

# Stress Indicators and Occupational Effectiveness among Academic Staff of Universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of stress indicators and occupational effectiveness among academic staff of universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States of Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, two research questions were raised and were converted into null hypotheses to guide the study. Related literatures were reviewed. The ex post facto research design was adopted for the study. Stratified random sample technique was employed and a sample size of 639 academic staff was used for the study. Stress Indicators and Occupational Effectiveness of Academic Staff Questionnaire (SIOEASQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was face-validated by the researchers assisted by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument ranged between 0.74 and 0.84. Data collected were analyzed using a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that workload and psychological work stress significantly influenced the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service. The study recommended, among others, that universities management should derive a method of obtaining feedback from their workers regarding the work situation so as to be able to redesign jobs to enhance occupational effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Stress Indicators, Occupational Effectiveness, Workloads, Psychological Work Stress

Stress is the reaction of an individual to life challenges. Stress is said to be the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands (Topper, Vermont, Steensma, Kleiner & Varca, cited in Ongori & Agolla, 2008). Academic staff occupational effectiveness is influenced by different stress indicators such as workload and psychological work stress among others. According to Akpan (2012), observations have shown that some academic staff exhibit poor work behaviours like general tardiness, absenteeism, delay in the marking of examination scripts, submission of student's grades as well as poor attitude towards teaching, research and community service. This situation may result in occupational ineffectiveness and low commitment due to prevailing level of stress.

Occupational effectiveness in this study is narrowed down to teaching, research and community service. The scourge of occupational ineffectiveness among academic staff has eaten deep into the foundation of the Nigeria universities. It is observed that in most cases, academic staff exhibit ineffectiveness in teaching, research and community service. In Nigeria today, there is a gradual decline in the standards, output and quality of teaching, research publications and community service. The most unfortunate part is that the university management and employers are doing little or nothing to salvage the situation. According to Ndum (2014), employees are resources that should be effectively managed if organizations are to make progress. With the absence of good human resources, even the best designed organization that is guided by well-made plans, necessary

## I. INTRODUCTION

equipment, etc cannot realize its performance potential.

Most academic staff seem to compromise their teaching, research and community service roles for non-academic activities. Observedly they seem to be somewhat negligent of their teaching duties as well as research paper writing for publication which should have led to their promotion and enable them also contribute to the knowledge bank. However, Philip, Gorreti, Samuel and Cush (2014) opined that every lecturer in the university is employed with three major terms of employment: to teach, to research and to carry out community service.

Occupational effectiveness for a university lecturer is therefore measured in terms of the ability to impart knowledge through the teaching, researching and publishing of papers and in the rendering of community service. In consonance with the above, it is obvious that occupational effectiveness determines the ability of a tertiary institution to attain its organizational goals. This is also a determinant of the career attainment of its academic staff.

Unfortunately, for some years now, it has been alleged that Nigerian graduates are half-baked, ill-trained and ill-equipped with the necessary skills to succeed. In some cases, they lack proper guidance and counseling services to inform their decisions and choice of career. Interestingly educational guidance a process of assisting students achieve the self-understanding and self-direction necessary to make informed decisions and move toward the achievement of their individual objectives (Ndum and Onukwugha, 2013). Arguably, this shows that the human resource produced is of poor quality (Buk, 2015). Part of the blame for this unhealthy development is on the academic staff who teach the students. It has been observed that academic staff have for sometimes been complaining of inadequate teaching, insufficient institutional facilities as well as an excessive workload. These may be a source of stress to academic staff which may also affect their occupational effectiveness. Workload is the amount of work that is expected to be done within a specific time which maybe under severe deadline pressure. This may involve long and unusual work hours, loss of sleep and relaxation. This makes it a stressor (Onoh, 2002).

Ofoegbu and Nnadiani (2006) explained that psychologically, stress results from demands put on individual body. According to medical experts, stress has a negative effect on health (World Health Organization, 2005). The

researchers are therefore arguing that the inability of academic staff to effectively carry out their occupational responsibilities may be attributed to these identified stress factors. Given this situation, the researchers carried out a study to investigate if stress indicators may influence occupational effectiveness among academic staff of universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States of Nigeria.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Academic Staff in Universities are faced with increased expectations of their services to schools, students and the community. They are required to teach students, supervise their research works, provide public assistance to their communities and embark on the publication of research works for their professional growth. It has been posited that parents, students and the public complain about the decline in the quality of teaching, research publications and community service delivered by academic staff of Nigeria universities (Buk, 2015). Frequently, academic staff are blamed for low quality research, inadequate engagement in community services and the inability to impart knowledge to the student resulting in student's poor academic performance. In order to meet these demands, academic staff seem to face stress. For the past years, the government and school authorities have put certain measures such as the provision of educational facilities, improvement of staff welfare in order to address these problems. However, the problems still persist.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The main reason for this research is to determine if stress indicators can influence occupational effectiveness among academic staff in universities with an emphasis on the two Federal Universities in Calabar and Uyo.

The specific objectives of the research were to determine the extent to which:

- (1) Workload influences the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service.
- (2) Psychological work stress influences the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service.

#### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does workload influence the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service?
2. How does psychological work stress influence the occupational effectiveness of

academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service?

**Statement of Hypotheses**

Two research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- (1) Workload does not significantly influence the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service in universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.
- (2) Psychological work stress does not significantly influence the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in universities.

**Method**

The research design used in this study was ex-post facto design. The choice is predicated on the premise that the variables' manifestation of in the study (i.e stress indicators and occupational

effectiveness) had occurred before the researchers undertook this study.

The study population was Three Thousand One Hundred and Ninety Four (3194) academic staff. The sample of the study was obtained using stratified random sampling technique. The sample size for this study was six hundred and thirty nine (639) academic staff, 382 academic staff from the University of Calabar and two hundred and fifty seven (257) academic staff from the University of Uyo (males and females), out of the 3194 academic staff in the two Federal Universities. Stress Indicators and Occupational Effectiveness of Academic Staff Questionnaire (SIOEASQ) was used for data collection.

**II. RESULTS**

Research question 1: How does workload influence the occupational effectiveness among academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service?

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and one-way (ANOVA) of influence of workload related stress on occupational effectiveness in terms of teaching, research and community service.

Occupational effectiveness	Workload related stress	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Teaching	Low	148	14.73	2.22
	Moderate	196	16.92	2.29
	High	276	18.63	2.11
	Total	620	16.76	2.21
Research	Low	148	15.26	2.38
	Moderate	196	15.91	2.17
	High	276	16.98	2.19
	Total	620	16.05	2.28
Community service	Low	148	15.84	2.12
	Moderate	196	16.81	2.16
	High	276	18.24	2.03
	Total	620	16.96	2.10

  

Academic staff output	Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F-ratio	P-level
Teaching	Between groups	589.62	2	294.81	19.50	0.000
	Within groups	9326.12	617	15.12		
	Total	9915.74	619			
Research	Between groups	368.98	2	184.49	14.12	0.000
	Within groups	8063.43	617	13.07		
	Total	8432.41	619			
Community service	Between groups	416.02	2	208.01	13.90	0.00
	Within groups	9236.43	617	14.97		
	Total	9652.98	619			

groups  
 Total

Significant at .05 ( $F_{2,617} = 3.02$ )

Table 1 shows that workload related stress significantly influenced the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in universities in terms of teaching ( $F = 19.50, P < .05$ ), research ( $F = 14.12, P < .05$ ) and community service ( $F = 13.90, P < .05$ ). With this, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted as the

calculated F-ratio of 19.50, 14.12 and 13.90 were greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 at .05 significance level. Since the F-ratio were significant, the Fisher Least Significant Different (LSD) multiple comparison tests was done. The LSD result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Fisher's (LSD) multiple comparison test analysis of influence of workload related stress

Occupational effectiveness	Workload related stress	Low (n = 148)	Moderate (n = 196)	High (n = 276)
Teaching	Low	14.73	-2.19	-3.90
	Moderate	-4.28*	16.92	-1.71
	High	-12.19*	-5.34*	18.63
		MSW = 15.12		
Research	Low	15.26	-0.65	-1.72
	Moderate	-1.63	15.91	-1.07
	High	-5.36*	-3.34*	16.98
		MSW = 13.07		
Community service	Low	15.84	-0.97	2.40
	Moderate	-2.43*	16.81	1.43
	High	-7.50*	-4.47*	18.24
		MSW = 14.97		

Significant at .05

Table 2 shows the influence of workload related stress on occupational effectiveness in terms of teaching. Academic staff who perceived workload stress as being high had significantly greater mean score for teaching than those who perceived it as low ( $t = -12.19$ ) and moderate ( $t = -5.34$ ). Likewise, those who perceived the influence of workload stress on teaching as moderate had a

significantly greater average score than academic staff who perceived it as low ( $t = -4.28$ ).

Research question 2

To what extent does psychological work stress influence the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service?

Table 3 Descriptive statistic and one-way ANOVA of influence of psychological work stress on occupational effectiveness in terms of teaching, research and community service

Occupational effectiveness	Workload related stress	N	Mean	Std. deviation	
Teaching	Low	126	15.72	2.21	
	Moderate	172	16.92	2.26	
	High	322	18.71	2.10	
	Total	620	17.12	2.19	
Research	Low	126	15.24	2.32	
	Moderate	172	15.62	3.21	
	High	322	16.16	2.16	
		Total	620	15.52	2.56
Community service	Low	126	15.82	2.16	
	Moderate	176	16.70	2.13	
	High	322	18.21	2.08	
		Total	620	16.91	2.12

Academic staff output	Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F-ratio	P-level
Teaching	Between groups	540.22	2	270.11	18.34	.000
	Within groups	9083.43	617	14.72		
	Total	9623.65	619			
Research	Between groups	216.92	2	108.46	7.53	.003
	Within groups	8892.68	617	14.41		
	Total	9109.60	619			
Community service	Between groups	387.69	2	193.85	13.85	.000
	Within groups	8643.21	617	14.00		
	Total	9030.90	619			

Significant at .05 ( $F_{2,617} = 3.02$ )

Table 3 shows that stress arising from psychological work stress significantly influenced the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service. In terms of teaching ( $F = 18.34, P < .05$ ), research ( $F = 7.53, p < .05$ ) and community service ( $F = 13.85, P < .05$ ). With this result, the null hypothesis was

rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted as the calculated F-ratio of 18.34, 7.53 and 13.85 were greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 at .05 significance level. Since the F-ratio were significant, Fisher LSD multiple comparison tests was done. The LSD result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Fisher's (LSD) multiple comparison test analysis of influence of psychological work stress on occupational effectiveness

Occupational effectiveness	Psychological related stress	Low (n = 126)	Moderate (n = 172)	High (n = 322)
Teaching	Low	15.72	-1.20	2.99
	Moderate	-2.67*	16.92	1.79
	High	-9.43*	-5.59*	18.71
		MSW = 14.72		
Research	Low	15.24	-0.38	-1.37
	Moderate	-0.95	15.62	-0.99
	High	-4.28*	-3.09*	16.61
		MSW = 14.41		
Community service	Low	15.82	-0.88	-2.39
	Moderate	-2.20*	16.70	-1.51
	High	-7.49*	-4.72*	18.21
		MSW = 24.00		

Significant at .05

Table 4 shows that for occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, those who perceived high psychological work stress had a significantly greater mean score for teaching than those who perceived it as low ( $t = -9.34$ ) and moderate ( $t = -5.59$ ). Likewise, academic staff that perceived psychological work-stress moderately had a significantly greater mean score than those who perceived it as low ( $t = -2.67$ ).

### III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the results obtained from the study, it was revealed that workload significantly influenced occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Agulana (2007), Usoro and Etuk (2016). This finding corroborates the study by Kazmi, Anjad

and Kahn, 2008. Nelson and Quick (2003) also concluded that excessive workload had an impact on teacher's job performance. This result, however, negates the finding of Amalu (2004) that teachers in secondary schools were not affected by workload. A number of explanations may have accounted for the present findings. Firstly, it is a fact that lecturing, learning processes involves a lot of energy dissipation. Given the academic situation in which lecturers in Nigeria do not have time for holidays to rest, relax and recoup lost vigor and the fact that most lecturers' tasks cannot be delegated, the findings seems genuine.

Another finding revealed that psychological work stress significantly influenced occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service. This corroborates the view of Ndum and Udoe (2020), who indicate that it is disheartening to note that there is a growing level of poor performance of employees today as a result of psychological stressors. The result confirms the findings of a research carried out by Philip, Richard and Andy (2016) regarding the influence of psychological stress on universities' academic job performance. Furthermore, this finding is in line with Cincotta's (2005) study which had it that high level of psychological stress could affect lecturers' job performance in universities. The finding is equally in line with Larson (2004) who said that psychological stress is normally associated with the human body's reaction resulting in anxiety, tension, frustration and depression. He concluded that various stress factors at place of work could directly and harmfully affect worker's productivity, effectiveness, work qualities of an individual. It is also said to impact the worker physical, emotionally and psychologically.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study it was concluded that workload significantly influenced the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service. Similarly, psychological work stress significantly influence the occupational effectiveness of academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community service.

#### Recommendations

From the findings, it was recommended among others, that:

1. Management should reduce the workload of academic staff by reassigning administrative

tasks back to the non-academic staff who were ab initio employed to carry out these tasks.

2. Nigeria's National Universities Commission should ensure that universities adhere to the internationally accepted student-lecturer ratio.
3. Periodic mandatory medical checkup should be initiated for or encouraged among academic staff.

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