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Original Article

Workload pressure and employee performance at the Customs Revenue Division, Nimule Station, South Sudan. A cross-sectional study.

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ABSTARCT

Background:
The scholarly interest in job stress and its link to employee performance dates back several decades and has evolved considerably across industrialised nations. The study aims to establish the relationship between workload pressure and employee performance at the Customs Revenue Division, Nimule Station, South Sudan.

Methodology:
This study adopted a correlational survey design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study population comprised all 137 employees of the Customs Revenue Division stationed at Nimule, South Sudan. This population includes customs officers responsible for daily cargo clearance. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were coded, cleaned, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 26) for analysis.

Results:
High mean scores on handling large volumes of work daily (Mean = 4.24, SD = 0.900), heavy workload within limited time (Mean = 4.42, SD = 0.845), and working extra hours (Mean = 4.45, SD = 0.847) indicate that employees strongly experience excessive job demands. The high mean scores on physical exhaustion (Mean = 4.22, SD = 0.976) and mental stress (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.695) suggest that workload pressure negatively affects employees' physical well-being, mental health, and efficiency. Low ratings for meeting work standards (M = 2.28) and meeting daily work targets (M = 2.47) further indicate performance gaps in productivity and efficiency. Workload pressure has a weak negative relationship with employee performance (r = -0.130, p = 0.258). 77% were male, while 23% were female

Conclusion:
Workload pressure is a key driver of job stress and negatively affects employee performance by reducing efficiency and increasing operational delays.

Recommendations:
The Customs Revenue Division should recruit additional staff and improve workload distribution to reduce excessive pressure on employees. Automation of customs processes should also be strengthened to enhance efficiency.

Keywords: Workload pressure, Employee performance, Customs Revenue Division, Nimule Station
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Background
The scholarly interest in job stress and its link to employee performance dates back several decades and has evolved considerably across industrialised nations. In Japan, the phenomenon of karoshi death from overwork drew global attention to the lethal extremes of occupational stress, prompting nationwide legislative reforms on working hours and employee wellbeing (Iwasaki al., 2006). These historical trajectories in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan collectively laid the groundwork for the global research agenda on job stress and employee performance.

Workload pressure is defined as the perception that the volume, pace, and complexity of work tasks exceed an employee's capacity to perform them within the allotted time (Bowling et al., 2015). It encompasses the sheer volume of work assigned, the time pressure under which it must be completed, and the pace at which successive tasks follow. When these dimensions exceed a sustainable threshold, employees experience cognitive overload, fatigue, and a decline in the quality and speed of their output (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

In operational settings such as customs and border management, workload pressure manifests in the daily processing of large volumes of commercial cargo, strict time-bound clearance targets, and the relentless pace of incoming consignments (JICA, 2023). Research has consistently demonstrated that sustained workload pressure diminishes concentration, increases error rates, and erodes both physical and mental health over time (Gesare et al., 2024; Holden et al., 2021). These effects make workload pressure a particularly relevant stressor in high-throughput

service environments. The study aims to establish the relationship between workload pressure and employee performance at the Customs Revenue Division, Nimule Station, South Sudan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a correlational survey design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Given that data collection was within a six-month window at a single border station, this design offers both methodological rigour and operational feasibility.

Study Population

The study population comprised all 137 employees of the Customs Revenue Division stationed at Nimule, South Sudan. This population includes customs officers responsible for daily cargo clearance and tariff assessment, supervisors and managers who oversee operations and staff coordination, and clearing agents who facilitate trade documentation on behalf of importers and exporters. The population figures were obtained from the administrative records (2025) of the South Sudan Revenue Authority at Nimule Station. This population was appropriate because all members were directly involved in customs operations and were exposed to the workplace stressors under investigation. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) emphasised that a target population should consist of all individuals who possess the characteristics relevant to the research problem.

Sample size

The sample size for this study was determined using the formula proposed by Yamane (1967), widely applied in social science research for finite populations. The formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)}$$

Where **n** represents the desired sample size, **N** is the total population, which is 137 respondents, comprising Customs Officers, Clearing Agents, and Supervisors/Managers, and **e** is the margin of error set at 0.05. Substituting into the formula

$$n = \frac{137}{1+137(0.05^2)} = \frac{137}{1+0.3} \quad \frac{137}{1+1.3} = 102$$

Therefore, the study used a sample size of 102 respondents, which was considered adequate to provide reliable and representative findings. Therefore, the study used a sample size of 102 respondents, which was considered adequate to provide reliable and representative findings.

Table 1: Distribution of Target Population by Category

Population Category	Target Population	Sample Size
Customs Officers	92	72
Supervisors/Managers	15	10
Clearing Agents	30	20
Total	**137**	**102**

Source: Administrative Records, SSRA Nimule Station (2025)

Sampling Technique

Two sampling techniques were employed in this study: simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select customs officers and clearing agents from the target population. This technique ensured that every individual in these categories has an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample, thereby minimizing selection bias. In practice, the study obtained complete staff registers from the station administration, assigned a unique number to each customs officer and each clearing agent, and then used a random number generator to select the required number of respondents from each group. A total of 72 customs officers were drawn from the 92 available, and 20 clearing agents were selected from the pool of 30. This approach was appropriate for these categories because the respondents share broadly similar job functions within their groups, making random selection sufficient to achieve representativeness. Purposive sampling, on the other hand, was applied to select 10 supervisors/ managers from 15 available at the station. Purposive sampling involved the deliberate selection of participants based on their knowledge, experience, or position within the organization. In this study, supervisors and managers were selected purposively because they possessed specialized institutional knowledge about operational challenges, stress dynamics, and employee performance patterns that could not be captured through random selection alone. Their inclusion through the census was also justified by the relatively small number of individuals in this category, making it both feasible and methodologically sound to include all of them.

Data Sources

The study relied exclusively on primary data, collected directly from respondents at the Customs Revenue Division, Nimule Station. Primary data was preferred for this study

because it provided first-hand, context-specific information about the variables under investigation. The use of primary data ensured that the findings reflected the actual experiences and perceptions of customs employees regarding job stress and their work performance.

Data Collection Methods

A survey method was employed to gather quantitative data from customs officers and clearing agents. This method involved the administration of structured questionnaires to a large number of respondents simultaneously, enabling efficient data collection within the study timeframe. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with supervisors and managers to collect qualitative data. Interviews were particularly suited for gathering in-depth perspectives from individuals who hold positions of authority and could provide nuanced insights into workplace dynamics and stress-related performance issues.

Data Collection Instruments.

Questionnaire

A self-administered structured questionnaire serves as the primary data collection instrument for customs officers and clearing agents. The questionnaires were distributed in person during working hours at Nimule Station, following initial briefing sessions with respondents. This instrument was appropriate because it allowed for standardized responses across a large sample, facilitating statistical analysis.

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from the 10 supervisors and managers.

Validity

In this study, content validity was assessed to ensure that the questionnaire items adequately covered all dimensions of job stress and employee performance as defined in the conceptual framework. Content validity was established by submitting the draft questionnaire to three academic experts and two field supervisors with experience in customs operations, who evaluated each item for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed using the formula:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of items}}$$

The study drew a conclusion based on the CVI of above $0 \leq 1$, reflecting the validity test results tabulated below;

Table 2: Content Validity Index

S/No.	Variables	No. of Items	No. of Items declared valid	CVI
1.	Workload Pressure	7	6	0.86
4.	Employee performance	16	13	0.81

Source: Primary Data (2026)

A CVI of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, in line with the threshold recommended by Amin (2005). Items falling below this threshold were revised or removed before the final instrument was administered. This approach ensured that the instrument comprehensively represented the constructs under study and yielded meaningful data.

Reliability

In this study, the internal consistency of the questionnaire will be evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. To achieve this, a pilot test was conducted with 15 customs employees at a neighbouring border station who were not part of the final sample. Their responses were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was computed for each section of the instrument, as in Table 3

Table 3: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient Reliability Test

S/N0.	ITEM	Cronbach Analysis
1	Workload Pressure	0.932
2	Employee performance	0.823

Source: Field (2026)

A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above was regarded as indicative of acceptable internal consistency. Any item whose subscale was below the benchmark was reviewed, rephrased, or eliminated to strengthen the instrument before

the main data collection exercise. This procedure ensured that the final questionnaire yielded dependable and replicable measurements of both job stress and employee performance.

Measurement of Variables

Independent Variable: Job Stress

Workload Pressure was measured using items adapted from the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983) and the Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek et al., 1998). Respondents rated their agreement with statements reflecting volume of work, time pressure, and work pace demands on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Task Performance was measured using items adapted from the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) developed by Koopmans et al. (2014). The items assessed work quality and efficiency, with respondents rating their agreement on a five-point Likert scale.

Contextual Performance was measured using items from the IWPQ (Koopmans et al., 2014), focusing on initiative and creativity as well as cooperation among colleagues. A five-point Likert scale was used consistently for measurement.

Counterproductive Work Behaviour was measured using items adapted from the IWPQ (Koopmans et al., 2014) and the Counterproductive Work Behaviour Checklist by Spector et al. (2006). Items assessed were absenteeism and excessive negativity on the same five-point Likert response format.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were coded, cleaned, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 26) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of respondents and the central tendencies of the study variables. To address the three research objectives, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship with employee performance.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected through interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved transcribing the recorded interviews verbatim, reading the transcripts repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes across coded data, reviewing and refining themes, and finally defining and naming the themes that emerged. The qualitative findings were organised around and integrated with the quantitative results during the discussion stage to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how job stress affects employee performance at Nimule Station.

Procedure for Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through a systematic sequence of steps. First, the study obtained an introductory letter from the School of Graduate Studies, Team University, and sought formal permission from the management of the South Sudan Revenue Authority at Nimule Station. Upon approval, the study visited the station to introduce the study to potential respondents and distribute informed consent forms. Following consent, questionnaires were administered to the sampled customs officers and clearing agents during their normal working hours. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires, after which the instruments were collected by the study. Concurrently, interview appointments were scheduled with the 10 supervisors and managers at times convenient to their operational duties. Each interview was conducted privately and recorded with the participant's permission. All completed instruments were checked for completeness before data entry began.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Each respondent received a written consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. No individual was compelled to participate, and consent was documented through signed forms.

Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld throughout the research process. Questionnaires did not require respondents to provide their names, and interview responses were reported using pseudonyms or generic identifiers rather than actual names. All collected data was stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the study. These measures were consistent with data protection principles outlined in contemporary research ethics guidelines (Saunders et al., 2019).

Before fieldwork commenced, the study obtained ethical clearance from the School of Graduate Studies, Team University, to secure written permission from the South Sudan Revenue Authority. A copy of the research approval letter was presented to the station management at Nimule before any contact with respondents. Adherence to these protocols ensured that the study conformed to nationally and institutionally recognised research governance frameworks (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

RESULTS

Response Rate

Sataloff & Vontela (2021), response rate refers to the proportion of respondents who complete and return questionnaires out of the total number distributed. It is expressed as a percentage and is calculated as:

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{\text{Total Sample Size}}{\text{Number of Responses}} \times 100$$

In this study, a total of 102 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 78 were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 76.5%. This response rate is considered adequate for statistical analysis and reliable interpretation of findings (Wu et al., 2022). Overall, the response rate was sufficiently high, minimising non-response bias and enhancing the credibility of the study findings.

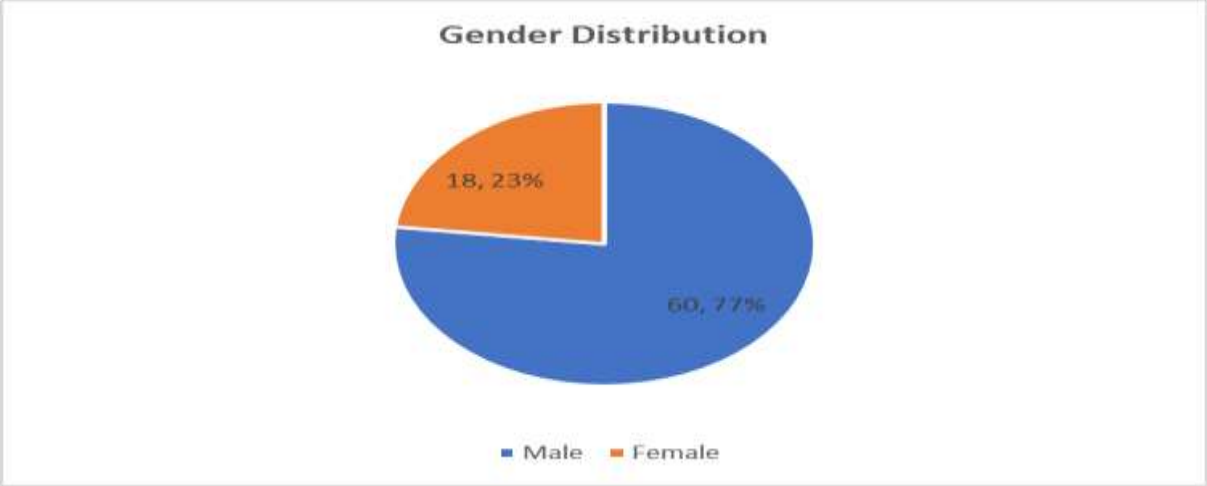
Table 4: Response Rate

Population Category	Sample Size	Actual Response	Response rate(%)
Customs Officers	72	54	75
Supervisors/Managers	10	06	60
Clearing Agents	20	18	90
Total	**102**	**78**	**76.5**

Source: *Primary Data (2026)*

Demographic characteristics

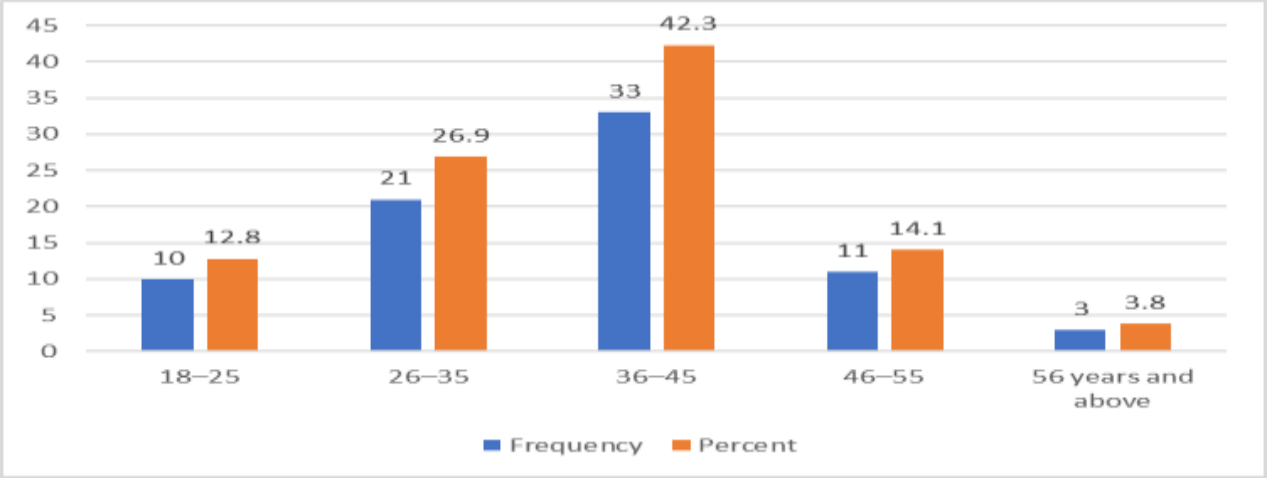
Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents



Source: Field (2026)

The study findings revealed that 77% were male while 23% were female. This implies that the majority of participants were male, which may have influenced the study findings, given the relatively low representation of female respondents.

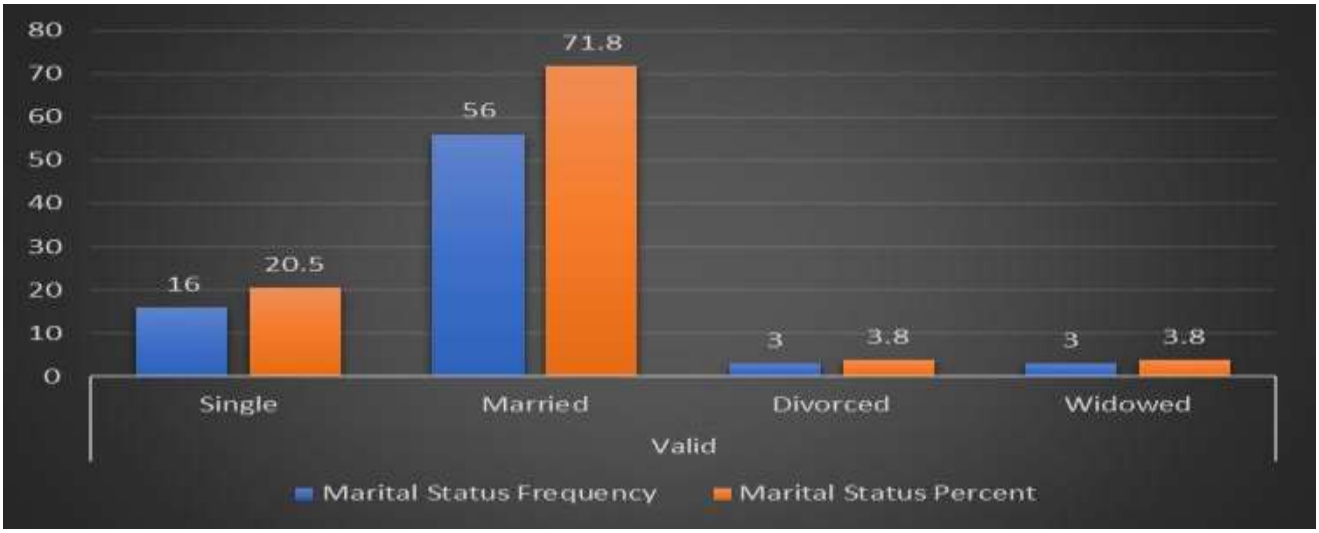
Figure 2: Age of the Respondents



Source: Field (2026)

The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents fall within the active working age group (36 –45 years). This implies that most employees are in their productive years, capable of handling demanding tasks associated with customs operations.

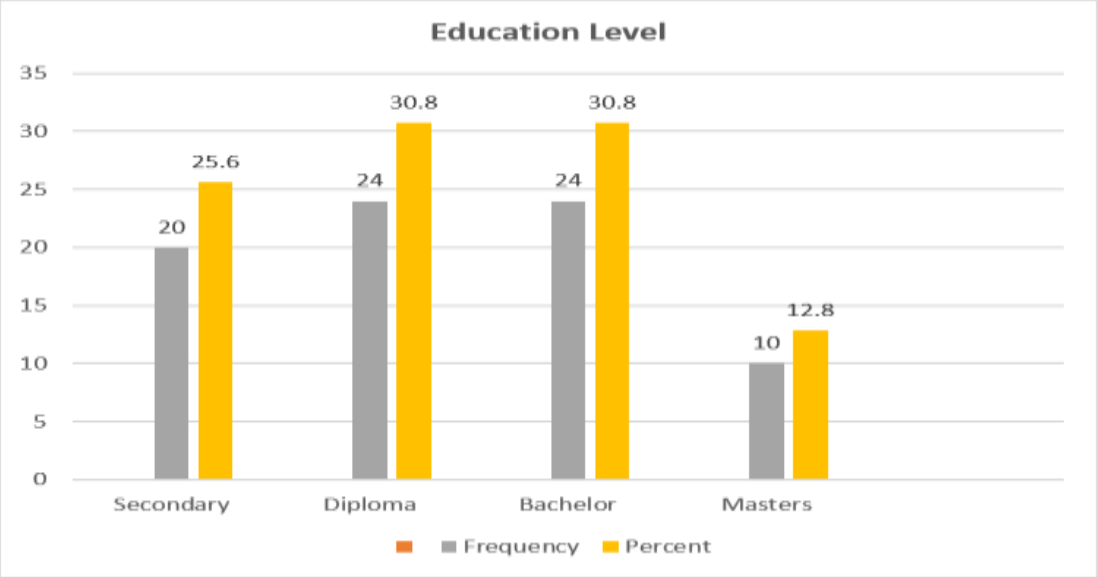
Figure 4: Bar Graph Showing Marital Status of the Respondents



Source: Field (2026)

The findings indicate that the majority, 71.8% (56) of respondents were married, while a minority, 3.8% (3) were divorced, and widowed at (3). This distribution suggests that most of the respondents had family responsibilities, which may influence their perspectives, level of commitment, and decision-making within the workplace.

Figure 5: Level of Education



Source: Field (2026)

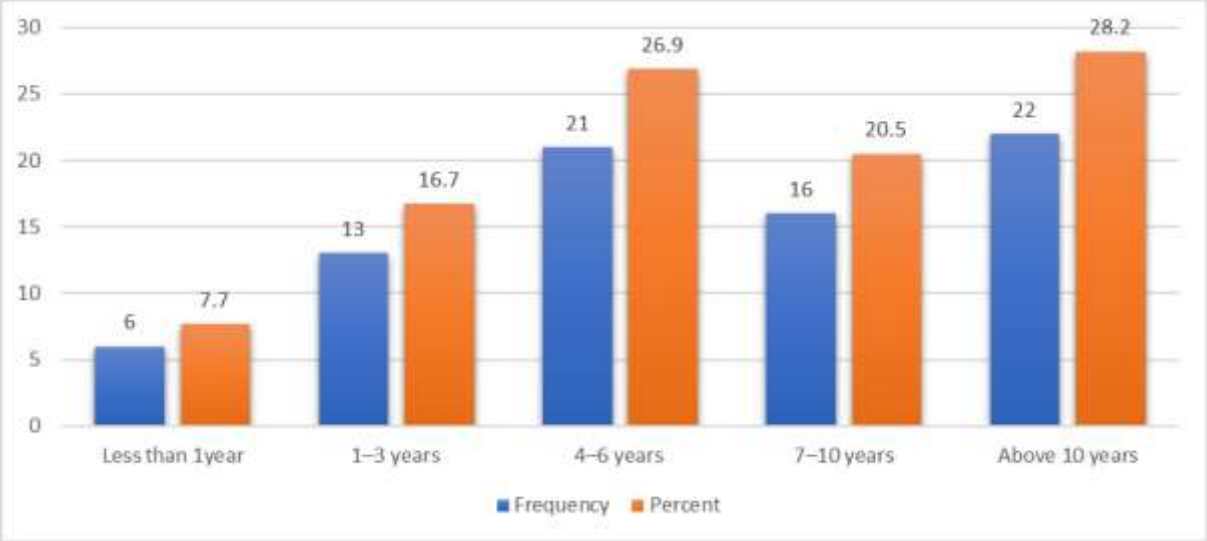
The findings show that most respondents hold a Bachelor's degree and diploma, indicating a highly educated workforce, while the smallest proportion of respondents hold a Master's degree, showing that the majority of employees are highly educated. And more so, it implies that employee performance challenges observed at Nimule Station are unlikely to stem from a lack of formal education, but may instead be attributed to other factors such as job stress, workload pressure, role ambiguity, and organisational constraints.

Figure 6: Bar Graph Showing Level of Position

Source: Field (2026)

The results indicate that most respondents were customs officers (44), while the smallest proportion of respondents were supervisors/managers (6). This reflects the operational structure of the Customs Revenue Division, where front-line staff are more numerous.

Figure 7:Years of Service at Nimule Station



Source: Field (2026)

The majority of respondents had worked for 10 years or more, while the minority had worked for less than 1 year. This suggests a relatively experienced workforce with sufficient exposure to job demands and organisational procedures.

Descriptive statistics

Work Load Pressure

Table 5: Responses on Workload Pressure

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
I handle a large volume of cargo clearance work daily	4.24	0.900
My workload is too heavy to complete within the required time	4.42	0.845
I often work under tight deadlines when clearing cargo	4.00	0.897
The number of tasks assigned to me affects my efficiency	4.56	0.749
I feel physically exhausted due to my workload	4.22	0.976
I feel mentally stressed because of the amount of work assigned	4.56	0.695
I am required to work extra hours to complete my duties	4.45	0.847
I feel mentally stressed because of the amount of work assigned	4.56	0.695
Average	**4.38**	**0.584**

Source: Field (2026)

The findings imply that workload pressure is a major source of job stress among employees at Nimule Station. High mean scores on handling large volumes of work daily (Mean = 4.24, SD = 0.900), heavy workload within limited time (Mean = 4.42, SD = 0.845), and working extra hours (Mean = 4.45, SD = 0.847) indicate that employees strongly experience excessive job demands. Similarly, the high mean scores on physical exhaustion (Mean = 4.22, SD = 0.976) and mental stress (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.695) suggest that workload pressure negatively affects employees' physical well-being, mental health, and efficiency. The relatively low standard deviations further show consistency in respondents' opinions, confirming that workload pressure is widely experienced among employees.

Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance

Employment performance was measured using three dimensions, namely: Task Performance, Contextual Performance, and Work Behaviour and Attitude. Task Performance

Table 6: Responses on Task Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I complete cargo clearance tasks on time	2.19	1.580
I accurately assess tariffs and duties	2.51	1.365
I meet the required standards in my work	2.28	1.611
I perform my duties efficiently	2.56	1.517
I am able to meet daily work targets	2.47	1.501
I make minimal errors when performing my duties	3.09	1.407
Average	**2.52**	**1.344**

Source: Field (2026)

The results in Table 6 indicate generally low to moderate levels of task performance among respondents. The item means range from 2.19 to 3.09, suggesting that most respondents either disagreed or were uncertain about their effectiveness in key aspects of cargo clearance duties. Specifically, the lowest mean (M = 2.19) for completing cargo clearance tasks on time suggests that timeliness is a major challenge. Similarly, low ratings for meeting work standards (M = 2.28) and meeting daily work targets (M = 2.47) further indicate performance gaps in productivity and efficiency. The relatively highest mean (M = 3.09) for making minimal errors suggests that while errors still occur, respondents were somewhat more confident in accuracy compared to other performance dimensions, such as speed and workload completion. Overall, the average of 2.52 confirms that task performance is generally below the expected level, indicating inefficiencies in workload execution, time management, and output delivery.

Contextual Performance

Table 7: Responses on Contextual Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I willingly assist my colleagues when needed	3.41	1.211
I follow organisational rules and procedures	2.15	1.571
I take the initiative to improve my work performance	2.45	1.326
I cooperate well with other staff members	2.28	1.511
I contribute positively to the work environment	2.49	1.412
Average	**2.56**	**1.267**

Source: Field (2026)

Table 7 shows that contextual performance among respondents is generally low to moderate, with an overall average of 2.56. The findings indicate mixed behaviours in workplace cooperation and extra-role performance. While respondents show relatively higher willingness to assist colleagues (Mean = 3.41), other aspects, such as following organisational rules (Mean = 2.15), cooperation with staff (Mean = 2.28), and initiative in improving performance (Mean = 2.45), are rated low. This suggests weaknesses in teamwork, compliance, and proactive behaviour. Overall, the results imply that although some supportive behaviour exists, contextual performance remains below desirable levels in most areas.

Work Behaviour and Attitude

Table 8: Responses on Work Behaviour and Attitude

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I delay completing assigned tasks	3.50	1.560
I sometimes ignore work procedures	3.36	1.377
I come late to work or leave early	3.51	1.356
I engage in behaviours that reduce work efficiency	3.69	1.302
I avoid responsibilities assigned to me.	3.41	1.362

Average	**3.49**	**1.206**

Source: Field (2026)

Table 8 shows that counterproductive work behaviour among respondents is generally high, with an overall average of 3.49. The results indicate frequent occurrences of negative workplace behaviours such as reducing work efficiency, arriving late or leaving early, delaying task completion, avoiding responsibilities, and occasionally ignoring work procedures. The highest mean (mean = 3.69) shows that reducing work efficiency is a notable concern, while all other indicators also reflect above-average agreement. Overall, the findings suggest that counterproductive behaviours are relatively common, indicating challenges in discipline, accountability, and adherence to organisational standards.

Overall, the results suggest that while some employees demonstrate acceptable performance, the general workplace environment is characterised by relatively low task performance (mean = 2.52) and contextual performance (mean = 2.56), alongside comparatively high counterproductive work behaviours (mean = 3.49). This pattern indicates that inefficiencies and negative workplace behaviours are more pronounced than desirable performance outcomes, which may adversely affect overall organisational effectiveness.

Correlation Analysis

Table 9: Correlation Results

		Workload Pressure
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.258

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**
*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**
Source: Field (2026)

Workload Pressure and Employee Performance

The findings indicate that workload pressure has a weak negative relationship with employee performance ($r = -0.130$, $p = 0.258$). This means that as workload pressure increases, employee performance tends to decrease slightly; however, the relationship is not statistically significant since the p-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, workload pressure does not significantly influence employee performance in this study.

Discussion of Findings

Workload Pressure and Employee Performance

The study established that workload pressure is a major contributor to job stress among employees at Nimule Station. The findings from both descriptive statistics and correlation analysis revealed that workload pressure is negatively associated with employee performance, although the relationship is weak and statistically insignificant ($r = -0.130$). The qualitative findings further reinforce this result by showing that employees face heavy cargo volumes, strict deadlines, and insufficient staffing levels. These conditions lead to fatigue, reduced concentration, and delays in service delivery.

These findings are consistent with Wang et al. (2022) and Bowling et al. (2015), who argue that excessive workload reduces employee efficiency and increases emotional exhaustion. The results also align with the Job Demands–Control Model (Karasek, 1979), which explains that high job demands combined with limited control result in strain and reduced performance. In the context of Nimule Station, workload pressure remains a key operational challenge that indirectly undermines performance quality.

Conclusions

Workload Pressure

The study concludes that workload pressure is a key driver of job stress and negatively affects employee performance by reducing efficiency and increasing operational delays.

Recommendations

The Customs Revenue Division should recruit additional staff and improve workload distribution to reduce excessive pressure on employees. Automation of customs processes should also be strengthened to enhance efficiency.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by its reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. In addition, the focus on a single station limits the generalizability of findings to other customs stations in South Sudan. Time and resource constraints also restricted broader data collection.

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Lists of acronyms and abbreviations

CVI	Content Validity Index
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
SSRA	South Sudan Revenue Authority
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Source of funding
The study was not funded.

Conflict of interest
The author did not declare any conflict of interest.

Data availability
Data is available upon request.

Author contribution
John Apoi Dhukpiu Apoi collected data and drafted the manuscript of the study.
Dr Sarah Kyaloba supervised the study.

Author biography
John Apoi Dhukpiu Apoi is a student of a Master's of Business Administration at Team University.
Dr. Sarah Kyaloba is a supervisor at Team University.

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