

## Original Paper

# Health Implications of Work-Related Stress among Academic

## Staff of Tertiary Institutions in Katsina State

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State, Nigeria. This research adopts a descriptive survey design. The population of this study is 2,036 academic staff from thirteen institutions. A sample of 328 academic staff was drawn, using proportionate stratified sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire (HIWRS-Q) with reliability of 0.75 was used. Chi-square and t-test were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of this study revealed that 105 (32%) of the respondents do not experienced health implications of work-related stress while, 223 (68%) of the respondents experienced health implications of work-related stress. Also, there is significant health implication of work-related stress among academic staff ( $P=0.001<0.05$ ). There is significant difference in the health implication of work-related stress among academic staff based on institutional ownership ( $P=0.023<0.05$ ). There is no significant difference in the work-related stress between male and female teaching staff ( $P=0.650>0.05$ ). It is recommended among others that the State government should improve on the working environment and conditions of academic staff to be health-friendly, health enhancing conditions for achieving academic excellence, and sustainable productivity in the State.*

### **Keywords**

*academic, health, implications, staff, stress, work*

## 1. Introduction

Stressful work related conditions are linked with many health implications among employees in developing countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania (Harvey, 2009). In Nigeria, premature death among academic staff is at its peak. Such death rates are presumed to be as a result of health implications of work-related stress among workers, especially those in the academics (Benjamin, 2003). Similarly, findings of Hinneh, Kwaku and Gyaki (2014) revealed that academic staff of tertiary institutions are exposed to health implications, including anxiety and general ill-health resulting from their job. At this point, Egu, Ogbonna, Obike and Obiuto (2014), termed health implication to be health hazards such as high blood pressure, heart diseases, stroke, ulcer, body pain, persistent headache and illnesses that could come as a result of work-related stress. Health implications such as depression, anxiety, heart attack, eye problems, fear, headache, insomnia, miscarriages, asthma, obesity, chest pain, diabetes, and anger are common among workers due to occupational stress—which is work-related stress (Communications Workers of America, 2001; Shute, 2007).

In addition, Lecturers are now battling with numerous health implications namely, ulcer, depressions, anger, high blood pressure, heart and eye problems owing to several work-related stressors commonly associated with faculty staff (Tarsi, Scheurs, & Van, 2001; Winefield & Jarret, 2001; Winter & Sarros, 2002; Tytherleigh et al., 2005; Barkuizen & Rothmans, 2008). This is not surprising as the higher educational sector is now regarded as a working environment that has become increasingly more stress and psychologically demanding due to multiple triggers for stress-related illness (Kinman, 2001; Winefield & Jarret, 2001).

In terms of comparison of occupational stress at workplaces, a study by the Communications Workers of America (2001) revealed that academic staff (lecturers) are exposed to physical illnesses such as asthma, obesity, headache and diabetes than any other groups. It further stated that job stress makes their body to break down and experience severe chest pains as they always read, write and type reading materials like lecture notes or research papers. Sonja et al. (2010) studied the health and wellbeing of staff members at a tertiary institution in New Zealand. The results revealed that relatively large numbers of the subjects were identified with hypertension (18.5%), stress symptoms (32.1%), job stress (36%) and emotional exhaustion (11.4%).

In the same line of thought, the research of Gunduluru and Gunduluru (2013) whose study was on mental health status of degree-awarding college lecturers based on gender and teaching experience in Rayalaseema zone, Andhra Pradesh, India, found that there is significant increase in mental health problems such as depression among lecturers and students. This finding is not at variance with the finding of Shute (2007). Health implications are extremely hazardous in that they cause and lead to many health problems such as body pains, headache, ulcers, heart palpitation, stroke, heart attack including miscarriages in pregnant women (Ukwayi, Uko, & Udida, 2013). They further posited that several academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions (centers of interaction; workplace for desirable

changes) has been observed to report insomnia, fear, hypertension, headache, depressions, adjustment disorders (emotional stress) as a result of academic stress.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—CDC (1999) stated clearly that poor health and even injury persisted due to work-related stress among workers. In the same vein, Auerbach and Gramling (2009), added that studies conducted in countries around the world demonstrate that people can actually work themselves to death. Academic staff of tertiary institutions are not exempted from the result. For example, among the numerous problems confronting organization in Nigeria is the perceived poor health of some workers (Ajayi et al., 2011). In addition, researchers observed that academic staff in higher institutions in Katsina State are exposed to conditions that may lead to stressful condition. These include regular, sandwich and summer programmes they offer annually which tie the academic staff down. Many of the attractions and advantages such as light work-load, provision of office and residential accommodations in academic environment have been eroded over the past two decades and it comes as a surprise that higher education institutions are now commonly labelled as stress factory (Barkuizen & Rothmans, 2008).

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (2012) stated in its guidelines that the ideal teacher-student ratio is 1:25. This ratio is no practice in tertiary institutions in Katsina State. Moreover, Bala (2013) observed that there is an excessive work-load and increasing hours of work arising from the dearth of teachers in the institution, making teacher-student ratio to stand at 1:500, causing most students to squat on bare floor or hang on windows during lectures. These circumstances compound stress on academic staff who are working in tertiary institutions in the State and as such, it may affect their health negatively. Higher institutions are now regarded as a working environment that has become increasingly more stressful and psychologically demanding due to multiple triggers for stress-related illness (Kinman, 2001; Windfield & Jarret, 2001).

In Katsina State, academic staff in tertiary institutions are now subjected to stress such as meeting deadlines in submitting examination results, changes in methods and approaches of teaching, innovations such as introduction of computers, unbearable work-loads, campus militancy, accommodation problems, and many others. Poor ventilation from enclosed offices, lecture and examination halls, excessive paper-work of writing lecture notes, conference papers, and administrative duties of being an examination officer, head of department and level coordinator are some of the challenges faced by academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State. These challenges may result to large number of health consequences that may affect them physically, socially and emotionally. It is against this background that this study was carried out in order to investigate the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

## 2. Research Questions

The authors of this article set up the following research questions, whose answers are to be provided in the course of this study:

- 1) Do academic staff experience health implications of work-related stress in tertiary institutions in Katsina State?
- 2) Is there any significant difference in the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State based on institutional ownership?
- 3) Will there be a difference in the health implication of work-related stress between male and female academic staff of tertiary institutions in the study area?

## 3. Research Hypotheses

In line with the above research questions, and based on the reviewed literature, the trio authors of this study came up with the following research hypotheses that will be tested to be refuted or not by this research findings:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant health implication of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff based on institutional ownership in Katsina State.

$H_{03}$ : There is no significant difference in the health implication of work-related stress between male and female academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

## 4. Methods

This research adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State, Nigeria. Below are the details for the methods that the authors used:

### 4.1 Source of Data and Research Design

To establish health implications of work-related stress among academic staff experiences in tertiary institutions in Katsina State, primary data were generated using questionnaire (Blaikie, 2010). The data were sourced from semi-natural social setting and descriptive survey research design was used.

### 4.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study is 2,036 which consisted of all academic staff from thirteen existing tertiary institutions in Katsina State as at 11th March, 2015. The target population was one thousand, six hundred and thirty nine (1,639) from five government owned tertiary institution. A sample of 328 academic staff was drawn using proportionate stratified sampling technique at 20% from each tertiary institution in the state. Self-developed questionnaire named Health Implications of Work-Related Stress Questionnaire (HIWRS-Q) of five points Likert scale was used as instrument for data collection.

#### *4.3 Instrument for Data Collection*

There are 17 items on the questionnaire that assessed health implications of work-related stress. The least score is 17; the highest score is 85 while the midpoint is 34. Therefore, scores between 17 and 34 are regarded as health implications work-related stress while, scores within 35-85 are regarded as no health implication of work-related stress. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in health education and two sociology. A reliability index of 0.75 was obtained. Five lecturers, one from each sampled institutions served as research assistants. Out of three hundred and fifty questionnaire copies administered, three hundred and twenty eight were duly filled and returned.

#### *4.4 Data Analysis*

Chi-square and independent sample t-test were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, using Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

### **5. Research Findings**

Many studies reveal that academic employees, especially those in tertiary institutions find their work stressful. Importantly, these studies are not peculiar to some parts of the world—developed or the developing nations (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Kinman, 2016; Tytherleigh et al., 2005; Winefield et al., 2008; Catano et al., 2010). Many factors are responsible for the work-related stress among the academics in tertiary institutions, including but not limited to increased demands in experience, limited resources, autonomy or lack of it, inadequate support and often lack of role clarity. Equally, the “massification” of higher education (Kinman, 2016, p. 504), a combination of various cultural, social, and educational background, and more stringent requirement for publications, as well as more “judgmental” performance management systems (Yusoff & Khan, 2013).

These studies are important, and have shed some light on the magnitude of the problem at macro-level analysis. But none of the studies was conducted in Nigeria, and particularly in Northern Nigerian tertiary institutions—a region that was nearly a century late in establishing Western schools, thereby leaving a majority of the people at a great disadvantaged position. This led to the region to be tagged as Educationally Less Developed Areas (ELDS) vis-à-vis their Western and Eastern counterparts (Maikudi, 2013). The results of this research will therefore address this gap. In so doing, the formulated hypotheses will be discussed as follows:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant health implication of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

**Table 1. Chi-Square Summary of Health Implications of Work-Related Stress among Academic Staff of Tertiary Institutions in Katsina State**

| <b>Health implications</b> | <b>Observed Frequency</b> | <b>Expected Frequency</b> | <b><math>\chi^2</math></b> | <b>df</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Not Experience             | 105 (32%)                 | 164.0                     | 42.451                     | 1         | .001        |
| Experience                 | 223 (68%)                 | 164.0                     |                            |           |             |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>328</b>                | <b>328.0</b>              |                            |           |             |

$\chi^2_{critical}=3.841$ , df:1,  $P<0.05$ .

Table 1 above shows that 105 (32%) academic staff do not experience health implications of work-related stress in tertiary institutions in Katsina State, while 223 (68%) experienced health implications of work-related stress. Hence, majority of academic staff in tertiary institutions in Katsina State experienced health implications of work-related stress due to exposure to work difficulties such as marking huge scripts of students in a limited time, meeting deadlines in submitting official documents, in adequate power supply and inadequate of other related facilities. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant health implication of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State is rejected ( $\chi^2_{tab}=3.841$ , df:1,  $P<0.05$ ). Hence, there is significant health implication of work-related stress on academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff based on institutional ownership in Katsina State.

**Table 2. T-Test Summary on Difference in the Health Implications of Work-Related Stress among Academic Staff based on Institutional Ownership in Katsina State**

| <b>Institutional ownership</b> | <b>N</b>   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. deviation</b> | <b>Std. error</b> | <b>t</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>P-value</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| State tertiary institution     | 192        | 1.73        | .446                  | .032              | 2.285    | 326       | .023           |
| Federal tertiary institution   | 136        | 1.61        | .489                  | .042              |          |           |                |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>328</b> |             |                       |                   |          |           |                |

$t_{critical}= 1.9719$ , df:326,  $P0.05$ .

Table 2 shows that the mean value for State owned tertiary institution was greater than federal owned tertiary institutions ( $1.73>1.61$ ). This means that academic staff from sate own tertiary institution in Katsina State are experiencing more health implications of work related stress than those in Federal institutions. It also showed that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the health implications of work-related stress on academic staff based on institutional ownership in

Katsina State is rejected ( $t_{tab}=1.9719$ ,  $df:326$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Hence, there is significant difference in the health implications of work-related stress on academic staff based on institutional ownership in Katsina State.

$H_{03}$ : There is no significant difference in the work-related stress between male and female teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

**Table 3. Summary of T-Test on Health Implications of Work-Related Stress between Male and Female Academic Staff of Tertiary Institutions in Katsina State**

| Gender       | N          | Mean | Std. deviation | Std. error | t    | df  | P-value |
|--------------|------------|------|----------------|------------|------|-----|---------|
| Male         | 261        | 1.69 | .465           | .029       | .454 | 326 | .650    |
| Female       | 67         | 1.66 | .478           | .058       |      |     |         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>328</b> |      |                |            |      |     |         |

$t_{critical}=1.9719$  at  $df=326$ ,  $P>0.05$ .

Table 3 reveals that male teaching staff had mean value which was relatively greater than female teaching staff mean value ( $1.69>1.66$ ). This means that male academic staff in tertiary institution in Katsina State are experiencing more health implications of work related stress than their female counterparts. The table also shows that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the work-related stress between male and female teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State is accepted ( $t_{critical}=1.9719$  at  $df=326$ ,  $P>0.05$ ). Hence, there is no significant difference in the work-related stress between male and female teaching staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State.

## 6. Discussions

The finding of this study shows that there is significant health implication of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions such as headache, insomnia, depression and many others owing to work-related stress. The result is in line with finding of Nnabuife, Onyeizugbe, and Onwuka (2012) who revealed in their study of stress management and occupational performance among female lecturers in Nigeria, that there was significant health implication of occupational stress on teaching staff of tertiary institutions. It is also congruent with the work Ukwai, Uko and Udida (2013) whose study was on a critical analysis of career stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Cross-River State, Nigeria, which revealed that there was significant health problem of job stress on academic staff of tertiary institutions in the State. It is also consistent with Egu et al. (2014), who carried out a study on managing stress among lecturers in Polytechnics in South-Eastern Nigeria, and their finding revealed that academic staff suffered high blood pressures, as well as stroke. In the same vein, Claire and Lucy (2014) who studied Dark Thoughts: mental illness in the academia found that academic staff

battled with mental health problems, stroke and breakdown as a result of their jobs.

The results of this study also agreed with Atsua (2014), who carried out a research on consequences of occupational stress among academic staff of university of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. It found out that there were reasonable health implications of job stress on academic staff of the institution such as headache (migraine), sleep disorders, back and neck pains, constant muscle tension, weight loss or gain, physical fatigue, lower immunity to colds and viruses, hypertension and heart problems. These health implications on academic staff may be due to excessive work-loads, poor and unhealthy working environment and conditions which academic staff of tertiary institutions are subjected to throughout their duration in the service. This is so because ordinarily, academic work and its environment required high precision, speed and accuracy. Thus, in an attempt to maintain an optimal level on these characteristics, the body system loses normal homeostasis (equilibrium) for good health. Secondly, it could be attributed to the fact that majority of the respondents are likely to work throughout their life without a leave. This is because the institutions run various programmes at different time of the year such as the regular programmes, sand-witch programmes, summer semesters and many others.

Furthermore, the result reveals that there is significant difference in the health implications of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions based on institutional ownership. The result has a strong relationship with the finding of Oghenetega (2014), whose studied comparative job stress among teaching staff of Library and Information Science Department, University of Ibadan, which revealed that there is significant difference in the health implications of job stress among the Federal, State and Privately owned tertiary institutions. Based on the finding of this study, Federal owned institutions have more strict standards or policies, enabling working environments and conditions than State owned institutions.

The finding also reveals that there is no significant difference in the health implication of work-related stress between male and female academic staff of tertiary institutions. This result is consistent with this result of Archibong, Bassey and Effiom (2010), which indicated that there is no significant difference in the health problem of occupational stress between male and female academic staff in Cross-River University of Technology. The result of this study also corresponded with the finding of Purvanova and Muros (2010), who studied gender differences in burnout: a meta-analysis, which revealed that male and female (teaching employees) experience equal health implications of job stress in higher institutions. Also, the finding of Omoniyi and Ogunsanmi (2012), who studied stress among academic staff in South-West, Nigeria, revealed that hazards of work-related stress between male and female lecturers in South-West, Nigeria did not have significant difference is also consisted with the finding of this study. The finding follows after the finding of Adebisi (2013), whose study on occupational stress among academic staff of Ekiti State, University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, showed that there is no significant difference in the health problems of job stress between male and female academic staff in Ekiti State University.



Although, the finding of Adeoye (2002), who studied correlates of job stress among female academics at the University of Ilorin, is not in line with this finding. It shows that there is significant difference in the health implications of job stress between male and female university academic staff. This research suggests that the equality found in this result based on gender can be explained based on the tertiary institution's ability to employ young female staff with a zeal to deliver and make changes in the present generation. Additionally, the subjects opined that both sexes are exposed to the same working environment and conditions despite their gender differences.

## **7. Conclusions**

Based on the results of this study, the authors of this article reached the following conclusions:

- 1) Academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State generally are exposed to health implications of work-related stress due to the nature of their job. The tertiary institutions run both regular and irregular academic programmes yearly—none stop, which further complicates the condition.
- 2) Academic staff of State owned tertiary institutions in Katsina State are more exposed to health implications than those from federal owned tertiary institutions. This can be attributed to a number of reasons, including bettering working atmosphere and conducive working conditions found in the federal- and private-owned tertiary institutions compared to the State-owned tertiary institutions in the study area.
- 3) Both male and female academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State experience the same health implications of work-related stress irrespective of their gender. Further research that will focus on closely examining work-related stress factors and gender may reveal different results. But only such research

## **8. Policy Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the authors of this article offer the following recommendations with a view to ameliorate or address the conditions of work-related stress among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State:

- 1) Academic unions such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), National University Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should collaborate to carry out supervision from time-to-time in tertiary institutions so as to evaluate the standards guiding tertiary institutions in Katsina State and the country at large.
- 2) For better outcomes, it is necessary for the state government to improve on the working environment and conditions of academic staff to be health-friendly and health-enhancing conditions for achieving academic excellence and productivity in the State. This policy recommendation is not limited to the state-owned institutions of higher learning but could be extended to the federal and private institutions.

3) Academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State should exert their agency by remaining steadfast on pursuing their rights and advancing their welfare. This can be achieved through concerted efforts and collectively bargaining as members of academic staff union. More so, the union leaders should refrain from engaging in dirty politics that would disunite the leadership and give room for their continuous exploitation by the institution authorities. In addition, the academic staff union leadership may consult, network, and collaborate with their federal and private counterparts to identify areas of needs and possible intervention.

4) Although, findings of this research do not find any significant difference between male and female academic staff in terms of work-related stress, it is highly recommended that health-oriented preferential treatment be given to female academic staff of tertiary institutions in Katsina State. These may include maternity leave and adoption of Baby-Friendly Breastfeeding Centers for pregnant staff, nursing mothers, and their babies' healthy living.

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