

Occupational Stress and the Job Effectiveness of Federal University Lecturers in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study focused on Occupational stress and its effect on the job effectiveness of lecturers in federal universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom states of Nigeria. The Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The stratified random sample size was 584 lecturers. The study utilized a questionnaire titled Workload Stress Scale (WSS) and Job Effectiveness Questionnaires (JEQ). The hypothesis was tested using the multiple regression analysis. The analysis results indicated that stress from factors – workload, facilities, career development requirements and organizational climate significantly joint predict job effectiveness of lecturers while inter-personal relationships and funding were not significant predictors. Recommendations made included that universities should ensure that bench mark standards of National University Commission for facilities are adhered to. Also, infrastructural facilities maintenance culture should be consciously inculcated into the members of the university community by management. (137 words)

Keywords: Occupational stress, federal university lecturers, job effectiveness, Akwa Ibom state, Cross River.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Globally the 21st-century workplace is a dynamic, complex, fast-paced highly challenging environment. Given the ever-increasing global nature of the service sector, the competitiveness of the knowledge era, key players such as university academicians are often working under pressure. While stress pressure can be a performance enhancer when moderate when too much it can lead to negative consequences.

The functions of lecturers worldwide are: to generate ideas, human resource capacity building, and service rendering. Today's Nigerian universities play five roles in the economy. They are employers of workers, human capacity builders, research centers, community service providers and sources of business when privately owned. Every lecturer in a university has three key terms of employment: to teach, to research, and to participate in community service. Therefore the three indices for measuring job effectiveness both for the institution and its lecturers are the ability to teach, ability to publish and the ability to transform society. Edema and Usoro (2018) affirm that federal universities are challenged by a growing need for modern infrastructural and technological facilities, which would equip them for provision of qualitative education and position them to become relevant competitively. For a worker to maximally contribute productively, whatever affects it adversely must be removed. Occupational stress has been identified as counterproductive for workers' productivity and ought, therefore, to be kept at the barest minimum if performance is to be maximized. Consequently, management of universities must find ways of managing stress at the workplace.

Occupational stress according to Narayanan, Menon, and Spector (1999) refers to pressure, tension or worries arising from problematic situations in an individual's life traceable to a job or work situation. This stress may be inbuilt in the job, that is, it may be set off by the responsibility that goes with the work, or it may be due to organizational culture or inter-personal conflicts. Ofuegbu and Nwadianni (2006) posit that Nigerian lecturers experience a high level of occupational stress.

Despite the enormous governmental interventions in tertiary institutions in Nigeria annually, educational problems remain today: yearly increasing student enrolments, inadequate infrastructures, declining lecturer-student ratios, insufficiency of funds, inappropriate curricula, industrial conflicts and administrative inertia or inefficiencies. In addition, to be globally relevant in the ranking of universities, the career progress requirements for lecturers are reviewed upwards from time to time. Furthermore, the incessant industrial face-offs has resulted in distortions of the global school year of October to July and brought pressure on each university to align her current academic calendar with the global trend, attendant to this is the inability of lecturers to go on annual vacation. All these factors can generate occupational stress for lecturers and thereafter adversely affect their job effectiveness. This study derives its relevance against this backdrop.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Lecturers could experience occupational stress at different levels due to factors such as excess workload, inadequate facilities, concerns on inter-personal relations, career progress requirements and organizational climate. This occupational stress could affect their job effectiveness regarding teaching, publication and

community service.

Taking the agitation for payment for excess workload and given the minimum benchmark staffing policies of NUC, it is easily seen that the workload of lecturers is far beyond the 2005 approved minimum academic standard for staff-student ratios. Again it is common knowledge that office space, lecture rooms, and hostel accommodations are seriously inadequate in universities. Research is crucial to the career development of every lecturer. This goal NUC expects institutions to attain through their staff development programmes. Currently, the situation is that most lecturers finance their staff development programmes by themselves either wholly or partly, while the stakes for promotion is hiked higher and higher regularly by management.

The constant face-off between Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the government as the owner of many of these Nigerian universities or the management of individual universities has bred in organizational uncertainties. These issues all predispose lecturers to high levels of occupational stress which may affect job effectiveness. Studies such as Ekennia (2000) in Agulanna (2007) and Anyaduba (2004), focused on the level, causes, and management of stress. This study is an effort to fill the lacuna on the possible relationship between occupational stress and job effectiveness of federal university lecturers in Cross River and the Akwa Ibom States.

1.3 Objective of the study

The aim of this study was to assess how the primary factors that instigate occupational stress affect job effectiveness of federal university lecturers in Cross River and Akwa Ibom states.

1.4 Hypotheses

This study tested the following null hypothesis.

H₀₁: Occupational stress is not significantly related to job effectiveness of federal university lecturers in Cross River and Akwa Ibom states.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of stress

Richard (2010) posited that job stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that job demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual can mobilize. Usoro and Udongwo (2018) states that occupational stress is universal, cannot be avoided, can be transferred, and differ in presentation from person to person.

Kyriacou (1987) posit that teachers experience occupational stress when teachers pass through not pleasant emotions, like frustration, tension, anxiety, depression, and anger emanating from teaching activities. This study views occupational stress as a phenomenon that is subjective, multi-faceted and occurs when workers' physical, emotional and attitudinal attributes are a mismatch to the job demands, constraints and opportunities. However, Hans (2009) asserted that stress is not bad as it depends on how it is perceived. The stress of exciting, creative work is useful, while that of failure or poor performance is harmful. According to Nelson and Quick (2003), two major types of stress have been established; namely eustress (good stress) and distress (bad stress).

2.2 Elements of job effectiveness of lecturers

Sequel to the employment terms of lecturers, a lecturer's effectiveness is assessed based on the ability to effectively impart knowledge, proficiency in research and community service. Obanya and Onocha (1984) identified some criteria for determining who is an effective teacher to include socio-economic status, personality traits, professional attitudes, experiences, teaching method and students' achievement among others. Some of these criteria when not there are identified as stressors that may make lecturers ineffective.

Research is the main criteria used in assessing lecturers for career growth. Research was defined by Creswell (2008), as a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase understanding of a topic or issue. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011) defined research as "a studious inquiry or examination; especially investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws" (p. 451). Research could be basic, applied or developmental.

Social responsibility in the form of community service is the trio of the three academic functions of every university lecturer. Community service could be rendered to various university associations, a community, state or the nation at large through forums such as public lectures, seminars, debates and national assignments like elections supervision and monitoring of national examinations.

2.3 Occupational stress and job effectiveness

Husain (2010) submits that all stress-health relationship conspicuously affect the organization and industry. Physical and mental sickness makes the worker not able to work, and together reduces job satisfaction, job

performance, and productivity levels. Tiji (2000) and Jega (2002) stated that stress and job performance are related. They further opined that where and when allowed to continue for a long time, or when stress rises to high levels, the performance of workers is strongly affected. Weihrich and Koontz (2005) posit that not only does the individual worker suffer, but the organization may also be adversely affected by the turnover or impaired decision making of its workers.

Okwuagwu (2010) contributed that high-stress level can impair performance especially when there is no motivation, no possible reward for performing the job well, or no ambition on the part of the individual, as minimal effort will be expended by the worker. He stated further that, however, with increases in motivation, the level of stress rises along with productivity and efficiency, with the right amount leading to creativity, interest, and optimal performance. Okwuagwu (2010) added that if the person becomes too achievement oriented or the job is too unrealistic and unreasonable, ability to perform will begin to decline as too much stress will snap a person's health and mental ability. It is the view of the researcher however that the peak differs from person to person and that frequently others notice the early warning symptoms of stress before the victim. Robin and Sanghi (2005) posit that even moderate levels of stress, when continued over a long-term period can have a negative influence on performance, in that persistent onslaught of stress wears down a person and depletes his energy level.

Kousar, Dogar, Ghazal, and Khattak (2005) carried out a study for the assessment of stress intensity and its effects on the performance of workers in five departments of a multi-national firm. The occupational stress scale had 36 items while the job performance rating scale was one item in which the supervisor rated the worker's performance. They found out that stress levels nearly equal in the five departments. They suggested that this could be due to the similarity in the management of the five departments, as they all had cordial working environment and social support for their colleagues. Also the whole organization was highly cultured. However, their result showed no significant effect of stress on workers' performance.

Pelsma and Richard (1988), indicated in their study that there is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and teacher stress. Furthermore, they observed that stress level and extent of job satisfaction experienced by teachers influences teachers' job performance. Singh and Billingsley (1996) stated that extensive documentation, isolation from colleagues, dissatisfaction with parent participation, and absence of supportive administration were often listed as crucial causes of stress, whereas an environment that is positive often produced satisfied teachers.

According to Kirk and Brown (2003), specific factors of the teaching profession can trigger stress. For instance, primary school teachers were observed not to be stressed as often as high school teachers. Secondly the more the years of teaching experience, the less the probability of stress. Kirk and Brown (2003), posit further that policy changes, language difficulties, computer illiteracy, extent accepted by students, rigid supervision, ability to manage time and equipment, workload and students performance are the major contributors to teaching stress.

3. Research methodology

The Cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. The stratified random sample size of 584 respondents was derived using Taro Yamane formula. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered in soliciting for information namely the Job Stress Scale (JSS) and the Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (JEQ), made up of three sections. Section A of the questionnaire requested for demographic information, Section B focused on stressors and the options were "very stressful," "stressful," "mildly stressful" and "not stressful." Section C was on job effectiveness regarding ability to teach, research proficiency and service to the community. The options in this section were "always," "often," "sometimes" and "never." The null hypothesis for this study was thus stated: H_0 : Occupational stress is not significantly related to job effectiveness of university lecturers.

The dependent variable is Job effectiveness while the independent variable is Occupational stress from a composite bundle of stress from workload, facilities, interpersonal relationships, career progress requirements and organizational climate. To test the hypothesis, the study utilized multiple regression.

Dewberry(2004) opined that multiple regression is suitable for examining the relationship between many predictor variables and a continuous dependent variable measured on a Likert scale. The formula is $Y = A + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5$.

Where Y =Job effectiveness

A = Constant

$\beta_1 - \beta_5$ = regression coefficients

X_1 =workload

X_2 =facilities

X_3 =interpersonal relationships

X_4 = career progress requirements

X_5 =organizational climate

The relationship between occupational stress and job effectiveness of lecturers is depicted in the model presented in Fig. 3.1.

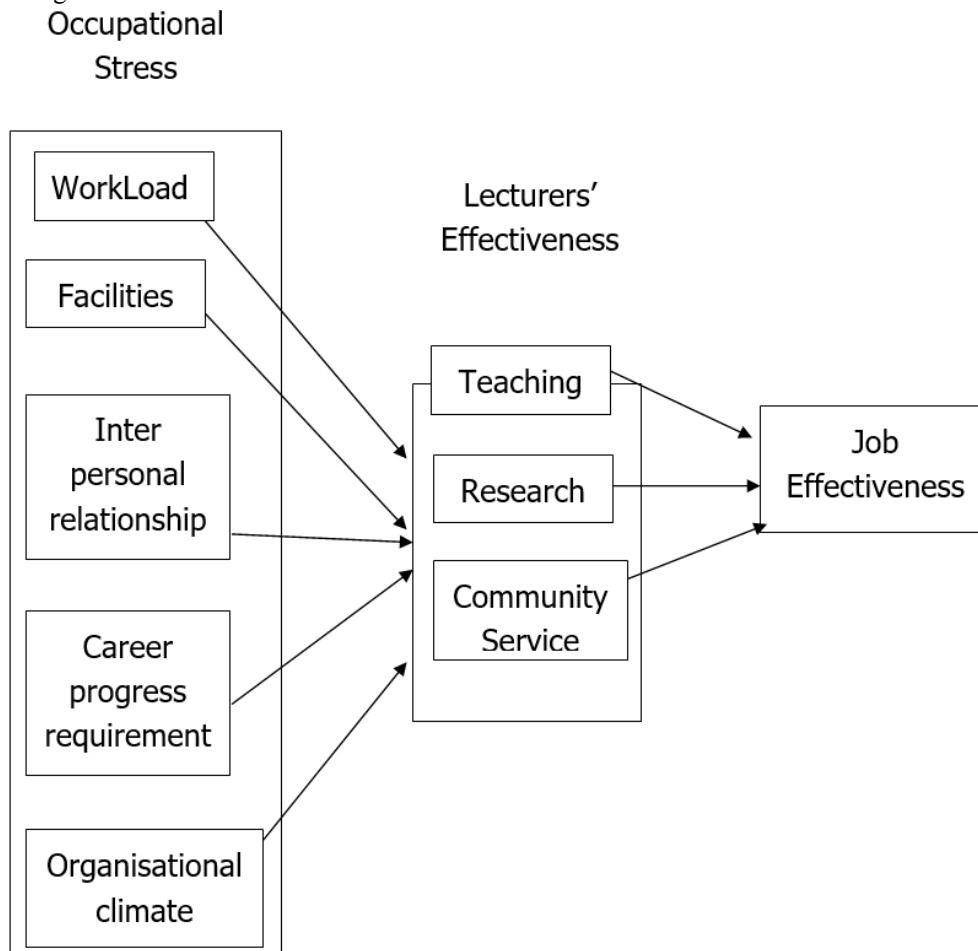


FIG 3.1: Model of lecturers' occupational stress and job effectiveness
 Source: Researcher, 2012

4 Data analysis

The result presented in Table 4.1 shows that stress-related factors like workload, facilities, interpersonal relationships, career progress requirements and organization climate are significant joint predictors of job effectiveness ($F=26.775$; $p<.05$).

TABLE 4.1

Regression analysis of the joint effect of stress arising from the workload, facilities, interpersonal relationship, career progress requirements and organization climate on job effectiveness of federal university lecturers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	20.439	.718		28.479	.000
Workload	0.87	.050	.010	17.40*	.000
Facilities	1.629	.141	.342	11.585*	.000
Interpersonal	.012	.126	.003	.093	.926
Career Progress.	1.73	.41	.006	4.22	.003
Organizational	.337	.128	.078	2.623*	.009

*significant at .05

$R^2 = 0.80$

Adjusted $R^2 = .78$

$F = 26.775$

Source: Researcher's computation

The null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The regression model also shows how individual variables contributed relatively to the prediction of job effectiveness. Since the regression

weight indicates the relative contribution of each variable, the results in Table 4.19 shows that workload related stress ($\beta_1=0.10;t=17.40$); facilities ($\beta_2=.342;t=11.585$); career progress requirements($\beta_4=0.006;t=4.22$);and organisational climate ($\beta_5=0.78;t=2.623$) were the most significant predictors followed by other non-significant factor interpersonal relationships ($\beta_3=.003;t=.093$). The coefficient of determination is $R^2 = .80$. This means that any variation in job effectiveness is accounted for by 80% variation in a contribution of the predictor variables (s).

$$Y = 20.439 + .87X_1 + 1.629X_2 + .012X_3 + 1.73X_4 + .337X_5$$

Where: Y = Job effectiveness
X₁ = workload stress
X₂ = stress from facilities
X₃ = stress from interpersonal relationships
X₄ = stress from career progress requirements
X₅ = stress from organizational climate

The results of the analysis show that stress-related factors like workload, facilities, career progress requirement and organizational climate are significant joint predictors of job effectiveness of lecturers. Since the regression weight is an indication of individual variables contribution relatively, the regression results showed that workload related stress and stress from facilities were the most significant predictors followed by career progress requirement and organizational climate. Other non-significant factors were interpersonal relationship and funding in descending order of significance.

5. Conclusion and recommendations.

From the findings of the study it was concluded that holistically, occupational stress has a significant relationship with the job effectiveness of university lecturers.

Given the result of this study these recommendations were made:

1. To reduce the workload of individual lecturers, the management of these institutions should recruit lecturers in alignment with the National Universities Commission student-lecturer ratio.
2. Seminars and workshops that will aid in equipping lecturers to meet the demands of teaching and research should be held regularly at departmental and faculty levels.
3. Government as owner of these institutions should adhere to collective agreements to avert industrial face-offs which distorts the academic calendar and puts pressure on universities to cram activities within a short space of time.
4. Infrastructural facilities such as electricity, offices, classrooms should be adequately provided with NUC benchmark as the minimum standard.
5. Management of these institutions should make conscious efforts to inculcate maintenance culture in students and staff of these institutions.
6. Promotion requirements changes should not be abrupt and additional support provided before the implementation of such changes.
7. The annual vacation and medical checkups of lecturers should be made mandatory.

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