

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND UNIVERSITY OF UYO ACADEMIC STAFF OUTPUT

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of specific stress management strategies on the output of academic staff. Workplace stress is identified as a significant challenge within the Nigerian tertiary education sector, exacerbated by factors such as excessive workload, inadequate resources, and administrative pressures. The study focuses on two key management strategies: rest and physical activity. A descriptive survey design was employed, with a sample of 152 academic staff selected from a population of 1,521. Data was collected using a validated researcher-developed questionnaire, the "Stress Management Strategies and University of Uyo Academic Staff Output Questionnaire (SMSUUASOQ)." Analysis involved mean, standard deviation, and independent t-tests. The results revealed a significant positive influence of both rest and physical activity on academic staff output. Staff who reported higher levels of rest and physical activity demonstrated markedly higher mean output scores compared to their counterparts with lower levels. The null hypotheses stating no significant influence were rejected at the .05 level of significance. The study concludes that effective stress management, particularly through adequate rest and regular physical activity, is crucial for enhancing productivity and well-being among academic staff. Recommendations include that university management should actively promote these strategies by providing conducive environments, facilities, and supportive policies to foster a healthier and more productive academic workforce.

## KEYWORDS

Stress management, management strategies, academic, staff, output

## INTRODUCTION

Stress has become a phenomenon that is attracting public attention globally. Stress is a common element in the lives of every individual regardless of age or cultural background. Stress can be described as the change in one's physical or mental state in response to situations (stressors) that pose challenge or threat to one's state of health. It is uncomfortable and unhealthy situation that places demands on an individual thereby upsetting the physical, psychological, emotional and cognitive wellbeing which is caused by different activities, events and life experiences. Everyday living involves stress, whether it is at work, home, with family, in the marketplace, or in any other area of lives. When daily chores become

too hard to handle without help, stress can arise and if it is not managed, it can have a negative effect on one's physical and mental health (Kaborloomene *et al.*, 2023).

Stress can manifest itself in either positive or negative form. It is positive when a situation offers an opportunity for one to gain something, but when constraints of demands are placed on individuals, then it is negative. According to Ogba *et al.* (2020), stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demands made upon it. In other words, as demands are made on an individual or as situations arise, the body attempts to adjust or adapt to the situation in order to re-establish normalcy.

Stress can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological; heart attacks and accidents. With this outlook, stress is one of the most significant health hazards of the twenty-first century. The important thing to note about stress is that it has a lot of negative implications for mankind, because as the body responds to various forms of physical or psychological stress, certain predictable changes occur, which include increased heart rate, blood pressure, dizziness and secretions of stimulatory hormones (Abouammoh *et al.*, 2020). Stress manifests itself at different levels such as at home, school, workplace among others. Specifically, this study focuses on workplace stress. Workplace stress is a stress pattern that is associated with workplace or jobs demand. Workplace stress has been shown to lower productivity, increase fears and absenteeism, and create pervasive patterns of dysfunction in the workplace (Abouammoh *et al.*, 2020).

Work stress has been identified as a common phenomenon in the teaching profession especially at tertiary institution level. Workplace stress is indeed a critical issue in academic institutions, especially among the academic staff. Academic stress is prevalent in universities all around the world, especially in Nigeria. Nowadays, rapid development, global competition, technology and changes in the nature of jobs today could make the job more demanding than ever, and workers are more prone to injuries and illnesses.

Listing the most related stressors on academic staff in the Nigerian University system, Obiora *et al.* (2023), identified workload, conflict, demands from colleagues and supervisors, incompatible demands from different personal and organization roles, inadequate resources for appropriate performance, inadequate autonomy to make decision on different tasks and feeling of underutilization as crucial factors. Aduma *et al.* (2022) listed factors influencing stress among

academic staff to include strike and school interruption, delay and irregular payment of salaries, lack of instructional facilities, preparation of examination results, invigilation of examination, high cost of living, poor office accommodation, lack of research facilities, lack of and delay in annual leave/ holiday and underfunding of education. University Uyo being one of the federal and largest universities in the country is no stranger to all the factors influencing stress as mentioned above.

Lecturers may also conduct research in their area of expertise and publish scholarly articles and books (American Association of University Professors, 2017). However, the job of a lecturer can be highly demanding and stressful, with long working hours, high workload, and competing demands. Letam (2023) opined that lecturers often face numerous stressors, including heavy workloads, time pressures, resource constraints, and insufficient remuneration which have the potential to lead to work-related stress among the lecturers, ultimately affecting their job performance and overall welfare.

Stress management strategies among academic staff are essential for maintaining their well-being and job performance in the challenging academic environment. Stress management strategies can be defined as constant changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Thompson *et al.*, 2018). Stress management is dependent on personality and perceptions about life experiences and the strategies adopted can differ by individuals. However, the main aim is to reduce stress and reach a balanced state of functioning (Abouammoh *et al.*, 2020). Stress management strategies can be classified into internal and external strategies.

The internal strategies include mindfulness and self-awareness, time management, positive self-talk, and continuous professional development

(Letam, 2023). The external strategies include seeking support, establishing boundaries, utilizing institutional resources, engaging in physical activities, flexible work policies, feedback and evaluation, timeoff and sabbaticals (Brown *et al.*, 2018). In this study, the following stress management strategies are being considered: rest, physical activity, social support, prioritized tasks and time management.

Rest means respite from labour or exertion of any kind and refreshment or repose obtained by a pause in activity and freedom from trouble, distress, molestation, aggression and so forth; a state of peace. Ilonze (2024) defined rest as a relative phenomenon and always related to movements. Rest is a process of overcoming physical or mental fatigue or weariness. Accordingly, the term rest comprises both a process (to rest) and a condition (being in rest). Rest is vital for better mental health, increased concentration and memory, a healthier immune system, reduced stress, improved mood and even a better metabolism (Ling and Mok, 2024). It is so important to prioritize adequate rest and quality sleep in everyday life. Rest is important to the mental, emotional and physical health. Regardless of how one chooses to rest, these daily behaviours can help one recover and recharge from physical and mental effort. That's why better rest is linked to better physical and mental health.

Physical activity is another important stress management strategies. Physical activity is a body activity that enhances or maintains physical fitness and overall health and wellness. Regular physical activity such as walking, cycling, wheeling, doing sports or active recreation, provides significant benefits for health. Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work. Both moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity improve health (Lippi and Sanchis-Gomar, 2020). Regular physical activity is proven to help prevent and manage non-

communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and several cancers. It also helps prevent hypertension, maintain healthy body weight and can improve mental health, quality of life and well-being (Alpsoy, 2020).

### **| Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that most academic staff in public tertiary institutions are bedeviled with stress and workload. Though it is essential to work but being conscious of stress may hinder productivity. Several challenges are faced by lecturers in Nigerian public Universities. Firstly, teaching a large number of students in a small classroom without a public address system; poor internet facilities and use of technology to teach online; poor conducive environment for teaching due to lack of electricity, ventilation, and sitting arrangement of the student. All these culminate in excess workload and stress for academic staff. Secondly, academic staff researches and supervision of students' projects often result in stress, because lecturers must attend international and national conferences and make research for publications before they can be promoted. However, supervision of undergraduate project work and postgraduate dissertation and thesis put extra pressure on academic staff. Thirdly, community service engagement by academic staff also leads to excess workload and stress for academic staff.

The primary assignment of academic staff of university is stressful as they engage in numerous activities especially researches, teaching and supervision, mentoring among others which require the use of the physical, mental and intellectual capacity all the time. University of Uyo has approximately about 158,264 students to be trained by just about 1,521 academic staff (University of Uyo, 2025). Therefore the academic staff are bound to work harder than usual, in terms of lecturing, handling practical work, field/educational trips, supervision of projects, dissertations and theses.

Also several administrative responsibilities like Deanship, Headship of Department, Postgraduate Programme Coordination, Registration and Examination Administration among others are assigned to the staff. In some cases, coupled with teaching and other responsibilities, the academic staff also get involved in rendering services to other universities, like going as visiting lecturers or resource persons, these tasks sometimes are more herculean than classroom lecturing.

Though, most Universities have regulatory frameworks and strategies on leave or break from work, ranging from annual leave, casual leave, sick leave, and maternity leave but, this does not constitute a proper stress management that can adequately enhance staff healthy living and foster effective performance and better job delivery. Therefore developing strategies for stress management is very important among the academic staff. It is unfortunate however that some lecturers lack the necessary stress management skills thereby making them victims of some stress related health problems such as high blood pressure, stroke, collapses and deaths. The level of stress and stress related health problems among academic staff of University of Uyo is so worrisome and this therefore motivated the present researcher to conduct this study in order to examine the stress management strategies and University of Uyo academic staff output.

### **| Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the stress management strategies and University of Uyo academic staff output. The study specifically seeks to:

- i. determine the influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output.
- ii. examine the influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

### **| Research Questions**

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

- i. What is the influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output?
- ii. What is the influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output?

### **| Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study and will be tested at .05 level of significance:

- i. There is no significant influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output.
- ii. There is no significant influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

### **| Research Method**

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Survey is a research method which focuses on a representative sample derived from the entire population of the study (Athbi and Hassan, 2019). This study was conducted in the University of Uyo. The University of Uyo is located in Uyo, capital of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria which is situated in the South South part of Nigeria. The population of this study comprised all the academic staff of University of Uyo with the total of 1,521 staff (University of Uyo Website, 2025). A sample size of 152 academic staff representing 10 percent of the total population was selected for the study. A researcher developed questionnaire, titled “Stress Management Strategies and University of Uyo Academic Staff Output Questionnaire (SMSUUASOQ)” was the main instrument for data collection in the study. The instrument was submitted to five experts in the Faculty of Education, two from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, two from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education and one from the Department of Sociological Foundations of Education, University of Uyo for validation. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the questionnaire

were given to the academic staff who did not take part in the main study but part of the population. The researcher after determining the group (departments) to participate in the study proceeded with the help of two research assistants, to distribute copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their various offices. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Using 2.5 as cut-off criterion on stress management strategies in a four point scale of SA, A, D, S scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively; response on output of academic Staff of University was divided into high or low. The high group

indicate academic staff with more output while low indicates academic staff with less output. Hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significant. When it is lower than .05, null hypothesis was rejected otherwise accepted. An informed consent was obtained from the participants after explaining the purpose of the study to them. The researcher assured the respondents of the confidentiality of the information that were obtained from them.

## **| RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Research Question 1**

What is the influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output?

**Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Rest on the University of Uyo Academic Staff Output**

<b>Rest</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
High	58	63.86	5.02
Low	90	54.22	5.75

The result in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the output of academic staff based on their level of rest. As shown in the table, academic staff who practice high rest had a mean output of 63.86 and a standard deviation of 5.02, while those who practice low rest had a mean output of 54.22 and a standard deviation of 5.75. The mean difference between the two groups is

9.64 in favour of academic staff that practice high rest. This is an indication of a positive influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

### **Research Question 2**

What is the influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output?

**Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Physical Activity on the University of Uyo Academic Staff Output**

<b>Physical Activity</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
High	69	62.03	5.89
Low	79	54.48	6.41

The result in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the output of academic staff

based on their level of physical activity. As shown in the table, academic staff who practice high

physical activity had a mean output of 62.03 and a standard deviation of 5.89, while those who practice low rest had a mean output of 54.48 and a standard deviation of 6.41. The mean difference between the two groups is 7.55 in favour of academic staff that practice high physical activity.

This is an indication of a positive influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

**Table 3. 1Independent t-test Analysis of the Influence of Rest on the University of Uyo Academic Staff Output**

Rest	n	Mean	SD	t-cal.	df	p-value
High	58	63.86	5.02	10.44	146	.000
Low	90	54.22	5.75			

The result in Table 3 indicates that the calculated t-value of 10.44 for the influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output is significant. This is because the p-value of .000 is less than .05 at 146 degrees of freedom and .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of rest on the University of Uyo

academic staff output. Hence, there is significant influence of rest on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

**Table 4. Independent t-test Analysis of the Influence of Physical Activity on the University of Uyo Academic Staff Output**

Physical Activity	n	Mean	SD	t-cal.	df	p-value
High	69	62.03	5.89	7.42	146	.000
Low	79	54.48	6.41			

The result in Table 4 indicates that the calculated t-value of 7.42 for the influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output is significant. This is because the p-value of .000 is less than .05 at 146 degrees of freedom and .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output. Hence, there is significant influence of physical

activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output.

### | Discussion of Findings

The finding on the influence of rest on University of Uyo academic staff output indicated that *rest has a significant positive influence on the University of Uyo academic staff output*. Rest is a natural way the body and mind recover from stress. For academic staff, who often work long hours preparing lectures, conducting research, attending meetings, and supervising students, proper rest



helps restore energy and focus. When lecturers are well-rested, they are more likely to perform better, meet deadlines, and engage more actively with students. One reason rest may improve output is that it helps prevent burnout. When the body and brain are overworked without enough recovery time, fatigue sets in. This can lead to poor decision-making, low productivity, and health problems. But when lecturers take time to rest whether through sleep, leisure activities, or short breaks, they return to work refreshed and more motivated. Another possible reason for the finding is that rest improves mental alertness and creativity. Academic work often requires problem-solving and original thinking. Without rest, the brain becomes sluggish and less effective. However, after resting, staff may find it easier to focus, remember information, and come up with new ideas. This finding agrees with the study by *Okon (2019)*, which found that lecturers who practiced good sleep hygiene and took regular breaks recorded better performance in teaching and research output. Similarly, *Etim and Uko (2020)* reported that lecturers who regularly observed rest days during the week were more efficient and had fewer stress-related complaints. These studies show that rest is not just good for health but also improves productivity.

The finding on the influence of physical activity on the University of Uyo academic staff output indicated that *physical activity has a significant positive influence on the University of Uyo academic staff output*. Physical activity, such as walking, jogging, or even simple stretches, helps the body release tension and improves blood flow to the brain. This, in turn, helps lecturers feel more alert, energized, and focused in their daily tasks. One possible reason for this finding is that physical activity helps reduce stress and anxiety. Many academic staff deal with pressure from teaching, research, and administrative duties. Engaging in physical activity helps the body release endorphins, which are natural mood

boosters. This positive effect on mood can lead to better performance at work. Another reason could be that physical activity improves sleep quality. When lecturers sleep well, they wake up feeling rested and ready to handle their responsibilities. A clear mind and healthy body support better classroom engagement, faster research output, and improved student supervision. This finding is supported by the study of *Essien and Udoh (2018)*, who found that academic staff who exercised regularly reported higher job satisfaction and better work output. Also, *Bassey (2020)* noted that lecturers who engaged in moderate physical activity at least three times a week were less likely to report fatigue and burnout. Physical activity also improves time management. Staff who schedule regular exercise often become more disciplined with their time. This allows them to complete tasks more efficiently without feeling overwhelmed.

### **| Conclusion**

The study looked at how stress management strategies affect the work output of academic staff at the University of Uyo. The findings showed that rest, physical activity, social support, time management and prioritized tasks have significant influence on the University of Uyo academic staff output. It can be concluded that when lecturers rested well, exercised, got support from others, managed their time and planned their tasks properly, they became more productive and less overwhelmed.

### **| Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. University management should encourage staff to take regular rest. This can be done by allowing reasonable breaks and reducing workload where necessary.
- ii. Academic staff should be encouraged to engage in physical activities. The university can support this by providing gym facilities or organizing fitness programs.

- iii. Lecturers should be given more emotional and social support. Management should create spaces for staff to share concerns and build good relationships with colleagues.
- iv. The university should organize time management seminars and workshops on regular basis in order to help lecturers plan their work better.
- v. The university should promote a healthy work environment. This includes fair workloads, open communication, and policies that support staff well-being.

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