

## **Stress Management and Workers' Productivity in Nigerian Privately owned Tertiary Institutions: A Survey of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Overloading and pressurizing employees with workload and unfavourable deadline at the work place triggers work stress, which in turn affects the performance of employees in the University. This especially often happens in the private sector where business owners over stretch employees capabilities and abilities so as to achieve economic value for shareholders. This study examines stress management in the privately owned University – Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin in particular. The study adopts a survey method and a sample of 113 was selected from the population of 161 using Krejcie and Morgan's Table of sample size. A close ended questionnaire was administered on the academic staff. Simple Regression analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the effect and relationship between the adopted variables. Results from the study show that job stress affects the employees' commitment, and that pressure at the work place also has a significant relationship with employees' satisfaction. The study further recommends that intense effort should be placed on remedying the effect as employees' commitment level tends to disintegrate due to high level of job stress and that continually mounting work pressure on employees should be looked into so as to achieve employees' satisfaction on the job.*

**Keywords:** *Stress, workload, work pressure, employees, satisfaction, Al-Hikmah University*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stress is a general phenomenon at work place irrespective of the nature of the job, whether skilled or unskilled, technical or administrative. Hence, job stress is a constant syndrome that affects the daily activities of employees, which in turn affects the welfare or wellbeing of the organization. This is usually caused by work overload or lack of satisfactory workload, which has been observed to cost a number of organizations, their productivity and employees, their job satisfaction. Organizations tend to experience a drop in productivity when employees are overwhelmed with work, and this causes them to lose job satisfaction. Organizations around the world have taken seriously the

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issue of stress as it has been observed to directly affect the performance of both the organization and their employees (Kotteeswari and Sharief, 2014). Consequently, stress has become a fast developing incidence in Nigerian higher institutions especially due to lack of funding as well as the wealth maximization and profit-making motives of the privately owned ones. These tertiary institutions roll out or run numerous programmes in order to complement the primary purpose for which they have been established, which is teaching and research. Apart from the undergraduate programmes, these institutions also run Postgraduate (Executive and Academic Master, MPhil and PhD), HND conversion and Degree Top-Up programmes among others; and this increases the workload of the employees in these institutions, dragging their timetable to weekends. Hence, some lingering issues aligning with stress in relation to workload and pressure from institutions in this category does affect the performance of employees and the overall output of the institutions in terms of job satisfaction and commitment. In addition, the achievement of effective and efficient organizational performance is often affected by the encountered stress and its management.

This study focuses on analyzing how stress affects the performance of employees in Nigerian Tertiary institutions. However, the scope was narrowed down to privately own tertiary institutions, giving specific emphasis to the academic staff of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State. The institution has an academic staff strength of 161 which spreads across all cadres– Professor, Associate Professor, Doctor, Lecturer I, Lecturer II, Assistant Lecturer, and Graduate Teaching Assistant. Additionally, questions and statements relating to how stress through workload and pressure affect the performance of the employees through their satisfaction and commitment were raised in the questionnaire administered on the respondents (Academic Staff).

The results of this study will be of great interest to numerous parties depending on their desire to develop and improve employee performance in different endeavours. This study will in essence serve as a guide to privately owned institutions in Nigeria, particularly the Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin as it will assist in addressing the issue of work stress on the the workers. Also, this study will be an eye opener to privately owned institutions on the inherent dangers of stress among employees, and it will also offer suggestions through conclusions and recommendations on how to tackle these challenges. Additionally, this study will be of benefit to the academia, consultants, and research students in the field of management and human and organization behaviour for further studies and empirical evidences.

The primary objective of this study is to examine how stress affects the performance of academic staff in Nigerian private tertiary institutions, using Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin as a case study. Hence, the specific objectives are:

- i. to evaluate how stress as a result of workload affects the level of commitment of the employees of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin; and
- ii. to clarify the relationship between work pressure and employees' satisfaction at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin

For the purpose of reliability, the following hypotheses were tested:

- H<sub>0</sub>1 Job stress has no significant effect on the level of commitment of the employees of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.
- H<sub>0</sub>2 There is no significant relationship between work pressure and employee satisfaction at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

### **Stress and Stress Management**

Stress as a construct means different things and it is interpreted in various manners depending on the viewer's perspective which is often determined by environment, time and other social factors. In essence, scholars in the field of management and human and organization behaviour have given their opinion in specific terms. Stress has its term dated to the 1930s by an endocrinologist named Selye (1976) as cited in Ravalier (2013) and Trevor (2015). Hence, stress, as explained in a biological term, means the consequences of the failure of a human or animal body to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats to the organism, whether actual or imagined (Kotteeswari and Sharief, 2014). In addition to that, they referred to stress as an event of strain from the disagreement between the human and its external environment, which often leads to emotional and physical distress (Bennett, 1994; Kotteeswari and Sharief, 2014). However, Bowing and Harvey (2001) also view stress as certain occurrence and interaction which takes place between a person and its operating environment, which often leads to emotional strain affecting a person's human condition physically and mentally. Consequently, Robbins (2004) describes stress as a changing condition of humans in which they are often confronted with opportunities, challenges, or life requirements which are related to what they desire as a person in which the expectation is relatively high but uncertain. A lot of things cause stress to a person. A hectic day or task is enough to cause stress. Workload equally leads to a stressful life. For a healthy life, stress must be effectively managed.

Managing stress in whether a formal or an informal organization of individual informs the ability of the controlling factors or leadership of the gathering to put into consideration some lingering factors in the environment. Some of these factors are environmental and psychological in nature. Environmental factors involve the environments in which the individual operates which are both immediate and extended. The immediate are often the office, work or factory atmosphere which often constitute stress if not well taken care of, while the extended are the ones that constitute the uncontrollable factors such as government policy, market trends among others (Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough, 2008). These factors are often managed through the assistant of a well-grounded internal policy of the organization in concern considering the frequent change in the business world in order to satisfy the employees (Mustapha, 2013). The psychological determinants are usually factors that affect the way an individual feels toward a particular scenario. Usually, employees are often faced with the challenge of managing too many things at the same time. Talk of work life balance (Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough 2008) where one out of the two of the concern (work

and life) often suffers at the advantage of the other. Organizations often manage these through the introduction of flexible policy where some work from home or have a considerable time off in order to manage one's life and work together.

### **Effects of Stress on Employees**

Blumenthal (2003) sheds more light on different effects of stress, and these are expatiated as subjective, behavioural, cognitive, health effects, and physiological responses. Behavioural effects are stress that lead to accident proneness, substance abuse, impaired speech, restlessness, and forgetfulness in individual employees. In addition, cognitive effects are further explained to be as a result of stress related to the thought processes which often causes individuals difficulty in making decisions in different spheres of life. Also, health effect and physiological responses relate to the human body system which affects the operations of adrenaline medulla and ends up causing degenerative processes and diseases as a result of stress in human. In essence, this implies that, an individual is liable to stress when he/she feels the anxiety to attain a particular target or goal; and depression and frustration from an event that has taken place or about to take place in the individual's life. Also, fatigue from a particular activity an individual gets involved in could cause stress; and an individual's inability to discover this in relation to self-esteem could also cause stress. Dwamena (2012) studied stress and its effects on employees' productivity and the result proves that stress had an effect on productivity.

### **Sources of Work Stress**

**Workload:** Usually, some of the identified sources of work stress as outlined by Arnold, Cooper, and Robertson (2011) are long hours spent on the job by individual employee. In essence, over time and unsolicited extra weekend work hours often amount to work stress. In addition, risk and danger elements attached to a particular work usually results to work stress. Employees are often exposed to hazardous conditions at the work place. Also, new technology in some work environments often brings about stress in employees as it is in the nature of humans to resist change. Finally, work overload or under-load usually causes work stress to employees, as when the expertise of employees is over or under-utilized, they tend to be stressed, which in turn affects their performance and productivity (Kotteeswari and Sharief, 2014). In the same vein, Okeke, Ojan, and Oboreh (2016) submit that workload pressure has significant effect on employees' productivity, that stress hinders the effective performance of employees. According to Kotteeswari and Sharief (2014), workload leads to job stress which leads to loss of concentration.

**Work Pressure:** Work pressure varies across concepts and perceptions depending on authors and their respective environments. Connolly (2013) argues that certain amounts of pressure which exist at a work place may challenge and/or motivate, promote learning and productivity, and improve the performance of an individual. In essence, pressure

which emanates from stress at work could affect the performance of individuals; either motivating or challenging them. Furthermore, individuals do not just get affected by work pressure alone but sometimes by co-workers or superior colleagues in the course of carrying out their responsibilities. In as much as setting deadlines for work motivates employees, unwanted and unfavourable short deadline by superior officers at the work place, and the assignment of ambiguous responsibilities to employees tend to result in work pressure as individual employees often react to unfavourable work condition and environment. In essence, undesirable or an unwanted work pressure affects the general performance of both employees and the organization (Okeke, Ojan, and Oboreh, 2016).

***Employees' Commitment:*** Employees' commitment refers to offering individuals who work in an organization a competitive remuneration package, assisting in developing employees' capability through acquiring higher education which includes periodic training and development. The aforementioned in addition give room to employees' ability to develop and improve the overall performance of both organization and employees through improvement in tasks and responsibilities achievement of the organization. Commitment shown by the company is returned in the form of commitment from employees which at the end affects the overall performance of the said organization.

***Employees' Satisfaction:*** Satisfaction has been explained by numerous scholars with different views and perspectives in accordance with their personnel management and human behaviour as involving satisfaction of employees on the job. However, for employees to be satisfied, there are some important requirements to be met. Armstrong (2006) argues that these key factors are career opportunities, job influence, teamwork, and job challenge. These factors come into play in a work environment and they contribute to the stress employees experience as giving employees a career opportunity could turn out to be challenging, thereby causing stress. In addition, job influence from either superior or peer officers could breed stress in a work environment thereby causing negative job challenge and in turn affecting employee and organizational performance. Consequently, job satisfaction is often measured by the level of commitment of employees towards handling the responsibilities assigned either by the organization or a superior. This is usually aligned to the attainment of the overall organizational objective, ownership of organization or citizenry and reduced rate of employees' turnover.

## METHOD

This study is a descriptive survey as it tends to describe how stress at the work place affects the performance of both the employees and the organization as a whole. Hence, the population of the study comprises all the Academic staff of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin given to be 161, in which using the Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of sample size (Appendix 1), a sample of 113 was selected and a close ended questionnaire was

distributed to the respondents. Hence, out of 113 copies of questionnaire distributed, 94(83%) return rate were retrieved and found useful for analysis. The study adopted a content validity in ascertaining whether the content of the administered questionnaire conforms to the set hypotheses in which all research ethical considerations were adhered to. The study, in addition, employed the Simple Regression analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation in testing the effect and relationship between the adopted variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicates the model summary of the hypothesis one which shows R as .391 which implies that a unit increase in workload which results in stress will affect the commitment of employees of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. This means that a unit increase in the independent variable would amount to 39%. In testing the hypothesis, the result of the simple regression analysis establishes that there is a significant positive relationship between workload and employees' commitment with R value of .391 and R<sup>2</sup> value of .138. The table shows that the analysis of variance of the fitted regression equation is significant with F value of 150.309. This is an indication that the model serves its purpose, and since the p-value is less than .005. Therefore, the study can conclude that workload statistically and significantly affects the employees' commitment in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that workload has no significant effect on employees commitment is rejected and the alternative, which states that workload does affect commitment of employees is accepted. This in addition conforms to the work of Okeke, Ojan and Oboreh (2016) where it was revealed that workload pressure has significant effect on employees' productivity.

The second hypothesis which seeks to clarify the significant relationship between the two variables employed the Pearson Product Moment Correlation in analyzing the data. The two adopted variables were captured with four items each of which establishes respondents' perception of the relationship between work pressure and employees' satisfaction at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. Therefore, the result of the correlation coefficient in table 2 shows that there is a positive relationship between the existence of work pressure among the employees of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin and their satisfaction on the job. With r value of .391, which implies that there is significant relationship between the adopted variables which is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed). This finding substantiates the stand of Connolly (2013); Okeke, Ojan and Oboreh (2016).

**Table 1:** The model summary of the hypothesis one

<b>Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.391 <sup>a</sup>	.138	.136	.47798

a. Predictors: (Constant), WL

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>							
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	34.240		1	34.240	150.309	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	20.562	93	.228			
	Total	54.902	94				

a. Dependent Variable: EC  
 b. Predictors: (Constant); WL

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.383	.173		3.792	.000
	WL	.418	.052	.391	12.260	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EC

**Table 2:** Correlation between WP and ES

		ES	WP
ES	Pearson Correlation	1	391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	94	94
WP	Pearson Correlation	391**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	94	94

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that stress which is as a result of workload does affect the level of commitment of the employees' of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, as indicated by respondents that their workload often encroaches on their weekends due to some added programme's courses. Also, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between work pressure and employees' satisfaction at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin as indicated by respondents that work pressures such as short deadlines and unrealistic targets often affects the satisfaction of the employees. The study then recommended that:

- i. Al-Hikmah University should look into the volume of work allocated to employees so as to improve their commitment. This, in addition implies that perhaps the institution may require more hands in the workforce so as to minimise the workload effect.
- ii. Al-Hikmah University should continually check the work routine in the institution to ensure that it does not exert pressure on employees which could have a negative effect on their job satisfaction. Regular checks on employees' job description would assist the institution in determining obstacles which could arise in the work place and tackle it before or on arrival.

- iii. Generally, in order to curb this menace usually caused by stress, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin should put in place some mechanisms to tackle the deficiencies leading to stress at work, and probably improve fringe benefits in order to keep the hope and spirit of employees high so as to positively affect the performance of employees which in turn affects the organization overall performance.
- iv. Further studies are encouraged to look at stress management from other available variables such as work environment, responsibilities clarity among others in order to explore all obtainable aspect. Future studies could as well look into other sectors of the economy for possible gaps to fill so as to enrich the field.

### Appendix A

**KREJCIE AND MORGAN SAMPLE SIZE TABLE**

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Where:

S = Sample Size; N = Population

**Source:** Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

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