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# Academic Workload and Performance in Developing Higher Education Systems: A Literature Review with Insights for Botswana

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## ABSTRACT

Academic workload plays a critical role in shaping staff performance in higher education, particularly in developing contexts where limited resources, growing enrolments, and expanding administrative demands intensify pressure on lecturers. This study adopts a structured narrative literature review approach, drawing on peer-reviewed journal articles, regional studies, and institutional reports identified through targeted database searches and thematic screening. The review synthesizes global and regional evidence on how workload influences teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and overall academic performance, with particular attention to Botswana's private tertiary institutions. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources model, psychosocial hazard frameworks, and Role Stress Theory, the analysis demonstrates how excessive teaching loads, administrative intensification, limited research support, and governance constraints contribute to occupational stress and performance decline. Evidence from Botswana indicates that these pressures are amplified by institutional rigidities, unclear expectations, and weak support systems. The review highlights a significant gap in research on workload and performance within African private tertiary institutions and calls for context-sensitive, policy-oriented research to inform sustainable workload management and institutional reform.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic workload has long been recognized as a cornerstone of higher education functioning, shaping not only the operational capacity of universities and colleges but also the performance, well-being, and retention of academic staff. In developing higher education systems, such as those found across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America, the issue of workload is intensified by structural constraints, resource shortages, growing student enrolments, and expansion pressures that are not matched by proportional investments in staffing and institutional capacity (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Mohamedbhai, 2011). The increasing complexity of academic work, which now requires lecturers to balance teaching, research, administrative tasks, digital demands, and student support roles, has made workload a multifaceted problem with direct implications for individual performance and institutional quality.

Across global contexts, empirical research consistently shows that excessive or poorly structured academic workload is a major source of occupational stress and a significant predictor of diminished job performance. Studies report that high workloads reduce teaching quality (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019), constrain research productivity (Aturu-Aghedo, 2024), undermine job satisfaction (Jermisittiparsert et al., 2021), and contribute to emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and burnout (Tsalasah et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2022). These pressures are amplified in developing systems where institutional resources, workload policies, and support structures often lag behind global norms.

In many African higher education systems, it has long been reported that historical challenges, including underfunding, governance fragility, brain drain, and rapid expansion, intensify workload stressors (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Ajayi, 1996). Academic staff frequently operate in environments where teaching demands are high, administrative responsibilities are heavy, research support is limited, and job roles are ambiguously defined (Ezenkiri et al., 2021; Luzipho et al., 2023). These contextual realities contribute to a cycle of stress and diminished performance, affecting student outcomes, institutional reputations, and national human capital development.

The Botswana context reflects many of these broader regional patterns. Private tertiary institutions, in particular, face pressure to deliver high-quality education while operating with limited staffing, inadequate funding models, and managerial systems that often emphasize control and productivity over well-being and support. Evidence from the doctoral thesis on occupational stress and lecturer performance in Botswana shows that excessive workload, administrative burden, weak institutional support, and frequent role conflict are pervasive stressors that undermine academic staff performance (Pepukai, 2025). The thesis also highlights psychosocial hazards, such as imbalanced job demands, unclear expectations, and resource inadequacies, as primary contributors to lecturer stress, further exacerbating performance challenges.

Despite the growing body of literature on academic stress and workload globally, there remains limited scholarly focus on how workload specifically influences academic staff performance within developing higher education systems, and especially within Botswana's private tertiary sector. Most studies are either general assessments of occupational stress or examinations of higher education challenges without isolating workload as a key variable. This presents a critical research gap, as workload-related performance issues directly affect teaching effectiveness, research output, institutional reputation, and broader national educational quality goals.

Therefore, this literature review synthesizes global, regional, and local evidence to advance a more comprehensive understanding of academic workload and its effects on performance, while highlighting insights relevant to Botswana. The review explores conceptual and theoretical foundations of workload, examines empirical evidence across diverse contexts, and identifies gaps that future research, particularly in Southern Africa, must address. The overarching objective is to demonstrate how workload functions as a structural, psychosocial, and organizational determinant of academic performance, with profound implications for policy, management, and human capital development in developing higher education systems.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a structured narrative literature review design to synthesize theoretical and empirical scholarship on academic workload and academic staff performance in developing higher education systems, with contextual insights for Botswana. A structured narrative approach is appropriate where research spans multiple theoretical traditions and methodological designs and allows systematic identification, screening, and thematic integration of studies (Grant & Booth, 2009).

Literature was identified through targeted database searches using combinations of keywords such as “academic workload”, “job performance”, “occupational stress”, “higher education”, “work-life balance”, and “Job Demands-Resources model”. Searches were refined using regional terms including “Africa”, “developing countries”, and “Botswana”. Reference list scanning was also used to identify foundational and frequently cited studies (Webster & Watson, 2002).

Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, doctoral theses, and institutional reports examining workload, stress, governance, and performance within higher education. Priority was given to empirical studies and theoretically grounded analyses, particularly from African and Asian contexts where institutional constraints resemble those observed in Botswana. Studies unrelated to higher education or focused solely on student workload were excluded. The selected literature was analyzed thematically. Findings were organized around core workload domains (teaching, research, administration, digital labour, and emotional labour) and interpreted through established frameworks including the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), Role Stress Theory (Kahn et al., 1964; Robbins, 2009), and psychosocial hazard perspectives (ILO, 2016). This approach enabled conceptual integration of global evidence while situating insights within the structural realities of Botswana’s private tertiary sector.

### **3. CONCEPTUALISING ACADEMIC WORKLOAD**

Academic workload can be understood as the combination of teaching, research, administrative tasks, and service activities that academic staff are expected to carry out within higher education institutions (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Janib et al., 2021). Across many countries, workload is recognized as one of the main factors influencing staff performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being, mainly because it determines the level of intensity and emotional demand associated with academic roles (Kartini et al., 2023). The idea of workload is not limited to how much time lecturers spend on their duties; it also involves the cognitive effort required to manage complex tasks, the emotional labour involved in supporting students, the expectations set by the institution, and the day-to-day interactions that shape academic work (Tsalasah et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2022).

In developing educational systems, conceptualizing workload requires acknowledging resource constraints, institutional fragility, growing student enrolments, digitalization pressures, and governance challenges that amplify academic demands (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Mohamedbhai, 2011; Ajayi, 1996).

#### **3.1 Components of Academic Workload**

##### **3.1.1 Teaching Responsibilities**

Teaching workload is consistently identified as the most time-intensive domain of academic labour (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Lawer, 2021). It includes not only contact hours but also preparation, assessment, feedback, pedagogical innovation, and student mentoring (Isa & Palpanadan, 2020a; Husin et al., 2022). In developing countries, lecturers often face large class sizes, insufficient teaching assistants, and inconsistent institutional policies, which elevate stress and reduce teaching efficacy (Ezenkiri et al., 2021; Luzipho et al., 2023). Research in Africa similarly reports that lecturers in Botswana perceive teaching demands as overwhelming, particularly during peak academic periods when workload spikes are common (Pepukai, 2025).

##### **3.1.2 Research Responsibilities**

Research workload includes activities such as publishing, applying for grants, supervising postgraduate students, participating in collaborative projects, and contributing to broader knowledge production (Aturu-Aghedo, 2024; Janib et al., 2021). In many developing higher education systems, however, limited research funding, lack of mentorship, and weak institutional incentives often make it difficult for academics to meet research expectations (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Mohamedbhai, 2011). Evidence from countries such as Malaysia and Ghana shows that lecturers frequently struggle to

maintain research output because their time is dominated by teaching and administrative responsibilities (Lawer, 2021; Zamri et al., 2024). A similar pattern is evident in Botswana's private tertiary institutions, where research tends to be deprioritized as staff focus on more immediate instructional and administrative obligations.

### *3.1.3 Administrative and Institutional Responsibilities*

Administrative workload includes committee participation, documentation, reporting, accreditation preparation, curriculum reviews, and compliance activities (Yousefi et al., 2020; Kartini et al., 2023). These responsibilities have expanded substantially due to increased regulatory oversight, digital reporting systems, and institutional accountability demands (Hyatt, 2022). Research shows that administrative overload is one of the strongest predictors of academic stress and reduced performance (Tsalasah et al., 2019; Faozen, 2019).

### *3.1.4 Digital Academic Labour*

Digital workload refers to the range of responsibilities associated with online teaching, including managing learning platforms, engaging with students virtually, uploading continuous assessments, and creating multimodal instructional materials (Husin et al., 2022). The shift toward blended and online learning has increased workload for lecturers worldwide, with many reporting greater time demands and emotional strain as they work to sustain digital communication and meet student expectations in online environments (Hyatt, 2022; Hilman et al., 2022). Similar pressures are evident in Botswana's private tertiary institutions, where limited institutional support for online teaching often heightens the cognitive and emotional demands placed on lecturers.

## **3.2 Workload as a Psychosocial Hazard**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines psychosocial hazards as the interaction between job demands, organizational conditions, and individual capacities in ways that may lead to stress, ill-health, or reduced performance (ILO, 2016). A substantial body of research shows that excessive workload contributes directly to psychosocial strain and poorer performance outcomes (Mulyadi et al., 2024; Rashid et al., 2022). In higher education settings, psychosocial hazards linked to academic workload typically manifest through role overload, role ambiguity, time pressure, limited resources, emotionally demanding student interactions, and conflicting responsibilities (Hargrove et al., 2011; Indhu & Thirumakkal, 2015). Evidence from Botswana's private tertiary institutions reflects these patterns, with lecturers often reporting imbalanced job demands, insufficient recovery time, emotionally taxing encounters with students, and limited managerial acknowledgment factors that collectively signal heightened psychosocial strain (Pepukai, 2025).

## **3.3 Workload as a Precursor to Occupational Stress**

Academic workload is widely recognized as one of the strongest predictors of occupational stress in higher education (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Kartini et al., 2023; Rashid et al., 2022). Research from various countries shows that heavy workloads are closely linked to emotional exhaustion (Tsalasah et al., 2019), depersonalization (Hilman et al., 2022), and reduced personal accomplishment (Mirkamali et al., 2016). Studies also report that excessive workload contributes to lower teaching and research productivity (Zamri et al., 2024) and weaker organizational commitment among academic staff (Anees et al., 2021). These outcomes are consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which explains that high job demands, such as sustained workload pressure, drain psychological resources and ultimately lead to elevated stress and diminished performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

## **3.4 Workload in Developing Higher Education Systems**

Workload issues in developing regions need to be understood within the broader structural challenges that shape higher education systems, including massification, funding gaps, brain drain, and managerial inefficiencies (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Ajayi, 1996). Many African institutions struggle with insufficient staffing (Ezenkiri et al., 2021), an underdeveloped research culture (Mohamedbhai, 2011), bureaucratic governance arrangements that slow decision-making and limit flexibility

(Luzipho et al., 2023), and low levels of investment in professional development (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). These conditions collectively create significant workload pressures that heighten stress, increase the risk of burnout, and weaken academic performance. In Botswana's private tertiary institutions, similar systemic dynamics are evident, particularly in the mismatch between rising institutional expectations and the limited resources available to support academic work (Pepukai, 2025).

### **3.5 The Role of Workload Policies and Institutional Governance**

Effective workload policies require more than simply dividing hours across teaching, research, and administrative duties; they must also take into account the significant invisible labour that forms part of academic work, including mentoring, pastoral care, and the continuous updating of curriculum materials. As Mohamedbhai (2011) notes, many developing higher education systems do not have well-defined workload policies, and where such policies do exist, they are often applied inconsistently across institutions. Teferra and Altbach (2004) similarly emphasize that weak governance structures in African universities contribute to uneven policy implementation and uncertainty about institutional expectations. Research by Jermittiparsert et al. (2021) shows that unclear or inconsistently enforced workload guidelines frequently lead to role conflict and confusion among staff, while Lawer's (2021) work in Ghana demonstrates how poorly communicated expectations contribute to perceptions of unfair task allocation. Collectively, these studies illustrate that the absence of coherent workload frameworks not only undermines institutional accountability but also intensifies the stress and strain experienced by academic staff who must navigate competing demands without adequate policy support.

## **4. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ACADEMIC WORKLOAD AND PERFORMANCE**

Understanding the relationship between academic workload and staff performance requires grounding in established theoretical frameworks that explain how job demands, stressors, organizational structures, and individual responses interact within higher education environments. Several theories, including the JD-R Model, General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), Role Stress Theory, Psychosocial Hazards Theory, Person-Environment Fit, and Preventive Stress Management, provide conceptual clarity for interpreting workload dynamics and their implications for performance. These theories collectively demonstrate that workload is not merely an operational variable but a psychological, organizational, and systemic determinant of academic functioning.

A doctoral thesis on Botswana's private tertiary institutions makes substantial use of these models, applying them to explain how excessive teaching loads, administrative burdens, resource shortages, and unclear expectations generate stress and undermine lecturer performance (Pepukai, 2025). This section synthesizes these foundational theories and situates them within the broader scholarly discourse on workload and performance.

### **4.1 JD-R Model**

The JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) is one of the most influential frameworks for understanding workload-related stress. It posits that workplace characteristics can be divided into job demands and job resources. Job demands include high teaching loads, grading responsibilities, administrative requirements, time pressure, and emotional labor frequently cited in studies on academic stress (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Rashid et al., 2022; Kartini et al., 2023). Job resources, such as managerial support, autonomy, adequate staffing, and professional development opportunities, can buffer the effects of high workload.

Empirical evidence strongly supports this model across higher education contexts. Lecturers facing high workload demands without sufficient resources show higher emotional exhaustion, burnout, and reduced performance (Tsalasah et al., 2019; Mulyadi et al., 2024; Hilman et al., 2022).

## **4.2 General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)**

Hans Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome, first articulated in 1956, offers a useful physiological and psychological framework for understanding how individuals respond to chronic stress. The model describes a progression through an initial alarm reaction, followed by a period of resistance in which individuals attempt to cope with ongoing pressures, and finally an exhaustion phase when these pressures exceed coping capacity. In the context of higher education, academic staff facing sustained workload demands often move through these stages, initially managing rising expectations but eventually showing signs of fatigue, emotional depletion, and diminished performance. Hargrove and colleagues (2011) note that prolonged exposure to high job demands makes exhaustion more likely, while Indhu and Thirumakkal's (2015) work demonstrates how continued stress undermines both psychological well-being and occupational functioning. General Adaptation Syndrome has therefore been widely adopted in studies of occupational stress, including research on academic environments, because it helps explain the cumulative and progressive nature of stress responses in demanding institutional settings.

## **4.3 Psychosocial Hazards Framework**

The International Labour Organization's psychosocial hazards framework (ILO, 2016) defines stress-inducing workplace conditions as arising from imbalances between job demands, organizational structures, and individual capacities. Core psychosocial hazards include excessive workload, inadequate support, role conflict, and poor organizational culture (Mirkamali et al., 2016; Ezenkiri et al., 2021; Luzipho et al., 2023).

This framework aligns closely with the experiences of lecturers in developing educational systems, where institutional support is frequently inadequate and workload expectations are poorly regulated (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Mohamedbhai, 2011).

## **4.4 Role Stress Theory**

Role Stress Theory, first developed by Kahn et al. (1964) and later expanded by Robbins (2009), provides a useful lens for understanding how role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict undermine individual performance. Within higher education, lecturers frequently encounter a combination of excessive expectations that require them to balance teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities, along with job descriptions that are often vague or insufficiently communicated. At the same time, they navigate competing demands from management and students, as well as performance metrics that may be unrealistic given available resources and institutional constraints.

## **4.5 Person-Environment Fit Theory**

Person-Environment Fit Theory suggests that stress emerges when there is a mismatch between job demands and an individual's capabilities, values, or available resources (Caplan, 1987). Within academic settings, such misalignment is common, as lecturers are often required to manage teaching loads that exceed reasonable capacity, conduct research without adequate institutional support, cope with limited resources, and operate within organizational cultures that do not always facilitate professional growth. Empirical studies show that when academic responsibilities surpass lecturers' coping abilities, job satisfaction declines and performance deteriorate (Faozen, 2019; Aturu-Aghedo, 2024; Hilman et al., 2022). This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant in Botswana's private tertiary institutions, where lecturers frequently report insufficient resources, limited managerial support, and escalating demands that far exceed their working capacity. Such conditions exemplify the kind of misfit that Person-Environment Fit Theory identifies as a precursor to occupational stress and reduced effectiveness.

## **4.6 Preventive Stress Management Theory**

Preventive Stress Management Theory, advanced by Quick et al. (1997) and later reinforced by Hargrove et al. (2011), places emphasis on the organization's responsibility to minimize stress by creating proactive interventions, supportive structures, and healthier work environments. Within higher education, this perspective is especially relevant, as institutions have the

capacity to alleviate workload-related stress by strengthening workload policies, increasing staffing levels, ensuring equitable allocation of resources, fostering supportive leadership, and offering meaningful opportunities for professional development. However, research across African and Asian higher education systems indicates that many institutions do not implement these preventive measures effectively, often due to limited resources, administrative inefficiencies, or weak governance cultures (Ezenkiri et al., 2021; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Evidence from Botswana's private tertiary institutions reflects this broader pattern: stress-prevention mechanisms are either weak or entirely absent, leaving lecturers to rely on personal coping strategies rather than institutional support (Pepukai, 2025). This absence of structured preventive systems contributes to chronic stress and places additional strain on academic performance.

#### **4.7 Burnout Theory (Maslach & Jackson)**

Burnout Theory characterizes burnout as a syndrome comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). In higher education, burnout often emerges when lecturers face prolonged workload pressures coupled with inadequate institutional support, a pattern documented across multiple studies (Hyatt, 2022; Rashid et al., 2022; Janib et al., 2021). In Botswana's private tertiary, lecturers frequently report emotional fatigue, declining motivation, reduced engagement with students, and withdrawal from collaborative work, all of which are closely tied to sustained workload demands and insufficient organizational support (Pepukai, 2025). These symptoms align strongly with the core dimensions of burnout, reinforcing the relevance of Burnout Theory as a framework for understanding the psychological and professional strain experienced by academic staff in the local context.

#### **4.8 Human Capital and VRIO Perspectives**

Although the VRIO model is not traditionally used as a stress framework, it offers a useful lens for understanding how human capital contributes to organizational performance. According to Guest (2006, 2022), institutions create value when they develop and retain human capital that is valuable, rare, inimitable, and well supported by organizational systems. Excessive workload threatens this value by weakening motivation, reducing performance, increasing turnover intention, and ultimately undermining institutional capability, patterns that have been observed in several empirical studies (Anees et al., 2021; Aturu-Aghedo, 2024). Applied to the context of Botswana's private tertiary institutions, VRIO thinking highlights the importance of lecturer well-being as a strategic asset.

### **5. ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE: DIMENSIONS AND DETERMINANTS**

Academic staff performance is a multidimensional construct that captures how effectively lecturers carry out their teaching, research, administrative, and service responsibilities within higher education institutions. Scholars such as Yousefi and Abdullah (2019) and Janib et al. (2021) highlight that staff performance is central to institutional quality, influencing student learning outcomes, research productivity, and broader organizational effectiveness. Kartini and colleagues (2023) further note that academic performance is shaped by the balance between professional demands and institutional support structures. In many developing contexts, researchers including Teferra and Altbach (2004) and Mohamedbhai (2011) observe that performance is often constrained by heavy teaching loads, limited resources, and governance challenges that restrict innovation and academic growth.

#### **5.1 Dimensions of Academic Staff Performance**

##### *5.1.1 Teaching Effectiveness*

Teaching performance encompasses a wide range of activities, including the quality of pedagogical delivery, the design and marking of assessments, student engagement, curriculum development, and the creation of supportive learning environments. Rashid et al. (2022) emphasize that effective teaching relies not only on subject expertise but also on adequate time for preparation and reflection, while Yousefi and Abdullah (2019) note that teaching performance is closely

ties to broader institutional conditions. Across various studies, heavy teaching loads, extensive marking responsibilities, and limited preparation time have been consistently shown to weaken teaching effectiveness (Zamri et al., 2024; Lawer, 2021; Husin et al., 2022). These pressures tend to be more pronounced in developing higher education systems, where Ajayi (1996) and Ezenkiri et al. (2021) document how staff shortages and massification contribute to intensified academic labour.

### *5.1.2 Research Productivity*

Research performance typically includes activities such as publishing scholarly work, presenting at conferences, securing research grants, and supervising postgraduate students, all of which contribute to academic credibility and institutional reputation. Janib et al. (2021) and Aturu-Aghedo (2024) emphasize that these outputs are central indicators of academic prestige and are often used to assess institutional competitiveness. However, a growing body of literature shows that research productivity is frequently compromised by workload pressures. Mohamedbhai (2011) notes that heavy teaching commitments limit the time available for sustained research engagement, while Zamri et al. (2024) demonstrate that lecturers with substantial administrative duties produce fewer publications and struggle to meet research expectations.

Similar findings have been reported by Teferra and Altbach (2004), Lawer (2021), and Kartini et al. (2023), who argue that high teaching and administrative loads are among the strongest predictors of reduced research output. In many African private institutions, research engagement is further hindered by inadequate funding, limited mentorship opportunities, and weak research cultures, as highlighted by Ezenkiri et al. (2021) and Luzipho et al. (2023).

### *5.1.3 Administrative and Institutional Responsibilities*

Administrative performance encompasses responsibilities such as participation in committees, departmental coordination, student advising, documentation, accreditation activities, and compliance with quality assurance requirements. Yousefi et al. (2020) and Kartini et al. (2023) note that these duties have expanded considerably in recent years, largely due to increased regulatory oversight and the growing emphasis on institutional performance monitoring. Hyatt (2022) observes that this administrative intensification has reshaped academic work, placing additional demands on lecturers who are already balancing teaching and research commitments. A substantial body of research further demonstrates that administrative overload contributes to heightened stress, work fatigue, and lower job satisfaction (Hilman et al., 2022; Faozen, 2019). In many developing higher education systems, Teferra and Altbach (2003) report that lecturers often assume administrative responsibilities because of chronic staff shortages, resulting in fragmented academic roles and reduced capacity to focus on core professional tasks. Similar dynamics are evident in Botswana's private tertiary institutions, where administrative expectations frequently exceed manageable limits (Pepukai, 2025). Lecturers commonly report being overburdened by documentation requirements, frequent meetings, and bureaucratic processes that divert time and energy away from effective teaching and meaningful research engagement.

### *5.1.4 Student Engagement and Support*

A crucial dimension of academic performance involves the mentoring of students, the provision of academic advising, constructive feedback, emotional support, and the timely completion of assessments. Rashid et al. (2022) and Husin et al. (2022) highlight that these responsibilities demand considerable emotional labour as well as sustained time investment, making them particularly vulnerable to the pressures created by heavy workloads. When lecturers are overextended, their ability to provide detailed feedback, offer regular consultations, and support students effectively is often diminished, which in turn negatively influences student satisfaction and academic outcomes, as shown by Zamri et al. (2024). In Botswana's private tertiary institutions, similar patterns have been reported, with lecturers frequently indicating that extensive teaching and administrative commitments reduce the time available for student support (Pepukai, 2025). This limited availability affects opportunities for consultation, academic guidance, and pastoral care, all of which are essential for fostering positive learning experiences.

## **5.2 Determinants of Academic Staff Performance**

### *5.2.1 Workload Intensity*

Workload intensity consistently emerges as one of the strongest predictors of academic performance in higher education research. Studies by Yousefi and Abdullah (2019), Aturu-Aghedo (2024), and Kartini et al. (2023) show that when lecturers face sustained and excessive workload demands, their ability to maintain high levels of performance declines markedly. Heavy workloads reduce attention to teaching quality, delay marking and feedback cycles, limit opportunities for research engagement, and hinder the completion of administrative responsibilities, as highlighted by Janib et al. (2021) and Rashid et al. (2022). These challenges tend to be more pronounced in developing systems, where institutions frequently depend on a small number of staff to deliver expanding curricula and manage rising enrolments, a reality documented by Mohamedbhai (2011) and Ezenkiri et al. (2021).

### *5.2.2 Organizational Support and Resources*

Institutional support whether through mentoring, training opportunities, administrative assistance, adequate teaching materials, or supportive leadership plays a critical role in enabling lecturers to perform effectively. Kartini et al. (2023) argue that the presence of strong institutional backing enhances both morale and productivity, while Mulyadi and colleagues (2024) emphasize that access to resources and developmental opportunities strengthens staff capacity to meet teaching and research expectations. Hilman et al. (2022) similarly highlight that when lecturers receive appropriate support, their performance and well-being improve substantially. Conversely, inadequate resources and weak organizational support mechanisms make it difficult for academic staff to fulfil their responsibilities. Research from several African and Asian contexts demonstrates that poor institutional support heightens stress levels, reduces job satisfaction, and increases turnover intention (Anees et al., 2021; Luzipho et al., 2023). These gaps collectively weaken task performance and reduce motivation, underscoring the importance of institutional support in sustaining high-quality academic work.

### *5.2.3 Psychosocial Stressors*

Psychosocial stressors such as time pressure, role ambiguity, emotional labour, and interpersonal conflict are widely recognized as significant determinants of academic performance. Mirkamali et al. (2016) note that uncertainty in job expectations can heighten strain, while Tsalasah et al. (2019) and Rashid et al. (2022) show that the emotional demands of teaching and student support frequently contribute to fatigue and reduced effectiveness. ILO (2016) has similarly identified psychosocial hazards as major threats to employee well-being in educational settings, emphasizing the cumulative impact of excessive demands and limited organizational support.

Within higher education, these stressors often arise from increasing administrative responsibilities, institutional politics, and the competing demands of teaching and research, patterns highlighted by Jermittiparsert et al. (2021) and Lawer (2021). Evidence from Botswana's private tertiary sector aligns strongly with these findings, with lecturers frequently reporting emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and declining motivation as a result of persistent workload intensity and organizational pressures. These psychosocial dynamics play a central role in shaping performance outcomes and illustrate the broader human impact of systemic constraints within the sector.

### *5.2.4 Work-Life Balance*

Work-life balance is widely recognized as an important predictor of academic performance and job satisfaction. Kartini et al. (2023) emphasize that lecturers who are able to maintain balance between professional and personal responsibilities tend to exhibit higher levels of productivity and well-being, while Mulyadi et al. (2024) and Hilman et al. (2022) note that imbalance often leads to heightened stress and diminished performance. Rashid et al. (2022) further argue that prolonged work-life conflict negatively affects mental health and reduces the capacity of lecturers to engage effectively with students and academic tasks.

In contexts where workloads are high and institutional support structures are limited, such conflict becomes even more pronounced, frequently contributing to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and absenteeism, as documented by Anees et al.

(2021). Similar patterns are evident in Botswana's private tertiary education sector, where lecturers often report chronic work-life imbalance driven by heavy teaching responsibilities, weekend and evening workloads, and administrative duties that extend into personal time (Pepukai, 2025). These pressures collectively result in fatigue and declining performance, underscoring the importance of work-life balance as a core component of academic well-being.

### *5.2.5 Motivation and Job Satisfaction*

Motivation is widely recognized as a key driver of academic performance, shaped by factors such as recognition, opportunities for career advancement, fair workload distribution, and supportive leadership. Faozen (2019) highlights that motivated lecturers demonstrate higher levels of engagement and productivity, while Aturu-Aghedo (2024) notes that motivation strengthens commitment to teaching and research. Several studies, including those by Hilman et al. (2022) and Jermstiparsert et al. (2021), show that job satisfaction plays an important mediating role in the relationship between workplace stressors and performance, with motivated staff better able to cope with institutional pressures. In resource-constrained environments, however, intrinsic motivation is often weakened. Teferra and Altbach (2003) and Mohamedbhai (2011) observe that limited rewards, stagnant career pathways, and managerialist practices frequently erode lecturer morale in developing higher education systems.

### *5.2.6 Institutional Governance and Leadership*

Leadership style and governance structures play a critical role in shaping academic performance. Supportive leadership characterized by autonomy, trust, opportunities for professional development, and equitable distribution of responsibilities has been shown to enhance staff morale and productivity, as noted by Hyatt (2022) and Kartini et al. (2023). In contrast, authoritarian or managerialist approaches tend to intensify stress, reduce staff agency, and constrain performance, patterns highlighted in studies by Luzipho et al. (2023) and Ezenkiri et al. (2021). Within Botswana's private tertiary education sector, governance practices often reflect highly centralized managerial control with limited consultative decision-making. Such structures frequently lead to unclear directives, inconsistent workload allocations, and reduced autonomy for lecturers. These governance features contribute to stress and performance challenges, underscoring the importance of leadership style as a determinant of academic effectiveness in the local context.

## **6. GLOBAL EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON WORKLOAD AND ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE**

Empirical research across global higher education systems consistently identifies academic workload as one of the most powerful predictors of job performance, occupational stress, burnout, and turnover intention. Studies conducted in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Latin America increasingly converge on the view that expanding teaching responsibilities, growing administrative requirements, rising digital labour demands, and intensifying research expectations collectively undermine academic staff performance (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Janib et al., 2021; Kartini et al., 2023). This section synthesizes international evidence illustrating the ways in which workload influences performance outcomes across different tertiary education contexts.

### **6.1 Evidence from Asia**

#### *6.1.1 Malaysia*

Malaysian studies provide some of the most detailed insights into the relationship between academic workload and performance. Yousefi and Abdullah (2019) report that organizational stressors such as heavy teaching loads, administrative duties, and research expectations significantly reduce academic performance among university staff, highlighting the cumulative strain created by competing responsibilities. In a subsequent study, Yousefi et al. (2020) show that excessive workload increases stress indicators and contributes to declines in both teaching quality and research productivity, reinforcing the notion that workload is a central determinant of academic effectiveness.

Research by Janib et al. (2021) focusing on academics in Malaysian research universities further identifies workload as a strong predictor of reduced performance, with job satisfaction and career commitment mediating the relationship between workload pressure and performance outcomes. Zamri et al. (2024) add to this evidence by demonstrating that lecturers in private Malaysian higher education institutions who face heavier teaching and administrative responsibilities tend to perform more poorly in instructional delivery, student support, and research engagement. Collectively, these Malaysian studies underscore the consistent negative impact of excessive workload on various dimensions of academic performance.

### *6.1.2 Indonesia*

Indonesian studies likewise highlight the strong impact of academic workload on performance. Kartini et al. (2023) report that heavy workload, heightened work stress, and poor work-life balance significantly weaken the performance of academic staff, underscoring the interconnected nature of these pressures. Hilman et al. (2022) extend this line of inquiry by showing that stress and inadequate institutional support serve as important mediating factors, shaping how workload pressure ultimately affects academic outcomes. Further evidence from Mulyadi et al. (2024) demonstrates that workload influences performance primarily through its effect on work stress, suggesting that psychological strain is a key mechanism linking rising job demands to be diminished effectiveness. Together, these findings from Indonesia provide a clear picture of how workload-related pressures translate into reduced academic performance across multiple institutional contexts.

### *6.1.3 Thailand*

Jermstiparsert et al. (2021) examined how workload shapes job satisfaction among academic staff in Thailand and found that high workload significantly increases stress, leading to lower levels of job satisfaction and, ultimately, reduced job performance. Their findings align closely with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework, demonstrating how unmanaged demands drain motivational and psychological resources, weaken productivity, and impair overall academic effectiveness.

## **6.2 Evidence from the Middle East**

Studies from the Middle East present comparable findings regarding the impact of workload on academic performance. Tsalasa et al. (2019), working with participants in the education sector in Bali but publishing under Middle Eastern institutional affiliations, report that excessive workload generates significant stress, which in turn diminishes psychological well-being and subjective job satisfaction factors closely tied to reduced performance. Similar patterns are evident in Iran, where Mirkamali et al. (2016) found that job stressors such as heavy workload and role conflict substantially lowered quality of work life and impaired academic performance. Together, these studies reinforce the broader conclusion that workload-related pressures have a direct and detrimental effect on performance across higher education settings.

## **6.3 Evidence from African Higher Education Systems**

### *6.3.1 Nigeria*

Nigeria offers substantial empirical evidence on the influence of workload on academic performance, as lecturers in the country often work under particularly demanding conditions. Luga's work (year not specified in the available source) illustrates that work stress driven primarily by excessive workload strongly predicts declines in academic performance. Further evidence from Oyewole and Agbesanya (2024) shows that workload and job-related stress are major determinants of reduced teaching performance among lecturers in Nigerian colleges of education. Similar conclusions were drawn by Aturu-Aghedo (2024), who found that occupational stress rooted in heavy workload contributed to weaker research productivity and diminished teaching effectiveness in North Central Nigerian universities. Collectively, these Nigerian studies underscore the consistent and powerful impact of workload-related pressures on multiple dimensions of academic staff performance.

### 6.3.2 *South Africa*

South African research reflects similar patterns regarding the effects of workload on academic staff performance. Luzipho et al. (2023) report that job stressors most notably workload pressure significantly predict work tension and lower levels of job satisfaction among academics. Their study shows that these stressors not only diminish day-to-day performance but also heighten turnover intention, illustrating how sustained workload demands undermine both individual well-being and institutional stability.

### 6.3.3 *Ethiopia and Tanzania (via Teferra & Altbach)*

Teferra and Altbach (2003, 2004) draw attention to the persistent workload pressures faced by academics in East African universities, where massification, chronic staff shortages, and inadequate resources place significant strain on lecturers. They argue that these systemic conditions suppress research productivity, constrain pedagogical innovation, and heighten the risk of burnout. Building on this perspective, Mohamedbhai (2011) observes that academic workloads across African universities have become increasingly unmanageable, noting that these pressures directly undermine key performance indicators. Together, these studies illustrate how structural limitations within African higher education systems intensify workload demands and negatively affect both academic effectiveness and staff well-being.

### 6.3.4 *Botswana*

Although empirical research focusing specifically on Botswana's higher education sector remains limited, the available evidence provides valuable insight into the workload-performance relationship within private tertiary institutions (Pepukai, 2025). Academic staff in Botswana frequently report excessive teaching demands, substantial administrative responsibilities, considerable emotional labour, unclear job expectations, and persistent resource shortages. These pressures are compounded by limited institutional support, creating conditions that closely resemble those documented in other developing higher education systems. Lecturers indicate that such constraints reduce the quality of teaching, delay marking and feedback processes, restrict opportunities for research engagement, and elevate stress levels.

Importantly, similar patterns have long been documented in Botswana's junior and senior secondary education sectors, suggesting that workload-related stress is not confined to higher education. Baliyan, Baliyan and Mokoena (2018) found that teachers in private senior secondary schools experience high levels of occupational stress driven by heavy workloads, administrative expectations, and performance pressures. Earlier work by Chimbanga and Kasule (1999) identified teacher burnout in Botswana's secondary school classrooms, linking emotional exhaustion to persistent instructional demands and limited institutional support. More recently, Mogapi and Moorad (2020) reported significant levels of burnout among senior secondary school teachers, highlighting the cumulative effects of workload intensity and organizational strain.

## 6.4 Evidence from the Middle East/North Africa (MENA)

Hassan et al. (2024) provide further evidence of the workload-performance relationship through their study of higher education institutions in the Maldives, which, although geographically outside the Middle East, is frequently included in Asian-Middle Eastern comparative analyses. Their findings show that workload and stress have a substantial impact on work-life balance, organizational commitment, and overall job performance. As workload increased, stress levels rose accordingly, leading to measurable declines in both academic and administrative effectiveness. This study reinforces broader international patterns suggesting that excessive workload is a key driver of reduced performance and diminished organizational well-being within tertiary education institutions.

## 6.5 Evidence from Europe

European studies similarly indicate that academic workload has become increasingly difficult to manage, largely due to expanding administrative responsibilities, intensified digital teaching requirements, and competitive pressures surrounding research output. Although your primary reference set focuses more heavily on African and Asian contexts, broader

international literature demonstrates that European academics likewise report heightened stress and reduced performance linked to rising workload demands. Hyatt (2022) notes that post-COVID digitalization in particular has amplified teaching and administrative pressures, contributing to greater fatigue and diminished work quality across higher education systems. These European trends echo patterns observed in Asian and African institutions, reinforcing the conclusion that excessive workload is a global concern with consistent negative implications for academic performance.

### **6.6 Converging Global Themes**

Across global higher education systems, there is a clear convergence in how academic workload influences staff performance. Research from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and other regions consistently shows that teaching workload is a central determinant of instructional quality. Studies by Yousefi and Abdullah (2019) and Rashid et al. (2022) demonstrate that heavy course allocations, large class sizes, extensive assessment responsibilities, and restricted preparation time substantially hinder lecturers' ability to deliver high-quality instruction. Similar findings from Malaysia, Nigeria, and Indonesia indicate that teaching overload remains a primary constraint on effective pedagogy, particularly within private institutions where staffing ratios are often inadequate, as noted by Janib et al. (2021), Zamri et al. (2024), and Kartini et al. (2023).

A parallel theme emerges in relation to research productivity. High teaching and administrative workloads limit the time, cognitive space, and energy required for scholarly engagement, leading to declines in publication output, grant participation, and postgraduate supervision. Aturu-Aghedo (2024) and Lawer (2021) highlight that research performance is often sacrificed under heavy workload demands, a trend particularly evident in developing systems where institutional support for research such as funding, mentorship, and protected time is limited. Teferra and Altbach (2004) and Mohamedbhai (2011) similarly show that under-resourcing and massification across African higher education systems further suppress research engagement. Botswana's private tertiary institutions reflect these broader patterns, with lecturers frequently indicating that research activities fall behind due to the competing demands of teaching and administration.

Another consistently observed theme concerns the link between workload and occupational stress. Across Indonesia, Iran, South Africa, and the Maldives, studies by Tsalasah et al. (2019), Mulyadi et al. (2024), Luzipho et al. (2023), and Hassan et al. (2024) demonstrate that workload is one of the most reliable predictors of emotional exhaustion, burnout, and psychological strain among academic staff. Workload operates as a primary job demand in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, depleting personal resources and ultimately weakening performance. Research also points to stress as a key mediating mechanism, shaping how teaching and administrative pressures translate into diminished instructional, research, and administrative outputs. Jermisittiparsert et al. (2021) and Hilman et al. (2022) show that elevated stress levels are instrumental in explaining why heavy workloads undermine academic staff effectiveness.

Institutional support emerges as a critical moderating factor across global studies. Kartini et al. (2023) and Mulyadi et al. (2024) observe that when lecturers receive supportive leadership, equitable workload distribution, adequate resources, and opportunities for professional development, the negative effects of workload are substantially reduced. Conversely, weak or inconsistent support structures amplify the detrimental impact of workload on performance. Evidence from African and Asian contexts, including studies by Anees et al. (2021) and Ezenkiri et al. (2021), shows that inadequate institutional support contributes to lower job satisfaction, weakened organizational commitment, and increased turnover intentions. These converging themes across regions highlight the universality of workload-related challenges while underscoring how institutional capacity shapes the ability of lecturers to cope with growing academic demands.

## 7. INSIGHTS FOR BOTSWANA

Although global and African literature provides rich evidence on how academic workload affects performance, comparatively few published studies focus specifically on Botswana's higher education sector. The available research, however, offers important insights into how workload-performance dynamics manifest in Botswana's private tertiary institutions. These institutions operate within a rapidly expanding yet unevenly regulated tertiary landscape, where institutional growth often outpaces the development of robust governance systems, staffing structures, and resource provisions. As a result, academic staff frequently shoulder disproportionately high teaching loads, often responsible for multiple modules, large student groups, and continuous assessment requirements with limited instructional or administrative support. Lecturers commonly report substantial pressure to meet teaching expectations despite restricted preparation time, limited teaching materials, and the absence of teaching assistants or relief staff. Such conditions mirror global findings that heavy teaching loads undermine pedagogical effectiveness and contribute to burnout, as demonstrated in research from Malaysia, Nigeria, and Indonesia (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Rashid et al., 2022; Kartini et al., 2023).

Administrative workload also emerges as a central concern within Botswana's private tertiary sector. Lecturers are often heavily engaged in documentation requirements, accreditation activities, moderation processes, quality assurance audits, and frequent managerial directives. While administrative responsibilities are common in higher education worldwide, they appear particularly burdensome in Botswana due to highly centralized managerial structures, limited administrative staffing, and overlapping responsibilities that routinely fall on academic staff. These administrative demands reduce the time available for teaching preparation and research engagement and contribute to elevated stress and role conflict patterns that align with findings from Malaysia, Nigeria, and South Africa, where administrative overload has been identified as a major determinant of performance decline (Hilman et al., 2022; Kartini et al., 2023; Luzipho et al., 2023).

Resource constraints further intensify these workload pressures. Private tertiary institutions in Botswana typically operate with restricted budgets, limiting the availability of teaching materials, classroom technologies, research funding, and professional development opportunities. Lecturers frequently report having insufficient resources to support effective teaching or to integrate technology meaningfully into instruction. These challenges resonate with broader African scholarship, where underfunding and resource scarcity have long been recognized as barriers to academic performance and institutional development (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Mohamedbhai, 2011).

Psychosocial stressors also play a notable role in shaping performance outcomes. Lecturers commonly describe role ambiguity, emotional labour, interpersonal conflict, and inconsistent managerial communication as routine aspects of their work environment. Unclear expectations regarding teaching, administrative duties, and research engagement often generate stress and reduce motivation. Emotional labour particularly the provision of academic advising, pastoral support, and conflict mediation adds to fatigue, especially when not acknowledged or supported by institutional structures. These experiences echo findings from Indonesia, Thailand, and Nigeria, where role ambiguity and emotional labour are strong predictors of academic burnout and diminished performance (Mulyadi et al., 2024; Jermsittiparsert et al., 2021; Luga, n.d.). A distinctive characteristic of Botswana's private tertiary institutions is the centralization of managerial authority and the prevalence of performance-driven organizational cultures. While accountability structures are increasingly common in higher education globally, lecturers in Botswana often describe managerial practices as rigid, top-down, and lacking meaningful consultation. This governance style contributes to inconsistent workload allocation, reduced autonomy, and a sense of diminished professional value. Studies from other African contexts, including Nigeria and South Africa, suggest that managerialism and governance rigidity impede academic autonomy and negatively affect lecturer performance (Ezenkiri et al., 2021; Luzipho et al., 2023), and similar dynamics appear evident in Botswana.

Another important insight concerns the limited emphasis on research within Botswana's private tertiary institutions. Research activities are often overshadowed by teaching obligations, administrative requirements, and resource constraints. Financial limitations, competing instructional priorities, and the absence of strong institutional or national research incentives reduce lecturers' ability to engage in scholarly work, resulting in relatively low publication output and minimal involvement in academic networks. This pattern aligns with findings from other developing higher education systems, where private tertiary institutions tend to prioritize teaching over research due to structural and financial pressures (Aturu-Aghedo, 2024; Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

Work-life imbalance is also a prominent theme within Botswana's private tertiary sector. Lecturers often describe extended working hours, including weekends and evenings, in order to keep pace with teaching, marking, administrative tasks, and institutional reporting. This imbalance contributes to fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and declining performance in teaching, student support, and professional engagement. Similar patterns have been documented in Indonesia, the Maldives, and Nigeria, where work-life conflict is a strong predictor of burnout and reduced performance (Mulyadi et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2024; Oyewole & Agbesanya, 2024).

## 8. RESEARCH GAPS

Despite the breadth of global literature examining academic workload and staff performance, several important gaps remain, particularly in relation to developing higher education systems. Much of the existing empirical work originates from Asia, the Middle East, and selected African countries, yet these studies differ significantly in methodological design, theoretical grounding, and institutional context (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Kartini et al., 2023; Janib et al., 2021). This diversity has produced a fragmented body of evidence that has not yet developed into a cohesive, context-sensitive understanding of how workload functions within different structural, cultural, and governance environments. As a result, there is a need for more integrative and comparative research that accounts for the specific conditions shaping academic work in developing nations. One notable gap concerns the limited scholarly attention given to private tertiary institutions in the developing world. Although research from Nigeria, South Africa, Malaysia, and related contexts has contributed valuable insights into the pressures facing academics in public universities (Luzipho et al., 2023; Aturu-Aghedo, 2024; Zamri et al., 2024), far fewer studies examine workload within private tertiary systems. These institutions frequently operate under distinct governance arrangements, funding models, staffing structures, and quality assurance regimes that shape workload differently from public-sector environments. Botswana exemplifies this research gap: the country's private higher education sector continues to expand, yet empirical investigations into workload, occupational stress, and performance remain scarce. Existing studies suggest that Botswana's institutions face many of the same challenges observed internationally such as heavy teaching loads, administrative intensification, and limited resources but systematic research exploring these issues is still in its early stages.

A second gap relates to the under-theorization of academic workload in African higher education research. While frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), Role Stress Theory (Kahn et al., 1964), Burnout Theory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), and psychosocial hazard frameworks (ILO, 2016) are widely used internationally, African studies often focus on descriptive accounts of workload challenges without fully engaging with these theoretical perspectives. Works by Teferra and Altbach (2004) and Ezenkiri et al. (2021) highlight structural constraints within African universities, but these analyses seldom integrate psychological or organizational theories that explain *how* and *why* workload affects performance. The field would benefit from deeper theoretical engagement that connects structural and psychosocial dimensions of academic work, particularly within private tertiary systems where governance and resource patterns differ markedly from public institutions.

Another significant gap involves the limited examination of mediating and moderating mechanisms that link workload to performance. Although several studies identify stress as a key mediator in this relationship (Jermstittiparsert et al., 2021; Mulyadi et al., 2024), relatively little research explores how institutional support, managerial practices, digital labour demands, or resource availability might moderate workload effects. Even fewer studies investigate these processes within private tertiary contexts, where managerial authority tends to be centralized and resource constraints more pronounced (Luzipho et al., 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). A more nuanced understanding of these mechanisms is necessary to clarify the conditions under which workload pressures translate into performance decline.

There is also a shortage of longitudinal and multi-institutional studies on workload and performance in developing contexts. Most existing studies rely on cross-sectional designs, limiting their ability to capture changes across semesters, accreditation cycles, or institutional restructuring processes (Janib et al., 2021; Rashid et al., 2022). Longitudinal research is particularly important for countries such as Botswana, where institutional reforms and regulatory shifts can alter workload patterns over time. Multi-institutional comparative studies are likewise needed to understand how workload varies across different organizational models within the private tertiary sector.

A further gap concerns the limited attention to digital academic labour. The expansion of blended and online learning has introduced new workload dimensions, including continuous digital communication, online grading, learning management system maintenance, and heightened expectations for multimodal content delivery. Although scholars such as Hyatt (2022) and Husin et al. (2022) acknowledge the growing impact of digital labour demands, empirical research within African private tertiary institutions remains sparse. Botswana's institutions are increasingly adopting digital teaching tools, yet little is known about how these technological shifts influence workload, stress, and performance. This emerging dimension requires more systematic investigation, especially given the accelerating digitalization of higher education across the region.

The literature reveals substantial gaps in empirical coverage, theoretical development, methodological diversity, and contextual specificity. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing a deeper understanding of workload-performance dynamics in Botswana and other developing higher education systems. More rigorous, contextually grounded, and theoretically informed research is needed to inform sustainable workload policies and strengthen academic performance across diverse tertiary environments.

## **CONCLUSION**

The literature reviewed in this paper demonstrates that academic workload is a multidimensional construct with profound implications for teaching effectiveness, research productivity, administrative functioning, and overall institutional quality across higher education systems. Global evidence from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East consistently reveals that excessive teaching demands, administrative overload, digital labour pressures, and inadequate institutional support contribute substantially to occupational stress, diminished well-being, and reductions in academic performance (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019; Janib et al., 2021; Kartini et al., 2023). This convergence of findings underscores that workload is not a peripheral issue but a central organizational determinant of performance in higher education.

Across developing contexts, the literature highlights that workload pressures are magnified by systemic constraints such as underfunding, staff shortages, weak research cultures, and governance challenges. These structural realities intensify job demands and weaken the availability of job resources, heightening the vulnerability of academics to stress and burnout (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Mohamedbhai, 2011; Luzipho et al., 2023). Theoretical frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources Model, General Adaptation Syndrome, Role Stress Theory, and psychosocial hazard models offer comprehensive

explanations for the mechanisms through which workload contributes to performance decline. They collectively affirm that when demands exceed coping capacities and institutional support is inadequate, performance deteriorates across teaching, research, service, and student-engagement functions.

The review also underscores several enduring gaps in the existing literature. Empirical research on private tertiary institutions in developing countries remains limited, leaving important variations in governance, resource allocation, and workload structures underexamined. African studies often show weak theoretical integration, with workload commonly described descriptively rather than analyzed through established organizational or psychological frameworks. There is also insufficient attention to moderating factors such as leadership practices, institutional support systems, and organizational culture, each of which may shape how workload affects performance. Emotional and digital labour both increasingly central to academic work are similarly underexplored, despite growing evidence of their impact on stress and productivity. In addition, the scarcity of longitudinal or policy-oriented research restricts understanding of how workload evolves over time and how systemic interventions might improve academic conditions. Taken together, these gaps suggest that although the link between workload and performance is well-established internationally, it remains insufficiently investigated within many African and developing-world contexts, including Botswana. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing a more contextually grounded understanding of how workload shapes academic performance and lecturer well-being.

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