves that professors had to seek help externally and not through their respective universities. Participants also said they had peer help, and no official support was offered to the professors. As practitioners, it is our responsibility to create a safe workspace for professors to motivate them to continue their jobs. It is also essential to allow professors to be flexible in their assessment practices as it will help them better cater to student learning. University policies should be modified to include professors' and students' needs.

Limitations

This study has interviewed four university professors from three different R1 universities in the United States. The low sample size may have created some barriers to understanding.