Stress and Burnout among Lecturers in the Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the variables linked to stress and burnout in academic staff members at three universities in Rivers State: Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University, and the University of Port Harcourt. Additionally, it determines whether stress and specific socio-dynamic factors of academic personnel differ significantly. Three hundred academic staff members from Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University, and the University of Port Harcourt were randomly chosen to provide the data. SPSS was used to examine the data and regression statistics and chi-square procedures were used. The results showed that stress among academic staff was substantially correlated with all evaluated variables: academic workload, student-related concerns, age, teaching experience and academic rank, research and career growth, and interpersonal interactions. The findings demonstrated that there is no discernible gender difference in the stress levels of academic personnel ($P>0.05$). However, there was a significant difference ($P<0.05$) in the stress levels of academic staff members based on their marital status, age, teaching experience and academic rank. The study recommends that university administrations establish an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide structured counseling, stress management training, and workload balancing strategies for academic staff experiencing burnout.

Keyword: Stress, Burnout, Universities, Lecturer and Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, stress and burnout have become major concerns among university lecturers worldwide, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Increasing workloads, administrative pressures, and expectations for research output contribute to significant occupational stress. [4] Defined burnout as a pattern of chronic affective reaction to high levels of interpersonal contact in stressful work environments. They defined burnout as consisting of three components: depersonalization, which is the tendency to develop negative, cynical, callous, or detached attitudes toward coworkers; emotional exhaustion, which is the feeling of being emotionally overextended, tired, and fatigued; and the loss or reduced feeling of personal accomplishment derived from jobs, which is the result of employees frequently evaluating themselves negatively [16]. Since the middle of the 1970s, burnout—a personal adverse experience brought on by ongoing work stress—has gained attention in professional literature for teachers. There is a widespread belief that teacher burnout can negatively affect both the teachers themselves—for example, by causing emotional and physical illness—and the students. Teachers who are burned out may be less committed to their work, provide less information and praise, and engage with students less. Higher education instructors' ability to conduct research is hampered by job stress and burnout. This study's primary goal was to look into the relationship between burnout and personality, social support, and job-related stress in University of Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University, and the Rivers State University lecturers—a demographic that had not been thoroughly

examined before. Examining the degree to which personality and social support might mitigate the detrimental effects of stress and burnout in lecturers was a secondary goal.

Researching stress and burnout among college education instructors has consequences for both improving their working lives and advancing knowledge of job-related stress and burnout. Institutions and lecturers may benefit from an understanding of the personal and environmental factors that contribute to burnout. Human resource professionals and career counselors can predict burnout and the characteristics associated with the early manifestation of burnout by understanding the environmental and personal factors that drive burnout. Such data can be used to build effective intervention techniques that will improve organizational and employee wellness and fight burnout. Even though stress and burnout have been extensively investigated, more research is necessary to find novel elements that may mitigate the relationship between job stress and burnout. According to [11], a typical professor in a university, polytechnic, or college of education works in four categories: teaching, research, civil duty, and administration. The rank of the professor determines the frequency and degree of influence of participation in any of the major categories of work-related activities. It is understandable why stress and burnout among professors are steadily rising as a result of the growing amount of responsibilities that employers, parents, and students place on them. The research responsibilities of professors at postsecondary institutions have always been impacted by this.

According to [8], teacher stress is an uncomfortable emotion brought on by their job. A person's physical, emotional, and mental health are all impacted by stress. Numerous factors and sources have been shown to influence stress levels and burnout in previous studies on occupational stress among postsecondary lecturers [3]. For instance, time pressure [10], high expectations for oneself and demands for research and publications have all been identified by researchers as major contributors to job stress. [11] Also noted that among Nigerian College of Education instructors, stressors included a severe workload, working under pressure, big class sizes, students interfering with lectures, and delayed or insufficient pay. [7] discovered that time restrictions, workload, handling student misconduct, and students' evaluations of teachers were all predictors of burnout.

A person's values, interests, needs, stable dispositions, or emotional traits are all considered to be part of their personality. [13] established a five-factor model of personality that has been used to analyze burnout in a variety of populations. According to the five-factor model of personality, neuroticism (the tendency toward psychological distress), extraversion (the tendency toward positive emotions, sociability, and high activity), openness (the propensity for variety, intellectual curiosity), agreeableness (the inclination towards interpersonal trust and consideration for others), and conscientiousness (the tendency toward persistence, industriousness, and organization) were the characteristics of adult personality. Research on personality correlates of burnout found that neuroticism was associated with teacher burnout [4].

According to [7], job stress arises when a person is presented with a demand, opportunity, or constraint whose outcome is uncertain but for which a specific response is necessary; as a result, the stimulus is aroused only if the individual believes the outcome is significant.

According to [5], strain is the cumulative effect of stress that mostly manifests as exposure to stressful situations and departures from typical performance states.

Exhaustion

According to [15], burnout is a severe type of job-related stress that manifests as a persistent affective response pattern to demanding work environments that need a lot of interpersonal interaction.

Managing

Related emotions must be controlled and diminished in a way that relieves the person to deal with significant stress. This necessitates that people adapt how they operate to deal with demands that are greater than their capacity for resources [16]. By doing this, a person can successfully manage intimidating demands and combat emotional pain.

Teaching in general and academic teaching in particular have long been seen as attractive careers. Working in a stress-free, predictable, safe, and stable atmosphere that was seen as having a high social standing was said to be its defining feature. However, according to recent studies, academic stress has surpassed that of the general population within the past 20 years. Academic staff members in post-secondary institutions who were formerly independent and largely stress-intolerant now seem to experience occupational stress [9].

The conclusion drawn from a survey of international research is that teacher stress is a real phenomenon and that high levels are consistently linked to a mix of organizational influences, personal susceptibility, and teaching-related factors. Numerous stresses have been identified by research as inherent to the teaching profession [12]. The teaching load is the first. This involves not having enough time for grading and lesson planning, as well as needing to cover the syllabus in the time allotted. This is combined with inadequate teaching resources (a poorly defined curriculum, a lack of supplies, and subpar facilities). The teacher is impacted by this element in four ways:

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Among lecturers at Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University, and the University of Port Harcourt, there is no statistically significant variation in the sources of stress according to biographical factors (age, gender, race, and marital status).

Hypothesis 2: The variance in overall stress experienced by lecturers at Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University, and the University of Port Harcourt will not be statistically significantly explained by task characteristics, organizational functioning, physical work conditions and equipment, career and social matters remuneration, fringe benefits, and personnel policies.

METHODOLOGY

Chi Square

In this research work we adopt method of Chi-Square test with the formula written as:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(O-E)^2}{E} \quad (1)$$

Were χ^2 is the test statistics, Σ is the summation, O is the observed frequencies and E is the expected frequencies.

General linear regression model

Regression models come in a wide range of forms (basic, linear, non-linear logistic, etc.), and the use of each model is contingent upon the problem under investigation. When the answer variable (Y) is dependent on a group of explanatory variables ($X_1, X_2, X_3 \ldots\ldots X_m$)multiple regression models are employed. Because economic and social phenomena are often complicated, it takes more than one explanatory variable to fully understand and analyze them. The linear regression model explains a dependent variable (Y) using several explanatory factors (X_J). The model assumes a linear relationship between the explained variable (Y_I) and the explanatory variables ($X_{\_1}$,$X_{\_2}$,$X_{\_3}$,…..$X_{\_m}$). The explanatory set includes a linear function that associates random error (ε_I) with each observation (Y_I) (i = 1, 2, …, n).

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} \ldots\ldots \beta_m X_j m + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

and: i = 1,2, … , n, j = 0,1,2, … , m, X_0 = 1. $\beta_0, \beta_1, \ldots, \beta_m$: is details to the parameters of the regression. ε_i Stand for random errors.

Research Design: The Work Stress Questionnaire was utilized to conduct this cross-sectional study. This study make used of a cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for examining stress and burnout at a specific point in time. This design was chosen because it allows for the collection of data from a large sample

efficiently, providing insights into patterns of stress among university lecturers. Fifteen volunteers (lecturers) from each faculty at the different universities in Rivers State will participate.

Study Area

The study population consisted of lecturers from Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University, and the University of Port Harcourt. A total of 300 lecturers (100 from each institution) were selected using purposive sampling technique.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that lecturers from various academic ranks, faculties, and departments were represented. This approach was chosen because it allowed for the selection of participants with diverse experiences, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of stress and burnout among university lecturers. Although purposive sampling may introduce selection bias, efforts were made to include a balanced sample across faculties and institutions.

Method of Data Collection

Because lecturers are required to either check or cross the box next to each assertion, the WSQ evaluation technique is rather straightforward. If the lecturer agrees with the statement more than they disagree with it, they mark it with a checkmark; if they disagree more than they agree with it, the slot is left empty for a statement. All of the instructors who agreed to participate will provide full and honest answers to the questionnaires to collect the necessary data.

RESULTS

Analysis and Results (Data Application)

This section presents the results of the study, including descriptive statistics and inferential analyses. The findings explore the relationship between stress and burnout among university lecturers in Rivers State, considering demographic factors (gender, age, marital status, teaching experience, and academic rank) and job-related stressors (workload, student interactions, research responsibilities, and administrative challenges). The analysis was conducted using SPSS software, employing chi-square tests and regression analysis to determine significant associations

Basic Statistics summary of the questionnaire

Based on the frequency study, we found that there were 153 men (50.8%) and 147 women (48.8%) by gender. Additionally, 102 people (33.9%) were married, 68 people (22.6%) were single, 78 people (24.9%) were divorced or separated, and 51 people (16.9%) were widowed or widower. Additional examination of the age divisions shows that those aged 24 and under were 36 (12%), those aged 25–30 were 54 (17.9%), those aged 31–45 were 91 (30.2%), those aged 46–55 were 93 (30.9%), and those aged 56 and more were 26 (8.6%). Ninety-three (30.9%) had five years or less of teaching experience, 123 (40.9%) had six to ten years, 64 (21.3%) had eleven to fifteen years, and 19 (6.3%) had sixteen years or more. Additionally, according to their academic rank, in the universities in Rivers State, there were 46 professors (15.3%), 22 associate professors (7.3%), 39 senior lecturers (14.0%), 79 lecturers (25.2%), 57 lecturers (18.9%), 35 assistant lecturers (11.6%), and 24 graduate assistants (8%).

Chi – Square Test for Gender, Marital Status, Teaching Experience and Academic Ranking

Table 1: Test Statistics for Chi – Square Test for Gender, Marital Status, Teaching Experience and Academic Ranking

	Gender	Marital Status	Age	Teaching Experience	Academic Rank
Chi-Square	.120[a]	18.231[b]	63.633[c]	78.726[b]	50.930[d]
Df	1	3	4	3	6
Asymp. Sig.	.729	.000	.000	.000	.000

Chi-square test results (Table 1) show that gender does not significantly impact stress and burnout levels (χ^2 = 0.120, p = 0.729), suggesting that both male and female lecturers experience similar stress levels. However, significant differences were found in stress levels based on marital status (χ^2 = 18.231, p < 0.05), age (χ^2 = 63.633, p < 0.05), teaching experience (χ^2 = 78.726, p < 0.05), and academic rank (χ^2 = 50.930, p < 0.05). This indicates that older lecturers, those with longer teaching experience, and those in higher academic positions tend to experience different levels of burnout compared to their younger or less experienced colleagues

Factors Associated with Academic workload, student-related issues, research and career development, interpersonal relationship, and administrative issues on Stress among Academic Staff in the three universities in Rivers State.

Table 2: Regression analysis for Factors Associated With Academic Workload, Student-Related Issues, Research and Career Development, Interpersonal Relationships, and Administrative Issues on Stress among Academic Staff

Model		**Co-efficient** [a] Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	211.743	20.268		10.447	.000
	Work Demands	-14.239	3.600	-.208	-3.956	.000
	The setting of examination questions	9.700	3.464	.151	2.800	.005
	Obtaining research/conference incentives	-12.142	3.775	-.174	-3.216	.001
	Relationship with students	12.078	4.176	.154	2.892	.004
	Leadership behavior of university executives	12.173	4.468	.153	2.724	.007
	Administrative Behavior of Departmental Heads	-19.064	4.946	-.232	-3.854	.000
	Participation in institutional administration	-10.353	4.334	-.141	-2.389	.018
a. Dependent Variable: D2						

The regression model (Table 2) explains 87.1% of the variation in stress levels among lecturers (Adjusted R^2 = 0.871), indicating a strong predictive capacity. The F-statistic (p <0.05) confirms that the model is statistically significant. Among the significant predictors of stress:

- Workload (β = -0.208, p < 0.001) negatively impacts stress, suggesting that higher work demands lead to increased burnout.
- Student-related issues (β = -0.174, p <0.01) also contribute to stress, particularly in handling large class sizes and student misconduct.
- Interpersonal relationships (β = 0.153, p <0.01) and administrative behavior of department heads (β = -0.232, p < 0.001) indicate that poor leadership and work place interactions can significantly influence burnout levels among lecturers.

Summary

The study evaluated the variables linked to stress among academic employees at three Rivers State universities. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that the amount of stress that academic staff members endure is greatly influenced by their workload, student-related concerns, research and career development, interpersonal relationships, and administrative-related concerns. According to the data, academic staff members' stress levels vary depending on their age, teaching experience, and academic position. They also vary in how stressed they are about their marital status. However, there is no gender-based difference in stress levels.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study's primary goal was to look into the relationship between burnout and personality, social support, and job-related stress in University of Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University, and Rivers State University

lecturers—a demographic that had not been thoroughly examined before. Examining the degree to which personality and social support might mitigate the detrimental effects of stress and burnout in lecturers was a secondary goal. This study found that workload, student related issues, and role conflicts were the most significant stressors for university lecturers. These findings align with prior research (e.g. [1]), which highlighted how heavy workloads and institutional pressures contribute to academic burnout. However, unlike some previous studies, this research found that gender differences were not a significant factor in stress levels among lecturers. This suggests that both male and female lecturers experience similar work related stressors, contrary to findings in other contexts. In Nigeria, stress-related burnout among university lecturers has resulted in frequent strike actions, affecting academic calendars and student performance. This study confirms that institutional challenges such as delayed salary payments, high teaching loads, and poor resources for instruction. Lastly, the administration of the university ought to think about starting an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to offer expert support and help to faculty members dealing with stress-related issues. It is true that no university exists in a vacuum. The institution must integrate with both its local and larger surroundings in order to remain relevant. In this sense, there are institutions, groups, and non-governmental organizations in the community that could assist in managing stress on the main campuses. Because university teachers' well-being is closely related to the well-being of the society in which they operate, universities should engage with them, particularly governmental organizations that may be developing stress-induced policies, to look inward and take human aspects into consideration.

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