Governmental Sources of Stress and Performance of Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnics in South East Nigeria

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Abstract:
This study investigated governmental sources of stress and performance of academic staff in federal polytechnics in South East, Nigeria. Structural questionnaire was the principal tool used in eliciting information from 315 respondents drawn from the study population. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used in data analysis. The result of the regression analysis shows that governmental sources of stress have a negative impact on employee performance. The model is highly fitted with no auto correlation with an overall significant regression. Thus governmental sources of stress have a significant impact on performance of academic staff in South East, Nigeria. The researcher concludes that lecturers who perceive their jobs as stressful record a decrease in performance that impacts significantly on students, institutions and the nation at large.

Keywords: governmental sources of stress, performance, academic staff, South East Nigeria.

Introduction
The changing nature of academic work appears to have led to a considerable increase in job demands without corresponding increase in job resources. Stress is likely to occur when valued resources are inadequate to meet the demands. WHO (2016) defines work-related stress as the response workers may have when presented with work demands and pressure that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. Stress is depicted as the antagonistic psychological and physical responses that happen in a person as a consequence of his or her inability to adapt to the demands being made on him or her. (Moorhead & Griffen, 2007).

Organizations cannot usually protect their workers from stress arising outside the work, but they can protect them from stress that arises through work. Job-stress can be a threat to the organization as far as its works are concerned.

Employee performance at the work place is a major concern for the organization irrespective of all the factors and conditions. Job performance can be viewed as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish the task assigned to him/her successfully, subject to the normal constraints of reasonable utilization of the available resources. Employees who perceive their jobs as stressful record a decrease in performance characterized by dissatisfaction, reduced motivation and commitment levels; they also exhibit unwanted behaviours like absenteeism, mistakes, improper decision making, drug use and abuse. The performance of academic staff may be decreased in such a way that the quality of education offered to the students are affected. The resultant effect includes complaints from parents and other...
stakeholders on the status of service delivery in the institutions, frequent strikes, dissatisfied employees, poor performance of the polytechnics in general, and eventually damaging overall image of the educational institutions (Noor & Noor, 2016).

In recent times, stress has become a major issue that has seriously affected academic staff in tertiary institutions all over the world. Scholars have come with the view that stress in academic institutions can have positive and negative consequences if not properly controlled.

Statement of the Problem
The tasks that polytechnic lecturers are expected to undertake have changed significantly in recent years, and increasingly their work is perceived as stressful as a result of expanding enrollment in the polytechnic without a proportional increase in teachers resource and the fact that all promotions for the academic are determined based on not only teaching but also the outcome of scientific research.

Polytechnic lecturers face problems with or the government, which have negative effects on their effectiveness in teaching and learning process. The governmental problems include, ever changing higher education reforms and policies, inadequate budget for higher education sector, quality control and accreditation concerns. These constitute potential sources of stress to polytechnic lecturers. With recent escalation in the demand of the job, it is not surprising that academic staff report difficulties in maintaining firm boundaries between the work place and the home as; for many, it appears that the home is the extension of the work place.

Stress related outcomes do have serious consequences on individuals’ mental, psychological and physical health. The cost of stress is seen in increase in the number of absenteeism, the decline in work performance, the negative attitude of lecturers and premature death. It is against this background that the study was carried out with a view to providing answers, to the highlighted problems.

Objective of the Study
The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of governmental sources of stress on performance of academic staff in federal polytechnics in South East Nigeria.

Research Questions
To what extent does governmental sources of stress affect performance of academic staff in South East Nigeria?

Hypothesis
Ho: Governmental sources of stress does not have a significant impact on performance of academic staff in South East Nigeria.

Literature Review
Work related stress (WRS) is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressure that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope (Leka, Griffola & Cox 2004; WHO 2016). Work- related stress is a combination of high levels of job demands and low levels of control over one’s job (Rosenthal, and Alter 2012). Work- related stress refers to physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities and resources provided (Jonker, 2016). Dar, Ahmal, Naseem and Khan (2011) states that job stress occurs as a result of a poor person-environment fit.

Teaching can be a stressful profession with demands and expectations from parents, students, administrators and colleagues, which are aggravated by workload, changing policies and a lack of acknowledgement for accomplishments. The complexity and challenges of modern tertiary institution with respect to teaching, research, administration as well as interaction with various interest groups within the educational system are associated with stress (Weiss, Hiu & Lu 2011).

Academic staff play a major role in achieving the objectives of the institution (Ahlarn & Musa, 2012). The performance of the staff, both as teachers and researchers and also as managers,
determine to a large extent, the quality of the student experience of higher education and has a significant impact on student learning and on the contribution that such institution can make to society. Increase in class size, static budgets, searching for alternative sources of finance for funding research, imposed forms of review and accountability, lack of tenure all contribute to the potential for an increase in conflict and negative stress outcomes among members of the profession (Sotirakou, 2004).

Job performance as indicated by Opatha (2002) specifies how well an employee performs task, duties and responsibilities of his or her job. It focuses directly on employee productivity by assessing the number of units of acceptable quality produced by an employee in a manufacturing environment within a specific time period. Performance as described by Velnampy (2006) is a function of two variables—capacities for work and will to work (otherwise known as motivation). Ying and Ahmad (2009) operationalized employee performance into task and contextual behaviours of employees. Task behaviour is the behaviour associated with maintaining and servicing an organization's technical core while contextual behaviour is one's interpersonal skill, knowledge that support to broader social environment.

Job performance can be viewed as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish the task assigned to him/her successfully, subject to the normal constraint of reasonable utilization of the available resources (Laiba, Muhamad & Kashif, 2011).

In recent times, stress has become a major issue that has seriously affected academic staff in tertiary institutions all over the world. Scholars have come with the view that stress in academic institutions can have positive and negative consequences if not properly controlled (Smith, 2002).

Higher education contributes significantly to the development and economic growth of a country by training and providing a required quantity of qualified specialists in various fields of the national economy. The need to evaluate the performance of the teaching staff creates preconditions necessary to comply with the demands of the occupied positions, professional skills, and abilities of the evaluated persons. The evaluation of the teaching staff is based on the following fields of activity: teaching, scientific research, and the lecturer's impact on the development of the higher education institution where he or she works (Adrian, Dragos & Anattol, 2016).

**Theoretical Review**

Stress results from the complex interactions between a large system of interrelated variables, there are several psychological theories and models that address occupational stress (Mark and Smith, 2008). However, this study is anchored on job demand resource model.

**Job-Demand Resource Model**

This model was propounded by Arnold Bakker and Evangelina Demorotti in 2007. Job-Demand Resource model posits that strain are a response to imbalance between demands of one’s job and the resources he or she has to deal with those demands. Job demands are the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills. Therefore, they are associated with the expenditure of time and energy. (Balducci, Schaufeli & Fraccaroli, 2011).

On the other hand, job resources are the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that aid in achieving work goals; reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological cost, stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Balducci, Schaufeli & Fraccaroli, 2011).

**Empirical Review**

Liu, Zhou and Zeng, (2010) investigated source of stress among high school chemistry teachers in China, involving a sample size of 101. Descriptive statistics and factor analysis were used to analyse the hypotheses. By means of factors analysis, five factors with eigen values greater than 1 were elicited. The first factor named teaching workload consisted of seven items. With an eigen value of 6.50, it explained 34.22 of the variances. Three items made up the second factor and was named school system.
eigen value was 2.13 and it explained 11.20 percent of the variance. The third factor consisted of three items, which was named society treatment and demands with an eigen value of 1.41, it explained 7.43 percent of the variance. The fourth factor consisted of three items and was named self-development demands. Its eigen value was 1.23 and its explained 6.48 percent of the variance. The fifth factor was named school hardware factors, consisted of three items with an eigen value of 1.05, it explained 64.87 percent of the variance.

Rosemary, Emene, Obike and Obiuto (2014) conducted a study titled Managing Stress among lecturers in Polytechnics in South East Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 1,005 lecturers. The objectives of the study were to determine the sources, effects and stress relieving packages available to Polytechnic lecturers in South Eastern Nigeria. Three research questions employed for the study were analysed by means t-test statistic (mean and standard deviation). The result identified need to meet up with departmental deadline for script marking and result preparation (3.50), study lecture rooms with poor seating arrangement for students (3.40), exam malpractice (3.90), lack of teaching facilities (3.10) as stressors. The study also identified sponsorship for capacity building workshop, research grant, staff club with recreational facilities and availability of school for staff children as stress relieving packages available in the institution.

Mehmet and Ahmet (2014) investigated the effect of organizational stress on individual performance: A study of hospital staff. The aims of the study were to establish the relationship between different stress factors namely, organizational stress factors, administrative stress factors, environmental stress factors, general stress factors and demographic factors on performance. A sample of 100 respondents selected through convenience sampling method was used for the study. Explanatory factory analysis, correlation and regression analysis were used for data analysis. Regression analysis shows a positive correlation between administrative stress and job satisfaction. On the other hand, organizational stress has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Physical conditions both have an impact on job satisfaction and adaptation. The result also shows a positive correlation between experience and job satisfaction.

**Methodology**

The survey research design was used in this research and both primary and secondary data were utilized in this study. The population of the study comprised all academic staff of federal polytechnics of South East Nigeria (Federal Polytechnic Oko, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede and Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana Afikpo. From a total population of 1465, a sample of 315 was drawn and 272 copies of questionnaire properly completed was used for the analysis. The research used literature –based self-developed questionnaire titled Governmental Sources of Stress and Performance Questionnaire (WRSAPQ).

**Operational Measures of Variables**

Two main variables are included in the proposed research model encompassing governmental sources of stress and employee performance.

**Governmental Sources of Stress**

Governmental sources of stress were operationalised into, ever changing higher education reforms and policies (ECHERP), inadequate budget for higher education sector (IBFHES), quality control and accreditation concerns (QCAAC).

**Employee Performance**

The perceived degree of employee performance was operationalized into three dimensions such as trait-based information, behavior based information and result based information. (Aroosiya and Hussain 2016).

**Data Analysis Technique**

Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used in data analysis.
Table 1. Responses on the Extent of Government Generated Stressors among Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnics in S.E Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>VHE</th>
<th>HE</th>
<th>NE</th>
<th>LE</th>
<th>VLE</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1</td>
<td>To what extent is higher education and policies ever changing</td>
<td>26 (9.6%)</td>
<td>57 (21.0%)</td>
<td>24 (8.8%)</td>
<td>105 (38.6%)</td>
<td>60 (22.1%)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>Quality control and accreditation concerns is challenging to a __ extent</td>
<td>6 (2.2%)</td>
<td>34 (12.5)</td>
<td>41 (15.1)</td>
<td>77 (28.3)</td>
<td>114 (41.9)</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td>Inadequate budget for higher education is stressful to a __ extent.</td>
<td>8 (2.9%)</td>
<td>77 (28.3%)</td>
<td>59 (21.7%)</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>52 (19.1%)</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s computation

Table 1 shows the responses on question items X1 – X3 on the extent of government generated stressors in Federal Polytechnics in South East Nigeria. The frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations of the responses are shown in the table.

Table 2. Responses on Overall Performance of Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnics in South East Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X4</td>
<td>The level of lecturers inculcation of ideas and knowledge on the student is commendable</td>
<td>57 (21.0%)</td>
<td>53 (19.5%)</td>
<td>39 (14.3%)</td>
<td>76 (27.9%)</td>
<td>47 (17.3%)</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X5</td>
<td>The quality of students produced in the institution is high</td>
<td>33 (12.1%)</td>
<td>78 (28.7%)</td>
<td>20 (7.4%)</td>
<td>89 (32.7%)</td>
<td>52 (19.1%)</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X6</td>
<td>Lecturers exhibit high cooperation and team work</td>
<td>58 (21.3%)</td>
<td>45 (16.5%)</td>
<td>2 (6.7%)</td>
<td>91 (33.5%)</td>
<td>76 (27.9%)</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X7</td>
<td>Interpersonal and communicative skills of the academic staff in my institution are high</td>
<td>23 (8.5%)</td>
<td>152 (55.9%)</td>
<td>24 (8.8%)</td>
<td>54 (18.9%)</td>
<td>19 (7.0%)</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X8</td>
<td>Performance speed of lecturers in my institution is adequate</td>
<td>42 (15.4%)</td>
<td>67 (24.6%)</td>
<td>8 (2.9%)</td>
<td>69 (25.4%)</td>
<td>86 (31.6%)</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s computation

Table 2 shows the responses on items 4-8 on overall performance of academic staff. The table shows the frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation.

Ho: Governmental sources of stress does not have a significant impact on performance of academic staff in S.E. Nigeria.

HA: Governmental sources of stress have a significant impact on performance of academic staff in S.E. Nigeria.

The result of the regression analysis is presented in table 3 as follows.
Table 3. Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 constant govt-related stressors</td>
<td>17.622</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>.518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a. - Dependent variable performance

Source: Researcher’s computation

This result shows that governmental sources of stress have a negative impact on employee performance. The model summary and ANOVA result presented shows that the model is highly fitted with no auto correlation and the overall regression is significant. Thus we reject Ho and accept HA that governmental sources of stress have a significant impact on performance of academic staff in S.E. Nigeria.

Table 4. Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td>2.700</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>165.266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: a. Predictors: (Constant), Government Related Stressors. b. Dependent Variable: Performance

Conclusion

The high stress level experienced by Polytechnic lecturers is capable of increasing risks of health problems. Lecturers who perceive their jobs as stressful record a decrease in performance that impacts significantly on students, institutions and the nation at large. The performance of academic staff may be decreased in such a way that the quality of education offered to students are affected. The resultant effects are complaints from parents, employers and other stakeholders on the status of service delivery, thereby damaging overall image of the institution.

Since the performance of academic staff as teachers, researchers and administrators determine the quality of the graduates and the contributions they make to the society, the issue of stress management needs urgent consideration.

Based on the findings of this study, if the issue of stress management is not given the attention it desires, the health and performance of the lecturers would be jeopardized. However, the commitment of educational stakeholders towards the welfare of academic staff will reduce work-related stress. The resultant effect would be improvement in the quality of education and the provision of talented and competent work force in the country.

Recommendations

The management of the Polytechnics need to reduce the excess work load by engaging within available resources more lecturers either on full or part time.

Functional well equipped counseling centres need to be established in all Federal Polytechnics in South East. Competent counsellors may not be able to change the external environment of the lecturers; they may be able to change their internal environments (attitudes to situations). This may be achieved through counselling strategies focused on cognitive restructuring and behaviour modification therapies.
The academic calendar needs to be regularized in order to enable the academic staff to embark on leave. This would enable them return to duty post more refreshed and also impact on the quality of teaching, the level of motivation and efficiency at their respective work places.

The Federal Government needs to provide adequate training to academic staff in order to enable them handle new development, technologies and policy changes. The federal government and the management of the Polytechnics should show adequate concern towards the welfare of Academic staff in order to reduce work-related stress.

The management of the Polytechnics need to develop organizational policies that give individuals more control over their work activities, develop support systems, shared goals and directions. In this regard, older lecturers should find ways of delegating their jobs to younger assistants in order to reduce the effect of stress. They should also find ways of adapting to changing priorities and demands.

References


