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Examining the Stressful Reality for Working Class Students Caused by Campus Relocation from Kanifing to Faraba Banta of the University of the Gambia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of stress and commuting hours on the work-life balance of working-class students at the University of The Gambia (UTG) following the relocation of most of its schools from the temporary site in Kanifing to the permanent site at Faraba Banta. The move to the new location has presented significant challenges, particularly for working-class students, who are the majority in the university. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, this research explored the relationship between perceived stress, commuting hours, and work-life balance. A total of 120 employed students participated by completing a structured questionnaire. The results of the first hypothesis revealed a significant negative correlation between stress and work-life balance, with higher stress levels leading to a reduced ability to balance work with personal life ($r = -0.377$, $df (198)$; $p < 0.01$). The results of the independent and joint influence of stress and commuting hours revealed that stress is a major predictor ($b= -.378$, $t= 4.35$, $p<.01$), while the independent influence of commuting hours was not significant ($b= .010$, $t= 110$, $p>.05$) on work-life balance, likely due to government/school management interventions such as subsidised transportation to Faraba Banta from different terminals in The Gambia; however, the two variables jointly had moderate influence on work-life balance ($R= .377$, $F= 9.68$, $p<.01$). The findings highlight the pivotal role of stress in students' lives, particularly those combining schooling with work, when it comes to managing their work with other life activities. The study suggests that institutional support, including flexible work/learning schedules, financial aid, and improved transportation, among others, is crucial in reducing stress and enhancing work-life balance. Recommendations include increased financial assistance, an improved transportation system, and workplace/academic flexibility to support working-class students. These insights are valuable for policymakers and educational institutions seeking to create a supportive environment for working students, fostering better balance between work and other aspects of life.

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1.0 Introduction

The relocation of a university campus is often perceived as a landmark achievement, signifying infrastructural development and enhanced academic opportunities. However, while such transitions are essential for institutional growth, they can also introduce profound challenges for students, particularly those balancing work, academics, and personal responsibilities. At the University of The Gambia (UTG), the first university in The Gambia, established in 1999, the movement from its temporary site in Kanifing to the permanent campus in Faraba Banta represents a transformative phase in its development. The University of The Gambia's relocation from Kanifing to Faraba Banta was a decade-long process that began with planning in 2012, thirteen years after the university was established and operating from the temporary campus at Kanifing, with major academic activities commencing in the 2023/2024 academic year at the new campus with schools of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; Arts and Sciences; Information Communication, Technology; Engineering and Architecture; Business and Public Administration; Education; and Public Health. Although some administrative departments and specialised faculties, such as the Faculty of Law and the School of Journalism and Digital Media, continue to operate in Kanifing, while the School of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences operates from Banjul Teaching Hospital, with the intention of relocating them all to Faraba Banta in the nearest future so the university can operate from a single campus. The relocation has resulted in significant stress for students, particularly those who work alongside their studies, as they navigate the logistical, financial, and emotional challenges of the transition and try to adjust to the new campus. This may not be unconnected with the fact the campus does not have a residential facility; as such, students have to find their way into school daily and return back home. This burden is especially heavy for working-class students due to the considerable distance—approximately 45 kilometres—between the former campus in Kanifing and the new campus in Faraba Banta. The situation is further exacerbated by frequent traffic congestion around areas such as Musumbala, Brikama, and Yundum. Unlike Kanifing, which is centrally located within the country's commercial hub and thus easily accessible from different locations of the country, Faraba Banta lies at the country's periphery with only one direct route from the centre of the country, making daily commuting difficult and costly for many.

The Gambia, a small West African nation with a population of less than three million, along the Gambia River with the slogan 'smiling coast of West Africa,' has a rich history shaped by trade, colonialism, and resilience (Sonko-Godwin, 2014). Gambia is made up of various ethnic groups, including the Mandinka, Fula, Jola, Wolof, Serahule, Serer, Manjago, Aku, and Bambara, which all thrived and lived peacefully among themselves (Saine, 2012; Encyclopaedia Britannica). The Gambia River played a crucial role in trade, dealing in goods such as gold, ivory, and, later, slaves between the 15th and 19th centuries. European contact began in the 15th century, but it was the British and French who later vied for control. By the 17th century, the British established trading posts, including James Island (now Kunta Kinteh Island), which became central to the transatlantic slave trade until its abolition in the 19th century (Sarr, 2019; Sonko-Godwin, 2014). In 1889, The Gambia became a British colony and protectorate, with Bathurst (now Banjul) as its administrative centre (British Colonial Office Records, 1889-1965).

The country gained independence from Britain on February 18, 1965, with Dawda Jawara as its first prime minister. In 1970, The Gambia became a republic, with Jawara as president. In 1994, Yahya Jammeh seized power in a military coup, ruling for 22 years. In 2016, Adama Barrow's victory marked a return to democracy (Saho, 2018; Perfect, 2016; Gomez, 2003; Hughes & Perfect, 2006). Today, The Gambia relies on agriculture, tourism, and remittances while preserving its rich cultural heritage.

The development of education in The Gambia has evolved from informal, community-based learning to structured formal education. Pre-colonial education was oral and religious, with Quranic schools (daras) teaching literacy in Arabic. British colonisation in the 19th century introduced Western-style education through missionary groups like the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which established early schools primarily for freed slaves and colonial officials (Curtin, 1975; Grey, 1940).

After independence, President Jawara prioritised expanding education, focusing on rural access and free primary schooling. International organisations like UNESCO and UNICEF assisted with teacher training and infrastructure. The 1980s and 1990s saw increased literacy efforts, particularly for girls, and the establishment of vocational institutions like the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI). The 2004 Basic Education Act made nine years of schooling free and compulsory, significantly increasing enrolment rates (UNESCO, 2010).

The University of The Gambia (UTG), founded in 1999, reduced the need for Gambians to study abroad and expanded higher education opportunities (University of The Gambia, n.d.). The University of The Gambia's (UTG) transition from its temporary site in Kanifing to its permanent campus in Faraba Banta marks a milestone in Gambian higher education. To the government of the day, this is a great milestone, as this has been a project spanning over 13 years. It will also bring about a rapid development of Faraba Banta, as the value of properties along that axis has appreciated significantly since the relocation in late 2025. As at the time of the relocation, the place was a desert; however, the prices of a plot of land around that area have tripled as of early 2025, with hope of massive development around the school soonest. Before the establishment of the University of The Gambia, Gambians had to seek university-level education abroad (Office of The President, Republic of The Gambia, 2024; University of The Gambia, 2024). Initially operating in Kanifing, the University of The Gambia offered limited programs in medicine, law, education, and agriculture. Overcrowding and inadequate facilities highlighted the need for a permanent campus. The government designated land in Faraba Banta, 50 km (about 31 miles) from Banjul, to develop a modern university campus.

Construction of the Faraba Banta campus aimed to address infrastructure deficits, incorporating lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, dormitories, and recreational spaces. The phased transition ensured academic continuity. By the early 2020s, Faraba Banta became the University of The Gambia's primary site, while academic activities officially commenced on the campus in late 2023, symbolising its growth into a modern institution. The infrastructure in the permanent site of the university improves learning conditions, attracts international faculty and students, and fosters research and innovation when compared with the temporary site of the university at the Knifing. However, the relocation poses challenges, particularly for married and working students who face longer commutes and logistical difficulties, which, if not properly managed and looked into, may affect the enrolment of mature students in the future. Despite these hurdles, the University of The Gambia's relocation, though in phases, aligns with The Gambia's vision for a stronger education sector and national development (The Point Newspaper, 2024; The Alkamba Times, 2024; Gambia Daily, 2024).

Campus relocation can significantly impact students and other stakeholders, particularly the working-class students since the school does not have boarding facilities. These changes can contribute to increased stress levels as students struggle to balance their academics and work with other spheres of life. For working-class students, managing work with other spheres of life is already a challenge, and campus relocation may further these challenges in areas such as longer commute times and spending more on transport, which could affect their attendance and punctuality in class; more flexibility towards part-time jobs, as job opportunities near the new campus are fewer or nonexistent for now; and the need to adapt to new academic structures, which can lead to heightened stress and potential burnout. Some students have taken this challenge as an opportunity to start new things and form a strong bond with colleagues, as most foods, drinks, and other basic amenities being sold in Faraba Banta are being carried out by students. While some do come together in a single car and spread the cost of fuel over the 4-5 students, the relocation has brought out creativity in some students and made them entrepreneurs, and a few are now self-employed in order to be in control of their time during this schooling stage. The ability to maintain equilibrium between work, studies, and personal life is essential for overall well-being and academic success. Understanding the relationship between campus relocation, managing stress, and balancing work with other aspects of life is crucial in designing supportive policies and interventions that can ease students' transition and enhance their academic and professional experiences.

1.1 Theoretical Background

The interplay between stress, work-life balance, and overall well-being is well-documented in research. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress highlights that stress arises when individuals perceive an imbalance between external demands and their coping resources. This is particularly relevant for working students at the University of The Gambia, where the recent campus relocation has introduced new stressors such as extended commuting times, increased transportation costs, and disruptions to daily routines, exacerbating existing challenges.

Clark's (2000) work/family border theory defines work-life balance as the ability to achieve harmony between work and personal life. Studies indicate that stress negatively impacts this balance, particularly when related to financial strain and time management difficulties (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The University of The Gambia relocation has forced students to reassess their schedules and financial

commitments, often requiring sacrifices in one or more aspects of their lives. Studies such as Zheng *et al*. (2022) further emphasise the increasing challenge of work-life balance in higher education due to economic and logistical constraints.

Economic stress theory (Conger & Elder, 1994) suggests that financial strain serves as a chronic stressor, leading to adverse psychological and behavioural outcomes. Rising transportation costs due to the move to Faraba Banta have placed additional burdens on students, particularly those with limited incomes or family responsibilities. A study by Kim and Kim (2021) confirmed that financial instability significantly affects student performance and well-being, reinforcing earlier conclusions on these relationships.

Time management is another key challenge. Role conflict theory (Kahn *et al*., 1964) posits that competing demands across multiple domains can lead to stress and reduced performance. The extended commuting hours reduce time available for academic work, professional obligations, and personal life. Studies have highlighted the negative impact of long commutes on cognitive function and productivity (Wang *et al*., 2023), which aligns with student experiences at the University of The Gambia.

Emotional well-being is also affected, as burnout theory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) explains how chronic stress results in exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished personal achievement. Increased fatigue, irritability, and concentration difficulties may increase students' stress level, consistent with broader research (Santoso *et al.,* 2023) on student burnout in high-stress environments.

The relocation of the University of The Gambia to its permanent site in Faraba Banta marks a major milestone, offering modern facilities, improved infrastructure, and a conducive learning environment. However, while these enhancements promise academic growth, they have also introduced significant challenges for working students balancing jobs, academics, and personal responsibilities. Increased commuting distances, financial strain, and disrupted routines have emerged as new stressors, which could negatively affect students' work-life balance and overall well-being. These challenges can impact time management, financial stability, academic performance, and emotional health, as working students may miss classes due to distances covered between workplace and school or miss deadlines in the office due to distances between school and work, unlike the temporary campus from which they are relocated, which is at the commercial/business centre of the country. Presently, the University of The Gambia operates on an off-campus basis, as there are no residential facilities for students in the university; all students come from home for lectures daily. Although there are no official documents on the population of working students, those working in the formal and informal sectors constitute over 60% of the present population of students, as most have to work in order to pay for the school fees, and the national education policies made it flexible for organisations to release their workers once they have classes, suggesting that students will have to submit their lecture timetables at the workplace.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Relationship between Stress, Commuting, and Work-Life Balance

The relationship between stress and work-life balance is multifaceted. High levels of stress can arise from various sources, including academic workload, work commitments, financial insecurity, and social responsibilities. Stress in these contexts can diminish students' ability to manage both their academic and professional duties effectively, which is essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. For working-class students, the stressors are compounded by financial strain, which may increase their reliance on part-time jobs or internships to meet living and educational expenses. This increased reliance can lead to less time for studying, socialising, and personal relaxation, all of which contribute to poor mental health outcomes like anxiety, depression, and burnout, widening the imbalance between work and other spheres of life.

Several studies have highlighted the negative impact of stress on work-life balance. Barker and Munir (2022) explored the effects of academic and work-related stressors on the mental health of university students; findings showed that students who reported high levels of stress experienced greater difficulties in maintaining a balance between work and study. The study noted that working-class students, especially those juggling multiple part-time jobs, struggled to allocate sufficient time for academics and self-care, leading to increased anxiety and poor academic performance, widening the gap between work and life balance. Hernandez *et al.* (2023) found that financial stress, often experienced by working-class students, was a key mediator between work-life conflict and mental health issues like depression and anxiety. The study observed that students in lower-income groups faced significant work-life balance challenges, which contributed to poorer mental health outcomes. Financial burdens often led to

chronic stress, impacting both academic performance and social well-being. Thompson *et al.* (2024) studied the impact of long commutes on the well-being of working students in the U.S., confirming the relationship between stress, time pressure, and work-life balance. Their findings indicated that students who commuted long distances to school or work reported higher stress levels and had difficulty managing both their academic work and job responsibilities effectively. This stress often resulted in lower academic performance, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. Brown *et al.* (2025) focused on interventions for improving work-life balance for working students. They proposed that universities should implement policies that promote flexible learning and provide financial and mental health support to alleviate the pressures faced by working-class students. The study found that students who had access to such support systems were better able to manage stress and maintain a healthier balance between their studies and work responsibilities, while Sprung and Rogers (2021) found that poor work-life balance is negatively related to students' perceived stress, general anxiety, and depressive symptoms, which are responsible for widening the gap between work and other aspects of life.

A study by Tetteh and Attiogbe (2019) on working university students in Ghana revealed that combining work and study often results in less time for academic pursuits, negatively affecting academic performance. The difficulty in finding time for studies due to work requirements was a significant challenge, highlighting the delicate balance working students must maintain. Moreover, the financial strain associated with longer commutes and higher living costs can exacerbate stress levels. An article in *The Guardian* (2024) discussed the rise of commuter students in the UK, noting that increased travel distances and costs contribute to financial pressure and stress among students.

This study aims to investigate the effects of the University of The Gambia's relocation from Kanifing to Faraba Banta on working students, focusing on the stressors (as measured by the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen *et al.,* 1983) introduced by the relocation and their cumulative impact on other spheres of students' lives. Specifically, the study will explore how relocation-induced stress and commuting hours independently and collectively influence the ability of working students to maintain a harmonious balance between their work and personal lives. By building on existing literature and contextualising the findings within The Gambia's socio-economic environment. Understanding the implications of this relocation is not only vital for the academic success and well-being of the University of The Gambia's students but also contributes to broader discussions on the impact of institutional location changes on students in similar contexts globally. This research therefore seeks to provide actionable insights for policymakers and institutional stakeholders to support the unique needs of working students due to location changes.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant negative influence of stress on work-life balance among working students of the University of The Gambia relocated to Faraba Banta.
2. Commuting hours and stress will have a significant independent and joint influence on work-life balance among working students of the University of The Gambia relocated to Faraba Banta.

3.0 Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional design is appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time and allows for the analysis of relationships between variables without manipulating the study environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It allows the researcher to examine and analyse the respondents' views on the variables of interest within a specific timeframe (Bryman, 2016). The independent variables in this study are stress and commuting hours, while work-life balance served as the dependent variable. This approach facilitates the assessment of the relationship between commuting time, stress levels, and work-life balance among working-class students.

3.2 Participants / Sample Size

The study population consists of working-class students (self-employed, employed in private organisations, or public sector employees) at the University of The Gambia, specifically those attending classes at the Faraba Banta permanent campus. Participants were asked to complete a structured questionnaire that included demographic information, commuting hours, employment status, mode of transportation to campus, and standardised scales measuring stress and work-life balance.

A purposive sampling method was employed, targeting only those students who were employed (either self-employed, employed in

private organisations, or government employees). The survey was distributed online using Google Forms. After screening for eligibility (to ensure respondents met the criteria of being working-class students), a total of 120 students out of 158 that responded to the questionnaire were used for final analysis. Only those who met the study's inclusive criteria were included in the analysis.

3.3 Instrumentation

The questionnaire included sections on socio-demographic variables, stress, and work-family balance.

3.3.1 Stress

Stress was measured using the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Cohen *et al.* (1983). The PSS assesses the degree to which individuals perceive their life situations as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale with the following response options: 0 = Never, 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly Often, 4 = Very Often. Higher scores on the PSS indicate higher levels of perceived stress. The Cronbach's alpha for the PSS typically ranges from 0.75 to 0.88, demonstrating good internal consistency across different populations (Cohen & Williamson, 1988; Roberti *et al.,* 2006). Direct items (1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10) are those that measure stress directly, while reversed items (4, 5, 7, 8) assess the opposite (lower stress). The possible score range is from 0 to 40, where higher scores reflect greater perceived stress.

3.3.2 Work-life Balance

The 15-item Work-Family Balance Scale developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) was used to assess the work-life balance of the participants. This scale uses a 5-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Higher scores on items such as "I feel overwhelmed by the demands of balancing work, study, and personal life" and "I often have to sacrifice personal or leisure activities to meet academic or work deadlines" indicate greater work-family conflict and stress. Conversely, lower scores indicate better work-life balance. The scale has shown acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 (Carlson *et al.,* 2000; Michel *et al.,* 2011). Direct items (1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15) measure positive aspects of work-life balance, while reversed items (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11) measure negative aspects.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

Data was analysed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson r, while hypothesis 2 was tested using multiple regression analysis.

Table 1
Results

Participants' working status.	Respondents	%	Cumulative %
Part-time	31	25.8	25.8
Full-time	70	58.3	84.2
Freelance/Contract/Self employees	19	15.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

The table shows the employment status distribution, with the majority of respondents being full-time employees (58.3%), followed by part-time (25.8%) and freelancer/contract/self-employed (15.8%).

Table 2
Participants Distribution by Schools

School distribution	Respondents	%	Cumulative %
Agric and Envtal Sci.	12	10.0	10.0
Arts and Sciences	22	18.4	28.4
ICT	19	15.8	44.2
Eng. And Architecture	4	3.3	47.5
Business and Pub Admn.	25	20.8	68.3
Education	21	17.5	85.7
Public Health	17	14.2	100.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**	

From the table above, the majority of respondents came from the School of Business and Public Administration (20.8%), followed by Arts and Sciences (18.4%) and Education (17.5%). The three schools accounted for over 56% of all participants.

Engineering and Architecture had the fewest respondents, contributing only 3.3% to the total sample. The participants distributions reflected the students' intake by schools, with the school of business and public administration having the highest number of student intakes.

Table 3
Participants' Age Distribution

Age Distribution	Respondents	%	Cumulative %
18-29 years	39	32.5	32.5
30-44years	68	56.7	89.2
45years and Above	13	10.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

From the above table, the majority of respondents (89.2%) were within the youthful and early working age range of 18–44 years.

Table 4
Time Taking to Get to Faraba Banta from Students Residents

		Respondents	%	Cumulative %
Time	Less than 30 minutes	17	14.2	14.2
	30-60 minutes	32	26.7	40.8
	1-2 hours	57	47.5	88.3
	More than 2 hours	14	11.7	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	

The table above shows the distribution of respondents' daily commute times, with the majority (47.5%) commuting for 1–2 hours, 40.9% commuting for 1 hour or less, and 11.7% commuting for more than 2 hours. The few students that live close to Faraba Banta are more likely to have benefited from the relocation and spent less time getting to school. Though there was no study for comparison of work-life balance before the relocation, now that the students have been relocated, the preference of Kanifing over Faraba Banta for the group's study and revision by students is substantial in validating the held view that most would have loved to be in Kanifing if they had a choice over the relocation.
The above table presents the mode of transportation used by respondents for commutes. The majority (78.3%) use a school bus, provided by the government at a highly subsidised rate, to transport students from specific points to Faraba Banta directly, costing Gambian D20 to and from, excluding transportation to dedicated terminals; this is about one-third or one-quarter of joining public buses, although these buses are not sufficient and are highly crowded, while 8.3% each rely on public buses and private vehicles. The 'Others' category accounts for 5%.

Table 5
Gender Distribution

Gender distribution	Respondents	%	Cumulative %
Male	75	62.5	62.5
Female	45	37.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Table 6
Means of Transportation to Faraba Banta by Participants

		Respondents	%	Cumulative %
Transport	Public transport (School bus)	94	78.3	78.3
	Public transport (Public bus/gelegele)	10	8.3	86.6
	Private vehicle	10	8.3	94.9
	Others	6	5.0	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	

Table 7
Frequency Distribution of Students Commuting to Faraba Banta Weekly to Attend Lectures

		Respondents	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Days	Daily	7	5.8	5.8	5.8
	1-2 times a week	90	75.0	75.0	80.8
	More than 2 times a week	21	17.5	17.5	98.3
	Occasionally	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows the frequency of students' commuting to Faraba Banta in a week to attend lectures. Students do register for a maximum of six courses in a week, with a maximum of three courses in a single day, and therefore, students may have all their courses in a minimum of two days and a maximum of six days, including Saturday. Most respondents (75.0%) commute 1-2 times a week, while 17.5% commute more than twice a week, 5.8% commute daily, and 1.7% commute occasionally.
Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant negative influence of stress on work-life balance among working students of the University of The Gambia relocated to Faraba Banta.

Table 8
Summary Table of Pearson R Correlation Showing the Relationship Stress and Work-Life Balance of Working-Class Students of the University of the Gambia Relocated to Faraba Banta

Variables	1	2
1. Stress	1	-0.377**
2. Work-life balance	-	-
Mean	26.04	40.03
SD	5.33	8.01

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It could be observed from the above table that there was a statistically significant moderate negative relationship between stress and work-life balance among working-class students (r = -0.377, df (198); p < 0.01). The results indicated that the higher the stress, the lower the work-life balance and vice versa. The results run in agreement with the statement hypothesis. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is thereby confirmed.

Although the correlation coefficient (r = -0.377) is moderate in strength, it is statistically significant (p < 0.01), indicating a reliable inverse relationship between stress and work-life balance among working-class students. According to Cohen (1988), a correlation between ±0.10 and ±0.29 is considered small, ±0.30 to ±0.49 moderate, and ±0.50 and above large. Thus, a correlation of -0.377 falls within the moderate effect size, and its significance supports the validity of the hypothesis. Additionally, Ferguson (2009) argued that in social science research, practical importance can be recognised with correlations as low as ±0.20, especially when the variables studied involve complex human behaviour such as stress and work-life balance. This underscores the relevance of the result even though it is below ±0.50.

Hypothesis 2: Commuting hours and stress will have a significant independent and joint influence on work-life balance among working students of the University of The Gambia relocated to Faraba Banta.

Table 9

Summary Table of Multiple Regression Showing the Joint and Independent Influence of Commuting Hours and Stress on Work-Life Balance

Model	R	R^2	F	Sig	b	T	Sig
	0.377	0.142	9.68	0.000			
Commuting hours					0.010	0.110	0.913
Stress					-0.378	-4.354	0.000

From the table, it could be deduced that there was a significant moderate joint influence of independent influence of commuting hours and stress on work-life balance (R = 0.377, F = 9.68, p < 0.01). The predictor variable accounted for 14% variance on the dependent variable. It could be further revealed that stress (b = -0.378, t = 4.35, p < 0.01) had significant independent influence on work-family conflict, while commuting hours (b = 0.010; t = 110, p > 0.05) had no significant independent influence on work-life balance. Therefore, the hypothesis is partially accepted.

4.0 Discussion

The first hypothesis was tested using Pearson's r correlation, revealing a significant negative correlation between stress and work-life balance among working-class students (r = −0.377, p < 0.01). This result indicates that higher levels of stress correspond to lower work-life balance. As students experience increased stress, their ability to manage work, academic, and personal responsibilities diminishes. These findings support the hypothesis that stress significantly and negatively impacts the work-life balance of working-class students, aligning with existing literature that highlights stress as a major factor contributing to work-life conflict, especially among individuals juggling multiple commitments.

The present study aligns with Barker and Munir (2022), who found that students under high academic and work-related stress struggle to balance life and jobs, often facing anxiety and poor performance. Hernandez *et al.* (2023) also showed that financial burdens mediate the link between work-life conflict and mental health.

issues like depression with negative implications for work and life balance. Working-class students who rely on employment to fund education often experience chronic stress. Similarly, Sprung and Rogers (2021) reported that poor work-life balance correlates with higher stress, anxiety, and depression. These findings support the current results, showing that stress, which can be a result of financial or institutional factors, can have a significant influence on students' work-life balance.

The present findings reinforce previous research, confirming that stress substantially undermines work-life balance among working-class students. The combined pressures of financial burdens, academic workload, and institutional policies contribute to this negative relationship. Unlike full-time students with full support from parents or sponsors, working-class students encounter role conflicts, struggling to allocate adequate time for studies, employment, and self-care. Time constraints exacerbate stress, reducing study hours, leading to chronic fatigue, and limiting

social engagement. Furthermore, financial insecurity forces many students to work extended hours, intensifying stress and negatively affecting academic performance.

The psychological impact of juggling multiple responsibilities often results in heightened anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, further disrupting work-life balance. Over time, this creates a vicious cycle where stress perpetuates imbalance, severely impacting students' well-being and academic success. Without adequate institutional support, such as flexible learning schedules, financial aid, and adequate means of transportation, students will continue to struggle to maintain equilibrium between their work and other areas of life domains.

The second hypothesis, which stated that commuting hours and stress would have a joint and independent significant influence on work-life balance, was tested using multiple regression analysis. This analysis examined the combined and individual impact of commuting hours and stress on the work-life balance of working-class students. The results revealed that 14.2% of the variation in work-life balance was explained by these two predictors, indicating that commuting hours and stress together significantly influenced work-life balance. This suggests that changes in work-life balance among students were partially attributed to these factors. However, the relatively low percentage of variation explained could be due to institutional welfarism and interventionist programs, such as scholarships provided by the government for some students with good grades, private organisations, and international agencies, which have mitigated financial stress. Additionally, the availability of subsidised buses from major locations in the country to Faraba Banta has reduced commuting burdens, which might have reduced the contributions of commuting time in these relationships.

Individually, stress emerged as a significant negative predictor, confirming that higher stress levels lead to lower work-life balance. This finding aligns with existing research that links stress to increased difficulty in managing work, academic, and personal responsibilities. However, commuting hours were not found to be a significant predictor, suggesting that the amount of time spent commuting does not directly impact work-life balance. While long commutes may contribute to exhaustion, they do not independently explain variations in the work-life balance relationship in this study. These findings highlight that stress plays a crucial role in disrupting work-life balance, whereas commuting hours alone may not be a primary determinant. This suggests that stress has a more dominant role in shaping students' ability to balance work with other personal life responsibilities among the University of The Gambia working class in Faraba Banta.

This finding is supported by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress, which explains that stress arises when external demands exceed coping resources—common among working-class students facing academic, financial, and job pressures. Clark's (2000) work/family border theory adds that maintaining boundaries between work, school, and personal life is harder under stress. Hernandez *et al.* (2023) found financial stress links work-life conflict to mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Theories like economic stress theory (Conger & Elder, 1994) and burnout theory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) show how financial strain and prolonged stress lead to exhaustion and reduced well-being. Relocating a campus worsens these stressors, increasing conflict and mental health risks that widen work-life balance.

The independent finding on commuting hours and work-life balance contrasts with studies such as Thompson *et al.* (2024), which found that long commutes negatively impacted students' well-being due to increased time pressure and exhaustion. However, the lack of significance in the present study may indicate that students have developed coping strategies or adjusted their schedules to mitigate the impact of commuting on their daily routines. More importantly, 78.3% of the sampled population commutes to school using government-subsidised modern buses; some of these buses haveair conditioning, allowing most students to nap while in transit. These buses pick up students from major terminals in The Gambia and along the route to Faraba Banta, charging the paltry sum of D10 (approximately $0.14) for a one-way trip and D20 ($0.28) for a round trip. This results in an estimated weekly commuting cost of D60 ($0.84) for students who travel to Faraba Banta thrice a week, as indicated in Tables 3 and 4. Although, this money is huge for many Gambians who earn far less than $100 per month and have families. Furthermore, the majority of the sampled students spend two hours or less commuting between their residence and Faraba Banta, as shown in Table 2. These interventions may account for the non-significant independent influence of commuting hours on work-life balance in this study, in contrast with previous research findings.

5.0 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of stress and commuting hours on the work-life balance of working-class students. The result of the Pearson R correlation of r = -0.377, df (198); p < 0.01; indicates that higher stress levels lead to moderate difficulty in managing work and other areas of life well, leading to moderate incongruence in work and life balance. Furthermore, stress with independent influence, resulting from b = -0.378, t = 4.35, and p < 0.01, emerged as a major predictor of work-life balance when compared to the commuting hours of b = 0.010, t = 110, and p > 0.05, which had no independent influence. When examining the independent effect of these variables on work-life balance, this might likely be due to institutional interventions such as subsidised transportation for relocated students from various terminals within the country, while the joint influence of stress and commuting hours on work-life balance was also moderate, with R = 0.377, F = 9.68, and p < 0.01.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Institutional Support Initiatives

Implement flexible work/learning schedules, such as hybrid or online classes, to accommodate working students' time constraints so they can attend lectures from different locations instead of spending hours on the road to Faraba Banta.

6.2 Financial Assistance Programs

Expand scholarship opportunities for students and introduce government-backed repayment systems for tuition fees, tuition subsidies, and financial aid packages to reduce students' financial burdens and mitigate stress resulting from financial challenges related to school. This will give room for students who intend to go on study leave to have access to funds for financing their education while on leave, in most situations, which are without pay.

6.3 Enhanced Transportation Services

Government should invest more in student transportation options to reduce commuting-related stress and improve work-life balance. Government should improve on the current arrangement, as the support in this area is suspected to be responsible for the non-significant negative impact of commuting hours on work-life balance. More buses and terminals should be made available across the country.

6.4 Awareness Campaigns

Institutions should promote work-life balance awareness to educate students on time management and stress reduction techniques, as many of these students are ignorant of these relationships.

6.5 Faculty Sensitisation Programs

Train academic staff to recognise the challenges of working students and adjust workloads and deadlines where possible, including deadline flexibility and workload adjustments.

6.6 Collaboration between Universities and Employers

Establishing partnerships between academic institutions and businesses/employers of labour to create supportive employment policies that prioritise academic success and student well-being that will result in win-win situations for students and employers; employees will become more productive at the same time as they develop themselves academically.

Future research should consider comparing the impact of the University of The Gambia relocation on working and non-working students to better understand differential experiences of stress and work-life balance. Additionally, studies could explore the stress levels and work-life balance among continuing students who previously attended classes in Kanifing before the relocation versus those who began their studies after the move.

7.0 Consent

As per international standards or university standards, respondents' consent was sought before the commencement of data collection and has been preserved by the author(s).

8.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Cohen et al. (1983)

Items	Coding	Response
1	Direct	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
2	Direct	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
3	Direct	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
4	Reverse	4, 3, 2, 1, 0
5	Reverse	4, 3, 2, 1, 0
6	Direct	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
7	Reverse	4, 3, 2, 1, 0
8	Reverse	4, 3, 2, 1, 0
9	Direct	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
10	Direct	0, 1, 2, 3, 4

Appendix 2

15-Item Work-Family Balance Scale Developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985)

Items	Coding	Response
1	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
2	Direct	1.2.3.4.5
3	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
4	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
5	Reverse	5.4,3,2,1
6	Reverse	5.4,3,2,1
7	Reverse	5.4,3,2,1
8	Reverse	5.4,3,2,1
9	Reverse	5.4,3,2,1
10	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
11	Reverse	5.4,3,2,1
12	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
13	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
14	Direct	1,2,3,4,5
15	Direct	1,2,3,4,5