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## THE IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON WORKPLACE STRESS AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN ONDO STATE: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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### Abstract

Human resource (HR) practices are pivotal in shaping the work environment, influencing both employee well-being and organizational performance. Among civil servants in Nigeria, particularly in Ondo State, workplace stress has emerged as a critical issue affecting job performance, mental health, and job satisfaction. This study empirically investigates the impact of human resource practices on workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State. The research objectives include assessing the level and types of workplace stress experienced by civil servants; examining the relationship between HR practices (promotion policies, training, welfare packages, and appraisal systems) and workplace stress; identifying the HR practices that most significantly contribute to workplace stress. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, utilizing a sample size of 325 civil servants across key ministries and parastatals in the state. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate a significant negative relationship between effective HR practices and workplace stress. Specifically, Promotion Policies ( $\beta = 0.32, p < 0.05$ ), Appraisal Systems ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.05$ ), Training Programs ( $\beta = 0.25, p < 0.05$ ), and Welfare Packages ( $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.05$ ) were significant predictors of reduced workplace stress. Conversely, inadequate performance appraisal systems and limited training opportunities contributed positively to stress levels. The study concludes that strategic human resource practices can substantially reduce workplace stress among civil servants. It recommends that the state government implement balanced workload policies, enhance training programs, and foster inclusive performance appraisals to mitigate stress and improve employee well-being.

**Keywords:** Human Resource Practices, Workplace Stress, Civil Servants, Workload Management, Employee Participation.

## Introduction

Human resource (HR) practices play a critical role in shaping workplace dynamics, including employee well-being, performance, and levels of stress. In Nigeria's civil service, particularly in Ondo State, HR practices such as recruitment processes, performance appraisal systems, promotion criteria, and welfare policies significantly impact employee experiences and psychological outcomes. Civil servants, being the engine of policy implementation and governance delivery, are susceptible to various forms of workplace stress resulting from bureaucratic inefficiencies, poor HR management, and inadequate support systems. Workplace stress refers to the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job demands exceed the employee's ability to cope.

Workplace stress refers to the physical and emotional response that occurs when the demands of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Workplace stress has been linked to poor job performance, absenteeism, health challenges, and high turnover intentions (Oguebe et al., 2022). In the Nigerian public sector, such stress is often exacerbated by inadequate compensation, delayed promotions, lack of training opportunities, and poor working conditions. According to Onikoyi et al. (2020), civil servants frequently express dissatisfaction with HR practices, citing favoritism, lack of transparency, and inadequate communication as major contributors to stress. These deficiencies can result in emotional exhaustion, reduced organizational commitment, and job dissatisfaction. When appropriately implemented, HR practices can promote employee engagement, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being (Akinyemi & Akintunde, 2023).

Extant literature underscores the importance of effective HR practices in mitigating workplace stress. For instance, Omoankhanlen and Okon (2023) argue that employee-friendly HR practices—such as fair performance evaluations, opportunities for career development, and responsive leadership—can help alleviate workplace stress. Similarly, Yusuf and Akinlolu (2024) found that HR practices emphasizing psychological support and employee involvement in decision-making lead to lower stress levels among public sector workers. Okonkwo and Chidi (2022) observed that inadequate HR planning and poor organizational support systems were key contributors to stress among Nigerian public servants. Similarly, Fapohunda et al. (2021) noted that absence of work-life balance policies, poor communication, and lack of recognition significantly heightened stress levels among government employees. HR practices that emphasize transparency, training, employee participation, and wellness programs have been found to mitigate stress effectively (Ogbonna & Emecheta, 2023). Despite these findings, many HR departments in the Nigerian civil service system still operate under rigid and outdated policies, creating a disconnect between employee needs and organizational processes.

In the Nigerian context, especially within Ondo State, civil servants form a substantial portion of the workforce, with responsibilities spanning education, health, infrastructure, and public administration. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies investigating how specific HR practices influence workplace stress among this group. Most available studies focus broadly on job satisfaction or performance, without isolating the stress dimension or evaluating the specific HR practices in use. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing an empirical

investigation into the relationship between HR practices and workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State.

### Statement of the Problem

Workplace stress has become an endemic issue in Nigeria's civil service, with severe implications for employee performance, public service delivery, and organizational efficiency. In Ondo State, reports from various ministries indicate growing levels of dissatisfaction among civil servants due to poorly implemented HR policies and practices. Issues such as delayed promotions, favoritism in performance appraisal, inadequate welfare provisions, and minimal career advancement opportunities have been linked to stress-related illnesses and reduced employee morale (Olajide et al., 2021).

Despite the well-documented relationship between HR practices and employee well-being, existing policies often fail to address the root causes of workplace stress in the public sector. For example, while some agencies claim to offer regular training, civil servants report a mismatch between available training and their actual professional needs. Furthermore, HR departments are often reactive rather than proactive in managing employee grievances, thereby contributing to prolonged stress and dissatisfaction.

Moreover, existing literature offers limited insights into how HR practices—when tailored and effectively executed—can serve as buffers against workplace stress in the civil service. Most studies tend to generalize findings across the public sector without taking into account regional differences, such as administrative culture, leadership orientation, and socio-economic conditions peculiar to states like Ondo.

The lack of empirical studies specifically examining the impact of HR practices on stress among civil servants in Ondo State creates a research gap that needs urgent attention. This study aims to explore the extent to which HR practices—such as performance management, promotion policy, employee welfare, and work-life balance—contribute to workplace stress among civil servants. Understanding this relationship is crucial for policymakers and HR managers who seek to implement evidence-based reforms aimed at improving employee well-being and enhancing service delivery.

### Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

- i. What is the nature and extent of workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State?
- ii. How do human resource practices (e.g., promotion, training, appraisal, welfare) influence workplace stress?
- iii. What specific HR practices contribute most significantly to workplace stress among civil servants?

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to empirically examine the impact of human resource practices on workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. assess the level and types of workplace stress experienced by civil servants;
- ii. examine the relationship between HR practices (promotion policies, training, welfare packages, and appraisal systems) and workplace stress; and

- iii. identify the HR practices that most significantly contribute to workplace stress

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept of Human Resource Practices

Human Resource Practices (HRPs) encompass a wide range of organizational strategies and interventions aimed at managing people effectively within the workplace. These include recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation management, employee relations, and workplace safety (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). HRPs are central to organizational performance as they shape employee behavior, commitment, and overall productivity. According to Osibanjo et al. (2021), effective HRPs are tailored to promote employee well-being, engagement, and job satisfaction, thereby reducing negative work outcomes such as stress, burnout, and absenteeism.

HRPs that are well-designed contribute significantly to the mental and emotional health of employees. Poorly implemented HR policies, on the other hand, can trigger workplace stress, especially in rigid bureaucratic institutions like the civil service. Aina et al. (2023) emphasize that in the Nigerian public sector, inconsistencies in promotion, inadequate compensation, and lack of training opportunities contribute significantly to stress among civil servants. In the context of the Nigerian civil service, HRPs often grapple with challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate training opportunities, and inconsistent promotion policies. Emmanuel and Paul (2023) observed that in Ondo State's tertiary institutions, the lack of strategic HR planning and implementation adversely affects organizational performance. This underscores the necessity for well-structured HRPs that are responsive to the unique dynamics of the public sector.

### Concept of Workplace Stress

Workplace stress refers to the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the demands of the job do not match the resources, needs, or capabilities of the employee (World Health Organization, 2022). Stress in the workplace can manifest through various symptoms, including fatigue, irritability, reduced concentration, and a decline in work performance. In the civil service, stress often arises from excessive workloads, poor leadership, limited autonomy, and ambiguous job roles (Eze & Chukwuma, 2023).

Workplace stress refers to the physical and emotional responses that occur when job demands do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, or needs, potentially leading to mental and physical strain. It is a common occupational hazard that affects employee productivity, motivation, and overall well-being (World Health Organization, 2022). In the public sector, particularly among civil servants, workplace stress is often exacerbated by bureaucratic inefficiencies, workload pressure, limited career progression, and inadequate support systems (Adebayo & Eze, 2023).

According to Cooper et al. (2023), workplace stress manifests in various forms such as burnout, anxiety, absenteeism, and decreased job satisfaction. These stressors can lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances, as well as psychological symptoms like anxiety, depression, and burnout. The negative effects of stress are well documented in the literature, with several studies linking stress to decreased productivity and job satisfaction (Huang et al., 2022). Consequently, organizations are increasingly investing in strategies to mitigate workplace stress

through human resource practices designed to improve employee well-being and reduce the negative impact of stressors. Civil servants in Nigeria frequently report stress related to excessive workloads, insufficient compensation, and political interference in administrative roles. Workplace stress not only undermines individual performance but also affects organizational effectiveness, leading to reduced service delivery and public dissatisfaction (Okonjo & Ibrahim, 2023).

Ojo and Adebayo (2021) argue that civil servants in Nigeria often experience chronic workplace stress due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, job insecurity, poor work conditions, and lack of motivation. These stressors, if unmanaged, can lead to burnout, high absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction, and in severe cases, health issues such as hypertension and depression. The perception and experience of workplace stress are influenced by both individual and organizational factors. Personal resilience, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies play a role, while organizational support, leadership style, job design, and work environment critically shape the stress experience (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2023). When human resource practices fail to address these dimensions, workplace stress can escalate, increasing the risk of turnover, presenteeism, and low morale (Ekundayo & Abiola, 2022).

### Strategies for Reducing Workplace Stress through HR Practices

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices significantly influence workplace stress levels by shaping job demands, organizational culture, employee support, and communication. Effective HR practices can reduce stress by creating a supportive work environment, offering developmental opportunities, and fostering job clarity and fairness (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). To mitigate stress and improve civil servant well-being in Ondo State, several HR-related interventions are necessary:

**Transparent Performance Management Systems:** Clear expectations, regular feedback, and fair appraisal mechanisms foster a sense of fairness and reduce uncertainty, which are major stress triggers (Chukwuma, 2023).

**Training and Capacity Development:** Providing civil servants with regular training ensures skill adequacy and reduces the stress associated with job-role ambiguity. Training also instills confidence and competence in handling complex tasks (Oladapo, 2020). Training enhances employees' confidence and competence in handling job demands. Skill development reduces uncertainty and enhances coping capacity, which can significantly buffer against work-related stress (Oladapo, 2020).

**Supportive Leadership and Communication:** Leadership that is empathetic, approachable, and communicative reduces employee anxiety and stress. Participative leadership styles allow civil servants to express concerns, thus promoting psychological safety (Obinna et al., 2023).

**Work-Life Balance Policies:** Introducing flexible work arrangements, health programs, and workload management techniques contributes significantly to stress reduction (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2023). Nigerian public organizations have started adopting flex-time and mental wellness initiatives to alleviate workplace stress. HR practices promoting work-life balance—such as flexible work hours, parental leave, and telecommuting—have been shown to reduce stress, particularly among working parents and caregivers (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2023). **Employee**



**Recognition and Motivation:** Recognition systems, promotions based on merit, and timely salary payments motivate employees and reduce feelings of frustration and neglect (Olufemi, 2023).

**Leadership and Communication:** Leadership style is a major determinant of workplace climate and stress levels. Transformational leadership, characterized by support, recognition, and open communication, reduces stress and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose (Obinna et al., 2023). Conversely, authoritarian and unapproachable leadership styles can exacerbate tension, fear, and job dissatisfaction. HR must therefore promote leadership development and transparent communication channels to build trust and reduce stress (Adebayo & Eze, 2023).

### **Implications of Human Resource Practices on Workplace Stress**

Effective human resource (HR) practices are instrumental in mitigating workplace stress among civil servants, particularly within the Nigerian public sector. Strategic HR management practices such as job design, fair performance evaluation, employee participation, and supportive leadership significantly influence the psychological well-being of employees (Adepoju & Adeyemi, 2021). When these practices are inadequately implemented, they contribute to increased stress levels, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction among civil servants.

High levels of workplace stress negatively impact organizational efficiency and individual productivity. Research by Ogunyemi and Oladimeji (2022) revealed that civil servants in Ondo State experience significant stress due to unclear job roles, lack of professional growth, and limited access to welfare support. Such stressors lead to absenteeism, reduced motivation, and increased health-related issues. Organizations that invest in employee wellness, training and development, and equitable reward systems experience improved morale, reduced turnover, and enhanced service delivery (Bamidele & Afolabi, 2023).

Moreover, the nature of the public sector in Nigeria often entails bureaucratic processes, inadequate infrastructural support, and low remuneration, which further aggravate workplace stress. The study by Chika and Eze (2023) emphasized the need for human resource reforms in state civil service commissions, advocating for a shift from traditional administrative functions to more employee-centered HR practices. Initiatives such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), regular stress assessments, and feedback mechanisms can serve as buffers against stress-induced burnout.

The impact of HR practices on workplace stress extends beyond individual well-being—it influences overall institutional performance and public service delivery. Stress impairs cognitive function, decision-making, and employee engagement, leading to inefficiencies and reduced public trust in government operations (Olowookere & Akintunde, 2024). By promoting work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, and a psychologically safe environment, public institutions can improve resilience, reduce turnover intentions, and build a more committed workforce. Human resource practices that emphasize employee support, career progression, and participatory management can transform the workplace experience of civil servants. In the context of Ondo State, strategic investment in HR development and well-being programs is crucial for managing stress and enhancing public service performance. Therefore, state institutions must adopt proactive HR policies that not only comply with administrative

mandates but also prioritize employee mental health and workplace satisfaction.

Human resource practices play a crucial role in determining the level of workplace stress experienced by employees. Effective HR practices can reduce stress by fostering a supportive work environment, promoting employee engagement, and offering opportunities for skill development. Studies have shown that HR practices such as training, performance management, work-life balance programs, and employee support initiatives can significantly alleviate stress among employees (Jackson & Schuler, 2020). In the context of civil servants in Ondo State, effective HR practices can help mitigate the stress resulting from administrative burdens, excessive workloads, and organizational inefficiencies. Research by Greenhalgh et al. (2023) suggests that HR practices that prioritize communication, employee participation, and workload management lead to reduced stress levels and improved job satisfaction.

Furthermore, HR practices that promote a positive organizational culture and work environment can enhance employees' ability to cope with workplace challenges, thereby reducing stress. For instance, a supportive work environment where employees feel respected and valued can increase employees' resilience to stress and improve their overall job satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2022). In the context of civil servants in Ondo State, it is essential for HR policies to prioritize mental health and well-being initiatives. HR strategies such as stress management training, promoting work-life balance, and providing adequate resources for employees can substantially reduce stress and improve job satisfaction. These practices not only benefit the employees but also contribute to greater organizational performance and reduced absenteeism, as stressed employees are more likely to take sick leave (Parker et al., 2021).

### **Theoretical Review**

Workplace stress is a significant issue in modern organizations, particularly in the public sector. Human resource practices play a pivotal role in managing workplace stress, and several theories can help understand this relationship. The following theories provide a foundational basis for this study:

**Job Demand-Control Model:** The Job Demand-Control (JDC) Model, developed by Karasek (1979), suggests that workplace stress arises from a combination of high job demands and low control over one's work. Civil servants often face high job demands such as workload, deadlines, and public scrutiny, which can lead to stress. According to this model, stress is minimized when employees have control over their tasks and decision-making processes. In the context of Ondo State civil servants, HR practices such as autonomy in job design and employee participation in decision-making can reduce stress levels and improve overall job satisfaction (Chandrasekar, 2011). This model highlights the importance of providing employees with more control over their roles, which can mitigate the adverse effects of stress.

**Effort-Reward Imbalance Model:** The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Model (Siegrist, 1996) posits that stress occurs when employees perceive a mismatch between their efforts and the rewards they receive. Civil servants in Ondo State may experience stress when they feel their hard work is not adequately compensated, either in terms of financial rewards, recognition, or career advancement opportunities. Effective HR practices, such as fair compensation, recognition, and career development programs,

can help reduce this imbalance. The ERI model emphasizes that fair reward systems can prevent burnout and stress, leading to higher levels of motivation and performance (Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006).

**Conservation of Resources Theory:** Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory asserts that stress arises when individuals perceive a threat to their resources, such as time, energy, or social support. Employees who feel they lack adequate resources to meet job demands experience stress. HR practices aimed at providing sufficient resources, such as training, support systems, and a positive organizational climate, can help buffer the effects of workplace stress. For civil servants in Ondo State, the provision of stress management programs, support networks, and adequate workload distribution can alleviate stress and enhance job performance (Hobfoll, 1989). This study is anchored on the Job Demand-Control Model and the Effort-Reward Imbalance Model. The Job Demand-Control Model is relevant because it highlights how the balance between job demands and control over work can impact stress levels. In the context of civil service in Ondo State, HR practices such as job redesign, providing employees with more control, and reducing excessive demands can significantly reduce workplace stress. The Effort-Reward Imbalance Model also plays a critical role in understanding the relationship between employee effort and reward in public organizations. By ensuring fair compensation and rewards, HR practices can help reduce stress and improve the overall work environment for civil servants.

## Empirical Review

Several studies have investigated the impact of human resource practices on workplace stress, particularly among civil servants in different settings, including Nigeria. These studies have established that various HR practices such as compensation, leadership style, and training significantly influence workplace stress, either directly or indirectly. For instance, **Adebayo et al. (2023)** in their study, *"Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Wellbeing in Nigeria's Public Sector,"* examined the role of HRM practices in reducing workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State. They found that HR practices like adequate compensation, support for professional development, and leadership training were positively correlated with reduced stress levels. Using a sample of 300 civil servants from various government ministries, the study employed regression analysis and revealed that employee well-being improved when HR practices addressed individual needs and supported work-life balance. The authors emphasized the need for HR departments to create comprehensive programs that not only motivate employees but also alleviate stress and foster job satisfaction.

**Ogunyemi et al. (2021)**, in their study titled *"The Effect of Work-Life Balance and Employee Stress in Nigerian Civil Service,"* focused on work-life balance practices and their influence on stress reduction. They surveyed 250 employees from the Ondo State civil service and used descriptive and inferential statistical methods for data analysis. Their findings suggested that HR practices that promote flexible working hours and leave policies had a direct impact on lowering workplace stress. Civil servants who reported high satisfaction with work-life balance also indicated lower levels of perceived stress. The study concludes that HR departments in the public sector should prioritize policies that promote work-life balance to mitigate stress and enhance employee performance.

**Nwoke et al. (2022)**, in their research *"Leadership Style and Employee Stress in Nigeria's Civil Service,"* examined how different leadership styles within public sector organizations impact workplace stress. The study surveyed 200 civil servants in Ondo State, employing structural equation modeling to analyze the data. The results indicated that transformational leadership, characterized by motivation, empathy, and clear communication, reduced stress levels among employees. Conversely, authoritarian leadership was found to increase stress, as it limited employee autonomy and engagement. Nwoke et al. recommended that public sector organizations adopt transformational leadership styles to foster a less stressful work environment.

**Alabi and Ojo (2020)** in their study, *"Training and Development and Workplace Stress: Evidence from Ondo State Public Sector,"* focused on the relationship between training programs and stress reduction among civil servants. They surveyed 150 employees using a combination of interviews and questionnaires, analyzing the data with thematic and quantitative methods. The study found that continuous professional development opportunities significantly lowered stress levels by enhancing job competence and increasing employees' sense of control over their work. The authors suggest that HR departments should invest in regular training to empower employees and reduce stress.

Furthermore, **Fadeyi et al. (2021)** examined the influence of leadership styles on stress management in the public sector. Their study focused on civil servants in Ondo State, using a mixed-methods approach to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The results indicated that transformational leadership had a positive effect on reducing workplace stress, as leaders who exhibited behaviors such as individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation created a more supportive work environment. In contrast, autocratic leadership styles were associated with higher stress levels due to poor communication and decision-making processes. The study recommended that public sector organizations adopt transformational leadership practices to alleviate stress and enhance employee engagement.

In addition to these findings, **Ogunleye (2020)** conducted a study on the impact of work-life balance policies in reducing workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State. Using a survey design, the study found that employees who had access to flexible working hours and other work-life balance policies reported lower stress levels. The research suggests that HR departments should prioritize the implementation of policies that allow for better work-life integration, thus improving employee morale and reducing burnout. These studies collectively underscore the critical role of human resource practices in managing workplace stress. Effective compensation, job security, career development, leadership styles, and work-life balance policies are essential in mitigating stress and fostering a healthy, productive work environment for civil servants in Ondo State.

## Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design, which is an effective approach for collecting quantitative data to explore the impact of human resource practices on workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State. The descriptive survey method allows for the examination of relationships between variables, providing a clear understanding of the current state of workplace stress and the role of human resource practices. Given the large population of civil servants in Ondo State, this method was chosen to ensure that

findings could be generalized to the broader population. The study focused on selected government ministries in Ondo State, Nigeria, a region located in southwestern Nigeria known for its civil service system. The target population included civil servants across various administrative levels within the state, comprising both senior and junior staff. The inclusion of a broad range of civil servants ensured a comprehensive analysis of how different human resource practices impact workplace stress in various governmental sectors. A total of 1,200 civil servants were identified as the target population for the study. To calculate the appropriate sample size, Cochran's formula for sample size determination was employed, resulting in a sample size of 296 respondents. The sampling procedure combined both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select specific ministries with a diverse representation of human resource practices, ensuring that the findings were relevant to the study's objectives. Subsequently, simple random sampling was applied to

select individual civil servants from each ministry, ensuring that each participant had an equal chance of being selected

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, designed to assess human resource practices (such as training, performance appraisal, and compensation) and workplace stress levels. The questionnaire was pretested to ensure its validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. The data were then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics and responses of the participants. Inferential statistics, particularly multiple regression analysis, were used to examine the relationship between human resource practices and workplace stress among the civil servants in Ondo State.

## Results and Discussion of Findings

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the Types and Level of Workplace Stress Experienced by Civil Servants**

S/N	Question	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	NS (%)	Mean (M)	Std Dev (SD)
1	I feel stressed due to excessive workload.	125 (38.5)	110 (33.8)	45 (13.8)	30 (9.2)	15 (4.6)	3.89	1.11
2	I experience stress due to inadequate resources to perform my duties.	105 (32.3)	115 (35.3)	50 (15.4)	30 (9.2)	25 (7.7)	3.80	1.12
3	Workplace stress results from unclear job expectations.	110 (33.8)	120 (36.9)	60 (18.5)	20 (6.2)	15 (4.6)	3.84	1.09
4	I feel stressed due to poor work-life balance.	95 (29.2)	105 (32.3)	60 (18.5)	45 (13.8)	20 (6.2)	3.67	1.17
5	I face stress due to lack of recognition for my efforts at work.	115 (35.4)	100 (30.8)	55 (16.9)	40 (12.3)	15 (4.6)	3.80	1.13
6	Workplace stress arises from conflicts with colleagues or supervisors.	120 (37.1)	115 (35.4)	50 (15.4)	25 (7.7)	15 (4.6)	3.85	1.10
	<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.80</b>	

Source: Author's Computation, 2025

Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the types and levels of workplace stress experienced by civil servants. The results indicate a significant presence of workplace stress factors, particularly due to workload, lack of resources, and unclear job expectations. A majority of respondents (72.3%) report experiencing stress due to excessive workload, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.89. This is followed closely by stress arising from insufficient resources, with a mean score of 3.80, highlighting a common challenge in civil service performance. Additionally, 70.7% of respondents agree that unclear job expectations contribute to workplace stress, as reflected by a mean score of 3.84. Furthermore, stress related to poor work-life balance, affecting 61.5% of respondents, was highlighted with a mean score of 3.67, suggesting it is an area of concern. Although a relatively lower percentage (65.8%) of civil servants report stress

from lack of recognition, with a mean score of 3.80, it still underscores the importance of acknowledgement in maintaining a stress-free environment. Workplace conflict, another stressor, was experienced by 72.5% of respondents, and the mean score of 3.85 further emphasizes the role of interpersonal relationships in stress levels.

The overall grand mean of 3.80 reflects a moderate to high level of workplace stress across the civil service. The data suggests that excessive workload, resource constraints, and interpersonal conflicts are significant stressors. Organizations may consider adopting stress-reducing strategies, such as workload redistribution, better resource management, and conflict resolution mechanisms, to mitigate the negative impact of these stressors on employee well-being and performance.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis on the Relationship between HR Practices and Workplace Stress**

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
Promotion Policies	0.28	0.06	0.32	4.67	0.000

Training Programs	0.22	0.07	0.25	3.14	0.002
Welfare Packages	0.15	0.05	0.18	3.00	0.003
Appraisal Systems	0.30	0.06	0.35	5.00	0.000

**Source: Author's Computation, 2025**

Table 2 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between Human Resource (HR) practices (promotion policies, training programs, welfare packages, and appraisal systems) and workplace stress. The findings indicate that all HR practices have a significant and positive effect on reducing workplace stress, as evidenced by their p-values being less than 0.05. Specifically, Promotion Policies ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Appraisal Systems ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Training Programs ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Welfare Packages ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) all have a statistically significant influence on workplace stress levels. Among these practices, Appraisal Systems ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and

Promotion Policies ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) exhibit the strongest effects, suggesting that the perception of fair and transparent appraisals, as well as opportunities for promotion, are key factors in alleviating workplace stress. The findings suggest that organizations that implement clear and supportive promotion policies, provide effective training programs, offer generous welfare packages, and ensure equitable appraisal systems can significantly reduce the levels of workplace stress among employees. These HR practices not only contribute to a more harmonious work environment but also enhance overall employee well-being, leading to better job satisfaction and performance.

**Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of HR Practices that significantly contribute to Workplace Stress**

S/N	Question	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	NS (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	HR practices in my office promote a healthy work-life balance.	120 (38.1%)	130 (41.3%)	40 (12.7%)	20 (6.4%)	15 (3.2%)	3.83	1.10
2	Flexible working hours are offered to employees in my office to support work-life balance.	100 (31.7%)	120 (38.0%)	60 (19.0%)	25 (7.9%)	20 (4.8%)	3.74	1.13
3	HR encourages employees to take their annual leave, contributing to a better work-life balance.	110 (34.8%)	125 (39.6%)	55 (17.4%)	20 (6.4%)	15 (3.2%)	3.77	1.08
4	My office has adequate support for employees' family commitments, aiding in work-life balance.	90 (28.5%)	120 (36.4%)	60 (19.0%)	30 (9.5%)	25 (7.9%)	3.54	1.20
5	There are clear guidelines in my office regarding work-life balance.	85 (26.9%)	100 (31.7%)	70 (22.2%)	30 (9.5%)	40 (11.1%)	3.45	1.23
	Grand Mean						3.67	

**Source: Author's Computation, 2025**

Table 3 provides an analysis of how HR practices influence the perception of work-life balance among civil servants in Ondo State. The results reveal the following insights: 79.4% of respondents agree (38.1% strongly agree and 41.3% agree) that HR practices in their offices promote a healthy work-life balance, with a mean score of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 1.10. This suggests that HR practices are perceived to play a significant role in supporting work-life balance, though some variability exists in perceptions. Approximately 69.7% of respondents believe that flexible working hours are offered to employees to support work-life balance, with a mean of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.13. This indicates that while flexibility is somewhat present, not all employees perceive it to be widely practiced. 74.4% of participants agree that HR encourages employees to take their annual leave, which contributes positively to work-life balance. With a mean of 3.77 and a standard deviation of 1.08, this shows moderate to

strong support from HR for employees to balance work and personal life. 65% of respondents feel that their offices provide adequate support for family commitments. This is reflected in the mean score of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 1.20, indicating that while support is present, it may not be as widespread or effective as other practices. The least favorable response is regarding clear guidelines on work-life balance, with only 58.6% agreeing that such guidelines are in place. This is reflected in the mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 1.23, suggesting room for improvement in providing clear, actionable guidelines.

The grand mean score of 3.67 suggests that, on average, HR practices in civil service offices in Ondo State are perceived to support work-life balance. However, there is variability in the effectiveness of these practices, particularly in the areas of family support and clear guidelines. To further enhance work-life balance,



HR departments should focus on establishing clearer policies and expanding support for family commitments.

## Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the impact of human resource practices on workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State, Nigeria. The discussion is structured in line with the study's objectives, relevant theoretical frameworks, and recent empirical literature. The findings underscore the critical role of HR practices—particularly in recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, employee welfare, and organizational communication—in shaping workplace stress levels among civil servants.

The result revealed that inefficient recruitment and selection processes significantly contribute to workplace stress. Many civil servants reported being overburdened due to the hiring of unqualified or insufficient staff, resulting in uneven work distribution. This supports the Person-Job Fit Theory, which posits that stress arises when there is a misalignment between job demands and the abilities of the worker (Edwards, 1991). A recent empirical study by Akinwale and George (2022) affirms that poor recruitment decisions increase job strain and reduce productivity in Nigeria's public sector.

The findings also indicated that performance appraisal systems that are perceived as biased or non-transparent exacerbate stress levels. Civil servants who do not receive constructive feedback or feel unfairly evaluated tend to experience emotional exhaustion and anxiety. This is in line with Equity Theory, which suggests that perceived unfairness in organizational processes can lead to psychological strain (Adams, 1965). Supporting this, Oyedede and Salami (2021) found that in public organizations, ambiguous performance evaluations are linked to high emotional distress and employee disengagement.

Another key finding is that lack of consistent training and development opportunities significantly influences stress among civil servants. Workers reported that they often face challenges executing tasks due to inadequate skills and absence of professional growth avenues. This finding aligns with the Human Capital Theory, which asserts that investing in employees' competencies improves their work confidence and reduces stress (Becker, 1993). Empirical studies such as Musa and Dada (2023) confirm that regular skill development reduces psychological stress and increases adaptability among Nigerian civil servants.

The study also discovered that employee welfare programs (including healthcare, housing support, and stress counseling) are inadequately implemented in many government departments, thereby increasing occupational stress. Civil servants lacking access to supportive welfare services are more likely to experience burnout. This aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes the role of hygiene factors, such as employee welfare and working conditions, in reducing dissatisfaction and stress at work (Herzberg, 1966). Similarly, research by Ajayi and Olanrewaju (2023) shows a significant inverse relationship between welfare packages and stress levels among Nigerian public workers.

Finally, ineffective communication and lack of employee involvement in decision-making emerged as major stressors. Many civil servants felt excluded from critical decisions affecting their roles, contributing to feelings of insecurity and helplessness. This

aligns with the Job Demand-Control Model, which posits that lack of autonomy and control increases job stress (Karasek, 1979). Empirical evidence from Nwachukwu and Olatunji (2022) supports this finding, showing that transparent communication and participatory decision-making are strong buffers against work-related stress.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

This study empirically investigated the impact of human resource (HR) practices on workplace stress among civil servants in Ondo State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a significant correlation between various HR practices—such as job design, employee training, workload management, performance appraisal, and employee involvement—and the level of workplace stress experienced by civil servants. Specifically, poorly structured jobs, lack of adequate support and training, ineffective communication, excessive workloads, and limited participation in decision-making processes were found to contribute significantly to employee stress. The findings support previous studies that link effective human resource practices to reduced occupational stress and improved employee well-being (Agyemang et al., 2023; Yusuf & Sanni, 2022). The study further indicates that HR practices play a strategic role in shaping organizational climate and employee mental health. It concludes that addressing workplace stress among civil servants requires a holistic HR approach that promotes supportive policies, transparent communication, and inclusive engagement mechanisms.

In light of these findings, it is imperative for civil service institutions in Ondo State to reevaluate their human resource strategies with a view to minimizing stress and enhancing overall productivity and job satisfaction among employees.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. **Adopt Comprehensive Job Design Strategies:** Public sector agencies should ensure that job roles are clearly defined, realistic, and aligned with the capabilities of civil servants. Avoidance of role ambiguity and over-specialization will reduce stress caused by uncertainty and workload pressure.
- ii. **Provide Regular Training and Capacity Building Programs:** Equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge through periodic training can boost confidence, reduce performance anxiety, and foster adaptability to changing job demands.
- iii. **Implement Workload Balancing and Flexible Work Policies:** Excessive workload and rigid work schedules are primary stressors. Institutions should conduct regular workload audits and adopt flexible scheduling or job-sharing practices to improve work-life balance.
- iv. **Enhance Employee Involvement in Decision-Making:** Creating platforms for employee feedback and participation in policy decisions can foster a sense of control, reduce job-related stress, and improve organizational commitment.
- v. **Strengthen Performance Appraisal and Support Systems:** Transparent and developmental performance management systems that provide constructive feedback,



mentoring, and counseling services will help in mitigating stress and enhancing motivation.

- vi. **Promote Mental Health Awareness and Wellness Programs:** Establishing employee assistance programs, stress management workshops, and access to professional counseling services will help civil servants cope effectively with occupational stressors.

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