

FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE BARRIERS THAT INHIBIT PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

In the Educational domain, the professional development of the teachers is very crucial, and it is believed that only skilled, well-systematized, and proficient teachers can handle the teaching-learning process very efficiently. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate the faculty members' perceptions about barriers constraining their participation and commitment to professional development activities and this study would also highlight the significance of professional development opportunities and activities for faculty training and development. This is a qualitative study and follows an interpretivism paradigm. Further, the researcher has adopted phenomenological research to identify an in-depth understanding of the participant's beliefs, and responses. By using a purposive sampling technique, 45 faculty members who belong to the different campuses and divisions of the University of Education were selected for the data collection. The semi-structured interviews were taken from the participants to record their perceptions and challenges for the professional development activities. The interviews were conducted until the occurrence of the saturation point. The data analysis procedure was very comprehensive with the attention of the research ethical considerations. Thus, the collected data were analyzed through NVivo Plus software. Initially, the received participant's responses were transcribed and then converted into various scripts for the thematic analysis. After that, codes were allocated to the extracted themes, and sub-themes were categorized in the data analysis procedure. As per the data findings, two major themes were highlighted. The Personal and Professional Barriers. The subthemes of personal are lack of family support, internal motivation, and financial, and health issues. Whereas the subthemes of professional barriers theme seemed as heavy workload, additional administrative tasks, their non-supportive attitude, time constraints, less financial incentives, lack of physical facilities, barriers to professional development opportunities, and favoritism. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that the university administration should provide frequent professional development opportunities and reduce teachers' workload or other administrative duties, so they will have enough time to concentrate on enhancing their skills and capabilities. Teachers can be effectively trained through induction programs, workshops, freedom for higher education, and access to research grants.

By adopting these strategies, institutions can build a faculty of skilled, well-prepared, and motivated educators. As it seems that, a highly reputable faculty, in turn, contributes to the reputation and success of the educational institution.

INTRODUCTION

The professional development of teachers is essential for the effective execution of the process of learning and teaching. Teachers concentrate on improving the quality of instruction and professional development to improve students' learning outcomes and teacher credibility (Powell & Bodur, 2019). According to Doan et al., (2023) and Berkovich (2023), teachers must continuously enhance their performance by leveraging their fellow professionals' expertise, information, and abilities throughout their careers. Teachers, being professionals, cannot avoid engaging in professional development. In order to maintain efficiency in their teaching methods, they must cultivate professional growth. Therefore, teachers' professional development is crucial to enhancing the standard of education (Yuner, 2022). Various activities and programs are implemented to enhance the professional development of teachers in public universities. According to Moorhouse (2023), several professional development activities can be used for teachers, including workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, writing in a journal, classroom visits, teaching portfolios, evaluation of critical incidents, case study evaluation, peer coaching, cooperative instruction, and action research. Kennedy (2016) claimed that teachers are required to engage in typical professional development activities without considering their individual needs and interests. Brown et al., (2018) argued that teachers experience isolation within their professional network during traditional professional development activities, as these activities, such as biased seminars, only provide teachers with unilateral knowledge transfer.

Insufficient access to high-quality professional development may aggravate the barriers faced by teachers (Powell & Bodur, 2019). In other words, if professional development activities are of low quality, limited, and irregular, teachers may not derive any advantages from them. Furthermore, numerous barriers impede teachers' involvement in activities or training courses specifically designed for their professional development. Research has indicated

significant barriers to professional development participation include time constraints, financial considerations, travel time and distance, and family commitments. Doan et al., (2023) additionally stated that teachers in the United States have a higher workload than teachers in other countries. For this reason, they have less time available for critical professional activities necessary for their teaching and professional development.

In Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission has recognized the critical role of faculty development in achieving academic excellence. Initiatives such as the Faculty Development Program aim to enhance the teaching and research capabilities of faculty members across the country (Ilyas & Zamir, 2020). However, the implementation of these programs faces significant challenges, including limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and inconsistent support from institutional leadership. The University of Education, Lahore, established in 2002, is committed to providing high-quality education and fostering professional development among its faculty members. Despite these efforts, faculty participation in professional development activities remains inconsistent, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the barriers that hinder engagement.

As per the need of the teachers learning, professional development, attitudes, and interest, this qualitative study aims to explore the perceptions of faculty members at the University of Education, Lahore, regarding the barriers that inhibit their participation in PD activities. Understanding these barriers is essential for the university to design and implement effective PD programs that meet the specific needs of its faculty. By addressing these barriers, the university can promote a culture of continuous improvement and ensure that its faculty members are well-equipped to deliver high-quality education.

Research Question

What are faculty members' perceptions regarding the barriers that inhibit faculty members' participation in PD activities at the University of Education, Lahore?

Literature Review

It is necessary to study the barriers to teacher professional development. In this regard, various terms are used to characterize these barriers to PD, and researchers have looked at them from various perspectives, including teachers' personal lives and professional careers. The authors identified both external and internal obstacles to participation in Professional development programs. Organization, research culture, time, money, family commitments like childcare, and weather were all examples of external influences. In contrast, identity and internal motivation, personal qualities, and views or attitudes were examples of internal elements that acted as barriers. Individuals' motivation to learn and the degree to which external and internal factors hinder them differ.

Barriers to Teachers' Professional Development

The importance of internal or intrinsic motivation in encouraging professional development for teachers has been demonstrated by various studies (Akcaoglu et al., 2023 & Xianhan, 2022). Teachers' interest in or enthusiasm for professional development can hinder their participation in PD events (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015; Sinyangwe et al., 2016).

Teachers' low self-efficacy is linked to their inability to prioritize professional development over other commitments, such as caring for family and enjoying free time. Teachers' perceptions of their competence as teachers Akcaoglu et al. (2023). Teachers' participation in professional development programs is seriously hindered by low self-efficacy (Soodmand Afshar & Ghasemi 2020). The author claimed that teachers' lack of confidence in their abilities to grow professionally and assist their students in achieving better learning outcomes could seriously impact their participation in professional development activities. When teachers experience personal challenges and issues like childcare, family, health, or disabilities, they may not have the support system around them that they need, and this can lead to a lack of confidence. While Bayar (2013) believed that

teachers' attitudes and perspectives on professional development activities can significantly impact how actively they engage. In contrast, positive attitudes can drive teachers to participate, while negative attitudes have a significant, undesirable impact. They are less likely to engage in them again if they do not feel they contribute to their professional growth and help improve their knowledge and skills Futterer et al., (2024) Teachers' perceptions that professional development activities are unnecessary and irrelevant have been shown to significantly reduce teachers' engagement in such programs (Tulu, 2019). There needs to be more skepticism among teachers about the usefulness of required professional development programs for teachers Shal et al, (2024). Due to this, some teachers feel helpless and choose to participate outside of required PD opportunities Futterer et al., (2024) and Sinyangwe et al. (2016) have also provided similar evidence that teachers' disinterest in professional development was caused by activities that were either unacceptable to their needs or of poor quality. Teachers are more inclined to participate in professional development and training programs if their trainers or moderators are competent (Kosgei, 2015). External presenters or specialists need to understand the participants' backgrounds or specific concerns, which can lead to frustration if they completely disregard the participants' knowledge and experience Perry et al, (2022). Teachers' dissatisfaction with mandated PD programs and activities is illustrated by research by Berkovich (2023), who found that when teachers were required to participate, they did not have time to focus on their PD goals but instead on those of administrators or other community members. Similarly, some teachers in Knight's (2010) study declined to participate in a one-time training session they deemed useless. Teachers also offered additional justification, stating that they could make far more productive use of that time by preparing for lessons. Teachers' preconceived notions about professional development can restrict the kinds of PD activities they would be willing to try. Because teachers in study saw professional development as a state mandate, they only participated in PD activities that fit this description. Therefore, teachers are less likely to take advantage of professional development opportunities due to poor awareness of these options and inadequate information about them.

The availability of financial resources is a significant motivator for teachers to engage in professional development activities. Lack of financial resources has been a significant barrier to teacher participation in professional development in several studies (Kosgei, 2015; Perry et al., 2022; Sinyangwe et al., 2016). Teachers participating in professional development events like seminars, workshops, or training courses may be responsible for covering various costs, including registration fees, travel, lodging, and food (Soodmand Afshar & Ghasemi 2020). The incomes of many teachers, however, are low. Teachers' salaries in Vietnam are relatively poor (Huong, 2018), making it challenging for teachers, especially newer ones, to cover the whole cost of professional development activities. Teachers might be less likely to participate in professional development activities if they did not receive any incentive or significant reward. (Dilshad et al., 2019) found that teachers were less likely to participate in professional development when they were not compensated for time spent on non-teaching activities such as revising curriculum, mentoring colleagues, leading a team and department, and supervising preservice teachers. Teachers are less likely to participate in professional development programs when there are no incentives (Futterer et al., 2024). Thus, a lack of financial reward harms teachers' motivation to engage in professional development and make educational efforts (Sinyangwe et al., 2016). Lack of effective and professional relationships among colleagues is the most cited barrier to the professional growth of teachers in the literature. Many studies have shown collegiality to increase teacher engagement in PD opportunities (Kosgei, 2015). While teachers work well together, generosity and boost student learning, there is a long-held assumption that tensions between colleagues might prevent them from engaging in professional development (Akcaoglu et al. 2023). When teachers have tense relations with their colleagues, they are less likely to participate in group projects or study sessions and more likely to get used to working alone. As a result, isolating teachers reduces their opportunity to share and gain insights from their professional experiences and practices with their peers (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Kosgei (2015) cited that broken relationships with colleagues and university officials could improve Teachers' engagement in professional development programs

and activities. While, Huong (2018) found that if teachers saw their supervisors as error finders, they were less likely to accept their professional growth and development advice.

In numerous studies, time constraints were a significant barrier to teachers' involvement in professional development (Badri et al., 2016). Time limits and time conflicts were significant barriers to teachers' participation in professional development and learning opportunities (Bigsby & Firestone, 2016; Nabhani et al., 2014). Teachers have a great deal on their hands, and fitting into professional development can be difficult because of all the other things they have to do, such as classroom teaching, lesson planning, family commitments, and personal time (Bayar, 2013; Roux, 2013). Consequently, teachers need to plan their daily schedules carefully. Those who engage in PD activities may find they can devote less time than they want to other pursuits, such as interests or caring for their children (Badri et al., 2016; Fang et al., 2021). Excessively face-to-face teaching, grading, and other teaching-related chores might leave teachers with little time for professional development opportunities, including professional development workshops, classroom research, and practice teaching (Perry et al., 2022).

Family commitments may hinder teachers with families from attending professional development activities (Bigsby & Firestone, 2017). Teachers' engagement in professional development activities could not be improved without family support. One of the primary support barriers to teachers' involvement in PD is the inequitable distribution of work that leads to teachers' heavy workloads.

Another is a Leadership Style characterized by leading decision-making and a lack of recognition, as evidenced by the research on this topic David and Bwisa (2013) and Sinyangwe et al. (2016) discovered that teachers' severe workload was a significant barrier to their participation in professional development opportunities. Sinyangwe et al. (2016) agreed that job diversity and high stress discourage teachers from participating in professional development.

Various studies found that most public sector professional development programs were more conceptual than operational and did not address real-world teaching scenarios. A severe barrier to Pakistani teachers is insufficient professional development

programs for their educational needs. PD programs are typically characterized by a defined purpose that disregards teachers' requirements and workplace circumstances (Akhtar et al., 2011), and it is a reality that most public institution teachers need more subject matter expertise. Teachers' professional development programs typically include training programs or workshops that provide insufficient pedagogical skills. According to Adu and Okeke (2014) PD learning experiences need coherence with their institution's curriculum. However, most professional development practices in Pakistan suggested limited opportunities for reflection on learning, resulting in less effective teacher learning experiences (Mahmood, 2013).

Similarly, research in Pakistan revealed that changes in reflecting practices were technical and required a more content-specific PD framework (Hashmi, 2011). Unfortunately, due to inadequate follow-up, most PD learning experiences in Pakistan were not translated into the students (Aslam, 2013). Zhang et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of evaluating teachers' presentations and recommended that they receive timely feedback on their instructional methods. Pakistani teachers mentioned that professional support structures are crucial for good practices (Ali, 2011). However, teachers need to gain knowledge of the purpose of the professional learning community and are unwilling to accept comments from their peers. Most teachers preferred working alone to sharing their expertise with others. Due to a lack of communication between teachers and the authority, they view themselves as clients rather than providers of professional development programs (Halai, 2011; Nadeem et al., 2013).

Methodology

This is a qualitative research paper employing a phenomenological approach to explore the in-depth understanding and perceptions of the faculty members' regarding the challenges and barriers to professional development activities. Therefore, the interpretivism paradigm has been followed in this study to find out the reality of the practical life (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2017). According to Lydall et al. (2005), Interpretivism is that philosophical approach that suggests understanding and developing a sense of experiences by cognitively processing information

from the outside world. 45 faculty members who belong to various divisions and campuses of the University of Education were selected for the data collection, by using the purposive sampling technique. Further, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview, after a comprehensive reading of the literature review. Interviews were taken from the participants until the saturation occurred and the study has maintained the research's ethical considerations and recorded the participant's responses without any biases. The researcher used NVivo 11 plus software for the thematic analysis. The interviews were transcribed, and the participant's responses were converted into various scripts to conduct the thematic analysis of the data. As Cassol et al. (2018) transcription process refers to the process of converting audio recordings of interviews into a textual way. Therefore, the researcher covertly recorded the interviews in written statements for transcription. Braun et al. (2019) claimed that transliteration is the method of reshaping words from one language to another, without changing their context and their meanings. By using this technique, the researchers can accurately phrase into the true background. After that, particular codes were assigned to the extracted themes, and sub-themes were categorized in the data analysis procedure. According to the analysis and results, two important themes emerged: personal barriers and professional barriers. The sub-themes of personal barriers emerged as Lack of family support/family commitments, financial constraints, Health issues, and Internal motivation. The subthemes of professional barriers appeared as Heavy workload, Additional administrative and non-teaching tasks, time constraints, less financial incentives, Lack of physical facilities, Barriers to professional development opportunities, The non-supportive attitude of the administration, and Favoritism.

Findings

The details of each theme and sub-theme are mentioned below:

- 1- Personal Barriers:
 - (i) Lack of Family Support / Family Commitments:

Some female faculty members have voiced concern that we had problems participating in professional development activities because the venue for professional development opportunities was in other cities requiring long commutes and, in some cases, involving stay there. Sometimes we were not allowed because of family commitments.

One of them revealed:

As a female faculty member who lives hundreds of kilometers away from opportunities for professional development, I have additional challenges. Unfortunately, I am rarely accessible for professional development activities due to my motherhood. (P30)

Another faculty member further specified:

I have had some personal obstacles that I need to tackle. The fact that I have to perform all the duties around the house alone makes me quite tired. So, this issue hindered me from participating in professional development activities. (P19)

Another faculty member further mentioned the same sentiments and stated:

I was selected for a workshop in Headquarters (Lahore). However, I had to be in Attock with my family at the time, so I could not participate in professional development activities. Because I had a child, traveling to different places to participate in professional development activities was problematic. (P2)

(ii) Financial Constraints:

Several faculty members have voiced concerns that teachers have to operate within specific financial parameters to remain compliant. Faculty members who struggle to make ends meet have difficulty choosing professional development activities over household responsibilities. As a result, they are less likely to be able to take part in PD activities. Another faculty member agreed with the previously expressed concerns and added

There are budgetary constraints that teachers have to function within. Faculty members with low incomes have difficulty prioritizing professional development activities over family chores and hence cannot readily go on study-abroad excursions.

(iii) Health Issues:

One of the experienced faculty members has discussed barriers and stated:

My health condition is pretty poor. Consequently, I am unable to participate in professional development activities frequently. (P21)

(iv) Internal motivation:

Several university faculty members expressed concern that some teachers avoid participating in PD activities due to a lack of internal motivation. This poses a significant barrier to taking part in PD activities.

2- Professional Barriers:

Under the professional barrier theme, sub-themes emerged as heavy workload, excessive administrative and non-teaching tasks, time constraints, less financial incentives, lack of physical facilities, and barriers to professional development opportunities.

(i) Heavy Workload:

Most of the faculty members expressed concern about the workload of faculty members. They said that heavy workloads are one of the major barriers for us, as all lecturers must teach 15 credit hours per week, which means three classes of 1 hour and 30 minutes per day. We are overloaded with teaching assignments.

One of them is mentioned as follows:

My assistant professor's workload is 12 credit hours with other teaching assignments, which is very high. Undoubtedly, it is a big barrier to my participation in professional development activities. If I participate in professional development activities, I have to ask to come back the same day, continue my remaining classes, and report to the administration. Participating in activities is very hectic, then joining the classes back and doing teaching assignments on the same day. I have been feeling exhausted since commencing work at this university (P7)

Another faculty member has added support for the position, as mentioned earlier, by stating that:

The workload is very hard, with 12 credit hours. I oversee five Ph.D. students and many M.Phil and B.Ed. Hons students. It is a demanding task. When the university nominates us for professional development activities, the institution sometimes

makes it difficult for us to participate in such activities with this heavy workload. (P18)

(ii) Additional Administrative and Non-teaching Tasks:

Most faculty members expressed worry that we must handle non-teaching activities such as admissions, which are incredibly stressful. It is difficult to do this duty from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This duty is not an academic task, such as teaching. KPOs can easily perform this duty, but we have to do this duty to waste our time instead of participating in professional development activities.

One of them was mentioned as follows:

I must take care of non-teaching responsibilities. I am admission in charge of my campus, which is pretty stressful. It is not an easy task to perform this duty from 8:00 in the morning till 4:00 in the afternoon. This responsibility does not involve academic work such as teaching in any way. I am compelled to do it to squander my time, so I cannot participate in professional development activities. (P8)

One of the faculty members boosted the perspective, as mentioned earlier, and reported that.

I am the sports in charge. Conducting sports gala and related activities is time-consuming. Some other extra duties I have to perform. So, I am incapable of participating in frequent professional development activities. (P27)

Several faculty members have voiced concerns that we have certain supplementary tasks on our shoulders. We need to make a date sheet and timetable. We are the coordinator of the University Management System (UMS) at the department level. Unfortunately, this means that administrative duties consume the majority of our time. That means we cannot participate in professional development activities very often. One of them was mentioned as follows:

I have to make a timetable and date sheet. I am the UMS in charge. I have to spend most of my time on administrative tasks. So, I cannot attend frequent professional development activities. (P4)

Some faculty members raised concern and said some meaningless clerical work takes up our mental energy. We are overburdened, which causes a great deal of physical and mental pressure, ultimately affecting the

quality of teaching and mental health. We cannot frequently participate in professional development activities.

(iii) Time Constraints:

Some faculty members showed dissatisfaction and stated. We had an excessive number of teaching and administrative responsibilities. This indicates that time constraints are incredibly damaging to the professional learning of university teachers, which may also impact the quality of teaching and research. Faculty members' most prominent barrier to conducting research was a lack of time. Fifteen faculty members reported that they found it challenging to do research because of their commitments to teaching and administrative activities. For instance, experienced teachers to whom the administration has assigned more administrative work have complained about a lack of time. Further, some faculty members said they had little time to pursue research because of their administrative duties and heavy teaching load. Another faculty member stated that he could not conduct studies[research] due to his participation in administrative duties. One of the faculty members agreed with the earlier expressed worry and exhibited. I am in the middle of a doctoral program and find it challenging to manage my time between my family, classes, and research. My work is so preoccupied that I have no time to think about anything else. Trying to keep everything in order is a daunting task. (P14)

One of them specified that:

Due to time constraints, I cannot devote excessive time to professional development activities. I think that a lack of time hindered my professional development. We worked during the day, but we were sometimes required to stay late to complete tasks started during the day. (P37)

It was also claimed that not having enough time to interact with peers hindered career progress. They realized they knew what was necessary to help students succeed, but they lacked the opportunity to meet with other teachers to exchange ideas. Inexperienced faculty members emphasized this with a greater presence in the classrooms. The major problem is finding the moment to read, which can be challenging with a full teaching schedule.

(iv) Lack of Physical Facilities:

Almost all teachers commented about a dearth of campus infrastructure and educational resources. It is important to mention that several faculty members were dissatisfied with the available infrastructure and physical facilities including Computer/Science Labs, Libraries, Laboratories,

Some experienced faculty members are concerned about a lack of resources. They believed that the library lacked contemporary literature and scholarly publications. Most faculty members agreed that the lack of computer facilities was a major barrier to effective teaching and research. They further expressed worry and mentioned that the campus library had not updated electronic books and electronic journals for teachers and students. This is a barrier; we cannot access the latest books and journals. One of them was specified as follows.

The library has not updated the latest books and international journals for teachers and students. This is a barrier. I cannot access the latest books and journals. (P28)

Another faculty member echoed the formerly raised concerns.

Internet access is available to students and faculty on campus. However, its speed is frequently poor. My professional development is hindered as a result. (P22)

Further, several faculty members expressed and indicated that appropriate offices are not available for teachers. Four or five teachers sit in the small office, and how can we do research? There is a lack of good physical facilities on our campus. Thus, this is a barrier to our professional development.

(v) Less Financial Incentives:

Many faculty members voiced concern and claimed that financial facilities are nominal and medical and house rent facilities are not good compared to other universities. So, teachers have to take evening classes to cover the financial gaps. In a result, we cannot participate in professional development activities.

Some faculty members showed concern and disclosed that we lack financial assistance to organize professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, etc. Sometimes, we feel embarrassed, and planning and conducting professional development

activities is not easy. They further stated that the university does not provide sufficient financial incentives for participation in professional development activities in other cities and countries. We have to bear some expenses by ourselves. Sometimes we have to manage our transportation, food, and residence. This is a barrier to our professional development. One of them specified that:

The university has never provided any monetary benefits to conduct and participate in professional development activities. So, I am not inclined to participate in professional development activities. When we participate in professional development activities, no incentive, even No TADA, is given to us. The university does not provide sufficient financial incentives for participation in professional development activities in other cities. We have to bear some expenses by ourselves. (P14)

One of the faculty members exhibited his concern and stated:

The university has not given me study leave as part of my doctoral studies in business administration. Although the university wants to encourage us to keep our degrees up to date, they do not believe in giving us study leave or paying our tuition fees. (P27)

(vi) Barriers to Professional Development Opportunities:

The overwhelming majority of faculty members revealed that training, seminars, and workshops are not tailored to the needs of teachers, and the available professional development activities are limited and infrequent. Professional development training is provided to us in irrelevant areas. Training sessions provided only basic knowledge. Professional development can be effective if it is delivered by an expert who provides notes and valuable information for teachers. Teachers added their concern as some campuses provide a large number of professional development opportunities while others provide a lesser number. They further expressed worry and mentioned that no Faculty Development Directorate in headquarters exists that works for faculty need analysis and provides training according to our needs. So, this causes a significant barrier to our professional

development. One of them showed his concern and stated:

A one-size-fits-all approach is used to meet the professional development needs of all faculty members. Different professional development activities based on the needs of faculty members are not provided to us prior to the start of each semester. (P9)

One of the faculty members further supported the same concerns and claimed:

The appointment of new teachers is thrown into the classroom with no induction and mentoring. Induction and mentoring are both an essential part of professional development needs for teachers, but it is not typically provided at this university (P40)

Some faculty members further mentioned worries as there is a lack of collaboration activities related to research and innovation between inter and intra-campus levels. Our endeavors to further our professional development are hindered due to this. Another faculty member raised similar concerns.

At the campus level, the quality of research produced by faculty working in collaboration with students and faculty is not promising. The result is limiting my personal and professional growth. (P27)

(vii) Non-Supportive Attitude of Administration:

Several faculty members mentioned that the administration [principals] do not appreciate us for showing promising results. However, they demoralize and humiliate us if we make mistakes entering data in UMS. The university administration puts teachers under pressure, which dazzles them with administrative paperwork and requires them to teach more than 40 students in a single class. A few faculty members expressed concern and revealed that our campus directors have multiple split personality disorders. So, we are hesitant to communicate our professional development needs to them. Some teachers want to transfer from one campus to another due to non-supportive behavior. This causes hurdles to our professional development. So, we have to face the non-supportive behavior of the administration.

One faculty member added his concern and claimed that:

With the agreement [assurance] that university work would not be compromised, the university provided opportunities to me and permitted me to participate in professional development activities at other institutions. This caused demotivation. Regrettably, the lack of teacher motivation is a factor that prevents us from furthering our professional development.

Several faculty members working at far-off campuses realized that their campus had lost out on opportunities due to its remote location from the main campus. Perhaps the administration does not pay enough attention to it because it is far from the main campus. They further expressed worry and mentioned a communication gap between far-off and main campus leadership. Some opportunities may be lacking because we are far from the main campus. Another faculty member showed his concern and stated

I was not encouraged to participate in international professional development activities. The university does not provide study or earned leave. Travel documents can be troublesome. I lost motivation and quit. (P42)

(viii) Favoritism: -

Some faculty members voiced worry and mentioned that the existing culture of favoritism is a barrier to professional development activities because recommendations and approvals are granted only to the favorite teachers without considering the subject/departmental needs and merit. The university has no transparent equal opportunity mechanism, which hinders professional development activities. Primarily, reference-based teachers are allowed to attend international conferences. One of the faculty members stated:

Only the most well-liked teachers are given recommendations and permissions, regardless of the needs or requirements of their respective departments. The university does not have a framework that ensures transparency and equal opportunity, which makes it difficult to participate in professional development activities. Instead of opportunities according to need, most teachers permitted to attend international conferences are selected based on favoritism. (P41)

Several faculty members stated concerns that some important professional development opportunities are offered at Headquarters (Lahore). So, far-off campuses are not invited to participate, which is a barrier to our professional development. They further mentioned that some teachers got directorships and principalships of campuses and divisions, and they have been enjoying the status for a long. They are stuck with these directorships and principalships. There is no rotation system, and others have not been given a chance. Professional development opportunities have been given to the will of principals and directors.

Another faculty member also stated that selecting teachers to attend the training courses and conferences and participate in professional development opportunities appeared to be excessively bureaucratic and unjust. He stated that

The faculty members who circle about top management have many opportunities, and some get them once or twice a year, both domestically and internationally. In contrast, others have not been given any opportunities. (P42)

Discussion

The study's qualitative findings showed the University of Education, Lahore teachers' perspectives on the barriers inhibiting them from participating in professional development. Some conspicuous findings emerged by analyzing the study's qualitative and quantitative data in light of the participant profile.

The present qualitative study exhibited that a majority of UE faculty members supposed that the most significant barriers to teachers' professional development are heavy workload, additional administrative and non-teaching tasks, time constraints, fewer financial incentives, lack of physical facilities, and barriers to professional development opportunities, non-supportive behavior of the administration and favoritism. According to the present study findings, several faculty members specified that some PD activities do not effectively assist their professional development. The major reasons are inappropriate course times, the repetition of course material/content, the incompetence of trainers, out-of-subject knowledge, the location of distant programs, course planning issues, the selection

of unsuitable participants, and the lack of PD opportunities. Some teachers stated that many classes to lecture made it hard for them to devote more time to professional development. Teachers are also responsible for administrative tasks. So, they need additional time to engage in professional development programs. A study on the PD of teachers in Turkey revealed similar findings.

Similarly, in studies conducted by Mahmood and Khidhir (2022) participants highlighted the monotonous course content, the incompetence of course trainers, uncomfortable courses and training time, out-of-content knowledge, and the insufficient number of courses as barriers associated with PD. Several other researchers Babanoğlu and Yardimci (2017), Mahmood and Khidhir (2022) have also shown the incompetence of course trainers and problems relating to the scheduling of PD training. According to Ekşi (2010) study, the inconvenient course schedule was a significant barrier to teacher participation in PD activities. Alzahrani (2019) found that financial problems, heavy workloads, rigidly enforced work schedules, lack of administrators' support for PD, poor self-motivation, difficulty accessing literature in the specific field, and a lack of interaction among colleagues were significant barriers to the professional development of teachers. According to other research by Oeamoum and Sriwichai (2020), the most significant barriers to teachers' professional development were a heavy workload, financial difficulties, and political pressure. It was found that UE faculty members have little time to focus on professional development activities such as conducting research, publishing journal articles, or authoring books, which require considerable time. In addition, teachers have limited opportunities to learn how to conduct research and write articles or other sorts of publications. The present study findings aligned with research by Sarwar et al. (2012) and Leka (2022) found that time constraints and lack of professional advancement opportunities were the main barriers. In addition, several studies highlighted inadequate PD opportunities as a significant barrier to professional development (Buissink et al., 2017; Dilshad et al., 2019). The OECD studied the professional development of teachers using larger samples. Thus, it was considered that the research's findings were more generalizable.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explores faculty perceptions at the University of Education, Lahore, regarding the barriers that inhibit their participation in professional development activities. By identifying and analyzing these barriers, the research not only highlights barriers unique to the university context but also aims to offer actionable recommendations for enhancing PD programs. Implementing such improvements could foster a more supportive culture of continuous professional growth, ensuring faculty have access to resources, training, and support that meet their evolving needs. As a result, this commitment to PD has the potential to positively impact teaching quality, faculty satisfaction, and ultimately student learning outcomes, thereby strengthening the university's mission of achieving academic excellence and fostering innovation. This study also underscores the importance of institutional support and strategic alignment with faculty needs, offering insights that may be valuable for similar educational institutions aiming to enhance their PD initiatives.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

1. University administration might provide each discipline with need-based, equal access, and frequent PD opportunities. Applying a one-size-fits-all approach to all faculty members of different disciplines regarding professional development is less useful. It is necessary to identify their needs according to their discipline and provide them with appropriate and relevant opportunities.
2. Induction training might be mandatory for all new faculty members. There is a need to improve the mechanism of induction training on campuses and divisions. Some novice teachers need to learn about their deficiencies in teaching and research. The university administration might introduce peer observation and coaching/mentoring practices in classes.
3. University administration might provide a research environment on campuses. University administration might initiate more research journals at the departmental level and provide well-equipped digital labs on campus, so teachers and students can

benefit from it promote research culture on campus, and produce more publications.

4. The university might provide more collaboration activities, such as conferences, workshops, seminars, and webinars where our faculty members learn from national and international scholars.

5. University administration might reduce teachers' workloads and administrative responsibilities, as they need additional time for scholarly pursuit.

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