

Workplace Stress and Organizational Outcomes: A Study on Employee Performance in Uttar Pradesh's Higher Education Sector

Afsha¹, Sultan Ahmad^{2*}, Abuzar Ali Khan³, Aftab Alam⁴, Usman Ghani⁵

¹Department of Commerce, Faculty of Commerce, Integral University, Lucknow, India

²Department of Commerce, Faculty of Commerce, Integral University, Lucknow, India

³Department of Education, Liverpool Hope University, England, United Kingdom

⁴Department of Commerce, Faculty of Commerce, Integral University, Lucknow, India

⁵Department of Commerce, Faculty of Commerce, Integral University, Lucknow, India

*Corresponding Author (e-mail: s.ahmadkhan123@gmail.com)

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Abstract

In situations with rising work demands and organisational pressures, employee performance is crucial to higher education institutions' success and balance. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework is used to analyse how workplace stress affects higher education employee performance. The impacts of workload, work–life balance, role conflict, and organisational support on employee performance are examined. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 225 higher education personnel in a quantitative, cross-sectional study. Using SmartPLS software, PLS-SEM was used to analyse data. The structural model was bootstrapped, but the measurement model was reliable and valid. All hypothesised associations are statistically significant. Organisational support and work–life balance boost employee performance, but workload and role conflict influence performance as essential job demands. A large part of employee performance variance is explained by the model, proving its power. The study empirically verifies the JD-R paradigm in higher education and offers helpful tips for boosting employee performance through supportive organisational practices and stress management.

Keywords

Employee performance, Higher education institutions, Job Demands–Resources model, PLS-SEM, Workplace stress

1. Introduction

Employees frequently encounter challenges that affect their efficiency and overall work performance. These challenges have become immensely common in today's rapidly changing work environment, where employees have to face significant pressure. Workplace stress comes

among these challenges as a significant factor which influences their productivity, job satisfaction and overall well-being. Workplace stress occurs when job demands surpasses employee's skill or ability to cope, which results in physical exhaustion and emotional burnout (Kerdpitak et al., 2020; Yekta Said Can et al., 2019). Prolonged and unmanaged stress mostly results in underperformance and disengagement. On the other hand, eustress, which is a moderate level of stress, can be beneficial as it helps individuals to push beyond their limits which results in effective performance even under pressure (Awada et al., 2024). One factor that greatly adds to workplace stress is workload. It refers to all those activities that takes up large part of employee's time and effort. Workload is a significant stressor employees face, particularly when employees face excessive task quantity or high task complexity (Kimura et al., 2018). Role Conflict is another major contributor to workplace stress. It occurs when employees get burdened with unrealistic expectations from various sources in a way than meeting one compliance would make achieving the other compliance more difficult (Katz and Kahn 1978). Due to workplace stress, maintaining a proper work-life balance has also become challenging especially in today's time as employees faces emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction due to overlapping professional and personal responsibilities (Konrad and Mangel, 2000). Organizational support plays a crucial role in mitigating this issue. Employees show higher levels of commitment and performance when they feel that their organization is appreciating their contributions and cares for their well-being (Demir, 2015; Park et al., 2020). A successful organisation is directly determined by its employee performance. Therefore, it is important to understand how workplace stress and its factors influence performance of employees in the higher education sector. Employee Performance, in this context, refers to the how well an employee is able to fulfil their duties effectively and properly perform their responsibilities. All factors discussed above collectively shape the experiences of employees and their performance in higher education. They influence employees' attitudes, motivation, and overall experience at work. So, exploring these dynamics will help us get valuable insights into the ways in which organization can develop a workplace environment that prioritizes employees well-being and fosters positive engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work place stress

Workplace stress is the physical and emotional response employees exhibit when their job demands conflict with their available skills and capabilities (Kerdpitak et al., 2020). This mismatch between job requirements and employees' abilities is what makes workplace stress one of the primary sources of daily stress (Yekta Said Can et al., 2019). When job demands consistently exceed employees' capabilities, stress levels increase, which often leads to decreased productivity and overall performance (Elzeiny et al., 2018). Although stress is often associated with negative outcomes, commonly referred to as "distress," there is also a positive form of stress, known as "eustress", which can motivate employees to perform effectively even under challenging circumstances when managed properly (Awada et al., 2024). While previous research shows that workplace stress can affect employee performance, In the context of higher education institutions, the current study makes the assumption that this association might not be statistically significant. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be suggested:

H₀₁: There is no substantial link between workplace stress and employee performance in higher educational sector in Uttar Pradesh.

2.2 Workload

Workload refers to all activities that occupy employees' time, including performing professional duties and responsibilities, as well as engaging in work-related tasks, whether directly or indirectly related to their role (Janib et al., 2021). In organizational terms, Workload can be characterised as the collection or quantity of activities that must be accomplished by a position holder or organizational unit within a specified timeframe (Hermawan, 2021). Research indicates that work overload becomes a significant stressor when employees are faced with either excessive task quantity or high task complexity (Kimura et al., 2018). Managing workload effectively helps organizations identify the level of tasks their employees can handle without compromising performance, as workload plays a vital role in determining overall organizational success (Tjiabrata et al., 2017). Furthermore, employee workload can generally be classified into three conditions: an appropriate workload that meets established standards, an excessive workload that exceeds capacity (overcapacity), and an insufficient workload that falls below expectations (underpower) (Neksen et al., 2021). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₀₂: Workload has no statistically substantial effect on employee performance in higher education institutions.

2.3 Role Conflict

According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) paradigm, role conflict is regarded as a job demand that exhausts employees' energy and is associated with both physiological and psychological strain, as it requires continuous physical or mental effort in the workplace (Bakker et al., 2007; Olafsen et al., 2021). In other words, role conflict represents a situation in which two or more role expectations occur at the same time, such that fulfilling one expectation makes it harder to comply with another (Katz and Kahn, 1978). It arises when employees face incompatible or conflicting expectations from different sources which makes it difficult for them to meet all demands simultaneously (Kahn et al., 1964). Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H₀₃: Role conflict has no statistically substantial effect on employee performance in higher education institutions

2.4 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance involves maintaining an equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life, personal life and family (Keelan, 2015; Kerdpitak et al., 2020). It represents the degree to which an employee can balance work demands, personal and family responsibilities altogether, in a way that they don't overlap each other (Haar et al., 2014; Konrad and Mangel, 2000). In today's time, where extra household workload and changing work pattern have become an everyday thing, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain balance everything. This has negatively impacted people's professional, social and family life in many different ways (Barling and Macewen, 1992). So, when work and personal life support each other, rather than compete, it fosters a balance by avoiding conflict (Isa et al., 2023).

H₀₄: Work–life balance does not have a statistically substantial impact on employee performance.

2.5 Organizational Support

Organizational support, sometimes called perceived organizational support, refers to how employees view their organization in terms of caring for their well-being and valuing their contributions (Demir, 2015). When employees feel that their organization genuinely cares about them, they feel more secure in their jobs and become more engaged with their work (Kose, 2016). This perception often motivates employees to respond with dedication and commitment, as part of a social exchange towards the organization (Park et al., 2020). When organizations invest in their employees, they can expect positive reciprocity in the form of extra effort, loyalty, or organizational citizenship behaviors (Russell Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

H₀₅: Organizational support does not have statistically substantial impact on employee performance.

2.6 Employee Performance

Employee performance pertains to the extent to which an individual is capable of executing their duties and job responsibilities efficiently (Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020). It reflects the results of an employee's efforts at work and is closely linked to the outcomes they achieve within an organization (Robbins, 2005; Kuswati, 2020). Stress is one of the many elements that might affect performance, which may either enhance or hinder work output depending on its intensity (Davis & Newstrom, 2008). Ultimately, the organization success depends largely on the its employees and how well they fulfil their roles (Isa et al., 2023). Employee Performance is not only about completing tasks but also about the quality and efficiency with which work is done. It reflects how effectively employees carry out their responsibilities which makes it a key factor in the success of any organisation.

H₀₆: Workload, role conflict, work-life balance, and organizational support do not significantly influence employee performance.

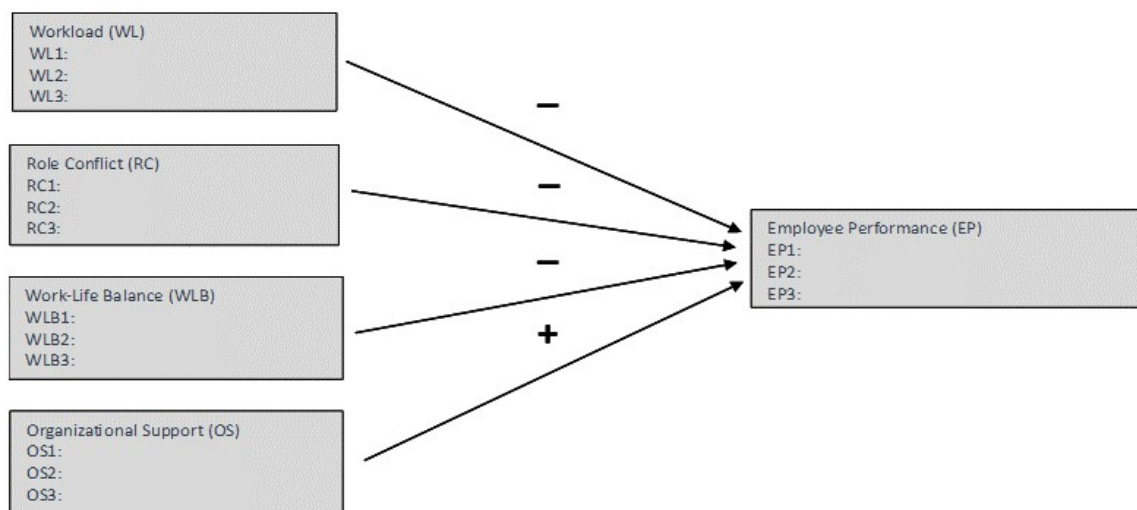


Figure.1. Conceptual Model of Factors Affecting Employee Performance

The conceptual framework investigating the impact of workplace stress-related factors on employee performance (EP) in higher education institutions is shown in Figure 1. The model specifies four exogenous constructs—workload (WL), role conflict (RC), work–life balance (WLB), and organizational support (OS)—as determinants of employee performance. Consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, workload and role conflict are conceptualized as job demands associated with increased psychological and physical strain, which are expected to negatively influence employee performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Kahn et al., 1964). Work–life balance and organizational support are conceptualized as job resources that support employees in managing work demands and are expected to positively influence performance outcomes (Haar et al., 2014; Demir, 2015; Park et al., 2020). Employee performance is treated as the endogenous construct and is measured using indicators reflecting task efficiency, work effectiveness, and job-related outcomes.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study uses a cross-sectional, quantitative research approach to examine how workplace stress-related factors influence employee performance within the higher education sector. A survey-based methodology was adopted, as it is well suited for empirically examining theory-driven relationships among latent variables and for drawing generalizable inferences from a defined population. Such an approach is widely recommended for explanatory and predictive research in organizational and behavioral studies (Hair et al., 2019).

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The research relies on original data gathered from employees working in higher education institutions through a structured questionnaire. A total of 225 valid replies were acquired and used into the final analysis. This sample size meets and surpasses the minimum criteria recommended for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), hence guaranteeing sufficient statistical power (Hair et al., 2021). Participants were chosen utilising a non-probability convenience sampling method, which is commonly employed in organizational research where random access to participants is constrained (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.3 Measurement of Variables

The survey instrument consisted of multiple measurement items, all assessed using a five-point Likert scale, on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Workplace stress was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing Workload, Work–Life Balance, Role Conflict, and Organizational Support, whereas Employee Performance was modeled as the dependent (endogenous) construct. All items were taken from well-known and previously confirmed scales found in the literature (Kahn et al., 1964; Haar et al., 2014; Demir, 2015; Robbins, 2005) to make sure they were valid in terms of both content and measurement.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

Using Smart PLS software and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), the data was analysed. It was chosen because PLS-SEM is good for predictive research, can work with complex models, and is reliable when used with small to medium sample numbers (Hair et al., 2019). A method for analysis with two steps was used. We first checked

the measurement model by looking at its indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio. The second step was to test the structure model using path coefficients, t-values made by bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples), effect sizes (f^2), coefficient of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) (Henseler et al., 2015).

4. PLS- SEM Results

Table 1. Outer Loadings of Measurement Items

	EP	OS	RC	WL	WLB
EP1	0.951				
EP2	0.940				
EP3	0.944				
OS1		0.949			
OS2		0.945			
OS3		0.941			
RC1			0.953		
RC2			0.950		
RC3			0.950		
WL1				0.958	
WL2				0.954	
WL3				0.945	
WLB1					0.947
WLB2					0.952
WLB3					0.954

Table 1 presents the outer loading values of all measurement indicators corresponding to their respective latent constructs. The results show that all of the indicator loadings are higher than the 0.70 value that is suggested, thereby demonstrating satisfactory indicator reliability and confirming that the items appropriately capture their underlying constructs (Hair et al., 2019). High loading values show that a big part of the variation in each observed indicator can be accounted by its corresponding latent variable. This is another reason why a reflective measurement model was chosen for this study.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EP	0.940	0.940	0.962	0.893
OS	0.940	0.943	0.962	0.893

RC	0.947	0.949	0.966	0.904
WL	0.949	0.957	0.967	0.907
WLB	0.947	0.948	0.966	0.905

The results of the test of construct dependability and convergent validity for the measurement model are shown in Table 2. The results show that both Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values for all latent constructs are higher than the suggested level of 0.70. This means that the internal consistency reliability is good (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Also, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) numbers for all constructs are higher than 0.50, which means that each construct is responsible for more than half of the variation in the indicators that go with it. All together, these findings strongly suggest that the measurement model has enough convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of Correlations

	EP	OS	RC	WL	WLB
EP					
OS	0.556				
RC	0.343	0.052			
WL	0.389	0.045	0.027		
WLB	0.501	0.028	0.052	0.055	

The Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratios are shown in Table 3. These were used to check the discriminant validity between the latent categories. A lot of people think that the HTMT method is a better and more reliable way to check discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modelling. The results show that all HTMT values are below the safe cut-off level of 0.85. This shows that the constructs are actually separate and don't have too much conceptual overlap (Henseler et al., 2015). These results show that measurement indicators have stronger connections with the constructs they are supposed to measure than with other constructs in the model. Moreover, the absence of elevated HTMT values suggests that multicollinearity is not a concern, and each construct represents a unique theoretical dimension within the proposed framework. Accordingly, discriminant validity is confirmed based on the HTMT criterion.

Table 4 Fornell–Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

	EP	OS	RC	WL	WLB
EP	0.945				
OS	0.524	0.945			
RC	0.324	-0.040	0.951		
WL	0.369	0.044	-0.016	0.952	
WLB	0.473	0.008	0.045	0.048	0.951

The Fornell–Larcker criterion, which is shown in Table 4, is another popular way to check the validity of discriminant statements. This rule says that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, shown on the diagonal, should be higher than the relationships between that construct and all the other constructs in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results show that the diagonal values are higher than the off-diagonal correlation coefficients for every design. This means that each construct explains a bigger part of the variation in its own indicators than in indicators related to other constructs. We can say that the measurement model meets the Fornell–Larcker standard for discriminant validity.

Table 5. Model Fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.031	0.031
d_ ULS	0.112	0.112
d_ G	0.224	0.224
Chi-square	314.176	314.176
NFI	0.911	0.911

The model fit values for both the saturated model and the estimated model can be seen in Table 5. It was found that the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value is less than the widely accepted threshold of 0.08. This means that the real-world data and the proposed model framework are reasonably similar (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is also higher than the suggested cutoff number of 0.90, which is more proof that the model fits well. The fact that the fit statistics for the saturated and estimated models are similar says that the data correctly captures the measurement and structural paths that were given. Overall, these findings confirm that the proposed model exhibits satisfactory goodness-of-fit and is suitable for further structural analysis and hypothesis evaluation.

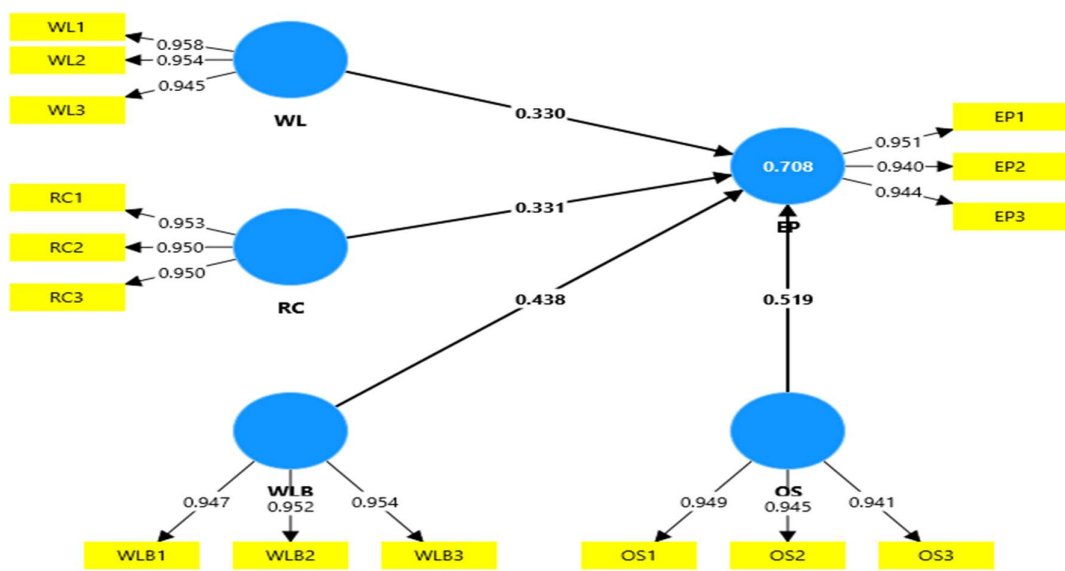


Figure 2 CFA Model

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model used to check the accuracy of the measurements for the hidden variables in this study is shown in Figure 2. The model consists of five reflective constructs, namely workload (WL), role conflict (RC), work–life balance (WLB), organizational support (OS), and employee performance (EP), with each construct operationalized through three observed indicators. Overall, the standardised factor loadings for all items are higher than the 0.70 level that is suggested, demonstrating robust indicator reliability and confirming that the observed measures appropriately capture their intended latent constructs (Hair et al., 2019). If the loading value is high, it means that the related construct explains a lot of the variation in each indicator. The CFA results also show good convergent validity, as shown by high factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above the minimum acceptable level of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 6 Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
OS -> EP	0.519	0.520	0.039	13.361	0.000
RC -> EP	0.331	0.331	0.038	8.596	0.000
WL -> EP	0.330	0.331	0.038	8.711	0.000
WLB -> EP	0.438	0.439	0.039	11.368	0.000

The results of the structural model analysis, which were estimated using a bootstrapping method, can be seen in Table 6. The findings reveal that all suggested links between the exogenous variables and employee performance are statistically significant at the 5 percent level. Organizational support demonstrates a strong and positive influence on employee performance ($\beta = 0.519$, $t = 13.361$, $p < .001$), highlighting the importance of supportive organizational practices as critical job resources that enhance employee outcomes (Demir, 2015; Park et al., 2020). Role conflict also exerts a significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.331$, $t = 8.596$, $p < .001$), lending empirical support to the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, which conceptualizes role conflict as a job demand that affects performance through psychological strain mechanisms (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Kahn et al., 1964). Similarly, workload is found to have a statistically considerable association with employee performance ($\beta = 0.330$, $t = 8.711$, $p < .001$), aligning with previous empirical studies that document the influence of workload on performance-related outcomes (Kimura et al., 2018). In addition, work–life balance exhibits a substantial and positive effect on employee

performance ($\beta = 0.438$, $t = 11.368$, $p < .001$), reinforcing its role as an essential job resource that contributes to improved employee effectiveness and productivity (Haar et al., 2014; Isa & Indrayati, 2023).

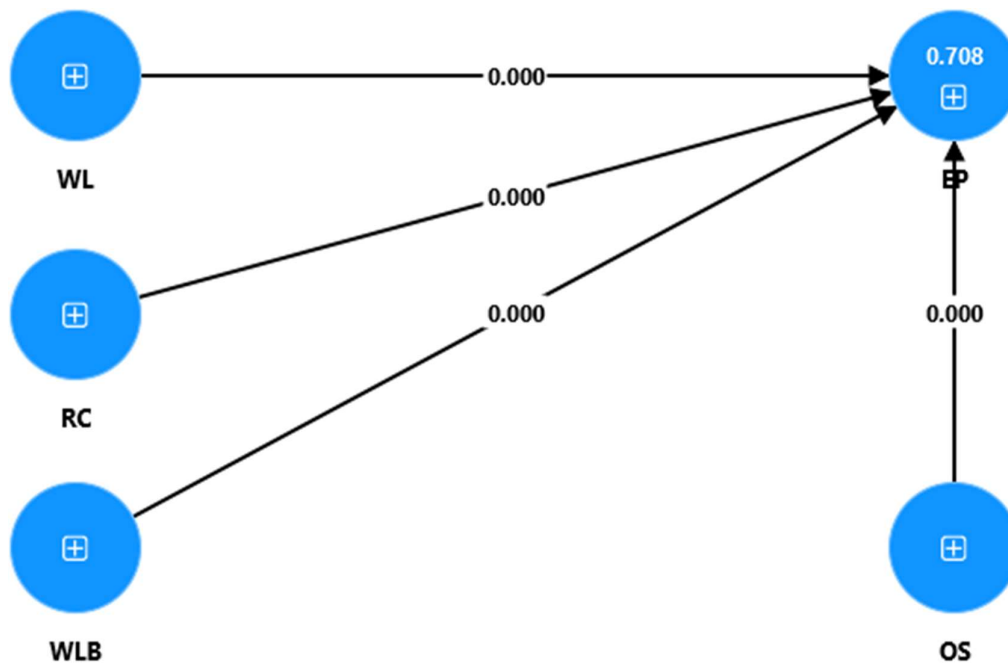


Figure 3. Sem Model

Figure 3 displays the estimated structural model depicting the directional relationships among workload (WL), role conflict (RC), work–life balance (WLB), organizational support (OS), and employee performance (EP). The standardized path estimates reveal that each of the four antecedent variables exerts a statistically meaningful influence on employee performance, with all relationships achieving significance at $p < .001$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.708$) also shows that the set of explanatory factors explains a large part of the variation in employee performance. This level of explained variance reflects the strong explanatory capability of the proposed structural framework.

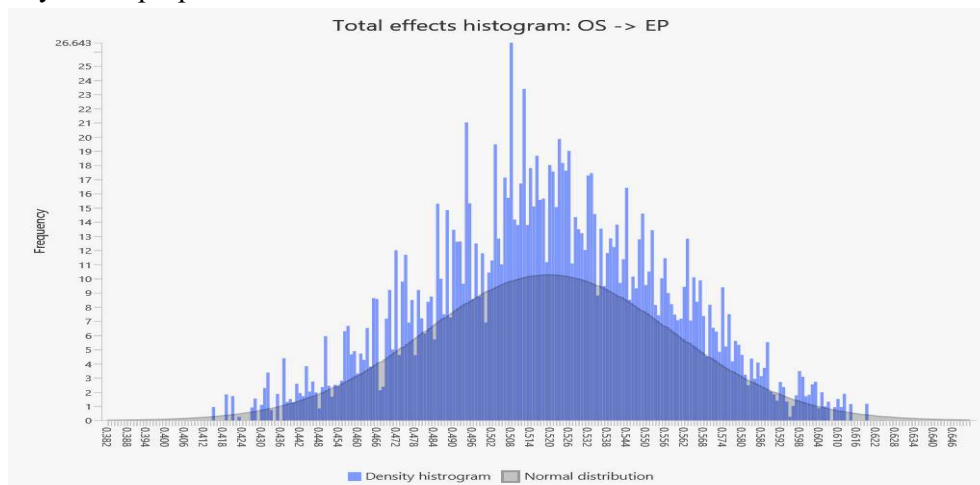


Figure 4

Figure 4 illustrates the bootstrapped sampling distribution of the total effect that the link has between organizational support and employee performance. The distribution exhibits an approximately symmetric pattern with a clearly positive central tendency, reflecting the reliability and stability of the estimated effect across resamples. The absence of values clustered around zero further indicates that the relationship is statistically meaningful, providing robust evidence that organizational support consistently contributes to enhanced employee performance.

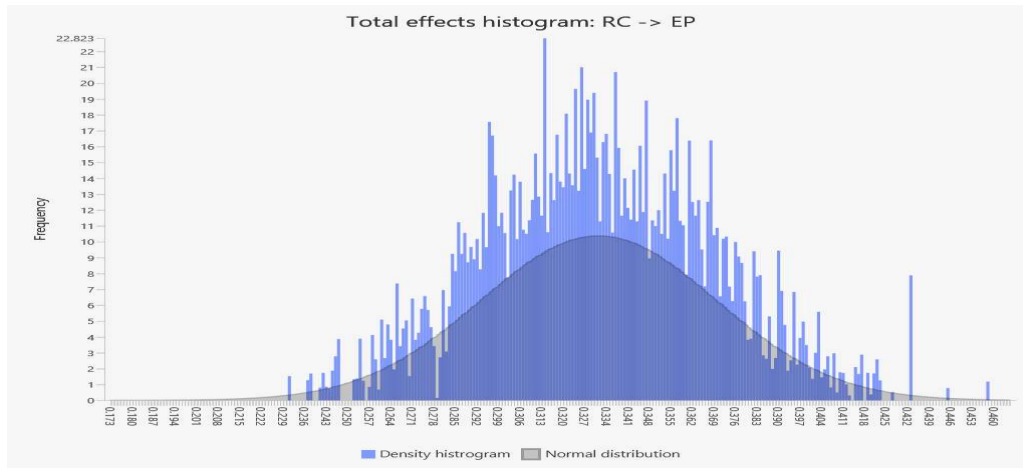


Figure 5

Figure 5 depicts the bootstrapped distribution of the total effect linking role conflict to employee performance. The pattern of estimates reveals a stable magnitude with limited variability, suggesting that the estimated relationship remains consistent across multiple resampling iterations. Furthermore, the lack of estimates concentrated near zero provides strong evidence of statistical relevance, indicating that role conflict exerts a substantive influence on employee performance in the context under investigation.

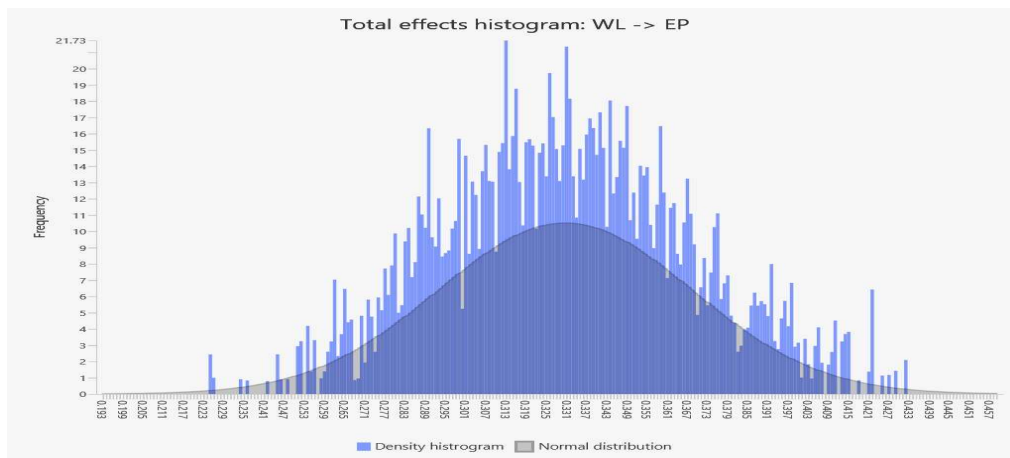


Figure 6

Figure 6 displays the bootstrapped distribution of the total effect associated with the link between workload and employee performance. The distribution appears approximately symmetric, with a clear concentration of estimates around the estimated path coefficient. Such a pattern reflects the consistency of the effect across resampling procedures and provides evidence that workload exerts a reliable and statistically meaningful impact on employee performance, thereby supporting the robustness of the structural model results.

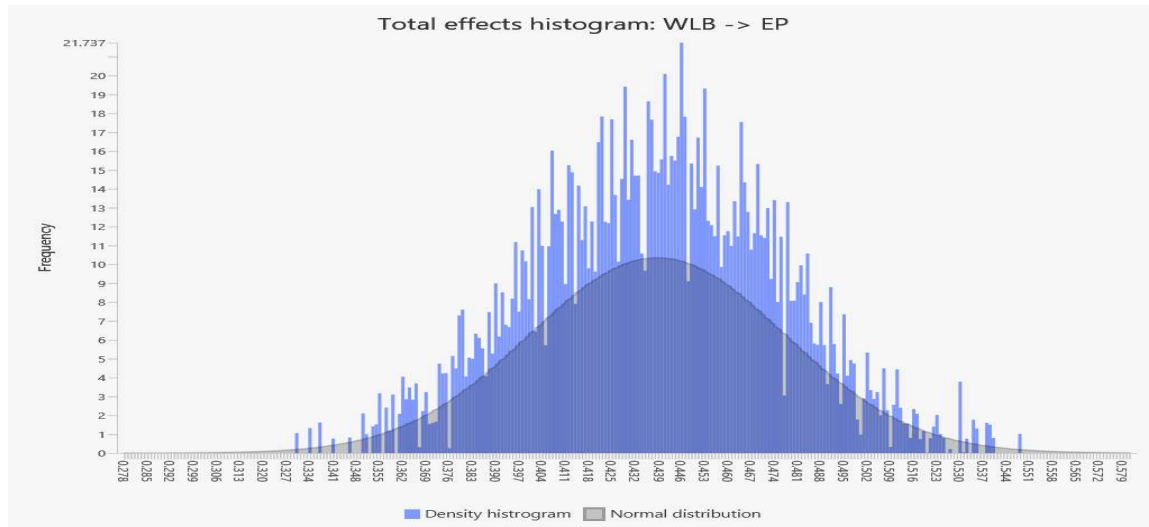


Figure 7

Figure 7 presents the bootstrapped sampling distribution of the total effect linking work–life balance to employee performance. The pattern of estimates demonstrates a clear positive tendency, with a large proportion of resampled coefficients clustered near the central value. This distribution provides strong evidence of statistical significance and highlights the predictive importance of work–life balance in explaining variations in employee performance.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings indicate that all proposed relationships between workplace stress–related factors and employee performance are statistically significant. Organizational support shows the strongest positive effect on employee performance, suggesting that employees who perceive higher levels of institutional care, recognition, and support demonstrate better task efficiency and work effectiveness. This result aligns with social exchange theory. The theory suggests that employees positively responds supportive organizational practices with enhanced performance and commitment (Demir, 2015; Park et al., 2020).

Employee success is also strongly improved by work–life balance.. This finding signifies that employees with the ability to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively demonstrate higher levels of productivity and engagement. The result supports prior empirical evidence that work–life balance functions as an important job resource that enhances performance outcomes and employee well-being (Haar et al., 2014; Isa & Indrayati, 2023).

Workload shows a significant relationship with employee performance, indicating that variations in task quantity and complexity influence employees' ability to perform effectively. Excessive workload is associated with increased strain, which may reduce efficiency and concentration. This finding is in line with the Job Demands–Resources model, which identifies workload as a critical job demand influencing performance through psychological and physical effort (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Kimura et al., 2018).

Role conflict also demonstrates a significant effect on employee performance. Employees experiencing incompatible or conflicting role expectations face greater cognitive and emotional demands, which can affect their ability to perform effectively. This result supports classical role theory and prior studies that link role conflict to stress-related performance outcomes (Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

The coefficient of determination suggests that a substantial proportion of variance in employee performance is described by the combined effects of workload, role conflict, work–life balance, and organizational support. This confirms the theoretical assumption that both job demands and job resources jointly shape employee performance in higher education institutions.

7. Practical Implications

The findings provide many practical implications for administrators and policymakers in higher education institutions. Institutional leaders should prioritize organizational support mechanisms such as transparent communication, recognition systems, and access to professional resources, as these practices contribute significantly to improved employee performance.

Work–life balance initiatives such as flexible work schedules, manageable teaching loads, and supportive leave policies can enhance employee productivity and well-being. These measures can help institutions lower stress-related performance issues and improve overall academic effectiveness.

Managing workload through realistic task allocation and clear performance expectations can reduce excessive strain on employees. Institutions may benefit from periodic workload assessments to ensure that task demands remain aligned with employees' capabilities.

Reducing role conflict through clearly defined job roles, consistent communication, and aligned performance expectations can further enhance employee performance. Clear role structures may help employees focus on core responsibilities and reduce stress arising from conflicting demands.

6. Conclusion

Researchers looked at how factors related to workplace stress affect how well college employees do their jobs. The results show that organisational support and a good work-life balance are important job tools that help employees do their best work, while workload and role conflict represent job demands that substantially influence performance outcomes. The findings validate the applicability of the Job Demands–Resources framework in explaining employee performance within academic institutions.

The empirical evidence demonstrates that employee performance is shaped by both organizational conditions and individual experiences of work demands and resources. The results highlight the importance of institutional policies and practices that assists employees in

managing work pressure and maintaining balance between professional and personal responsibilities.

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