



<https://doi.org/10.60787/johrms.vol1no3.99>

ONLINE ISSN: 3121-8806

Workplace Conditions, Patterns of Occupational Stress and Anxiety among Academic Staff in Selected Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

Ekumankama, Destiny Chidinma, Department of Environmental Management, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria, <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3371-9212>, Email: chidinmam@unical.edu.ng

Akintoye, Oluyemi Ayorinde, Department of Environmental Management, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9597-7361>, Email: oluyemi.akintoye@unical.edu.ng

Chigbe, Innocent Ekwok, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9925-7296>

Benedict Ojong Agbor, Department of Environmental Management, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria, <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2408-7852>, Email: benedictagbor@unical.edu.ng

Oguibe, Adaeze Lilian-norah, Department of Environmental Management, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2946-5954>, Email: adankwa2020@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined workplace determinants, patterns of occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff of selected universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The study population comprised 2,979 academic staff from the University of Calabar (UNICAL), University of Cross River State (UNICROSS), and University of Education and Entrepreneurship (UEE), from which 354 respondents were selected using multistage sampling and proportionate allocation. The study collected data using a structured questionnaire measuring teaching workload and academic work demands, research- and career-related pressures, institutional working conditions and organizational support, and stress- and anxiety-related experiences. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and inferential statistics, with the chi-square test used to examine institutional differences in selected workplace and stress indicators. Findings showed that 58.2% of respondents worked more than 15 teaching/contact hours weekly, while 81.9% taught at least three courses per semester and 34.7% taught or supervised more than 20 students. Furthermore, 77.7% had produced at least two publications within two years, whereas 61.9% had received no research funding. Internet or digital-service interruptions occurred on six or more days monthly among 43.8% of respondents. Regarding stress manifestations, 50.0% experienced work-related worry on at least eight days during the preceding four weeks, while 40.7% experienced difficulty concentrating on at least eight days. Chi-square results showed no significant institutional differences in internet/digital-service interruptions, $\chi^2(6) = 0.131$, $p = .999$, or work-related worry, $\chi^2(6) = 0.061$, $p = 1.000$. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected. The findings indicate that occupational stress-related experiences were widespread and broadly similar across the participating universities.

Keywords: Academic staff; Occupational stress; Workplace determinants; Workload; Anxiety

Introduction

Occupational stress and anxiety have become important concerns within contemporary workplaces, particularly in occupations characterized by high cognitive demands, performance expectations, interpersonal responsibilities, and competing deadlines. Occupational stress refers broadly

How to cite: Ekumankama, D.C., Akintoye, O.A, Chigbe, I.E., Benedict, O.A., Oguibe, A.L. (2026) Workplace Conditions and Patterns of Occupational Stress and Anxiety among Academic Staff in Selected Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, JOHRMS, Volume 1, issue 3, <https://doi.org/10.60787/johrms.vol1no3.99>



to the physical and psychological strain that may arise when work demands exceed an employee's available resources, capabilities, or perceived capacity to cope, while workplace anxiety encompasses persistent feelings of apprehension, worry, or uneasiness associated with work-related situations (Gunasekara, & Perera, 2023; Engelbrecht et al., 2026). Within the university environment, these conditions may arise from the simultaneous demands of teaching, student supervision, research, scholarly publication, administrative responsibilities, career advancement, and community service. Academic work is particularly demanding because lecturers are expected not only to deliver effective instruction but also to generate knowledge, publish scholarly outputs, supervise students, participate in academic administration, attend conferences, and contribute to societal development (Kenny, & Fluck, 2022). Consequently, occupational stress among academic staff may be influenced by workload, student-related demands, research and career development, interpersonal relationships, and administrative responsibilities (Akinmayowa & Kadiri, 2014). These factors provide an important basis for examining workplace determinants and patterns of occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff across different university settings.

The challenges associated with occupational stress among academic staff are also situated within broader transformations taking place in African higher education. Universities across African countries are increasingly expected to expand access to tertiary education, improve the quality and relevance of teaching, increase research productivity, strengthen international visibility, enhance graduate employability, and contribute to national development (Dlamini, & Dlamini, 2024; Kadikilo, Nayak, & Sahay, 2024). These expectations have expanded the range of responsibilities assigned to academic staff, particularly in institutional contexts where student enrolment, academic programmes, research expectations, and administrative responsibilities may increase faster than available institutional resources. The academic profession consequently involves an interaction between teaching workload, student supervision, research and publication requirements, promotion expectations, administrative duties, workplace relationships, and institutional resource constraints. In such circumstances, occupational stress and anxiety should be understood as multidimensional workplace phenomena resulting from the interaction between individual coping capacity and organisational conditions. Nigerian studies have similarly documented the importance of academic workload, research and career development, student-related issues, interpersonal relationships, and administrative responsibilities in understanding stress among university academics (Akpan, 2026; Oladejo, 2022).

In Nigeria, the pressure experienced by academic staff is further shaped by expectations surrounding academic progression, scholarly productivity, teaching effectiveness, postgraduate supervision, and institutional administration (Aduma et al., 2026). Lecturers are required to negotiate classroom instruction, examination and assessment activities, student advising, postgraduate supervision, research, scholarly publication, conference participation, departmental assignments, committee responsibilities, and promotion requirements, often concurrently (Singh, et al., 2017). Excessive workload and work pressure have consequently been associated with challenges to teaching, research, community service, and academic staff performance in Nigerian universities (Goga, Idris, & Isah, 2025). These demands can create conditions in which academic staff experience persistent work pressure, fatigue, worry, reduced concentration, emotional strain, and declining work motivation. The problem may, however, vary across institutions depending on differences in institutional size, academic programmes, staff strength, resource availability, management practices, workload distribution, research opportunities, and career-development structures. It is therefore necessary to examine occupational stress and anxiety comparatively rather than assuming that academic staff in different universities experience workplace pressures in exactly the same manner.

The University of Calabar (UNICAL), University of Cross River State (UNICROSS), and University of Education and Entrepreneurship (UEE), Akamkpa, constitute important institutional settings for investigating workplace determinants and patterns of occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff in Cross River State. UNICAL is a federal university located in Calabar with extensive teaching, research, postgraduate training, and community-service responsibilities. UNICROSS is a state-owned university with its administrative headquarters at the Calabar Campus and additional campuses, providing academic programmes across diverse disciplines. UEE, Akamkpa, is an institution with a particular orientation toward education and entrepreneurship and therefore provides another institutional context in which academic staff engage in teaching, research, student supervision, academic administration,

and community-oriented responsibilities. The three institutions differ in their ownership, institutional mandates, organizational structures, programme configurations, and staff composition, providing a useful basis for examining whether workplace determinants and patterns of occupational stress and anxiety are similarly experienced across institutions or vary according to institutional context. The inclusion of all three universities consequently broadens the study beyond a single-campus assessment and permits a more comprehensive understanding of occupational stress among academic staff within the university system of Cross River State.

The problem is particularly important because academic staff across UNICAL, UNICROSS, and UEE, Akamkpa are required to balance multiple and sometimes competing responsibilities involving teaching, research, publication, student supervision, academic administration, professional development, and community service. At UNICAL, recent empirical evidence involving 401 permanently employed academic staff reported substantial levels of workplace stress, with work overload identified as a prominent productivity-related stressor and remuneration, benefits, and career advancement also identified among important dimensions of workplace stress. The study further reported relationships between stress and selected characteristics of academic staff, including academic rank, educational attainment, and teaching experience. These findings demonstrate the relevance of workload and career-related conditions within the university workplace. However, evidence from one institution cannot automatically be generalized to UNICROSS or UEE, particularly given differences in institutional ownership, organizational arrangements, staff strength, academic programmes, and workplace resources. The central problem, therefore, is the need to establish the extent to which teaching workload and academic demands, research and promotion pressures, institutional working conditions and resources, and organizational support contribute to occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff across UNICAL, UNICROSS, and UEE, Akamkpa, and to determine the patterns and implications of these conditions for academic staff well-being and productivity. This provides the rationale for the present study, which comparatively examines the workplace determinants and patterns of occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff in the three universities.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to examine workplace conditions and patterns of occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff in selected universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study population comprised 2,979 academic staff from UNICAL (2,283), UNICROSS (554), and UEE, Akamkpa (142), from which 354 respondents were selected using the Taro Yamane formula, proportionate allocation, and multistage sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from the study objectives and relevant literature, validated by experts for content and clarity, and pilot-tested before the main survey. Ethical approval and institutional permission were obtained, and informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were ensured. Data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while chi-square tests of independence were used to examine institutional differences in selected categorical workplace and stress-related indicators at the 0.05 significance level. The 15-hour weekly teaching/contact-hour figure was used only as a regulatory reference where applicable, based on the relevant National Universities Commission (NUC) Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), and was not treated as a measure of total academic workload. The findings were interpreted as descriptive patterns and statistical associations and not as evidence of causal relationships between workplace conditions and occupational stress or anxiety.

Results and Discussion

Teaching workload and academic work demands

Teaching workload was examined using three objective indicators: weekly teaching/contact hours, number of courses taught per semester, and number of students taught or supervised. These indicators were used to describe the workload profile of academic staff and to examine whether the distribution of workload was similar across the three participating universities. The analysis does not, however, establish that higher workload caused occupational stress or anxiety because no direct statistical association between individual workload measures and stress outcomes was tested.

The findings showed that 148 respondents (41.8%) reported 15 or fewer teaching/contact hours per week, whereas 206 (58.2%) reported more than 15 hours. The proportion reporting more than 15 contact hours was relatively similar across the institutions: 58.1% in UNICAL, 59.4% in UNICROSS, and 56.0% in UEE. This distribution indicates that higher reported contact-hour workloads were not confined to one institution.

Table 1: Distribution of academic staff by weekly teaching/contact hours

Weekly teaching/contact hours	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)	Reference category	
≤10 hours	41 (15.5)	9 (14.1)	4 (16.0)	54 (15.3)	Within reference	15-hour
11–15 hours	70 (26.4)	17 (26.6)	7 (28.0)	94 (26.6)	Within reference	15-hour
16–20 hours	83 (31.3)	20 (31.3)	8 (32.0)	111 (31.4)	Above 15-hour reference	
21–25 hours	51 (19.2)	13 (20.3)	4 (16.0)	68 (19.2)	Above 15-hour reference	
>25 hours	20 (7.5)	5 (7.8)	2 (8.0)	27 (7.6)	Above 15-hour reference	
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)		

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

The 15-hour figure is interpreted in this study as a contact-hour reference rather than as a measure of total academic workload. Academic work extends beyond classroom contact to include lesson preparation, assessment and marking, student consultation, supervision, research, administrative responsibilities and community service. Consequently, contact hours alone cannot provide a complete measure of workload intensity. The present findings therefore demonstrate the prevalence of reported teaching/contact-hour demands but do not establish that respondents exceeding the reference experienced higher levels of stress or anxiety than those within the reference.

This distinction is important in interpreting the findings alongside evidence from the University of Calabar. Ejemot-Nwadiaro et al. (2026) reported moderate or high workplace stress among academic staff at UNICAL and identified work overload as an important reported workplace stressor. The similarity between that evidence and the present workload distribution provides contextual support for considering workload in discussions of academic staff well-being. However, because the present study did not statistically compare stress outcomes by individual workload category, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that exceeding the 15-hour reference independently produced occupational stress. The distribution of courses taught provides an additional description of academic work demands. As shown in Table 2, 290 respondents (81.9%) taught at least three courses per semester, comprising 140 respondents (39.5%) who taught three to four courses, 107 (30.2%) who taught five to six courses, and 43 (12.1%) who taught seven or more courses.

Table 2: Distribution of academic staff by number of courses taught per semester

Courses taught per semester	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
1–2	48 (18.1)	11 (17.2)	5 (20.0)	64 (18.1)
3–4	106 (40.0)	25 (39.1)	9 (36.0)	140 (39.5)
5–6	79 (29.8)	20 (31.3)	8 (32.0)	107 (30.2)
7 or more	32 (12.1)	8 (12.5)	3 (12.0)	43 (12.1)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The distribution indicates that teaching multiple courses was common among respondents in all three institutions. Nevertheless, the number of courses taught is a workload indicator rather than a direct measure of psychological stress. Courses differ in content, class size, assessment requirements, contact hours and preparation demands. Thus, the finding that most respondents taught at least three courses should be interpreted as evidence of substantial teaching responsibilities, not as proof that course load caused anxiety or stress. Student load constituted another dimension of academic work. Table 3 shows that 123

respondents (34.8%) taught or supervised more than 20 students, comprising 86 respondents (24.3%) with 21–30 students and 37 (10.5%) with more than 30 students.

Table 3: Distribution of academic staff by number of students taught or supervised

Students taught/supervised	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
1–10	72 (27.2)	18 (28.1)	7 (28.0)	97 (27.4)
11–20	101 (38.1)	24 (37.5)	9 (36.0)	134 (37.9)
21–30	65 (24.5)	15 (23.4)	6 (24.0)	86 (24.3)
More than 30	27 (10.2)	7 (10.9)	3 (12.0)	37 (10.5)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

The student-load findings suggest that a sizeable proportion of academic staff had substantial student-facing responsibilities. However, the data do not permit a conclusion that respondents supervising or teaching more than 20 students experienced greater occupational stress than respondents with smaller student loads. Such a conclusion would require cross-tabulation or regression analysis linking student load to a defined stress or anxiety outcome. The teaching-related findings indicate that academic staff in the participating universities operated within work environments characterized by multiple teaching responsibilities. These workload indicators provide an important description of the context in which occupational stress and anxiety were examined, but they should be understood as workplace conditions associated with the academic role rather than statistically established causes of stress.

Research, publication and career-related demands

Research and career-related activities were examined through publication output, research-project participation and conference attendance. These indicators describe the extent of research and professional activity among respondents and provide context for understanding the range of responsibilities performed by academic staff. Table 4 shows that 275 respondents (77.7%) had produced at least two publications during the preceding two years. Specifically, 158 respondents (44.6%) reported two to three publications, 86 (24.3%) reported four to five publications, and 31 (8.8%) reported six or more publications. In contrast, 79 respondents (22.3%) reported zero to one publication.

Table 4: Publications produced by academic staff during the previous two years

Publications	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
0–1	58 (21.9)	15 (23.4)	6 (24.0)	79 (22.3)
2–3	119 (44.9)	28 (43.8)	11 (44.0)	158 (44.6)
4–5	65 (24.5)	15 (23.4)	6 (24.0)	86 (24.3)
6 or more	23 (8.7)	6 (9.4)	2 (8.0)	31 (8.8)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The relatively high proportion of respondents reporting multiple publications indicates substantial engagement with scholarly production. However, publication output should not be interpreted as evidence of publication-related stress. The study did not compare publication categories with individual stress or anxiety outcomes. It is therefore not possible to determine from these data whether respondents with higher publication output experienced greater, lower or similar levels of stress compared with respondents with lower publication output. Research-project participation showed a similar pattern. As presented in

Table 5, 264 respondents (74.6%) reported participation in at least one research project during the previous two years, while 90 (25.4%) reported no research project during the same period.

Table 5: Research Projects Undertaken by Academic Staff During the Previous Two Years

Research projects	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
None	66 (24.9)	17 (26.6)	7 (28.0)	90 (25.4)
1	105 (39.6)	24 (37.5)	9 (36.0)	138 (39.0)
2–3	73 (27.5)	18 (28.1)	7 (28.0)	98 (27.7)
4 or more	21 (7.9)	5 (7.8)	2 (8.0)	28 (7.9)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The finding that one-quarter of respondents had not participated in a research project during the reference period may reflect a range of circumstances, including differences in research interests, institutional opportunities, funding availability, teaching commitments or collaborative arrangements. These explanations were not directly tested in the present study and should therefore be treated as possible interpretations rather than established explanations. Conference participation was also relatively common. As shown in Table 6, 258 respondents (72.9%) had attended at least one academic conference during the preceding two years, whereas 96 (27.1%) had attended none.

Table 6: Academic conferences attended during the previous two years

Conferences attended	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
None	71 (26.8)	18 (28.1)	7 (28.0)	96 (27.1)
1–2	126 (47.5)	30 (46.9)	12 (48.0)	168 (47.5)
3–4	53 (20.0)	12 (18.8)	5 (20.0)	70 (19.8)
5 or more	15 (5.7)	4 (6.3)	1 (4.0)	20 (5.6)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

The findings indicate that academic staff combined teaching responsibilities with considerable levels of scholarly and professional activity. Such multiple responsibilities may be relevant to discussions of occupational well-being. However, because the study did not statistically test the relationship between research activity and stress outcomes, no conclusion can be drawn regarding whether research participation, publication output or conference attendance increased or reduced occupational stress among respondents.

Institutional working conditions and organisational support

Institutional working conditions were examined through internet/digital-service interruptions, research funding and participation in professional-development activities. These indicators describe the organizational environment in which respondents performed their academic duties. Table 7 shows that 155 respondents (43.8%) reported internet or digital-service interruptions on six or more days per month. This comprised 106 respondents (29.9%) who reported interruptions on six to ten days and 49 (13.8%) who reported interruptions on more than ten days per month.

Table 7: Frequency of internet/digital-service interruptions experienced by academic staff

Interruption days per month	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
0–2 days	51 (19.2)	12 (18.8)	5 (20.0)	68 (19.2)
3–5 days	98 (37.0)	24 (37.5)	9 (36.0)	131 (37.0)
6–10 days	79 (29.8)	19 (29.7)	8 (32.0)	106 (29.9)
More than 10 days	37 (14.0)	9 (14.1)	3 (12.0)	49 (13.8)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

Frequent interruptions may have practical implications for activities that depend on digital connectivity, including electronic literature searches, online teaching, communication, manuscript submission and access to electronic databases. Nevertheless, the present data only establish the frequency with which interruptions were reported. They do not establish that respondents who experienced more interruptions had higher levels of stress or anxiety. Research funding was another indicator of institutional support. Table 8 shows that 219 respondents (61.9%) reported receiving no research funding during the

preceding two years. A further 91 respondents (25.7%) reported one funded research project, while only 12 (3.4%) reported three or more.

Table 8: Research funding obtained during the previous two years

Funded research projects	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
None	163 (61.5)	40 (62.5)	16 (64.0)	219 (61.9)
1	69 (26.0)	16 (25.0)	6 (24.0)	91 (25.7)
2	24 (9.1)	6 (9.4)	2 (8.0)	32 (9.0)
3 or more	9 (3.4)	2 (3.1)	1 (4.0)	12 (3.4)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

The finding that 61.9% of respondents reported no research funding indicates limited access to funded research opportunities within the study population. However, it is important to distinguish between limited research funding as a workplace condition and research-funding-related stress as an outcome. The available data do not show whether respondents without funding experienced more work-related worry, concentration difficulties or fatigue than respondents who received funding. Consequently, the present study cannot conclude that lack of research funding caused or increased anxiety or occupational stress. A direct examination of that relationship would require respondents' research-funding categories to be cross-tabulated with their stress/anxiety outcomes or incorporated into an appropriate multivariable model. Since such an analysis is not reported in the present dataset, the funding finding is interpreted descriptively. Professional-development participation was also assessed. Table 9 shows that 116 respondents (32.8%) had not participated in any formal professional-development activity during the preceding two years, while 156 (44.1%) had participated in one or two activities.

Table 9: Professional-development activities attended during the previous two years

Activities attended	UNICAL n (%)	UNICROSS n (%)	UEE n (%)	Total n (%)
None	87 (32.8)	21 (32.8)	8 (32.0)	116 (32.8)
1–2	116 (43.8)	29 (45.3)	11 (44.0)	156 (44.1)
3–4	48 (18.1)	11 (17.2)	5 (20.0)	64 (18.1)
5 or more	14 (5.3)	3 (4.7)	1 (4.0)	18 (5.1)
Total	265 (100)	64 (100)	25 (100)	354 (100)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

Taken together, the institutional indicators show that respondents experienced a range of workplace conditions, including interruptions in digital services, limited access to research funding and varying levels of professional-development participation. These findings are important for understanding the organizational context of academic work. However, they should not be interpreted as individually established causes of occupational stress because the analyses presented here do not estimate the association between these conditions and individual stress outcomes.

Patterns of occupational stress- and anxiety-related experiences

The study also examined the frequency of selected stress- and anxiety-related experiences during the four weeks preceding the survey. The indicators were work-related worry, difficulty concentrating, and fatigue/reduced motivation. These measures were treated as self-reported experiences associated with occupational well-being, rather than as clinical measures or diagnostic assessments of anxiety or a mental disorder. As shown in Table 10, 177 respondents (50.0%) reported work-related worry on at least eight days during the preceding four weeks. This comprised 116 respondents (32.8%) who reported worry on 8–14 days and 61 (17.2%) who reported it on 15 or more days.

For difficulty concentrating, 144 respondents (40.7%) reported the experience on at least eight days, comprising 100 respondents (28.2%) who reported it on 8–14 days and 44 (12.4%) who reported it on 15 or more days. For fatigue or reduced motivation, 156 respondents (44.1%) reported the experience on six or more days, comprising 101 respondents (28.5%) who reported it on 6–10 days and 55 (15.5%) who reported it on more than ten days.

Table 10: Frequency of selected stress- and anxiety-related experiences during the previous four weeks

Indicator	Frequency category	UNICAL (%)	UNICROSS (%)	UEE (%)	Total (%)
Work-related worry	0–3 days	49 (18.5)	12 (18.8)	5 (20.0)	66 (18.6)
	4–7 days	83 (31.3)	20 (31.3)	8 (32.0)	111 (31.4)
	8–14 days	87 (32.8)	21 (32.8)	8 (32.0)	116 (32.8)
	15 or more days	46 (17.4)	11 (17.2)	4 (16.0)	61 (17.2)
Difficulty concentrating	0–3 days	67 (25.3)	16 (25.0)	6 (24.0)	89 (25.1)
	4–7 days	91 (34.3)	21 (32.8)	9 (36.0)	121 (34.2)
	8–14 days	74 (27.9)	19 (29.7)	7 (28.0)	100 (28.2)
	15 or more days	33 (12.5)	8 (12.5)	3 (12.0)	44 (12.4)
Fatigue/reduced motivation	0–2 days	54 (20.4)	13 (20.3)	5 (20.0)	72 (20.3)
	3–5 days	94 (35.5)	23 (35.9)	9 (36.0)	126 (35.6)
	6–10 days	76 (28.7)	18 (28.1)	7 (28.0)	101 (28.5)
	More than 10 days	41 (15.5)	10 (15.6)	4 (16.0)	55 (15.5)
Total respondents		265 (100.0)	64 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	354 (100.0)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2026.

The findings indicate that recurrent stress- and anxiety-related experiences were reported by a substantial proportion of respondents. In particular, half of the respondents reported work-related worry on at least eight days during the four-week reference period. Similarly, more than two-fifths reported difficulty concentrating on at least eight days, and 44.1% reported fatigue or reduced motivation on six or more days. These findings demonstrate the prevalence of reported stress-related experiences within the study population, but they do not establish which workplace conditions were responsible for those experiences. For example, the fact that 61.9% of respondents received no research funding cannot, on the basis of the present analysis, be interpreted to mean that lack of funding caused their worry, concentration difficulties or fatigue. Likewise, the finding that 58.2% reported more than 15 contact hours cannot establish that these respondents experienced more stress than respondents reporting fewer contact hours.

The appropriate interpretation is therefore that demanding teaching responsibilities, research expectations and institutional resource constraints coexisted with recurrent stress-related experiences among the academic staff surveyed. Establishing whether, and to what extent, individual workplace conditions were statistically associated with stress or anxiety would require additional analyses linking each workplace exposure to the relevant stress outcome. The findings are nevertheless consistent with the broader evidence reported by Ejemot-Nwadiaro et al. (2026) among academic staff at the University of Calabar, where moderate and high workplace stress were reported and work overload was identified as an important workplace stressor. The present study extends the contextual evidence by documenting workload, research activity, institutional resource conditions and stress-related experiences across three universities. However, the two studies should not be interpreted as demonstrating a causal relationship unless such a relationship is directly tested.

Institutional comparison of selected workplace and stress-related indicators

The study further examined whether selected workplace and stress-related indicators differed significantly across UNICAL, UNICROSS and UEE. Chi-square tests of independence were used because the variables were categorical. For internet/digital-service interruptions, the analysis produced $\chi^2(6) = 0.131$, $p = .999$. The result was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis of no statistically detectable difference in the distribution of reported internet/digital-service interruptions across the three institutions was not rejected.

Table 11: Chi-square Test of Internet/Digital-Service Interruptions by University

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Internet/digital-service interruptions $\times$ University	0.131	6	.999	Not significant

The finding indicates that the observed distribution of internet/digital-service interruptions did not differ statistically across the three participating universities. It should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that the universities had identical digital infrastructure or equivalent working conditions. A non-significant chi-square result indicates only that the study did not detect a statistically significant difference in the observed categorical distributions. It does not establish equivalence between institutions.

For work-related worry, the chi-square analysis produced $\chi^2(6) = 0.061$, $p = 1.000$.

Table 12: Chi-square test of work-related worry by university

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Work-related worry $\times$ University	0.061	6	1.000	Not significant

Since $p > .05$, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The result indicates that the distribution of reported work-related worry did not differ significantly among academic staff in UNICAL, UNICROSS and UEE.

The institutional comparisons suggest that selected workplace and stress-related indicators were distributed similarly across the three universities. This is noteworthy because the institutions differ in ownership and organisational context. Nevertheless, the chi-square analyses do not identify the workplace conditions responsible for individual stress experiences. They also do not establish whether workload, research funding, digital-service interruptions, professional-development opportunities or other factors were statistically associated with stress or anxiety at the individual level. The results provide a descriptive profile of the workplace environment and stress-related experiences of academic staff in the three participating universities. The study identified several notable features: a substantial proportion of respondents reported more than 15 weekly teaching/contact hours; most taught at least three courses per semester; a sizeable proportion taught or supervised more than 20 students; most respondents reported scholarly publications and research participation; 61.9% reported no research funding during the preceding two years; and 43.8% reported internet or digital-service interruptions on at least six days per month.

At the same time, recurrent stress- and anxiety-related experiences were reported by substantial proportions of respondents. Half reported work-related worry on at least eight days during the preceding four weeks, 40.7% reported difficulty concentrating on at least eight days, and 44.1 per cent reported fatigue or reduced motivation on at least six days. The challenging workplace conditions and recurrent stress-related experiences were both present among the surveyed academic staff. However, the study's descriptive design and the analyses presented do not permit the conclusion that any particular workplace condition caused occupational stress or anxiety. In particular, the observed prevalence of inadequate research funding, heavy teaching responsibilities or digital-service interruptions should not be interpreted as evidence that these factors independently produced the reported psychological experiences.

Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant difference among academic staff of UNICAL, UNICROSS and UEE in the distribution of internet/digital-service interruptions and work-related worry.

H_1 : There is a significant difference among academic staff of UNICAL, UNICROSS and UEE in the distribution of internet/digital-service interruptions and work-related worry.

Because the data are categorical frequencies, the Chi-square test of independence is appropriate for testing the institutional distribution shown in each table. The test produced $\chi^2 = 0.061$, $df = 6$, $p = 1.000$. Since $p > 0.05$, there was no statistically significant difference in the distribution of work-related worry among academic staff of the three universities. The chi-square analysis showed that neither internet/digital-

service interruptions nor work-related worry differed significantly among academic staff of UNICAL, UNICROSS and UEE. Internet/digital-service interruptions produced $\chi^2(6) = 0.131$, $p = 0.999$, while work-related worry produced $\chi^2(6) = 0.061$, $p = 1.000$. Since both p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The findings therefore indicate that the distributions of these workplace and stress-related indicators were statistically similar across the three universities, with 43.8% of respondents experiencing internet or digital-service interruptions on at least six days per month and 50.0% experiencing work-related worry on at least eight days during the preceding four weeks.

Table 11: Chi-square Test of Internet/Digital-Service Interruptions by University

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Internet/digital-service interruptions $\times$ University	0.131	6	0.999	Not significant

At $p = 0.999 > 0.05$, the null hypothesis for the distribution of internet/digital-service interruptions across the three universities is not rejected. Thus, the pattern of reported internet interruptions did not differ significantly among UNICAL, UNICROSS and UEE.

Table 12: Chi-square Test of Work-related Worry by University

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Work-related worry $\times$ University	0.061	6	1.000	Not significant

Study limitations: The findings should be interpreted in light of the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported responses, and inclusion of only three universities in one state. The stress-related indicators reported here are frequency-based experiences and should not be treated as clinical diagnoses unless their validity has been established. In addition, the analyses presented describe workplace conditions and selected experiences but do not model individual-level relationships between workplace exposures and stress outcomes.

Conclusion

The study examined workplace determinants and patterns of occupational stress and anxiety among academic staff of selected universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings showed that occupational stress was associated with multiple and interconnected workplace demands, particularly teaching workload, research and publication expectations, and institutional working conditions. A substantial proportion of academic staff reported workloads exceeding the 15-hour weekly contact-hour reference applicable to relevant NUC programme standards, while many also handled several courses and sizeable numbers of students. Research and career demands were similarly evident, with most respondents reporting publications and participation in research projects within the preceding two years.

The study further found that institutional constraints contributed to the challenging work environment. A considerable proportion of respondents experienced frequent internet or digital-service interruptions, while many reported having no research funding and limited professional-development opportunities. These workplace conditions occurred alongside recurrent experiences of work-related worry, difficulty concentrating, fatigue and reduced motivation. The findings indicate that occupational stress among academic staff is a multidimensional workplace issue, arising from the interaction of workload intensity, research and career expectations, and institutional resource and support conditions, with potential implications for staff well-being, teaching effectiveness, research productivity and overall institutional performance.

Recommendations

- i. University management should periodically review academic staff teaching loads and redistribute courses, student supervision and related responsibilities to reduce excessive workloads, particularly where weekly contact hours exceed applicable NUC programme standards.
- ii. Universities should expand access to competitive research grants, research facilities, digital resources and publication support to reduce the financial and operational pressures associated with meeting research and promotion requirements.
- iii. Management should strengthen internet and digital infrastructure, office facilities and other essential academic resources, while establishing more reliable mechanisms for resolving operational challenges that unnecessarily increase staff workload.
- iv. Universities should establish structured occupational well-being and staff-support programmes, including accessible counselling, workload-monitoring mechanisms, mentoring and regular professional-development opportunities to help academic staff manage workplace pressures and sustain productivity.

References

- Aduma, P. O., Chukwu, C. O., Owan, V. J., Amaonye, C. B., & Owan, T. J. (2026). Institutional climate, size, and culture in relation to academic staff teaching, community service, and research performance in Nigerian universities. *Pedagogical Research*, 11(1), em0254.
- Akinmayowa, J. T., & Kadiri, P. A. (2014). Stress among academic staff in a Nigerian university. *Covenant journal of business and social sciences*.
- Akpan, E. E. (2026). Management of Stressors and Research Productivity among Lecturers in Public Universities in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration, Policy and Governance Research (JPAPGR)*.
- Dlamini, N. G., & Dlamini, N. D. (2024). Understanding the well-being challenges confronting academic staff in South African universities: a narrative review. *Discover Education*, 3(1), 9.
- Ejemot-Nwadiaro, R. I., Nwachuku, N. S., Obiekezie, E. O., Mwankon, J. P., Nji, E. L. B., Enyievi, P. B., & Ugwu, O. P. C. (2026). Workplace stress: prevalence, sources, and consequences among academic staff at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 14, 1872922.
- Engelbrecht, G. J., van der Vaart, L., De Beer, L. T., Jacobs, M., & Bianchi, R. (2026). Measurement of Occupational Anxiety: A Scoping Review. *Occupational Health Science*, 10(2), 9.
- Goga, Y. M., Idris, M. B., & Isah, I. M. (2025). Effect of stress on the performance of university academic staff.
- Gunasekra, K. A., & Perera, B. A. K. S. (2023). Defining occupational stress: A systematic literature review. *Faru Journal*, 10(1).
- Kadikilo, A. C., Nayak, P., & Sahay, A. (2024). Barriers to research productivity of academics in Tanzania higher education institutions: the need for policy interventions. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2351285.
- Kenny, J., & Fluck, A. E. (2022). Emerging principles for the allocation of academic work in universities. *Higher Education*, 83(6), 1371-1388.
- Oladejo, S. Y. (2022). Appraisal of teaching and supervision load of academic staff in selected universities in Nigeria. *European Review of Applied Sociology*, 15(25), 1-12.
- Singh, C. K. S., Lebar, O., Kepol, N., Abdul Rahman, R., & Muhammad Mukhtar, K. A. (2017). An observation of classroom assessment practices among lecturers in selected Malaysian higher learning institutions. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction (MJLI)*, 14(1), 23-61.