

## **Workplace Spirituality and Happiness at Work Among School Teachers with Mediating Effect of Job Stress**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study incorporates the emerging concept of workplace spirituality into the domains of job stress and happiness at work. These constructs have received limited attention in the context of the educational sector. Therefore, the aim of this study was to fill this research gap by examining the associations between workplace spirituality, job stress, and happiness at work. Moreover, the study investigated whether job stress plays a mediating role in the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness at work. A cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were gathered from a sample of 300 school teachers. Three scales were utilized to measure workplace spirituality, job stress, and happiness at work. The data analysis revealed a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and happiness at work. However, the mediation analysis indicated that job stress does not serve as a mediator in the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness at work. Moreover, to reduce job stress, compassion plays a great role, which is one of the components of workplace spirituality. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions adopt workplace spirituality practices to foster a conducive work environment that promotes the well-being and happiness of teachers, thereby positively impacting the teaching process.

**Keywords:** workplace spirituality, happiness at work, job stress, school teachers, educational sector

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**T**eachers play a pivotal role in education (Wahyu, 2020), significantly impacting the quality of education, either positively or negatively (Terry et al., 2020). Successful countries in education emphasize the importance of skilled and qualified teachers who contribute to the overall well-being of the nation (Nurabadi et al., 2021; Tezer et al., 2019). The quality of teachers directly shapes the future trajectory of a country (Rachmah & Putrawan, 2018; Warren, 2021). Nurturing and developing students' potential rests on the shoulders of teachers, who bear the great responsibility of shaping young minds (Pillay et al., 2005). Teachers help students thrive (Evers et al., 2004), and for this they must prioritize their own physical and mental well-being (Smith, 1992). In this context, workplace spirituality emerges as a crucial factor that has the potential to enhance teachers' professional well-being (Paul & Jena, 2022).

The acknowledgement of an inner existence that is fostered by meaningful work is referred to as workplace spirituality. It has been shown to lessen teachers' perceived stress and enhance psychological well-being (Ahmed et al., 2022; Mahipalan & Sheena, 2019). Many facets of workers' well-being are positively impacted by increased workplace spirituality. Studies have shown that it enhances job satisfaction (Ghayas et al., 2023), increases work performance (Ghayas et al., 2022), lowers stress levels, improves psychological health of employees (Upadhyay et al., 2019), and decreases inclinations to leave the organization (Hussain & Hussain, 2020). Consequently, encouraging spirituality in the workplace helps workers overcome daily challenges, and when their needs are met, it leads to increased happiness.

Happiness at work, a vital component of teachers' overall well-being, is impacted by a variety of factors including dispositional qualities, self-esteem, and the working environment (Benevene et al., 2019). A healthy spiritual atmosphere at work can significantly boost teachers' happiness, which in turn enhances their well-being and productivity (Benevene et al., 2019; Garg et al., 2022). Happiness at work, which includes satisfaction, engagement, and positive emotional experiences, is critical for long-term teaching effectiveness, and self-determination theory (SDT) provides a solid theoretical framework for comprehending the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness. SDT holds that intrinsic motivation and well-being depend on satisfying the three fundamental psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and when these objectives are met by workplace spirituality, teachers can feel more purposeful and fulfilled.

However, stress at work frequently disrupts this positive dynamic by undermining the advantages of spirituality and failing to meet psychological demands. School teachers that experience job stress frequently have poor work performance, high turnover, and absenteeism (Oteer, 2015). Furthermore, poor student behavior (Sass et al., 2011), an overwhelming workload (Timperley & Robinson, 2000), a lack of supervisory assistance (Spector, 1997), and strained relationships between new and old teachers (Rieg et al., 2007) are other factors that contribute to teachers' stress levels. Nevertheless, the presence of spirituality in the workplace can serve as a buffer and lower stress levels (Akhondi et al., 2017).

With an emphasis on job stress as a mediator, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness. Developing solutions to enhance teacher well-being and performance requires an understanding of how job stress mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness. Additionally, it examines how job stress impacts this dynamic and how workplace spirituality satisfies fundamental psychological needs, utilizing self-determination theory as a theoretical framework. The results of study are meant to contribute organizational procedures that foster a friendly and spiritually enlightening work environment for teachers, hence improving their well-being and productivity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Workplace Spirituality**

A sense of work motivation enables employees to reach their full potential (Dehler & Welsh 1994). It represents a spiritual connection between individuals and their work environment (Pawar, 2009), thereby encompassing self-awareness (Guillory, 2000). Nonetheless, this concept is a unique and personal philosophical construct that represents integrity, values, and a feeling of connection with the organization (Gibbons, 2000). It involves a dedicated effort towards self-discovery and understanding one's purpose in life, fostering connections, and establishing a consistent alignment between colleagues and the organization's internal belief system (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). In essence, it can be defined as the perception that employees have regarding the enhancement of their personal lives through meaningful work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Further, it is a multi-faceted and complicated construct that is both abstract and personal (Milliman et al., 2003), and it has no universally accepted acknowledged definition (Freshman, 1999). According to Brown and Ryan (2003), different authors defined workplace spirituality using other words that reflect the same phenomenon: business, workplace spirituality, and organizational spirituality.

The current study incorporates and builds upon the four aspects of workplace spirituality put forth by Pradhan et al., (2017), which serves as a conceptual foundation for further research. Understanding the nature of spirituality within the organization is based on these four dimensions. The ability of employees to gain personal meaning from their work, and find purpose and fulfilment in their professional endeavors, is the first dimension of workplace spirituality, i.e., spiritual orientation. Second, meaningful work investigates how much employees believe their work is intrinsically connected to their life's purpose or destiny, fostering a strong sense of fulfilment and meaning. Thirdly, compassion demonstrates a person's ability to show empathy, care, and consideration for others, which promotes a productive workplace. Finally, the alignment of values dimension considers employees' professional goal to harmonize their private values with the values upheld by their organization, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and congruence. In the context of this study, these dimensions offer a thorough framework for understanding the subtleties of workplace spirituality.

### **Job Stress**

Work stress is a negative mental state resulting from the connection between the worker and his work environment. It is an employee's reaction to a frightening work environment (Jamal, 1990). According to Karasek and Theorell (1990), when employees have a higher workload, they experience job stress because they cannot make decisions on their own and

lack social support from their coworkers and employer. Furthermore, the potential stressors described by Siegrist (1996), such as not receiving adequate recognition, remuneration, or promotion, result in high job stress, which ultimately demotivates employees, reduces productivity, and makes them feel unsafe at work.

### **Spirituality and Job Stress**

Literature shows a reverse relationship between workplace spirituality and job stress (Akhondi, 2017). Spirituality enables a person to attract the best out of the adverse conditions, reducing stress and increasing adaptive behaviors during hardships. Meaningful work reduces physical, mental, and emotional stress (Knoop, 1994), which is negatively correlated to job stress (Daniel, 2015). Engagement in meaningful work results in long-term benefits from stressful occasions (Britt et al., 2001). Cooperation and support from the organizations reduce stress (Zeffane & McLoughlin, 2006). Workplace spirituality is positively correlated with health and reduces the adversative effects of stress on wellbeing (Kumar & Kumar, 2014).

Therefore, the researchers hypothesize the following:

H1. There will be a negative relationship between workplace spirituality and job stress.

### **Happiness at Work**

The concept of "happiness at work" is complex and includes many aspects of an individual's experience and contentment with their workplace. Happiness at work involves a high level of life satisfaction and the presence of positive emotions. This state is marked by a general sense of well-being and contentment with one's job and work environment, which is why it is often synonymous with well-being and is characterized by high levels of life satisfaction, positive emotions, and reduced negative emotions (Fitriana et al., 2022).

### ***Workplace Spirituality and happiness at work***

Happiness is also essential for employees to perform well. Happy workers are more productive than unhappy employees (DiMaria et al., 2020). Studies have shown that a healthy spiritual environment at work can considerably increase teachers' happiness (Benevene et al., 2019; Garg et al., 2022; Paul & Jena, 2022).

Therefore, the researchers present a second hypothesis:

H2. There will be a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness at work.

### ***Job Stress and Happiness at work***

Most studies focus on well-being, but there is limited literature available on the influence of job stress on happiness at work. High job demands and limited job control have a detrimental effect on workers' well-being (Karasek, 1979). Stressors significantly impact psychological well-being (Daniels & Guppy, 1994), and they can have adverse effects on mental well-being (Fujishiro & Heaney, 2009; Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Conversely, experiencing happiness at work is associated with improved health and enhanced abilities to deal with stress (Stasio et al., 2017). Furthermore, higher levels of happiness at work act as a protective factor against occupational stress (Ros, 1999).

Therefore, the researchers present a third hypothesis:

H3. There will be a significant negative relationship between job stress and happiness at work.

The present study assumes a direct relationship among all three variables and postulates that when workplace spirituality is great, a person will perceive less job stress, which leads to happiness at work. The study also assumes that job stress would play the mediating role between workplace spirituality and job happiness. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4. Job stress will mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness at work.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Design and Sample

The current study used a cross-sectional quantitative methodology to investigate workplace spirituality, happiness at work, and job stress among schoolteachers. Data collection was facilitated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in charge of teacher training programs, allowing the researchers to reach a diverse sample of teachers from all types of schools (private, government, and community). This strategy resulted in efficient data collecting, which was completed within three to six months. Initially, 350-400 teachers were recruited, and their involvement was entirely voluntary. A total of 300 fully completed questionnaires were kept for processing, while around 60 incomplete questionnaires were removed to ensure data integrity. The overall refusal rate was low because of the indirect technique to reaching participants, in which teachers were invited through professional NGO networks rather than directly through their schools. Pakistan has three common types of schools. Public (government-funded) schools cater to a variety of socioeconomic classes and usually have higher class sizes. Private schools, which are fee-based, serve moderate and upper-income families by providing superior resources and lower class sizes. Community schools, which are often run by NGOs or local organizations, serve impoverished populations with limited resources.

### Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed using Google forms. The NGOs responsible for teacher training were requested to share the Google Forms link with teachers in their contact lists. This approach aimed to minimize social desirability bias by ensuring that teachers were not approached directly through their school principals or within their own school settings. Further, prior to participation, teachers were provided with detailed information about the research's purpose, assured that their participation would remain anonymous, and informed that in case of any queries, they could connect with the researchers via email.

Data were collected through three questionnaires and a demographic sheet, including gender, age, qualification, marital status, and number of years spent in the same school. A scale created by Pradhan et al. (2017) that includes four dimensions—meaningful work, spiritual orientation, compassion, and alignment of values—was used to evaluate workplace spirituality. This scale has strong internal consistency and positive psychometric qualities, as seen by its Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78. Furthermore, it has been shown that this scale is appropriate in the Pakistani setting as well (Hussain & Hussain, 2020).

The majority of the questionnaire used a 5-point rating scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." The statement "I experience a sense of personal fulfillment from my work" is an example of meaningful work component. Among the items pertaining to spiritual orientation is "My spiritual values guide my decision-making at work." Compassion items include "I am concerned about the needs and requirements of my colleagues," while items measuring alignment of values comprise "My personal values align with the value system of this organization."

The *happiness at work scale*, developed by Ramirez-Garcia et al. (2019), was also utilized in this study. Job factor and personal factors of the employees are the two aspects of workplace happiness that are measured by this eleven-item questionnaire, which exhibits good psychometric qualities including high Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.878$ , and satisfactory construct, convergent, and discriminant validity. Further, confirmatory factor analysis supported a two-factor structure (job-related (extrinsic) and individual-related (intrinsic) factors), with acceptable model fit indices (CFI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08). It uses a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 7 showing "strongly agree." "The organizational climate at my work unit is good" is a sample item that reflects the job environment dimension, and "I have internal stability" is a sample item that represents the worker factor dimension.

Finally, job stress was assessed using a scale developed by Tate et al. (1997). This eight-item questionnaire evaluates both psychological and physiological stress indicators, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.835. It employs a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." Sample items from the psychological characteristics' domain include "I feel frustrated at my job," while sample items from the physiological features domain include "Job-related problems make my heart beat faster than usual."

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the demographic data, and Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess internal reliability. The Hayes process macro was applied through IBM SPSS statistics version 21 to examine the mediating

role of a variable. Additionally, correlation and multiple regressions were employed to ascertain the relationships between different variables. In the current study, two scales exhibited high alpha reliabilities: workplace spirituality ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) and happiness at work ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ). The stress at work scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = 0.69$ ). Generally, Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 indicate sufficient reliability, while higher values suggest good instrument reliability (De Vet et al., 2011). The alpha values obtained in this study indicate the appropriate measures were utilized.

**RESULTS**

Out of the 300 participants, 150 were males and 150 were females. Among the total respondents, 48.3% worked in private schools, 26.7% were employed in public sector schools, and the remaining 25% were affiliated with community schools. The majority of participants, 61.4%, fell between the ages of 31 and 40, while 50.7% were married and 46% held postgraduate degrees. Additionally, 88.7% of the total participants were associated with the same school for a period ranging from 1 to 10 years. Table 1 illustrates the full distribution of respondent demographic information.

**Table 1**

**Participant Demographic Information**

Demographics		Freq.	%
Gender	Male	150	50
	Female	150	50
Age	21-25	32	10.7
	26-30	57	19
	31-35	98	32.7
	36-40	86	28.7
	41-45	17	5.7
	46-50	10	3.3
Marital Status	Single	109	36.3
	Married	152	50.7
	Windowed/widower	14	4.7
	Divorcee	25	8.3
Currently Job Sector	Private School	145	48.3
	Government School	80	26.7
	Community School	75	25
Qualification	Intermediate	1	3
	Bachelors	110	36.7
	Masters	138	46
	M. Phil	51	17
Years Spent in Same School	1 to 10	266	88.7
	More than 10	34	11.3

Results indicate a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness ( $r = 0.595^{**}$ ). However, the association between workplace spirituality and job stress is negative ( $r = -0.090$ ), but not statistically

significant. Similarly, the relationship between happiness and job stress is negative ( $r = -0.076$ ), but it also lacks statistical significance. Table 2 displays the correlation values among the variables examined in this study.

**Table 2**  
**Correlation Among Examined Variables**

Variable	1	2	3
Workplace Spirituality		-0.090	0.595**
Job Stress			-0.076
Happiness at work			

Note. \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The mediation analysis findings (Table 3) reveal that workplace spirituality has a significant direct effect on job stress ( $\beta = -0.1193$ ,  $SE = 0.0762$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that higher levels of workplace spirituality are associated with lower levels of job stress. Moreover, workplace spirituality has a positive and significant direct effect on happiness at work ( $\beta = 1.0$ ,  $SE = 0.0806$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that higher levels of workplace spirituality contribute to greater workplace happiness. However, the direct effect of job stress on happiness at work is negative but not significant ( $\beta = -0.0291$ ,  $SE = 0.0610$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

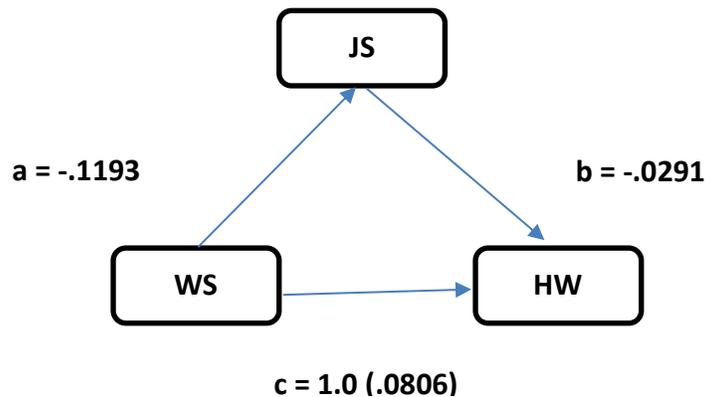
**Table 3**  
**Mediation Analysis Findings**

Direct Effect Variables	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
WPS-JS	-.1193	.0762	-1.5649	.1187	-.2693	.0307
WPS-HW	1.0	.0806	12.6546	.0000	.8618	1.1792
JS-HW	-.0291	.0610	-.4769	.6338	-.1492	.0910
Indirect Effect Variables	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCL	Boot ULCL		
WPS-JS-HW	.0035	.0102	-.0132	.0284		

Note: WPS = workplace spirituality, HW = happiness at work, JS = job stress, C.I = class interval, LLCI = lower limit class interval, ULCI = upper limit class interval.

Regarding the mediating role of job stress between workplace spirituality and happiness at work, the results indicate that it is statistically insignificant ( $\beta = 0.0035$ ,  $SE = 0.0102$ ,  $LLCL = -0.0132$ ,  $ULCL = 0.0284$ ). This implies that job stress does not mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness at work. Figure 1 displays a graphic representation of the mediation model, displaying the relationship between workplace spirituality, job stress, and happiness at work.

**Figure 1**  
**Mediation Model: Workplace Spirituality, Job Stress, and Happiness at Work**



Note: WPS = workplace spirituality, HW = happiness at work, JS = job stress.

Table 4 displays the results of the multiple regression analysis, indicating that all the variables have variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues in the data. Among all the dimensions of workplace spirituality, only compassion demonstrates a statistically significant inverse relationship with job stress ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4**  
**Multiple Regression Analysis Findings**

Model	Unstandardized coefficient <i>B</i>	SE	Standardized coefficient <i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	sig	VIF
(constant)	5.225	0.333		15.687	.000	
Alignment of Values	-.037	0.070	-.042	-.527	.5999	1.917
Spiritual Orientation	.081	0.092	.070	.882	.379	1.913
Compassion	-.137	0.080	-.120	-1.719	.087	1.462
Meaningful work	-.059	0.101	-.048	-.578	.563	2.109
Adjusted $R^2 = .008$	$F$ ANOVA = 1.591		Sig = .177			

## DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality, happiness, and job stress. Among the four hypotheses proposed, only one hypothesis was supported, indicating a statistically significant positive correlation between workplace spirituality and happiness at work. Teaching is widely regarded as a noble profession, with teachers playing a significant role in shaping the lives of many individuals. The act of imparting knowledge and sharing with others gives teachers a sense of fulfillment and contributes to their overall happiness. Although research on the connection between job happiness and spirituality is still in its early stages, the findings of this study align with existing literature and support a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job happiness (Benevene et al., 2019; Garg et al., 2022; Paul & Jena, 2022). Overall, spirituality is vital for a good life and eudemonic well-being. The present study's findings illustrate statistically positive significant relations between workplace spirituality and happiness.

This study also examined the potential mediating effect of job stress on the relationship between workplace spirituality and happiness at work. However, the results presented in Table 3 suggest that job stress does not act as a mediator in this relationship. This finding contradicts the study that shows job stress is a significant mediator between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being (Mahipalan and Sheena, 2019). Furthermore, although a negative relationship is observed between job stress and happiness in the present study, this result does not reach statistical significance. Similarly, the results indicate an inverse relationship between workplace spirituality and job stress, which is also found to be statistically insignificant. These findings suggest that while contributing to society may enhance workplace happiness among teachers, it does not eliminate the stress they experience in their work environment. In the present study, happiness at work is higher among teachers, which suggests spirituality helps minimize the harmful effect of job stress, improving physical and psychological well-being (Zellars & Perrewé, 2003). However, there are other factors, too, that need to understand, such as burnout, work overload, emotional intelligence, resilience, and organizational politics. Teaching is one of the most overburdened professions and people often undermine its importance. Further, lack of recognition, low pay scale, and limited promotion opportunities are potential stressors (Siegrist, 1996).

To further explore these findings, regression analysis was conducted. The results show that spirituality does not have a direct impact on job stress (Table 4). The current study's findings highlight compassion, a vital facet of workplace spirituality, as a key factor in managing job stress among schoolteachers. While spirituality as a whole did not directly lower occupational stress, compassion emerged as a strong predictor of stress reduction. This highlights the importance of cultivating compassion as a successful strategy in the challenging field of education. Beyond lowering stress, practicing compassion in the workplace fosters a positive work environment characterized by kindness, understanding, and mutual respect—all essential traits for teachers' overall well-being and the effectiveness of an organization. According to research by Barsade and O'Neill, 2016, compassionate workplaces have lower turnover rates, higher levels of engagement, and job satisfaction. Additionally, compassion fosters a sense of connectivity and thankfulness, which improves psychological health and lowers cortisol levels (Ozbay et al., 2007). The findings further extend to the idea of applying workplace

spirituality as an umbrella concept in stress management. For instance, spirituality practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and other reflective practices assist in managing stress, enhancing well-being, and increasing resilience (Csiernik & Adams, 2002). These practices empower people to find meaning in their work and to find purpose, which is crucial for teachers who bear one of the more emotionally exhausting professions.

In this context, leadership plays an essential role in cultivating a compassionate culture and lowering workplace stress. Effective leaders can set examples of compassionate behavior by fostering workplaces that value empathy, understanding, and support. Such compassionate leadership enhances employee well-being by improving trust, lowering perceptions of organizational pressures, and promoting emotional resilience (Boyatzis et al., 2006; Worline & Dutton, 2017).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

According to expert recommendations (Sim et al., 2021), the sample size utilized in this study was deemed sufficient to explore the moderate to strong relationships among the variables. However, it is important to acknowledge that a larger sample size or the inclusion of participants from different cities could have yielded a more comprehensive understanding of the mediating effect. Responses varied significantly across school types due to differences in the number of teachers employed at each institution. As a result, conducting a robust school-level analysis was not feasible as unequal representation could have skewed the findings.

This study represents a foundational attempt to explore the relationships among workplace spirituality, happiness at work, and job stress specifically in the context of school teachers in Pakistan. Since no prior studies have examined these constructs collectively within this demographic, the analysis was intentionally exploratory in nature. While the inclusion of control variables such as leadership style, school-level policies, or other organizational factors could have added significance, the study prioritized establishing baseline relationships between the primary constructs. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate controls to build on the findings presented here. The decision to omit controls was also informed by the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) highlights people's psychological needs and intrinsic motivation, which can be usefully examined in exploratory research without the requirement for substantial environmental controls. This strategy lays the foundation for further, in-depth research by enabling the study to concentrate on comprehending how personal views of workplace spirituality affect job stress and happiness.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the significant need for the educational sector to focus on compassion and spiritual practices to lessen teachers' stress and to develop a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their work. As by applying spirituality in the workplace, teachers can not only prioritize students' academic achievements and their comprehensive development, but they can also foster meaningful connections within the classroom (Lindholm & Astin, 2006; Jones, 2005).

### **Recommendations**

To successfully address teachers' stress and promote happiness in the workplace, the authors recommend six action steps for educational institutions:

1. Train school leaders to embrace compassionate leadership styles. Consequently, teachers can feel supported, valued, and heard, thus reducing stress and improving morale.
2. Promote formal and informal peer support networks where teachers can share experiences and provide mutual support.
3. Integrate spiritual practices such as mindfulness and meditation with other training programs that help teachers manage stress.
4. Recognize and praise compassionate behavior among teaching staff to further reinforce such behaviors.
5. Make policies that promote teachers' work-life balance such as flexible working hours and equitable workload distribution. Moreover, establish structured systems for recognizing and rewarding exceptional work.
6. Conduct more research studies on teachers' happiness and workplace spirituality, especially within the Pakistani context. Moreover, survey teachers on a regular basis to track their stress levels, job satisfaction, and the results of interventions that have been put in place.

Understanding the significance of teacher happiness in the educational process (Tadić et al., 2013), these recommendations are meant to create a sustainable and supportive work environment where teachers can thrive. Further, investing in the psychological, economic, and social well-being of teachers is not only an organizational responsibility but a societal necessity that can ultimately lead to better educational outcomes for students and society.

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