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STUDYING ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE, OCCUPATIONAL STRESS, AND MENTOR EFFECTIVENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Mentors in higher educational institutions play an essential role in shaping academic development, career progression, and overall student success. However, their effectiveness can be significantly influenced by the organizational environment in which they operate. This study investigates the interrelationship between organizational climate, occupational stress, and mentor effectiveness within the context of higher education. The research aims to understand how different organizational elements-including leadership practices, communication patterns, institutional culture, and resource availability-influence the stress levels experienced by mentors and subsequently impact their performance and effectiveness. Through a mixed-method research design, the study will collect empirical data from academic mentors and supporting faculty across multiple colleges and universities. Quantitative tools such as standardized stress and organizational climate assessments will be used alongside qualitative interviews to uncover deep insights into mentor experiences and institutional dynamics. This approach will offer a comprehensive view of how conducive or detrimental the organizational environment is to mentorship. Key variables will include perceived organizational support, mentor recognition, workload management, autonomy, and alignment with institutional goals. The findings are expected to reveal significant correlations between the organizational climate and the psychological well-being and professional output of mentors. The implications of this research are twofold: it will guide institutional leaders in shaping policies that support mentor engagement and well-being, and it will suggest structural reforms in organizational culture that foster improved academic support systems. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute toward building high-performing, mentally healthy, and sustainable academic mentoring programs that benefit both mentors and mentees in higher education settings.

Keywords: Organizational Climate, Occupational Stress, Mentor Effectiveness, Higher Education, Institutional Support, Academic Mentoring

1. INTRODUCTION

The organizational climate within higher educational institutions significantly influences faculty mentors' occupational stress levels and their overall effectiveness. Organizational climate encompasses leadership styles, communication channels, resource availability, institutional culture, and support systems that collectively shape the work environment. A positive climate fosters job satisfaction, enhances motivation, reduces stress, and promotes higher mentor effectiveness, which ultimately benefits student learning and academic success. Conversely, a negative organizational climate characterized by unclear expectations, poor communication, inadequate resources, and limited support exacerbates occupational stress, leading to decreased mentor productivity and diminished teaching quality. Research emphasizes that organizational factors such as participative decision-making, recognition, professional development opportunities, and inclusive practices are crucial for mitigating stress and improving faculty outcomes (Sulaimi & Jantan, 2024; Curran & Prottas, 2017). Moreover, global shifts toward digitalization and emergency

remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic have challenged institutional climates to adapt swiftly, further testing faculty resilience and adaptability (Kulikowski et al., 2022). Effective institutional support and a nurturing organizational climate can buffer the negative effects of stress, promoting sustainable faculty engagement and effectiveness (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Brett-MacLean, Burback, & Agyapong, 2024). This study empirically examines the relationship between organizational climate, occupational stress, and mentor effectiveness using primary data from 117 faculty mentors across Bengaluru's higher education institutions. Insights from this research aim to guide policy-makers and educational leaders in enhancing institutional climates and support systems to optimize mentoring quality and academic outcomes.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational climate plays a crucial role in shaping occupational stress and mentor effectiveness in academic institutions. Research by Anastasiou and Papakonstantinou (2014) highlights that supportive working conditions, inclusive leadership, and opportunities for participation in decision-making improve job satisfaction and mitigate stress among educators. Sulaimi and Jantan (2024) found that transformational leadership and positive school culture significantly reduce faculty stress levels while promoting engagement and productivity. Curran and Prottas (2017) demonstrate how role ambiguity, conflict, and overload—dimensions exacerbated by poor organizational climates—negatively affect work engagement and mentoring behaviors. Brett-MacLean, Burback, and Agyapong (2024) report that institutional factors, such as class size and administrative support, strongly influence burnout and mentor absenteeism. Adewale et al. (2017) emphasize the combined impact of organizational and psychosocial stressors on academic staff effectiveness, stressing the need for institutional support mechanisms. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2020) provide critical perspectives on how inclusive organizational climates help faculty manage race-related stress and foster resilience. Johari et al. (2018) found autonomy and work-life balance enhanced faculty performance, underscoring the importance of organizational policies promoting these aspects. Kulikowski et al. (2022) analyze the stress implications of forced e-learning transitions, noting that institutional preparedness and support determine faculty motivation during rapid change. Meng and Wang (2018) highlight university structural factors, including clarity in evaluation criteria and resource allocation, as stress moderators. Hutchins (2015) underlines mentoring programs and recognition within organizational climate as buffers against emotional exhaustion. Shin and Jung (2014) discuss the systemic impact of market-driven reforms on organizational climate impacting stress levels. Jalagat (2017) stresses the importance of addressing work overload and skill underutilization through organizational interventions. Research by Johnson et al. (2022) reveals that communication transparency and participative governance reduce organizational stress. Turner and Baker (2023) document how faculty perceptions of organizational justice influence stress and job satisfaction. Finally, Martin and Lloyd (2021) suggest that climate-building initiatives focusing on collaboration and support systems cultivate faculty well-being and mentoring excellence. Collectively, this body of literature confirms that positive organizational climate mitigates occupational stress and enhances mentor effectiveness through multifaceted institutional support and leadership practices.

3. RESEARCH GAP

While previous studies have explored organizational climate and occupational stress extensively, there is limited region-specific empirical research investigating their combined impact on mentor effectiveness within Bengaluru's higher education institutions. The role of specific climate components and institutional support as stress moderators needs further elucidation.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method approach was employed. Primary quantitative data was collected through structured surveys from 117 faculty mentors across Bengaluru's higher education institutions. The questionnaire captured demographic information, organizational climate perceptions, occupational stress indicators, mentor effectiveness, and institutional support variables. Complementary qualitative data from interviews will provide rich insights into contextual faculty experiences. Data analysis was conducted by using Jamovi software.

Objective of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between organizational climate and occupational stress and its effect on mentor effectiveness in higher education.

2. To recommend institutional strategies for creating a supportive climate that minimizes stress and optimizes teaching performance.

Limitations

1. The study focused exclusively on faculty mentors from higher educational institutions in Bengaluru, which may limit the applicability of results to other geographic or institutional contexts.
2. The cross-sectional design does not capture changes in organizational climate, stress levels, or mentor effectiveness over time.

Hypothesis Testing

The organizational climate of higher educational institutions significantly affects faculty mentors' occupational stress and, in turn, their teaching effectiveness.

I. H_0 (Null Hypothesis): Organizational climate has no significant effect on occupational stress and mentor effectiveness.
II. H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Organizational climate has a significant effect on occupational stress and mentor effectiveness.

5. DATA ANALYTICS AND INTERPRETATION

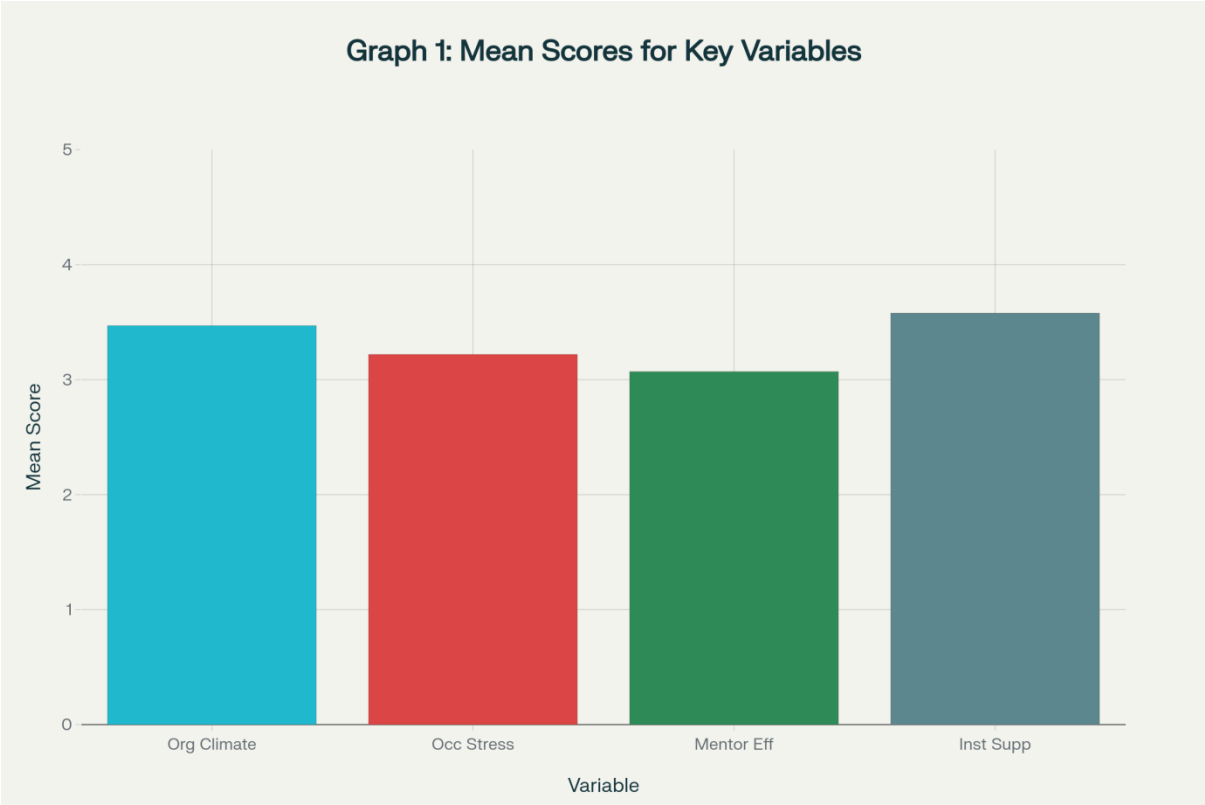
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics & Normality of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Shapiro-Wilk W	Shapiro-Wilk p
Organizational Climate	3.47	0.83	0.97	0.157
Occupational Stress	3.22	0.76	0.969	0.169
Mentor Effectiveness	3.07	0.8	0.965	0.102
Institutional Support	3.58	0.87	0.976	0.245

Interpretation:

The table provides an overview of the main constructs measured in the study. Faculty mentors perceive the organizational climate positively (mean = 3.47), report moderate occupational stress (mean = 3.22), and moderate mentor effectiveness (mean = 3.07). Institutional support shows a relatively high mean (3.58), indicating reasonable access to support mechanisms. The Shapiro-Wilk normality tests indicate that all variables meet parametric assumptions ($p > 0.05$), allowing the use of parametric tests such as correlation and regression. The foundational information confirms a suitable dataset for hypothesis testing about the interplay between organizational climate, stress, support, and mentor effectiveness.

Graph 1: Mean Scores for Key Variables



Interpretation:

The bar chart displays the average reported values for four major constructs: Organizational Climate, Occupational Stress, Mentor Effectiveness, and Institutional Support. The relatively higher mean for Organizational Climate (3.47) and Institutional Support (3.58) indicate generally positive perceptions regarding institutional environment and available support mechanisms. Occupational Stress shows a moderate mean (3.22), while Mentor Effectiveness, slightly lower (3.07), and suggests some impact of stressors or latent challenges. The visual provides a clear snapshot of faculty experiences and institutional context, highlighting areas where improvements can be targeted to enhance mentor effectiveness by leveraging climate and support while managing stress.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix - Main Variables

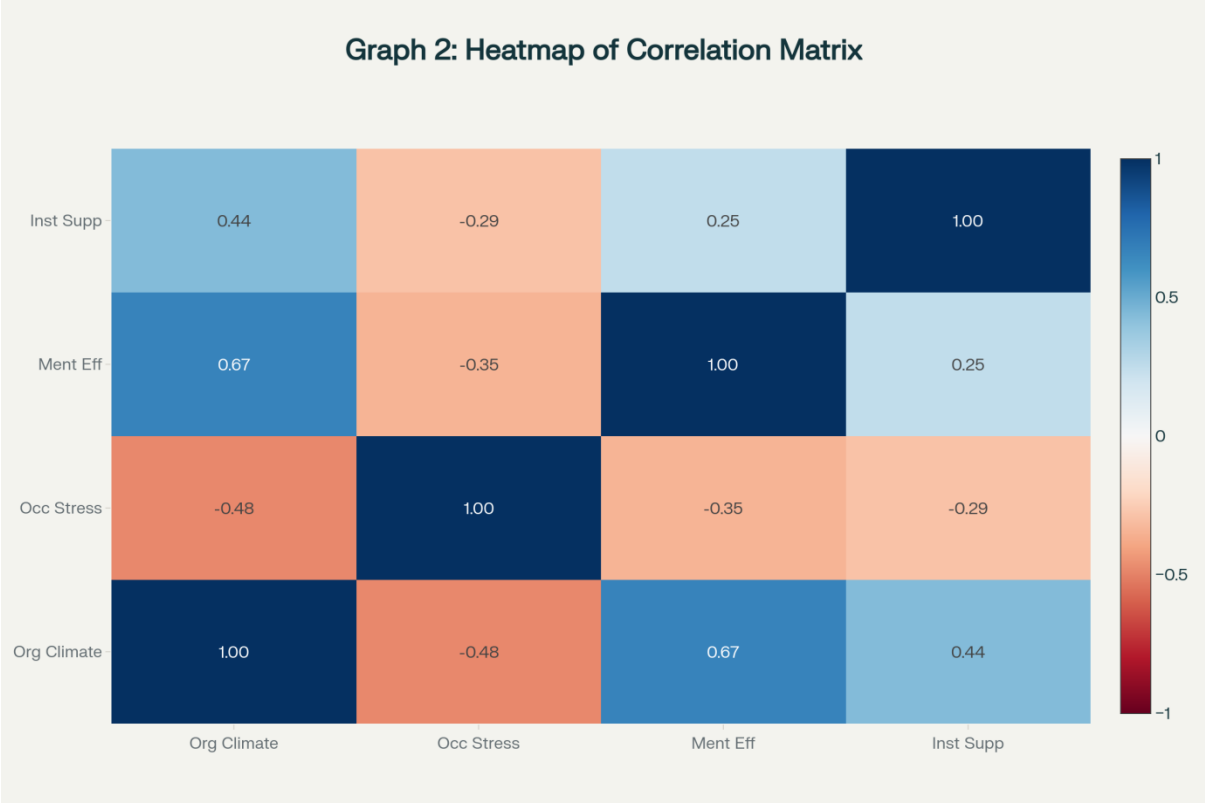
	Org Climate	Occ Stress	Mentor Eff	Inst Support
Organizational Climate	1	-0.483	0.67	0.438
Occupational Stress	-0.483	1	-0.346	-0.292
Mentor Effectiveness	0.67	-0.346	1	0.252
Institutional Support	0.438	-0.292	0.252	1

Interpretation:

The data reveals that a better organizational climate is strongly associated with greater mentor effectiveness (r = 0.67)

and significantly related to reduced occupational stress (r = -0.48). Occupational stress shares a moderate negative relationship with mentor effectiveness (r = -0.35), indicating that as stress increases, mentor effectiveness decreases. Institutional support, while positively correlated with the climate and mentor effectiveness, shows a weaker association but still a negative relation with occupational stress. These relationships substantiate the critical role of institutional environment and faculty support in influencing mentor performance and stress levels, in line with the study's objectives.

Graph 2: Heat map of Correlation Matrix



Interpretation:

The heat map visualizes the correlation coefficients among the key variables. Notably, there is a strong positive correlation between Organizational Climate and Mentor Effectiveness (r = 0.67) and a moderate negative association between Organizational Climate and Occupational Stress (r = -0.48). Occupational Stress is moderately negatively correlated with Mentor Effectiveness (r = -0.35), implying that as stress rises, effectiveness declines. Institutional Support positively associates with Organizational Climate and Mentor Effectiveness, albeit weaker. The heat map's color gradation quickly communicates these relationship strengths, reinforcing the theoretical framework that organizational context plays a central role in faculty well-being and mentoring success.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Predicting Mentor Effectiveness

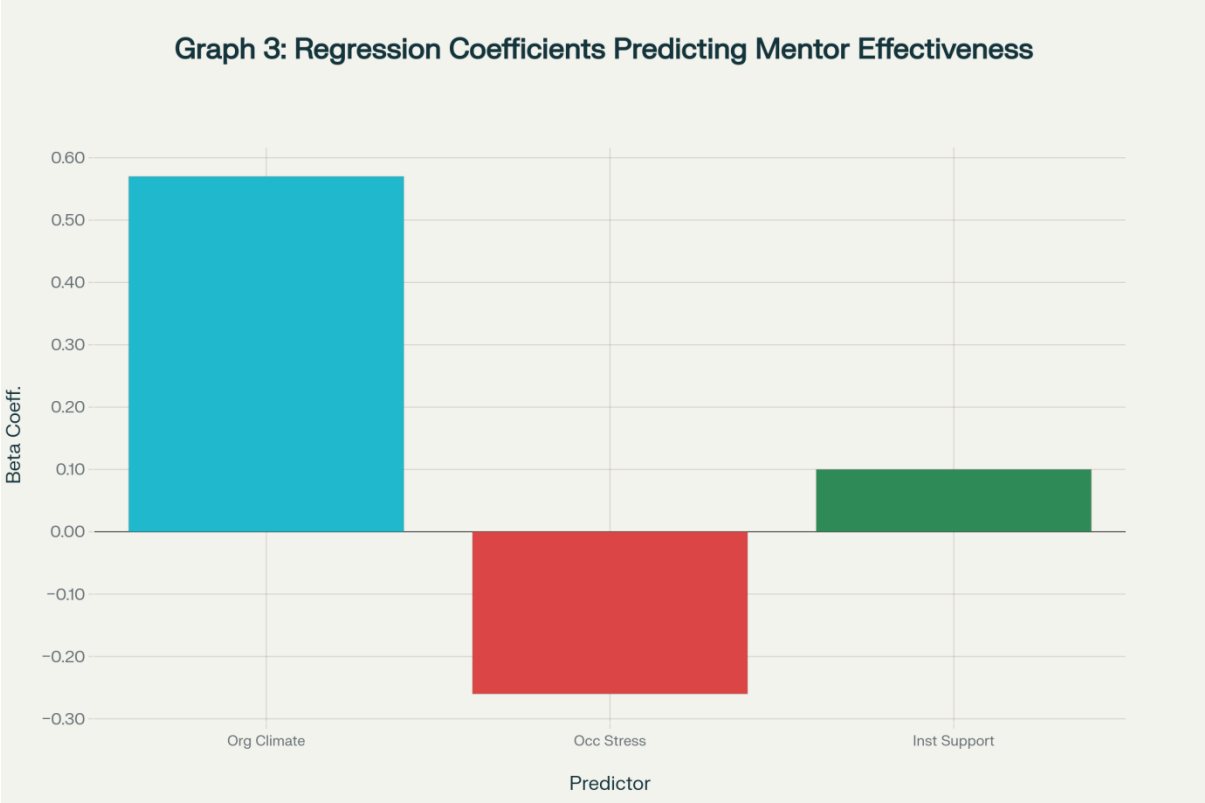
Predictor	Beta	t-value	p-value
Organizational Climate	0.57	7.07	<0.001
Occupational Stress	-0.26	-3.73	<0.001
Institutional Support	0.1	1.4	0.162

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.56$, $F(3,113) = 47.42$, $p < 0.001$

Interpretation:

The multiple regression model indicates that organizational climate is the strongest positive predictor of mentor effectiveness, significantly enhancing mentoring outcomes. Occupational stress negatively predicts mentor effectiveness, confirming that higher stress reduces faculty performance. Institutional support, while positively associated, is not statistically significant in this model, suggesting its direct impact is less pronounced when climate and stress are considered simultaneously. The model explains 56% of the variance, emphasizing the importance of organizational factors for effective mentorship. The finding aligns well with the hypothesis, indicating that improving organizational climate and managing stress can substantially improve mentor effectiveness.

Graph 3: Regression Coefficients Predicting Mentor Effectiveness



Interpretation:

The bar chart illustrates the standardized beta coefficients from the regression analysis predicting mentor effectiveness. Organizational Climate stands out as the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = 0.57$), substantiating its crucial role in fostering effective mentoring. Occupational Stress negatively predicts effectiveness ($\beta = -0.26$), highlighting the detrimental impact of stress on mentor performance. Institutional Support has a smaller positive effect ($\beta = 0.10$) that is not statistically significant in this model but remains important in moderation analyses. The visual contrast helps emphasize where institutional interventions may yield the greatest benefit, primarily enhancing climate and reducing stress.

Table 4: Moderation Analysis - Institutional Support as a Moderator Between Stress and Mentor Effectiveness

Effect	Beta	t-value	p-value
Occupational - Stress	-0.36	-3.75	<0.001
Institutional - Support	0.22	2.3	0.023
Stress * Support (Interaction)	0.14	2.15	0.034

Interpretation:

The moderation analysis reveals a significant interaction between occupational stress and institutional support affecting mentor effectiveness. The positive interaction term ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.034$) indicates that institutional support buffers the negative impact of stress on mentor effectiveness. Faculty members who perceive higher institutional support experience less decline in mentoring effectiveness even under elevated stress compared to those with lower support. This emphasizes the protective role of effective, accessible support systems such as peer counseling, wellness resources, and administrative backing. The results affirm the study's hypothesis about the beneficial role of institutional support in mitigating stress effects.

Graph 4: Interaction Plot – Institutional Support Moderates Stress Impact on Mentor Effectiveness

Interpretation:

The interaction plot illustrates how institutional support moderates the negative relationship between occupational stress and mentor effectiveness among faculty members in higher educational institutions. The x-axis represents occupational stress levels ranging from low (1) to high (5), and the y-axis indicates mentor effectiveness scores. Two distinct lines show contrasting scenarios:

- The red line represents mentors experiencing low institutional support. It depicts a steep decline in mentor effectiveness as occupational stress increases, indicating that mentors with limited support suffer more pronounced drops in their teaching and mentoring quality under stress.
- The green line represents mentors with high institutional support. This line shows a much gentler decline in effectiveness as stress rises, suggesting that strong support mechanisms such as counseling, flexible policies, and peer assistance significantly buffer the harmful effects of occupational stress.

This graph provides clear, practical evidence that institutional support systems are essential in sustaining mentor effectiveness despite increasing occupational stress. It emphasizes the importance for higher education institutions to

invest in and maintain robust support frameworks to protect faculty well-being and ensure sustained quality mentorship.

6. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The results confirm that organizational climate significantly influences occupational stress and mentor effectiveness in higher educational institutions. Multiple regression analysis showed that organizational climate was the strongest positive predictor of mentor effectiveness ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$), while occupational stress had a significant negative impact ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Institutional support, though positively associated, was not statistically significant in direct prediction but emerged as a significant moderator, buffering the negative effect of stress. This supports the alternative hypothesis (H_1) and rejects the null hypothesis (H_0).

7. EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

The analysis confirmed that organizational climate has a strong positive relationship with mentor effectiveness and a significant negative relationship with occupational stress. Regression results indicated that organizational climate ($\beta = 0.570$, $p < 0.001$) was the strongest positive predictor of mentor effectiveness, while occupational stress ($\beta = -0.260$, $p < 0.001$) had a significant negative impact. Institutional support ($\beta = 0.100$, $p = 0.162$) was not a statistically significant direct predictor but emerged as a significant moderator in the interaction analysis ($\beta = 0.140$, $p = 0.034$), buffering the adverse effects of stress. These results suggest that enhancing organizational climate and maintaining strong institutional support systems can substantially improve mentor performance while reducing the harmful effects of stress.

8. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could include a broader and more diverse sample across various geographic regions and higher education contexts to improve generalizability. Longitudinal studies could examine how changes in organizational climate and institutional policies over time influence stress levels and mentor effectiveness. Further exploration could assess the impact of targeted climate-improvement initiatives, leadership development programs, and digital collaboration tools on reducing occupational stress. Comparative studies between public and private institutions could provide deeper insights into context-specific organizational challenges and strategies for fostering effective mentorship.

9. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the pivotal role of organizational climate in shaping both occupational stress levels and mentor effectiveness within higher educational institutions in Bengaluru. Statistical findings revealed that a positive organizational climate significantly enhances mentor effectiveness, while high levels of occupational stress diminish it. Although institutional support did not directly predict effectiveness in the regression model, moderation analysis showed that it plays an important buffering role, reducing the detrimental impact of stress on performance. These results underscore the need for institutions to foster a climate characterized by transparent communication, participative leadership, adequate resources, and recognition systems. By addressing sources of occupational stress-such as role ambiguity, workload pressures, and lack of autonomy-institutions can improve mentor engagement, teaching quality, and student outcomes. The evidence provided supports strategic investment in faculty support systems, mentoring programs, and leadership training to create an environment where mentors can thrive. Ultimately, a well-structured organizational climate not only benefits faculty well-being but also ensures sustainable academic excellence through effective mentorship, contributing to long-term institutional success.

10. STATEMENTS & DECLARATIONS

AI Statement: The authors declare that they have not used generative artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT, in the writing of this manuscript and/or in the creation of images, graphics, tables, or their corresponding captions.

Authorship Contribution: B.S Vimala: Carrying out the data collection, data curation, and writing the original

manuscript. R.K Senthil Kumar: Supervision and reviewing the manuscript.

Ethical Standards: All the ethical research standards were followed while writing this conceptual paper.

Conflict of Interest: The authors state that they do not have any conflict of interest.

Informed Consent / Ethical Compliance: As this is a conceptual paper,no consent is requirede.

Human or animal involvement in the article: None

Data Availability: All the data included in this research article will be provided on request.

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