

## **In-class Time Theft in Higher Education Classrooms: An Exploratory Study**

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### **Abstract:**

*The primary purpose of the study was to explore the ways and extent of in-class time theft by the university teachers. A sample of ten teachers was selected from the multi-campus public university of Lahore by using random sampling technique. The participatory observation was used as a tool to collect the data. The observations were recorded in checklists. The data was analyzed by using frequency and percentage of occurrence of time theft. It is concluded that all the sample teachers were involved in time theft that ranged from 17.28% to 75.31%, average being 47.05%. The sample teachers taught only for the 53% of the scheduled time. A large majority of the classes were either started 10 minutes late or left 10 minutes earlier than the scheduled time. Twenty-one out of scheduled 90 classes were not taken by the teachers. The findings of this study have implications for academicians, department heads and policy makers.*

**Keywords:** Work Attitude, Higher Education, Deviant Behavior, Teacher

### **I. Introduction**

The issue of Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) is prevalent at almost all workplaces (Spector et al., 2006) and educational institutions are not exception to it (Hu, Hung, & Ching, 2015). Teachers being normal individuals exhibit behaviors that are similar to a typical employee in some other organization (Bayram, Gursakal, & Bilgel, 2009). CWB is damaging to both the institution and the individuals who are involved in it (Gruys & Sackett, 2003). Time theft is one of the CWB that is prevalent in all type of institutions. In order to understand the time theft by the university teachers, it is quite important to understand to what extent the time theft is prevalent in public sector university classrooms.

The theft or ill use of time is as challenging as the theft or ill use of any other asset because time is an organizational asset. Employees can be engaged in stealing of the time from their employer through many different ways, sometimes these time stealing behaviors can be resulted in more rigorous organizational consequences than others do. Employees who come back late constantly from the break are engaged in time theft. Some of the examples of time theft in the classrooms by the teachers include coming late to the class, leaving the class earlier than scheduled time and gossiping in the class.

Time theft is weighed as a type of unsanctioned non-work related behavior in which an employee, while being on the job, is engaged in the activities which are not related to work (Gryus& Sackett, 2003). Ketchen, Craighead and Buckley (2008) introduced the concept of time theft and Martin and his colleagues (2010) later defined it as "the tendency of an employee to involve in counterproductive work behavior in the workplace throughout the work hours". Teachers can also be involved in time theft. Methods include arriving late in the class room, leaving class before the actual class time, taking extended breaks, passing time in irrelevant discussions, being on their cell phones during class time: excessive personal phone calls etc. Sometimes it could be difficult to detect the theft of time, this study will help the organizations to detect the teachers' time theft behavior so that they recognize the intention of teachers committing time theft and solve the problem effectively. This study is perhaps the first in Pakistan that was conducted to study the in-class time theft behavior of university teachers. The primary purpose of the study was to explore the ways and extent of in-class time theft by the university teachers.

## **II. Literature Review**

In most of the organizations, time theft is a common phenomenon. Furthermore, by the supervision style of management and the given culture, the type and degree of time theft can vary. Involving in time theft doesn't always signify bad employees; it can be contrary in some situations. However, for better understanding of the concept of time theft this particular phenomenon is needed to be explored more to derive new ways to lessen its foregoing detrimental influence within an organization, especially educational institutions.

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Culture of an organization plays a big role for developing a norm within which purloining of time is whether acceptable or is not acceptable and to the degree of its occurrence (Lim, 2002). For instance, in a sample, it was found by Blanchard and Henle (2008) that 96% of employees receive personal e-mails at work. Time theft is not seen as "wrong" where such type of behavior is common and acceptable (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994) and its prevailing occurrence is affected by this norm.

The phenomenon of time theft is also related to the career stage of the worker. It is hypothesized that the workers who exhibit low level of work ethics are susceptible to involve in more off-task behaviors. (Filipczak, Zemke, & Raine, 1999). Across the career stage, time theft differs, with the employees at both the maintenance and trial stages involving in time theft to a greater degree as compared to the employees who are at their stabilization stage.

Literature shows that the length of service is also associated with the time theft behavior. It is hypothesized that length of service and ethical conduct of the employees is positively associated (Appelbaum, Deguire, & Lay, 2005). Malachowski (2005) has found that an old employee wastes less time during work hours. Tenure of an organization is related to time theft negatively.

Time theft may also be affected by the perception of commitment to one's own place of work. Employees will be less likely to engage in time theft and stay longer with the organization if they are committed to their work place (Johnston, Parasurama, Futrell, & Black, 1990 and Spector & Fox, 2002). McElroy, Morrow and Fenton (1995) found that the employees who are not committed to their work place are more likely to have sick days even if they are they are not sick. Fox and Spector (2002) have proposed that it is because of the gap between employees' expectation from their work place and what they acquire from their work place, for example benefits and salary etc. Thus, time theft in an organization can be reduced by increasing the organizational commitment as committed personnel is not encouraged to jeopardize their contemporary contract with their organization.

Researches have hypothesized that the number of employees who involve in time theft can be increased by the perception of injustice (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; Greenberg, 1990; Sharlicki & Folger, 1997). In a survey of 2000 employees by Malachowski (2005), approximately 24% of them designated that they involve in counterproductive work behaviors because they feel that according to the amount of work they do they are not being paid enough.

The decision to involve in counterproductive work behaviors can be influence by the degree of contentment of an employee with his/her work. Researches have revealed that the employees are much likely to involve in counterproductive work behaviors who have low satisfaction with their jobs (Lau, Au & Ho, 2003). Explicitly, employees who are not contended with their jobs are susceptible to be absent or late from the work than contended employees (Golan, & Adler, 1981).

In time theft, perhaps the most important personality factor is conscientiousness. Conscientiousness demonstrated by the employees contributes to the organizational citizenship behavior (Ilies, Scott & Judge, 2006). Employees' productivity is directly tied to conscientiousness (Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007) and work presentation (Barrick & Mount, 1991) across different occupations and workstandards (Salgado, 1997). Self-efficacy and motivation are additional personality factors; time theft is hypothesized to be negatively related to both these additional factors. Time theft is likely to have a negative interaction with the motivation of an employee (Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007).

Time theft is decreased by the degree to which employees are being supervised whether electronically or in person by their supervisor. Employees will be less likely to find a co-worker to talk to or walk in the office if their individual existence is monitored. In a nutshell, time theft behaviors (only the behaviors that are monitored) can be decreased by the good supervision techniques. For instance, the personnel will devote more time on their work related activities if their internet usage is monitored. (Alder, Schminke, Noel, &Kuenzi, 2008).

Time theft is so likely to be reduced by the incidence of job standards such as accountability to meet the objectives and productivity goals. Employees have a harder time involving in time theft behaviors if there is an effective control over them by the organization (Ketchen et al., 2008). According to Cordes and Dougherty (1993), if employees are not facilitated with the right to use appropriate resources they will be overburdened and be unsuccessful to complete their responsibilities.

Time theft is operated with the operant conditioning classic principles. According to Lawrence and Robinson (2007) if there are negative consequences for some act, employees will be less likely to replicate a behavior and if there are positive (or at least no negative) consequences they will be much likely to replicate a behavior Thus personnel will be less likely to involve in time theft behaviors at a later time if there are consequences for that behavior.

As mentioned, CWB can be harmful for those who practice it and where it is practiced. Hu et al. (2015) reported prevalence of CWBs in Taiwan schools (Hu et al., 2015). Salami (2010) mentioned that CWB is associated with work related stress and negative affectivity. Hung (2011) and Kyriacou and Chien (2004) commented that CWB is inevitable in the stressful nature of work in Taiwan. CWM that may include leaving institution for some time during working hours, coming late to schools and leaving early, has negative consequences for schools (Appelbaum et al., 2007). It is evident from the previous studies that CWB exists in schools (Kaptein, 2011) and is destroying conducive environment (Andreoli&LefRowitz, 2009) and is harming institutional interests (Berry et al., 2007). Ahmed (2018) mentioned that “average employee steals approximately 4.5 hours per week from their employer, totaling nearly six full work weeks per year and costing businesses hundreds of billions of dollars a year worldwide”.

Anwer et al. (2011) suggested that the CWB is more prevalent among Pakistani university male teachers as compared to female teachers. Khan (2017) confirmed that teachers CWB is present in a public sector university of Peshawar and that the teachers’ deviant behavior has a negative impact on students’ academic performance

The above quoted literature suggests that, time theft take different forms. University teachers work autonomously in the classroom and there hardly any supervision of what is going on in the class. In such a situation, keeping in view the above mentioned literature, university teachers, being normal human beings, are prone to time theft behavior.

### III. Research Methodology and Variables

The population of this study was a multi-campus university in Lahore. All the teachers who were teaching in spring 2018 comprised the population for this study. The sample of the study was chosen by simple random technique from one of the campuses in Lahore. Ten teachers made up the sample of the study.

The *participant observation method* was employed for data collection of this quantitative study. The researcher used the participant observation method. The present research aims to investigate the time theft behavior of teachers at higher education classrooms. The data were collected through participatory observing teachers in higher education classrooms in real time. Nine consecutive classes of each teacher were observed. The observations were recorded in an observation checklist that was prepared by the researcher herself and was validated by the experts. The participant observations were recorded by one of the researchers herself and some other students who were registered in the relevant classes.

Three courses were participatory observed by one of the researchers herself whereas remaining seven courses were participatory observed by three other enumerators. Since the data involved observation of a *normal educational practice* therefore there was no need to obtain informed consent from the subjects (Institutional Review Board for Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2018). The data were collected in March-April 2018.

#### A. Data Analysis and Findings

The data obtained through all the ten checklists was subjected to manual analysis and collated in the form of tables to make the data presentation meaningful. The overall aim of this study was to find out the extent of time theft by teachers in higher education classrooms.

Table 1 presents the summary of teacher activity in a ninety minute class. In all 9 classes were scheduled to be observed out of which two classes did not held. The teacher was late in five classes, whereas two classes were left early. Out of 810 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 400 minutes. This simply means the time theft for teacher 1 was 50.62%.

**Table 1: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 1)**

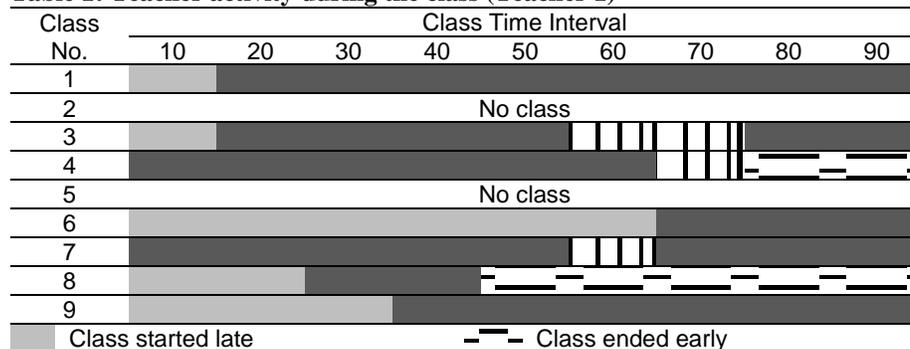




Table 2 shows that teacher 2 did not take two classes, was late in four classes and left six classes earlier than the scheduled time. Out of 810 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 460 minutes. This simply means the time theft for teacher 2 was 43.21%.

**Table 2: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 2)**

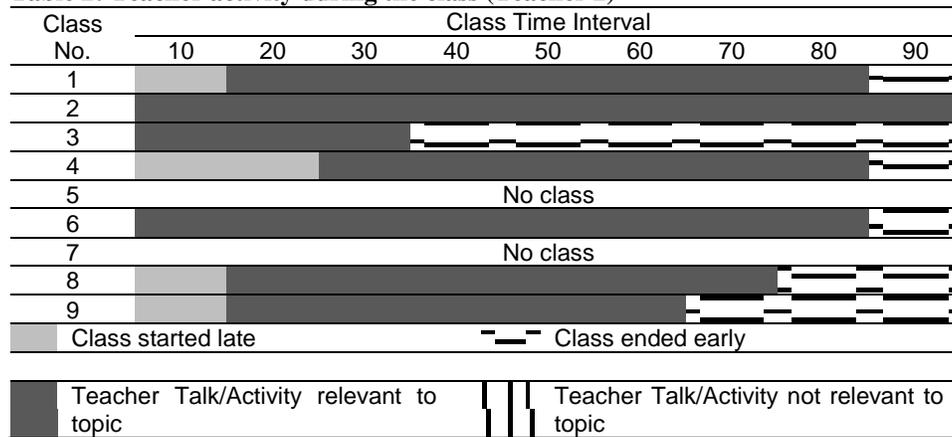


Table 3 shows that teacher 3 took two full classes, was late in 5 classes and left five classes earlier than the scheduled time. This teacher did not take one class. Out of 810 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 560 minutes. This simply means the time theft for teacher 3 was 30.86%.

**Table 3 Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 3)**

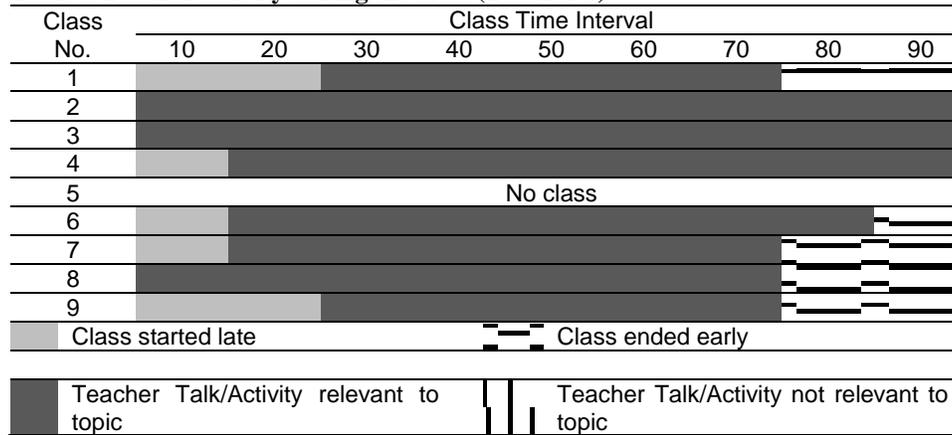


Table 4 reveals that teacher 4 did not take five classes, was late in one class, left two classes earlier than the scheduled time and took one class for complete ninety minutes. Out of 810 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 200 minutes. This simply means the time theft for teacher 3 was 75.31%. This is highest time theft by any of the subject teachers.

**Table 4: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 4)**

Class No.	Class Time Interval									
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	
1	No class									
2	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
3	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
4	No class									
5	No class									
6	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
7	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
8	No class									
9	No class									
Class started late				Class ended early						
Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic					Teacher Talk/Activity not relevant to topic					

Table 5 shows the teacher 5 took all of the scheduled classes though teacher was late in one class, left two classes earlier than scheduled time. Out of 720 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 670 minutes. The time theft for teacher 5 was 17.28%. This is the lowest time theft by any of the subject teachers.

**Table 5: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 5)**

Class No.	Class Time Interval									
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	
1	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
2	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
3	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
4	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
5	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
6	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
7	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
8	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
9	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic									
Class started late				Class ended early						
Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic					Teacher Talk/Activity not relevant to topic					

Table 6 shows the teacher 6 took six out of nine scheduled classes; however the teacher was late in all the six classes. Further he ended all the six classes earlier than the scheduled time. Out of 810 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 330 minutes. The time theft for teacher 6 was 59.26%.

**Table 6: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 6)**

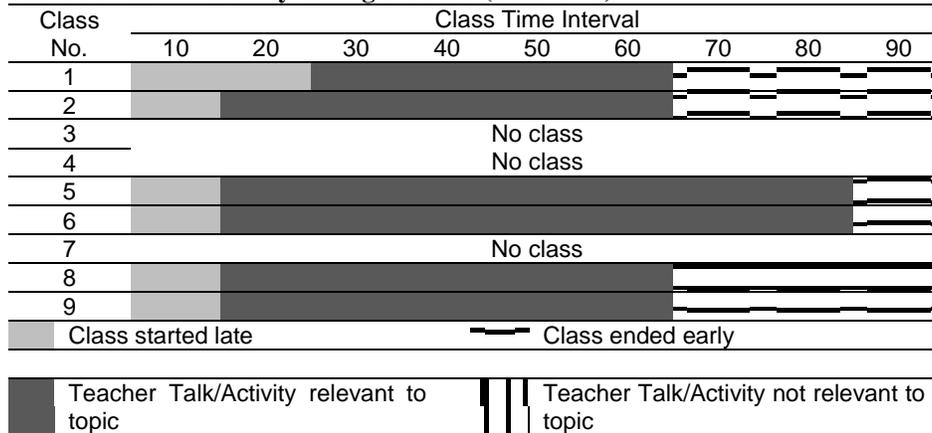


Table 7 shows that teacher 7 took six out of the nine classes, was late in each class and left 4 classes earlier than the scheduled class ending time. Out of 810 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 390 minutes. The time theft for teacher 7 was 51.85%.

**Table 7: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 7)**

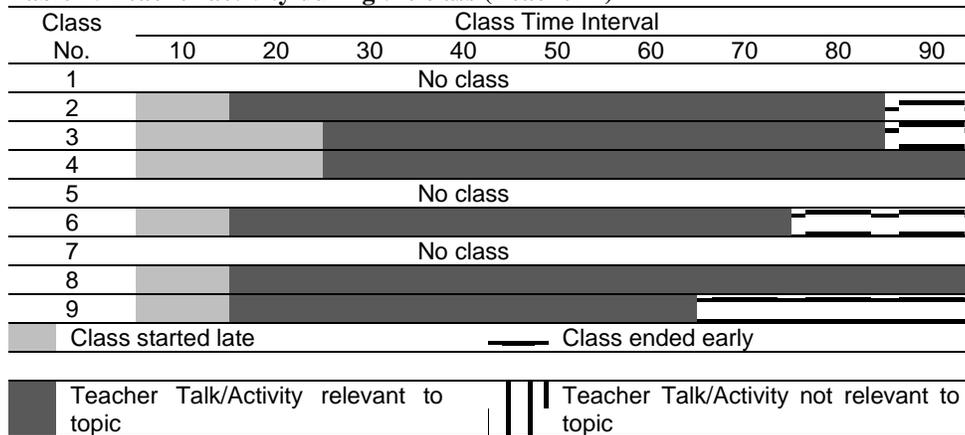


Table 8 shows that teacher 8 took six out of the nine classes, was late in two classes and left 3 classes earlier than the scheduled class ending time. Out of 540 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 310 minutes. The time theft for teacher 8 was 42.59%.

**Table 8: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 8)**

Class No.	Class Time Interval						
	10	20	30	40	50	60	
1	[Dark Grey Bar]						
2	[Dark Grey Bar]						
3	No class						
4	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
5	[Dark Grey Bar]						
6	[Dark Grey Bar]						
7	No class						
8	No class						
9	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
	Class started late			Class ended early			
	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic			Teacher Talk/Activity not relevant to topic			

Table 9 presents the data on teacher activity for teacher 9. It is evident that teacher 9 took 8 out of nine classes. The teacher came late in seven classes and left six classes before the class ends. Out of 540 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 320 minutes. The time theft for teacher 8 was 40.74%.

**Table 9: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 9)**

Class No.	Class Time Interval						
	10	20	30	40	50	60	
1	[Dark Grey Bar]						
2	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
3	No class						
4	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
5	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
6	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
7	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
8	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
9	[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]				[Light Grey Bar]	[Dark Grey Bar]
	Class started late			Class ended early			
	Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic			Teacher Talk/Activity not relevant to topic			

Table 10 reveals that teacher 10 did not take three out of nine classes. Teacher was further late in all the lasses and also left three classes early. Out of 540 minutes of the scheduled time, for 9 classes, the teacher taught only for 220 minutes. The time theft for teacher 10 was 59.26%.

The figure 1 presents a comparison of total class minutes and minutes taught by each teacher over a period of nine classes. It is noticeable from the figure that the highest time theft is recorded for teacher 4 (75.31%) and the lowest time theft is recorded for

teacher 5 (17.28%). The average time theft for all the teachers stood at 47.05%. It means that on average the sample teachers taught for 53% of the scheduled time.

**Table 10: Teacher activity during the class (Teacher 10)**

Class No.	Class Time Interval					
	10	20	30	40	50	60
1	[Bar with relevant activity from 10-40, irrelevant from 40-60]					
2	[Bar with relevant activity from 10-50, irrelevant from 50-60]					
3	No class					
4	[Bar with relevant activity from 10-30, irrelevant from 30-60]					
5	[Bar with relevant activity from 10-40, irrelevant from 40-60]					
6	[Bar with relevant activity from 10-30, irrelevant from 30-60]					
7	No class					
8	No class					
9	[Bar with relevant activity from 10-40, irrelevant from 40-60]					

Class started late     
  Class ended early

Teacher Talk/Activity relevant to topic     
  Teacher Talk/Activity not relevant to topic

**Figure 1: Comparison of Total Class Minutes vs Minutes Taught by each teacher**

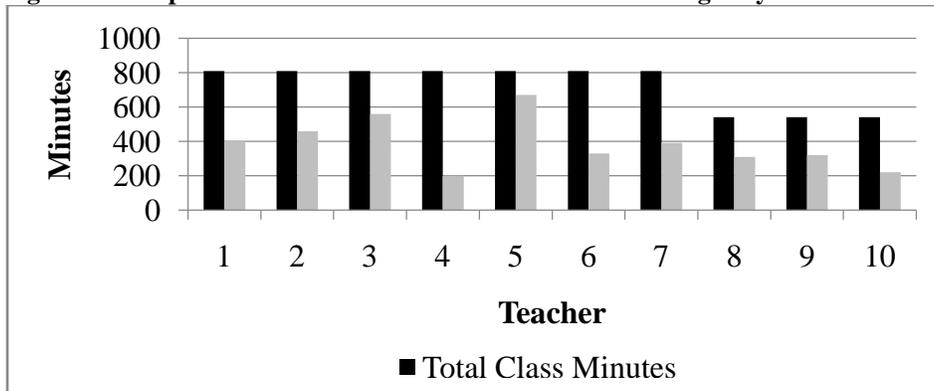
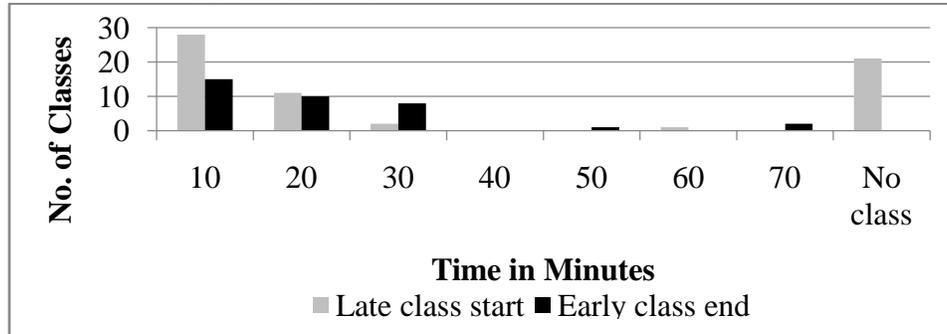


Figure 2 shows that twenty one classes did not held, 28 classes were start 10 minutes later and 15 classes were ended 10 minutes earlier than the scheduled time. Eleven classes were started 20 minutes later and 10 classes were ended 20 minutes earlier than the scheduled time. In all, 42 classes were stared later and 36 classes were ended earlier than the scheduled time.

The analysis of the data has shown that 28 classes started 10 minutes late, 11 classes started 20 minutes late, 2 classes started 30 minutes, and 1 class was started 60 minutes late. 15 classes were left 10 minutes early, 10 classes were left 20 minutes early, 8 classes were left 30 minutes early, 1 class was left 50 minutes early and 2 classes were left 70 minutes early. Above all, 21 classes were never held out of 90 classes. It is further found that highest recorded time theft was 75.31% and the lowest recorded time theft was

17.28%. The average time theft for all the teachers stood at 47.05%. It means that, on average, the sample teachers taught for 53% of the scheduled time.

**Figure 2: No. of classes that either started late or ended earlier than the Scheduled Time**



## V. Conclusion

This study has found out in-class time theft behavior of teachers of a public sector multi-campus university of Lahore. This finding is in accordance with previous studies conducted in various contexts (Kyriacou&Chien, 2004; Salami, 2010; Anwer et al., 2011; Hung, 2011; Hu et al., 2015; Khan, 2017 and Ahmed, 2018). The time theft among university teachers may be due to various factors including organizational, environment, and personal factors (Futrell &Farasuraman, 1990; Shepard, &Whimbush, 1994; Filipczak, Zemke, & Raines, 1999; Black, Johnston, Fox & Spector, 2002; Fox and Spector, 2002 and Lay, Applebaum &Deguire 2005)

It is concluded that all the sample teachers were involved in time theft that ranged from 17.28% to 75.31%, average being 47.05%. The sample teachers taught only for the 53% of the scheduled time. A large majority of the classes were either started 10 minutes late or left 10 minutes earlier than the scheduled time.

It is suggested that future research may look into various factors that contribute to university teachers' in-class time theft. It may also further be studied that how in-class time theft could be minimized so that wastage of students time and money may be saved.

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