Lecturers Workload as a Correlate of Work Burnout and Research Procrastination in Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

The peculiarities of the Nigerian socio-political cum economic landscape has exposed academics to untold financial hardship and physical stress. In a bid to make up for lost time, the school calendar has been tweaked to ensure that academic activities are streamlined in the face of current time-bound realities. This correlation paper seeks to examine lecturer's workload as a correlate of work burnout and research procrastination in public universities in South East Nigeria. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The population of the study comprises all the teaching staff in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The Simple Random Sampling Technique was used to select 500 lecturers from across the faculties in NAU and COOU. Instruments for data collection include an adapted version of the Work Stressor Questionnaire, an adopted version of Maslach's Work Burnout Inventory and an adapted version of the McCloskey Academic Procrastination Questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using regression statistics. Findings revealed that increased workload predicted work burnout and research procrastination among NAU lecturers. It was recommended that universities should return to a one academic session per year and lecturers should be granted at least four months every year for research and career development.

Keywords: Workload, Work burnout, Research procrastination, Physical stress.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The average lecturer in Nigeria, especially those employed in public universities have experienced a tumultuous occupational life in recent years. In fact, it is widely assumed that a career in academics is merely viewed as a stepping stone to other career paths, especially those that lead to foreign shores. This has become evidenced in the "japa" syndrome (a term that loosely translates to brain drain). The statistics make for a grim reflection. A report by The Guardian (2023) revealed that around 50% of academics in public universities in Nigeria have resigned their job for opportunities abroad. Akinwale *et al*. (2023) also decried the prevalent rate of brain drain amongst lecturers in Nigeria, attributing the menace to poor quality of work life.

With several studies assessing the relationship that exists between work-life quality and psychosomatic wellness (Guerrero-Barona *et al*., 2020; WHO, 2020; Olivares *et al*., 2018). it has become increasingly clear that workers' health and workload is getting the much-desired attention it deserves. The concept of occupational burnout has also been extensively studied and associated with increased job demands made of employees by employers; expedited deadlines and the need to maximise productivity (Ashar *et al.,*2021; Inegbedion *et al*., 2020). The concept of work burnout was popularised by the work of Christiana Maslach. Maslach (1988) proposed a multidimensional theory of work burnout that explains burnout as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. In the course of carrying out one's assigned tasks. Maslach identified three major dimensions of burnout; emotional exhaustion, cynicism or depersonalisation: as well as a feeling of ineffectiveness on the job.

Research procrastination is the tendency to defer productive tasks directed at solving research problems to a later time. It explains the individual's disposition towards goal-oriented behaviours in pursuit of problem-solving opportunities. Research procrastination is a sparsely studied concept, it however builds on several studies done on procrastinating behaviour especially as it concerns academic-orientation.

Procrastination behaviour entails deferring goal-oriented pursuits. Hailikari *et al*. (2021) asserted that procrastination stems from a lack of self-regulation that leads to increased workplace stress and other mental health problems. Nigeria *et al*. (2009) identified two kinds of procrastinators; avoidant and arousal procrastinators. While avoidant procrastination refers to putting off tasks or responsibilities because of a desire to avoid uncomfortable emotions

or situations associated with them; that is cause anxiety, fear or discomfort, arousal procrastination involves delaying tasks as a result of a tendency to thrive on last minute rush to complete a task.

In the context of this study, avoidant research procrastination could be associated to stress and aversive stimuli associated with the workplace. Sirois *et al.* (2019) implied that research procrastination of the avoidant sub-type could stem from a chronic fear of failure or perfectionism. Perhaps, in a bid to ensure that they achieve remarkable success in their research endeavour, the said individual continues to delay action for a suitable time. Islas (2018) affirmed that irrespective of the procrastination typology, deferring action ultimately results in disappointment, chaos and anxiety.

Arousal procrastination typology is explained by a personality flaw that is expressed by an impulsive lateness to task completion. Such researchers get a surge of adrenaline whenever they are rushing to complete a task (Ferrari *et al*. (2009). Arousal procrastination is reported amongst adult workers and was found to be associated with decreased mastery, increased stress and significant levels of discomfort (Islas, 2018; Pasha & Jyothi, 2017).

In compressing the school academic calendar to make up for time lost to frequent industrial actions in the Nigerian University system, the university lecturers are subjected to intense workload. The conditions of service for public university lecturers in Nigeria are deplorable (Umeorah & Jacob, 2020; Jacob & Lawan, 2020). This overload has compounded the woes of an already overstretched work force tethering on the brink. Extant research is limited to the associations that exist between lecturers' conditions of service. This study seeks to go a bit further to examine the nature of relationship that exists between workload and work burnout.

Studies on procrastination behaviour seem to be limited to general and academic procrastination (Barnova & Krasna, 2021; Islas, 2018), however deferring tasks is not limited to these areas. With a paucity of studies on research procrastination, this paper is somewhat timely as it attempts to fill the gaps in literature. Therefore, this paper will also seek to establish the nature of relationship that exists between lecturers' workload and their research procrastination in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to ascertain the extent of relationship that exists among lecturer's workload, job burnout and research procrastination. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the prediction of workload on lecture's work burnout in South East Nigeria.

2. Determine the prediction of workload on lecturers' research procrastination in south East Nigeria.

1.2 Research Question

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What is the prediction of lecturer's workload on their work burnout in South East Nigeria?

- What is the prediction of lecturers' workload on their research procrastination in South East Nigeria?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

1. Lecturers' workload does not significantly predict work burnout among university lectures in South East Nigeria.

2. Lecturers' workload does not significantly predict research procrastination among university lecturers in South East Nigeria.

2.0 METHOD

The study adopted a correlation research design. The population of the study comprises the entire 8,398 university lecturers presently working in Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. A sample of 500 respondents (250 from each university) was selected using multi-stage sampling technique. Simple Random Sampling was used to select 10 faculties from each of the schools, while proportional sampling was employed to select 25 lecturers each from the selected faculties.

Three measures served as instrument for data collection; adapted version of the Work Stressor Questionnaire (WSQ); Maslach's Work Burnout Inventory (MWBI); and an adapted version of McCloskey's Academic Procrastination Questionnaire (APQ). The face validity of these instruments was established by three specialists in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation, from University of Nigeria, Nsukka and from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University respectively. The internal consistency of 0.81, 0.89, and 0.92 were computed for the WSQ, MWBI and APQ respectively, using Cronbach Alpha procedure. Linear regression was used to answer the research question, while t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of respondents' characteristics

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage (%)
AGE		
Below 25	**33**	6.11
26 – 30	119	22.04
31 – 35	138	25.56
36-40	121	22.41
41-45	82	15.20
46 and above	47	8.70
Total	**540**	**100**
GENDER		
Male	358	66.30
Female	182	33.70
Total	**540**	**100**
LEVEL		
Assistant Lecturer	31	5.74
Lecturer II	48	8.88
Lecturer I	201	37.22
Senior Lecturer	154	28.52
Reader/Associate Professor	89	16.48
Professor	17	3.15
Total	**540**	**100**
UNIVERSITIES		
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	270	50
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam	270	50
Total	**540**	**100**

Research Question 1: What is the prediction of lectures' workload on their work burnout in South East Nigeria.

Table 1: Linear regression analysis on the prediction of lecturers' workload on work burnout

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Decision
1	0.792	0.627	0.627	High Prediction

Table 1 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is .792 while the regression square coefficient is .627. The regression revealed that there is a high prediction of workload on work burnout among lecturers in South East Nigeria. This implies that an increased workload for university lecturers translates to work burnout.

Research Question 2: What is the prediction of lecturers' workload on their research procrastination.

Table 2: Linear regression analysis on the prediction of lecturers' workload on work procrastination

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Decision
1	0.815	0.664	0.664	High Prediction

Table 2 showed that the regression coefficient (R) is .815 while the regression square coefficient yielded .664. the yielded R implies that there is a high prediction of lecturers' workload on their research procrastination. Thus, increased lecturer workload implies that university teachers will always put away their research engagement (R) for a later time.

Hypothesis I: Lecturers' workload does not significantly predict work burnout in South East Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test associates with simple regression analysis on the prediction of lecturers' workload on their work burnout.

Model	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sign.	Decision (p < 0.05)
	β	Std. Error	β			
1 (constant)	7.38	.93		7.81	0.00	
Lecturers' workload	.76	.03	.792	19.37	0.00	Significant

Table 3 revealed that t-test associated with simple regression is 19.37. The p-value 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. as a result, the null hypothesis that states that lecturers' workload does not significantly predict work burnout was rejected. This implied that there is a significant prediction of lecturers' workload on their work burnout.

Hypothesis 2: Lecturers' workload does not significantly predict their research procrastination in South East Nigeria

Table 4: t-test associates with simple regression analysis on the prediction of lecturers' workload on their research procrastination.

Model	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sign.	Decision (p < 0.05)
	β	Std. Error	β			
1 (constant)	8.19	.89		8.14	0.00	
Research procrastination	.91	.03	.815	22.38	0.00	Significant

Table 4 revealed that t-test associated with simple regression is 22.38. since the probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis that states that lecturers' workload does not predict research procrastination. This implies that lecturers' workload significantly predicts their research procrastination in South East Nigeria.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that there is a significant high prediction of lectures. Workload on work burnout among university lecturers in South East Nigeria. The finding is not congruent with that of Jaafar *et al.* (2020) that found no direct link between workload and job stress for academic staff in universities in Indonesia. This could be explained by the disparities that exist in terms and conditions of service between Nigeria and Indonesia. Esteban *et al.* (2020) on the other hand associated psychological distress and workload, claiming that both predicted the satisfaction with life recorded in female professors.

Burnout is typified by emotional exhaustion, reduced affect and depersonalisation. Findings by Jomuad *et al.* (2021) identified workload as a prediction of reduced job performance and motivation to persist. This finding lends credence to insinuations that the tear and wear associated with sustained exposure to excessive workload could trigger psychosomatic symptoms that typify work burnout.

The findings of this study also revealed that lecturers' workload significantly predicted their research procrastination. De Armond *et al.* (2014) procrastination is related to occupational stressors which can be explained by psychological detachment and fatigue. In another vein, Bozkuz (2020) found high workloads to predict work procrastination, especially when there is low resourcefulness. Findings revealed a positive relationship between lecturers' work procrastination and poor personal skills in line with the view of Hailikari *et al.* (2021) that associated procrastination with negative outcomes.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that lecturers' workload is a significant predictor of work burnout and research procrastination among university lecturers in South East Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Stress reduction initiatives need to be embraced to help lecturers imbibe adaptive stress coping strategies through workshops, regular training and therapy, for physical and mental well-being.

2. There is need to reduce the workload of university lecturers. This can be done by remodelling school academic calendars to help reduce the pressure placed on the shoulders of our lecturers.

3. It is important that the university work climate is made cordial and supportive. Collaboration and team work can be promoted to help lecturers cope with their dense workload.

4. Universities should consider returning to the one academic session per year calendar that had hither to being embraced across board. This will help the lecturers have enough time to recuperate from their tedious job schedules.

5. University Lecturers should be granted at least 4 months every year to focus on research and career development.

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