April 2018

Investigating Occupational Burnout in Library Personnel

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ABSTRACT

Background: *This paper is an attempt to investigate occupational burnout among library personnel in University Libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria. Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion which is caused by prolonged stress.*

Objectives: *find out if library personnel in academic libraries in Ogun State, do experience occupational burnout, Highlight the perceived causes of occupational burnout, identify the consequences of occupational burnout on the library personnel surveyed and strategies to mitigate burnout syndrome among library personnel.*

Methods: *A descriptive survey method was adopted for the study Two hundred and thirty six copies of structured questionnaire were administered and Two hundred and twenty one (representing 93.6% response rate) were retrieved. One hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation.*

Results: *The causes of occupational burnout among library personnel sampled ranged from inadequate resources to work with, rigid working hours, unfavorable policies.*

Discussions: *Drawing from the analysis carried out, there are some factors that affect the level of burnout experienced by the library personnel; these factors go a long way to affect the level of occupational burn out experienced.*

Conclusion: *The paper concludes that the level of commitment of the library personnel could be determined by the nature of prevailing policies in the institution.*

Introduction

Organizations have the mission of offering high quality service and this depends greatly on the disposition of its employees. Human resource is the most important factor in any organization notwithstanding the abundance of physical and financial resources. For any organization to be termed as being successful, it is of paramount importance that its employees are taken good care of both physically and emotionally because the physical resources available can only be turned to products or services that will bring about economic returns with the involvement of the human resource. It is the obligation of every organization or institution to provide adequate working environment, health and safety measures for their employees' in order to forestall accidental occurrences and to avoid high rate of turnover. Absence of these leads to workers experiencing occupational health hazards, accumulated stress and occupational burnout (Thomas, Kohli & Choi 2014).

Workers are very important asset to any organization or institution and they deserve to be treated with prestige and their welfare packages must be enticing. (Drucker, 2010). Howse (1999) posited that the Nigerian labor law gives room for workers to negotiate for their rights by bargaining for their legitimate interest; however, these laws have not been taken seriously by most employers. Therefore, it has become a trend for workers in Nigeria to embark on demonstrations, rallies and long strike actions because the provision for their welfare only exists on paper and not implemented. Workers are constantly denied of basic social and economic incentives that will help to improve the quality of their life. This has a very great impact on the productivity, passion, self-esteem, financial status and team spirit of workers (Ifijeh & Adebayo, 2014). Hence, this has led workers being faced with stressors such as low income, unfavorable policies, physical loss of strength, being overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands amongst others. When this accumulates, it results in burnout in form of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion (Sowmya, 2011)

The study will be guided by the following objectives:

❖ find out if library staff in University libraries in Ogun State do experience occupational burnout.
❖ highlight the perceived causes of occupational burnout
❖ identify the consequences of occupational burnout on the library personnel surveyed and
❖ proffer strategies to mitigate burnout syndrome among library personnel.

Review of Related Literature

A library is a center for lifelong learning, research, skill development amongst others and it is supposed to operate in a serene and quiet atmosphere if a meaningful result is to be achieved. Library personnel are saddled with the responsibility of acquiring and organizing information resources and also making these information resources available for use. Traditionally, a librarian is seen as a custodian of books and other print materials but in recent times, especially with the introduction of ICT into library services, the trend has changed. This change in technological advancement has affected both the library and library personnel. In order to remain relevant in the changing environment, it has become necessary for library personnel to develop new skills in processing and making information available to users. Akazue & Ojeme (2010) posited that many academic libraries in Nigeria are fully automated which means activities such as cataloguing, classification, indexing, charging and discharging of books are done using a library

management software. All these are only achievable with the use of peripherals such as computers, scanners, and the internet because the software cannot function in isolation.

Occupational Burnout

Occupational burnout is characterized by exhaustion, lack of enthusiasm and motivation, feeling drained and also having a dimension of frustration and/or negative emotions and cynical behavior as a result of reduced professional efficacy within the workplace (Powell, 2011). Occupational burnout does not only imply the loss of physical strength at work; it also entails some other factors that may lead to an employee's lack of interest in the job. Such factors include: low earnings, unfavorable policies, role conflicts etc. Often times, employees become frustrated, bitter and in some cases, they leave their jobs if affected by any of these factors.

Paskey (2012) asserted that occupational burnout is often associated with excessive stress, which most time is not the underlying culprit. She further posited that employees may exhibit signs of burnout if they feel they are not adequately rewarded for a job well done, or if the current job they are doing become mundane and uninteresting. According to Sowmya (2011) burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion which is caused by prolonged stress. This kind of excessive stress occurs when an individual is not able to catch up with the constant demand of work. As the stress continues, there is usually a loss of initial motivation and interest prior to assumption of certain roles. Burnout has the tendency of reducing productivity and decreasing the level of one's energy, leaving a feeling of increasingly helplessness, hopelessness, cynicism, and resentfulness and at the long run; one may feel like he/she has nothing more to give. To confirm this, Templeton and Satcher, (2007) reiterated that employees that are suffering from burnout are those that have low productivity rate, those that deliver poor client service, ineffective and those that do not make themselves available at work regularly. These kinds of employees most often seek for other jobs thereby causing a high rate of turnover in workplaces.

Occupational burnout is not the absence of skills or knowledge of what to do or how to do it; it is just that the will power to carry out the required task is no longer there.

Occupational burnout is said to be common with people who interact with other people frequently. Therefore, library personnel cannot be exempted from these categories of workers since they spend most time communicating and having direct contact with library patrons.

Maslach & Leiter (2005) identified three dimension of occupational burnout:

(1) Emotional exhaustion: This means energy discharge and consumption of emotional resources,

(2) Depersonalization: this is common with employees who interact with clients and customers on a regular basis. This type of burnout separates workers from others and the effect may lead to pessimism.

(3) Dimensional personal accomplishment: this is a situation whereby the employee comes to a negative self-assessment

Burisch (2006) posited that burnout has often been mistaken for stress. He stated that the symptoms could be quite similar but distinctions should be made because stress can only intensify burnout; it is not the main cause of it. Workers might experience stress from work overload, rigid working hours, and inadequate working procedures and yet they might not experience

occupational burnout. Burnout can be triggered by many factors. Maslach et al. (2001) posited that job characteristics such as role conflicts and role ambiguity are quite demanding while Demerouti et al. (2001) opined that physical environment (heat and noise) could also be contributing factors.

World Health Organization (2000) reported that most countries do not have a specific legislation that addresses the impact of job stress on employees. Although most of these countries have minimum standards for safety and health, it is not sufficient since the standard focuses on the physical aspects of the workplace and does not include the psychological and mental health aspects of working conditions.

Casey (2012) quoting Caputo (1991) averred that occupational burnout can be manifested psychologically, physically and behaviorally. Casey further opined that physical symptoms can include frustration, anxiety, boredom and attitudinal problem such as cynicism, indifference and resignation; physical symptoms include insomnia, weight gain, fatigue and in some cases, hypertension.

Library personnel and Burnout
Library personnel are not immune to occupational burnout because according to Huprich (2007), library personnel engage in very tedious work while trying to satisfy the users. Affleck (1996) using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) carried out a survey among Bibliographic Instruction Library personnel in Britain and discovered a high rate of burnout among 52.8% of the Library personnel surveyed. Odelia (1999) also surveyed Library personnel in Israel and noted that there was a low burnout rate among the older Library personnel while the younger ones acknowledged the fact that they experience feelings of frustration and lack of self-fulfillment.

Cardina (2004) opined that library personnel have had to do more with fewer resources as budgets have been significantly cut. In a study carried out by Saddiq & Burke (2006), lack of money, budget cuts, budget issues and downsizing were variables that scored high in each parameter. They also observed that these variables are constant in each research involving stress and burnout. This finding affirms the opinion of Cardina (2004).

Baird and Baird (2005) identified lack of variety as a variable that makes the library a boring place to work. According to them, the repetitive nature of library work makes it monotonous and this brings about boredom. A study conducted by Siamian et al (2006) reported that the degree of burnout among the library personnel in Mazandaran University was high. The study identified the following as burnout factors among library personnel: lack of facilities, not given enough time to carry out or perform a task, no opportunity to give suggestions or unconducive working environment; ambiguous roles and duties assigned to the employee's; and lack of proper motivation.

According to Harwell (2013), the following are major factors that contribute to occupational burnout among Library personnel:

❖ Workload issues: work overload, responsibilities not matched to support systems, working nights and weekends, frequent technological change, obnoxious patrons.

❖ Control issues: powerlessness to affect change, budget cuts, bureaucratic inertia, poor management and supervision, lack of voice in goal setting or decision making, role conflict, role ambiguity, and lack of autonomy.

❖ Issues with regard to rewards and recognitions: underpaid and undervalued respective of qualifications and working conditions, lack of adequate recognition, lack of opportunity for advancement.

❖ Community issues: ambiguous authority structures, blurred roles between professionals and paraprofessionals, poor public image of library personnel.

❖ Fairness issues: job discrimination and lack of private work space.

❖ Value issues: expectations that library personnel should be helpful and pleasant.

Researchers in the field of library, librarianship and other related disciplines in Nigeria have dealt extensively on issues ranging from job satisfaction and performance of library personnel, job motivation and productivity it is however disheartening to note that no literature existed for occupational burnout among library personnel in Nigeria. Although stress related issues have also been dealt with extensively but it is not sufficient to take the place of occupational burnout.

For clarity, the table below distinguishes between stress and burnout.

Stress	Burnout
Characterized by over engagement	Characterized by disengagement
Emotions are over active	Emotions are blunted
Produces urgency and hyperactivity	Produces helplessness and hopelessness
Loss of energy	Loss of motivation, ideals and hope
Leads to anxiety disorders	Leads to detachment and depression
Primary damage is physical	Primary damage is emotional
May kill prematurely	May make life seem not worth living

(Source: Help Guide.org, http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/preventing-burnout.htm)

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and thirteen university libraries in Ogun State were surveyed. The total sampling method was used. Self-designed questionnaire with closed ended questions were administered to the library staff in the libraries surveyed. A total number of two hundred and thirty (236) copies of questionnaire were administered and two hundred and twenty one (221) copies were retrieved from the library personnel bringing the response rate 93.6%. Analysis and interpretations were done using descriptive statistics. One hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation to test the relationship.

Table 1: Population of Library personnel in University Libraries Ogun State

S/N	List of Universities in Ogun State ,Nigeria	Number of Library Staff	Ownership
1.	Babcock University,Ilishan-Remo	26	Private
2.	OlabisiOnabanjo University, Ago Iwoye	34	Public
3.	Tai Solarin University of Education Ijebu Ode	18	Public
4.	Covenant University Ota	45	Private
5.	Mountain Top University	12	Private
6.	Mcpherson University, SerikiSotayo, Ajebo	3	Private
7.	Crescent University	11	Private
8.	Crawford University Igbesa	15	Private
9.	Southwestern University, Oku Owa	5	Private
10.	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	60	Public
11.	Bells University, Ota	7	Private
	Total	236	

Source: National University Commission website and personal contact

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2: Demographic Information

		Frequency	
		N	%
Gender	Male	91	41.2
	Female	130	58.8
Age	20 – 30	63	28.5
	31 – 40	78	35.3
	41 – 50	72	32.6
	51 – 60	8	3.6
Work Experience	1-5 yrs	92	41.6
	6 – 10 yrs	58	26.2
	Above 10 yrs	71	32.1
	Total	221	100.0
Qualification	PhD	13	5.9
	Masters	74	33.5

	BSc (in any discipline)	88	39.8
	SSCE (Senior Secondary School graduates)	6	2.7
	Diploma	40	18.1
	Total	221	100.0
Designation	Library attendant	6	2.7
	Library assistant	18	8.1
	Library Porter	13	5.9
	Library Officer	33	14.9
	Assistant Librarian	41	18.6
	Librarian II	24	10.9
	Librarian I	36	16.3
	Senior Librarian	17	7.7
	Principal Librarian	25	11.3
	Chief Librarian	8	3.6
	Total	221	100.0

The table 2 above shows the demographic distribution of the library personnel surveyed. It reveals that the female respondents were more than their male counterparts. It also shows that most of the respondents were between the age group of 31-40 years (35.3%) , followed closely by the age group 41 – 50 (32.6%), 20-30 (28.5%) and 51-60 (3.6%).

For the working experience parameter, the table shows that most of the library staff 92 (41.6%) had between 1-6 years working experience in the profession, 58(26.2%) of the respondents had between 6- 10 working experience while 71 (32.1%) had above 10 years working experience.
For the designation of the respondents, a highest proportion 41(18.6%) were Assistant Library personnel, followed by Librarian I with 36 (16.3%) respondents, Library Officers 33 (14.9%) respondents, Principal Library personnel with 25 (11.3%) respondents, Librarian II with 24 (10.9%) Library Assistants 18 (8.1%) respondents, Senior Library personnel with 17 (7.7%) Library Portals with 13 (5.9%) respondents, Chief Librarian 8 (3.6%) respondents and 6 (2.7%) respondents are library attendants.

Research Question 1

Table 3: Perceived causes of Occupational burnout

	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%		
Rigid working hours (work time is not flexible)	177	80.1	44	19.9	221	100.0
Unfavourable policies made by University Management	170	76.9	51	23.1	221	100.0
Lack of proper funding	69	31.2	152	68.8	221	100.0
Lack of proper institutional guidelines and policies	122	55.2	99	44.8	221	100.0
Conflicts with colleagues and patrons	178	80.5	43	19.5	221	100.0
The resources at my disposal are not enough to do my work	87	39.4	134	60.6	221	100.0
obeying so many instructions almost at once	154	69.7	67	30.3	221	100.0
I don't have a say when it comes to decision making	92	41.6	129	58.4	221	100.0
I am always under pressure to meet deadlines	162	73.3	59	26.7	221	100.0
No opportunity for capacity building (training, getting higher degrees.)	134	60.6	87	39.4	221	100.0
The working environment is not conducive	126	57.0	95	43.0	221	100.0
Things are never done at the appropriate time	128	57.9	93	42.1	221	100.0

From Table 3:178 (80.5%) respondents indicated that they have conflicts with colleagues, 177 (80.1%) agreed that rigid working hours causes occupational burnout, 170 (76.9 indicated unfavorable policies, 162 (73.3%) indicated being always under pressure while the parameter that scored lowest is funding with 69 (31.2%). This implies that resources made available to the

library personnel go a long way to affect the level of their productivity. When these resources and the work environment in general are not conducive, burn out may be inevitable.

Research Question 2

Table 4: Personal experience of occupational burnout of the Library personnel:

	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%		
I experience burnout when:						
My working hours is inflexible	139	63.0	82	37.0	221	100.0
I cannot carry out my work effectively due to limited resources at my disposal.	178	81.0	43	19.0	221	100.0
There is bureaucracy and obeying so many directives almost at once	157	71.0	64	29.0	221	100.0
I cannot partake in decision making process.	98	44.3	123	55.5	221	100.0
I am under pressure to meet the target and deadlines	166	75.1	55	25.0	221	100.0
The working environment is not conducive	131	59.0	90	41.0	221	100.0
There is lack of opportunity for career progress	111	50.2	110	49.7	221	100.0
I have conflicts with colleagues and patrons	182	82.5	39	17.5	221	100.0

Table 4 above sought to find out personal occupational burnout experiences of the library personnel surveyed. The findings revealed that 182 (81%) experience conflicts with colleagues, 178 (81%), 166 (75.1%), 157 (71.0%) indicated that bureaucracy and obeying so many directives at once are personal experiences of occupational burnout while 139 (63.0%) indicated inflexible working hours.

Research Question 3

Table 5: Consequences of occupational burnout

	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%		
Frustration	152	68.8	69	31.2	221	100.0
Lack of career progression	145	65.6	76	34.4	221	100.0
Lack of commitment	151	68.3	70	31.7	221	100.0
Drinking and smoking excessively	204	92.3	17	7.7	221	100.0
Sleepless nights	175	79.2	46	20.8	221	100.0
Dread going to work	173	78.3	48	21.7	221	100.0
Avoiding my colleagues	207	93.7	14	6.3	221	100.0
Get irritated easily	199	90.0	22	10.0	221	100.0
Headaches, back pains and HBP	124	56.1	97	43.9	221	100.0
Feeling unappreciated	113	51.1	108	48.9	221	100.0
Loss of creativity	114	51.6	107	48.4	221	100.0
Hoard relevant and useful information	136	61.5	85	38.5	221	100.0
I have lost the dreams and high hopes with which I entered this career	73	33.0	148	67.0	221	100.0
Low productivity	147	66.5	74	33.5	221	100.0

Table 5 showed that a highest proportion of the respondents 207 (93.7%) indicated that the consequences of occupational burnout is avoiding my colleagues, 204 (92.3%) indicated that occupational burnout result to drinking and smoking excessively, 199 (90%) get irritated easily, 175 (79.2) experience sleepless nights, 173 (78.3) dread going to work, 147 (66.5) agreed that occupational burnout results in low productivity. Only 73 (33%) of the library personnel surveyed attested that they have lost the high hopes with which they entered the profession.

Hypothesis

H_0 There is a significant relationship between occupational burnout and demographic factors among library personnel in University libraries in Ogun State Nigeria.

		Occupational burnout	Demographic Factors
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	-.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.085
	N	221	221
Demographic Factors	Pearson Correlation	-.116	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085	
	N	221	221

This hypothesis was raised to determine the significant relationship between demographic factors and occupational burnout among library personnel in University libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that there was no positive significant relationship between demographic factors and occupational burnout among library personnel at r=0.116; p<0.05. It implies that demographic factors such as age, gender, academic qualification and designation have no effect on occupational burnout.

It implies that occupational burnout has nothing to do with age, it occurs among both old and young library personnel. Likewise it is not a matter of gender; both male and female do experience occupational burnout. This is in contrast with the study of Mostafavi and Ghasemi-Nejad (2010) who carried out a study on burnout and its relationship with age and experience of library personnel of academic libraries in Tehran, Iran. The study revealed that age and occupational experience were significantly associated to occupational burnout and its components. The increase in their age and their career experience their burnout also increased. Also the findings of Biglu (2012) on job burnout among public library personnel in Ardabil revealed that there was positive relationship between occupational burnout and gender. There was different level of occupation burnout between male and female; the level of job burnout among married women was higher than the married men. In the same vein the study of Khan (2013) submitted that burnout is more pronounced among men than women.

Discussion of Findings
Drawing from the analysis carried out, it can be deduced that there are some factors that affect the level of burnout experienced by the library staff; these factors go a long way to affect the level of occupational burn out experienced, Some of the factors include the condition of service at the workplace and the resources made available for the library staff. When the conditions of service are not favorable to the library personnel, the tendency of occupational burnout is usually very high. A good number of the library personnel understudied indicated that the experience of occupational burnout brings about hatred and displeasure of the job while some totally detest the workplace environment and in the long run, the level of productivity drops significantly (Jankome, Mangoriand & Ritacco, 2013)
Furthermore, from the hypothesis, there is no positive significant relationship between demographic factors and occupational burn out of library personnel as shown thus: r=0.116; p<0.05, hence the Null hypothesis was rejected. This reveals that the level of burn out

experienced or not experienced has little or nothing to do with factors such as age, designation, gender, etc. of the respondents in this study. This however is in contradiction to the findings of Ahola et al (2008) which noted that the level of burnout experienced was higher among the aging population than among the middle aged workers in Sweden; however the reiterated that some demographic variables such as the level of education and marital status do not have effect of the level of burnout experienced

Conclusion and Recommendation

The availability of good working equipment at the various work stations in the library cannot be overemphasized as that is unequivocally instrumental to the achievement of goals and objectives of the library. Besides the provision of these facilities, the library staff should have a healthy working relationship among themselves and every staff should be a self-motivated team member as this will help to improve the level of commitment of every staff. It is paramount to note that the level of commitment could also be determined by the nature of policies being formulated by the institution's Management.

Strategies to Mitigate Occupational Burnout

This comes in two dimensions, personal and organizational.

Personal

➢ Be creative: creativity can help in reducing the risk of having occupational burnout syndrome. Engage in creative activities such as reading and writing.

➢ Personal development**:** acquire new skills.

➢ Share your feelings: it is advisable to loosen up and share feelings with colleagues, counselors or any other trusted individual.

➢ Make your work environment friendly: put family pictures, flowers, listen to music etc

➢ Self-efficacy: accomplish personal goals and tasks.

➢ Be positive: maintain a positive attitude; it will help to build resilience if challenges arise

➢ Attend academic/social activities: attend seminars, talk shows, public lectures, weddings etc

➢ Be excited: laugh/smile always, be surrounded with happy people always

➢ Go on vacation

Organizational

➢ Role ambiguity: employing the use of surveys can be very helpful in identifying the extent to which role ambiguity exists in an organization. This will enable the organizations management to put in place a clarified job description manual stating what is expected of each worker.

➢ Support: in cases of perceived unfairness or gaps in values, there should be a feedback technique that will enable the workers air their views about their job.

➢ Good welfare packages/incentives/reward systems

➢ Recognition of workers: periodical acknowledgement of dedicated workers will go a long way to reduce the rate of burnout.

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