

Stress Factors and Job Performance of Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Annabel .U. Obinna-Akakuru,¹ Uzoma B. Njoku,² Victoria Chinwendu Agunanne,³ Ezinne Nelson-Okata,³

Onyinyechi I. Onwujialiri⁴

¹ Department of Psychology, G&C, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State Nigeria

² Prevention Department, eXclusive services INC, 11134 Lushek Drive Cincinnati, OH 45241 USA

³ Department of Life science education, Faculty of Education, Imo State University Owerri, Imo State Nigeria.

⁴ Department of General Studies, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State Nigeria.

Email: anniemagma@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined stress factors on job performance of lecturers in Imo State, Nigeria. Six specific purposes, six research questions and six hypotheses guided the work. The study employed inferential survey research design. The population of this study consisted of all lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo state which are eight thousand, three hundred (8,300). The sample size for this is 382, determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The researcher applied a random sampling technique to ensure that all selected groups have an equal chance with the other sample that is not selected. The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire tagged "Stress as a factor of Job Performance of Lecturers". The validity of the research instrument was determined by two specialists in Health Education and one specialist in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, from Alvan Ikoku FCE Owerri and Imo State University Owerri, respectively, while the reliability coefficient over time of the instrument for data collection was established through test-retest method of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) statistics which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.94. The research questions were answered using, mean, and standard deviations presented in tables, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated amongst others that physical, psychological and psycho-social stressors are factors on job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made, which includes amongst others that there is a need to create recreational activities for lecturers to ease job stress. Also, Seminars, workshops and conferences on occupational health services should be organized periodically for lecturers so as to improve their knowledge on occupational stress and related issues.

Keywords: job performance; physical stress; psychological stress; psycho-social stress; structured questionnaire

1. Introduction

Stress occurs when the demands of a situation are seen to be greater than the individual ability to cope with such demands. Situations or events that place excessive psychological and physical demand on a person may cause stress. Therefore, stress is the result of a misfit between the individual and the environment. No wonder, Hayble (2002) posits that stress is regarded as the dominant psychological problem of today. The term is defined as the inability of an individual to cope with his or her environment (Dobson & Smith, 2000). Chiffy (2005) posits stress as the responses the body makes while striving to maintain equilibrium and deal with the demands of life.

Khan, Shah, Khan & Gul (2012) sees stress as the body's response to the negative demands of the environment. These negative demands undoubtedly cause unpleasantness, restlessness and rising levels of discomfort. From a psychological point of view, stress refers to "an adaptive

response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes that is a consequence of any external action, situation or event that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person” (Adams, 2000). It is a psychological process which results from the interaction of the individual with the environment and results in disturbances caused to the psychological and social systems, depending on the individual’s characteristics (Akhlq, Amad, Mahmood, Husaan & Malik, 2010).

In consonance with foregoing, Uko (2012) stated that stress is also a condition of being subject to external forces or pressures which can either be good (eustress) or bad (distress). Eustress represents moderate and low stress levels and distress is frequently defined as high stress level. Principals and teachers who experience eustress will be able to meet job demands and this may engender positive work life (e.g., satisfaction and positive moral values), while principals and teachers who experience distress will not be able to fulfill job demands leading to dissatisfaction which affects an individual’s productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Leka, Griffiths & Cox, 2013). In similar view, Oboegbulem & Onwurah (2011) identified these stressors which are intrinsic to the job and which border on unpleasant working conditions as: total school working hours, physical or environmental factors like overpopulation of students; problems with the school plant; inadequate and ill-equipped teachers with lackadaisical attitudes towards work; students’ attitude towards learning; parental ambivalence towards the educational well-being of their children; low motivation; inadequate resources to run the school, low prospects of advancement, lack of job security and poor staff development programs. Others are personal problems and pressures; financial problems and domestic worries (Adebola & Makhari, 2008).

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. Therefore management of universities must find ways of managing stress at the workplace. Occupational stress according to Narayanan, Menon & 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 interpersonal conflicts. Ofuegbu & Nwadianni (2006) posit that Stress factors broadly fall into four types or categories: physical stress, psychological stress, and psychosocial stress; these stresses affect the job performance of lecturers.

Performance is the measurement of actual output or result against set goals. The line managers and leaders play vital roles by accommodating employees’ concerns so as to maintain organization performance (Kazimoto, 2016). The performance of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is regulated by three agencies under the Ministry of Education. These agencies include: National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and these agencies are saddled with the responsibilities of ensuring quality assurance of academic programs and providing framework for ranking the performance of tertiary institutions against set criteria.

According to the framework for measuring the lecturers’ performance, a lecturer’s performance is measured based on his/her research output, quality of teaching, community services among others. There has been a global shift towards ensuring efficient and result-oriented employees since managers are often conscious of the fact that having a high performing workforce is

essential for organizational growth and survival. They recognize that a highly engaged workforce can increase productivity while reducing the cost that is related to hiring and retaining personnel in a highly competitive market. Robinson, Perry & Hayday (2004) posits that employee engagement is the dynamics of positive attitude exhibited by employees towards an organization in order to promote organizational goals. An engaged employee is often aware of business context, and cooperates with colleagues to improve performance within the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee. In this context, employee engagement indicates that there are things to be done by both parties.

Osuala (1996) argued that teachers' job performance calls for critical examination as it is concerned with the job, the nature of supervision, the nature of opportunity available for advancement, nature of fringe benefits and the suitability for working conditions. Lecturers of both private and public and public institutions need to be encouraged or motivated in order to be more functional and contribute meaningfully to quality assurance in the teaching learning process in all Institutions of learning. It can further be stressed that "if lecturers and managers of Tertiary Institutions are not provided with the necessary working tools, they will lack job satisfaction, their psychological needs will negatively influence their productive capacity and results in poor quality performance of the institution" (Osuala, 1996).

One of the greatest threats to tertiary educational institutions in South Eastern Nigeria is lack of job satisfaction. This situation, according to Obanya (1997), is peculiar with lecturers in the public educational institutions. Tensions in these educational systems are consequent, in part, upon lecturers' dissatisfaction with their job, strike by the Academic Staff union of Universities (ASUU) which has resulted in negative attitude and poor quality output. Obanya (1997) further observed that, negative attitude to work brings about undesirable behavior characterized by low output, absenteeism and confrontational posture, while positive attitudes lead to improved performance, increased productivity and better quality assurance. On the other hand, their counterparts in the private institutions are better equipped, adequately motivated and properly guided for quality performance. This equally affects the health condition of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the work life of lecturers in tertiary institutions is not an easy one. Indeed, lecturers in Nigeria grapple daily with overcrowded classrooms, outdated laboratory facilities for research activities and teaching, poor working conditions amongst others. The slogan in Nigerian tertiary institutions '*publish or perish syndrome*' is a stressor. The intense pressure piled on lecturers (especially the younger ones) to publish as many papers as possible in the shortest time possible for promotion purposes is no longer news.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine stress as a factor on job performance and health conditions of lecturers in Imo State. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to:

1. examine the impact of physical stress on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State;
2. examine the impact of psychological stress on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State;

3. examine the impact of psycho-social stress on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State;

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent is physical stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State?
2. How is psychological stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State?
3. To what extent is psycho-social stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State?

1.3 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho₁ Physical stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not greater than the expected mean of 12.5.
- Ho₂ Psychological stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not greater than the expected mean of 12.5.
- Ho₃ Psycho-social stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not greater than the expected mean of 12.5.

2. Methodology

The study employed inferential survey research design. The survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. In other words, only a part of the population is studied, and findings from this are expected to be generalized to the entire population (Nworgu, 1991). The population of this study consisted of all lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo state; Imo State University Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Federal College of Land Resources Technology Oforola, Imo State Polytechnics Umuagwo, Federal Polytechnics Nekede, Imo State College of Education, Ihette Uboma and ICCN Institute of finance and investment Nkwere. The population is eight thousand three hundred (8,300). The sample size is 382, this was determined using Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973), from the population. For the effective study, a simple random sampling procedure was adopted on the institutions to be visited, since it would allow for equiprobability to all members of the institutions. The researcher applied a random sampling technique to ensure that all selected groups have an equal chance with the other sample that is not selected. The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire tagged "Stress as a factor of Job Performance of Lecturers". It is made up of two sections i.e. A and B. Section A of the instrument requests for demographic information, Section B - G, focused on stressors and the options are "Strongly Agreed (4-point);", "Agreed (3-point);", "Disagreed (2-point);", and "Strongly Disagreed (1-point)".

Copies of the instruments, together with the purpose of the study and research questions were sent to two specialists in Health Education and one specialist in Educational Measurement and

Evaluation, from Alvan Ikoku FCE Owerri and Imo State University Owerri, respectively, for vetting. They vetted the instrument in terms of content validity, face validity, simplicity and clarity of vocabulary, sentence structure, appropriateness and relevance of the instrument to the purpose of the study. The instrument was used based on the corrections effected and comments made by these specialties. This ensured face and content validity of the instrument. The Reliability coefficient over time of the instrument for data collection was established through the test-retest method. The researcher administered copies of the instrument on 15 respondents from Hezekiah University Lecturers, Umudi. The researcher used Hezekiah University Lecturers, Umudi, a private university which was not part of the research. After an interval of two weeks, the same respondents were re-administered with the same instrument which was reshuffled. Each respondent obtained two sets of scores X and Y for the test and retest scores respectively. The data obtained from the two administrations of the instrument was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) statistics which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.94. In order to ensure proper administration of these instruments, the researcher made several personal visits to the tertiary institutions, with the help of research assistants, who were trained by the researcher. At each visit, with the help of the research assistants, the researcher administered the instrument face to face. This method was used to ensure clarification of questions, words and phrases that needed to be clarified. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to recover all the copies of the instrument. The data gathered was analyzed using mean, and standard deviations presented in tables. t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

The analyses are made with respect to the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: To what extent is physical stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State?

Table 1: The extent to which physical stress is a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I feel weak and fatigued when I do a lot of jobs myself.	3.84	0.92	Accepted
2	I resort to the use of energizers to help carry out my daily task.	2.99	0.96	Accepted
3	I experience body pains when faced with tedious deadlines in my work/ life that are difficult to meet.	3.26	0.80	Accepted
4	My self-confidence / self-esteem is lower than I would like it to be when I feel I cannot meet my target.	2.97	0.94	Accepted
5	I frequently have guilty feelings if I relax and do nothing.	2.94	0.87	Accepted
	Grand Mean	16.0		

Table 1 indicates that weakness and fatigue when lots of work are done, use of energizers to carry out daily task, body pains with tedious deadlines in my work, low self-confidence/self-esteem when difficult tasks are not met, thinking too much about problems, are the extent to which physical stress affects the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State as their mean scores were more than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

Hypotheses 1: Physical stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not greater than the expected mean of 12.5.

Table 2: One way sample t-test showing physical stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State

	Test Value = 12.5						
	T	Mean	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Physical stress	41.746	16.0	381	.000	3.49476	3.3302	3.6594

Table 2 shows that the significance of t value is .000 which is less than 0.05 and the mean is 16.0 which is greater than the test value which is 12.5, therefore we reject the hypothesis, indicating that physical stress is a factor on job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

From the results, it revealed in this study that physical stress is a factor on job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State. This is as a result of the increasing complexities of work and its divergent demand, which has become a prominent and pervading feature of the modern teaching career. This result also implies that factors such as inability to meet academic targets and deadlines, tedious work, large workload results in physical stress. This result is in line with the findings of Bassey and Otu (2021), who studied duty related stress and work productivity among university lecturers in Cross River State, Nigeria. The result of the analysis revealed that duty content and workload significantly relate to work productivity among university lecturers.

Research Question Two: How is psychological stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State?

Table 3: Psychological stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I find myself resisting change when I feel I am not able to accomplish a task after spending time on it.	2.93	0.90	Accepted
2	I criticize myself when I do not meet the requirement for promotion in my workplace.	2.95	0.94	Accepted
3	I feel irritated or angry if I am not able to meet the criteria for a particular task at my workplace.	3.02	0.87	Accepted
4	I panic so much when I am assigned to a large class.	3.98	0.88	Accepted
5	I frequently have guilty feelings if I do not complete my syllabus in a semester	3.48	0.96	Accepted
	Grand mean	16.36		

Table 3 indicates that resisting change when unable to accomplish a task after spending time on it, criticizing oneself, feeling irritated, panic and feeling guilty, are the ways which psychological stress affects the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State as their mean scores were more than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

Hypotheses 2: Psychological stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not greater than the expected mean of 12.5.

Table 4: One way sample t-test showing psychological stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State

			Value = 12.5				
			Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Mean				Lower	Upper
Psychological Stress	9.451	16.36	381	.000	3.83508	3.7402	3.9300

Table 4 shows that the significance of t value is .000 which is less than 0.05 and the mean is 16.36 which is greater than the test value which is 12.5, therefore we reject the hypothesis, indicating that psychological stress is a factor on job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

The results from this study revealed that psychological stress is a factor on the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions. This result also indicates that resisting change when unable to accomplish a task after spending time on it, criticizing oneself, feeling irritated, panic and feeling guilty, were the ways which psychological stress affects the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State. This result is in line with the findings of Ojukwu and Nwankwo (2021) who studied the effect of job-related stress on lecturers' performance in Nigeria's Federal Universities in South-East region to ascertain how this burning issue can be dealt with so that employee can work at their maximum best and not be burned-out. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between management support and lecturer-student relations; Work-home interface affects lecturers' organizing skill; and finally, that Work- overload does not affect lecturers' course knowledge.

Research Question Three: To what extent is psycho-social stress a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State?

Table 5: The extent to which psycho-social stress is a factor on the job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
	I feel stressed when there is:			
1	inadequate or weak recognition for good job performance	2.93	0.99	Accepted
2	uncooperative colleagues	3.25	0.88	Accepted
3	Loss of motivation and enthusiasm for the work	3.02	0.98	Accepted
4	Promotion	3.98	0.88	Accepted
5	Work interfering during personal or family time	3.48	0.66	Accepted
	Grand mean	16.66		

Table 5 indicates that inadequate or weak recognition, inadequate or weak recognition for good job performance, uncooperative colleagues, loss of motivation and enthusiasm for the work, promotion, work interfering during personal or family time, are the extent to which psycho-social stress affects the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State as their mean scores were more than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

Hypotheses 3: Psycho-social stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State is not greater than the expected mean of 12.5.

Table 6: One way sample t-test showing psycho-social stress as a factor on job performance of lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Imo State

	Test Value = 12.5						
	T	Mean	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Psycho-social stress	65.074	16.66	381	.000	4.16230	4.0365	4.2881

Table 6 shows that the significance of t value is .000 which is less than 0.05 and the mean is 16.66 which is greater than the test value which is 12.5, therefore we reject the hypothesis, indicating that psycho-social stress is a factor on job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

It was revealed in this study that psycho-social stress is a factor on the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions. This implies that inadequate or weak recognition, inadequate or weak recognition for good job performance, uncooperative colleagues, loss of motivation and enthusiasm for the work, promotion, work interfering during personal or family time, were the extent to which psycho-social stress affects the job performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions in Imo State. This result is in line with the findings of Yusoff (2013) who carried out a study on job stress, performance and emotional intelligence in academia. Findings from this study revealed that a relationship exists between job stress and lecturer's performance in Nigeria and that lecturers in Nigeria should identify the job stress factors and try to manage their emotional competencies by working in a conducive atmosphere. This would deal with the problem of stress and boost their performance.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study have some far-reaching implications on lecturers, school administrators and the entire educational system. The implications of the findings that emerged in the course of this study indicated that lecturers exposed to hectic academic activity will experience stress; physical stress affects productivity and job performance. Based on these, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is a need to create recreational activities for lecturers to ease job stress.
2. Seminars, workshops and conferences on occupational health services, should be organized periodically for lecturers so as to improve their knowledge on occupational stress and related issues.
3. Also, tertiary educational institutions should structure their academic programs in such a way that it will be easy for lectures to balance their family, social and academic life.

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