



Relative contributions of avoidance and social support components of workload management to job performance of university lecturers in rivers state, Nigeria

Ohia Adanma Ngozi

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined the relative contributions of avoidance and social support components of workload management to job performance of university lecturers in Rivers State, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A sample of 600 university lecturers was selected for the study through purposive sampling technique. Two instruments namely "Workload Management Strategies Questionnaire" (WMSQ) and "Lecturers' Job Performance Scale" (LJPS) were used for data collection. The face and content validities of the instruments were established. Reliabilities of WMSQ and LJPS were determined through Cronbach alpha and test-retest methods respectively. Overall reliability coefficients of 0.72 and 0.70 were obtained for WMSQ and LJPS respectively. Simple linear regression, and t-value associated with simple regression were used for data analysis at 0.05 alpha level. Findings include that; avoidance component of workload management contributes to job performance of university lecturers by 1.06% as indicated by the coefficient of determination; social support component of workload management contributes to job performance of university lecturers by 54% as indicated by the coefficient of determination. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made among which are that; university lecturers in Nigeria should seek support from professional colleagues and those around them to minimize pressure arising from their job.

Keywords: avoidance, social support, workload, job performance, university lecturers

Introduction

Universities are rated the highest educational level in any country. This is so because the development of a country lies on the calibre of personnel that the universities produce for effective quality service delivery. Among these calibres of personnel are the academic staff who are saddled with a lot of responsibilities which increase their workload. The University management has traditionally classified the role of academic staff in three areas of teaching, research, and community service with primary emphasis placed on teaching and research aspects and secondary on community or administrative service. Administratively, the university lecturers work as counsellors, examination officers, postgraduate coordinators, departmental heads, directors, deans and many other positions of responsibilities in relation to their teaching responsibilities. Some lecturers teach extremely large classes (up to 400 students per semester), supervise theses, dissertations and project work. Indeed, in some extreme cases, the lecturers supervise up to 30 students per semester, owing to the running of regular, part time and sandwich programmes. In addition to all these, lecturers are expected to publish high-quality articles in reputable journals and attend local and international conferences as part of their research responsibilities for them to be promoted in the universities. Thus, the workload of the academic staff keeps increasing posing so much pressure on them to meet the targets set by the university management team.

The way academic staff (lecturers) of universities manage their workload may affect the quality of service they deliver to their students and other staff of the universities at a particular point and time. This is because the duties of an academic staff include teaching and preparing students' performance result sheets, marking scheme, time table and

course coverage, attendance sheets, decision making, interpersonal skills and classroom management. This implies that the need to adopt an effective workload management or coping strategy is very necessary if they want to deliver their service effectively and efficiently.

Workload management can therefore be classified into active and avoidant coping strategies. Holahan and Moos (2009) ^[4] explained that active coping strategies are either behavioural or psychological responses designed to change the nature of the work challenge or how one thinks about it, while avoidant coping strategies, lead people into activities (such as alcohol use) or mental states (such as withdrawal) that keep them from directly addressing workload related problems. Active coping is considered a better way to deal with workload problems while avoidant coping is considered as a psychological risk factor for adverse responses to work life problems including schooling and working at the same time (Holahan & Moos, 2009) ^[4]. Seeking-social-support coping takes place when a person turns to others for help, advice and support. It is associated with both increased and decreased distress (Holahan & Moos, 2009) ^[4].

Carver (2009) ^[1] also added that active coping strategies means taking action or exerting efforts to remove or circumvent the workload challenge. This implies that the need to confront issues that generate workload is by accepting the fact that challenges has occurred and are real. Avoidant strategies means denial, which is an attempt to reject the reality of workload challenges such as giving up or withdrawing efforts from the attempt to attain the goal with which the workload is interfering, venting or an increased awareness of one's emotional distress and a concomitant tendency to ventilate or discharge those feelings and humour to crack jokes about the work (Carver, 2009) ^[1].

The commitment of the researchers to embark on this study was to ascertain how workload management can improve the quality of service delivery of academic staff of universities. However, within the university environment lecturers may adopt different workload management or coping strategies to deal with work overloaded and work under-loaded related challenges. Consequently, this study examined therefore, relative contribution of avoidance and social support components of workload management to job performance of university lecturers in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

To attain quality education for sustainable development, the lecturers are seen as the core instiller of knowledge. However, they should be well motivated, live a healthy life and be satisfied with their job for excellent performance. Unfortunately, lecturers seem not to be properly placed on their job to improve their job performance. These have increased their workload leading to great danger in their work life.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine relative contributions of avoidance and social support components of workload management to job performance of University lecturers in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following Research Questions guided the study

- **Research Question One:** To what extent does avoidance component of workload management predict job performance of lecturers of universities?
- **Research Question Two:** To what extent does social support component of workload management predict job performance of lecturers of universities?

Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- **Hypothesis One:** Avoidance component of workload management does not significantly predict job performance of lecturers of universities
- **Hypothesis Two:** Social support component of workload management does not significantly predict job performance of lecturers of universities

Empirical Review

Ugwu and Ugwu (2017) ^[10] conducted a study aimed at determining the relationship between demographic variables and the job performance of librarians in university libraries in South East Nigeria. A sample of 100 librarians was selected for the study through purposive sampling technique. Mean, standard deviation, and Spearman's ranked order coefficient, ANOVA and multiple regression were used for data analysis at 0.05 probability level. The findings revealed high job performance of librarians with respect to both their task and extra roles. The results of the study also showed that age, education, job position and work experience were found to be significant predictors of librarians' task-based and contextual performance with education as the most significant predictor.

Mohamed and Youssef (2014) ^[6] explored academic stress and anxiety among faculty of nursing students at Assiut University in Turkey. Also the study evaluated correlation

between academic stress and anxiety. A systematic random sample (one by one) was selected from the first and fourth grade students. The number of them was 249 students. A descriptive correlation design was employed. A self-report questionnaire included three parts: Socio demographic data, academic stress scale and Hamilton anxiety scale was used for data collection. The mean age of students was 19.34 ± 1.54 years. 96.4% of them were single, 66.7% of them were residing in rural areas and from the first grade respectively. It was found out that, 53.4%, 45.8%, 43.4%, and 43.0% experienced extreme academic stress related to waiting for results/grades, continuous poor performance, academic workload and feeling of not having enough knowledge for the practical test. Also, 53.6% of students had severe academic stress and 27.7% had moderate academic stress. While, 24.1% had mild to moderate level of anxiety and 24.9% of them had severe to extreme anxiety level. Academic stress was positively and significantly correlated with anxiety ($r = 0.415$) and (p value = 0.000). The article concluded that more than half of the students have severe academic stress, and more than one quarter have moderate academic stress. Also, a great number of them experienced various anxiety levels which ranged from mild to moderate and severe to extreme levels. Academic stress was positively and significantly correlated with anxiety.

Ekpenyong, Daniel and Aribo (2013) ^[2] assessed the association between academic workload, reaction to stress, coping strategies and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) among 1365 undergraduates in Nigeria. The study was a cross-sectional study conducted in a Nigerian university at the beginning of the 2010/2011 academic session with the same group of participants. The Life Stress Assessment Inventory, Coping Strategies Questionnaire, and Short Musculoskeletal Function Assessment were administered as tools of data gathering. The results of the study indicated that students' stress level and associated MSDs were higher during the examination period than the pre-examination periods. Stressors were significantly associated with increased risk of MSDs in both sexes were those related to changes (odds ratio (OR) = 1.7, $p = 0.002$) and pressures (OR = 2.09, $p = 0.001$). Emotional and physiological reactions to stress were significantly associated with MSDs in both sexes, with higher odds for MSDs in females, whereas cognitive and behavioral reactions showed higher odds (though non-significant) in males. The risk of MSDs was higher in respondents who adopted avoidance and religious coping strategies compared with those who adopted active practical and distracting coping strategies.

Okafor (2013) ^[8] found that planful, social support, and problem-focused coping strategies significantly predict job performance of secondary school teachers. The study was carried out in Imo State using a sample of 180 teachers drawn via stratified random sampling method. The composition of the sample of the study was 90 male and 90 female public secondary school teachers. Two instruments were used to gather data while regression analysis and Pearson correlation were used for data analysis at 05 level of significance

Forster and Offei-Ansah (2012) ^[3] carried out a research to identify the family roles female students in five public universities in Ghana played and the strategies they used to manage the roles while in school, to ensure academic excellence. Questionnaire was used to collect data in order to allow for a wide coverage and generalization. Family roles performed by the students while in school were found to

include: running errands; meal provision; fulfilling marital obligations; decision making; laundering; settling disputes; cleaning; supervising domestic work; shopping; helping children to do school assignments; financial support; disciplining children; fetching water; mending clothes; child, elderly and invalid care; and leading religious activities. Coping strategies adopted by the students to manage these family roles and academic work were: creation of new social boundaries; delegation of roles; acting in context; prioritizing activities; postponing responsibilities; pre-planning activities; dovetailing family and academic work. Mature and married students had more family roles to play than non-mature and single students.

Kausar (2010) ^[5] carried out a study on academic workload and coping strategies of university students in Pakistani. The overall findings of the study reported that students used practical coping, avoidance focused coping, religious coping and active distractive coping in their respective order of frequency when facing perceived stress and academic workload. In addition, academic workload encountered by students was perceived as having a positive relationship with practical coping strategies and negative relationship with distractive coping strategies and avoidance coping used by students. Also conclusions in the study showed that students who had more academic workload used more practical coping strategies to deal with academic stress such as discussions, taking reading notes and reading material whilst students with less academic stress used active distraction coping strategies such as visiting friends, movie watching and indulging in recreational activities.

Oku, Owoaje, Oku and Ikpeme (2015) ^[9] conducted a study to determine the prevalence of academic workload, stressors and coping strategies of medical students in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. A cross-sectional descriptive survey of 451 medical students was conducted on available classes during the study period. A semi-structured self-administered questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents. Data were summarized using proportions, and Chi-square test was used to explore associations between categorical variables. Level of significance was set at $P < 0.05$. The results showed that majority (94.2%), of undergraduate medical trainees perceived the training as stressful. The major stressors identified were excessive academic work load (82.3%), inadequate holidays (76.4%), and insufficient time for recreation (76.2%). Feeling depressed, sleeping problems and anxiety were the most common effects of stress reported by the respondents. The coping strategies adopted by the students were mainly positive. Perceived stress was significantly associated with being in the clinical level of study, residing on campus and a higher monthly allowance ($P < 0.05$).

Muhammed and Rufai (2015) ^[7] examined the stress responses and adaptation among undergraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University Samaru, Zaria in Kaduna State. The aim of the study was to determine the level of stress, source of stress and coping strategies adopted by the students. It was a descriptive cross-sectional study in which 400 stress survey questionnaires were distributed to the students of selected faculties. The 386 completed questionnaires were collected and data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that undergraduate students reported high level of stress related to academic pressure and financial demands. Most students reported academic, environmental and intrapersonal factors as their sources of

stress. The coping strategies used by the students were self-reliance, seeking spiritual support and investing in close friends. The article concluded by recommending that proper orientation, counseling services and financial support to the students is given.

Research Methodology

This study adopted correlational research design. The population of this study consisted of all lecturers of University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University, Nkpolu, Port Harcourt. The population of academic staff in both universities as at the time of this study was 2,026. The population of lecturers in University of Port Harcourt was 1,450 according to the report of Establishment Department, University of Port Harcourt 2018 and 576 from Rivers State University Establishment Department report, 2018 respectively.

The sample size of the study was 600 university lecturers. This figure represented 29.6% of the total population from University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 400 lecturers each (both male and female) from University of Port Harcourt and 200 academic staff each (both male and female) from Rivers State University for this study. The instruments for data collection in this study were Workload Management Strategies Questionnaire (WMSQ), and Lecturers’ Job Performance Scale Questionnaire (LJPS). To ensure face and content validities of the instruments, the instruments were presented to three experts in the area of measurement and evaluation. All corrections were incorporated before producing the final draft.

For the purpose of the present study, the reliabilities of the two instruments namely Workload Management or Coping Strategies Questionnaire (WMSQ), and Lecturers’ Job Performance Scale (LJPS) were determined by the researcher through Cronbach alpha and test retest respectively. The instruments were administered to the respondents through direct delivery method. However, the researcher administered the instruments directly on the respondents, with the help of one research assistant chosen from each of the universities selected for the study. Filled copies of the instruments were retrieved by the researchers on the same spot to ensure 100% retrieval case. However, retrieved instruments were scored and collated for data analysis. Simple linear regression, and t-value associated with simple regression were used for data analysis at .05 alpha level.

Data Analysis

Research Question One: To what extent does avoidance component of workload management predict job performance of lecturers of universities?

Table 1a: Simple regression analysis on the extent avoidance component of workload management predicts job performance of lecturers of universities

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.103 ^b	0.0106	0.324	13.217

Table 1a revealed that the computed regression coefficient of R is 0.103 while the squared regression value was computed to be 0.0106. This implies that avoidance component of workload management contributes to job performance of university lecturers by 1.06% as indicated by the coefficient

of determination. Therefore, the remaining 98.94% is accounted for by other factors.

Hypothesis One: Avoidance component of workload management does not significantly predict job performance of lecturers of universities

Table 1b: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the extent avoidance component of workload management contributes to job performance of lecturers of universities

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	P-Val
	B	Std Error	Beta		
Constant	93.468	1.724		91.161	0.000
Avoidance	2.242	0.432	0.103	0.019	0.193

Table 1b showed that standardized beta coefficient is 0.103. The t-calculated value of 0.019 associated with simple regression is not statistically significant at 0.193 when subjected to alpha level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, avoidance component of workload management does not significantly predict job performance of lecturers of universities.

Research Question Two: To what extent does social support component of workload management predict job performance of lecturers of universities?

Table 2a: Simple regression analysis on the extent social support component of workload management predicts job performance of university lecturers

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.735 ^b	0.540	0.656	11.577

Table 2a revealed that the computed regression coefficient of R is 0.735 while the squared regression value was computed to be 0.540. This implies that social support component of workload management contributes to job performance of lecturers of universities by 54% as indicated by the coefficient of determination. Therefore, the remaining 45.9% is accounted for by other factors.

Hypothesis Two: Social support component of workload management does not significantly predict job performance of lecturers of universities

Table 2b: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the extent social support component of workload management contributes to job performance of university lecturers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	P-Val
	B	Std Error	Beta		
Constant	78.423	0.364		93.407	0.000
Social support	0.163	0.194	0.735	0.618	0.000

Table 2b showed that standardized beta coefficient is 0.735. The t-calculated value of .618 associated with simple regression is statistically significant at 0.000 when subjected to alpha level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, social support component of workload management significantly predict job performance of lecturers of universities.

Discussion of Findings

Contribution of avoidance component of workload management to job performance of university lecturers

The degree of association or relationship between avoidance component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities was found to be 0.103 (Table 1a). The coefficient of alienation ($\sqrt{1-R^2}$) was found to be 0.99. This value represents the degree of lack of relationship between avoidance component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities. Thus, while the degree of relationship was 0.103, the degree of lack of relationship was found to be 0.99.

The percentage of association or coefficient of determinism ($R^2 \times 100$) was found to be 1.06%. This value represents the magnitude of the relationship between avoidance component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities which indicates a very low relationship between the two variables. When the percentage reduction in error of prediction (R^2) for avoidance component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities was determined, it was found to be 0.0106. This means that knowledge of scores of avoidance component of workload management will reduce the error of predicting scores of job performance of lecturers of universities by 1.06% and vice-versa. That is to say that you can predict job performance of lecturers of universities from knowledge of scores of avoidance component of workload management by only 1.06%.

On the other hand, the percentage of error of prediction ($1-R^2$) of avoidance component of workload management from job performance of lecturers of universities and vice-versa was found to be 98.94%. Therefore, in terms of predicting one variable from another, it means that avoidance component of workload management contributes 1.06% to job performance of lecturers of universities as indicated by the coefficient of determinism while 98.94% could be accounted for by other factors.

More so, analysis of data on hypothesis two revealed that avoidance component of workload management does not significantly contribute to job performance of lecturers of universities in Rivers State. $Y = AB + X$. $Y = 93.468 + 2.242X$. University lecturers who avoid additional responsibilities given to them by their university authorities will not be very effective. This may have contributed to the outcome of this study.

Contribution of social support workload management to job performance of university lecturers

The degree of association or relationship between social support component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities was found to be 0.735 (Table 2a). The coefficient of alienation ($\sqrt{1-R^2}$) was found to be 0.67. This value represents the degree of lack of relationship between social support component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities. Thus, while the degree of relationship was 0.735, the degree of lack of relationship was found to be 0.67.

The percentage of association or coefficient of determinism ($R^2 \times 100$) was found to be 54%. This value represents the magnitude of the relationship between social support component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities which indicates a moderate relationship between the two variables. When the percentage

reduction in error of prediction (R^2) for social support component of workload management and job performance of lecturers of universities was determined, it was found to be 0.540. This means that knowledge of scores of social support component of workload management will reduce the error of predicting scores of job performance of lecturers of universities by 54% and vice-versa. That is to say that you can predict job performance of lecturers of universities from knowledge of scores of social support component of workload management by only 54%.

On the other hand, the percentage of error of prediction ($1-R^2$) of social support component of workload management from job performance of lecturers of universities and vice-versa was found to be 45.9%. Therefore, in terms of predicting one variable from another, it means that social support component of workload management contributes 54% to job performance of lecturers of universities as indicated by the coefficient of determinism while 45.9% could be accounted for by other factors.

More so, analysis of data on hypothesis three indicated that social support component of workload management contributes significantly to job performance of lecturers of universities in Rivers State. $Y = AB + X$. $Y = 78.423 + .163X$. This finding is much expected because assistance from friends, lecturers and non-academic staff will cushion the effects of workload experienced by lecturers. Such assistance, will likely influence lecturers' job performance positively. This present finding is in agreement with Okafor (2013) ^[8] whose study revealed that social support coping strategy significantly predicts job performance of secondary school teachers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that components of workload management such as avoidance and social support contribute to lecturers' job performance in the universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following relevant recommendations were made:

1. University lecturers in Nigeria should seek support from professional colleagues and those around them to minimize pressure arising from their job.
2. University authorities in Nigeria should consider the capacity of staff they have before floating new programmes into the system. A situation where a university lecturer is saddled with so many responsibilities can trigger health challenges.
3. Annual assessment of lecturers' job performance by university authorities should be introduced and those who have performed excellently well should be rewarded accordingly.

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