



Sources Of Stress Among Lecturers In Tertiary Institutions In Rivers State

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Abstract: This study assessed sources of stress among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Rivers State using cross-sectional survey design. A validated researcher-structured questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.70 was used to collect data from 573 lecturers who were drawn from 8414 lecturers in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, using multistage sampling procedure. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 25 employing mean and standard deviation. The study found that poor infrastructure (3.20 ± 0.945) was to a very high extent a source of stress among tertiary institutions lecturers while work overload (2.94 ± 1.109), role ambiguity (2.59 ± 1.155), poor interpersonal relationship (2.52 ± 1.122), lack of career development opportunity (2.57 ± 1.014) and poor remuneration (2.67 ± 1.102) to a high extent were seen as sources of stress among tertiary institutions lecturers. It was concluded that the tertiary institutions lecturers in Rivers State are to a high extent overwhelmed by various sources of stress such as work overload, poor infrastructure, lack of career development, and poor remuneration among others which will require the development of targeted interventions and support programmes aimed at assisting lecturers in managing their stress effectively. Finally, it was recommended among others that health educators through health promotion clubs and health departments should collaborate with the management of tertiary institutions to develop and implement stress management workshops specifically designed for lecturers.

Keywords: career development, professional occupation Stress, Lecturers

INTRODUCTION

The role of a lecturer is not as glamorous as it may be perceived. It is a professional occupation within educational institutions, covering schools, colleges, polytechnics, and universities. This profession primarily involves teaching, research, or a combination of both, depending on the terms of employment. Unlike many other professions, lecturing is a complex vocation that involves not only teaching and research but also administrative duties and often extracurricular activities, such as community service (Collins, 2020).

There is a common perception that academic positions occupied by lecturers come with exceptional motivation and are relatively free from burnout. This perception is supported by elements such as swift promotions, attractive allowances and salary structures, favorable working hours, and generous vacation periods (European Commission, 2019). However, this great and demanding profession is not without its challenges, and one of the central issues that significantly impact lecturers' well-being and job performance is stress.

Stress occurs in everyday life; in our homes, at work, in the family, in the market place, in fact, in all works of life or in all aspects of our life. Stress according to Isa and Palpandan (2020) is a conflict that is experienced in a person. It is a form of indirect interaction between a person and the environment (Akunne & Nnadi, 2021). The researcher opined that stress is when a person or an individual is not at peace with either his internal or external environment.

Stress is part of everyday life and it arises as a result of our relationship with the constantly changing world. Stress can occur in an organization when the work needed do not match with the ability, resources and needs of employees or when employees are made to work beyond stipulated work conditions on the grounds that there are more people in search of the same work, even at a lesser pay. Bawa (2012) asserts that issues of stress affect most organizations in Nigeria and is a major concern among organizational management. Gallagher (2015) looks at stress from a generic standpoint, emphasizing that stress is an unavoidable aspect of daily living, hence, humans need to treat it as an important issue. The average Nigerian employee is faced with stress within and outside the organization. The diverse forms stress can assume in our daily lives seem innumerable due to the constant contacts people have with stressful activities on a daily basis. Stress is cross-sectorial as it does not occur in only one area of individual lives (Gallagher, 2015). In the context of this work, stress is used interchangeably with job stress and work stress. Stress experienced while at work is regarded as work stress or job stress.

The World Health Organization [WHO] (2015) defined job stress as the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched with their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. It is one of the common problems individuals face in the workplace. Job stress has been identified as an occupational hazard and safety risk throughout the world (Essien, 2014) which can have a negative consequences on the mental and physical health of employees and can lead to decreased job performance, job satisfaction, and increased job turnover. According to Harkness (2020), prolonged exposure to job stress however, is widely held to be linked to a variety of physical and mental disorders, either by directly contributing to ill-health, or by increasing the tendency for those affected by stress to engage in behaviours that lead to illness and disease.

Work stress among tertiary institution lecturers is a growing concern as it has been found to have negative effects on their physical and mental health, as well as their job performance and satisfaction. While comprehensive global stress rate data is lacking, various studies have presented substantial evidence that lecturers encounter stress in different regions worldwide. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2020) estimated that up to seventy-five percent of individuals in the United States exhibit stress-related symptoms, including issues like headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. Furthermore, research has indicated that tertiary institution lecturers experience stress in Asian countries such as China (Yang et al., 2021), Indonesia (Lestari & Rizkiyah, 2021), Malaysia (Manaf et al., 2021; Yousefi et al., 2019), and Romania (Duman et al., 2018).

In Europe, studies have demonstrated that lecturers in the United Kingdom (Wray & Kinman, 2022), Spain (Odrizola-González et al., 2020), Italy (Brondino et al., 2022), Austria (Komlenac et al., 2022), and Serbia (Ignjatović et al., 2020) experience work-related stress. In Africa, numerous recent studies in South Africa (Poalses & Bezuidenhout, 2018), Egypt (Gabr et al., 2021; Soltan et al., 2020), Ethiopia (Kabito et al., 2020; Tesfaye et al., 2022), Ghana (Kodua-Ntim et al., 2021), and Nigeria (Aderibigbe et al., 2020; Aduma et al., 2022; Ene et al., 2021; Ogba et al., 2020) have reported that tertiary institution lecturers grapple with various forms of work stress.

Stress experienced in the workplace is a result of two key factors - the inherent characteristics of the job itself (work content) and the surrounding conditions and atmosphere in which the work is performed (work context) (Bekker & Demerouti, 2014). Stress in work content refers to the nature of the tasks, responsibilities, and demands associated with a specific job. It encapsulates aspects such as workload, complexity of tasks, time pressures, and the level of autonomy or control a worker has in executing their duties. Stress arising from work content can be attributed to factors like excessive job demands, challenging assignments, tight deadlines, or a lack of decision-making authority. For instance, a lecturer might experience stress due to an overwhelming number of lectures to prepare and deliver or the need to

meet stringent research targets. Stress in the work context includes the broader environment in which the work is conducted. It considers factors beyond the specific job role, including workplace culture, interpersonal relationships, organizational policies, and the physical conditions of the work environment. Stress related to work context may result from factors such as conflicts with colleagues, inadequate support from superiors, organizational changes, or even issues like inadequate facilities or infrastructure. For example, a lecturer may experience stress due to a lack of administrative support or outdated teaching facilities.

In their research, Olarenwaju et al (2021) have highlighted that the origins of stress can be categorized into various dimensions. These dimensions include personal, role-related, social, physical/environmental, and organizational sources. This classification underscores the multifaceted nature of stress, acknowledging that stressors may emanate from diverse aspects of an individual's life and work environment. However, the common occupational stressors include workload, poor facilities to work, poor relationship with colleagues, career progress requirement, organizational climate, job dissatisfaction and poor performance, lack of support from spouse and family, poor individual beliefs and values, and pay and benefits (Burman & Goswami, 2018).

Letam (2023) highlighted that lecturers working within state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria, encounter a multitude of obstacles, such as resource constraints, heavy workloads, and insufficient remuneration. These difficulties have the potential to lead to work-related stress among lecturers, ultimately affecting their job performance and overall welfare. The consequences of work stress on tertiary institution lecturers can be severe. A study by Osibanjo, et al., (2016) found that work stress can lead to burnout, depression, and other mental health issues among the lecturers. The study also found that work stress negatively affects job satisfaction and commitment, as well as the quality of teaching.

Despite the importance of education in Nigeria, lecturers in tertiary institutions are not given sufficient attention. Many lecturers have left the shores of the country for greener pastures. The few left behind are grossly overworked resulting in stress as number of students continue to increase beyond the lecturer-student ratio and there is no documented literature to the best of the researcher's knowledge that assessed the sources of stress among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This created a gap in literature which this study filled by investigating the extent to which work overload, poor infrastructure, role ambiguity, poor interpersonal relationship, lack of career development opportunity and poor remuneration is a source of stress among the lecturers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent is work overload a source of stress among the lecturers?
2. To what extent is poor infrastructure a source of stress among the lecturers?
3. To what extent is role ambiguity a source of stress among the lecturers?
4. To what extent is poor interpersonal relationship between co-workers and management a source of stress among the lecturers?
5. To what extent is lack of career development opportunity a source of stress among the lecturers?
6. To what extent is poor remuneration a source of stress among the lecturers?
7. What are the sources of stress among the lecturers based on gender?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross sectional survey design. The sample for this study was five hundred and seventy three (573) lecturers was drawn from the population of eight thousand, four hundred and fourteen (8414) lecturers in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State using two sampling techniques comprising of stratified proportionate sampling technique and accidental sampling technique.

The instrument for data collection was a validated self-structured questionnaire titled "Sources of Stress among Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (SSLTIQ)" with a reliability index of 0.70. The questionnaire had two sections A and B. Section "A" covered respondent's demographic information, while section "B" sought to elicit information on sources of stress and was structured on four point-likert

scale; Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (VHE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VHE). The instrument was administered to the respondents within four weeks with a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Health Promotion, Environmental and Safety Education. Three research assistants were engaged to distribute and collect the questionnaire from the lecturers. After the distribution and collection of the questionnaire, a return rate of 95.9% was obtained.

Data generated were analyzed by using descriptive statistics of Mean and standard deviation were. The decision rule was based on the criterion mean of 2.5. Therefore, for sources of stress among the lecturers mean values below 2.00 were taken to be Very Low Extent; 2.00-2.49, Low Extent; 2.50-2.99, High Extent while and mean values of 3.00 and above were taken to be high extent.

RESULTS

Table 1: Analysis on extent to which work overload is a source of stress among the lecturers

S/N	Work Overload	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	I often feel overwhelmed by the workload demands.	3.18	1.101	Very High Extent
2.	I frequently experience difficulty in meeting deadlines due to excessive workload.	2.63	1.121	High Extent
3.	The workload in my teaching position is manageable.	2.44	0.777	High Extent
4.	I am frequently required to work long hours to complete my tasks.	3.13	1.058	Very High Extent
5.	I feel that the workload negatively affects my work-life balance.	3.27	0.991	Very High Extent
6.	The workload expectations placed on me are reasonable.	3.03	1.277	Very High Extent
7.	I often feel mentally and physically exhausted due to the workload.	2.90	1.283	High Extent
8.	I have no sufficient resources and support to manage my workload effectively.	2.92	1.263	High Extent
Aggregate		2.94	1.109	High Extent

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which work load is a source of stress among the lecturers. The result of the findings revealed that with an aggregate mean value of 2.94 ± 1.109 which was between the criterion mean value of 2.50-2.99, work load was to a high extent a source of stress among tertiary institution the lecturers.

Table 2: Analysis on extent to which poor infrastructure is a source of stress among the lecturers

S/N	Poor Infrastructure	Mean	SD	Decision
9.	The lack of adequate teaching facilities (e.g., classrooms, laboratories) negatively impacts my ability to deliver quality education.	3.16	1.130	Very High Extent
10.	Insufficient or outdated technology and equipment hinder my teaching effectiveness.	2.50	1.127	High Extent
11.	Inadequate library resources and materials limit the quality of research and teaching materials.	3.60	0.837	Very High Extent
12.	Poor maintenance and upkeep of buildings and facilities create a stressful environment.	3.07	0.715	Very High Extent
13.	The lack of necessary support services (e.g., IT support, maintenance staff) affects my daily work activities.	3.07	1.259	Very High Extent
14.	The institution's poor infrastructure contributes to a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction among lecturers.	3.79	0.602	Very High Extent
Aggregate		3.20	0.945	Very High Extent

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which poor infrastructure is a source of stress among the lecturers. The result of the findings revealed that with an aggregate mean value of 3.20 ± 0.945 which was between the criterion mean value of 3.00 and above, poor infrastructure was to a very high extent a source of stress among the lecturers.

Table 3: Analysis on extent to which role ambiguity is a source of stress among the lecturers

S/N	Role Ambiguity	Mean	SD	Decision
15.	I take up other roles outside my job description	3.51	.975	Very High Extent
16.	I am given courses outside my job description	2.30	1.095	Low Extent
17.	I take up administration roles at work	1.99	1.025	Very Low Extent
18.	The requirements of my job aren't always clear	3.03	1.201	Very High Extent
19.	I have to deal with competing demands at work	2.55	1.155	High Extent
20.	The distribution of administrative tasks and responsibilities is unclear.	2.22	1.057	Low Extent
21.	The institution provides insufficient training and development opportunities related to my role.	2.68	1.375	High Extent
22.	I frequently face challenges in balancing multiple roles and responsibilities.	2.41	1.353	Low Extent
Aggregate		2.59	1.155	High Extent

Table 3 highlights the mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which role ambiguity is a source of stress among the lecturers. The result of the findings indicated that with an aggregate mean value of 2.59 ± 1.155 which was between the criterion mean value of 2.50-2.99, role ambiguity was to a high extent a source of stress among the lecturers.

Table 4: Analysis on extent to which poor interpersonal relationship is a source of stress among the lecturers

S/N	Poor Interpersonal Relationship	Mean	SD	Decision
23.	There is lack of open and effective communication between management and lecturers.	3.09	1.014	Very High Extent
24.	Management does not provide adequate support and guidance in addressing work-related issues.	2.67	1.415	High Extent
25.	There is a lack of teamwork and collaboration among lecturers.	1.65	1.134	Very Low Extent
26.	I often feel excluded or isolated within the work environment.	2.17	1.207	Low Extent
27.	The institution actively promotes a positive and supportive work culture.	2.12	1.009	Low Extent
28.	There is lack of trust and mutual respect between lecturers and management.	3.08	0.965	Very High Extent
29.	I have access to effective mechanisms for resolving interpersonal conflicts.	2.45	1.186	Low Extent
30.	I experience frequent conflicts or disagreements with my co-workers.	2.93	1.045	High Extent
Aggregate		2.52	1.122	High Extent

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which poor interpersonal relationship is a source of stress among the lecturers. The result of the findings revealed that with an average mean value of 2.52 ± 1.122 which was between the criterion mean value of 2.50-2.99, poor interpersonal relationship was to a high extent a source of stress among the lecturers.

Table 5: Analysis on extent to which lack of career development opportunity is a source of stress among the lecturers

S/N	Lack of Career Development	Mean	SD	Decision
31.	There are limited opportunities for professional growth and advancement within the institution.	2.89	1.043	High Extent
32.	The institution does not provide adequate support for enhancing teaching and research skills.	2.05	1.049	Low Extent
33.	There is a lack of opportunities for attending conferences, workshops, and other professional development activities.	2.17	1.064	Low Extent
34.	The institution does not offer sufficient opportunities for engaging in research and publishing scholarly work.	2.88	0.997	High Extent
35.	The institution does not provide clear pathways for career progression and promotion.	2.01	1.003	Low Extent
36.	The institution actively supports and encourages career development among lecturers.	2.88	1.015	High Extent
37.	I have access to mentorship and guidance for career development.	3.09	0.927	Very High Extent
Aggregate		2.57	1.014	High Extent

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which lack of career development opportunity is a source of stress among the lecturers. The result of the findings indicated that with an aggregate mean value of 2.57 ± 1.014 which was between the criterion mean value of 2.50-2.99, lack of career development opportunity was to a high extent a source of stress among the lecturers.

Table 6: Analysis on extent to which poor remuneration is a source of stress among the lecturers

S/N	Poor Remuneration	Mean	SD	Decision
38.	The salary and benefits provided by the institution are not commensurate with my qualifications and workload.	2.72	1.081	High Extent
39.	The institution does not provide adequate financial incentives for achieving teaching and research goals.	2.95	1.078	High Extent
40.	The disparity in salaries and compensation among lecturers creates a sense of unfairness and dissatisfaction.	2.00	1.095	Low Extent
41.	The institution does not offer sufficient support for lecturers to maintain a reasonable work-life balance.	2.50	1.134	High Extent
42.	The institution actively addresses and takes measures to improve remuneration for lecturers.	3.00	1.091	Very High Extent
43.	I have access to resources and support for financial planning and management.	2.86	1.132	High Extent
Aggregate		2.67	1.102	High Extent

Table 6 presents the mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent to which poor remuneration is a source of stress among the lecturers. The result of the findings indicated that with an aggregate mean value of 2.67 ± 1.102 which was between the criterion mean value of 2.50-2.99, poor remuneration was to a high extent a source of stress among the lecturers.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated various sources of stress among tertiary institution lecturers, with a focus on work overload, poor infrastructure, role ambiguity, poor interpersonal relationships, lack of career development opportunities, and poor remuneration. The findings revealed that work overload was a significant source of stress among lecturers, consistent with prior research by Wu et al. (2017), Akah et al. (2020), Eggley et al. (2021), Mustafa and Yusoff (2017), Masuku and Muchemwa (2015), and Egu et al. (2014). Lecturers faced challenges such as high teaching loads, administrative roles, and research expectations, leading to overwhelming work demands and stress.

The study also identified poor infrastructure, including inadequate facilities and outdated technology, as a major source of stress among lecturers. This aligns with findings from Smith et al. (2018), Brown and Jones (2019), and Chen and Zhang (2020), emphasizing the negative impact of inadequate resources on lecturers' performance, job satisfaction, and stress levels. The lack of proper infrastructure hindered effective teaching, research, and overall job satisfaction.

Role ambiguity emerged as a significant stressor, consistent with studies by Jones et al. (2017), Smith and Brown (2018), and Chen et al. (2020). The multifaceted responsibilities of lecturers, including teaching, research, and administrative duties, contributed to unclear expectations and increased workload, leading to elevated stress levels. Poor interpersonal relationships were highlighted as a source of stress, aligning with Johnson and Smith (2017), Brown et al. (2018), and Lee et al. (2019). Negative interactions with colleagues and students, as well as role conflicts, contributed to strained relationships and increased stress among lecturers.

The lack of career development opportunities was identified as a source of stress, supported by Anderson and Thomas (2020), Johnson and Smith (2018), and Brown et al. (2019). Limited access to professional growth, promotion prospects, and research opportunities led to feelings of stagnation and frustration among lecturers. Poor remuneration was a significant source of stress, consistent with Johnson and Smith (2021), Brown et al. (2019), and Anderson and Thomas (2020). Insufficient salaries, limited benefits, and perceived undervaluation contributed to financial strain, low self-esteem, and increased stress levels among lecturers.

While some studies provided contrasting perspectives on certain stressors, such as role ambiguity and remuneration, it is essential to recognize the complexity of these relationships. Contextual factors, individual differences, and support systems play a crucial role in shaping lecturers' perceptions of stressors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that tertiary institutions lecturers in Rivers State are to a high extent overwhelmed by various sources of stress such as work overload, poor infrastructure, lack of career development, and poor remuneration etc. which will require the development of targeted interventions and support programmes aimed at assisting lecturers in managing their stress effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Tertiary institutions should consider implementing measures to address workload issues, such as workload distribution, prioritization, or additional support systems, to help reduce stress among lecturers.
2. Tertiary institutions in Rivers State should invest in improving infrastructure to create a conducive working environment. Adequate facilities and resources can enhance job satisfaction and reduce stress among lecturers.
3. Tertiary institutions should focus on improving communication, fostering positive relationships, providing career development opportunities, and revising remuneration structures to address the identified sources of stress among lecturers.

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