

# The Rhizophagic Impact Of Stress On Work Performance Of Administrators In Public Universities In Ghana

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## Abstract

The study assessed the impact of stress on the work performance of administrators in public universities in Ghana. The purpose of the study was to investigate how stress impacts the work performance of administrators in public universities in Ghana. The sequential explanatory mixed method approach was used for the study. A sample size of 120 administrators was drawn from three institutions in Ghana via purposive and convenient sampling techniques. An online structured questionnaire and unstructured interview guide were used to collect the data. The questionnaire data were analysed quantitatively with SPSS. Six respondents were interviewed and the interview data were analysed qualitatively. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Mean, standard deviations, frequencies, regression, descriptive and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the data. The major findings of the study were that: stress decreases work performance of administrators and thus, work performance decreases as stress increases, and vice versa; and impact of stress differs from one university to the other. Also, the impact of stress on performance differs in context from one job to the other and even in the same job due to the fact that individuals appraise stressors differently. It was therefore concluded that stress eats the roots of work performance secretly and if unchecked may have detrimental effect on work performance of employees as well as organisational outcomes. It is recommended that Management of public universities should develop strategies to reduce stress on staff.

**Key Words:** Rhizophagic, impact, work stress, work performance, administrators

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## I. Introduction

Physical and mental demands exceeding the individual's capacity have constituted a risk for long-term stress among employees, and not having control over working time has been related to a higher level of self-reported stress and a high risk for sick leave (Ala-Mursula et al., 2005). Work-related stress can severely impact workers' general achievement levels negatively with respect to both efficiency and accuracy (Lovelace et al., 2007). The HSE (Health Safety Executive UK) defines stress as an unpleasant response individuals give to intensified pressures or associated request assigned to them.

Excessive levels of stress may also lead to high absenteeism, increased turnover rates, higher accident rates, more physical ill-health, poor job quality, and low performance (Siu 2002; Winefield et al., 2003). Blumenthal (2003) opined that excess stress is harmful, destructive, and detrimental to human performance.

Studies investigating the impact of work-related stress on organisational outcomes have revealed several associated forms of behaviour affecting performance, competitiveness, and the public image of the enterprise. According to Warraich et al. (2014) who studied the impact of stress on job performance of the employees of Private Sector Universities of Karachi, Pakistan, found out that stress reduces the efficiency of employees. The results of another study conducted by Cross (2019) on the effects of job stress on employee performance showed that the negative factors that distressed employees had a negative effect on performance. Furthermore, Blumenthal (2003) has used an inverted U-type curve to depict the effect stress has on performance. He indicated that as stress increases so does performance. However, if stress continues to increase beyond an optimal point, performance will peak and start to decline.

The vast information gathered serve to confirm that stress has negative effect on performance of employees. Thus, reducing the factors that contribute to stress will improve employee job performance. The researchers were therefore interested in knowing whether the stress of the administrators of the three Public Universities in Ghana positively or negative affect their performance.

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## **II. Literature Review**

According to Selye (1976), stress can be defined as the way the body responds to demands as a result of or caused by either joyful or sad situations. Stress is also defined as an unwelcomed response that people provide when external demands exceed their internal capabilities (Waters & Ussey, 2007). However, stress can present either positive effects (eustress) or negative effects (distress) which indicates that the presence of stress is good and its absence in a person means no life (Trivellasa et al., 2013; Asamoah-Appiah & Aggrey-Fynn, 2017).

The absence of stress presents two issues: task stressors as well as deterrent stressors where the task stressors contribute to the timely and efficient achievement of goals. This means that an ideal state of stress doubles the productivity of organisational members (Certo, 2003). The other side is that deterrent stressors prevent people from attaining their set goals (Robbins et al., 2009).

Stress has several effects to individuals as well as organisations be it work stress, chronic stress, acute stress, traumatic stress or episodic stress (Taylor, 1995). Occupational stress also adds to reduction in organisational performance, increased error level and poor work quality, rise in employee turnover, and absence from work as a result of health defects such as emotional imbalance, worry, unstable work-life, sadness, headache, obesity and heart attacks (Ajayi, 2018; Okeke et al., 2016). This was buttressed by Sdrolias et al. (2005) that stress negatively affects employee output and the rise in job satisfaction and turnover (Strahan et al., 2008).

The annual cost of occupational stress and its effects in the US is estimated to be over 60 billion to employers and 250 to 300 billion to the economy (ILO, 2016). The work of the Administrator has the fixed component as well as the unscheduled ones that come to the desk as a result of their work. In the course of trying to respond to all of them within some stipulated time coupled with the environment of the institution, increases the level of stress. Management is therefore supposed to use some interventions to manage the stress. LeFerve et al. (2006) define stress management interventions (SMIs) as any direct action embarked on to mitigate or ease the stress experience by members of the organisation in the course of performing their duties.

There is a relationship between stress and performance. The first is the inverse relation between stress and job performance: rise in stress level decreases job performance. The second is the direct relation whereby the increase in stress level increases performance. The third is the mild level, where the stress elevates the work of the employee to the highest level at the initial stage but sends the worker into suffering state (Dar et al., 2011).

## **III. Problem Definition**

Stress comes from many sources and each one can have a negative impact on an individual. For Bada and Falana (2012), the demand and challenges of every day, such as job, economic conditions, marriage, desire to survive, and others, appears to be part of the stressors of life. The impact of stress on employees' performance is enormous causing a debilitating effect on the economy of many countries. For example, the annual estimated cost of work-related stress in some six countries are; €617 billion in United Kingdom (Matrix Insight, 2012), \$5.3 billion in Australia (SWA, 2015), CA\$20 billion in Canada (Andersen et al., 2012), €1.9 to €3 billion in France (Trontin et al., 2010), €29.2 billion in Germany (Bodeker & Friedrichs, 2011) and €150 to €372 million in Spain (EASHW, 2014). Extant research on stress indicates a negative impact of stress on work performance (Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019; Fisher, 2014; Bernard, 2009; Amponsah, 2010; Roberts, 2014; Owusu & Tawiah, 2014; Mosadeghrad, 2014). Nevertheless, little is known about the potential effects of stress on workers in universities especially administrators in public universities in Ghana. This is the gap this study seeks to fill.

## **IV. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to assess how stress impacts the work performance of administrators in three public universities in Ghana.

## **V. Objective of the Study**

The study sets out to examine the impact of stress on the work performance of administrators in the three public universities in Ghana.

## **VI. Research Question**

How does stress impact the work performance of administrators in the three public universities in Ghana?

## VII. Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant impact of stress on the work performance of administrators in the three public universities in Ghana.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in how stress affects administrators from the three different public universities in Ghana.

## VIII. Research Methodology

The researchers employed the sequential explanatory mixed method approach. The research was conducted in three public universities in Ghana: University of Ghana, Legon in the Greater Accra Region, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast in the Central Region, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, in Kumasi, Ashanti Region. For this study, the target population was 174 administrators in three public tertiary institutions in Ghana. For the quantitative aspect of this study, a sample size of 120 administrators was selected with the help of Krejcie and Morgan's Sample Size Determination Table. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 120 is a good sample size for a population of 174. Thus, the 120 administrators were selected with purposive sampling and convenience sampling methods. For the qualitative aspect, the researchers selected two administrators from each institution from the sample with convenience sampling method. In all, six (6) respondents were interviewed.

An online close-ended questionnaire from google forms was used to collect the quantitative data while an unstructured interview guide was used to collect the qualitative data on face-to-face basis. The questionnaire had two sections A and B. Section A was used to find out the demographic variables, such as age, gender, years of working experience, and professional qualification of the respondents. Section B comprised eight items that sought to find the views of the respondents on the impacts of stress on work performance. The Likert Scale type of questionnaire was used to collect the data. In each question, a statement was presented in which a respondent must indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement in a multiple-choice type format which ranged from strongly agree (SA) = 5, agree (A) = 4, neutral (N) = 3, strongly disagree (SD) = 2 to disagree (D) = 1.

## IX. Analysis and Discussion of Results

### Analysis of Research Question

#### Impact of Stress on Work Performance of Administrators

The data discussed in this section seeks to find answers to research question 1 which states "How does stress impact the work performance of administrators in the three public universities?" Table 1 presents the results.

The responses displayed in Table 1 with reference to the interpretation of the mean and the standard deviation show how stress impacts the performance of the respondents. From the data in Table 1, reduced research ability (Mean=3.689; sd=1.032), reduction in the quality of work (mean=3.598; sd=1.042), reduction in output of work (mean=3.479; sd=1.053), poor budgeting, planning and organising (mean=2.788; sd=1.212), difficulty in task accomplishment (mean=2.765; sd=1.235), prolong/frequent absenteeism to work (mean=2.724; sd=0.276), concentration problems when performing duties (mean=2.723; sd=1.277), lower appetite for work (mean=2.657; sd=0.343), low self-motivation (mean=2.564; sd=0.436), low commitment (mean=2.575; sd=1.425) and intention to quit this work (mean=1.393; sd=0.607) are the items of the impact of stress on respondents performance.

**Table 1 Impact of Stress on the Performance of Administrators in Higher Education**

Impact of Stress on Performance	Mean	Std Dev.
Reduced research ability	3.689	1.032
Reduction in the quality of work	3.598	1.042
Reduction in the output of work	3.479	1.053
Poor budgeting, planning, and organising	2.788	1.212
Difficulty in task accomplishment	2.765	1.235
Prolong/frequent absenteeism to work	2.724	0.276
Concentration problems when performing duties	2.723	1.277
Lower appetite for work	2.657	0.343
Low self-motivation	2.564	0.436
Low commitment	2.575	1.425
Intention to quit this work	1.393	0.607
Mean	2.814	0.903

Source: Field Data, 2023

N=120

**Analysis of Hypothesis**

**Impact of Stress on Work Performance**

The data under this section seeks to discuss Research hypothesis 1 which states that “There is no significant difference between stress and work performance of administrators from different institutions. Table 2 shows the correlation between the two variables, stress levels and performance. Pearson correlation analysis was used in this study to portray the relationship between the dependent variable (performance) and the independent variable (stress).

**Table 2 Correlation between Stress and Work Performance**

		Stress	Performance
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	-.639**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.012
	N	120	120
Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.639**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.012	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

The result in Table 2 indicates that the dependent variable (performance) relates negatively with the independent variables (stress) showing a higher value ( $r = -.639, p < .05$ ). This indicates that as stress level increases, performance decreases and vice versa. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis 1 and concludes that there is significant impact of stress on the work performance of administrators in the three public Universities in Ghana.

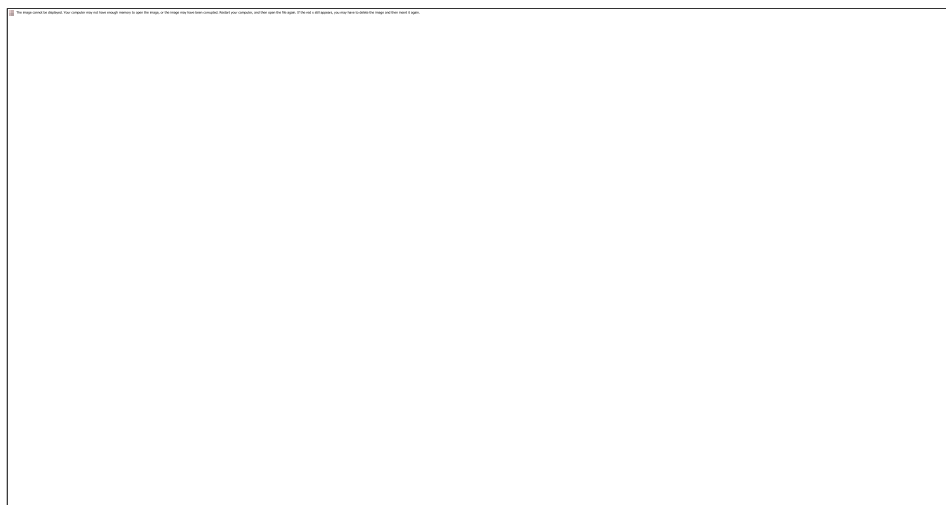
**Table 3 Summary of Simple Linear Regression for the Relationship between Stress Impact and Work Performance**

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig.
1	-.639 <sup>a</sup>	.408	.324	.415	<.012

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Stress levels
- b. Dependent Variable: Performance

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Table 3 gives a summary of simple linear regression to ascertain the impact of stress on performance. The adjusted R-square value displayed in the table shows that 32.4% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance) is explained by the independent variable (stress). Thus, the adjusted R-square value was accounted for .324 which means that a 1% change in stress will result in a 32% increase in performance. However, the significance value of .012 was significant in the sense that the independent variable tends to predict the dependent variable. The finding of the study showed a significant negative relationship between employee stress and performance ( $r = -0.639, sig. value < .012$ ).



**Figure 1 Regression plot for the impact of stress on performance**  
**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Figure 1 shows a negative linear relationship between stress and performance. That is, as stress increases, the administrators' performance decreases, and vice versa. Note that the scatterplot only suggests a linear relationship between the two sets of values.

**Differences in the Impact of Stress on the Performance of Administrators from Different Institutions**

The data under this section seeks to discuss hypothesis 2 which states that “There is no significant difference between the impact of stress on the performance of administrators from different institutions.” Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the institutions with their respective SD, SE, and CI statistics.

**Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of the impact of stress on the performance of the groups in the selected institutions in this Study.**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Institution A	40	3.002	.718	.127	2.930	3.213	1.00	5.00
Institution B	34	3.000	.183	.183	2.515	3.126	1.00	5.00
Institution C	46	3.595	.082	.082	3.153	3.691	1.00	5.00

Source: Field Data, 2023

The results in Table 4, the average mean scored by Institution C was 3.595 with a standard deviation of .082 whereas that of Institution A was 3.002 with a standard deviation of .718. Also, the mean score of Institution B was 3.000 with a standard deviation of .183. This, thus indicates that the impact of stress on the performance of administrators in Institution C was higher than those of Institution A and Institution B in this study.

**Table 5 One-Way ANOVA Test for stress and performance in this Study**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	118.852	2	29.713	170.624	<.015
Within Groups	15.499	117	.168		
Total	134.351	119			

Source: Field Data, 2023

N = 120

Based on the descriptive statistics in Table 5, the study showed that indeed, the mean differences observed between the three institutions were significant (F(2) = 170.624, p<.05). Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis 2 and concludes that the impact of stress on the performance of administrators in the selected institutions in this study is statistically different.

**Table 6 Tukey HSD Test for Multiple Comparisons between Institutions**

(I) Stress	(J) Stress	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Institution A	B	-.62500*	.13735	<.040	-.0075	-.2425
	C	-.73611*	.16311	<.012	-.1903	-.2819
Institution B	A	.95076*	.12317	<.040	.6078	.2937
	C	.62500*	.12047	<.021	.2896	.9604
Institution C	A	-.57576*	.13973	<.012	-.9648	-.1867
	B	-.68687*	.16512	<.021	-.1466	-.2271

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. Dependent Variable: Performance

Source: Field Data, 2023

N = 120

The post-hoc results in Table 6 illustrate significant differences that exist between Institution A and B (p<.05), B and C (p<.05), and; A and C (p<.05). Practically, the impact of stress on performance results obtained between the three tertiary institutions in Ghana, are statistically different.

**Findings from the Qualitative Study**

**Impact of Stress on Work Performance**

Literature has it that stress has a negative impact on performance. When stress dominates peoples' thoughts day in and day out, it causes anxiety, tiredness, high blood pressure, and depression leading to sick leaves, absenteeism, low concentration when performing their duties, difficulty to accomplish task, reduced organisational abilities, and reduced output and quality of work. Stress, indeed impacts negatively on employee

performance. The data in the quantitative section of this study shows that stress impacts negatively on work performance of administrators in public universities. This was evident in the sample of responses from the respondents (W1UA = woman one of university A, ... W2UC = woman two of university C).

“Stress makes me lose focus, forget things, or fail to process new things I am hearing and learning. My budgeting, planning, and organising abilities become poor when I am stressed.” W1UA  
W2UC also said

“When I am stressed, I cannot concentrate well when performing my duties and I make so many mistakes. It also becomes difficult for me to accomplish a task on time, therefore reducing my performance at work.”

Similarly, W1UB recounted

“I normally absent myself from work and also experience a lower appetite for work when I get ill out of stress.”

In addition, W1UC added

“As a result of the workload and pressure at work my research ability, output of work, and quality of work reduce.”

However, W2UA commented in the opposite position saying

“I feel motivated to perform under pressure because stress boosts my energy and attention. It makes me work hard and stay focused.”

## **Discussion of Results**

### **Impact of Stress on Work Performance**

From jam-packed days of meetings and looming deadlines to unceasing emails and an often-unrealistic workload, employees (administrators) tend to work around the clock, into the weekend, and wake up on Monday morning to start the cycle all over again. Of course, some love the hustle. Others simply love what they do. Regardless of how you look at it, employees contend with a lot of stress. It does not matter how good they are at their work or how much they love the chaos – unmanaged and prolonged periods of stress can lead to burnout, negativity, and nonperforming/unproductive employees. Employee stress is a consistent challenge for organisations, as stress contributes to decreased organisational performance, decreased employee overall performance, high error rate, poor quality of work, high staff turnover, and absenteeism

In examining, whether stress has an impact on performance, respondents shared their views on various ways stress impacts their performance. The respondents' views which are presented in section Table 1 indicates that the majority of the administrators (mean=2.724; sd=0.276) absent themselves frequently from work when they are stressed, cannot concentrate well when performing their duties (mean=2.723; sd=1.277), find it difficult to accomplish a task (mean=2.765; sd=1.235) and the budgeting, planning, and organising abilities of respondents become poor (mean=2.788; sd=1.212), and also, when respondents are stressed, their research ability reduces (mean=3.689; sd=1.032) and output of work and quality of work reduce (mean=3.598; sd=1.042). In addition, respondents experience a lower appetite for work (mean=2.657; sd=0.343) when they are stressed. The data above is greatly supported by the following responses from the qualitative results:

“Stress makes me lose focus, forget things, or fail to process new things I am hearing and learning. My budgeting, planning, and organising abilities become poor when I am stressed.” W1UA

Adding her view W2UC said

“When I am stressed, I cannot concentrate well when performing duties and I make so many mistakes even in my reports and presentations. It also becomes difficult for me to accomplish a task on time reducing my performance at work.”

Similarly, W1UC recounted

“I normally absent myself from work and experience a lower appetite for work when I get ill out of stress.”

In addition, W2UB stated

“As a result of the workload and pressure at work my research ability, output of work, and quality of work have reduced.”

The work of Biron (2012) supported by Ganesh et al. (2018), Vahtera et al. (2004), and Akanji (2013) confirms the above results that stress reduces employee performance, increases absenteeism and sickness, and reduces turnovers. According to Blumenthal (2003), the behavioural signs of stress lead to absenteeism from work, poor planning, poor budgeting and poor task accomplishment, low self-esteem, inability to concentrate,

trouble in making decisions, and job dissatisfaction causing performance to deteriorate. Also, Fisher (2014) and Dessler (2000) believe that at the organisational level, stress is responsible for organisational outcomes such as a decline in performance, dissatisfaction, reductions in the quantity and quality of work performance, lack of motivation and commitment, and an increase in absenteeism and decrease in turnover or productivity.

What is surprising is that even though the respondents go through higher levels of stress, some of them are still satisfied with work, still have confidence and hope, their sense of self-worth has not diminished, are still self-motivated, and are committed to working and most surprisingly have no intention to quit the work that gives them stress. Indeed, a part of the result in Table 1 of this study states that some of the respondents are still satisfied with their work, still have confidence and hope, their sense of self-worth has not diminished, are still self-motivated, and are committed to working and most surprisingly have no intention to quit the work that gives them stress has no literature support. Nevertheless, research has opined that the kind of pain which shows up when people experience stress results in a diminished sense of self-worth, lost confidence and hope, and intention to quit (Ofili et al., 2009) low self-confidence, low motivation (Kermene, 2016), (Fisher, 2014) and (ILO, 2016), negative impact on workers' motivation and commitment, increasing their intention to quit or leave the work (Faragher et al., 2005), (Yeh & Yu, 2009) and (Bonsdorff, 2010).

All the above interference of stress on respondent work processes impact negatively on their performance at work. The respondents' mean of means score of 2.814 on the impact of stress on their work performance in Table 1, indicates that stress has negative impacts on respondents' work performance. This was evidenced in a higher value ( $r = -.639$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in Table 2 which relates the dependent variable (performance), negatively with the independent variables (stress). This implies that as the stress level of administrators in this study increases, their performance decreases and vice versa. Also, the adjusted R-square value displayed in Table 3 shows that 32.5% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance) is explained by the independent variable (stress). Thus, the adjusted R-square value was accounted for .325 which means that a 1% change in stress will result in a 32% increase in performance. However, the significance value of .012 was significant in the sense that the independent variable has a tendency to predict the dependent variable. The finding of the study showed a significant negative relationship between employee stress and performance ( $r = -0.639$ , sig. value  $< .012$ ). More so, Figure 1 shows a negative linear relationship between stress and performance. That implies that as stress increases, the administrator's performance decreases and vice versa.

The results above is supported by a number of research studies such as Swathi and Reddy (2016) who posit that "stress affects performance negatively"; Bernard (2009), Amponsah (2010), Roberts (2014), and Mosadeghrad (2014) who opine that stress have a negative impact on performance; Kossek et al. (2012) who conclude that stress negatively impacts on employee work performance. Carr et al. (2011) who focussed on strategies for promoting a healthier and productive environment and found out that stress negatively affects performance of employees; Biron (2012), Akanji (2013) and Ganesh et al. (2018) who emphasised that stress reduces performance. It can therefore be concluded that stress has a negative impact on employees' performance.

The result in Table 4 indicates that the impact of stress on the performance of administrators in Institution C was higher than those of Institution A and Institution B in this study. Also, Table 5 showed that stress impacts on performance results obtained differed between the three institutions in Ghana ( $F(2) = 170.624$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with Institution C having the highest impact than Institutions B and A. Again, the post-hoc results in Table 6 illustrate significant differences that exist between Institution A and B ( $p < .05$ ), B and C ( $p < .05$ ), and; A and C ( $p < .05$ ). Conclusively, the results in Tables 4, 5, and 6, show that the impact of stress on performance results obtained between the three Universities in Ghana, are statistically different. Unfortunately, the researchers did not get supporting literature to confirm the above result.

## **X. Summary of Key Findings**

The first key finding of the study is that stress reduces research ability, quality of work, the output of work, concentration when performing duties, appetite for work, self-motivation, and commitment and increases the difficulty in task accomplishment, prolonged/frequent absenteeism to work, poor budgeting, planning and organising ability and intention to quit a job. The study also showed that performance decreases as administrator's stress increases. Lastly it was found out that the impact of stress on the performance of administrators differed in different institutions.

## **XI. Conclusion**

It can be concluded from the analyses that performance decreases as administrators' stress increases. Also, the impact of stress on performance differs in context from one job to the other and even in the same job due to the fact that individuals appraise stressors differently. Furthermore, stress is a secret 'worm' that eats the roots of work performance and if unchecked will cause detrimental effect on employees' performance as well as organisational outcomes.

## **XII. Recommendations**

Following the research findings and conclusions, it is recommended that Management of public universities should develop strategies to reduce staff stress.

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