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Lecturers' Work Stress and Job Performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education, Nigeria

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Abstract

All forms of work and organisational procedures are potential sources of stress and stressors. In higher educational institutions, lecturers perform many responsibilities such as lecturing, carrying out researches and engaging in community services. If not properly handled, these multiple roles could result in stress which would negatively impact on their job performance. Using a sample of 191 lecturers randomly selected from three colleges of education in Kwara State and two instruments entitled "Work Stress Measurement Questionnaire" (WSMQ) and Job Performance Assessment Proforma (JPAP), data were collected on lecturers' physiological, psychological and behavioural stress and job performance. Findings of the study revealed that lecturers experienced excess workload in academic activities. Also, lecturers' job performance was negatively influenced by physiological, psychological and behavioural work stress. Among the recommendations made were the need for organising regular induction courses for lecturers on stress management, employment of more staff to reduce the excessive workload of lecturers and provision of relaxation centres to reduce stress and enhance interpersonal relations among the lecturers.

Introduction

All forms of work and organisational procedures are potential causes of stress simply because other people's needs and wishes impinge on one another. According to Adedipe (1993), stress is part of the normal fabric of human existence; it is just as essential as eating and breathing. Stress is (the cause of many of man's present ills and one of the most urgent problems of man that need urgent attention. We have all experienced stress at different times and aspects of our existence, some of which we can understand and analyse their origins and effect and some we cannot. In colleges of education, lecturers perform many responsibilities in addition to lecturing. The lecturers have to administer students' continuous assessment, attend conferences, seminars and workshops, carry out researches and publish in recognised journals as well as engage in community services. Peretomade (1993), while shedding light on functional and dysfunctional stress, asserted that work stress is like a coin, having two faces; one face is functional stress and the other dysfunctional stress (distress). It is dysfunctional when it is caused by something bad such as a lecturer being demoted for moral turbulence. However, as good as functional stress is, it could equally be destructive if not properly handled. Example was given of how functional stress killed a cafeteria cook who won 3.6 million lottery and the excitement of sudden richness killed him.

This study is, however, concerned with dysfunctional stress (distress) and its relationship with job performance among lecturers in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

Concept of Stress

Stress has been defined in various ways. Usually, it is considered to be something unpleasant

which has its origin outside the individual. Stress is believed to be a pressure. Sometimes also, we do not see stress as unpleasant but rather as a feeling or state of response to something that is in an individual's environment and which may not have the same effect on other people. In the study of Freeman & Gray (1987), stress is neither good nor bad but it depends on how it is experienced. Stress can be a stimulant or energiser in which case it is positive and beneficial; or it can be the cause of feeling of anxiety, depression or discomfort; here, it is negative and connotes a harmful condition.

However, Ojiako (2001) viewed stress as the bodily changes that can take place when the external pressures on an individual reach an intolerable pitch, causing weakened job performance and ill-health. Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires for which the outcome is perceived to be both certain and uncertain (Kreiner,2001).

Peretomade (1993) said that stress is used both in medical and management literatures to refer to an internal state of psychological, emotional and physiological tension or imbalance and strain within an individual resulting from his attempt to adapt and adjust to both internal and external pressures or to both physical and mental demand. Hence, Freeman & Gray (1987) identified anxiety, depression, collective anxiety, breakdown and burnout as some terms associated with stress in schools.

Causes and Sources of Stress

Stress has many causes and sources. Cooper (1981) discovered that the actual jobs done by the worker might constitute a source of stress for him. The writer identified workload as one of the stressors inherent to a worker and classified this into two, namely: qualitative work overload and quantitative work overload. Quantitative work overload means Having too much work to do, while qualitative work overload means having to make a very difficult decision that will have a strong effect on the life of others. The author also identified hours of work which could include weekends, excessive travels, coping with changes at work and fear of making mistakes as some other factors that could be considered as work overload, which in turn are some common sources of stress.

Work Stress and its Influence in Educational Institutions

Work stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. This concept is often confused with challenge but they are not the same. Challenges energise psychologically and physically and motivate us to learn new skills and master our job. Work stress can lead to poor health and even injury. Taiwo (1992), citing World Health Organisation (1992), divided factors associated with work stress into occupational and human conditions. The occupational conditions include work environment like job task, work overload, working hours, workers' role conflict, role ambiguity, job security and such organisational factors as supervisory, managerial, colleagues-relationship, risk and safety status in the organisation. Human conditions include workers' capacities, needs, expectation, culture and private life. All these are in a dynamic interaction that may lead to emotional disturbance and behavioural disorder or problems that are likely to result in work stress.

Workers and professionals face tension as a result of continuous interaction with people who have problems. This can lead to loss of care as it is often perceived in the character of medical practitioners who seem undisturbed by patients' worried health condition. Maslach & Jackson (1996) opined that lecturers that face large number of students with academic problems are likely to experience stress in their job. They asserted that one visible aspect of work stress is the increased feeling of emotional exhaustion and tiredness by workers.

In another study on job stress and burnout among university senior staff, Egwunyenga & Ebule (1994) found that university senior staff (both academic and non-academic) showed high stress symptoms in performing their duties and that the commonest symptoms of stress among this category of staff include restlessness, anxiety, frustration, occasional headache, dizziness and

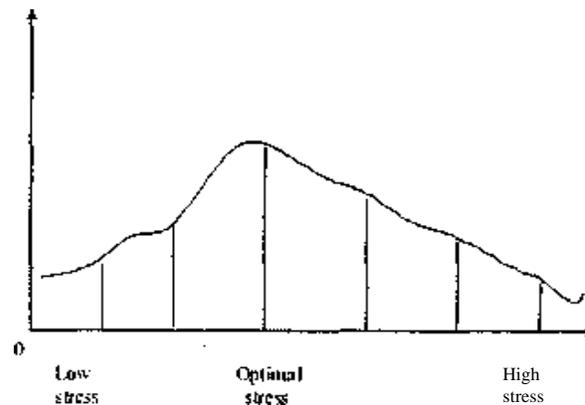
physical pains. The study concluded that the complexity and challenges of modern tertiary institutions with respect to teaching, research, administration as well as interaction with various interest groups within the educational system are associated with stress. This assertion was corroborated by many writers who also believed that lecturers in higher institutions, when stressed, do exhibit unusual behaviours/habits such as clutching the hair, ear or nose, biting the lips, grinding the teeth, foot tapping, nodding of head during meeting or social gathering, losing sense of humour, reacting nervously, restlessness, frustration and developing full-blown anger or hostility (Ellision, 1991; Peretomade, 1993; Ali-Khan, 1999; Yusuf, 2001; Nasir, 2001; Taiwo, 2003; Taiwo, 2005).

Stress and Job Performance

Lecturer job performance can be defined as an index of lecturer effectiveness, which refers to relationship between the characteristics of teaching and its effect on educational outcome in classroom teaching. Many researchers have carried out different studies on stress *vis-a-vis* job performance. The most widely published research work carried out is the inverted-u-relationship.

The study proved that low/moderate influence of stress stimulates the body and increases its ability to act. Too much stress places unattainable demands on the person which result in low performance (Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administration of Nigeria (IC SAN) 1999). The inverted-u-relationship describes the reaction to stress overtime as well as the changes in stress intensity. A moderate level of stress may have negative influence on individual performance over a long period of time. Hence, a conclusion may be drawn that lecturer may use a positive influence of stress to perform well in his task of lecturing and administration but, when this is experienced over a long period of time, it may result in a low performance. This is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: The Inverted -U- Relationship between stress and performance



Source: Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria (ICSAN) 1999 Report p. 78.

Figure 1 indicates that performance increases as the level of stress increases up to an optimum. With further stress, performance decreases such that high stress is characterised by low performance. Therefore, some level of stress is useful as a catalyst for performance, up to an optimal level.

It was gathered also from various studies that stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tiredness and intention by workers to quit their job, all of which have a negative effect on productivity (Miller, 1989; Moos, 1994; Yusuf, 2003; Bakare, 1988; Al i-Khan, 1999; Taiwo, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between work stress and job performance among lecturers in Kwara State Colleges of Education. The study also sought to find out the coping strategies that would enable higher job performance among lecturers in the process of carrying out their duties.

The outcome of this study would assist the lecturers to determine the level at which they could be more productive. It would also intimate any reader of this work and lecturers with the importance of self-understanding and self-appraisal and their influence on job performance.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the focus of this study:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between physiological work stress and lecturer job performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between psychological work stress and lecturers job performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between behavioural work stress and lecturers' job performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlation design method. The target population for the study consisted of all the lecturers in the three Kwara State Government-owned Colleges of Education (College of Education Ilorin, College of Education Oro and College of Education (Technical) Lafiaji). From a population of 380 lecturers (180 in Ilorin, 141 in Oro and 59 in Lafiaji), 191 lecturers were randomly selected for the study (90 from Ilorin, 71 from Oro and 30 from Lafiaji). This represented an average of 50.3% each of the total population of lecturers from the three institutions.

A questionnaire entitled "Work Stress Measurement Questionnaire" (WSMQ) and a proforma entitled "Job Performance Assessment Proforma" (JPAP) were used for data collection. These instruments were subjected to face and content validity while a test-retest method was used to determine their reliability through a pilot study involving 20 lecturers of Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (KAISLS) Ilorin, at an interval of three weeks. The reliability coefficients were calculated to be 0.87 and 0.86 respectively using Pearson product moment correlation statistics.

Results and Discussion

The following results were obtained after both the administration and analysis of data on the study, using frequency counts, percentages and Pearson product moment correlation statistics:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by number of lecture hours per week

| Lecture Hours per Week | Frquency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|----------|----------------|
| 4 to 6 Hours | 41 | 21,5 |
| 7 to 12 Hours | 120 | 62.8 |
| 12 Hours and above | 30 | 15.7 |
| Total | 191 | |

Results in table 1 reveal that the lecturers experienced excess workload in lecturing activities. This is because at least 150 lecturers out of the 191 sampled by this study had 7 to 12 hours and above 12 lecture hours per week. This situation may prevent the lecturers from attending to other academic activities such as publications, conference, seminars and workshop attendance. It is a situation which may also slow down the rate of lecturers' promotion and lead to diversion of attention and frustration due to overstaying in one post or rank and can influence lecturer's level of job performance.

Hypothesis Testing

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between physiological work stress and lecturers' job

performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

Table 2: Work stress and lecturers' job performance

| variables | No of cases | x | \bar{d} | Df | calculated r-value | critical r-value | Remark |
|----------------|-------------|------|-----------|-----|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| Physiological | 191 | 2.86 | .953 | 189 | | | |
| Work stress | | | | | | | |
| Lecturer's job | | | | | .139 | | Ho |
| Performance | 191 | 3.68 | .921 | 189 | | | Rejected |

Table 2 shows that the calculated Pearson r value of .897 is greater than the critical r value of .139. Thus, the operational hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between physiological work stress and lecturers' job performance was rejected.

The positive correlation between the variables could be attributed to the following reasons:

- * working under poor physical condition; and
- * sleeplessness, body weakness, physical tiredness and body pain/muscular tension experienced by the lecturers.

The finding confirms the findings of Perlberg & Keinans (1984), Olatade (1998) and Taiwo (2005), which found physiological stress to be related with lecturers' job performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between psychological work stress and lecturers' job performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

Table 3: Psychological work stress and lecturers' job performance

| variables | No of cases | x | \bar{d} | Df | calculated r-value | critical r-value | Remark |
|----------------|-------------|------|-----------|-----|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| Psychological | 191 | 2.86 | .871 | 189 | | | |
| Work stress | | | | | | | |
| Lecturer's job | | | | | .951 | .139 | Ho |
| Performance | 191 | 3.82 | .921 | 189 | | | Rejected |

Table 3 shows that the calculated Pearson r value of .951 is greater than the critical r value of .139. Thus, the operational hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between psychological work stress and lecturers' job performance was, therefore, rejected. This finding in the table implies that lecturers suffered psychological stress which could affect their job performance. This finding corroborates the findings of Perlberg & Keinan (1984), Egwunyenga & Egbule (1994), Olatade, (1998) and Taiwo (2005) which maintained that stress conditions such as low self-esteem, emotional tension, fear and frustration that could result from high sense of expectation in areas such as research and publication, which are the main criteria for promotion, hinder lecturers' level of commitment in the discharge of their duties (Taiwo, 2005).

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between behavioural work stress and lecturers' job performance in Kwara State Colleges of Education.

Table 4: Behavioural work stress and lecturers' job performance

| variables | No of cases | \bar{x} | $\bar{\sigma}$ | Df | calculated r-value | critical r-value | Remark |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-----|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| Psychological | 191 | 2.92 | .871 | 189 | | | |
| Work stress | | | | | | | |
| Lecturer's job | | | | | .858 | .139 | Ho |
| Performance | 191 | 3.68 | .921 | 189 | | | Rejected |

Table 4 shows that the calculated Pearson r value of .858 is greater than the critical r value of .139. Thus, the operational hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between behavioural work stress and lecturers' job performance was rejected. This positivity in table 4 can also be interpreted to mean that there exists significant relationship between behavioural work stress and lecturers' job performance. This finding conforms with those of Miller (1988), Adeoye (1992) and Taiwo (2005) who submitted that the positive correlation between the variable of behavioural work stress and lecturers' job performance could be attributed to some feelings experienced by the lecturers while discharging their duties. These feelings include procrastination, being faced with students' threat or crimes, being overloaded with lecturing and administrative jobs, ineffective communication between the lecturers and their boss (HOD, Dean and Provost), absenteeism and collecting unrealistic salary.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn that:

- * existence of work stress influences the level of job performance of lecturers in Kwara State Colleges of Education;
- * the physiological work stress conditions suffered by the lecturers include such reactions as physical tiredness, body weakness and muscular tension. These experiences affect negatively the level of the lecturers' job performance;
- * the psychological stress experienced by lecturers on their job include low self-esteem, anxiety, frustration, poor concentration, job insecurity, role conflict and role ambiguity, which impact negatively on their job performance; and the behavioural work stress conditions of procrastination, fear from crime and threats from students, ineffective communication, absenteeism and unrealistic salary have negative influence on the level of job performance of lecturers in Kwara State College of Education.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- * Lecturers need to critically examine their attitudes towards life in order to become stress-free, especially as regards psychological and behavioural stress.
- * Induction courses on techniques for monitoring and coping with work stress should be regularly organised for lecturers using experts in stress management.
- * "Too much workload" was found to be one of the major sources of stress. Hence, government, through the college management, should employ more staff so as to reduce the excessive workload of lecturers.
- * The college management, through the assistance of various agencies, should provide necessary support for lecturers in career development through conferences, seminars and constant promotion.
- * Kwara State Government, through the college management, should make efforts at improving the

self-esteem of the lecturers to meet the level of their counterparts in the federal or other organised higher institution by providing them with loan facilities.

- * Kwara State Government, through the college management, should facilitate and ensure that all lecturers are registered with such schemes as Federal mortgage programme, contributive pension scheme and National Health Insurance Scheme to boost the morale and loyalty of the lecturers.
- * Constant promotion as and when due is also recommended so as to get the best of the lecturers' performance at all times.
- * Relaxation centres such as staff club house should be renovated and maintained and well equipped with all kinds of relaxation gadgets for the lecturers, thereby enhancing their interpersonal relations and reducing the tendency of behavioural and psychological work stress among them.

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