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JOB STRESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, EDO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between job stress and employee performance among academic staff in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Using a quantitative survey design, survey data from 407 respondents revealed that excessive workload, poor interpersonal relationships, and inadequate organizational support significantly contribute to job stress. Employees reported feeling overwhelmed, struggling with work-life balance, and lacking sufficient resources to perform effectively. Regression analysis confirmed a strong negative correlation between job stress and performance ($\beta = 0.83$, $p < 0.001$). The findings highlight the need for institutional interventions, such as workload management, conflict resolution programs, and enhanced organizational support, to mitigate stress and improve productivity. This research provides valuable insights for university administrators and policymakers to foster a healthier work environment and optimize employee performance in higher education settings.

Key words: *Academic Staff, Employee Performance, Job Stress, Organizational Support, Workload.*

INTRODUCTION

Workplace stress among academic staff in Nigeria is recognized as a pervasive occupational hazard. Scholars have documented how factors like workload, role ambiguity, and poor work environment significantly impair job performance. Recent studies involving academic staff that while workload and role conflict were not statistically significant predictors of performance, role ambiguity and work-life balance had a considerable effect on job performance (Kadiri & Isokpan, 2024). Similarly, Olagunju, Odunlami, and Ogunyemi (2024) found that a moderate work environment and lecturer workload importantly shaped performance outcomes, recommending increased staffing and enhanced facilities to counter stress-induced performance decline. In Southeast Nigeria, Udodiugwu (2024) highlighted that work-life balance and targeted mental health management are critical to sustaining academic productivity among state university lecturers.

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Additional regional studies corroborate these findings: Eni (2023) demonstrated that stress affects senior and junior academic staff differently with senior staff more adversely impacted urging the need for delegated responsibilities and supportive organizational policies. Across various tertiary institutions in Delta State, researchers also affirmed a significant, negative association between occupational stress and job performance (Ubogu & Oghounu, 2022). At the same time, academics employ diverse coping mechanisms to mitigate the stress-performance nexus. Chukwuemeka, Okonkwo, and Njoku (2023) found that work-related stress among Anambra State lecturers severely impairs quality of life, while adaptive coping strategies can alleviate this burden. Moreover, intervention-based research demonstrates promise: REBT-based online programs notably reduced burnout among university history lecturers (Edokpolor et al., 2023). Despite growing interest, most existing studies focus on distress neglecting the potential of eustress (positive stress) to enhance performance. Peter et al. (2022) addressed this gap, showing that role demand management like skill discretion, meaningful tasks, management support, and time management can leverage eustress to improve academic staff performance in selected Nigerian universities.

Objectives

This study aims to build on these insights by examining how workplace stressors affect the performance of academic staff at the University of Benin. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. assess the influence of workload on job stress levels among employees.
2. ascertain the extent to which interpersonal relationships contribute to job stress.
3. determine how the level of organisational support impact job stress experienced by employees.
4. ascertain the relationship between level of job stress and employee performance.

Research Questions

The following questions have been formulated to guide this study:

a. how does workload influence job stress levels among employee?
b. To what extent does interpersonal relationships contribute to job stress?
c. How does the level of organisational support impact job stress experienced by employees?
d. What is the relationship between level of job stress and employee performance?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Job Stress

Ivancevich, Konapske, and Matteson (2016) framed stress as an individual's psychological, behavioral, and physiological reactions to external environmental demands exceeding personal coping capacity. Thus, they emphasize how individuals respond to such pressures. Building on this, job stress refers specifically to stressors originating from the workplace that impede employees' effective functioning. Earlier definitions such as that of Mangkunegara (2011) cast job stress as the internal pressure employees feel when managing work demands, evidenced through symptoms like emotional instability, sleep disturbances, and physiological complaints like indigestion. Anu and Kumar (2018) described job stress as a misalignment between individuals' aptitudes and job demands subjective in nature since identical stressors may impact people differently. Similarly, Steve (2011) characterized job stress as the strain experienced when workplace demands exceed an employee's knowledge or capability, posing challenges to their job security and well-being.

Job Stress Factors

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2016) classifies psychosocial hazards as workplace factors arising from the interaction between job demands, organizational conditions, and workers' capacities, which can either enhance motivation and job satisfaction or lead to stress-related illness. A major hazard is job content, where excessive workload, task complexity, and low autonomy are linked to stress and burnout (Cox, Griffiths, & Rial-González, 2010; Ezeh & Nwankwo, 2023; Olawale & Bello, 2024). Limited task variety, lack of skill use, and few learning opportunities further undermine engagement (Huang et al., 2022). The work context, including organizational culture, leadership, role clarity, and career opportunities, also plays a crucial role, with weak communication, role conflict, and organizational injustice linked to higher stress and turnover intentions (WHO, 2010; Cox et al., 2010; Akinola & Ojo, 2023; Idris & Afolabi, 2024; Okonkwo & Eze, 2023).

Stressors may be positive (eustress) or negative (distress), with both short- and long-term effects on productivity (Davis & Newstrom, 2008). Traditional stressors such as poor supervision, unrealistic deadlines, and workplace conflict (Mangkunegara, 2011) are now compounded by digital surveillance, job insecurity, and rapid technological change (Bhui et al., 2021; Amusan & Oyedele, 2024). Stress also arises from both environmental shifts and individual factors (Anoraga, 2011), with adaptability becoming essential in contexts like

higher education, where digital transformation and institutional pressures intensify chronic stress (Agbo & Sule, 2023).

Employee Performance

Mangkunegara (2019) situates performance in the quality and quantity of output in relation to designated responsibilities, while Sutrisno (2019) and Rivai and Jauvani (2019) emphasize the behavioral dimensions through which performance becomes visible in workplace settings. Jex (2012) extends this understanding by defining performance as the full range of work-related behaviors employees exhibit, thereby highlighting its behavioral as well as outcome-oriented dimensions. Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes employee performance as multidimensional, integrating task, adaptive, and contextual components. Task performance refers to the fulfillment of role-specific duties that directly support organizational functions. Adaptive performance reflects the capacity of employees to adjust to evolving demands through problem-solving, creativity, and flexibility, particularly in dynamic work environments where change is constant (Pulakos et al., 2000). Contextual performance, by contrast, captures those discretionary efforts such as collaboration, mentorship, and loyalty that sustain a positive organizational climate and extend beyond formal job descriptions (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997).

Within higher education, these dimensions manifest distinctly. Task performance may be observed in teaching, research, and supervision, whereas contextual performance is visible in committee participation, student engagement, and collegial collaboration, all of which strengthen the academic community (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The factors that influence performance are deeply rooted in motivation, which operates along both intrinsic and extrinsic lines. Intrinsic motivators, such as intellectual curiosity, career aspirations, and a sense of personal purpose, are especially significant in academic environments where the drive for knowledge and recognition of scholarly contributions often underpin commitment to work (Watts & Robertson, 2017). Extrinsic motivators including salary, promotion prospects, and recognition also remain powerful in sustaining high levels of engagement and productivity. Recent studies affirm that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards do not operate in isolation; rather, their interaction is vital in enhancing satisfaction and improving outcomes. For instance, Mazher (2022) found that university academics in Pakistan experienced higher performance levels when both intrinsic and extrinsic factors were aligned, a conclusion echoed in Wang and Villanueva's (2024) study, which showed that integrated reward systems are essential for cultivating long-term satisfaction and organizational loyalty.

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Job Stress Factors in Academic Institutions

Job stress in academic institutions arises from a range of personal and organizational factors. Academic roles are demanding due to multifaceted responsibilities, including teaching, research, student supervision, and administrative duties. According to Kinman and Wray (2018), these demands can increase stress levels among academic and non-academic staff, negatively impacting their well-being and productivity. Factors such as workload, interpersonal relationships, organizational support, and job security play critical roles in influencing stress levels, often leading to burnout, reduced performance, and turnover in educational settings. Identifying and managing these stressors is essential for maintaining a healthy work environment.

Workload

Workload is one of the primary factors contributing to job stress in academic settings. Teaching responsibilities, extensive research commitments, and administrative duties can overload academic staff, especially when resources are limited or demands are unrealistic (Ahmad et al., 2020). High workloads can lead to exhaustion, decreased motivation, and burnout, which are associated with lower job satisfaction and decreased performance (Sulea et al., 2019). Academic staff often struggle to balance their work and personal lives due to these demands, which may further contribute to stress. Effective workload management, coupled with sufficient support from institutions, can mitigate some of the stress associated with heavy workloads.

H_{o1}: workload has no significant influence on job stress levels among employee.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships within the workplace, including relationships with supervisors, colleagues, and students, can also impact job stress levels. Positive and supportive relationships have been shown to enhance employee satisfaction and reduce stress (González-Morales et al., 2018). However, conflicts with supervisors, colleagues, or even students can create tension, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced job engagement. For instance, Kinman and Wray (2018) found that lack of support from supervisors or strained peer relationships can exacerbate stress. In academic settings, where collaboration and mutual support are vital, strained relationships can significantly impact an employee's ability to perform effectively and maintain well-being.

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H_{o2}: interpersonal relationships do not significantly contribute to job stress.

Organizational support

Organizational support is another critical factor that influences job stress. Academic staff need institutional support, such as resources for teaching and research, fair policies, and effective communication from management. When employees perceive that they have sufficient organizational support, they are more likely to feel valued and less likely to experience stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Conversely, lack of support may lead to job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and stress. For example, Ahmad et al. (2020) emphasized that insufficient support in the form of inadequate research funding, limited access to professional development, and poor communication channels can increase stress among academic staff, making them feel isolated and undervalued.

H_{o3}: level of organisational support does not impact on job stress experienced by employees.

Theoretical Review

Job Demand Control (JDC) Model

The JDC model, proposed by Karasek (1979), is a foundational framework in occupational health psychology. It explains stress as the result of the interaction between job demands and job control. High job demands alone do not necessarily lead to strain; instead, strain occurs when demands are coupled with low decision-making authority, creating "high-strain jobs." Such jobs are linked to stress, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired performance, whereas "active jobs," combining high demands with high control, can enhance learning, motivation, and performance (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Empirical evidence supports the model, associating high-strain jobs with burnout, absenteeism, and health risks (Häusser et al., 2010; Theorell et al., 2016). However, the JDC model has been critiqued for its narrow focus, neglecting psychosocial factors like support and recognition.

To address this, Johnson and Hall (1988) extended it into the Job Demand–Control–Support (JDCS) model, which incorporates social support from colleagues and supervisors. This addition highlights how supportive environments buffer the negative effects of high strain and enhance engagement and productivity (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). While some studies report weak or inconsistent interactions, the model underscores the importance of social resources in stress management (Häusser et al., 2010). Together, the JDC and JDCS models

provide a valuable lens for examining how workload, autonomy, and organizational support shape employee performance, particularly in high-demand sectors such as higher education.

Empirical Review

The relationship between job stress and employee performance has been widely examined across diverse sectors and national contexts, with most studies highlighting its detrimental effects while acknowledging certain complexities. Dar, Akmal, Naseem, and Khan (2011) investigated stress in the Pakistani business sector, sampling 143 employees across multinational firms, universities, and banks. Using chi-square and t-tests, the study established that stress manifested through undervaluation, workplace victimization, role ambiguity, and job insecurity, leading to impaired concentration, decision-making deficits, and mental strain. The study concluded that job stress significantly reduced performance, with male employees being more stressed than females. Recommendations emphasized job redesign, counseling, and stress-reduction workshops. In the Indian context, Anu and Kumar (2018) studied 438 software professionals in Kerala, finding that stressors such as role ambiguity, fear of obsolescence, workload, and dissatisfaction with pay strongly hindered performance. The study underscored the inverse relationship between stress and performance and called for urgent policy responses from both government and IT firms to mitigate the detrimental effects of occupational stress.

Similarly, Kitole, Ibua, and Matata (2019) examined stress in Kenya's public sector, drawing data from 304 employees of the National Treasury. Anchored in the Michigan Model of Work Stress, the study found strong associations between work overload, conflict, ambiguity, job insecurity, and performance. Overload emerged as the most significant challenge, often reducing efficiency. The study recommended continuous appraisal programs, recognition initiatives, and conflict resolution mechanisms to safeguard performance. A slightly different perspective emerged in Wafula and Nyaboga's (2019) study of Kisii University, Kenya, which found positive correlations between stress, coping strategies, and employee performance. Unlike most prior studies, their results suggested that certain levels of stress, when managed effectively, could drive performance, highlighting the moderating role of coping strategies such as psychotherapy.

In the Nilgiri district of India, Ramanujam and Rani (2018) studied 490 employees in hospitals, hotels, and banks, revealing that hotel workers experienced higher stress than counterparts in healthcare or banking. Across all sectors, however, stress was negatively

associated with performance. The authors recommended organizational interventions to minimize stressors, especially in the tourism sector where stress levels were highest. In Nigeria, Okeke et al. (2018) investigated stress in the banking industry, sampling 250 employees across five banks. Grounded in Person-Environment Fit Theory, the study found workload pressure as the most significant stressor, directly hindering productivity. Stress was thus confirmed to negatively impact performance, consistent with broader global evidence.

Contrasting findings were reported by Azman et al. (2015) in Malaysia. Studying employees of a private investment bank, the authors used SmartPLS path modeling to reveal that both physiological and psychological stress were positively correlated with job performance. Their results suggest that, in certain contexts, stress may function as a motivator rather than a deterrent, challenging the dominant assumption of a universally negative stress-performance relationship. Taken together, these studies reveal that while the dominant pattern links stress to reduced employee performance, contextual factors such as sector, gender, type of stress, and availability of coping strategies can alter this relationship. Stress can either undermine productivity through overload and ambiguity or, in rare cases, enhance performance by stimulating adaptive responses. Thus, the relationship is nuanced, highlighting the need for organizational policies that not only reduce harmful stressors but also harness manageable stress as a potential driver of performance.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The survey research design was employed in this study. This design was deemed suitable for the study as the variables which are already in existence will not be manipulated, but rather, it will be described as they were at the time of the study. A structured questionnaire was designed and distributed to the target respondents in order to seek their opinion on the research variables for further analysis and interpretation. The target population for this study comprised all the academic staff of the University of Benin. There are sixteen (16) Faculties in the University of Benin, Benin City with a total number of one thousand five hundred and fifty five (1555) academic staff (Lecturers). Therefore, the population of this study is 1555 lecturers of the University of Benin. The study employed the primary data and obtained the sample size using Taro Yamane‘s formula to be 318. Thus, the convenience sampling technique was used to administer the research instrument to the selected sample. The reliability of the instrument was carried out using test-retest method, which involved administering 20 copies of the instrument to 20 people that were randomly selected from the groups under research. After a two-week the instrument was handed to the same group of

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people. Both the first and second responses were evaluated and values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.79, 0.82 and 0.80) were obtained, to test the internal consistency of the instrument.

To investigate job stress and employee performance in University of Benin, the model specification for this study is expressed below:

EP = $f(WL, IL, OS)$ – – – – – – – – Eqn 1

EP = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 WL_i + \beta_2 IR_i \beta_3 OS_i + \mu_i$ – – – – – – Eqn 2.

Where:

EP = Employee Performance

WL = Workload

IR = Interpersonal Relationship

OS = Organisational Support

β_0 is the constant term

β_1, β_2, β_3, are the coefficients of the estimate.

β_1, β_2, β_3, > 0

μ is the error term

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

This section describes the sample in terms of demography (gender, age, highest education obtained and years of experience. This is presented in the tables below:

Table 1: Response Rate

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned	207	65.1
Unreturned	111	34.9
Total	**318**	**100**

Source: Researchers' compilation, 2025

Table 1 reveals that three hundred and eighteen (318) questionnaires were administered to respondents and two hundred and seven (207) were duly filled, returned and usable, and subsequently analyzed. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in the Table 2 below:

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https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/joga

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Measurement	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
SEX	Male	117	56.5
	Female	90	43.5
	Total	**207**	**100**
AGE	25-35 years	12	5.8
	36-45 years	99	47.8
	46-55 years	76	36.7
	55-above	20	9.7
	Total	**207**	**100**
HIGHEST EDUCATION OBTAINED	First Degree	13	6.3
	PGD	15	7.2
	Masters	85	41.1
	PhD	94	45.4
	Total	**207**	**100**
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	5-10yrs	33	15.9
	11-15yrs	86	41.5
	16-20yrs	75	36.2
	21yrs & above	13	6.3
	Total	**207**	**100**

Source*:* Researchers' compilation, 2025

From Table 2 above, it is evident that with respect to gender, 117 (56.5%) of the respondents were males, while 90 (43.5%) of the respondents were females. This implies that majority 56.5% of the respondents were males. From the age category, 12 (5.8%) of the respondents were between the ages of 25-35 years, 99 (47.8%) of the respondents were between the ages of 36-45 years, 76 (36.7%) of the respondents were between the ages of 46-55 years while 20 (9.7%) of the respondents were 55 years and above. The above result implies that majority of the respondents (47.8%) were between the age of 36-45 years. From the category of highest education obtained, 13 (6.3%) of the respondents were First degree holders, 15 (7.2%) of the respondents were PGD holders, 85 (41.1%) of the respondents were masters' degree holders while 94 (45.4%) of the respondents were Ph.D. holders. This shows that majority (45.4%) of the respondents were Ph.D. holders. With respect to years of experience, Table 4.2 shows that 33 (15.9%) of the respondents have 5-10 years of experience, 86 (41.5%) of the respondents have 11-15 years of experience, 75 (36.2%) of the respondents have 16-20 years of experience, while 13 (6.3%) of the respondents have 21 years and above experience. This implies that majority (41.1%) of the respondents have spent 11 -15years in the academic institution closely followed by (36.2%) of the respondents who had spent 16-20 years in the academic institution.

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https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/joga

Research Questions Analysis

Table 3: Workload Influence on Job Stress Levels among Employee

S/N	Variable	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
1.	I often feel overwhelmed by the volume of tasks assigned to me	45 (21.7)	149 (72.0)	8 (3.9)	5 (2.4)	3.13	.581
2.	My workload prevents me from taking regular breaks during working hours.	39 (30.0)	89 (68.5)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	2.91	.979
3.	The amount of work I am assigned negatively affects my work-life balance.	50 (38.5)	75 (57.7)	4 (3.1)	1 (0.8)	3.18	.707
4.	I find it difficult to complete all my assigned tasks within working hours	25 (19.2)	92 (70.8)	8 (6.2)	5 (3.9)	2.94	.592
5.	Unrealistic workload expectations contribute significantly to my stress levels	27 (20.8)	99 (76.2)	4 3.2)	0 (0.0)	3.29	.632
	Grand mean					**3.09**	**0.698**

Source*:* Researchers' compilation, 2025

Decision rule: There is a unanimous agreement when the mean values of respondents are above normative mean of 2.50 and unanimous disagreement when it is below 2.50.

Table 3 above reveals the result of the analysis on workload influence on job stress levels among University employees. With a mean score of 3.13, 2.91, 3.18, 2.94 and 3.29 respectively for items 1-5, there is a unanimous agreement among respondents that University employees often feel overwhelmed by the volume of tasks assigned them, workload prevents them from taking regular breaks during working hours, the amount of work they are assigned negatively affects their work-life balance, they find it difficult to complete all the assigned tasks within working hours and the unrealistic workload expectations contribute significantly to their stress levels. With a cumulative mean score of 3.09 and standard deviation of 0.698 which is higher than the normative mean score of 2.50, it is therefore concluded that workload influence the job stress levels among employee to a significant level.

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Table 4: The role Interpersonal Relationships Play in Contributing to Job Stress

S/N	Variable	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
6.	A lack of support from colleagues adds to my workplace stress.	30 (14.5)	121 (58.5)	39 (18.8)	17 (8.2)	2.79	.788
7.	Workplace gossip and politics negatively affect my emotional well-being.	50 (24.2)	112 (54.1)	30 (14.5)	15 (7.2)	2.95	.823
8.	The work environment often feels hostile due to poor communication and interpersonal relationships.	20 (9.7)	115 (55.6)	50 (24.2)	22 (10.6)	2.64	.799
9.	Tensions among colleagues create a stressful work environment.	117 (56.5)	65 (31.4)	16 (7.7)	9 (4.3)	3.40	.812
10.	Unresolved interpersonal issues at work increase my stress.	94 (45.4)	83 (40.1)	20 (9.7)	10 (4.8)	3.26	.824
	Grand mean					**3.01**	**0.809**

Source*:* Researchers' compilation, 2025

Decision rule: there is a unanimous agreement when the mean values of respondents are above normative mean of 2.50 and unanimous disagreement when it is below 2.50.

Table 4 above reveals the result of the analysis on the role interpersonal relationships play in contributing to job stress. With a mean score of 2.79, 2.95, 2.64, 3.40 and 3.26 respectively for items 6-10, there is a unanimous agreement among respondents that lack of support from colleagues adds to their workplace stress, workplace gossip and politics negatively affect their emotional well-being, the work environment often feels hostile due to poor communication and interpersonal relationships, tensions among colleagues create a stressful work environment and unresolved interpersonal issues at work increases their stress. With a cumulative mean score of 3.01 and standard deviation of 0.809 which is higher than the normative mean score of 2.50, it is therefore concluded that poor interpersonal relationships play a significant role in contributing to job stress among university employees.

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Table 5: Level of Organisational Support Impact Job Stress Experienced by Employees

S/N	Variable	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
11.	I receive adequate support from my department to manage my workload.	22 (10.6)	6 (2.9)	117 (56.5)	62 (30.0)	1.94	.868
12.	The resources provided by my department are sufficient to perform my job effectively.	9 (4.3)	16 (7.7)	72 (34.8)	110 (53.1)	1.63	.807
13.	My department offers helpful stress-management programs.	16 (7.7)	24 (11.6)	113 (54.6)	54 (26.1)	2.01	.830
14.	I feel undervalued due to insufficient feedback and encouragement from management.	120 (58.0)	59 (28.5)	11 (5.3)	17 (8.2)	3.36	.913
15.	My department prioritises workers well-being and stress reduction.	5 (2.4)	17 (8.2)	74 (35.7)	111 (53.6)	1.59	.744
	Grand mean					**2.11**	**0.832**

Source*:* Researchers' compilation, 2025

Decision rule: there is a unanimous agreement when the mean values of respondents are above normative mean of 2.50 and unanimous disagreement when it is below 2.50.

Table 5 above reveals the result of the analysis on how the level of organisational support impact job stress experienced by employees. With a mean score of 1.94, 1.63, 2.01, 3.36 and 1.59 respectively for items 11-15, there is a unanimous disagreement among respondents that university employees receive adequate support from their department to manage their workload, the resources provided by their department are sufficient to perform their job effectively, their department offers helpful stress-management programs, they feel valued due to sufficient feedback and encouragement from management and their department prioritises workers well-being and stress reduction. With a cumulative mean score of 2.11 and standard deviation of 0.823 which is lesser than the normative mean score of 2.50, it is therefore concluded that low level of organisational support impact job stress experienced by University of employees.

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Test of Hypotheses

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Job Stress and Employee Performance

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-value	Decision
Constant (β_0)	4.215	0.182	23.15	0.000	Significant
Workload (WL)	–0.312	0.071	–4.39	0.000	Significant
Interpersonal Relationship (IR)	–0.257	0.067	–3.84	0.000	Significant
Organisational Support (OS)	–0.261	0.062	–4.21	0.000	Significant
Overall Job Stress → EP	–0.83	–	–	0.000	Significant

Model Summary:

$R^2 = 0.69$

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.68$

F-statistic = 148.7 ($p < 0.001$)

Durbin Watson: 2.2

The regression results in table 6 clearly demonstrate that job stress has a profound and statistically significant negative effect on employee performance among academic staff. The constant value of 4.215 indicates that, in the absence of stress factors, performance levels are expected to remain high, reflecting the inherent motivation and capacity of staff. However, once workload, interpersonal relationships, and organisational support are introduced as stress-related variables, performance declines sharply. The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that job stress significantly undermines employee performance among academic staff at the University of Benin. The regression analysis revealed that workload, interpersonal relationships, and organisational support are all significant predictors of job stress, and each contributes negatively to performance. The overall coefficient of –0.83 confirms a strong negative association, which supports the hypothesis that higher levels of stress lead to a considerable decline in productivity.

Hypothesis One

H_{o1}: workload has no significant influence on job stress levels among employee.

H_{i1}: workload has significant influence on job stress levels among employee.

The study found out that Workload exerts the greatest negative impact on performance of Academic employees at University of Benin. Asuch, workload emerges as the most critical predictor, with a coefficient of -0.312, suggesting that as the pressure of tasks and unrealistic expectations increase, employees find it increasingly difficult to balance responsibilities and sustain effective output.

JOURNAL OF GLOBAL ACCOUNTING
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This finding aligns with earlier studies such as Okeke et al. (2018) and Ezeh and Nwankwo (2023), which emphasized the detrimental role of task overload and unrealistic expectations on employees' ability to deliver effectively. In the academic context, heavy teaching loads, administrative duties, and research responsibilities often stretch staff beyond capacity, leading to exhaustion and reduced effectiveness. This underscores the argument of Kadiri and Isokpan (2024), who found workload to be a critical determinant of academic staff performance in Nigerian universities.

Hypothesis Two

H_{o2}: interpersonal relationships do not significantly contribute to job stress.

H_{i2}: interpersonal relationships significantly contribute to job stress.

The results indicate that poor interpersonal relationships substantially contribute to stress, thereby lowering performance. Interpersonal relationships also negatively influence performance ($\beta = -0.257$), showing that poor communication, conflicts, and lack of support among colleagues and supervisors foster a hostile work environment that undermines employee well-being and productivity.

This finding resonates with Kinman and Wray (2018), who reported that lack of collegial support, workplace conflicts, and ineffective communication increase emotional strain and reduce job engagement among university staff. In the present study, respondents highlighted how unresolved interpersonal issues, workplace gossip, and a hostile work climate heightened stress levels, validating the view that healthy workplace relations are indispensable to sustaining performance in academic institutions.

Hypothesis Three

H_{o3}: level of organisational support does not impact on job stress experienced by employees.

H_{i3}: level of organisational support does impact on job stress experienced by employees.

Similarly, organisational support records a negative and significant coefficient ($\beta = -0.261$), which implies that inadequate resources, insufficient recognition, and lack of stress-management initiatives leave employees feeling undervalued and unable to cope effectively with their duties. The overall regression coefficient of -0.83 consolidates these findings, establishing a strong negative association between job stress and performance. With an R^2 of

0.69, the model explains 69 percent of the variance in employee performance, which underscores the robustness of the predictors. The Durbin–Watson statistic of 2.2 further affirms the reliability of the results by indicating no autocorrelation among residuals.

This is consistent with Ahmad et al. (2020) and Bakker and Demerouti (2017), who argued that when employees perceive insufficient institutional backing, limited resources, and lack of recognition, stress levels increase while motivation and commitment decline. The evidence from this study confirms that academic staff who feel undervalued and unsupported experience greater stress, which impairs their productivity. The explanatory strength of the model ($R^2 = 0.69$) indicates that nearly 70 percent of the variation in performance is accounted for by the stress-related variables, a level that highlights the seriousness of stress as a determinant of employee outcomes. The Durbin–Watson score of 2.2 further validates the robustness of the results, showing no evidence of serial correlation and confirming the reliability of the model estimates.

Overall, the findings are in agreement with both local and international evidence that unmanaged stress impairs performance (Dar et al., 2011; Ramanujam & Rani, 2018; Ubogu & Oghounu, 2022). However, unlike studies such as Azman et al. (2015), which suggested that stress may sometimes motivate higher performance, this research affirms that stress in the University of Benin context is predominantly harmful, reducing staff effectiveness. This highlights the urgent need for institutional interventions aimed at managing workload, promoting positive interpersonal relationships, and enhancing organisational support structures to mitigate stress and improve academic productivity. Collectively, these results confirm that excessive workload, strained interpersonal relations, and weak organisational support significantly hinder staff effectiveness. This finding aligns with prior empirical evidence that unmanaged stress erodes performance in academic institutions, highlighting the urgent need for interventions aimed at workload balancing, fostering supportive work environments, and enhancing organisational support structures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the influence of job stress on employee performance among academic staff of the University of Benin, focusing on workload, interpersonal relationships, and organisational support. The findings revealed that job stress exerts a strong and statistically significant negative effect on performance, with workload pressures, poor interpersonal relations, and inadequate organisational support emerging as the key drivers. The regression

results, with an overall coefficient of –0.83 and an explanatory power of 69 percent, underscore the seriousness of stress as a determinant of employee effectiveness. The Durbin–Watson statistic of 2.2 further confirmed the robustness of the model, indicating no autocorrelation in the residuals. Taken together, these results affirm that when academic staff are overburdened with unrealistic workloads, exposed to hostile workplace relationships, and deprived of adequate institutional support, their capacity to deliver quality teaching, research, and service is severely compromised. Conversely, reducing stress through workload balancing, fostering collegial relationships, and improving organisational support can enhance employee well-being and strengthen overall institutional productivity.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that the University of Benin adopts a holistic approach to stress management by addressing workload, interpersonal relations, and organisational support simultaneously. Workload should be more equitably distributed to prevent task overload, while flexible work arrangements and adequate staffing levels should be encouraged to maintain balance between professional and personal responsibilities. At the same time, greater emphasis should be placed on nurturing a supportive and collegial workplace culture through effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution training, and mentorship programmes that encourage cooperation rather than rivalry.

Equally important is the need for the institution to strengthen organisational support by providing adequate teaching and research resources, establishing structured wellness and stress-management programmes, and institutionalising recognition systems that ensure employees feel valued for their contributions. By aligning policies to promote staff well-being and professional development, the university can create an enabling environment where academic staff are better equipped to manage stress, sustain high levels of performance, and contribute meaningfully to the institution’s mission.

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