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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
female university students; night-shift employment; work-study balance; role strain; academic challenges; occupational safety; Pakistan	This study aimed to identify the problems faced by female university students who engage in both academic education and night-shift work at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. A qualitative, phenomenological methodology was used to shed light on participants lived experience and to understand how they manage their academic, occupational and personal responsibilities. The subjects were 15 female students aged 21-28 years who were purposively and snowball sampled. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The five major themes that arose were physical challenges and fatigue, work-study balance, academic challenges and concentration, workplace and occupational challenges, and transportation and safety concerns. Participants noted sleep disturbances, physical fatigue, poor attention span, limited study time, hectic work hours and the inability to travel safely at night. These challenges often intertwined, and the impact on employment, academic outcomes, and inadequate rest on the functioning of students as physical and psychological beings were all interwoven. Role Strain Theory serves as the basic theory to explain these experiences, as it suggests that demands for students, employees, and families are conflicting and that students have limited time and personal resources to attend to all these roles. The research reveals the importance of providing flexible academic solutions, encouraging workplace practices, counseling services, and safe transportation facilities for working female students who work at night.
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Introduction

The involvement of university students in paid jobs has been growing significantly as students try to pay for education, gain work experience and gain financial independence. Employment can also have an impact on the personal development and self-confidence of young women and increase their role in the economy. But, the integration of university study and paid work may be challenging the time, energy and academic obligations of students. These pressures can be even more difficult if the job is done at night, when it happens during the times of the day when people ought to be resting and recuperating (Costa, 1996; Knutsson, 2003; Ferri et al., 2016).

Occupational groups that are 24 hours a day, such as healthcare, and work across multiple time zones, such as customer service, call centres, hospitality, and online services, are more likely to have night-shift jobs. It is sometimes convenient for university students to work at night as they can attend classes and do their studies during the day. However, this can create a challenging schedule for students who are expected to engage in a regimen of studying all night long and going to university during the day, without having time to rest. Sleep disturbances, tiredness, daytime sleepiness and poor psychological health are well-documented outcomes of working shifts (Booker et al., 2014; Belingheri et al., 2022). Exposure to night shift has also been linked to more general physical and psychological health issues (Knutsson, 2003; Ferri et al., 2016).

One way that sleep disturbance is significant for students is that sufficient sleep helps to focus, remember, learn and make good decisions. Night workers are often challenged in their ability to maintain a regular sleep pattern because of the conflicting hours of work and the body's normal sleep-wake cycle (Costa, 1996; Scott, 2000). This may result in tiredness, concentration problems, lack of engagement in class and lack of time for assignments or taking exams for female students at university who come from the night shift. Similar studies have shown that fatigue and sleep quality issues can also be a problem for shift workers and can affect them in their daily functioning and in their occupations (Booker et al., 2014; Belingheri et al., 2022). For working students, the effects may have been more of a strain on those balancing work and study.

Physical health and academic achievement are not the only issues facing night workers. At the same time working students are required to play a number of roles, such as student, worker, family member and, in some instances, career. The requirements or needs of these jobs can be competing for scarce resources that include time, attention, and emotional energy. The research on work-family relationships has consistently shown that the conflicting demands of work and home can lead to conflicts and imbalance (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). These pressures can be even more pronounced for female students given that their working hours can clash with those of the university, their family life, social life and their own personal obligations.

The experience of working the night shift is further influenced by gender. Whereas workplace factors also impact on women's employment, broader social norms regarding gender role, family responsibilities and mobility have a bearing on women's participation in paid work as well (Browne & Misra, 2003; Atalianis & Litosseliti, 2017). These issues can manifest themselves especially on

Pakistani society when young females are working outside the home at late hours. Factors such as approval from family, social stigma, transportation, harassment, and personal safety could be different stressors for female students. Economic participation, family expectations and gendered social norms have also been identified as continuing relationships in the context of women's participation in research in Pakistan (Faiz, 2015; Naseem, 2020).

Another aspect of night shift work among women is their transport and personal safety. Late-night travel could be challenging in areas with less bus or train service and/or in areas where women feel there are more risks of harassment and insecurity. These concerns can impact students, as well as their families, as their attitudes towards working at night will rely on safe transportation and reliable workplaces. The working environment is also a crucial factor. Favorable supervisors, schedules, working conditions, and examination schedules can help students cope with their responsibilities, while inflexible schedules, stressors at work, discrimination, and lack of organizational support can aggravate role related stress.

Although significant studies have investigated shift work, the current literature is mainly based on a study of nurses and health care workers (Costa, 1996; Knutsson, 2003; Ferri et al., 2016; Belingheri et al., 2022). As a result, there has been little research on university students who work nights, on a regular basis. The experiences of females should be discussed specifically, as educational needs are coupled with job pressures, gender expectations, family responsibilities and transportation and safety issues. Data collected from one type of occupation cannot necessarily be extrapolated as evidence of a female university student group.

To fill this gap the present study investigates the situation of female students at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, who are working in night shift jobs. It specifically examines the challenges they face in juggling education and employment and looks at physical fatigue and sleep disturbance, work-study balance, academic challenges, workplace challenges, transportation and personal safety. The study aims to explore these experiences qualitatively to gain greater insight into the real-world experiences of multiple academic, occupational and social demands for female working students. Results might help shape more responsive university support systems, safer working practices, more flexible working and gender sensitive policies for students who work at night and attend University.

Problem Statement

Female university students working the night shift are subjected to academic, occupational, physical and social pressures. Night work can disrupt normal sleep patterns, affect concentration, cause fatigue, and interfere with the ability to attend the university regularly, do assignments, prepare for exams and perform well academically (Costa, 1996; Knutsson, 2003; Ferri et al., 2016). These demands may continue to cause problems for students working at night and studying during the day.

This is especially relevant for girls in Pakistan who may also be driven to night work due to gender norms, expectations from family members, issues with transportation, and safety apprehensions. Working at night can lead to social criticism, limited mobility, work stress and anxiety over travel safety (Faiz, 2015; Naseem, 2020). The original study also points out the major concerns of fatigue, academic disruption, transportation, safety, workplace pressures, and difficulties keeping multiple responsibilities as concerns of female night-shift students.

There are a number of studies that have investigated the effects of night-shift work among health care workers and other workers, but very few studies have focused on female college students working at night and their academic performance, especially in Pakistan. This study thus fills this gap by analyzing the challenges faced by female students of Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, employed in night-shift jobs from health, academic and workplace perspective along with transportation, safety and work-study balance.

Research Objectives

To identify the major obstacles faced by female university students employed in night-shift jobs.

To explore how night-shift employment affects their physical well-being, academic life, work-study balance, workplace experiences, transportation, and personal safety.

Research Questions

What major obstacles are faced by female university students employed in night-shift jobs?

How does night-shift employment affect their physical well-being, academic life, work-study balance, workplace experiences, transportation, and personal safety?

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it helps fill the void on a relatively under-researched population—Female University students who work regularly at night shifts in addition to their studies. There has been a focus so far on existing literature on night work among healthcare professionals and other full-time workers (Knutsson, 2003; Ferri et al., 2016; Belingheri et al., 2022), and few studies have focused on students who undertake multifaceted roles including academic and work responsibilities, family and personal relationships (Ferri et al., 2016; Belingheri et al., 2022).

In addition, the study brings a gender-informed perspective from Pakistan. It is sometimes more than just fatigue and studies that hinder the performance of women working at night; there may be worries about family, social pressures, transportation, working conditions, and personal safety. All of these dimensions are manifest in the experiences described by the participants in the current study.

From a practical point of view, the results could be used by universities and employers to improve their support for working students. Supportive policies in the workplace, counseling services, and greater public awareness of the stress of working at night are among the flexible academic arrangements that may enhance students' abilities to complete their studies and work. Hence the study holds significance for the university administrators, employers, policy makers, families and researchers who are interested in the education of women and employment of women in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Many studies of night-shift work have been conducted because the night shift may have an impact on physical health, psychological health, occupational functioning and social life. Most of this literature, however, deals with full-time workers, especially those in the health-care sector, with few studies examining university students working at night while going to school. A special consideration is given to female university students, since night jobs can also impact studies, family duties, gender roles and issues of personal safety.

Night-Shift Work, Sleep, and Physical Well-Being

Disruption of the normal sleep-wake cycle is one of the most frequently reported effects of work at night: Circadian rhythms play an important role in human biological function, and night work has the potential to disrupt normal rhythms of activity and recovery (Costa, 1996). Some of the most common complaints made by shift workers include poor sleep quality, tiredness, sleepiness, and finding it hard to sleep at regular times (Knutsson, 2003; Booker et al., 2014).

2. Other more recent studies also link irregular work hours to sleep problems and mental health (Belingeri et al., 2022). Fatigue and disturbed sleep are also cited as common problems of shift work by Ferri et al. (2016). These effects are particularly important for students because they may have to attend classes shortly after completing a night shift. This may subsequently impact physical and cognitive resources to support learning due to the overlap of sleep and school during the day.

Psychological Stress and Multiple Responsibilities

Psychological effects like stress, irritability, emotional exhaustion, and social routine disruption can be experienced by night shift workers as well (Ferri et al., 2016). These pressures can be greater if one has to perform multiple roles.

Working girls students are multi-role players who hold multiple roles as a student, worker and family member. There is a time, attention and emotional energy commitment to each role. Studies of work and family dynamics have shown that conflicts between role expectations in the occupational and personal domains may lead to stress and poor role functioning (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). For working students, completing assignments and duties at school and work, as well as having to adhere to family expectations and get the proper rest, can all be at odds with each other at times.

Academic Difficulties and Work–Study Balance

Academic duties involve regular attendance, focus, self-study, assignment completion and exam preparation. When students are fatigued or do not have enough time for study/rest during the night, it may disrupt these activities. Studies on shift workers generally show that poor sleep is associated with decreased concentration and day-to-day performance (Booker et al., 2014), and Scott (2000) connects sleep disruption with shifts to a decrease in alertness and cognitive functioning.

The issue for female students is not just the hours that are worked but also the kind of work that is done. They may have to decide which of the four options (sleeping, going to university, doing academic work, and personal responsibilities) to take at a night schedule. The challenge can thus be seen as one of work–study balance, in which competing demands press against scarce time and energy resources. The original study also notes problems with attending university, assignments, time spent studying, attention, and work vs. university.

Gender Norms, Family Expectations, and Social Life

Gender is also a factor in employment experiences. Labour market and workplace communication research shows that women may face gendered expectations of what they can do, gendered treatment in the workplace, and occupational pressures that are different to men's (Browne & Misra, 2003; Atalianis & Litosseliti, 2017).

These concerns can be particularly relevant in socially conservative environments where women's activity outside the "natural" working day and their employment outside of regular hours may be called into doubt. The expectations on women's family responsibilities, respectability and acceptable gender roles have always been connected to their jobs in Pakistan (Faiz, 2015). The way that family reactions work, though, can affect the experience for female students of working at night as being manageable or socially stressful.

Students who rely on family to get to school and back, for emotional support and/or acceptance of their work schedule will benefit from extra family support. Studies on young women in call-center jobs have also pointed to parent and family attitude as a determinant to the employment experiences of women (Tara & Ilavarasan, 2009). The demographic profile of this current research is also not uniform, with responses of immediate support, beginnings of concern or continued lack of support in families.

Transportation, Safety, and Workplace Conditions

Women who work late hours face other challenges in transportation and personal safety. Travel to and from work may be challenging as there is limited public transport and poorly monitored travel, with concerns about harassment and family anxiety. A long history of literature highlights concerns

about women's safety in public and work settings and how these concerns can limit women's access to these environments (Zaman, 1997).

Students' capacity to manage employment and education may also be impacted by the work environment. Encouraging supervisors, flexible work hours, safe workplaces, and manageable workloads can lead to continued education for working students. By comparison, a rigid work schedule, work pressure, no support in the workplace, and gender-related issues at work can exacerbate stress. The similar study participants also reported high workload, work stress, transportation constraints and safety risks as significant factors in their night shift experience.

Research Gap

There is ample literature available about the health, psychological and job consequences of shift work. Many of these studies focus on other well-established occupational groups; however, they do not focus on female college students. There is very little qualitative research from Pakistan on the interaction of night-shift work, study duties, gender roles, workplace experiences, transportation and safety of student women.

This study fills this gap by investigating the experiences of the female students of Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi who are pursuing higher education but working during the night. In reviewing these issues collectively, the study offers a more balanced approach to the issues of constraints on women's attempts to hold onto their education and careers.

Theoretical Framework

The main theory that has guided this study is that of Role Strain Theory by Goode (1960). The theory posits that persons feel strain when they are challenged with time, energy and resources to perform the roles of their multiple identities, which exceed their capability. The framework is very applicable to women at university as they work at night and are at the same time students, employees, and family members.

The student participants are expected to attend class, do homework, study for tests and exams, and perform academically. They are employees and have to adhere to night-shift schedules, complete workplace duties and meet organizational expectations. Meanwhile, the family and social demands can still be taking a toll on their time and energy. If these expectations coincide, students can feel overwhelmed, stressed, less able to study, experience sleep problems and have problems balancing work and study.

Role Conflict Theory is also briefly referred to. According to Kahn et al. (1964), role conflict happens when the expectations that are associated with various roles become incompatible. For the purposes of the current study, for instance, a night-time work schedule might interfere with attention during a daytime class, and a work schedule might interfere with exams, homework, family obligations, and sleep recovery.

Thus, the difficulties that female students face when working at night-time are not just understood as personal problems but are perceived as the results of competing role demands and scarce personal and institutional resources. The primary analytical tools for discussing the impact of these overlapping responsibilities on students' physical health, educational experiences, work experiences and work-study balance are those offered by the Role Strain Theory.

Materials and Methods

The approach used in this study was qualitative phenomenological, aimed at exploring the lived experiences of female university students who work on night-shift jobs. The qualitative design was suitable for the study because the goal was to gain insight into participants' perceptions of the work-related, academic, physical, and safety issues they experienced, rather than to quantify these issues.

The final sample was 15 female students working night shifts at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi. Participants were selected by purposive sampling technique, and snowball sampling was employed to locate more eligible participants. The participants ranged from 21 to 28 years of age and were studying BS or MSc/MS or MPhil. They were employed in industries such as call centres, customer service, health care, education and other service-related roles.

Semi-structured interviews of about 30-60 minutes were used to gather data. Interviews were held in person or via a secure video call as preferred by the participants. Questions centered around physical well-being, sleep, schoolwork, balancing work and school, work experiences, transportation, safety, and family issues.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, following the six-phase process described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Transcripts were read, categorized and segmented into common themes that were then identified as themes. The analysis was narrowed down to five areas of concern: physical fatigue, work-study balance, academic challenges, work concerns and transportation and safety concerns.

Ethical principles were adhered to in the conduct of this research. Participants were briefed on the study's aims; participation was entirely voluntary; anonymity was ensured using codes; and respondents were able to withdraw at any point. The data were stored safely, and the manuscript states that it received ethical approval from the University's Ethics Review Committee.

Results

The thematic analysis identified five major themes: physical challenges and fatigue; work-study balance; academic difficulties and concentration; workplace and occupational challenges; and transportation and safety concerns. These themes reflect the difficulties female students experienced while simultaneously managing education, employment, and personal responsibilities.

Physical Challenges and Fatigue

The most common difficulties included physical fatigue and sleeping difficulties. The participants explained that working during the night impacted their ability to get a good night's sleep, especially if they had to attend university during the day. This frequently led to fatigue, weakness, reduced energy and lack of concentration. One participant explained:

"Night shifts have affected my physical health. I often experience body fatigue, and I feel that irregular sleep has affected my concentration and memory, making daily activities more difficult."

This experience demonstrates how night work impacted both physical health and effective academic and everyday functioning.

Work–Study Balance

Another significant challenge was finding the balance between work, studies, sleep and personal obligations. There was a limited amount of time for participants to perform multiple activities, including university attendance, doing assignments, studying, working at night, and resting. This often caused the time allotted for one demand to be diminished by another. One participant stated:

"Working night shifts creates difficulties in balancing my studies, work responsibilities, and personal life. Although I try to manage everything, maintaining that balance is sometimes challenging."

The results thus suggest that balancing work and study was not only a time management issue; it was also a resource management issue of participants' physical and emotional capacities.

Academic Difficulties and Concentration

Night-shift workers also indicated that their academic duties were impacted by their night-shift job. They reported difficulty paying attention during lectures, completing assignments, preparing for exams and fully participating in university activities as a result of fatigue after working at night. One participant observed:

"Night-shift work can disturb university studies, social life, and daily routines. However, with good time management and commitment, it is possible to balance work, education, and personal life effectively."

This is a typical answer to the question and demonstrates the academic difficulty of working at night, as well as the strategies students use to continue with their studies.

Workplace and Occupational Challenges

Participants' experiences were also influenced by conditions at work. Rough schedules, stress at work, relationships with colleagues, lack of organizational support and inflexible work routines may make it harder to fulfill the obligations of the university. One participant talked about the conflict between expectations at the workplace and university:

"Meanwhile, they have to be flexible regarding classes, exams, assignments, and research work. Tough schedules at work make it difficult for them to complete their academic responsibilities."

The results indicate that there are workplace practices that could contribute significantly to the successful integration of students into the world of work and into higher education.

TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY CONCERNS

One of the key issues participants had raised was personal safety, and transportation issues were especially relevant as they often had to travel at late times when public transport services were less available. Family members reported anxiety upon children's return home late at night as well. One participant explained:

"Late-night transport creates problems. If we come back home late, it can raise worries among participants and their relatives."

These concerns highlight the pressures experienced in the workplace and at school related to working the night shift, as well as wider concerns about the mobility and safety of women.

Overall, the results indicate that the challenges for women students are interrelated. The depletion of physical strength can lead to academic distraction, the heavy workload can limit study time, and traffic and security issues can add family and psychological strain. The experiences are thus an expression of the tension that occurs when the roles are those of a student, employee and family member.

Discussion

The results indicate that university female students who work at night face problems in physical, academic, occupational and safety-related aspects that are interconnected. These challenges are best understood by the Role Strain Theory, which states that when people are required to perform a number of demanding roles within time, energy and resource constraints, then strain occurs (Goode, 1960). In the current investigation, students, employees and family members all played multiple roles and sometimes encountered pressures in one role that negatively impacted their performance in another.

Physical exhaustion and sleep disturbance proved to be a significant problem. Fatigue, diminished energy levels, disrupted sleep and decreased attention. These results are similar to earlier studies that indicated that night work "disturbs circadian rhythms and is linked to sleep disturbance and fatigue" (Costa, 1996; Knutsson, 2003; Booker et al., 2014). Additionally, more recent studies have shown negative associations between shift schedules and sleep quality and mental health (Belingheri et al., 2022). These physical effects are especially important to students because they often have to go on to university just after finishing a night shift.

The other significant area of strain was work–study balance. It was the duty of participants to allocate their time between work, study, assignments and exams, sleep and personal matters. This confirms Goode's (1960) theory that role strain occurs when resources are limited and conflicting role demands are made. It also demonstrates Role Conflict Theory, meaning that "problems arise when the requirements of multiple roles become unmet due to their incompatibility" (Kahn et al., 1964).

Academic problems were strongly associated with fatigue and time restraints. Concerns about concentration, study and managing academic responsibilities were reported by participants after working at night. These results are consistent with a study that found that sleep disturbances lead to decreases in alertness and cognitive function (Scott, 2000; Booker et al., 2014). Hence, the findings indicate that night-shift workers not only have limited time for studying but also have less physical and mental resources available for study.

Participants' capacity to manage their education was also related to their working environment. The rigid working hours, stress at work and restricted organizational flexibility posed further challenges, while the organizational flexibility of supportive workplaces might render working and studying more feasible. This discovery has revealed that it is not just about the work–study balance for students, but it is also an institutional issue. The initial study also suggests that support from employer can have an impact on students' balance between the educational and occupational requirements.

Participants' gender and late working hours were significant factors in relation to transportation and their own safety. The lack of transport and family concerns of travelling at night were additional stressors to the employment experience. The results correspond with findings in studies that suggest that safety worries and gendered social norms may influence women's mobility and employment (Zaman, 1997; Faiz, 2015). In Pakistan, these issues can affect women's preference to work at night and their families' attitudes to night-shift working.

In general, the results show that the problem faced by female night-shift students is not a problem that is isolated. Fatigue may decrease academic focus, work schedules may restrict study and recovery, and transportation issues may contribute to family and/or psychological stress. Role strain theory is therefore useful in explaining the development of these problems as a result of the combination of several roles and not just the failure of the individual or poor time management.

Meanwhile, participants were extremely resilient in continuing to acquire new knowledge while at work. The results indicate that certain institutional accommodations such as flexible academic arrangements, scheduling in the workplace, safe transportation, and counselling could help alleviate the burden of the schedule that occurs when working the night shift and attending higher education courses.

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations of this research study are: Firstly, the sample was limited to only 15 female students from one university, which restricts the generalizability of the study results to other universities and areas of Pakistan. Second, the participants might have had the same social and work networks as a result of purposive and snowball sampling. Third, self-reported interview data were used, which means that the study results are based on what participants think happened in their classrooms and not on academic or health event data that were measured independently.

Larger, more diverse samples from other universities and cities in the future would be beneficial. Possible comparisons might include those of females versus males, of various work sectors, or of day- versus night-shift workers. Qualitative interviews and quantitative instruments measuring sleep quality, school performance, stress and work-school balance might also be included in future studies.

Conclusion

The current research study focused on problem areas faced by female students who are pursuing higher education along with night shift work at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi. Five areas of difficulty were identified that were interconnected: physical fatigue and sleep disruption, work-study imbalance, academic difficulties, workplace challenges, and transportation and safety concerns.

As can be seen in the results, these challenges are tightly linked. Poor sleep habits and fatigue, irregular work schedules, and transportation and safety issues may limit concentration, study and recovery time, and contribute to family and psychological stress. The challenges can be explained using the perspective of Role Strain Theory, which suggests that individuals who have to manage multiple roles of student, employee and family member in their lives with restricted time and resources are likely to experience difficulties.

Even in the face of these challenges, the participants remained committed to their education and job search efforts, showing resilience and determination. Based on the findings, it is suggested that the university and the employer can help alleviate these challenges by implementing flexible academic arrangements, supportive work schedules, counseling services, and safer transportation. Therefore, it is important to support females who work at night, as well as to support their academic achievement; they should also be supported regarding their physical state, safety and their involvement in working life.

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