



# Stress Management and Job Performance of Secretaries in Public Polytechnics, South-west, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Secretaries encounter job stress on daily basis due to the multitasking nature of their work and this goes a long way to determine their level of job performance. However, appropriate strategies are required to manage this job stress to prevent low performance. This study investigated stress management and job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in Southwest, Nigeria. The population comprised all the 648 secretaries in both federal and state polytechnics in the six states of South-west, Nigeria. A sample size of 242 was selected by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination. A likert type structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and simple percentages were used to analyze data. Inferential statistics of simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis. Result showed that the level of stress management among secretaries was moderately high (mean = 2.761). There was significant influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries (Adj.  $R^2 = 0.154$ ,  $F(3.214) = 14.124$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). It was recommended that management of public polytechnics in South-west should provide stress awareness training to secretaries to help them recognize the signs of stress and learn coping strategies. This can include workshops on time management, resilience, and mindfulness.

**Keywords:** Stress Management, Job Performance, Secretaries

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of secretaries' work is very stressful due to the numerous tasks they perform on daily basis ranging from taking down the minutes of meetings, supervising daily office activities, assisting the boss to keep schedules in desk diaries to enhance effective job performance of such a boss and taking charge of the office when her boss is not around as well as keeping other general information (Akasi and Popoola, 2020). The job performance of secretaries is very important to the growth of the organization as well as tertiary institutions. Job performance can be defined as a complete value expected in the organization of the different attitudinal episodes which an employee displays during a certain period of time. Job performance in countries in Africa has also been researched by some authors in particular reference to educational sector in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and others.



In South Africa, some employees in some institutions work overtime or long hours without additional or commensurate pay. This can lead to poor job performance as there is no motivation (Forson, Ofosu, Dwamena, Opoku and Adjavon, 2021).

The emergence of new technologies has redefined, upgraded and broadened the scope of secretaries' work. This is because the organisations in 21st century have been dominated by E-office. This is where digital facilities such as computer, projector, e-board, scanner, video conferencing as well as internet facilities have emerged to do most of the work that secretaries used to perform manually in some years back (Ojo and Akhademe, 2016). With combination of traditional and e-office works, secretaries are prone to high level of stress. However, in order to avoid being burnt out, secretaries require coping with occupational stress for job performance to be enhanced. There are poor coping strategies which are known to be substance abuse, joining bad group, drinking of alcohol and smoking, (Rihab and Mukhtar, 2023).” Inability to apply the right mechanism to cope with stress has been identified as a source of stress.

Effectively coping with stress on the other hand is the first step to preventing psychological distress and development of health problems (Kagwe, Ngigi and Sabina, 2018). The coping strategies known to enhance general wellbeing and good job performance of secretaries are identified to be effectively addressing the causes of stress by recognizing source of stress, appraising such type of stress and eventually devise strategies to cope with such stress. This is because stress cannot be ruled out in every human endeavor but ability to cope with it will go a long way to keep the employee achieving and keep the organizational performance at its hype. Some of the measures that are associated with stress management include; recognition of stress, reappraisal and coping with stress.

Recognition of stress means to identify the difference between 'stressed' and 'relaxed' state, nonetheless, employees usually snub this sign and rather concentrate on their giving tasks, hence, they are neither relaxed nor believed to be stressed. Ability of secretaries to recognize stress and manage it would make them to be more productive in the organisation (Khalid, 2021). Appraisal is a method by which a secretary manages stress on his/her own and able to recognize how to respond physically to stress as a positive phenomenon that can help to combat the problem, instead of responding negatively to a scary situation. Secretaries who could easily identify the symptoms of stress physiologically tend to deal more with such situation.

Coping with stress is another measure of stress management that includes all the positive endeavour towards dealing with stressor and control uncooperative-environment relationship so as to use individual behaviour to deal with the sources of stress. Secretaries who could focus more on stressful event such as work demand, other personal life demands also to manage the stress successfully tend to be more productive at work (Zhang, Ji, Ji, Liu, Wang and Xu, 2021). It is observed that many studies have been carried out on stress management and job performance of employees in different establishment. Nonetheless, there has been dearth of empirical studies on the influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics, hence, the reason for this study.



### **Statement of Problem**

In Nigeria, it has been observed that issues with job performance of employees in the educational sector in Nigeria were attributed to poor remuneration and this leads to efficiency problems, low performance per employee, low morale, absenteeism, job avoidance and turnover. Likewise, the polytechnic management holds performance in high esteem because it is a measure to justify the growth of organization. Consequently, poor performance should be avoided at all cost. Secretaries undergo stress at work as well as at their various homes which could hinder their effective performance at place of work.

Individual employee as well as the organization cannot but encounter problems if this level of stress is not well managed which could result to low productivity, retrenchment, poor health and death. Numerous researches have been carried out on the influence of stress management on job performance of employees in business organisations as well as educational institutions. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies on stress management that is peculiar to job performance in an IT environment among secretaries in public polytechnics in Southwest, Nigeria. This is the gap this study filled.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria.

The objectives are to:

- i. assess the level of stress management of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria; and
- ii. ascertain the influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria.

### **Research question**

1. What is the level of stress management of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria?

### **Hypothesis**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Assibey-Ankrah (2021) job performance refers to the actions that an employee takes to ensure the completion of given tasks in the organization. Accomplishment of roles is not independent; instead, it is often impacted by a secretary's personal qualities, talents, and job happiness as well as the amount of compensation they receive. Employee job performance refers to an employee's actual accomplishments or work performance. Generally, job performance of employee is identified in data that represents effectiveness that are categorized under productivity, level of goal accomplishment, customer satisfaction index, and attachment (Orji & Makubu, 2020).



Failure to fulfil tasks to the needed standard; non-compliance with workplace standards, rules, or process; unwelcome and disruptive attitude at workplace which have unpleasant effects on coworkers are all examples of poor performance. Secretaries are usually faced with job stress on daily basis which is probably as a result of the enormous and diversified nature of work they do. The work of secretaries has become so enormous in the office of nowadays that is characterized with Information Technology. It is a fact that secretaries face with inexhaustible to-do list on daily basis. This is because their work is so encompassing. Therefore, the shortage of time, role conflict and fatigue dominate their working hours in the office could make them to undergo a lot of stress which could have an adverse effect on the quality of their job and their health if not well managed.

Stress management, according to Sucharitha and Shaik (2020), is the proactive steps that people and organizations take to address stress before it has an impact on workers. Thus, stress management involves addressing potential stressors on an individual or group level before they cause stress to organizational employees. The topic of stress management has several facets, one of which is workplace counseling. According to Petreanu, Lordache, and Seracin (2020), stress management encompasses a broad range of approaches that concentrate on strategies to reduce stress in companies of all sizes in order to reduce the detrimental effects of stress. As a result, stress management takes on various forms depending on the company. Orji and Makubu (2020) believe that stress management can be demonstrated through flexible work schedules, workplace counseling, or even improvements to the quality of the workplace, as these strategies, when implemented effectively, may lessen stress.

Past researchers have different opinions on the correlation between management of stress and job performance. Some believed that job-stress has favourable relationship with job performance while other asserted that there exists contrary relationship between job-stress and job performance. Evidently, Beehr, Jex, Stacy and Murray (2017) examined the connection between job-stress and employees performance. It was found that job-stress has significant negative association with job performance. Wushe and Shenje (2019) carried out a research work to examine the relationship that exists between workplace stress and job performance of employee using a quantitative research design that comprised 197 workers and management staff who worked in five selected government departments.

Result revealed that there was negative relationship between elongating hours of work and job performance. In another similar study conducted by Imbur, Agba and Iloma (2023) on the effect of stress management on employees' performance among bank staff in Markurdi metropolis using the cross sectional survey design. One hundred and fifty-three respondents were used, and questionnaire was used in the collection of data. Result revealed that, there was significant impact of workplace stress on employees' performance of bank staff in Markurdi. It was recommended that bank management should organize yearly walkouts, and make provision for beneficial programs that could enhance staff wellness and physical fitness at the same time reduce the vulnerability of bank staff to the effects of occupation stress.



Tojue, Audu and Nnamani (2023) investigated the effect of stress management on employee job performance in manufacturing firms in Nigeria using the descriptive survey method. The sample size comprised 378 respondents and questionnaire was used in the collection of data. Result showed that there was significant influence of stress management on job performance of employees in manufacturing firms. It was recommended that management of manufacturing firms in Nigeria should embrace diverse dimensions by which stress could be managed such as meditation and relaxation techniques in order to heighten the level of job performance of employee. In the same vein, Odita (2023) investigated employee performance and stress management techniques in Edo State manufacturing companies.

The precise goals were to ascertain the connection between employees' performance and workplace social support, coping skills, time management methods, and mind-body practices. The 301 respondents in the sample were chosen among 1663 employees of certain industrial companies. The findings demonstrated that workers in manufacturing companies have high levels of coping ability when it comes to handling stress and that they receive the greatest amount of social support from their employers at work. Additionally, it was found that employees in manufacturing companies used time management the most frequently and that it was their preferred method of stress management. Furthermore, it was found that employees do, on the whole, use the mind-body method for time management, albeit not as much as they do when it comes to other stress management techniques. According to the study, managers of manufacturing companies should educate their staff about the advantages of mind-body therapies like massage, yoga, and other practices and how to effectively utilize them to lower stress levels.

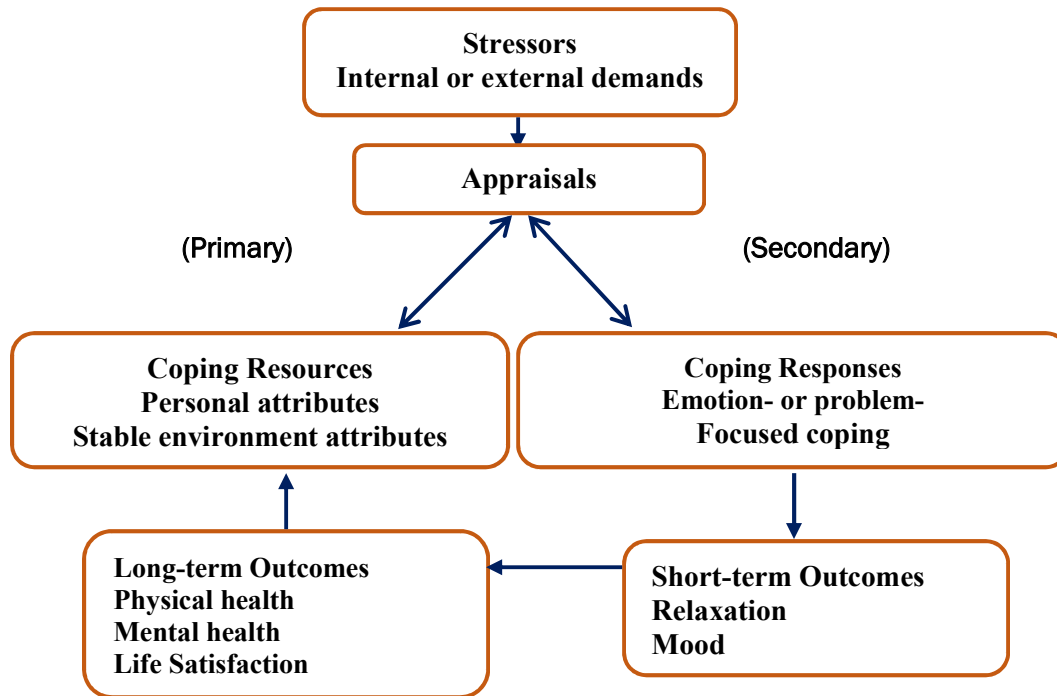
Assibey-Ankrah (2021) conducted a study at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana to investigate the impact of stress management techniques on worker performance. 923 administrative staff members made up the study's population, while 269 made up the sample size. The first set of study results showed that the University of Cape Coast's stress management strategies included staff welfare programs, training and development, job redesign, and psychological assistance. Additionally, the study found a high and favorable correlation between employee performance and stress management techniques. The study suggested that in order to battle stress, university management should implement a combination of all the stress management techniques found in this research. Abonoyo (2020) carried out research to find out how stress management affected Kenya Airways employees' performance.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of workplace quality, workplace counseling, and flexible work schedules on employee performance at Kenya Airways. The results of the study showed that employee performance variation might be explained by stress management. The study also found a significant positive correlation between employee performance and flexible work schedules, an insignificant negative correlation between employee performance and workplace counseling, and a significant positive correlation between employee performance and workplace quality. The study came to the conclusion that employee performance is influenced by workplace quality and flexible work schedules, but not by workplace counseling.



### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Transactional theory of stress and coping is used to underpin this study. This model was propounded by Richard Lazarus which suggests that response to stress depends on individual's cognitive appraisal when encountered with demand from environment which brings about stressor interpretation that is based on one's ability to cope with such stressor. (Lazarus, 1990). This model shows ever changing relationship of stress due to a frequent dealings that exist between personal and environmental factors, which have a complementary relationship. It implies further how an individual appraises the cause of stress as it influences corporate performance, psychological and physical health (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). More also, one can feel the stressor as intimidating despite the situation is illusive. Additionally, the process of cognitive appraisal produces the similar track by which both emotional and individual factors change the response to psychological situation the consequence of which introduce emotions and their biological moderation



**Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus and Folkman, (1984)**

According to the transactional model of stress, primary and secondary cognitive appraisal may affect the relationships between the stressor and physiological reaction. Lazarus and Folkman concur with Selye's theory that stress causes our systems to react defensively and disrupt homeostasis, and that chronically high levels of provocation can result in a number of diseases. Notwithstanding, they do not agree with him but reject his assertion on a physiological reaction to factors that constitute stress. They contend that varying behavioural responses to the similar stressor can result in varying physiological reactions.



The coping strategy applied by people towards a certain stressor can be influenced by their perception towards such strain. This usually has consequential effect on health due to the fact that the neurochemical stress reactions can be influenced by coping. For example, maladaptive coping strategy like taking of harmful substances like alcohol, smoking, drugs, etc.) which are detrimental to health, increase the chance of early death and despondency (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

This theory is significant to this study due to the fact that secretary's job is very demanding and encompassing which means application of personal measures to combat job stress will go a long way to assist him/her from burnout and frequent and incessant exhaustion hence his/her good health does have positive ripple effects on institutional growth.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design and the population was made up of the secretaries in public polytechnics in six states of Southwest Nigeria. The institutions are; The Polytechnic of Ibadan, Ibadan; Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta; The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti; Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo; Federal Polytechnic, Ede; and Lagos Yaba College of Technology, Lagos. The sample size comprised 242 secretaries who were selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. The stratified proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of questionnaires that was given in each of the institution.

The stress management scale was adopted from Ezeonwurie and Ugwoke (2021) which comprised fifteen items. Data was collected by administering the questionnaire to each secretaries in the Polytechnics with the help of trained research assistants. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts was used to analyze data while inferential statistics of simple linear regression were used to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

### 4. RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographic information of the Respondents**

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	47	21.6
	Female	171	78.4
Age	20-30 years	45	20.6
	31-40years	48	22.0
	41-50years	62	28.4
	51-60years	39	17.9
	61 years above	24	11.0

#### Field Survey Result: 2023

The Table 1 presents the personal information of the respondents used for this study. It was indicated that 47 respondents representing 21.6% were male while 171 respondents representing 78.4% were females, showing that the respondents were dominated by female.



The table also showed that 25 respondents representing 20.6% were between ages 20-30years, 48 respondents representing 22.0% were between 31-40 years, 62 respondents representing 28.4% were between 41-50 years, 39 respondents representing 17.9% were between 51-60years, 24 respondents representing 11.0% were 61 years and above, indicating that there were more respondents within the age 41-50 years.

**Research question:** What is the level of stress management of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria?

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Responses on the level of Stress Management**

Stress Management		VHL	HL	LL	VLL	Mean
<b>Recognition of stress</b>						
1	Being upset when doing work that is not part of my job description	(49) 22.5%	(69) 31.7%	(64) 29.4%	(36) 16.5%	2.60
2	Feel cheated when acting in a higher position without allowance	(45) 20.6%	(90) 41.3%	(57) 26.1%	(26) 11.9%	2.71
3	Increase rate of heartbeat when I overwork myself	(31) 14.2%	(90) 41.3%	(60) 27.5%	(37) 17.0%	2.53
4	Worried when my supervisor is doing my work as a secretary	(49) 22.5%	(92) 42.2%	(47) 21.6%	(30) 13.8%	2.73
5	Difficulty to sleep well because of the work that are undone	(50) 22.9%	(83) 38.1%	(57) 26.1%	(28) 12.8%	2.71
Grand mean for Recognition of stress						2.656
<b>Appraisal</b>						
6	Feeling of incompetence in me whenever I am unable to finish up my tasks on time	(56) 25.7%	(99) 45.4%	(44) 20.2%	(19) 8.7	2.88
7	Feeling threaten when I am faced with many difficult tasks at same time	(44) 20.2%	(81) 37.2%	(60) 27.5%	(33) 15.1%	2.62
8	Feeling embarrassed when my boss is impatient with me when performing a task	(41) 18.8%	(94) 43.1%	(56) 25.7%	(27) 12.4%	2.68
9	Feeling my boss is so difficult to get along with	(24) 11.0%	(73) 33.5%	(85) 39.0%	(36) 16.5%	2.39
10	Controlling my thought about the way I feel in any situation I find myself	(50) 22.9%	(103) 47.2%	(52) 23.9%	(13) 6.0%	2.87
Grand mean for Appraisal						2.688
<b>Coping with stress</b>						
11	Visiting health centre for medical check up	(44) 20.2%	(95) 43.6	(57) 26.1	(22) 10.1%	2.74
12	Talk to someone about how I feel when I am stressed	(40) 18.3%	(106) 48.6%	(47) 21.6%	(25) 11.5%	2.74
13	Focus on finishing up daily tasks	(80) 36.7%	(103) 47.2%	(25) 11.5%	(10) 4.6%	3.16
14	Devising different methods in solving problems in the institution	(56) 25.7%	(125) 57.3%	(32) 14.7%	(5) 2.3%	3.06
15	Doing exercise to enable me cope with stress	(64) 29.6%	(95) 44.0%	(49) 22.7%	(8) 3.7%	3.00
Grand mean for coping with stress						2.94
<b>Grand mean for stress management</b>						<b>2.761</b>

Decision rule 1.00 – 1.49= very low level, 1.50 – 2.49= low level, 2.50 – 3.49 = high level, 3.50-4.00= very high level.

**Note:** VHL-Very High Level, HL-High Level, LL-Low Level, VLL-Very Low Level

**Source:** Field Survey Results (2023)





Result from Table 2 showed the level of stress management of secretaries in polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. It was revealed that recognition of stress had a grand mean of 2.656 which means that the level of stress recognition among secretaries is moderate. Also, it was revealed that the level of appraisal of stress by secretaries was moderate with a grand mean of 2.688. It was also revealed that the level at which secretaries cope with stress was moderate with a grand mean of 2.940. It could be concluded from the overall grand mean (2.761) that the level of stress management of secretaries in public polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria is moderately high. This means that the activities that will improve secretaries' ability to manage stress be given priority otherwise when stress is very high, certain number of individual and organisational performance suffer.

### Test of Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria.

**Table 3 a, b, c: Summary of Regression Analysis for the Influence of Stress Management on Job Performance of Secretaries in Public Polytechnics in South-west Nigeria**

Model Summary <sup>a</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.407 <sup>a</sup>	.165	.154	.24797

a. Predictors: (Constant), RES, CS, APP

Source: Field Survey Results (2023)

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.605	3	.868	14.124	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	13.158	214	.061		
	Total	15.764	217			

a. Dependent Variable: Job performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), CS, SREG, APP

Source: Field Survey Results (2023)

Coefficients <sup>c</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.129	.096		32.533	.000
	SREG	-.033	.030	-.086	-1.084	.280
	APP	-.112	.034	-.274	-3.254	.001
	CS	.216	.034	.453	6.278	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job performance

Source: Field Survey Results (2023)



From the results in Tables 3 a,b,c, stress management has positive and statistically significant relationship with the job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria. ( $R = 0.407$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) however, the relationship is weak. The coefficient of determination ( $\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.154$ ,  $F(3.214) = 14.124$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) revealed that stress management explains 15.4% of the variance in job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria, while the remaining 84.6% variance in job performance of secretaries is attributable to other exogenous variables not considered in this study.

The results also reveal that at 95% confidence level, appraisal ( $\beta = -0.274$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and coping with stress ( $\beta = 0.453$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria. This result reveals that coping with stress contributes 43.3% to job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west, Nigeria. This implies that stress management by secretaries is a very important factor in their job performance. A unit change in coping with stress will lead to 0.216 increase in the job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria, given that all other factors are held constant.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question three revealed that the level of stress management of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria was moderately high. This implies that the level of stress management of secretaries under examination is moderately high nonetheless it is important that activities that will improve secretaries' ability to manage stress be given priority because when the level of stress is very high, certain number of individuals and organisational performance suffers. The finding corroborates that of Usman and Muhammad (2015) who investigated stress among accountants. Their study identified excess work, lack of rest, self-centeredness, sitting position, too much occupation, strain, individual attitude such as drug abuse, alcoholism and conflicts of role as the major stressors faced by accountants.

The finding also supports the study of Aderibigbe, Nwokolo, and Solomon (2020) that examined perceived occupational stress among some graduate employees in Nigeria due to experience at work and educational qualification. 1,532 graduate employees in various economic sectors of Nigeria were examined. The finding revealed that graduate who have more work experience exhibit more job stress than their colleagues who have less work experience. The finding also supports a study by Daniel (2019) who made an enquire into the impacts of job stress on performance of employees. Having extensively reviewed the relevant literatures, it was indicated through results that negative factors which distressed employees, had a negative effect on performance. The result further confirmed that stress had a negative effect on employees' performance.

Hypothesis one showed that there was significant influence of stress management on job performance of secretaries in public polytechnics in South-west Nigeria. The finding supports the study of Abonoyo (2020) who made a research on the impact of stress management on employee performance among employees in Indonesia using the descriptive survey and purposive sampling technique. Result showed that job stress affects employee performance, mental and physical health, high turnover, and high level of job avoidance. Stress-free work atmosphere should be created if employees' health and wellbeing is to be ascertained.



This could be achieved by creating friendly systems of organization, auditing of stress, stress awareness training and work balance sensitization. The finding also supports the study of Tojue, Audu and Nnamani (2023) who investigated the impact of stress management on performance of employee of manufacturing firms in Nigeria using the descriptive survey method. The sample size comprised 378 respondents and collection of data was done using questionnaire. Result showed that there was significant influence of stress management on job performance of employees in manufacturing firms.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, it could be revealed that when secretaries find it difficult to manage stress that could emanate from loads of work and also from family, they tend to be less productive as this could inhibit their job performance. However, when they are able to identify and manage stress, they tend to be more productive. It could be concluded that stress management had significant influence on job performance of secretaries in polytechnics in Southwest, Nigeria.

Based on the strength of the findings, recommendations were made as follows:

1. Management of public polytechnics in South-west should provide stress awareness training to secretaries to help them recognize the signs of stress and learn coping strategies. This can include workshops on time management, resilience, and mindfulness.
2. Secretaries should prioritize tasks and manage their time effectively. This can help prevent overwhelming workloads and reduce stress levels. Also, secretaries should take regular breaks during the workday. Short breaks can help them refresh and maintain focus.
3. Employers of labour should recognize and appreciate the hard work and dedication of secretaries. Feeling valued and appreciated can boost morale and reduce stress levels.
4. Management of labour should consider implementing performance-aid programmes such as counselling programs and support services for secretaries who are experiencing the challenges of work-related and personal stress.

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