

Demographic Differences in the Sources of Stress among Academic Staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State

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Abstract

This study investigated demographic differences in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study employed survey research design. The entire population of 203 academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State participated in the study. A self-developed structured questionnaire entitled Sources of Stress Questionnaire (SSQ) ($r=0.87$) was used as an instrument for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer all the research questions while t -test and ANOVA statistics were used to test hypotheses. The study found that interpersonal relationship (2.98 ± 1.13), research (2.93 ± 1.10), teaching (2.91 ± 1.05) and career development (2.82 ± 1.02) are the sources of stress but interpersonal relationship with higher mean is the highest source of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State. Differences exist in the sources of stress and these differences in the sources of stress were significant based on gender (P -value <0.05) and academic rank (P -value <0.05). The implication is that if this trend continues, there is a tendency that it might cause low productivity and lack of adequate commitment in job performance, hence decline academic standard. The study therefore, recommended among others that Management of College of Education should create stable working conditions to encourage staff through prompt payment of salaries and adequate remuneration and programme on stress management through workshops, seminars and conferences to academic staff is advocated.

Key words: Stress, Source of Stress, Academic Staff

Introduction

Studies have shown that stress has seriously affected the academic staff in institutions worldwide. For example, in United States of America (USA), Australia and New Zealand, Blix, Cruise, Mitchel and Blix, (2014) reported that academic staff had a high level of stress. Millward-Brown (2016) reported that over 50% of academic staff and researchers in the United Kingdom (UK) agreed that stress has decreased their performance, increased poor health condition and long term absence from work. In Nigeria, Adebisi (2013) affirmed that this condition has reduced academic staff passion for the job, resulting in impaired individual functioning, decreased morale, dampened initiative, reduced interest in working and increased absenteeism rates. Stress is the adverse reaction a

person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them (Health and Safety Executives (HSE), (2011). Stress is an unpleasant psychological process that may happen as a response to environmental pressures (Robbins & Judge, 2013). In this study, stress is the physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirements of the job and capabilities, resources and needs of the academic staff to cope with job demands.

Academic staff is academic professionals who are responsible for planning, directing and undertaking academic teaching and research within higher educational institutions. They are usually faced with enormous responsibilities such as lecturing, supervising, publishing of finished articles, marking of examination scripts, trying to obtain the required qualifications and researching for prolonged and exhausting working hours which might pose stress among them (Walsh, 2011). Health Safety and Executive (HSE) (2011) maintained that the stress can come from different sources and is often as a result of combination of factors in the personal and working lives.

Sources of stress among academic staff include interpersonal relationships such as relationship with students, colleagues and university management. Others are the research sources which involve sourcing for research grants, publication of finished articles, conceptual problem, linkage to other professionals in the research discipline and teaching sources of stress may be seen in exam setting, supervision, collation of results, marking of exam scripts and career development sources like trying to have the required publications and obtaining the required qualifications (Ahsan, Abdullah, Fie & Alam, 2009). Kinman (2018) affirmed that these responsibilities pose stress to the academic staff and the negative consequences include hypertension, cancer, and psychological illnesses such as sadness or collapse. Others include poor job performance, reduced efficiency, poor quality control, decline in productivity and low quality products and services (Thabo, 2010).

Some demographic variables such as gender and academic rank play a significant role in the source of stress among academic staff (Vagg, Spielberger & Wasala, 2012). On gender, American Psychological Association (2020) reported that women had higher sources of stress compared to men. Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2010) reported that interpersonal relationships, research work, teaching and career development were sources of stress among academic staff in South Africa but female always have a high level of sources of stress because they are more committed to their jobs and they have more barriers to overcome and attain their positions. Other studies like Haastrup and Adenike (2013) reported significant differences exist between male and female in the sources of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti State, Nigeria and Archibong, Bassey and Effiom (2010) on the occupational stress sources among university academic staff of Calabar. Davidson and Cooper (2013) found that men and women reported differently to various sources of stress.

Academic ranks are one of the variables that may determine sources of stress. Guppy and Rick (2016) reported that Senior Lecturer, Lecturer 1 and below and Assistant Lecturers have a high level of work stress as a result of struggling to advance to higher levels compared to Chief Lecturers and Principal Lecturers. Oshagbemi (2013) found that Chief Lecturers and Principal Lecturers had a low level of sources of stress than Lecturer 11 and Senior Lecturers because a higher level academic rank tends to be less complex and have been better working conditions, pay, promotion prospects, supervision. Robie (2018) indicated that Chief Lecturers have higher level of productivity than Principal Lecturers have a higher level of sources of stress than the Assistants Lecturers. Ana and Dara (2011) reported that lecturers 1 and 11 were reported to have high level of sources of stress as a result of not being more supportive by the management.

As a result of pursuit and dissemination of understanding through teaching, research, scholarly activity and creative artistic activity, academic staff might experience unpleasant emotions such as anger and depression resulting from aspect of their work (Kyriacou, 2011). In United Kingdom, Health and Safety Executive (2001) reported that two out of every five academic staff were highly stressed as against one in every five in other occupations such as nursing, security and management when discharging their duties. The consequences are shown on individual's mental, psychological and physical health, making them to be irritating, difficult and un-cooperating with students, co-workers and highly intolerance to everyone (Damilola, 2013). Also, lower emotional and physical health of academic staff (Gunbayi, 2018). Kinman (2018) equally reported that two-thirds of the academic staff experienced feelings of anxiety, depression, burnout, anger, irritability and helplessness. In fact, an epidemiological study of suicide conducted by Roberts, Bogdan and Keith (2012) suggested that academic staff has about 50 percent greater risk than the average worker as a result of stress.

In Nigeria, stress among academic staff is one of the factors that have disrupted smooth operation of academic activities in tertiary institutions (Chinawa, Ndu, Arinze-onyia, Ogugua, Okwor, Kassy, Agwu-Umuahi, Aguwan & Okeke, 2020). Accordingly, several academic staff in Nigeria colleges of education has reported insomnia, fear, being hypertensive, experiencing headaches, depression, adjustment disorders (emotional stress) as a result of academic stress. This situation might results to wrong decision making, poor academic performance,

lack of commitment and poor concentration (Gebisa, Sintayehu, Danel & Tesfaye, 2020). Other health problems reported among lecturers in Nigeria include health harms and reduction in work (Lucky, Efe & Atliyu, 2014). This could result in low performance, absenteeism, accidents, unprincipled behaviour, displeasure and sickness (Damilola, 2013).

Despite these reports, nothing is known significantly among academic staff of the college of education Aha-Amufu, Enugu State, since many of them often complain of health problems, and most of them reported experiencing tiredness, being hypertensive, back and neck pains, sleeping difficulties, headaches, muscle pain and has collapsed in the office. This is worrisome and led the researchers to investigate demographic differences in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine demographic differences in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State. Specifically, the study determine:

1. Sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State
2. Difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State based on gender
3. Difference in the of sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State based on academic rank

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State?
2. What is the difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State based on gender?
3. What is the difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State based on academic rank?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significance difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State based on gender
2. There is no significance difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amafu, Enugu State based on academic rank

Methods

The study employed survey research design. The study was conducted in Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State. The population for the study was 203 (male 115, female 88) academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State and the entire population were used in the study. Hence, there was no sampling of the population. Instrument for data collection was self-developed structured questionnaire known as Sources of Stress Questionnaire (SSQ). The instrument consisted of 32 items meant to elicit information on the degree to which the respondents possessed the attributes of the variables under study. The questionnaire has two sections A and B. Section A contained two items (1-2) on demographic data of the respondents. Section B contained 30 items meant to elicit information on the sources of stress in which items 1-5 elicited information on personal relationship, 6-10 on research, 11-24 on teaching and 25-30 on career development. The respondents were required to indicate on a 4-point scale on the option that serves as sources of stress namely: Always (AL) = 4, sometimes (ST) = 3, rarely (RE) = 2 and Never (NE) = 1.

The instrument was validated by five experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha co-efficient and the overall reliability coefficient $r=0.87$ was obtained. Each of the subscale were equally computed separately and reliability coefficient of $r=0.78$ for interpersonal relationship, research $r = 0.78$, teaching $r = 0.89$ and career development $r = 0.78$ were obtained which were higher than a coefficient of 0.60 for good instrument (Ogbazi & Okpala, 2014). In order to establish the differences in the level of agreement on the sources of stress among the participants; the criterion mean was set at 2.50. Hence, any mean up to 2.50 and above indicated sources of stress while below 2.50 was not accepted as sources of stress.

In order to have access to the respondents, an introductory letter was attached to the instrument given to each of the Head of the Department in the Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State. The researchers and their research assistants administered the questionnaire to the respondents in their respective Department. The respondents filled and returned the questionnaire immediately after completion and this yield 97% return rate. Out of 203 copies of questionnaire distributed 201 were retrieved and used for data analysis. Statistical mean and standard deviation were used to answer the entire research questions while t-test was used to test hypothesis 1 and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypothesis 2. The entire hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Sources of Stress among Academic Staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State (N= 201)

S/N	Sources of Stress	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
Interpersonal Relationship				
1.	Relationship with students	3.11	1.26	S
2.	Relationship with management	3.10	1.23	S
3.	Relationship with Head of Department	3.00	1.19	S
4.	Relationship with Non-academic staff	2.87	1.13	S
5.	Relationship with Colleagues	2.82	1.15	S
	Total	2.98	1.13	S
Research				
6.	Sourcing fund for research grants	3.01	1.27	S
7.	Conceptual problems	3.02	1.23	S
8.	Linkage to other professionals in my research discipline	3.00	1.18	S
9.	Publication of finished article	2.82	1.16	S
10.	Poor research incentives from the school management	2.82	1.15	S
	Total	2.93	1.10	S
Teaching				
11.	Preparation of examination result	3.08	1.24	S
12.	Invigilation of examination	3.03	1.23	S
13.	State of lecture halls/classrooms	2.97	1.20	S
14.	Marking students continuous assessments	3.04	1.11	S
15.	Grading of papers	2.92	1.22	S
16.	Delivering of course content	2.78	1.21	S
17.	Deciding on appropriate method of lesson presentation	2.84	1.20	S
18.	School calendar interruption	2.70	1.17	S
19.	Delivering of lectures	2.97	1.21	S
20.	setting examination questions	2.92	1.27	S
21.	Participation in extra teaching	2.99	1.20	S
22.	Students project supervision	2.96	1.18	S
23.	Inadequate of instructional materials	2.82	1.19	S
24.	Inadequate of facilities for research	2.76	1.14	S
	Total	2.91	1.05	S
Career Development				
25.	Sourcing funds for career development	3.02	1.19	S
26.	Linkage to avenues of professional development	2.97	1.24	S
27.	Having the required publication for promotion	2.96	1.96	S
28.	Obtaining the required qualifications	2.95	1.17	S
29.	Delays in release of promotion and entitlement	2.73	1.16	S
30.	Criteria used for promotion	2.31	1.19	NS
	Total	2.82	1.02	S
	Overall	2.91	1.06	S

S= Source of Stress NS= Not Source of Stress

Data in Table 1 showed that the respondents scored 2.50 and above criteria mean set for the study on item 1-29 except on item 30. On each of the source of stress dimension, the respondents score above 2.50 mean criteria set for the study. Thus, interpersonal relationships (2.98 ± 1.13), research (2.93 ± 1.10), teaching (2.91 ± 1.05) and career development (2.82 ± 1.02) with overall 2.91 ± 1.06 . This implies that interpersonal relationships, research, teaching and career development are sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Aha-Amufu, Enugu State but interpersonal relationships with higher mean is the highest source of stress.

Table 2: Mean and Summary of t-test Analysis of Source of Stress among Academic Staff of Eha-Amufu College of Education based on Gender

Variables	Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-val	p-val	Dec
Interpersonal relationship	Male	113	2.76	1.24	3.174	0.001	S
	Female	88	3.26	0.91			
Research	Male	113	2.76	1.22	2.529	0.012	S
	Female	88	3.15	0.88			
Career development	Male	113	2.72	1.19	2.982	0.003	S
	Female	88	3.16	0.80			
Teaching	Male	113	2.67	1.15	2.449	0.015	S
	Female	88	3.02	0.78			
Overall	Male	113	2.73	1.18	3.326	0.010	S
	Female	88	3.15	0.11			

HSS= High Level of Stress

Table 2 showed mean scores for male and female responses on each of the sources of stress. Thus, male have 2.76 ± 1.24 on interpersonal relationship, 2.76 ± 1.22 on research, 2.72 ± 1.19 on career development and teaching $\bar{x} = 2.67 \pm 1.15$ while female have 3.26 ± 0.91 on interpersonal relationship, research 3.15 ± 0.88 , career development 3.16 ± 0.80 and teaching 3.02 ± 0.78 which was up to 2.50 and above criteria mean set for the study. In overall sources of stress, male have 2.73 ± 1.18 and female 3.15 ± 0.11 . This suggest that both male and female had high level of sources of stress in all the dimensions than male. This implies that differences exist in the sources of stress based on gender. The t-test analysis on the table showed that there is significance differences in interpersonal relationships, research, teaching and career development based on gender (P-value <0.05). In overall, a statistically significant difference was observed with regards to gender (P-value <0.05). Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3: Mean and Summary of ANOVA Analysis of Sources of Stress among Academic Staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State based on Academic Rank

Variables	Rank	\bar{x}	SD	f-val	p-val	Dec
Interpersonal relationship	CL	1.54	0.98	75.617	0.000	S
	PL	2.20	1.22			
	SL	3.46	0.47			
	LI & below	3.73	0.22			
Research	CL	1.55	0.95	67.326	0.000	S
	PL	2.22	1.21			
	SL	3.38	0.56			
	LI & below	3.65	0.24			
Teaching	CL	1.57	0.94	47.547	0.000	S
	PL	2.25	1.26			

	SL	3.43	0.36			
	LI & below	3.54	1.19			
Career development	CL	1.59	0.95	65.855	0.000	S
	PL	2.12	1.17			
	SL	3.37	0.27			
	LI & below	3.39	0.37			
Overall	CL	1.56	0.94	53.325	0.000	S
	PL	2.20	1.20			
	SL	3.41	0.34			
	LI & below	3.58	1.15			

CL=Chief Lecturer

PL=Principal Lecturer

SL=Senior Lecturer

L1&below= Lecturer 1and Above

Results on table 3 showed that Chief and Principal Lecturers had mean score below 2.50 criteria set for the study. Thus, on interpersonal relationships, Chief Lecturer had 1.54 ± 0.98 , research 1.55 ± 0.95 , teaching 1.57 ± 0.94 and career development 1.59 ± 0.95 while Principal Lecturer mean score on interpersonal relationships 2.20 ± 1.22 , research 2.22 ± 1.21 , and career development 2.12 ± 1.17 . However, Senior Lecturer had mean score of 2.50 and above criteria set for the study on interpersonal relationships 3.46 ± 0.47 , research 3.38 ± 0.56 , teaching $\bar{x} = 3.43 \pm 0.36$ and career development 3.37 ± 0.27 and lecturer 1 and below on interpersonal relationships 3.73 ± 0.22 , research 3.65 ± 0.24 , teaching 3.54 ± 0.99 and career development 3.39 ± 0.37 .

In overall mean, data equally showed that Chief Lecturers 1.56 ± 0.94 and Principal Lecturers 2.20 ± 0.12 had mean score below 2.50 criteria set for the study on the sources of stress while Senior Lecturers $\bar{x} = 3.41 \pm 0.34$ and Lecturer 1 and below 3.58 ± 0.15 had mean score of 2.50 and above criteria set for the study. This implies that Chief Lecturer and Principal Lecturer had low level of sources of stress while Senior Lecturer and Lecturer 1 and below had high level of sources of stress, hence differences exist in the sources of stress based on academic rank. More so, the table further showed significance differences in all the dimensions of sources of stress (interpersonal relationships, research, teaching and career development (P-value <0.05). In overall, there was significance difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education, Aha-Amufu Enugu State based on academic rank (P-value <0.05). However, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

Table 1 showed that interpersonal relationships, research, teaching and career development are sources of stress but interpersonal relationships with higher mean is the highest source of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State. This finding is not surprised one based on the fact that in most of the higher institutions, school management does not relate well to academic staff hence, delay their salary, promotion and there is no conducive environment for academic exercise to take place. This finding led credence to the study of Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2010) whose study found that interpersonal relationships, research work, teaching and career development were sources of stress among academic staff in South Africa.

Results of table 2 showed that males and females had a high level of source of stress both on interpersonal relationships, research, teaching and career development. However, females had higher sources of stress than males, indicating that differences exist in the source of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State by gender. This finding was expected following the social roles that women play in the society as a worker and as mother. So trying to meet up both in the workplace and at home within the same period generates stress. The findings supported American Psychological Association (2020) which reported that women had higher sources of stress compared to men. The findings in this study agreed with Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2010) that female academic staff had high level of sources of stress in interpersonal relationships, research work, teaching and career development in South Africa. However, the findings in this study disagreed with Davidson and Cooper (2013) that men and women responded differently to various sources of stress.

The difference found in table 2 was further shown on hypothesis where significant difference was observed among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State by gender. This finding was not a surprised because, the results showed that differences exist in the source of stress, where females had a high level of stress than males in all the various sources of stress dimension studied. The findings agrees with Haastrup and Adenike (2013) which found significant difference among secondary school teachers in Ekiti State, Nigeria by gender. The findings in this study supported Archibong, Bassey and Effiom (2010), whose findings

revealed significant difference on the occupational stress sources among university academic staff of Calabar by gender.

Differences were also found in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State based on academic rank. However, Chief Lecturer and Principal Lecturer had low level of source of stress while Senior Lecturer and Lecturer I and below had high level of source of stress. This finding is not surprised based on the fact that the pressure piled on lecturers especially the younger ones to publish as many papers as possible for promotion purposes, strenuous promotion criteria/ guidelines, frustration in the efforts for articles to be published in international journals, delay and irregular payment of salary and lack of conducive environment for academic activities could have contributed to it. Reasons also abound that academia with higher rank may leverage on the power on the position bestowed on them by delegating responsibilities (i.e. course advising, invigilating of examination, marking of examination scripts and undergraduate project supervisions) they perceived to be tedious to junior colleagues. It is also due to the fact that some senior academic staff delegates some responsibilities to their sub-ordinates who are younger in order to manage with work-related stress. This finding agreed with Oshagbemi (2013) which found that Chief Lecturers and Principal Lecturers had low level of source of stress because they have advanced to high level and has better working conditions, pay, promotion and precepts.

The difference was further revealed in the hypothesis where ANOVA results shows significant difference in the sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State by academic rank. The findings is in agreement with Agolla and Ongori (2009) study which indicated significant difference on the assessment of stress among academic lecturers in university of Botswana by academic rank. Findings in this study agreed with Damilola (2013) which conducted study on occupational stress among academic staff of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti and found significant difference based on academic rank.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that interpersonal relationships, research, teaching and career development are various sources of stress among academic staff of Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State particularly the female ones, lecturer 1 and below. This implies that if this trend continuous, there is a tendency that it might give rise to low productivity and lack of adequate commitment in job performance, hence decline academic standard.

Recommendations

1. Management of College of Education should create stable working condition to encourage staff through prompt payment of salaries and adequate remuneration.
2. Federal College of Education management should make fund available to academic staff for research and career development especially academic staff like lecturer I and below.
3. Programme on stress management should be organized by health educators and non-governmental organization through workshop, seminar and conferences to academic staff.

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