ACADEMIC STRESS MANAGEMENT AND LECTURERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

SHITTU, Taofeek Olawale [1]

YEKINNI, Nurudeen Lanre[2]

ADEDAPO, Olubukola Olawunmi[3]
*Department of Educational Management, Lagos State University,
Lagos, Nigeria* [1,2&3]

ABSTRACT

This paper examined academic stress management and productivity in public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational design. The population of the study comprised 1,900 academic staff in two public universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and three null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A sample of 550 respondents was drawn through simple random sampling techniques. Two research instruments titled 'Academic Stress Management Questionnaire' (ASMQ) and 'Lecturers' Productivity Questionnaire' (LPQ) were used for data collection. Content validity of the instruments was ensured by test experts and the reliability consistency of the instruments was 0.69 using Cronbach's alpha. The Kendall's tau-b correlation was used to analyse data collected via Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0. The findings of hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 showed that: a significant relationship existed between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in public universities in Lagos State, Nigeria (τ_b = .561; N=550; p<0.05); a significant relationship existed between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity in public universities Lagos State, Nigeria (τ_b =.651; N=550; p>.05); and a significant relationship existed between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in public universities Lagos State, Nigeria (τ_b = .595; N=550; p>.05). Based on the findings, the study concluded that academic stress can be properly managed if the management of public universities caters for lecturers' welfare and provide enabling environment for teaching, research, and community services. Therefore, it is recommended amongst others that government should increase academic research funds allocated to public universities via Tetfund, need assessment funds, and provide adequate teaching facilities for academic staff to be more productive.

KEYWORDS: Academic Staff, Stress, Workload, Productivity and Tertiary Institution

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*CORRESPONDNG AUTHOR: SHITTU, Taofeek Olawale. Department of Educational Management, Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria. Email: taofeek.shittu@lasu.edu.ng   Tel +2348026297217

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the university seems to be a citadel of learning where teaching, research, and community service are implemented for academic excellence. Tertiary education is the education given after secondary education either in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, Monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses (Shittu, Ajimuse & Idowu, 2020). University is an ivory tower where teaching, learning, and research take place for academic purposes. The University education offered academic programmes and admission for students that yearned for knowledge. Today, most public universities in Nigeria floated new courses in the area of creativity and entrepreneurship for national development. Academic Staff is a lecturer that teaches in tertiary institutions. Lecturers are the cornerstone of the university system. Academic staff qualification and experience are prerequisites to the teaching and research process. The planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, reporting of academic staff is inevitable for public universities in Nigeria. The excess workload for academic staff in public universities in Lagos State increases at geometric progression; while the lecturers' is at arithmetic progression which is the major cause of stress.

Most often, lecturers are bedeviled with academic stress due to excess workload in the teaching occupation. According to Adeshina (2021), stress is the feeling of pressure or worry when there is a problem or issue going on in a person's life; it's emotional or physical tension as the thought of the problems at hand makes one nervous, agitated, or frustrated. If stress is allowed to become excessive, it may lead to sickness or psychosomatic disorders like fever, sneezing, hypertension, peptic ulcers, colitis, high blood pressure, constipation, alcoholism, insomnia, chronic fatigue, migraine, heart disease, dizziness, and nervous dermatitis. According to Adeshina (2021), the physical symptoms of stress include low energy, headaches (migraine most likely), chest pain or rapid heartbeat, stomach upset, high blood pressure, difficulty in breathing, insomnia, frequent cold among others. Behavioural symptoms of stress include: change in eating habits, either not eating or eating too much, procrastination and avoiding responsibilities, increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes, exhibiting nervous behaviour such as nail-biting, and pacing. However, the psychological and emotional signs of stress include: depression or anxiety, anger, irritability, or restlessness, feeling overwhelmed, lack of motivation, trouble sleeping or sleeping too much, constant worry, lack of concentration, making bad decisions, and others. According to Malik (2011), occupational stress occurs when there are disagreements between the demands of the place of work and those of the individuals' capabilities. Above all, effective stress management helps academic staff to break the hold stress in has in life, so the lecturers' can be happier, healthier, and more productive.

Management of Academic Stress and Lecturers' Productivity in Public Universities

Academic staff stress can be said to be normal if there is a regular balance in the time used to carry out numerous organizational goals and duties in such a way that the mental and physical state of the person doing the work is not affected. When calculating normal workload, three important variables should be considered. These are Task, Time, and Frequency of labour. Task refers to the job to be done. Tasks can be broken down into daily, detailed, and project. Daily tasks are routine jobs that need to be carried out daily basis, an example of such tasks for a lecturer is teaching. Detail tasks can be performed on a set-schedule basis and are more involved than daily work. Examples of detailed tasks are supervision of student projects, marking and grading of scripts, and research and publications. Project tasks are performed less frequently: anywhere from weekly to annually. Examples of these are community service and attending meetings that are school-related (Amini-Philips & Okonmah, 2020).

The workload can be seen as heavy when the workload exceeds the capacity to manage thereby making productivity to be negatively affected. Often, the cumbersome workload of these lecturers tends to be accompanied by stress as their job description entails working long hours and this could lead to stress if not properly handled (Amini-Philips & Okonmah, 2020). Lecturers are also exposed to a variety of other duties some of which are complex and sometimes conflicting with their primary roles as teachers and academic staff. They are exposed to doing so many works almost at the same time with the teaching job which is primary. Some of which are examination officers, chart coordinators, directors, head of departments, deans, provost, project supervisors, at undergraduate and graduate levels, attending conferences, and publication of papers, teach very large classes as against NUC recommendation of 12 students to 1 lecturer (Osaat & Ekechukwu, 2017).

However, Lecturers in public universities engaged in teaching, research, and community services. Academic staff stress was divided into three categories namely: Academic teaching stress; academic research stress and academic community service stress. The academic teaching stress involves delivering lectures, students' seminars, practical demonstrations, preparing for students' classes, teaching practice exercises; invigilation of students' examinations; marking and grading of examinations script and holding trust for the implemented curriculum of higher education. According to Osaat and Ekechukwu (2017), teaching is a difficult task and demands serious commitment to be effective. Teaching involves adequate preparation of what is to be taught through research, regularity, and punctuality to the class to implement what had been prepared. Teaching extends to evaluating the students through tests, assignments, and examinations, and particularly teaching extends to marking examination scripts and production of results. The excess workload of lecturers encumbers many administrative assignments like the Head of Department, Deans, Director, and Vice-Chancellor positions.

However, academic staff research stress involves the lecturer's research for academic publications for promotion; attending national and international academic conferences, supervision of the undergraduate project and postgraduate dissertation and PhD thesis. This is especially true for university teachers where there is a proverb well-circulated: "publish or perish". A lecturer must publish a good amount of articles published in refereed journals with a good reputation; he/she should attend national and international seminars, conferences, workshops, and training programs to gather and develop up to date knowledge and information about teaching, learning, and development (Mahmood and Yaqub, 2016). The certified lecturer possesses a bachelor's degree; master's and most importantly PhD. However, the academic staff community service stress involves lecturer appointments to serve at local and international organisations. According to Makhbul and Khairuddin (2014), community service refers to the activities of academics involving participation in external committees or organizations outside the university.

These activities include services extended to the government; professional associations, public and community organizations, other universities, and activities such as the external examination of theses, consultancy work, and appearances as an invited expert in a media event. Lecturers owed responsibilities to the society in the aspect of contributing of knowledge and social welfare. Lecturers have to contribute their knowledge and expertise to society either locally or at the international level. Akinfolarin (2013) posited that the education industry in Nigeria has been neglected through lack of adequate funding at all levels, low lecturers' wages and salaries, lack of proper supervision of human and material resources, low research facilities across various levels of education. Basic amenities such as water and electricity are also very important for lecturers' job satisfaction and motivation, for example, sanitary facilities are especially important to motivate female lecturers or teachers to work at a given school. The workload can be seen as the amount of work assigned to an individual for completion within a certain time. Relating it to the lecturers, the workload is a professional and non-

professional job carried out by the lecturers as they carry out their duties in the instruction of students. Meanwhile, management of academic stress is the best form of stress prevention in public universities in Nigeria. Management of academic stress involved planning, organising, staffing, coordinating, and reporting of lecturer's workload toward accomplishing educational goals and objectives. Academic stress and workload may cause psychosomatic disorders for lecturers and affect their physical and mental health. If lecturers are already stressed, their Head of Department should be aware of it and know how to help to get the best out of their academic staff. Poor academic environment, research stress, and community services systems and the way we manage them, can cause job stress. Job stress could affect the university by increasing absenteeism, decreasing commitment to work, increasing staff turnover, impairing performance and productivity, increasing complaints from students, increasing mistakes, and causing damage to the University's image both among its workers and externally (Nnuro, 2012).

Moreover, productivity refers to the optimization of the input and output of a task toward achieving organisational goals and objectives. Academic staff productivity can be said to be useful results obtained from efforts made by the lecturers to attain educational goals in the university system. Uyeri (2016) posited that productivity is a measure derived by input/output analysis. The extent of lecturers' efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity in their teaching and researching responsibility may not be guaranteed in the face of stress is orchestrated by excess workloads. In the educational system, productivity refers to the ratio between the total educational output and the resource inputs utilized in the production process. Productivity is a measure of how well resources such as information, finance, and human and physical resources are combined and utilized to accomplish specific and desirable results (Ejiogu in Abdulganiyu, 2015).
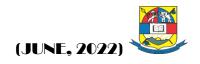
Problem of the Study

It has been observed that most academic staff in public tertiary institutions are bedeviled with stress and workload. Though it is essential to work but being conscious of stress may hinder productivity. Several challenges faced by lecturers in Nigerian public Universities. Firstly, teaching a large number of students in a small classroom without a public address system; poor internet facilities and use of technology to teach online; poor conducive environment for teaching due to lack of electricity, ventilation, and sitting arrangement of the student. All these culminated in excess workload and stress for academic staff. Secondly, academic staff researches and supervision of students' projects often result in stress. Because Lecturers must attend international and national conferences and make research for publications before they can be promoted. However, supervision of undergraduate project work and postgraduate dissertation and thesis put extra pressure on academic staff. Thirdly, community service engagement by academic staff also leads to excess workload and stress for academic staff.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to:

1. examine the relationship between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university.
2. determine the relationship between academic staff research stress and Lecturers' productivity in a public university.
3. assess the relationship between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university.

Research Hypotheses

The following Null hypotheses were raised:

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university.

H_{o3}: There is no significant relationship between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university.

METHODOLOGY

The research design was descriptive survey and correlational. The target population comprised of all 1,900 academic staff in the University of Lagos, Akoka, and Lagos State University, Ojo. The sample size comprised 550 lecturers randomly selected for the study. An instrument titled: Academic Stress Management Questionnaire (ASMQ) and Lecturers' Productivity Questionnaire (LPQ) was designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was purposively administered to 550 academic staff in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Faculty Law, Faculty Art, Faculty Science, Faculty of Engineering, and Faculty of management science in both University of Lagos and Lagos State University. 40 academic staff was randomly selected from each of the faculties selected for the study. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Section A and B. Section A contains the personal information of the respondents and section B contains the questionnaire items structured around the search questions. Each statement is measured on a four-point modifier Likert-type-rating scale, namely: "Strongly Agree (SA)", "Agree (A)", "Strongly Disagree (SD)", and "Disagree (D)". The data collected were properly analyzed using Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient. Content validity of the instruments was ensured by test experts and the reliability index of the instrument was persistently determined through Cronbach's alpha at 0.69 meaning that the instrument is reliable.
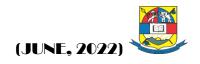
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Kendall's tau-b correlation analysis between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in public universities in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Correlations				
Variables			Academic Staff Teaching Stress	Lecturers' Productivity
Kendall's tau_b	Academic _Staff Teaching Stress	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.561
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	550	550
	Lecturers'_Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	.561	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	550	550

Source: *Field Survey (2021) * Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

A Kendall's tau-b correlation was run to investigate the relationship between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria. The result indicated that there was a strong, positive correlation relationship between the academic staff stress and lecturers' productivity which was statistically significant (τ_b = .561; N=550; p>0.05). Hence, the hypothesis which stated that "there is no significant relationship between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria is rejected and alternate was accepted. The p-value of 0.003 is less than the 0.05 significance level which indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implied that a statistically, a significant relationship existed between academic staff teaching stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria. These findings supported with Gwambombo (2013) conducted a study that looked into the effect of teachers' workload on students' academic performance. The study revealed that teachers' workload was heavy and harms students' academic performance. The study recommended that this could be prevented if the government employed competent teachers to increase the teaching workforce.

Table 2: Kendall's tau-b correlation analysis between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Correlations			Academic_ Staff_ Research_ Stress	Lecturers'_ Productivity
Variables				
Kendall's tau_b	Academic_Staff Research_Stress	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.651
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	550	550
	Lecturers' _productivity	Correlation Coefficient	.651	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	550	550

Source: *Field Survey (2021) * Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level *(2-tailed)**

A Kendall's tau-b correlation was run to investigate the relationship between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria. The result indicated that there was a strong, positive correlation relationship between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity which was statistically significant (τ_b = .651; N=550; p>0.05, 2-tailed). Hence, hypothesis two which stated that "there is no significant relationship between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria is rejected and alternate was accepted. The p-value of 0.003 is less than the 0.05 significance level which indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implied that a statistically, a significant relationship existed between academic staff research stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria. These findings are opposed with Alabi *et al* (2012) and Otaroghene (2013) that lack of infrastructure and workload are major causes of job stress among academic staff at University of Ibadan followed by conduct of examination, time pressure, and students' indiscipline, respectively. More so, this study supported Amini-Philips & Okonmah (2020) that an increase in research workload leads to a decrease in productivity.
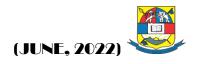
Table 3: Kendall's tau-b correlation analysis between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria.

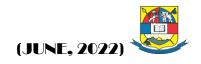| Correlations			Academic_ Staff_ Community_ Services _Stress_	Lecturers'_ Productivity
Variables				
Kendall's tau-b	Academic_Staff_Community_Services_ Stress	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.595
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	550	550
	Lecturers'_Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	.595	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	550	550

Source: *Field Survey (2021) * Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level*(2-tailed)*

A Kendall's tau-b correlation was run to investigate the relationship between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria. The result indicated that there was a significant relationship between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity (τ_b =.595; N=550; $p>0.05$, 2-tailed). Hence, hypothesis three which stated that there is no significant relationship between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria is rejected and alternate was accepted. The p-value of 0.003 is less than 0.05 the significance level which indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implied that a statistically, a significant relationship existed between academic staff community services stress and lecturers' productivity in a public university in Lagos State, Nigeria. These findings supported Amini-Philips & Okonmah (2020) that a significantly high negative relationship between lecturers' participation in community service workload and productivity in universities in Delta State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, academic stress can be properly managed if the management of public universities caters for lecturers' welfare, payment for earned academic allowance, and provide enabling environment for teaching, research, and community services. The study concluded that academic stress is a major predictor of low productivity among academic staff in public Nigerian universities due to poor work, lack of infrastructure, workload, overseeing the conduct of examinations, time pressure for academic research, a compilation of results, and student's project supervision. Therefore, the excess workload of lecturers leads to stress and affects their level of productivity in their teaching, research and community services as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should increase academic research funds through Tetfund and encourage academic staff to win academic research grants for educational development.
2. Authorities of a public university should provide enabling teaching environment for academic staff to be more productive and proactive.
3. Academic staff should always ensure that their teaching activities are well prioritized to give adequate attention to the learning need of students.
4. University Councils should ensure that a comfortable student-lecturer ratio policy is well implemented to ensure parity and productivity.
5. Universities management should employ an adequate number of universities lecturer to reduce teaching and research workload.
6. Nigerian government should implement Earned Academic Allowance for academic staff to cater for the welfare and regular health checkups to stay healthy.
7. Government should improve the welfare of academic staff in public universities and motivate lecturers, especially in the supervision of students' projects and a postgraduate thesis. This can be done by ensuring progressive periodic salary increments, staff development programmes as well as lecturers' involvement in decision making.
8. The periodic mandatory medical check-up should be initiated by the University Councils. Health talks and relevant on-the-spot check-ups will also help in reducing stress.
9. Universities management should also provide recreational facilities in their staff quarters and not just open fields that have no recreation equipment. Corporate bodies can be approached to finance such projects and these projects are named after them.

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