Causes and Implications of Stress among Academic Staff: A Case of the Catholic University in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract*: This research investigated stress management and coping mechanisms employed by members of the academic staff at Catholic University in Zimbabwe. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. In all, 50 academic members were sampled through the use of convenient sampling technique. Questionnaires and structured interviews were used to solicit for the requisite data for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data as extracted from the responses and to compare relationships among variables. Analysis of variance (ANOVA), post hoc multiple comparison analyses and Pearson correlations were computed in an attempt to understand data and phenomena better. The study among other things found out that academic staff experienced stress related disorders. Most stress related disorders faced by the academic members of the university were sleeping problems, feeling overwhelmed, fatigue and various pains including headaches. It was also found out that poor interpersonal relationships, work overload, poor conditions of service, large classes and lack of professional development where the major drivers of stress among academic staff. The respondents adopted coping strategies such as confronting, distancing themselves, church-going, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escaping/ avoidance, planned problem-solving and positive reappraisal. The study recommended training of staff in stress coping mechanisms and awareness of those things that mitigated stress like lack of recreation and lack of leisure. The study also recommended improvement of conditions of service and reduction of work overload including reduction of class sizes.*
Key words: *stress, coping mechanisms, academic staff , stress management*

I.   Introduction

Melgosa (2006) averred that stress is the reason for two thirds of the total visits to the physicians; thus stress is a trigger of other related diseases such as stroke, diabetes, heart attack, mental disorder, burnout and hypertension to mention but just a few. The phenomenon of stress is not new. Humans have been experiencing stress since time immemorial. Stress is part of everyday life and it arises from our relationship with the constantly changing world (Rok, 2011). There is general consensus that human resources are the most valuable resources for any organization. Humans are the creators of wealth. The generation of wealth and other resources for any organization or country hinges on human capital (Brown et al, 2008). Yet humanity by nature is vulnerable to such phenomena as stress which can negatively affect production if not curtailed. Clearly, it should be noted that the effects of stress, whether triggered by work, or social constraints will eventually reduce the employee's performance. Without adequate coping strategies, there is real threat to production and health which may even lead to premature death of the affected employees. The effects of such eventuality are more devastating in knowledge societies such as universities where main focus is to generate knowledge using skills and brain power. Various techniques used to understand and manage stress among academic staff in universities should be explored and that was the main thrust of this study. This study sought to understand the drivers of stress, its implications and the coping mechanisms used by academic staff.

1.1 Background to the Study

While stress may have been with humanity since creation, it was not until 1936 when it was discovered by Hans Selye. Stress is a complex phenomenon as it is a pertinent area of modern medical, social, behavioral and psychological science and research (Ahmed et al, 2013). Traditionally, stress has been viewed as an unavoidable outcome of work life; or at most, a health care issue but studies have also come up to give another view of stress as a workplace issue as it affects productivity at work. Stress negatively affects the performance of all people, regardless of race, social class, age, type of occupation or place of work and universities are no exception.

Work-related stress among educationists may have existed since the advent of formal education but it was not until the 1930s when it was identified in a study by Smith and Milstein. Later on in 1955, Travers and Cooper documented the history of changes in the educational process as well as the impact of stress in academic institutions.

One of the factors that has influenced the success of higher education institutions is their wide array of highly qualified human capital who continue to impart skills and knowledge which help to change the world (Farber, 2010). The high quality of academic staff in universities contributes to a favorable learning atmosphere thus producing high quality students but the moment these employees are affected by stress their performance becomes compromised (Rowley, 1996).

Indisputably, the intensification of stress and its related disorders in Zimbabwe within higher learning institutions poses momentous questions: What are the root causes of stress? What are the effects of stress? What are the prevention strategies? What are the control mechanisms and what are the coping strategies that can be employed to manage stress?

Previous researches on the subject of stress showed that different people are affected by stress differently depending on the type of pressures they face. There is a lot of pressure that academic staff in Zimbabwe faces with most of this emanating from the state of the economy and the nature of politics. Zimbabwe as a developing country is evidently full of life-threatening and unpredictable situations, which are stressful to people and their well-being such as high levels of job insecurity, turbulent economic and political environment, low levels of salaries, inconsistent paydays, lack of resources, work overload, poor leadership in workplaces, lack of basic commodities such as food and accommodation to mention but just a few. Academic staff in Zimbabwe experiences all these problems and one wonders how they are coping. Evidence of stress are general widespread feelings of worry, anxiety, anger, lack of tolerance, alcoholism, high absenteeism, high misconduct cases, low man-hours caused by sick leaves, fatigue, low enthusiasm, lack of motivation, anti-establishment tendencies and frustration which have damaging effects on the lecturers' performance at work.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Stress has been implicated as a major contributing factor to growing job dissatisfaction, high brain-drain, work-related conditions and diseases such as hypertension, stroke, mental problems, high emotions, diabetes, personality changes including alcoholism and even death among academic staff in higher education institutions. A study on occupational stress which was carried out by Masuku and Muchemwa in 2015 at Solusi University concluded that most lecturers from universities are suffering from stress and stress-related ailments. The demands caused by preparing for lectures, lecturing, marking assignments and exams, supervision of dissertations, follow-up of students on attachments, attending to discipline and counseling and additional demands caused by the new Education 5.0 curriculum which demands that lecturers should attend to teaching, research, community service, innovation and industrialization amid resource constraints have increased the chances of stress building up among lecturers. The drive for high enrolment as a way to raise money from students' fees in the backdrop of reduced funding and popularization of Part-time, Block-release, Parallel, Week-end and Summer School learning modes over and above the Conventional mode; all aimed at raising money for the universities have had their toll on the same lecturer who is only but just a human being. Previous studies have centered on stress in industries and the commercial services sector. Besides Masuku and Muchemwa's 2015 study cited above, no other research on stress and its dangers has delved on universities. There was need for a study which explored the stress phenomenon to get a deeper understanding of its drivers, control, management and coping strategies in order to save academicians.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to explore the phenomenon of stress as it manifests among academic staff in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe using the case of the Catholic University. The specific objectives were:
1. To identify common stressors among lecturers.
2. To establish factors influencing stress among academic staff.
3. To identify the coping mechanisms used by academic staff in universities.
4. To suggest sustainable strategies of managing stress among academic staff.

1.4 Hypotheses
❖ There is association between heavy workload and the manifestation of stress among academic staff.
❖ The manifestation of stress among academic staff is related to their lack of knowledge of prevention and coping mechanisms.
❖ Stress is significantly associated with the socio-demographic factors of the lecturers concerned.

II. Literature Review

Stress is the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur on individuals as a result of their being unable to cope with the demands being made on them (Yusuf, 2003; Zindi, 2002; and Stevenson et al, 2006). Stress results when the individual fails to manage the environment. Winfield (2000) views coping mechanisms as the various ways through which a human being handles and manages the discomfort caused by stress. ILO (2012) is in agreement with Barhem (2004), Barkuzien et al (2008) and Barhem (2004) who define stress management as the predetermined strategies or ways for coping with the psychological or emotional turmoil caused by stress.

2.1 Overview of Lecturing in Zimbabwean Universities

A background of the Higher and Tertiary Education Sector in Zimbabwe has shown that as a sector, it is more developed and diversified in comparison to other markets in the Sub-Saharan region. Lecturers in the Zimbabwean context have been experiencing high levels of work-related stress (Madzingaidzo, 2010). Lecturing is a profession that is highly regarded in Zimbabwe, if not the world over, but instead of enjoying their work, lecturers have been impacted with stress in many facets if their lives.

2.2 Causes of Stress in workplaces

Several studies that have attempted to identify the sources of stress have indicated that stressors vary and that they tend to change from one context to another (Harris and Hartman, 2002). In a study by Sajuyigbe et al (2015) to assess the influence of job-stress on job performance among academic staff at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, the study revealed that lack of adequate and appropriate infrastructure, work overload, time pressure, compilation of results and students indiscipline are major causes of job stress in universities.
Christo and Pienaar (2006) argued that the causes of job-stress include perceived loss of job, sitting for long periods, complexity of repetitiveness and lack of autonomy. Academic staff in Zimbabwean higher learning institutions have multiple roles of which they act as teachers, researchers, mentors, counselors, *loco parentis* and also as managers. These put a lot of pressure on lecturers resultantly leading to stress and its related disorders.
Most academic staff work long hours even during weekends in order to meet required targets. Academic staff members are promoted based on publications. Heavy teaching schedules and lack of funds have been identified as major drawbacks to research and publications (Laver, 2009). All these become pressures which if not managed lead to stress.

2.3 Outcomes of Stress

The results of stress can either be costly in monetary terms or devastating in human terms. The report by Industrial Psychology Consultants (IPC) in Zimbabwe in 2016 on stress gave shocking results concerning stress levels in Zimbabwe. The survey concluded that companies are losing a total of over three billion United States dollars per year in wages through mental health or stress related absenteeism excluding costs of treating health-related illnesses of the same employees.

Table 1: Physical, Psychological and Behavioral Symptoms of Stress

Physical	Psychosocial	Behavioural
- Headaches	- Anxiety	- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Grinding teeth	- Irritability	- Impatience
- Clenched jaws	- Sadness	- Quickness to argue
- Chest pain	- Defensiveness	- Procrastination
- Shortness of breath	- Anger	- Increased use of alcohol / drugs
- Pounding heart	- Mood swings	
- High blood pressure	- Hypersensitivity	- Increased smoking
- Muscle aches	- Apathy	- Withdrawal or isolation from others
- Indigestion	- Depression	
- Constipation or diarrhea	- Slowed thinking or racing thoughts	- Neglect of responsibility
		- Poor job performance
- Increased perspiration	- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or of being trapped	- Poor personal hygiene
		- Change in religious practices
- Fatigue		- Changes in close family relationships
- Insomnia		
- Frequent illness		
Workplace Stress		

Sources: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (2000)

In a study by Critchley et al (2010), it was concluded that a person with stress can also have eating, drinking, and smoking problems. Additionally, chronic fatigue syndrome ME (Myalgia encephalomyelitis) can also be attributed to stress. Stress also leads to accelerated burnout. Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress (Clark, 2002). Various researchers among them Winfield (2000), Barhem (2004), Barkuzien et al (2008) and Barhem (2004) argue that, burnout is a complex physical, mental and emotional reaction to constant levels of high stress. It normally produces feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, sarcasm, bitterness, and dissatisfaction as well as inactivity all leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, real illness and feigned illness.
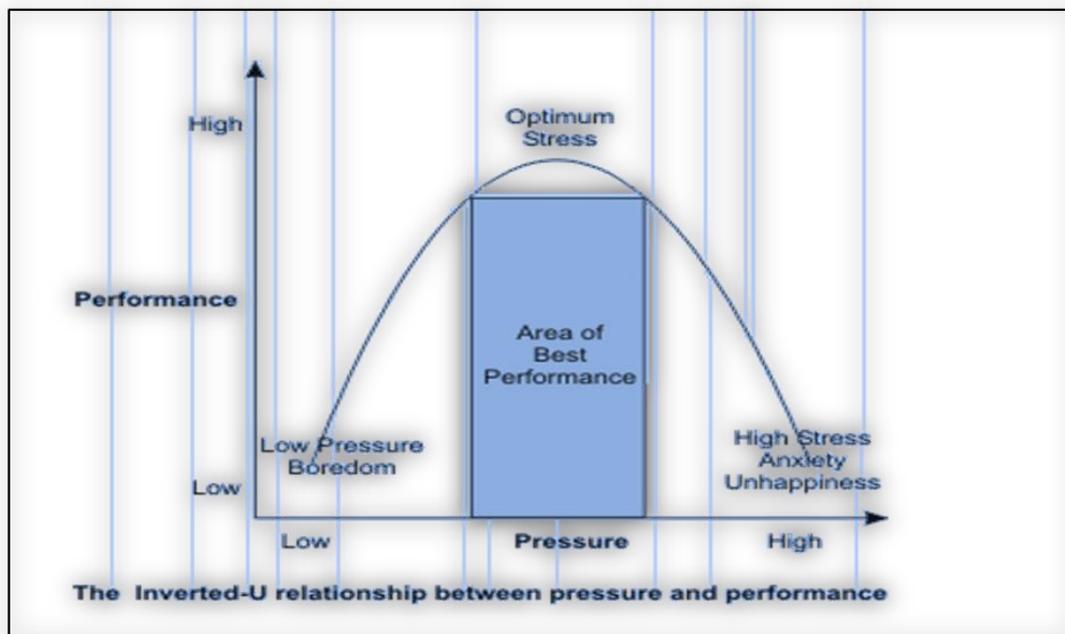

Source: Yerkes and Dodson's work Performance Model (1908)
Figure 1: The Relationship between level of stress and performance

The above diagram shows that individual performance on a given task will be lower at high levels of stress and optimal at reasonable or moderate levels of stress. Watson's Global Benefits Attitudes survey in United Kingdom in 2014 found out that, levels of workplace disengagement significantly increase when employees experience high levels of stress.

Figure 2: Stress Model
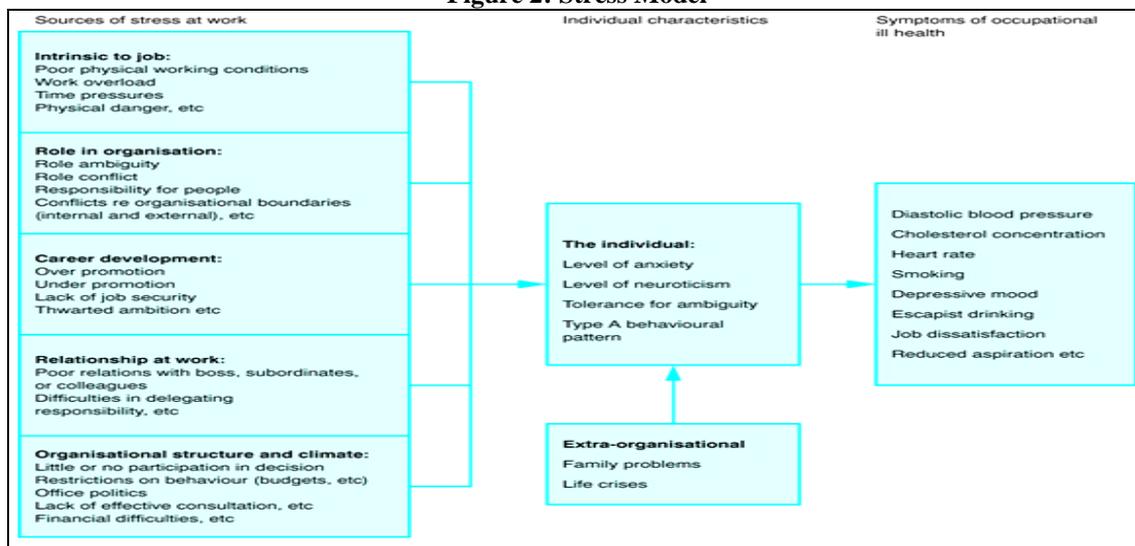
Source: Michael Occupational Environmental Media (2002:15)

Not all job stressors have negative effect. Certain amount of job stress has been known to improve both effectiveness and performance (Larson, 2004). For example, a newly promoted Vice Chancellor can have stress derived from the challenging and exciting opportunity to excel and prove one's worth. Such an experience can lead to positive stress in job accomplishment. Stress is not necessarily something bad. It all depends on how we take it (Selye, 1976). In small doses, stress becomes positive as it helps to keep us alert and perform tasks to the best of our ability as aforementioned. A positive type of stress is called Eustress (Beehr et al, 2000). In his studies, Selye (1976) pointed out that eustress happens when there is a gap between what one has and what one wants. In simple terms, it means one will have goals and the goals will not be too far out of reach but still slightly more than what one can handle.
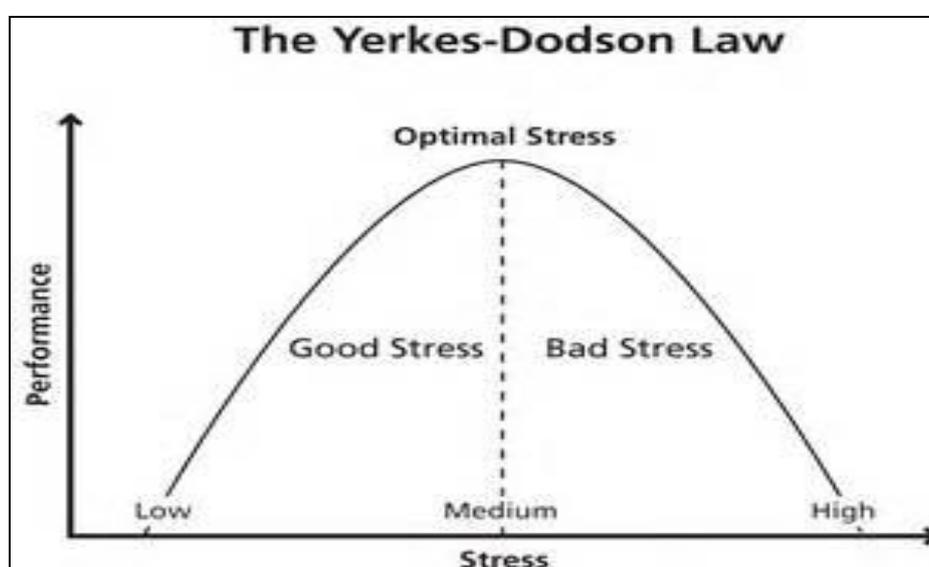
Source: Yerkes and Dodson's work opportunity Performance Model (1908)
Figure 3: Positive Stress (Eustress) vs Performance

2 .4 Theoretical Framework

This research was situated within the framework of P-E Fit Theory, Demand Control Theory, Psychological Theory of stress and coping by Lazarus and the transactional model of stress.

2.4.1 Person – Environment Fit Theory (P-E Fit Theory)

The concept of Person-Environment Fit Theory explains the extent to which individual characteristics complement with those of his or her setting. Burke (2008) provides in-depth analysis of the P-E Fit Theory when he pointed out that stress occurs in the absence of fit between individual's competences and the work demands. The theory emphasises the need for a fit between the individual and his/her work situations (Salami, 2003).

Four domains P-E Fit Theory are:

2.4.1.1 Person and Organization fit
This is a situation where the organisation and an individual will be both benefiting from the work relationship (Burke, 2008). There will be a fit between the person and the organisation.

24.1.2   Person and Job fit
The Person and job fit domain refers to the compatibility between a person's skills, qualifications, experiences, capabilities, values and norms and those of a specific job (Edwards and Shipp, 2007)

2.4.1.2 Person and Group fit
This type of fit is between the individual and other members of the group (in a Department or Faculty, Institute) at work.

2.4.1.4 Person and Person fit.
This relates to the fit between one and other individual workmates (Ostroff and Schulte, 2007).

2.4.2 Demand-Control Theory

According to the Demand – control Theory, demand is subdivided into workload, work hazards, physical and emotional demands and role conflict (Kenny, 1999). For stress to exist, the demand from the environment (the job) versus the capability of the individual to control it will typically determine if stress will occur or disappear.

2.5 Models of Stress

Over the years, a number of models have been postulated in conceptualizing and defining stress (Cooper et al, 2012).

**2.5.1 Lazarus's Transactional Model of Stress**

Lazarus' transactional model postulates that stress arises when the demands on the person exceed their adjustment capabilities. It also focuses on the dynamic and transactional interaction and compatibility and adaptability between the environment and the individual. Richard Lazarus's interpretation of stress responses (in Brannon & Feist, 1997) emphasized that it is not the environment or the stressor that is important, but the perception of the individual pertaining to the stressful situation that reveals how he or she will cope.

Lazarus's research (in Brannon & Feist, 1997) revealed that the inability of some employees to think and evaluate future events makes them vulnerable and causes stress build-up. Lazarus recognized that individuals use three kinds of appraisal to analyze situations namely: Primary appraisal, Secondary appraisal and Reappraisal. Primary appraisal concerns the first encounter with the stressful event, and this is when the individual appraises the situation in respect of its effect on his/her well-being. In other words a stressful appraisal would indicate that the individual sees the situation as harmful or threatening resulting in anger, sadness or disappointment. When the individual's appraisal of the event is done, he /she forms an impression of his or her ability to control or cope with the situation, be it 'harm' or 'threat' or 'challenge'. This stage is referred to as a secondary appraisal. The third type of appraisal is reappraisal which implies that the individual's appraisals of the situation may change as new information becomes available. What is important to note in Lazarus's theory deals with the ability to cope with a stressful situation.

2.6 Conceptual Framework of Stress

After extensive reference to literature, collecting and analysing data, the study noted that various causes of stress arise from either environmental, physical, individual, demographic and psychological factors.

Fig. 4: A Conceptual Model of Stress

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework. Source: Author's Field Work ,2017.
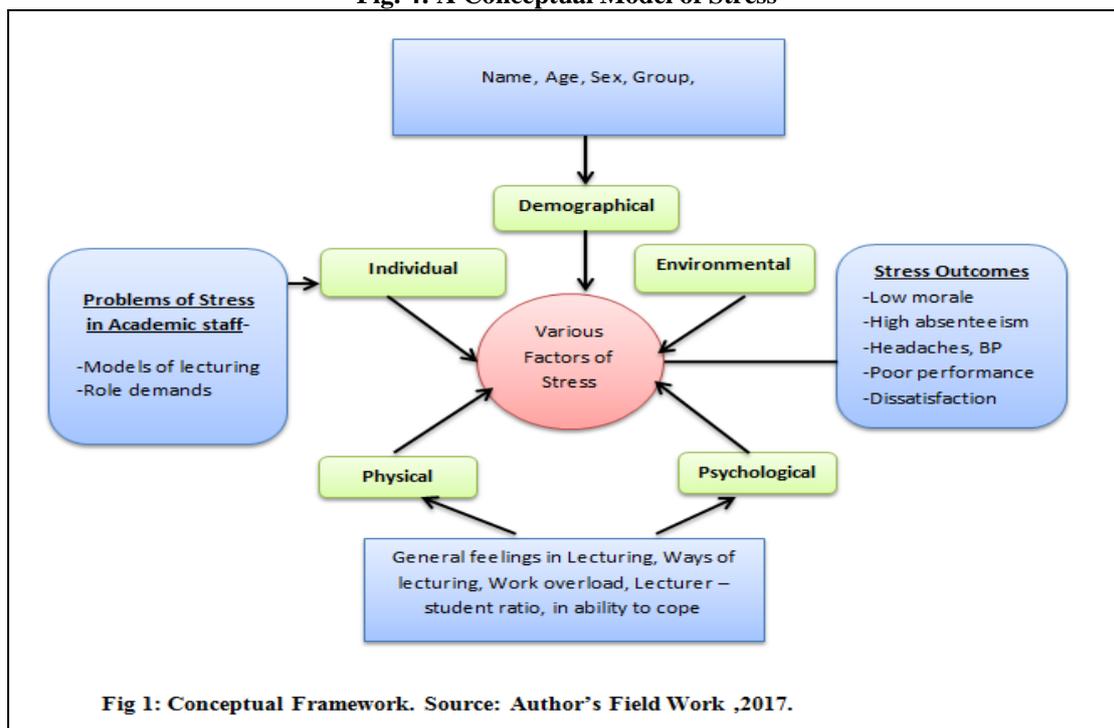
III. Research Methodology

The research was carried out under the realms of the Positivist and Interpretivist Research philosophies thus it employed both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in examining and describing the management of stress in universities in Zimbabwe. Work-related stress lies in an employee's perception and interpretation of his or her condition and qualitative.

IV. Data Presentation And Analysis

Catholic University had a population of 100 academic staff. After stratified random sampling, a sample of 50 was set aside, 45 questionnaires were completed and returned but 40 were usable of which 27 were male and 13 were female thus achieving an 80% response rate. Interviews were meant to probe and have better insight of the response to achieve in-depth understanding of the responses given on questionnaires. Interviews targeted both lecturers and their supervisors.

### 4.1 Stress symptoms among respondents

Responses showed that a majority of the respondents (62.5%) described their general health as good for the past 3 years, 30% described their health as reasonable and most of lecturers above 56 years of age and with more than 16 years of service complained that their health was deteriorating (7.5%). While this could be attributed to advanced age, it could also be attributed to accumulation of stress over the years. Most respondents (58%) indicated that they have never experienced stress symptoms, 32% indicated that they had sometimes experienced stress symptoms especially headaches, hypertension and exhaustion, while 10% of the respondents pointed out that they often experience stress symptoms. It was also noted through interviews that other lecturers who had stress did not know that they had it.

46% of the junior lecturers indicated that they are irritated and sometimes frustrated by their work. Senior lectures often felt tired at work. 35% of the respondents often felt depressed while 19% mostly from the middle age indicated that they are sometimes unable to concentrate on their work. For the past 12 months only 22% of the participants went on leave, an indicator that most lecturers (78%) could not proceed on leave or chose not to take leave, a phenomena which drives stress and burnout among other conditions.

4.2 Working Hours

Figure 5 below shows the working hours of lecturers at Catholic University per week.

Figure 5: Working Hours Per week Graph
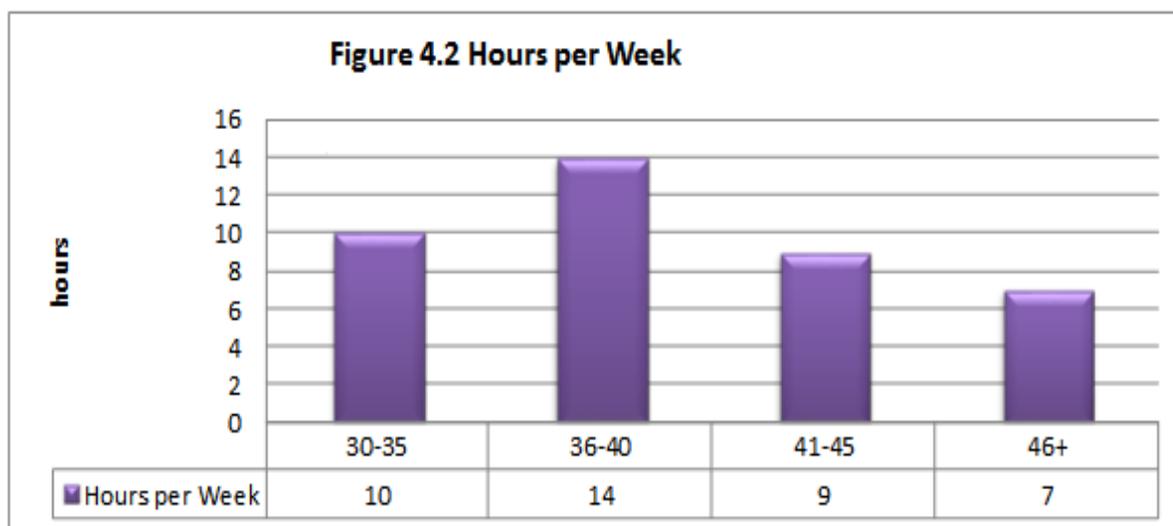
Source: Primary Data

30 out of 40 respondents (75%), were working 36 hours or more per week. During interviews, it became clear that this excluded the time when lecturers marked exam and assignments during weekends. Interviews noted that respondents only considered teaching hours leaving out research and other activities expected of lecturers.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics
Table 2: below shows the descriptive statistics of the causes of stress among the academic staff.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student Discipline	40	2.2500	1.05125
More Students	40	2.4250	.98417
Changes to Courses	40	2.6500	1.00128
Increased Workload	40	2.6500	1.00128
Long Working Hours	40	2.6000	1.00766
Control over Demand	40	2.8500	.92126
Competing Demands	40	2.6500	1.05125
Lack of Funds	40	2.7000	1.06699
Poor Relationships	40	1. 2000	0.5212
Work Value	40	2.8750	.96576
Valid N (list-wise)	40		

Mean of means= 2.625

Average standard deviation=1.011793

1= Not stressful, 2= Stressful, 3=Very stressful, 4=extremely stressful

It can be concluded in general that the majority of the participants chose the option 'Very Stressful' thus the participants are by and large very stressed according to the results in Table 4.3. The participants found increased workload, lack of funds and competing demands as very stressful.

Academic staff members were asked to give responses to a question concerning students being a source of stress. 2.4250 was recorded as mean and 0.98417 was recorded as standard deviation which confirmed that most academic staff members find it stressful working with students. From Table 4.3, poor relationships from contemporaries are not a source of stress for the academic staff members who participated in the study since a mean of 1.2000 and a standard deviation of .0.5212 were obtained for this stressor.

The students discipline causes stress among academic staff members. A mean of 2.25 and a measure of spread of .90 were achieved for this item designed to solicit this information. Sources of stress partly influence the type of coping strategies that a person adopts in order to curtail that stressful situation.

4.4 Coping Strategies

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the strategies used in coping causes of stress.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for coping strategies			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Removing Stressors	40	2.9250	.82858
Developing Proficiency	40	3.0500	.84580
Diversion from Pressure	40	2.9250	.91672
Valid N (list-wise)	40		

Source: Primary data

The averages for sources of stress and coping strategies by lecturers are 26.25 and 8.927, respectively. The standard deviations are 10.11793 and 2.5911, respectively. The relation between the two variables is determined in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Descriptive Statistics Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std Deviation(SD)	N
Sources of Stress	26.25	10.11793	40
Coping Strategies	8.927	2.5911	40

Source: Primary data

4.5 Regression and Correlation Analysis: Sources of stress and coping strategies

The purpose of the analysis was to estimate the numerical relationship between the dependent and independent variables. A correlation coefficient is a proportion that lies between −1 and +1 only. That is, $-1 \leq r \leq +1$ (Wegner 2013). Table 5 shows how the strength of the linear association between two numeric variables is represented by the correlation coefficient.

Table 5: Graphical display of interpretation of a correlation coefficient

Strong (-ve)	Moderate (-ve)	Weak (-ve)		Weak (+ve)	Moderate (+ve)	Strong (+ve)
-1 Perfect Negative Correlation			0 No Correlation			+1 Perfect Positive Correlation

Source: Adapted from Wegner (2013)

Results in Table 5 show a positive moderately strong relationship between sources of stress and coping strategies. This is indicated by the correlation coefficient $r = .567$. In other words, the result shows that sources of stress influence the coping strategies adopted by academic staff members. In order to prevent stress every person develops a repertoire of coping strategies.

Table 6: Regression Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.567[a]	.321	.180	.79460	.104	4.406	1	38	.043
a. Predictors: (Constant), Source of stress									

Source: Primary data

4.6 Chi-Square Tests: Causes of stress and Coping Strategies

The key result in the Chi-Square Tests table is the Pearson Chi-Square. The value of the test statistic was 94.847. The statistic pertained to the expected cell count assumption (i.e., expected cell counts are all greater than 5): No cells had an expected count less than 5, so this assumption was met. The degree of freedom was 96. The corresponding p-value of the test statistic was $p = 0.014$. Since the p-value was less than the chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the study rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is an association between sources of stress and coping strategies (X^2 (96)> = 94.847, $p = 0.014$)

Table 7: Chi-square Model Fitting Information				
Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	94.847			
Final	.000	94.847	96	.014

Source: Primary data

4.7 Parametric Tests: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

According to Wegner (2013) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is the method to compare sample means across multiple populations. Each sample represents a different level of a categorical treatment variable. ANOVA works on the principle that large *F-stat* values imply significant differences between at least two population means, giving sufficient evidence to reject H_0 in favour of H_1. Alternatively, small *F-stat* values imply no significant differences between population means and hence the sample evidence indicates that H_0 (i.e. that all the population means are equal) was probably true.

The Table below shows the ANOVA results. F-statistic value of 4.406 was by far greater than zero implying that H_0 was probably not true, indicating that there is a positive or statistical relationship between causes of stress and the coping strategies available to the academic staff who participated in the study. Thus causes of stress are therefore assumed to have an influence on coping strategies adopted by the University academic staff.

Table 8: ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.782	1	2.782	4.406	.043[b]
	Residual	23.993	38	.631		
	Total	26.775	39			
a. Dependent Variable: coping strategies						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Causes of stress						

Source: Primary data

4.8 Individual interviews findings

In general the whole level of stress on academic staff in the Zimbabwean Universities was very high. 45% of respondents were identified as being at risk of stress-related illnesses. By contrast, in a national survey of mental health and well-being in Zimbabwe, Ministry of Health (2015) reported a corresponding rate of 15%. Even Prison and Correctional Services Officers, extensively acknowledged as a high stress occupational group, reported a lower rate (28%) (Ministry of Health and Child Care, 2012).

In contrast to the high stress level, the level of overall job satisfaction was moderate. In general, 58% of the interviewees were satisfied with their jobs. About 25% of the academic lecturers were reported not to be satisfied with their jobs. Areas of greatest satisfaction were fellow colleagues, freedom, variety in the job, and the level of responsibility. Lecturers were most dissatisfied with lack of resources at the University, increased workloads and long working hours. More than 35% of staff reported dissatisfaction with larger classes and the lack of recognition they received for good work. As occupational levels increased, so did working hours, with senior lecturers and professors in the science faculties reporting an average of 40-45 hours per week. The majority of respondents (71%) pointed out that they had to work for extra hours for most of the days in order to meet targets. On the whole, more than 25% of academic staff interviewed reported working for more than 45 hours per week. 35% of academic lecturers were looking forward to a decrease in their weekly working hours.

4.9 Stress Coping Strategies

In this study it was established that there is a positive relationship between causes of stress and the coping strategies of stress available to the academic staff who participated in the study. A mean of 2.25 and a measure of spread of .90 were achieved for this item designed to solicit this information. In structured interviews, interviewees were asked to state the best ways of coping with stress and the responses given were exercises, (Such as indoor games, gym and aerobics and yoga), attending church, time management such as prioritising work, recreation which most felt included drinking alcohol with friends and spending time with positive people and family.

4.10 Stressors at work

Lecturers were asked about what their perceptions on stressors originating from academic work setting were. The analyses of responses from 40 respondents showed that 100% of academic staff complained about work overload; 82% singled out the intensity of e-mails to answer and to write, 68% mentioned the problems with ICTs, 57% pointed at large numbers of students, 70% noted the insufficient physical conditions, 40% singled out the many meetings without agenda, while 45% indicated the planning load, the changing profile of students and generational differentials with students was also mentioned. 32% mentioned lack of time to do things due to deadlines and having to work extra at home marking assignments, dissertations and exams, 24% complained of lack of enough supporting personnel, lack of effective management and no job guarantee. 18 % mentioned understaffing in the face of increasing volumes of work. Insufficient financial support and lack of resources were also mentioned.

V. Summary Of Findings

The findings of this study show that, there is need to significantly reduce workload of university lecturers in Zimbabwe particularly at Catholic University. This study found out that the percentage of academic staff showing signs of stress were high and this affected their motivation. It was also the finding of this study that heavy workload, poor motivation strategies, lack of funding, long working hours and poor working conditions were the main drivers of stress among academic staff. This study also found out that stress is related to age as it was more prevalent among academic staff who are 56 years and above.

VI. Conclusions

Based on the findings, this study drew the following conclusions:

6.1 Academic staff members in Zimbabwean universities are experiencing high levels of occupational stress.

6.2 Stress among academic staff is driven by work overload, poor remuneration, high student lecturer ratio, poor balance of home and work pressure, not engaging in recreation or leisure activities and long working hours.

6.3 Most academic staff members in universities are suffering in ignorance as they are not aware that they have stress.

6.4 Many academic staff members are not aware of the stress coping mechanisms.

VII. Recommendations

In light of the above findings and conclusions, this study came up with the following recommendations:

7.1 Academic staff should be given more incentives than they are currently receiving in order to motivate them to enjoy their work.

7.2 The workload of academic staff should be reduced and class sizes should be reduced.

7.3 Adequate facilities for sports, fitness training, leisure/ recreation to mention but just a few should be provided in universities to help staff cope with stress or avoid stress.

7.4 Authorities should come up with training and awareness programmes to help staff with strategies to prevent, manage and cope with stress

7.5 More academic staff should be recruited in line with increased students enrolment.

7.6 University management should help academic staff to develop computer skills as a way of reducing work overload and bring excitement into their job as some academic staff members were still doing their work manually, a thing which drives stress and adds to work overload.

VIII. Implications For Future Research

More studies of on this topic are needed with larger samples drawn from State Universities to ascertain whether Private and State Universities in Zimbabwe have similar stressors. Future research needs to explore and test the effects of sub-variables such as job ranks. A comparative study to find out how stress manifests in grades of lecturer, Associate Professor and full Professor would make interesting.

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