

INFLUENCE OF WORK OVERLOAD AND GENDER ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF NON-ACADEMIC STAFF OF BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI

by

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Abstract

This study examined influence of work overload on psychological wellbeing among non-academic staff. A total of 267 respondents were randomly drawn from Benue State University, Makurdi LGA with the age range of 18-52 years and the mean age of 26.3 years. Out of this number 196 (73.4%) were males and 71 (26.6%) were females. Data were collected using Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (RPWS) and Work Overload Scale (WOS). Three hypotheses were tested using Two-Way ANOVA and the results show that, in the first hypothesis, there was a significant influence of work overload on psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff. Secondly, there was a significant gender difference in psychological wellbeing of workers. While in the third hypothesis, there was no significant interactive effect of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff. Based on these findings, it was therefore, recommended that job incentives should be put in place to motivate resilient non-academic staff who showed commitment to duty in the face of work overload. Also, University managements should employ enough non-academic staff especially in the Establishment and Registry units to lessen their work and reduce stress at work place and promote psychological health. Furthermore, work-shift should be encouraged and maintained to reduce stress due to over time. Finally, university Management should employ occupational therapists to help both male and female non-academic staff to cope with the stress for enhanced psychological wellbeing.

KeyWords: Work Overload, Gender and Psychological Wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

Workers' psychological well-being issues are currently expanding in educational organizations especially of those dealing with heavy work activities and longer hours at work such as the non-academic staff of Nigerian universities. The necessity of maintaining psychological wellbeing among non-academic staff members is important to guarantee performance at work and effective service delivery that entails long-term benefit to the society. Psychological well-being is a subjective term that means different things to different people. For the present study it is defined as the individual's own interpretation and evaluation of his present and past life, his satisfaction or his happiness (Chadha & Van Willigen, 1995).

The literature in psychological well-being has progressed rapidly since the emergence of the field over five decades ago. Psychologists and other social scientists have taken huge steps in their understanding of the factors influencing psychological wellbeing. Work overload has been identified as one of those. According to Mojuyinola (2004), work overload seems to have adverse effect on the mental well-being of non-academic staff. Work overload is an important phenomenon that can affect health, well-being and service delivery in negative dimensions (Mojuyinola, 2004). Workload can be characterized as a mental construct that reflects the mental strain resulting from

performing a task under specific environmental and operational conditions, coupled with the capability of the operator to respond to those demands. Workload is not only task specific, but also person specific. It involves individual capacities and motivation to perform a task. Workload is also referred to as the total energy output of a system, particularly of a person performing strenuous task overtime. Workload is the portion of operator information processing capacity or resources that is actually required to meet system demands. It is a demand placed upon humans. Mental workload is the difference between the capacities of the information processing system that are required for task performance to satisfy performance expectations and the capacity available at any given time (Backs & Ryan, 1992).

Work overload has been identified as an occupational hazard and safety risk throughout the world, including Nigeria (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH, 2007). The International Labour Organization's (ILO) report (2008) shows that an additional 160 million new people suffer from work overloads. Work overload manifests in employee's behaviour in the form of depression, anxiety, headache, frustration, fatigue, aggression, alcoholism, and loss of concentration.

Elevated scores on work overload measures

among different professionals have been associated with higher levels of perceived role conflict and role ambiguity (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982), lessened self-actualization and lack of perceived support (Pierce & Molloy, 1990). Research suggests that professionals in educational settings are susceptible to mental problems because of work-overloads, lack of autonomy in the work setting, ambiguity about professional roles and performance constraints. (Watkins, 1983)

The interconnection between these pressures of meeting up job challenges, family expectations and group needs usually lead to work overload generally reported in work burnout. Thus, conflict may arise between a person's roles as an employee and a spouse and on being the president of a social club. University is a place where many things take place almost at the same time. There is ample evidence that university staff in the course of their careers, experience a great deal of mental strain due to work overload (Waterloo Gazette, 1995). The experience of overload at work often results in depressed mood, exhaustion, poor performance, and attitude and personality changes, which, in turn, lead to illness and premature retirement (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Cherniss, 1989; Friedman & Farber, 1992). University system as an educational institution gives equal employment opportunity to every citizen without bias for gender, tribe or social status. This is because

employment in the system is more rooted in academic and administrative potentials and capabilities. Thus, the university community comprises of different strata of human beings who are daily working together to keep the system going in their own ways.

In the last one decade, Nigerian University system has run ceaselessly without the usual holiday breaks for staff to refresh unless interrupted by sporadic strikes. The resultant effect of the pressures mounted on staff is the heavy workload that is continually increasing with the associated increase in stress, which appears to be a major threat to quality of life. Many staff members now feel they can no longer complete the jobs they are expected to do. It is equally noteworthy that while expectations are increasing, attempts at complementary improvements in efficiency to make the workload manageable remain very few. Non-teaching staff carry extra loads through new part-time programmes being established despite the fact that the number of staff in relation to expected job to be done remains fairly constant. Many staff could not take full vacations in the last one-decade leading to syndrome of accumulated leaves. Staff workloads are on the increase; many are working longer hours and have assumed responsibilities as staff complements have been reduced through attritions without replacements (Adekola 2012).

In spite of the efforts of the university management to ensure the wellbeing of non-academic staff, it seems issues of work overload impact on their psychological wellbeing. A search through Nigerian literature showed paucity of research in the study of non-academic staff in relation to work overload experience and psychological wellbeing. This study seeks to determine the level of differences experienced by non-academic staff of different gender in their level of work overload and its effects on their psychological wellbeing.

Given this obvious knowledge gap, this study has become an imperative to bridge this gap in our local setting by assessing the influence of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing. Hence, it was hypothesized that: (i) work overload will significantly predict psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff. (ii) gender will significantly predict psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff. (iii) work overload and gender will jointly and significantly predict psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff.

METHOD

Design

This study employs a cross sectional survey which allows for the use of questionnaires to collect data from respondents. The variables tested in the study are work overload and gender which serve as

independent variables. While psychological wellbeing was measured as a dependent variable.

Participants

This study consisted of 267 participants drawn from members of non-academic staff of Benue State University, Makurdi. 196 (73.4%) were males and 71 (26.6%) were females. Distribution of respondents according to age revealed that 131 (41.9%) were in the age range of 18-25 years and 136 (50.9%) were aged between 26 to 52 years. The study was made up of 51 (19.1%) senior and 216 (80.9%) junior staff. Furthermore the study was also made up of 55 (20.6%) non-academic staff who were single, 177 (66.3) were married, 18 (6.7%) divorced their partners, 17(6.4%) lost their partners. The religious affinity of respondents indicated that 191 (71.5%) of the respondents were of Christian faith, 58(21.7%) were Muslims and 18 (6.7%) did not specify their religion. Verification of respondents' income revealed that 122 (45.7%), 88 (33.0%), 57(21.3%) fall in low, moderate and high income categories respectively. Results with regards to ethnic group showed that 123 (46.1%), 79 (29.6%), 53 (19.9%) and 12 (4.9%) were Tiv, Idoma, Igede and other respectively.

Sampling Technique

This research work relied on purposive sampling technique for selection of participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is applied

when using population that is not commonly found. It was therefore applied in sampling non-academic staff members who were available and willing at the time of this research to respond to questionnaires.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study. The first instrument adopted was the Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (RPWB) which is a widely-used instrument designed by Ryff (1989) to measure six dimensions of psychological well-being. Ryff's scales of psychological well-being (RPWB) include the following six components of psychological functioning: a positive attitude toward oneself and one's past life (self-acceptance), high quality, satisfying relationships with others (positive relations with others), a sense of self-determination, independence, and freedom from norms (autonomy), having life goals and a belief that one's life is meaningful (purpose in life), the ability to manage life and one's surroundings (environmental mastery), and being open to new experiences as well as having continued personal growth (personal growth).

RPWB is scored based on 4-point likert scale of strongly agree=4; agree=3; disagree=2 and strongly disagree=1. However, items 1, 6, 17, 23, 34, 42 and 57 are scored in a reverse order. The total score for each respondent is arrived at by sum up scores for each item. The internal

consistency coefficients of 0.86 and 0.93 was obtained, and the test-retest reliable coefficients for a subsample of the participants over a six week period were 0.81 and 0.88).

The second instrument that was adopted in this work was the Job-related Tension Scale developed by Kahn, et al (1964) to assess the nature, causes and consequences of two aspects of organizational stress which is defined as the feelings of tension, discomfort, uncertainty, indecisiveness and distress a worker experience as a result of the social and physical circumstances of work setting. The two components of organizational stress which the inventory assesses are role conflict and role ambiguity. This instrument is administered individually or in groups after establishing rapport with the clients. There is no time limit for completing JTS. The inventory is scored on a 4-point Likert response scale starting from Never = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, Rather often = 4 to Nearly all the same = 5. The items are scored directly by adding together the values of the numbers shaded. The coefficient Alpha reported by Sheridan et al.,(1978) is .87 while a concurrent validity coefficient of .01 was obtained by correlating JST with rated performance (Sherian, et al., 1978).

Kahn *etal* (1964) provided psychometric properties for American samples while Oseghare provided the properties for Nigerian sample through extrapolation on

his findings on Stressors Checklist by McLains (1969) which is equivalent to JTS. Out of the 12 items of Stressor Checklist, 11 are exactly the same as those of the 15 items of the JTS.

interactive effect of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing among non-academic staff. Also descriptive statistics were used to analysis demographic data.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were analyzed using Two- Way ANOVA to test the main and

RESULTS

The mean scores of the groups of participants on psychological wellbeing are

shown in Table 1, while Two-Way ANOVA summary table is presented in Table 2

Table 1: Showing Mean Scores (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Groups non-academic staff on psychological wellbeing

Variables	Levels	Mean	SD	N
Workload	High	62.21	22.61	160
	Low	70.90	17.91	107
Gender	Male	63.96	22.59	196
	Female	70.48	16.22	71

The results presented in Table 1 revealed that non-academic staff members who perceived high work overload recorded lower mean score on psychological wellbeing ($M = 62.21, SD = 22.61$) than their counterparts who perceived low level of work overload ($M = 70.90, SD= 17.91$)

The results further showed that male workers scored lower on psychological wellbeing ($M = 63.96, SD = 22.59$) than males ($M = 70.48, SD = 16.2245$).. Tests of significance of the means are reported in table 2 below.

Table 2: Two-ANOVA summary table showing the main and interactive effects of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff of Benue State University, Makurdi

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	7860.450 ^a	3	2620.150	6.136	.000	.065
Intercept	894876.194	1	894876.194	2095.632	.000	.888
Overload	2879.607	1	2879.607	6.743	.010	.025
Sex	1977.021	1	1977.021	4.630	.032	.017
Overload * Sex	372.532	1	372.532	.872	.351	.003
Error	112306.188	263	427.020			
Total	1272428.492	267				
Corrected Total	120166.637	266				

a. R Squared = .065 (Adjusted R Squared = .055)

Results in Table 2 show that there was a significant difference between non-academic staff who perceived high and low work overload on psychological wellbeing ($F(1, 263) = 6.743, p < .05$). This implies that work overload has a negative influence on psychological wellbeing of non-academic staff. The results clearly showed that work overload has effect size of 2.5% ($\eta^2 = .025$) on workers' psychological wellbeing. Also, the results indicated that there was a significant difference between male and female non-academic staff on psychological wellbeing ($F(1, 263) = 4.630, p < .05$). This means that gender is a likely determinant of psychological wellbeing with an effect size of 1.7% ($\eta^2 = .017$). Finally the results showed that there was no significant interactive effect of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing ($F(1, 263) = .872, p > .05$). This means that interplay of work overload and

gender is less likely to influence psychological wellbeing among non-academic staff. This further implies that work overload and gender are not co-determinant of workers' psychological wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings was done according to the tested and verified hypotheses. The first hypothesis of the study which states that there will be a significant difference between non-academic staff who perceived high and low work overload on psychological wellbeing was tested and it was found that there is a significant difference between non-academic staff who perceived high and low work overload on psychological wellbeing. This means that workers who experienced low work overload are more likely to enjoy psychological health than their counterparts

who experienced high work overload. This finding is in line with Ozioko et al. (2014) finding which indicated that psychological, emotional, technological, physiological, situational and accidental stresses were the constituents of work overload among staff; environmental hazard, lack of social support, poor communication and leadership style, job insecurity, lack of control and role ambiguity together with health related factors were the major causes of job stress among them; job stress had the following consequences on the polytechnic library staff; absenteeism, sleeplessness, health deterioration, depression and tiredness. Functional inconsistency and job dissatisfaction; the extent to which work overload had affected them had resulted in prolonged headache and pains constant breakdown of rules and regulations, intermittent impairment of vision, loss of attention and lowered productivity among others.

Also, hypothesis two was tested to find out if there will be a significant difference between male and female non-academic staff on psychological wellbeing. This hypothesis was confirmed. It is obvious from the results that male score less on psychological wellbeing when compared with female workers. This implies that male workers suffer the burden of work overload more than female workers. This finding contradicts the research outcome by Adekola (2012) which revealed that there is no difference in the levels of emotional

exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment of both male and female staff. He however, reported that the mean of the scores on the de-personalisation of both sexes shows a significant difference. It was confirmed also that male staff experienced higher level of de-personalisation than their female counterparts.

Finally, the results derived from test of hypothesis three showed that there was no significant interactive effect of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing. This means that the interplay of work overload and gender is less likely to influence psychological wellbeing among non-academic staff. This further implies that work overload and gender are not co-determinants of psychological wellbeing. This finding contradicts research outcome by Fallon-Hogan (2013) who examined patterns in working hours and behaviours and associated levels of work-life conflict and psychological strain in Irish academics and found that a number of organizational, personal and individual variables including work intensity, workaholism, job involvement, organizational support and having children were found to directly and indirectly influence work hours, work-life conflict and psychological strain. Gender was found to moderate some of these effects.

Conclusion

In a bid to investigate the influence of work overload and gender on psychological

wellbeing among non-academic staff, theories and empirical literature were reviewed, data were collected and tested. Based on the results, it was concluded that:

- i. There was a significant difference between non-academic staff who perceived high and low work overload on psychological wellbeing.
- ii. There was a significant difference between male and female workers on psychological wellbeing.
- iii. There was no significant interact effect of work overload and gender on psychological wellbeing.

Recommendations

With regards to the findings of this research work, it was recommended thus:

- i. Job incentives should be put in place to motivate resilient non-academic staff who showed commitment to duty in the face of work overload.
- ii. University management should employ enough non-academic staff to lessen their work and reduce stress at work place and promote psychological health.
- iii. Work-shift should be encouraged and maintained to reduce stress due to overtime.
- iv. University Management should

employ occupational therapists to help both male and female non-academic staff to cope with the stress for enhance psychological wellbeing.

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