

INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF UNIVERSITY STAFF IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

In the contemporary academic environment, occupational stress is an ever-present concern which may significantly impact the psychological well-being of university staff. This paper investigates the influence of occupational stress on psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State using the descriptive survey research design. A sample of 286 staff of federal, state and private universities in Ogun State was selected through the stratified random sampling technique. Instruments used for data collection were the Demographic Data Inventory (DDI), Organizational Support Questionnaire (OSQ), Workload Sub-Scale of the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS - W) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale — Short Form (PWBS-SF). Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using the simple linear regression analysis at the .05 level of significance. Results revealed that workload ($\beta = -.283$, $t = 14.115$, $p < .0005$) and lack of organizational support ($\beta = -.251$, $t = 12.402$, $p < .0005$) each had a significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff. It was subsequently recommended among other things that universities should implement workload management strategies.

Keywords: Occupational stress, workload, lack of organizational support, psychological well-being.

Introduction

In the contemporary academic environment, occupational stress is an ever-present concern, significantly impacting the psychological well-being of university staff. This issue is particularly pertinent in Nigeria, where rapid changes in the higher education sector, coupled with increasing workloads and insufficient organizational support, have exacerbated stress levels among university personnel. Ogun State, a prominent educational hub in Nigeria, presents a unique context to examine these dynamics, given its relatively high concentration of universities and academic staff.

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept encompassing emotional, mental and social aspects that contribute to an individual's overall functioning and happiness. It involves the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), and satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning. Psychological well-being also reflects the capacity to manage life's challenges, develop meaningful relationships and achieve personal goals (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Research has consistently highlighted the significance of psychological well-being in enhancing productivity, fostering positive social relationships and promoting overall life satisfaction. In the context of university staff, psychological well-being is crucial, as it influences not only their personal health and job satisfaction but also their professional performance and interactions with students and

colleagues. The unique challenges and demands faced by university staff, including academic pressures, administrative duties and the need to balance work and personal life, make the study of psychological well-being particularly pertinent in this demographic.

The psychological well-being of university staff is crucial not only for their personal health but also for the overall productivity and efficiency of educational institutions. Studies have shown that high levels of occupational stress can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction and poor mental health outcomes (Aluko, 2021). This, in turn, affects the quality of education delivered to students, thereby impacting the broader educational goals of the nation. Occupational stress can have negative impacts on psychological well-being by increasing levels of anxiety, depression and job dissatisfaction among university staff, ultimately hindering their overall mental health and productivity (Akinwale & Osazuwa, 2019).

Occupational stress, defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job demands do not match the worker's capabilities, resources or needs, is a major contributor to mental health issues in various professions (World Health Organization, 2020). In the academic sector, the pressures of teaching, research, administrative duties and the expectation to publish frequently contribute to a high-stress environment (Ifewale, 2021). These stressors are compounded by organizational factors including workload and a lack of organizational support (Ogunbameru, 2020). Workload refers to the amount of work assigned to an individual and the perceived pressure to complete these tasks within a given timeframe. In essence, when employees work more hours or at a higher intensity than is reasonable for them, they are said to have a heavy workload. Workload is typically the consequence of an individual needing to perform tasks beyond the regular scope or degree of responsibilities for their position. High workload can lead to chronic stress as individuals struggle to meet deadlines and manage the demands placed upon them. University staff often face significant workload pressures due to teaching responsibilities, research obligations, administrative duties, and service commitments. Excessive workload can result in burnout, fatigue and decreased job satisfaction, ultimately impairing psychological well-being (Adeoye & Elegbede, 2019).

Lack of organizational support encompasses the perceived deficiency of resources, guidance and assistance from the institution to help employees effectively perform their duties. This can include inadequate access to professional development opportunities, insufficient recognition and rewards, lack of clear communication from management and minimal involvement of employees in decision-making processes. When university staff feel unsupported by their institution, they may experience heightened stress levels, reduced morale and a sense of isolation, all of which can detrimentally affect their psychological well-being (Olumide & Ajayi, 2020).

High workload and lack of organizational support are significant contributors to occupational stress, which in turn may adversely impact the psychological well-being of university staff. An overwhelming workload can lead to physical and mental exhaustion, increased anxiety and diminished life satisfaction. Similarly, when university staff perceive a lack of organizational support, they may feel undervalued and disconnected, which can exacerbate stress levels and contribute to poor psychological well-being (Ibrahim, 2020).

Despite the critical nature of this issue, there is a paucity of research specifically focusing on the Nigerian context, particularly in Ogun State. Previous studies have largely been conducted in Western countries, with limited applicability to the Nigerian educational system (Nwosu & Osuji, 2020). Additionally, while there is some literature on occupational stress in Nigeria, it tends to focus on general workplace environments rather than the specific challenges faced by university staff (Obi,

Adebayo, & Akintunde, 2020). This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the influence of occupational stress on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State. It specifically examines two primary occupational stressors - workload and lack of organizational support. By doing so, the study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations to university administrators and policymakers to enhance the working conditions and psychological health of academic staff.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

Assess the influence of workload on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State;
and

Evaluate the impact of lack of organizational support on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State.

The study tested the following null hypotheses:

Ho1: Workload has no significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State.

Ho2: Lack of organizational support has no significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State.

Methods

Design, Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population consisted of all academic and non-academic staff working in the Federal, State and private universities in Ogun State. A sample of 300 university staff from federal, state and private universities (Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye and Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo) was selected through the stratified random sampling technique.

Instruments

The instruments used for data collection in this study were Demographic Data Inventory (DDI), Organizational Support Questionnaire (OSQ), Workload Sub-Scale of the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS - W) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale — Short Form (PWBS-SF). Further information on these instruments is given below.

Demographic Data Inventory (DDI)

The Demographic Data Inventory (DDI) is a five-item instrument developed by the researcher to measure the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as name of university, gender, age, educational qualification and work experience.

Organizational Support Questionnaire (OSQ)

Organizational Support Questionnaire (OSQ) was developed by Thompson and Lyness (1999) to measure respondents' perceptions of the level of support they receive from their institution. It is a Likert-type instrument with 18 items in a 5-point response format with options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Sample items on the scale are:

- I feel a strong sense of belonging in this university and
- The university cares about my well-being.

The developers reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging of .81. To confirm the test's applicability in the Nigerian environment, Onyishi (2006) also administered it on 173 participants.

The results showed a Cronbach's alpha of .88 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .89. This instrument is therefore trustworthy, legitimate and appropriate for the Nigerian context.

Workload Sub-Scale of the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS - W)

The Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) was developed by Onugbo (2017) to measure job satisfaction among university staff. The JSS consists of 48 items in a Likert-type format along the following eight dimensions or sub-scales: Compensation and benefits, workload, career development and opportunities, job security, collegial relationships, work environment, recognition and feedback and involvement in decision-making. The workload sub-scale, which contains six items, is adopted in this study. The instrument has a 5-point Likert-type format with responses ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Very Often. Sample items on the sub-scale are:

I feel that my workload is manageable and allows for time outside of work and

I rarely feel overwhelmed by my job demands.

The developer reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .71 for the JSS – W, indicating that the sub-scale has good internal consistency reliability, the items being internally consistent with one another. Sofoluwe and Akinsolu (2021) examined the psychometric properties of the JSS-W using a sample of College of Education staff in Lagos State, Nigeria. He found that scores on the JSS-W correlated positively and significantly with scores on the Job Performance Index. This provided evidence for the construct validity of the instrument.

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale - Short Form (PWBS-SF)

The Psychological Well-Being Scale Short - Form (PWBS-SF) was developed by Ryff (1995) as a brief measure of psychological well-being. It consists of 18 items measuring the six sub-scales or dimensions of human positive functioning, namely, autonomy, purpose in life, positive relations with others, personal growth, environmental mastery and self-acceptance, with each sub-scale having three items. All the items are to be rated on a 5-point Likert –type scale with responses ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Sample items on the scale are:

Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them

In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.

Ryff (1995) reported satisfactory reliability coefficients for the PWBS-SF ranging from .87 to .93 for coefficient alphas and from .81 to .88 for 6-week test-retest reliability. The pilot test conducted in this study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .75.

Method of Data Collection

While ensuring that ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were complied with, data collection commenced. Three hundred copies of the questionnaires were physically distributed to the specified number of staff out of which 286 copies were retrieved, giving an attrition rate of 4.7%.

Method of Data Analysis

Each of the two hypotheses formulated in this study was tested using the simple linear regression analysis at the .05 alpha level.

Results

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Workload has no significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff in

Ogun State.

Table 1: Coefficients of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis for Influence of Workload on Psychological Well-Being

	B	Std Error	B	t	Sig.
(Constant)	7.361	5.772		9.406	.000
Workload	-.084	.018	-.283	-14.115	.000

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Table 1 revealed significant results ($\beta = -.283$, $t = 14.115$, $p < .0005$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld. It was subsequently concluded that workload had a significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State. Table 1 further showed that workload is negatively associated with psychological well-being ($\beta = -.283$) and that the latter can be predicted from the former by means of the regression equation:

$$\text{Psychological Well-Being} = 7.361 - 0.084 \times \text{Workload}$$

Hypothesis Two

Lack of organizational support has no significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State.

Table 2: Coefficients of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis for Influence of Lack of Organizational Support on Psychological Well-Being

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	10.456	4.303		11.946	.000
Lack of Organizational Support	-0.117	0.026	-0.251	-12.402	.000

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Table 2 revealed significant results ($\beta = -.251$, $t = 12.402$, $p < .0005$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld. It was subsequently concluded that lack of organizational support had a significant influence on the psychological well-being of university staff in Ogun State. Table 2 further showed that lack of organizational support is negatively associated with psychological well-being ($\beta = -.251$) and that the latter can be predicted from the former by means of the regression equation:

$$\text{Psychological Well-Being} = 10.456 - 0.117 \times \text{Lack of Organizational Support.}$$

Discussion

The findings from this study provided significant insights into the impact of occupational stressors on the psychological well-being of university staff. The study highlighted two primary stressors: Workload and lack of organizational support. Both have been shown to have a substantial negative influence on the psychological well-being of university staff.

The study revealed that workload has a significant negative influence on the psychological well-being of university staff, as indicated by the standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = -.283$, $t = 14.115$, $p < .0005$). This means that as the workload increases, the psychological well-being of university staff decreases. The negative association ($\beta = -.283$) suggests that excessive workload contributes to higher levels of stress, burnout and possibly even mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. This is consistent with existing literature which posits that excessive workload can lead to chronic stress,

reduced job satisfaction and impaired mental health (Adeoye & Elegbede, 2019). In the context of university staff, the heavy workload may stem from various sources such as teaching responsibilities, administrative tasks, research commitments and student mentoring. Balancing these demands can be challenging and often leads to feelings of being overwhelmed, which detrimentally impacts their overall psychological well-being.

The findings also indicated that lack of organizational support significantly negatively influenced the psychological well-being of university staff ($\beta = -.251$, $t = 12.402$, $p < .0005$). This implies that inadequate support from the organization is associated with lower psychological well-being among staff members. The negative association ($\beta = -.251$) highlights the importance of organizational support in maintaining and enhancing the psychological well-being of employees. Organizational support can include resources such as adequate staffing, professional development opportunities, mental health resources and a supportive work environment. University staff may experience a lack of organizational support in various forms, such as insufficient resources to perform their duties effectively, lack of recognition and appreciation, poor communication and limited opportunities for career advancement. These factors can lead to feelings of isolation, dissatisfaction and stress, thereby negatively impacting their psychological well-being.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made:

Universities should implement workload management strategies that may include hiring additional staff to distribute tasks more evenly, creating more efficient scheduling systems, and offering professional development programmes focused on time management and prioritization skills.

Universities should strengthen their organizational support systems by creating a supportive work environment that includes providing adequate resources, recognizing and rewarding staff contributions, and ensuring effective communication channels.

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