

EFFECT OF JOB STRESS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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Abstract: Job stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Compared to other universities, the Open University has most students who are engaged in various professional careers. In the context of Open and Distant Learning (ODL), Open university students has become a problem to manage their work stress balance while studying. The purpose of this research is to sociologically study the effect of job stress on the academic performance of the university among undergraduate students at the Open University of Sri Lanka. This study further aims to present the causes of job stress as well as the measures to be taken to control and prevent it. This study is quantitative research and used a questionnaire to collect data. In identifying the sample selected for the research on the effect of job stress on the academic performance of the university among undergraduate students of the Open University of Sri Lanka, the Department of Social Studies was selected for the sample among the departments of the Open University of Sri Lanka. This study was conducted through a non-random sample as a judgmental sample of 40 employed students from the B.A. in Social Sciences degree program's student population. Using employed students for this study, Participants who reported experiencing higher levels of job stress had lower grades and academic achievement compared to those who reported lower levels of job stress. Most of the participants reported experiencing moderate to high levels of job stress, which was found to be negatively impacted by factors such as workload, job demands, and work-life balance. Here, some suggestions for the control and prevention of job stress were presented through this study. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the negative impact of job stress on academic performance.

Keywords: job stress, academic performance, undergraduates, judgmental sample, Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and demanding world, stress has become an integral part of individuals' lives, affecting their academic and professional performance (Elshaug, 2009). What is job stress? Job stress refers to the physical and emotional harm that happens when the needs of a job are not in agreement with the capabilities, resources or needs of a worker (Leka et al., 2015). However, some of these institutions only cater for specific categories of learners. For instance, the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is a well-known institution that offers education to many professionals among other students (Panda & Lalnunhlimi, 2019). Within this context, the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), a prominent public university offering distance education, caters to a diverse student population. A

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significant number of OUSL undergraduates have been challenged by balancing their work responsibilities with their academic pursuits due to the increasing popularity of ODL. The nature of distance education makes them susceptible to stressors as there is too much emphasis on self-directed learning. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how job stress affects undergraduate students' academic performance at Open University of Sri Lanka.

The available literature has shown that job stress can negatively affect academic performance. Chen, Huang and Lam (2014) conducted a study which found that higher levels of job stress were linked to lower grades and poor academic achievement in university students. Besides, Teixeira et al. (2017) discovered in their study that job demands were associated with work-life balance and the experience of job stress among undergraduate students. On one hand, some studies suggest that stress can have a positive influence on performance by increasing motivation and focus (Li et al., 2015). However, chronic stress can impair cognitive functions such as memory retention and attention leading to poor academic performance (McEwen, 2007). Furthermore, work-related stress has negative effects on students' physical and mental health which results in absenteeism; reduced concentration; and hence a general decline in one's academics (McEwen, 2007). Drug abuse has been linked to anxiety disorder. A study conducted by Kabir & Sharma (2017) showed a strong negative relationship between stress and academic performance among undergraduate students in India. Al-Rawashdeh et al. (2018), on the other hand, found that stress predicted academic performance among undergraduate students in Jordan. However, there is very limited research on the impact of job stress on academic performance amongst undergraduate students from the Open University of Sri Lanka.

Several studies have examined the link between stress and academic performance among undergraduates; however, there has been relatively little attention to job stress and its effect on undergraduate student's academic performance at Open University of Sri Lanka. This research aims to fill this gap in literature. The research problem is with regard to understanding the exact influence of job stress on the academic performance of Open University of Sri Lanka's undergraduate students. Thus, it focuses on job-stress and relations with academic performance in a specific context, distance education and self-directed learning. This quantitative research design by means of a survey questionnaire will be useful for gathering information from a representative sample of undergraduate students, enabling them to understand better how job stress affects their academic performance.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the effect of job stress on academic performance among undergraduate students at the Open University of Sri Lanka. Additionally, it aims to identify the specific stressors faced by students, explore the coping mechanisms employed, and assess the overall well-being of the student population. By achieving these objectives, this research endeavors to provide policymakers, educators, and students themselves with a comprehensive understanding of the

relationship between job stress and academic performance. Ultimately, it aims to inform the development of targeted strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of stress on academic performance within the unique setting of the Open University of Sri Lanka. In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will delve into an extensive literature review on stress, its impact on academic performance, and the factors specific to job stress among undergraduate students.

The research problem discussed in this thesis examines the harmful impact of work pressure on the educational achievements of undergraduate learners at the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). With a considerable number of OUSL learners occupied in various professional vocations, the difficulty of managing job strain while pursuing their studies has turned into an urgent concern. The simultaneous existence of work and study responsibilities frequently results in heightened work pressure, which can adversely influence learners' academic performance. The research problem can be formulated as follows: What is the consequence of work stress on the educational achievements of undergraduate learners at OUSL, and what are the underlying reasons and potential measures to manage and prevent work stress among these learners?

By addressing this research problem, the study aims to contribute to the comprehension of the connection between work stress and educational performance among employed undergraduate learners. It seeks to identify the specific causes of work stress in the OUSL context and propose effective strategies to alleviate its negative outcomes. Understanding and tackling this problem are vital for the university to enhance the overall well-being and academic triumph of its undergraduate learners. The research problem is significant as it relates to the distinct challenges encountered by employed learners in an open and distance learning environment. The findings of this study will offer valuable insights into the factors contributing to work stress among these learners and aid in the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms. Ultimately, tackling the research problem can assist in creating a favorable environment for employed learners to successfully balance their work and academic responsibilities at OUSL.

One of the objectives of this research is to take a look at the effect of process stress on the instructional overall performance of undergraduate students at the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL): This goal pursues to analyze the connection between process strain and educational overall performance, particularly focusing on how process pressure affects college students' grades and ordinary instructional fulfillment. Then to pick out the causes of task strain amongst undergraduate college students at OUSL: This goal seeks to discover the elements that contribute to task stress among working students, inclusive of workload, job demands, paintings-lifestyles balance, and different related elements unique to the OUSL context. Another objective is to propose measures to govern and prevent process stress among undergraduate students at OUSL: This objective aims to offer practical suggestions and strategies to

successfully manage process stress and minimize its terrible impact on academic overall performance. It will consciousness on interventions, assist systems, and coping mechanisms that may assist students higher balance their work and educational duties. Assess the levels of task pressure experienced via undergraduate students at OUSL: This objective involves evaluating the superiority and depth of task pressure amongst working students at OUSL. Its pursuits to collect quantitative statistics on the degrees of process stress experienced by college students and have a look at how those pressure stages correlate with their academic overall performance. Then to explore the perceptions and reviews of undergraduate students concerning process strain at OUSL: This goal involves gathering qualitative information through interviews or open-ended survey inquiries to gain deeper insights into college students' perspectives on activity pressure. Its objectives to recognize their private reviews, coping strategies, and guidelines for coping with activity strain successfully.

Main importance of this research is students' success and well-being depend on their ability to comprehend how work-related stress affects their academic achievement. Students' cognitive abilities, attention spans, and general mental health can all be negatively impacted by job stress, which can ultimately result in subpar academic achievement. This study can offer important insights into the unique stresses encountered by undergraduate students at the Open University of Sri Lanka by examining the connection between job stress and academic performance. It can also assist in identifying practical methods for stress management and mitigation. The results of this research can help design focused interventions and support networks that increase student wellbeing and promote better academic performance.

Second, in developing student-centered policies and initiatives, educators and legislators should find great value in this research. Educational institutions can establish a conducive atmosphere that caters to the distinct difficulties encountered by undergraduate students by acknowledging the influence of job stress on academic achievement. This study can aid in the creation of evidence-based programs and regulations that support students in managing their stress, give them resources, and improve their academic performance. The results of this study can also be used by policymakers to support holistic approaches to education that put students' performance and well-being first, which will enhance the higher education system.

Literature Review

In recent years, there has been a lot of attention focused on the effect that job stress has on undergraduate students' academic performance. Given the growing trend of students pursuing degrees concurrently with professional occupations, it is imperative to comprehend the connection between occupational stress and academic performance. In order to consolidate the body of research on the subject, this review

of the literature looks at the origins of occupational stress, how it affects academic performance, and possible solutions to lessen its detrimental impacts. It also points out areas in need of more research and suggests avenues for future study to deepen our comprehension of this intricate phenomenon.

Undergraduate students experience job stress due to various factors. Often, students have too much work to do leading to stress (Chen, Huang, & Lam, 2014). Students may be unable to focus on their studies when they are overwhelmed by the demands of their jobs such as deadlines.

Work-life balance is another determinant of job stress. Maintaining a balance between work and personal life in addition to school is not easy for undergraduates (Teixeira et al., 2017). Moreover, inadequate time for relaxation and leisure activities can increase stress levels while exacerbating struggles with academic focus.

Academic pressures such as heavy workloads, strict deadlines and high expectations are some of the major causes of severe tension (Kabir & Sharma, 2017). Financial constraints and managing jobs alongside education worsens anxiety among students (Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2018). On top of that, social expectations as well as fears about unemployment are associated with post-graduation job stress with students (He et al., 2019).

The research conducted indicates that stress caused by jobs had negative effects on undergraduates' academic achievement. Chen et al. (2014) also discovered that higher levels of job stress were related to lower grades and a poorer academic standing. Furthermore, it is quite common for students who are exposed to job stress to be unable to concentrate, complete assignments, and perform well during exams. Job stress can cause emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and burnout thereby further affecting thinking abilities of students and their performance in class.

Also, Job stress occurs when individuals experience psychological or physical strain from pressures or demands made in their jobs. Dagher and Itani (2018) did one important study which showed a negative correlation between job stress and academic performance meaning that more stressful events are associated with worse outcomes in the educational area. A similar study was done by Ahmad et al. (2019) which exposed that high rates of job stress affect cognitive functions including attention, memory leading to poor academic results at last.

One of the ways students cope with job stress and still maintain their academic performance is by employing a variety of mechanisms. Problem focused coping strategies such as managing time, seeking social support, and use of academic resources have been found to be effective in reducing job stress and improving academic outcomes (Chen & Xie, 2019). Emotion-focused coping strategies like relaxation techniques, mindfulness, and self-care activities also help to alleviate job stress' negative

effects on academics performance significantly (Zhang et al., 2020). For learners to remain healthy and achieve academic success despite occupational pressures they must employ good coping mechanisms.

Educational institutions are instrumental in dealing with job stress among their students. To assist learners in handling job-related pressures, institutions should put in place support systems such as counseling services, stress management workshops, as well as academic assistance programs (Walter et al., 2021). Furthermore, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel appreciated; thus, their issues get attended to can promote a reduction in job related stresses leading to increased academic excellence (Gao et al., 2019).

The effects of contextual factors and cultural variations on job stress among undergraduates have received little attention. The studies conducted in the past have been insightful, but more must be done for us to know how educational policies, society and cultural elements influence these occurrences. This means that a comprehensive understanding of job stress among students necessitates exploration into such factors.

Much has been written on the negative impacts of job stress towards academic performance while less has been written about how undergraduate students cope and become resilient. Such assessments should also evaluate the efficacy of different coping mechanisms as well as the impact of resilience on mitigating the consequences of job stress on academic performance. Consequently, we need to understand strategies for students' coping with job stress and their resilience levels.

However, there is shortage of empirical research assessing the interventions and support programs that aim at reducing job stress among undergraduate students. In order to evaluate the outcomes of such programs, future studies should consider examining stress management interventions, mentoring programs, and organizational support mechanisms. This will be helpful for coming up with evidence-based practices for supporting working students and improving their academic performance.

This shift has made it necessary to understand the distinctive challenges and stressors arising from changes in remote work practices and technology application in education. The work-study dynamics have significantly changed following the COVID-19 pandemic where remote work has been adopted broadly. Other than pandemic-related aspects, future research should delve into unique challenges and stressors associated with remote work on college students' academic performance. Additionally, this research should consider studying the impact of technology and how changing job nature affect students' job stress.

The literature review explores the effect of job stress on academic performance among undergraduates. Additionally, it states that there is an inverse relationship between job stress and academic outcomes.

It also identifies the causes of this problem, investigates ways of managing it, and emphasizes on importance of interventions and support systems. Furthermore, research gaps have been identified, suggesting the need for future studies examining contextual factors, exploring coping strategies and resilience, evaluating intervention programs, and investigating the impact of technological advancements. By synthesizing the existing research, this literature review forms a basis for our study in Open University of Sri Lanka through which we can delve more into job stress and academic performance among undergraduate students in Sri Lanka within a specific context. Thus, the existing gaps in the available works provide an opportunity to not only contribute to knowledge by addressing some unique challenges faced by students at open university of Sri Lanka but also propose specific strategies aimed at curtailing adverse effects of job stress on their education.

Materials and Methods

Methodology

Research will use a quantitative approach to establish how job stress affects the academic performance of undergraduate students in OUSL. This will help the researcher to get quantitative data where there is the collection and analysis of numerical data which is related to job stress and academic performances for working students. The questionnaire intends to provide primary data concerning the issue of job stresses, academic performance, and other related issues.

Population

The population of interest for this study includes all undergraduates enrolled in various professional programs at the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). Therefore, the sample group consists of working students who are simultaneously studying for their degrees as well as going about their employment.

Sample

This study will use a non-random convenience sample from the Department of Social Studies at OUSL. The sample group will comprise 40 undergraduate students currently working and taking a degree in Social Sciences. It is important because it gives a diverse representation of people with different backgrounds that are faced by people while trying to balance work and school life under this setting.

Instrumentation

I used a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. This questionnaire have several sections such as demographics, job related factors, job stress levels, and academic performance. The questions on job stress generated from validated scales like Job Stress Scale (JSS) or Perceived

Stress Scale (PSS) in order to make measurement reliable and valid. There were three parts of the questionnaire each serving a different purpose.

Section A: Student's Profile – This section was aimed at collecting demographic data of participants' such as age, sex and employment status. It is necessary for obtaining a full understanding of the sample properties.

Section B: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) – Perceived stress levels among participants were measured using a 14-item perceived stress scale developed by Cohen et al. (1983). P.S.S made up of Likert-type response format with five points between one which is never and five that referred to very often. This scale is widely used in psychological research to measure levels of stress while giving insight into thoughts and feelings of individuals within a particular timeframe.

Section C: Stress Factors Survey - This section focuses on identifying specific stress factors experienced by the participants. The survey includes stress factors discussed by Cohen et al. (1983) and allows participants to indicate multiple relevant factors. By exploring these stress factors, the study aims to understand the specific aspects of participants' work environments that contribute to job stress.

Participants' academic performance was measured using Grade Point Average (GPA), a common metric for assessing academic achievement in universities. The GPA data was obtained from the university records of the participants.

Data Collection

Data will be collected using a self-administered questionnaire distributed to the selected participants in the Department of Social Studies at OUSL. The questionnaire will be distributed electronically through online survey platforms, ensuring anonymity and privacy of responses. Participants will be requested to complete the questionnaire voluntarily and honestly, and informed consent will be obtained before data collection. The data collection process adhered to a predetermined timeline to maintain consistency and uniformity in the data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis will be conducted using statistical software, such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, will be used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, such as correlation

analysis and regression analysis, will be employed to examine the relationships between job stress and academic performance. The significance level will be set at $p < 0.05$.

Reliability and Normality

The reliability of the questionnaire items will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure the internal consistency of the job stress scale. Additionally, normality tests will be conducted to check the distribution of variables. If the data deviate significantly from normality, appropriate transformations or non-parametric tests may be applied to ensure the validity of the results.

Results and Discussion

Demographics

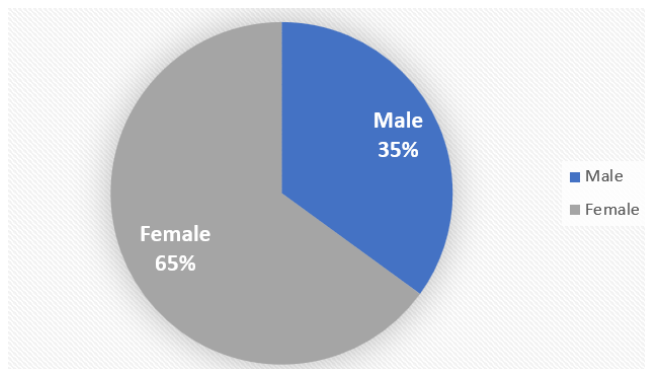


Figure 01 : Undergraduate students by gender

Among the respondents, it was found that 35% (n=14) were male and 65% (n=26) were female. It may be noted that the age range 20 to 40 years represented the largest percentage of respondents. The students who are doing their degrees in BA in Youth and Community Development are 13, BA in Social Sciences Degree – Mass Communication Stream 6, BA in Social Sciences Degree – Society and Culture Stream 8, BA in Social Sciences Degree – Economics and Development Studies stream 5, students who are doing their degrees in BA in Social Sciences Degree – Politics and International Relations Stream 8.

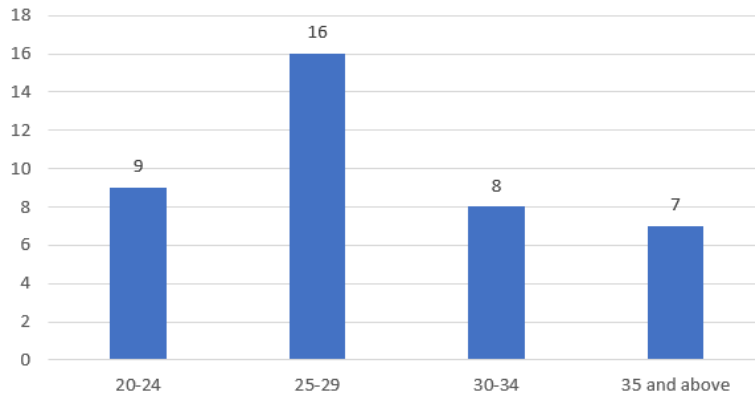


Figure 02 : Undergraduate students by age

students across different age groups reveals a distribution of academic pursuits within the surveyed population. Among the respondents, 29% fell within the 20-24 age bracket, constituting the largest group. The 25-29 age group accounted for 51% of students, representing a substantial portion of the sample. The 30-34 age range comprised 26% of students, and those aged 35 and above constituted 23%. These percentages provide a clear indication of the age distribution within the student population, with a higher concentration in the mid-to-late twenties. Understanding the demographic composition of students across various age groups is valuable for educational institutions and policymakers in tailoring support services and academic programs that address the diverse needs of students at different life stages.

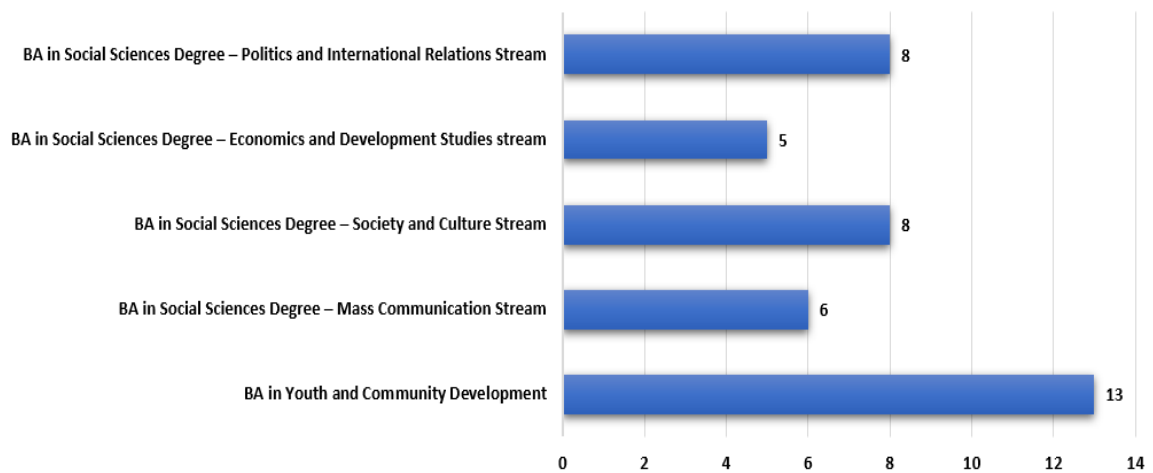


Figure 03 : students the major field study

40 responses

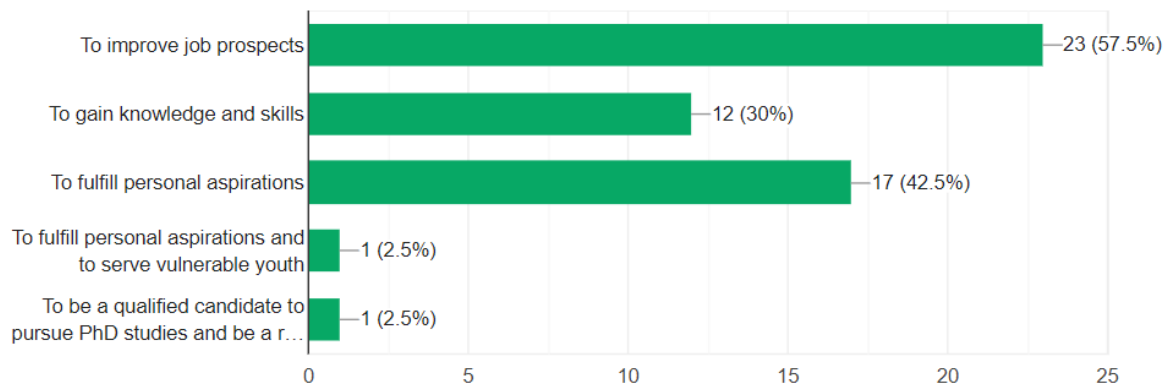


Figure 04 : students primary reason for pursuing an undergraduate degree at the Open University of Sri Lanka

students' primary motivations for pursuing an undergraduate degree offers valuable insights into their varied aspirations. Among the respondents, 58% identified "To improve job prospects" as their primary reason, indicating a significant emphasis on the practical and career-oriented benefits of higher education. Meanwhile, 30% of students cited "To gain knowledge and skills," highlighting a substantial portion who prioritize academic and intellectual growth. Additionally, 43% of respondents indicated "To fulfill personal aspirations" as their primary motivation, suggesting a considerable number of students driven by personal fulfillment and self-realization through their academic journey. These percentages underscore the multifaceted nature of students' motivations, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach in educational institutions to cater to the diverse needs and expectations of their student body. Understanding these motivations can guide educational policies and practices to better align with students' overarching goals and enhance the overall educational experience.

Factors Contributing to Job Stress, Job Stress and Academic Performance

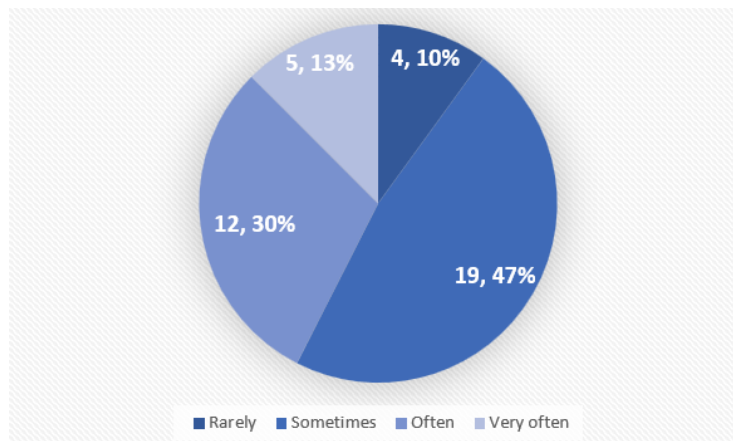


Figure 05 : frequency of experiencing job stress undergraduate students

students based on the frequency of experiencing job stress provides a comprehensive view of their stress levels in the academic and professional spheres. Among the respondents, 10% reported experiencing job stress "Rarely," while a larger proportion, constituting 47%, indicated facing stress "Sometimes." Notably, 30% of students reported encountering job stress "Often," and 13% noted experiencing stress "Very often." These percentages highlight the prevalence of job stress among the surveyed students, with a considerable number facing stress either frequently or very often. Understanding the distribution of stress levels is crucial for educational institutions and support services to tailor interventions that address the specific needs of students, fostering a more resilient and healthier academic environment. These findings underscore the importance of implementing strategies to mitigate stressors and enhance overall well-being throughout students' educational journeys.

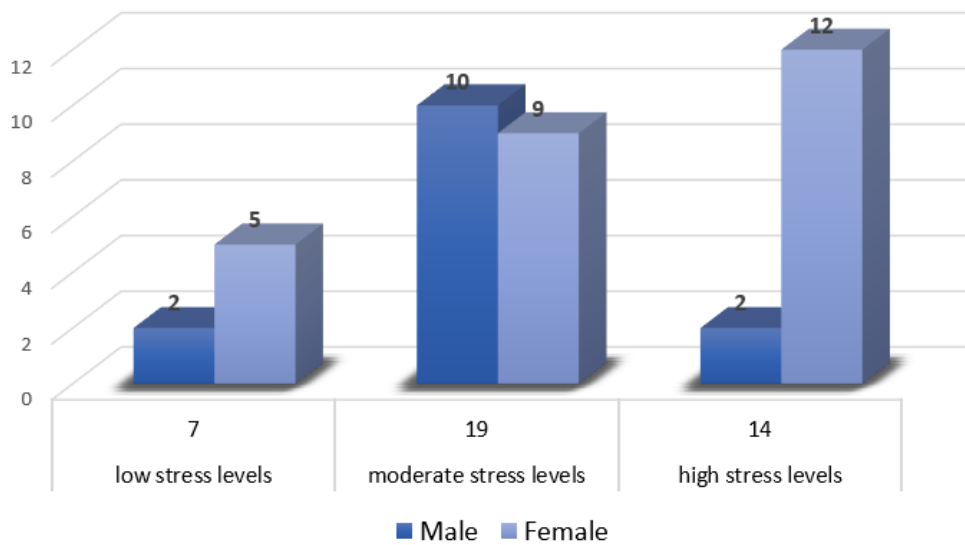


Figure 06 : Levels of Stress Among Students

The results show that 7 students had low stress levels, 19 students had moderate stress levels, and 14 students had high stress levels, Among male students, 2 students had low stress levels, 10 students had moderate stress levels while 2 students reported high stress levels. Among female students 5 experienced low stress levels, 9 students had moderate stress level while 12 reported high stress level.

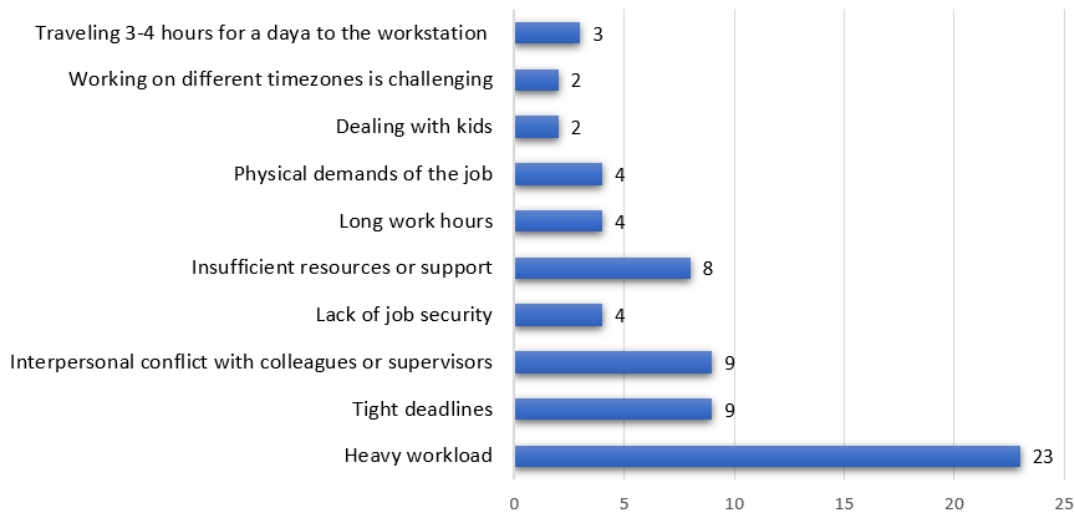


Figure 07 : Sources of Job Stress of among the Students

Workplace stressors reveals that a substantial 23% of respondents identified a heavy workload as a primary source of stress, emphasizing the prevalence of this challenge in the surveyed population. Tight deadlines and interpersonal conflicts with colleagues or supervisors were reported by 9% each, indicating a significant but slightly lower frequency. Concerns about job security and insufficient resources or support were mentioned by 4% and 8% of respondents, respectively. Long work hours and physical demands of the job were identified by 4% each, while dealing with kids, working across different time zones, and lengthy commutes were cited by 2-3% of individuals. These percentages provide a clear picture of the relative prevalence of each stressor, guiding organizations in prioritizing interventions and support mechanisms to address the most pressing concerns faced by their workforce.

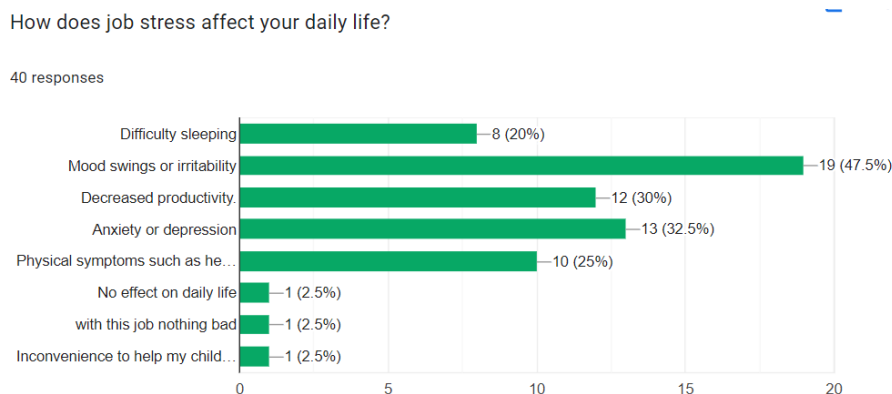


Figure 08 : How job stress affect students daily life

The impact of job stress on daily life among the surveyed students provides a detailed perspective on the various ways stress manifests. Approximately 20% of students reported experiencing "Difficulty sleeping," indicating the significant influence of job stress on their sleep patterns. Mood-related

challenges were prevalent, with 19% of students reporting "Mood swings or irritability," underscoring the emotional toll that job stress can take. "Decreased productivity" was noted by 30% of students, highlighting the tangible impact on academic or professional performance. Additionally, 13% of students reported experiencing "Anxiety or depression," indicating the profound effects of job stress on mental well-being. Physical symptoms such as "Headaches or stomach aches" were reported by 10% of students, emphasizing the mind-body connection in stress responses. These percentages illustrate the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the impact of job stress on daily life, reinforcing the importance of implementing supportive measures and interventions to address both the psychological and physiological consequences experienced by individuals facing workplace pressures. Understanding these quantitative breakdowns can guide the development of targeted strategies to promote overall well-being and resilience in the face of job-related stressors.

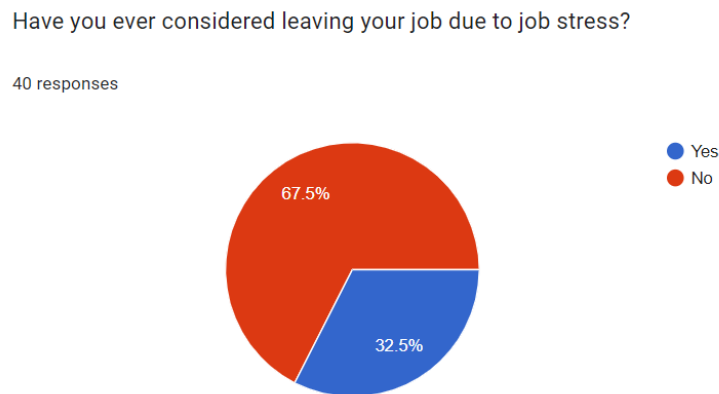


Figure 09 : How job stress affect students daily life

Individuals considering leaving their job due to job stress reveals insightful perspectives within the surveyed population. Approximately 33% of respondents acknowledged having considered leaving their job because of stress, while the majority, constituting 68%, reported not contemplating such a drastic measure. These percentages shed light on the prevalence of job stress as a factor influencing individuals' thoughts about their professional continuity. Understanding the frequency of this consideration is crucial for employers and organizational leaders in recognizing the potential impact of workplace stress on employee retention. The data suggests a significant proportion of individuals grappling with stress to the extent that it prompts contemplation of leaving their current job. Addressing these stressors through supportive workplace initiatives and mental health resources may contribute to fostering a more resilient and satisfied workforce.

health problems you have experienced as a result of job stress:

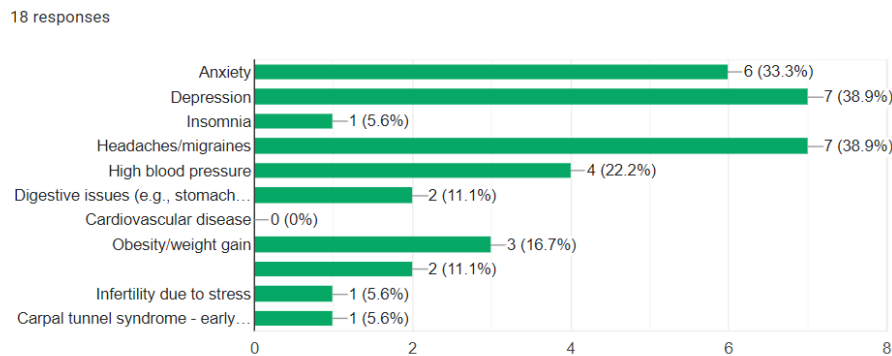


Figure 10 : Health problems students have experienced as a result of job stress

Health problems experienced as a result of job stress among the surveyed students provides valuable insights into the multifaceted impact of workplace stressors on overall well-being. Approximately 33% of students reported experiencing "Anxiety," while 39% noted "Depression," underscoring the mental health implications of job stress. "Insomnia" was reported by 6% of students, indicating challenges with sleep patterns. Head-related issues, such as "Headaches/migraines," were noted by 39% of students, while 22% reported "High blood pressure," emphasizing the physiological toll of job stress. "Digestive issues" were mentioned by 11% of students, and "Obesity/weight gain" was reported by 17%, highlighting the diverse range of physical health problems associated with workplace stress. Understanding these percentages is crucial for employers and healthcare professionals in recognizing the need for comprehensive wellness programs and support mechanisms that address both mental and physical health challenges arising from job-related stressors. Addressing these issues holistically can contribute to a healthier and more resilient workforce.

Job Stress and Academic Performance

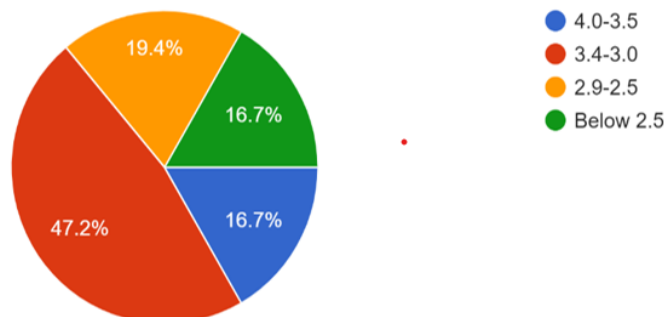


Figure 11 : Students current grade point average (GPA)

Table indicates that in general, we can say that student performance is good, where majority (47.2%) of them scored Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 and above. Out of this number (16.7%) of them achieved 3.50 and above which indicates excellent academic performance. It may be noted that only 16.7% of the students scored GPA less than 2.00. This indicates that the number of low academic achiever is relatively low.

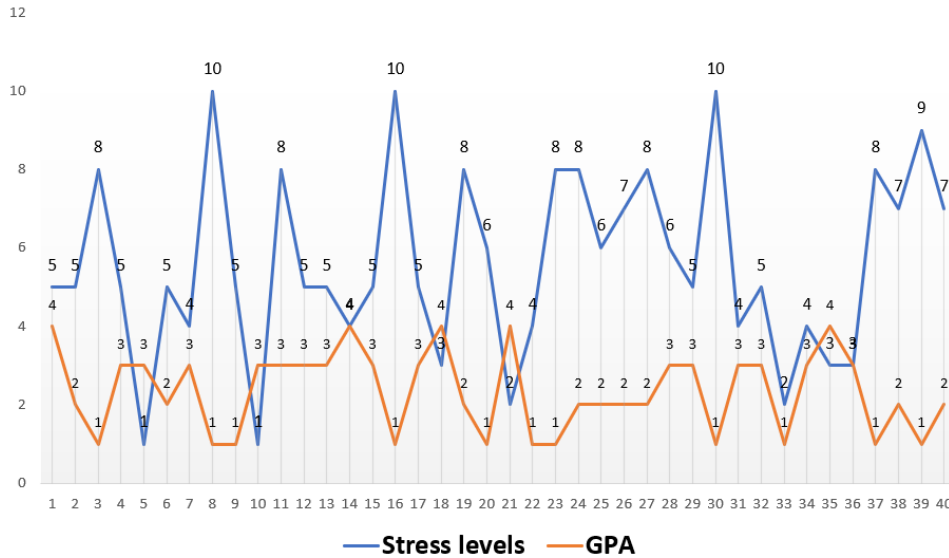


Figure 12 : Relationship between Undergraduate Students' Stress Level and Academic Achievement

The fourth objective of this research was to identify the relationship between stress and academic achievement of the undergraduate students. It was hypothesized that there is no relationship between undergraduate students' stress level and academic achievement. Table shows the relationship between stress and academic achievement of the respondents.

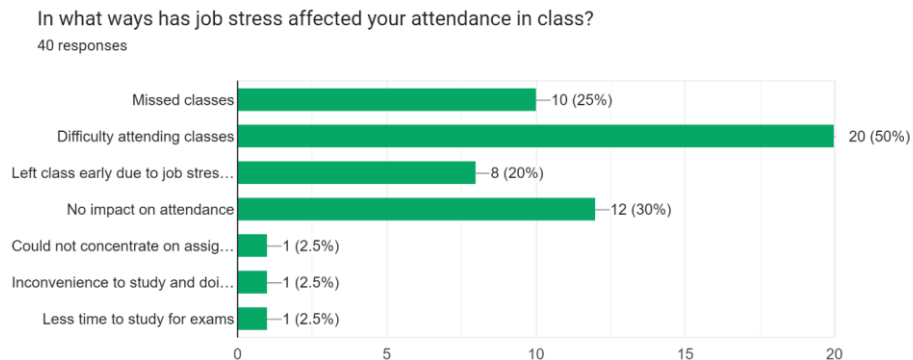


Figure 13 : what ways has job stress affected Students attendance in class

Job stress affects students' attendance in classes among the surveyed population provides valuable insights into the tangible consequences of workplace stress on academic engagement. Approximately 50% of students reported "Difficulty attending classes," indicating a substantial impact on their ability to consistently participate in academic activities. Meanwhile, 25% noted they had "Missed classes," underscoring the direct correlation between job stress and absenteeism. "Left class early due to job stress-related issues" was reported by 20% of students, suggesting that stress influences the duration of their class attendance. Interestingly, 30% of students stated that job stress had "No impact on attendance," suggesting resilience or coping mechanisms in a portion of the surveyed population. These percentages highlight the nuanced ways in which job stress can affect students' attendance patterns, emphasizing the need for academic institutions to implement supportive measures that address the diverse challenges faced by students balancing work and academic commitments.

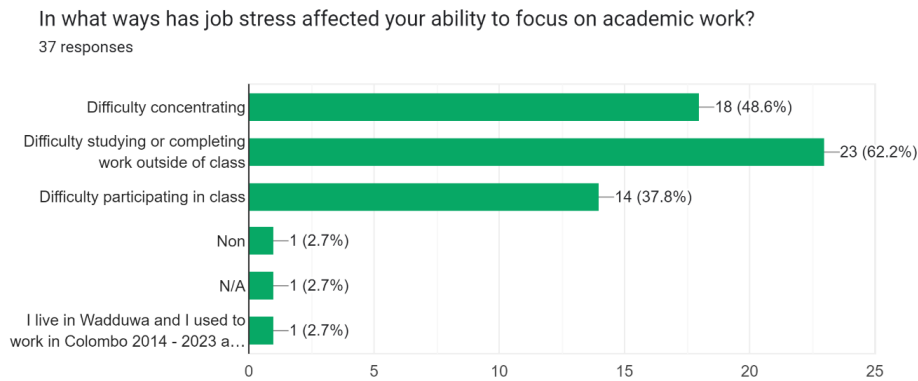


Figure 14 : what ways has job stress affected Students attendance in class

The ways in which job stress has affected students' ability to focus on academic work offers crucial insights into the challenges faced by the surveyed population. Approximately 62% of students reported "Difficulty studying or completing work outside of class," highlighting a substantial impact on their ability to engage with academic materials beyond scheduled class times. "Difficulty concentrating" was noted by 49% of students, underscoring the pervasive influence of job stress on their capacity to maintain focus during academic tasks. Additionally, 38% of students reported "Difficulty participating in class," indicating that the impact of job stress extends to their active involvement in classroom discussions and activities. These percentages illuminate the multifaceted ways in which job stress can impede students' academic focus, emphasizing the need for targeted support services and interventions aimed at alleviating stressors and enhancing concentration levels. Understanding these specific

challenges is essential for academic institutions to implement strategies that foster a conducive learning environment for students managing the dual responsibilities of work and academics.

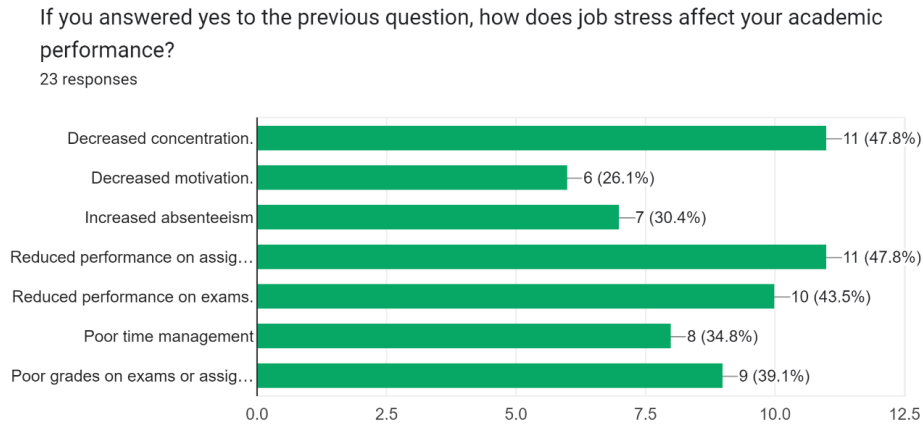


Figure 15 : How job stress affect Students academic performance

How job stress affects academic performance among the surveyed students provides a comprehensive view of the various challenges faced in their educational pursuits. Approximately 48% of students reported "Decreased concentration," indicating a substantial impact on their ability to focus during academic activities. "Reduced performance on assignments" and "Decreased motivation" were noted by 48% and 26% of students, respectively, underlining the interconnected nature of motivation and academic achievement. Additionally, 30% of students reported "Increased absenteeism," highlighting the tangible effect of job stress on attendance, while 44% cited "Reduced performance on exams," emphasizing the influence of stress on high-stakes assessments. "Poor grades on exams or assignments" were reported by 39% of students, and "Poor time management" was noted by 35%, indicating the broader implications of job stress on overall academic success. These percentages underscore the multifaceted ways in which job stress can negatively impact academic performance, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address specific challenges faced by students managing both work and academic responsibilities.

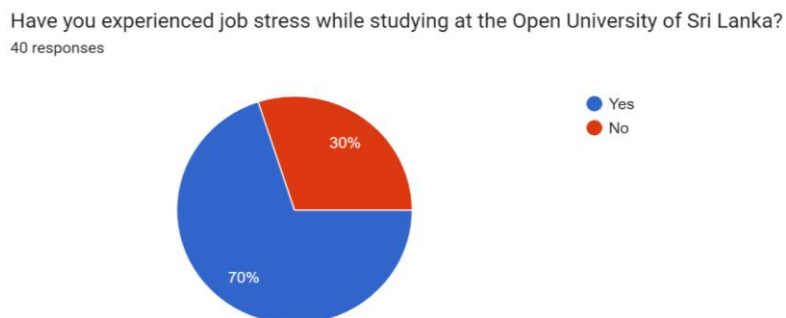


Figure 16 : Students experienced job stress while studying at the Open University of Sri Lanka

Have you ever received a lower grade on an assignment or exam due to job stress -related issues?
40 responses

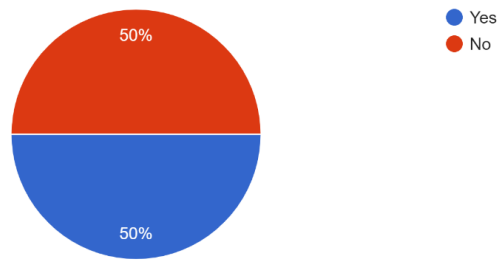


Figure 17: Students who received a lower grade on an assignment or exam due to job stress -related issues

Coping with Job Stress

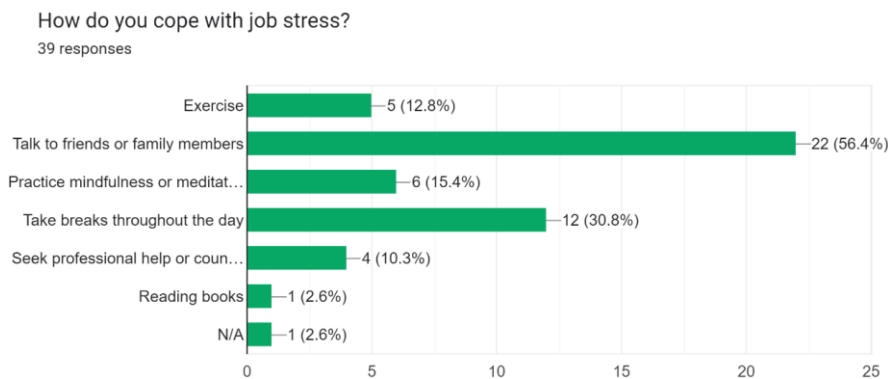


Figure 18 : Students who received a lower grade on an assignment or exam due to job stress -related issues

The coping mechanisms employed by students to deal with job stress sheds light on the diverse strategies they use to manage workplace pressures. Approximately 56% of students reported "Talking to friends or family members" as a primary coping method, highlighting the significant role of social support in alleviating stress. "Taking breaks throughout the day" was utilized by 30% of students, emphasizing the importance of incorporating moments of relaxation into their daily routines. Meanwhile, 13% of students chose to cope with job stress through "Exercise," recognizing the positive impact of physical activity on mental well-being. "Practice mindfulness or meditation" was embraced by 15% of students as a strategy to cultivate mental resilience. Interestingly, 10% of students reported seeking "Professional help or counseling," indicating a recognition of the importance of professional support in managing job-related stressors. These percentages illustrate the variety of coping mechanisms students employ, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach in supporting their well-being. Academic institutions can benefit from understanding these coping strategies to tailor supportive programs that cater to the diverse needs of students facing job stress.

What resources have you used to manage job stress?

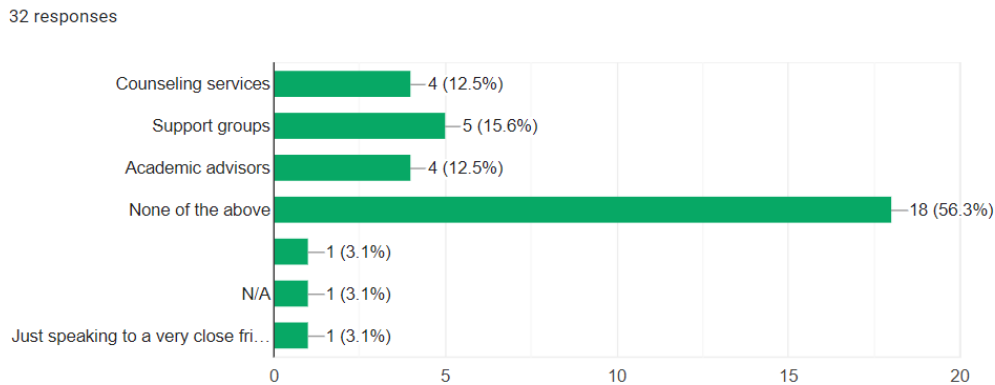


Figure 19 : Resources have students used to manage job stress

The resources used by students to manage job stress provides insights into the avenues they explore for support and guidance. Approximately 12% of students reported utilizing "Counseling services" as a resource, indicating a recognition of the value of professional mental health support in coping with job-related stressors. "Support groups" were embraced by 15% of students, underscoring the importance of community and shared experiences in navigating workplace pressures. Meanwhile, 12% of students sought assistance from "Academic advisors," suggesting that academic guidance and mentorship play a role in addressing stressors related to both work and academic responsibilities. These percentages highlight the diversity of resources students tap into, indicating a multifaceted approach to managing job stress. Understanding the prevalence of these resources can guide educational institutions in enhancing and expanding support services, ensuring that students have access to a range of options that cater to their unique needs and preferences.

Are you aware of the resources available to help you manage job stress at the Open University of Sri Lanka?

40 responses

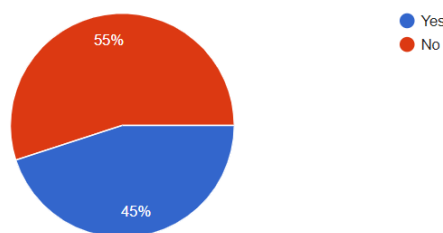


Figure 20 : Awareness of the resources available to help for manage job stress at the Open University of Sri Lanka

Have you ever used any of the resources available to help you manage job stress at the Open University of Sri Lanka?

39 responses

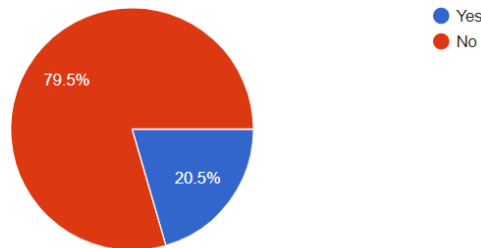


Figure 21 : Students who use resources for manage job stress at the Open University of Sri Lanka

The respondents' awareness of resources available to manage job stress at the Open University of Sri Lanka indicates that 45% of individuals are aware, with 18 students responding affirmatively, while 55% are not aware, constituting 22 students who answered negatively. These percentages suggest a relatively even split in terms of awareness. It highlights the need for the Open University of Sri Lanka to enhance communication and outreach efforts to ensure that students are well-informed about the available resources for managing job stress. By improving awareness, the university can better support its students in navigating the challenges associated with workplace stress, fostering a more resilient and thriving academic community. Understanding these percentages is essential for institutions to tailor their support services effectively and address the specific needs of students managing both academic and employment responsibilities.

Limitations

- **Generalizability:** The research's conclusions are unique to the Open University of Sri Lanka and might not be easily transferred to other organizations or environments. The results' generalizability may be constrained by the particulars of the university's student body, curriculum, and support services.
- **Self-Reporting Bias:** Survey and interview data are susceptible to self-reporting bias. The accuracy of the results is impacted when students exaggerate or underestimate their experiences with work-related stress. The findings' objectivity can be compromised by their dependence on subjective reactions.
- **Restricted Variables:** The study only looks at a few components of the association between work stress and academic achievement, possibly ignoring other important variables. The stress-performance dynamic, for example, may be influenced by personal factors, family dynamics, or extracurricular activities, yet these elements may not receive enough attention.

- **Variability in Stress Measurement:** Stress is a subjective construct that is sensitive to individual perspective. It can be difficult to standardize stress measurement throughout the entire sample since different students may interpret and react to stressors in different ways.
- **Lack of influence over External Variables:** The researcher has no influence over external variables like curricular modifications, institutional regulations, or socioeconomic circumstances. These characteristics could introduce confounding variables that affect the results of the investigation.
- **Temporal Changes:** Students may face different pressures as a result of changes in the socioeconomic, political, or technical environment. The study's applicability in other contexts may be limited if these changes are not captured.

Suggestion for future extension

Explore Coping Mechanisms:

Conduct an in-depth exploration of coping mechanisms employed by students to manage job stress. Investigate the effectiveness of various strategies, including time management, seeking social support, and engaging in stress-relief activities. Understanding coping mechanisms can inform the development of targeted interventions.

Assess Institutional Support Services:

Evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of existing institutional support services, such as counseling and mental health programs, in assisting students dealing with job stress. Identify areas for improvement and potential gaps in the support infrastructure.

Faculty and Staff Perspectives:

Include the perspectives of faculty and staff members in understanding the dynamics of job stress among students. Investigate how teaching methods, course structures, and institutional policies contribute to or alleviate student stress.

Intervention Development and Testing:

Develop and implement targeted interventions based on identified stressors. Evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing job stress and improving academic performance. This could involve implementing stress management workshops, mentorship programs, or academic support initiatives.

Technology-Enabled Support:

Investigate the role of technology in providing support for students dealing with job stress. Explore the potential of digital platforms or apps for stress management and academic assistance, considering the preferences and needs of the student population.

Intersectionality of Stress Factors:

Examine how factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and employment status intersect with job stress and academic performance. This intersectional approach can provide a more nuanced understanding of the differential experiences of stress among subgroups of students.

Collaboration with Industry Partners:

Collaborate with industry partners to understand the specific stressors related to employment and how these factors interact with academic responsibilities. This collaboration can offer a practical perspective on the challenges students may face in balancing work and studies.

Evaluate Resilience Factors:

Assess individual and contextual resilience factors that may mitigate the negative effects of job stress on academic performance. Identify characteristics or support systems that contribute to students' ability to overcome stress and succeed academically.

Cross-Cultural Comparative Study:

Consider a cross-cultural comparative study to explore whether the relationship between job stress and academic performance varies across cultures. This could provide valuable insights into culturally specific stressors and coping mechanisms.

Conclusion

The Open University of Sri Lanka was the setting for my inquiry into how job stress affects the academic performance of undergraduates. The results revealed a negative relationship between job stress levels and academic performance. The results, however, were negative. Students with higher levels of job stress had poorer grades and were less academically successful than their counterparts who had lower levels of stress. This shows that work-related pressure could seriously

affect students' ability to do well academically and is a major problem for working pupils at Open University in Sri Lanka.

Several factors that cause job stress among undergraduate students were identified by this research. Heavy workloads, demanding job requirements, and difficulties in maintaining a healthy work-life balance emerged as primary stressors. Additionally, the unique nature of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) at the Open University exacerbates these challenges because students are required to handle both work commitments as well as their studies at the same time.

In order to ensure that job stress does not impact negatively on academic performance, it becomes imperative to create elaborate support systems that are customized for working students. Some of the measures that educational institutions can employ include holding stress management workshops, providing favorable time-tables for learning and teaching while creating convenient environment for learning. Also, effective communication networks among students, lecturers and employers should be established to enable the formation of supportive networks addressing the specific stressors related to working students.

Moreover, this study emphasizes the importance of self-care and coping skills in managing work stress. On the other hand, participants who practiced good time management skills, sought emotional support from friends and participated in leisure activities had better performances academically than those who didn't. Finally encouraging them to adopt healthier ways of handling such situations will empower them in their bid to balance between employment and education effectively.

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