

Stress and Mental Health as Predictors of Lecturers' Job Performance in Delta State Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of stress and mental health in predicting the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. In recent times, the increase in workload, administrative pressures, and lack of institutional support has intensified the stress experienced by lecturers, potentially undermining their psychological well-being and professional effectiveness. Adopting a correlational research design, this paper aims to determine the direction, strength, and relationships among the variables. The population comprised 3,089 lecturers across six tertiary institutions, and a stratified random sample of 306 participants was selected. Standardized instruments were used for data collection: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), and a Job Performance Scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression. The results indicated that stress correlated negatively with both mental health ($r = -0.57, p < 0.01$) and job performance ($r = -0.44, p < 0.01$), while mental health correlated positively with job performance ($r = 0.54, p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further revealed that stress, mental health, and coping strategies jointly explained 48% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.48, F(3,302) = 93.00, p < 0.001$). Among the predictors, mental health emerged as the strongest positive determinant of job performance ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$), whereas stress exerted a significant negative influence ($\beta = -0.24, p < 0.001$). The study concludes that promoting lecturers' health and reducing stress is essential to improving productivity and recommends institutional intervention, such as counseling services and management programmes, to enhance lecturers' performance. The findings underscore the importance of institutional mental health support and stress reduction programmes to enhance lecturers' productivity.

Keywords: Stress; Mental Health; Job Performance; Lecturers; Delta State Tertiary Institution

1. Introduction

In the Nigerian higher or tertiary education system, the intellectual and moral development of students depends on lecturers. This is because they serve not only as educators but also as mentors, researchers, and representatives of the institution. (Ogunode and Abubakar, 2024). The effectiveness and efficiency of their performance depend largely on their psychological and emotional well-being, which in recent times has become tenuous. Recent scholarly inquiry indicates a deteriorating mental health and escalating stress levels among lecturers of tertiary institutions, which has not only undermined their personal welfare but also their level of performance. (Adebayo and Oladipo, 2019; Ogunleye and Adeoye, 2020). Research

submission indicates that as a result of occupational stress, many lecturers are prone to High blood pressure, resulting in stroke and sometimes death. These studies suggest that the well-being of lecturers functions as a determinant of the

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academic quality of tutoring proffered in our tertiary institutions. It follows, therefore, that neglecting the lecturers' mental health becomes a major threat to the educational outcomes in Nigeria.

The link between mental health and job performance can be conceptualized through Lazarus and Folkman's 1984 Transactional Model of Stress and the Job Demand Resource Model. Both frameworks situate stress as a dynamic response to perceived imbalances between the demands and available coping resources. Within the Nigerian tertiary education system, the imbalances are not only amplified but stretched to their elastic limits by excessive workloads, large class sizes, limited research funding, and inadequate remuneration. The cumulative effect of these pressures, as captured in multiple studies, points to a cycle in which institutional deficiency intensifies work stress, leading to emotional exhaustion, cognitive fatigue, and ultimately a diminishing level of performance (Akah, Owan, Usoro, and Nse, 2022; Ogunleye and Adeoye, 2020). Rather than isolate stressors, this pattern reflects systemic conditions that compromise both individual resilience and the productivity of the institutions.

Synthesizing global and local perspectives, mental health emerges as the mediating factor that translates stress into performance outcomes in many organizations globally. The World Health Organization (2018) defines mental health as a state of well-being that enables individuals to function productively and cope with life's demands. Empirical evidence is in support of the view that lecturers with stable mental health exhibit a high sense of focus, creativity, and interpersonal effectiveness, whereas those grappling with anxiety, depression, or exhaustion and emotional stress display reduced motivation and engagement (Singh and Verma, 2024). It indeed will take an individual who is physically fit, mentally and emotionally stable, to work efficiently (Singh and Verma, 2024; Molusi and Rahman, 2025; Eze, Okonkwo, and Adeyemi, 2020). In tertiary institutions within the Nigerian context, mental health challenges are often exacerbated by institutional neglect, as a premium is not placed on it by administrators of most educational institutions. Additionally, cultural stigma also prevents or discourages lecturers from seeking professional help. This resulting silence and lack of institutional support entrenches a culture of obscuring or hiding distress, which leads to a massive decline in productivity, strained relationships, and, oftentimes, professional disengagement.

Several scholarly inquiries submit that stress and mental health are not mainly individual experiences but are interdependent constructs that collectively shape and influence job performance. Adebayo and Oladipo (2019) note that while occupational stress distorts cognitive processing and weakens motivation, mental health cushions these effects by promoting adaptive coping and emotional balance. Conversely, when stress overwhelms coping mechanisms, it triggers psychological distress that undermines a lecturer's ability to effectively dispense their statutory duties of teaching and conducting research. There is a consensus in the studies by Eze et al. (2020) and Chukwu et al. (2022) that enhanced mental health among lecturers brings about an increase in job satisfaction and performance, while persistent stress is associated with diminished productivity and morale.

These findings align with global research submissions, which suggest that occupational stress and mental health combine to predict job performance across professional contexts (WHO, 2018). However, it is noteworthy that most of the existing research remains fragmented, often examining stress or mental health independently rather than exploring the interactive effect on job performance. This gap is particularly evident within Nigerian tertiary institutions, where administrative inefficiency and economic instability further complicate performance dynamics. In Delta State, these challenges are especially acute, thus making it an ideal context to investigate how stress and mental health directly predict lecturers' performance. Exploring this interrelatedness of stress, mental health, and job performance deepens theoretical understanding and provides practical strategies for enhancing lecturer welfare, the efficiency of the institution's performance, and the quality of higher education in Nigeria.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Tertiary education in Nigeria plays a vital role in national development and human capital development. This fact notwithstanding, the academic workforce is faced with significant challenges that negatively impact their productivity and well-being. Lecturers in higher institutions in Nigeria, such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, are burdened with excessive workload, poor salaries, and unfavourable working conditions. Added to the above are institutional pressures to publish as a prerequisite for promotion. These challenges create a high-stress environment capable of ushering in chronic stress and mental health issues. These conditions impede their ability to concentrate, meet stipulated deadlines, and relate effectively with students, which potentially reduces the quality of instruction and research outputs. Given the growing awareness of the effect of stress and mental health on job performance, scant attention is given to the issue. There is a lack of counseling units and wellness programmes, and underreporting of mental health issues. In addition, previous studies have tended to isolate stress and mental health challenges, thus leaving a research gap with regard to their combined effect on Job performance. This paper, therefore, seeks to ascertain how stress and mental health jointly predict lecturers' job performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The paper

posit that a lecturer's well-being is inextricably linked to a lecturer's job performance and enhanced educational achievement. The findings will provide strategies for educational administrators, government agencies, and mental health professionals to adequately contribute to fostering a healthier and more productive academic environment.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to

- Examine the relationship between stress and the mental health of lecturers in tertiary institutions.
- Determine the major stressors affecting the mental health of lecturers in tertiary institutions.
- Examine the relationship between stress, mental health, and job performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
- Determine the relationship between stress-coping strategies, mental health, and lecturers' job performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions have been drawn to guide this study.

- What is the relationship between stress and the mental health of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State?
- What is the relationship between stress-inducing factors and lecturers' mental health in tertiary institutions in Delta State?
- What is the nature of the relationship between stress, mental health, and lecturers' job performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State
- What is the relationship between stress coping strategies and lecturers' mental health?

1.3. Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will be generated for the study

- There is no significant relationship between stress and the mental health of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
- There is no significant relationship between stress-inducing factors and the mental health of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
- There is no significant relationship between stress, mental health, and the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
- There is no significant relationship between coping strategies, mental health, and job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is myriad. Educationally, it provides insights into factors affecting the effectiveness of lecturers in tertiary institutions, which can inform meaningful policy making and institutional practices like the administrative system, teaching and learning process, staff welfare, and resource management process. Psychologically, it will highlight the role and relevance of mental well-being in the performance of professional duties. It will also promote awareness and interventions that support the mental health of lecturers. Additionally, the findings will guide administrators in designing programmes capable of reducing stress, enhancing productivity, and improving job satisfaction among academic staff. Lastly, the study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the occupational well-being of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2. Literature review

The understanding of the influence of stress and mental health on job performance will require a conceptualization of the terms and how they relate to the academic work environment. It will combine relevant theoretical and empirical findings, highlight areas of convergence and divergence, and help to highlight gaps in existing research.

2.1. Concept of Stress and Occupational Stress

Stress is usually defined as the body's non-specific response to any demand placed on the body. It is an inevitable aspect of daily life that can be experienced in different professions and personal roles. In the occupational context, stress often

shows up as a reaction to excessive demands, inadequate resources, poor remuneration, and organizational pressure that exceeds the coping capacity of an individual. According to Adenuga (2015), occupational stress is a major source of employee dissatisfaction, reducing to a great extent the workers' morale and productivity. Similarly, Branham (2005, cited in Adenuga, 2015) stated that between one-quarter and one-half of all workers experience work-related dysfunction due to stress, and this adversely affects job performance and decreases turnover.

While excessive stress is detrimental and seen as dysfunctional, several scholars note that a moderate level of stress can enhance motivation and productivity when it is seen as a challenge rather than a threat. Nwimo and Onwunaka (2015) and Hargrove, Quick, Nelson, and Quick (2011) contend that manageable stress levels may act as a performance stimulant by encouraging focus and goal orientation. However, the potential benefit of moderate stress depends on the resilience of the individual and environmental support, which highlights the importance of understanding when stress shifts from being functional to dysfunctional. In the Nigerian academic setting, few studies have examined the balance. Consequently, there is a research gap in understanding how lecturers can harness moderate stress productively while reducing the adverse effects of stress.

2.2. Occupational Stress and Academic Work

Occupational stress, which is also referred to as work-related stress, describes the physiological and psychological strain that results from adverse working conditions or pressures from the demands of the organization (Baquero, Khairy, and Al-Romeedy, 2025). It has been consistently linked to reduced health, poor productivity, and reduced morale. Olanrewaju (2015) and Dube and Onuzulike (2024) observed that globally, stress is a workplace phenomenon, but it manifests differently depending on the job characteristics and the expectations of society or an organization. In the academic setting, the stressors are both intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic stressors include workload and role ambiguity, while the extrinsic stressors include institutional policies and student-to-staff ratios. It is noteworthy that the effect of these stressors differs by context. Winefield et al. (2003) and Onyishi, Okereke, and Obi (2025) find workload to be the most critical stressor in universities. Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014) and Olusola and Ifeoluwa (2023) found inadequate resources and bureaucratic bottlenecks as key stressors among Nigerian lecturers. These contrasts suggest that specific stressors, such as inadequate funding and decay in infrastructure, may worsen stress levels in developing countries like Nigeria.

2.3. Stress in the Lecturing Profession

The lecturing profession is often regarded as one of the most stressful occupations due to high intellectual, emotional, and administrative demands. Kyriacou (as cited in Nwimo and Onwunaka, 2015) describes lecturers' stress as the experience of negative emotions such as irritability, anxiety, and frustration resulting from work-related pressures. In Nigeria, lecturers face unique institutional stressors such as the 'published or perish' culture, stringent promotion requirements, and poor remuneration. These pressures not only undermine job satisfaction but also affect the mental health and productivity of lecturers. Adebiyi (2013) further noted that no Nigerian tertiary institution can genuinely claim to be stress-free. This view is further reinforced by Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014), who linked high job stress to burnout and professional disengagement. Despite these findings, few empirical studies have explored how institutional support systems, such as the regulation of lecturers' workload or wellness programmes, can assuage stress among lecturers, thus representing a key gap in existing literature.

2.4. Mental Health and Job Performance

Mental health is generally perceived or conceived as a state of psychological balance that enables individuals to effectively cope with the demands of life, maintain fulfilling relationships, and contribute meaningfully to society (Adenuga, 2015). Moronkola (as cited in Adenuga, 2015) identified emotional stability, self-acceptance, social tolerance, and problem-solving ability as hallmarks of good mental health in the educational context. Lecturers with positive mental health are better equipped to engage students, manage workload stress, and sustain creativity and motivation. On the other hand, poor mental health, which manifests through anxiety, depression, or chronic fatigue, can lead to absenteeism, reduced teaching quality, and poor research outputs.

Comparatively, several studies like that of Antoniou, Polychroni, and Vlachakis (2006) have shown that mental health programmes are organized by institutions in developed countries to improve lecturers' well-being. Such interventions are absent in Nigerian universities. This inconsistency shows a gap between research and practice. Research findings from global literature are yet to be translated into actionable policies within local institutions. Furthermore, issues like overcrowded lecture halls, limited technological facilities, and insufficient welfare incentives further exacerbate stress and mental strain among lecturers, which compounds the problem.

2.5. Stress factors among lecturers

Empirical studies have identified three dominant categories of stressors, and they include

- **Workload demands:** This comprises long teaching hours. A high number of students, project or thesis supervision, and research expectations lead to fatigue and reduced efficiency (Akune et al., 2021).
- **Administrative Pressures:** This refers to the bureaucratic processes and ambiguous evaluation systems for promotions, which engender frustrations and erode autonomy (Olanrewaju, 2015).
- **Inadequate Resources:** This ranges from a lack of funding, technology, and a conducive workspace, restricting effective teaching and engagement in research work (Akinmayowa and Kadiri, 2014).

Although these stressors have been documented in several intellectual fora, scant comparative studies have evaluated their relative significance or combined effects on lecturers' mental health and job performance. This gap hinders research-based policy decision-making by the management of tertiary institutions.

2.6. Coping and Mitigation Strategies

Coping strategies refer to the mental and behavioural approaches or mechanisms that individuals employ to manage stress and maintain their psychological well-being and mental health. It enables lecturers to adapt and try to restore balance when confronted with challenging situations brought about by occupational pressures. Drawing from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, individuals usually employ problem-focused strategies such as time management, goal setting, negotiation of workload, and emotion-based strategies like relaxation, social support, and recreational engagement. The studies by Kyriacou (2001) and Antoniou et al. (2006) submit that adaptive coping not only reduces stress but also increases job satisfaction. In the Nigerian context, recreational outlets such as theatre and the creative arts employ coping strategies that enhance emotional release and community bonding (Dykstra and Fleischmann, 2018). However, coping strategies like counseling services and wellness programmes remain underdeveloped (Winefield et al., 2003). Cinemas, theatres, and other recreational arts have been recommended as innovative coping strategies. The studies reveal a dual gap comprising the need for empirical authentication and indigenous coping strategies, and for stronger institutional support mechanisms that will integrate wellness into the academic institution's culture.

2.7. Summary of Literature Review

The literature review reveals that occupational stress and mental health are separate but interdependent predictors of job performance among lecturers. Excessive workload, inadequate resources, and poor administrative support consistently emerge as major stressors that affect the well-being of lecturers. Although studies globally underscore the importance of mental health promotion and stress management programmes, empirical studies in Nigeria have largely remained descriptive. There is a lack of critical evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions. Furthermore, inconsistency in the definition and measurement of stress across different studies hinders generalizability. This study, therefore, seeks to fill these gaps by examining how stress and mental health jointly predict the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The aim is to propose context-specific coping interventions.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts the correlational research design to find out the relationship between stress and mental health, and its impact on lecturers' job performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The population for this study was 3089 university lecturers, and the sample consisted of 306 lecturers randomly selected from six tertiary institutions in Delta State. They comprise two universities, two polytechnics, and two Colleges of Education. The institutions are Delta State University, Abraka, University of Science and Technology, Ozoro, Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashiukwu, College of Education, Technical, Asaba, and College of Education, Warri. This was arrived at using Yamane's formula (1967). Given the population of 3089, the collected sample corresponds to an effective precision level of 0.054. A multi-stage sampling technique comprising purposive and simple random sampling methods was employed. In the first stage, the tertiary institutions were categorized by type, such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. In the second stage, these institutions were grouped according to senatorial districts of Delta North, Delta South, and Delta Central to ensure fair representation across the state. In the third stage, two institutions were purposely selected from each senatorial district. In the fourth stage, 51 lecturers were randomly selected from each of the six institutions using the balloting method.

3.1. Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a four-point Likert-type Structured questionnaire tagged Stress and Mental Health of Lecturers as Predictors of Job Performance (SMHPJP). A pilot study of 20 lecturers outside the sample was conducted. The reliability of the instrument was established at a 0.82 reliability coefficient using the Cronbach Alpha Method. The data was collected by the researcher and two trained research assistants. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately, while others were collected on a later date.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, comprising mean and standard deviation, used to summarize the responses. Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression determined the relationships and predictive effect of stress and mental health on job performance at a 0.05 level of significance.

3.3. Expected Outcome

Educational and Awareness creation: The findings will help improve teaching and learning by highlighting how stress and mental health influence the performance of lecturers, thereby guiding strategies to enhance the quality of education

Managerial Support: University Administrators of universities and policy makers will gain useful insights on the development of supportive policies, wellness programmes, and stress management strategies that can promote a healthier and more productive workforce capable of meeting institutional goals.

Psychological Orientation: The findings of the study will raise awareness about the relevance of mental health among lecturers and encourage the adoption of preventive and therapeutic measures to maintain the psychological well-being of lecturers.

Policy Formation: The findings will provide an empirical framework for the government to formulate mental health and staff welfare policies tailored to tertiary institutions

Future Research: The study will contribute to the extant body of literature in this field by providing Nigerian-based empirical perspectives of the predictive relationship between stress, mental health, and job performance, which will serve as a reference point for future research.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables (N=306)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Stress	6.00	33.00	18.60	5.10
Mental Health	8.00	29.00	22.40	4.90
Job Performance	1.60	4.80	3.47	0.61
Coping Strategies	1.00	4.00	3.12	0.58

Note: SD = standard deviation

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the major study variables: stress, mental health, job performance, and coping strategies, among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The results show that lecturers reported a moderate level of stress ($M = 18.60$, $SD = 5.10$) and a relatively high level of mental health ($M = 22.40$, $SD = 4.90$). The mean score for job performance ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.61$) suggests that lecturers generally perceive themselves as performing effectively in their professional roles. Similarly, the mean coping strategies score ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.58$) indicates that most lecturers frequently adopt stress-coping mechanisms to manage work-related stress.

The standard deviations across variables indicate a moderate spread of responses, showing some variability in how lecturers experience and respond to stress. The pattern of results implies that while lecturers encounter notable occupational stress, many maintain good mental health and use coping mechanisms that help sustain their job performance. These findings corroborate earlier research (Ofoegbu, 2020; Ibrahim and Salami, 2023; Okorie and Eze, 2022), which established that Nigerian lecturers often experience significant work-related pressures but rely on emotional resilience and coping resources to preserve psychological stability and productivity. The moderate stress levels observed here underscore the need for continued institutional efforts to reduce workload pressure, enhance

welfare programs, and foster supportive work environments that promote both mental well-being and teaching effectiveness.

Table 2 Factor Loadings and Variance for Stress-Inducing Factors (Varimax Rotation)

Factor	Example Items	Top Loadings	Variance Explained (%)	Eigenvalue
Workload Demands	Excess teaching load, large class size, and grading volume	.78, .75, .72	36.0	3.24
Administrative Pressure	Meetings, bureaucracy, reporting requirements	.71, .66, .61	22.0	1.98
Resource Inadequacy	Poor facilities, insufficient funding, and ICT challenges	.68, .60, .54	14.0	1.26
Total Variance Explained			72.0	6.48

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

3.4. Interpretation of Table 2: Factor Loadings and Variance Explained for Stress-Inducing Factors

Table 2 presents the results of a factor analysis conducted to identify the major stress-inducing factors among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Delta State. Three main factors emerged: Workload Demands, Administrative Pressure, and Resource Inadequacy. Workload Demands had the highest factor loadings (0.78, 0.75, 0.72), indicating that excessive teaching load, large class sizes, and grading volume are the most significant sources of stress. Administrative Pressure, with loadings of .71, .66, and .61, represents bureaucratic requirements, meetings, and institutional reporting burdens that contribute to lecturers' occupational strain. Resource Inadequacy, reflected in loadings of 0.68, 0.60, and 0.54, underscores the stress arising from poor facilities, inadequate funding, and ICT challenges.

Together, these factors explained 72% of the total variance, which signifies that they comprehensively capture the main stress dimensions experienced by lecturers. The findings imply that institutional and workload pressures are central contributors to academic stress, which may negatively affect lecturers' mental health and performance outcomes.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	Stress	Mental Health	Job Performance	Coping Strategies
Stress	1.00			
Mental Health	-0.57**	1.00		
Job Performance	-0.44**	0.54**	1.00	
Coping Strategies	-0.29**	0.39**	0.28**	1.00

Note. N = 306. Pearson correlation coefficients are presented. **p < .01 (2-tailed).

3.5. Interpretation of Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Table 3 presents the interrelationship among the major variables: stress, mental health, job performance, and coping strategies. The result shows that all relationships were significant at $p < 0.01$.

The result shows a strong negative correlation between stress and mental health ($r = -0.57$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that as lecturers' stress level rises, their mental well-being declines. This finding aligns with theoretical expectations and prior empirical evidence that prolonged occupational stress undermines mental health.

Similarly, Stress correlated negatively with job performance ($r = -0.44$), implying that as stress increases, lecturers' productivity and teaching efficiency decrease. This underscores stress as a key inhibitor of optimal efficiency.

Conversely, mental health correlated positively with job performance ($r = 0.54$), indicating that lecturers with better mental health tend to perform better in their professional duties. Additionally, coping strategies correlated positively with mental health ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$) and job performance ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), but negatively with stress ($r = -0.29$, $p < 0.01$).

< 0.01). This means that effective coping strategies help lecturers manage stress and maintain both mental stability and job effectiveness.

These findings collectively confirm that reducing occupational stress and strengthening coping mechanisms can significantly improve lecturers' mental health and job performance in tertiary institutions.

Table 4 Multiple Regression Summary for Predictors of Lecturers' Job Performance

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
(Constant)	0.85	0.18	—	4.72	<0.001
Stress	-0.021	0.004	-0.24	-5.25	<0.001
Mental Health	0.078	0.009	0.42	8.67	<0.001
Coping Strategies	0.16	0.06	0.12	2.52	0.012

Model Summary: R = .69, $R^2 = .48$, Adjusted $R^2 = .47$, F (3, 302) = 93.00, p < .001

Interpretation of Table 4: Multiple Regression Summary for Predictors of Lecturers' Job Performance

Table 4 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis that examined how stress, mental health, and coping strategies predict lecturers' job performance. The overall model was statistically significant, F(3, 302) = 93.00, p < .001, and explained 48% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.48$).

Among the predictors, mental health emerged as the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = 0.42$, p < 0.001), indicating that lecturers with higher mental well-being demonstrate better teaching effectiveness, commitment, and productivity. Coping strategies also had a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.12$, p = 0.012), suggesting that lecturers who adopt adaptive coping methods are more likely to maintain good job performance despite challenges.

In contrast, stress exerted a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.24$, p < 0.001), confirming that high stress levels undermine lecturers' professional efficiency. The findings highlight that enhancing lecturers' mental health and coping capacity can buffer the detrimental impact of stress on their job performance, ultimately improving educational outcomes in tertiary institutions.

Dependent Variable: Mental Health Model Summary: R = 0.69, $R^2 = 0.48$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.47$, F(4, 301) = 70.10, p < 0.001

Table 5 Multiple Regression Summary for Predictors of Lecturers' Mental Health

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
(Constant)	26.10	0.95	—	27.47	<0.001
Stress	-0.31	0.06	-0.36	-5.17	<0.001
Workload Demands	-0.89	0.18	-0.27	-4.94	<0.001
Administrative Pressure	-0.51	0.17	-0.15	-3.00	0.003
Coping Strategies	1.92	0.44	0.30	4.36	<0.001

Interpretation of Table 5: Multiple Regression Summary for Predictors of Lecturers' Mental Health

Table 5 displays the regression results for predicting mental health from stress, workload demands, administrative pressure, and coping strategies. The model was statistically significant, F (4, 301) = 70.10, p < 0.001, explaining 48.2% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = 0.48$).

The results show that stress ($\beta = -0.36$, p < 0.001) and workload demands ($\beta = -0.27$, p < 0.001) had strong negative effects on lecturers' mental health. Similarly, administrative pressure ($\beta = -0.15$, p = 0.003) was a significant negative predictor, indicating that excessive bureaucratic and managerial expectations affect lecturers' psychological well-being.

However, coping strategies ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$) positively predicted mental health, confirming their protective and restorative role. This implies that lecturers who engage in effective coping practices such as social support, time management, and emotional regulation are better equipped to withstand stress and preserve mental stability.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that stress and institutional workload significantly deteriorate lecturers' mental health, whereas strong coping mechanisms enhance psychological resilience and well-being.

Table 6 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Decision
H ₀₁	No significant relationship between stress and lecturers' mental health	$r = -0.57$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H ₀₂	No significant relationship between stress-inducing factors and lecturers' mental health	$p < 0.01$	Rejected
H ₀₃	No significant relationship between stress, mental health, and job performance	$R^2 = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H ₀₄	No significant relationship between coping strategies, mental health, and job performance	$\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.012$	Rejected

Interpretation of Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 summarizes the outcomes of the four null hypotheses of the study. All null hypotheses (H₀₁–H₀₄) were rejected, indicating statistically significant relationships among the study variables.

- **H₀₁:** The significant negative correlation ($r = -0.57$, $p < 0.001$) led to rejection, confirming a meaningful relationship between stress and lecturers' mental health.
- **H₀₂:** The significant model ($p < 0.01$) also resulted in rejection, establishing a link between stress-inducing factors and mental health.
- **H₀₃:** The regression model for job performance ($R^2 = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed a significant combined influence of stress, mental health, and coping strategies.
- **H₀₄:** The relationship between coping strategies, mental health, and job performance ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.012$) was also significant, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

Collectively, these results confirm that stress and mental health are significant predictors of lecturers' job performance, and that coping strategies play a crucial moderating role in maintaining well-being and productivity in tertiary institutions.

4. Discussion of Findings

Taken together, the findings demonstrate a coherent pattern indicating that stress exerts a detrimental effect on both mental health and job performance, whereas mental health and coping strategies play critical positive roles in sustaining effective academic functioning. The results affirm that when lecturers experience manageable stress levels and adopt effective coping mechanisms, their mental well-being and job productivity improve significantly.

These findings align with previous Nigerian and international studies (Adebayo, 2021; Okorie and Eze, 2022; Ibrahim and Salami, 2023) that emphasize the impact of administrative stress on lecturers' well-being. They also corroborate the transactional model of stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), which posits that coping strategies mediate the stress–performance link.

In practical terms, institutions should prioritize policies that reduce workload overload, streamline administrative procedures, and promote staff welfare programs that support psychological health and coping capacity. By addressing these areas, tertiary institutions in Delta State and beyond can enhance lecturer performance and overall institutional productivity.

4.1. Summary of Discussion

In summary, this study established that occupational stress significantly impairs lecturers' mental health and job performance, while positive mental health and adaptive coping mechanisms enhance performance. The evidence suggests that mental well-being acts as both a mediator and a protective factor in the stress–performance relationship. Therefore, strengthening mental health support and promoting recreational and coping interventions should be prioritized within tertiary education policy frameworks.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship among stress, mental health, coping strategies, and job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions across Delta State. The findings show that stress is inversely related to mental health and job performance, while sound mental health and effective coping mechanisms significantly enhance lecturers' productivity. Specifically, excessive workload, administrative pressures, and inadequate institutional resources were identified as key stressors undermining lecturers' psychological well-being. Conversely, the use of adaptive coping strategies, such as recreational and creative engagements, such as theatre relaxation and social support, was found to mitigate stress and promote emotional balance. Lecturers' mental health serves as a vital predictor of job performance, mediating the effects of occupational stress. Therefore, improving mental well-being through institutional and individual interventions is essential for enhancing academic productivity, quality teaching, and sustainable performance outcomes in higher education.

Recommendation

- **Institutional Stress Management Policies:** Tertiary institutions should develop and implement comprehensive stress management policies that include workload redistribution, flexible schedules, and supportive supervision to reduce occupational strain.
- **Mental Health Support Services:** Counselling and mental health units should be established or strengthened within campuses to provide periodic psychological assessments, stress management workshops, and professional therapy sessions for academic staff.
- **Promotion of Recreational and Creative Activities:** Institutions should encourage lecturers to engage in recreational outlets such as theatre arts activities, sports, music, and social clubs as part of regular wellness initiatives to enhance emotional balance and social connectedness.
- **Training in Coping and Resilience Skills:** Regular seminars and professional development programs should be organized to train lecturers on effective coping techniques, time management, and other stress management practices to handle academic pressure constructively.
- **Improving Work Conditions:** Adequate teaching facilities, reduced bureaucratic bottlenecks, and improved remuneration should be prioritized to minimize institutional stressors and foster a supportive academic environment.
- **Further Research:** Further studies should explore longitudinal and experimental approaches to examine causal links between stress, mental health, and job performance, and to assess the effectiveness of specific coping interventions across different academic disciplines.

Addressing occupational stress and prioritizing mental health promotion in tertiary institutions in Delta State, and by extension, Nigeria, can strengthen lecturers' motivation, reduce burnout, and improve institutional effectiveness.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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