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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC STAFF WORK PRESSURE AND RESEARCH/PUBLICATIONS EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between academic staff work pressure and their research/publications effectiveness in Nigerian universities. The research was prompted by the need to verify the claim by academic staff that heavy workloads affect their research/publication effectiveness. This is with a view to enhancing academic staff research/publications effectiveness. The study was a descriptive survey, and stratified random sampling technique was used to select sixty-seven academic staff from 12 universities. Research and Publications Effectiveness Questionnaire (RPEQ), with a reliability coefficient of .82, was administered on respondents to collect data. Percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to answer the questions and test the hypotheses respectively. The study revealed a low level of academic staff conference attendance, moderate level of publications, moderate level of work pressure on staff. There was no significant relationship between work pressure and academic staff attendance at conferences, between work pressure and frequency of publications and between work pressure and overall research and publications effectiveness. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that; accomplished senior academic staff should mentor young and upcoming ones to master the research function, universities should develop mechanism to detect academic staff weaknesses in research activities and help them to overcome same.

Introduction

The tasks of academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions, as in other parts of the world, are many and varied. Academic staff members have tripartite function of teaching, research and community development service. Among the above stated functions, academic staff research activity is more highly rated than others. Academic staff research effectiveness is the basic criteria considered for staff employment, promotion, salary enhancement; and it is the main criteria for ranking "world class universities" (Olorisade, 2008; Kerani, 1997; Jenkins, 1995). According to Azmi (2006), Nigerian academics will only be recognized as international scholars when they publish research findings in internationally subscribed refereed journals, and in books published by reputable publishers. Yusuf (2005) observed that research publications are the major index of an academic staff quality, and the determinant of advancement. The National Universities Commission (NUC) in its 2005 ranking of universities,

considered the number of scholarly research articles published in prestigious international academic journals and the number of citations in scholarly index.

Cetto (1998) in a study concluded that the number and quality of published studies by Nigerians in international journals is considered a contributory factor to the generation, dissemination and application of scientific knowledge for development in Nigeria and beyond. Thomas and Harris (2000) in their study opined that academic staff develops skills and knowledge as a result of engaging in research, as well as intrinsic reward and enthusiasm. They argued that encouraging and enabling research among academic staff enhances job satisfaction and improves the educational experiences of students. Considering the foregoing, academic staff research activity is not only important, but one that must be encouraged and supported for maximal productivity in the nation's tertiary institutions and the larger society. It has been reported that academic staff workload in tertiary institutions is high and depriving the staff required time for their research studies (Olorisade, 2006).

It has been observed that the clamour for university education is very high in Nigeria, resulting from the country's high population (estimated at 170 million) and the preference for university graduates over and above graduates from other tertiary institutions. In the last five years, it has been reported that the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) had recorded applications for university placements ranging from 1.2 million to 1.7 million candidates, with limited spaces in the Nigerian universities for these vast population. There has been therefore pressure on the universities to admit more students every year, even when additional facilities are not provided in the institutions, and when additional academic staffs are not employed. This has resulted in the increased work schedule of academic staff in Nigerian universities, as they are required to: teach the large number of students, assess and provide needed guidance on academic matters for the students, and supervise students' project work. These academic staff members are as well required to serve as level advisers, examinations officers, heads of department, etc. They are also expected to function in the varying departmental, faculty and university-wide committees, and in many other positions of responsibilities. In many of the universities, academic staff still has to share office space which is sometimes converted to classrooms for small student groups, and they are confronted with the problem of electricity/power and non-functional internet services. Again, academic staff members are required to partake in faculty and university-wide activities like: teaching practice and SIWES supervision of students, adviser to students' course/subject associations, open day and Global Entrepreneurship week (GEW) of their institutions. With all these tasks that academic staff members of universities are saddled with, they are required, not only to contribute to community developmental issues; but also to carry out quality research and

publish articles in reputable national and international journals to earn promotion. According to Sterner (1999), academic staff believes that engaging in research was essential to their professional development; but they face some barriers among which were heavy teaching and advising loads, as well as too many administrative assignments. This paper therefore attempts to determine the relationship between academic staff work pressure and their research effectiveness, and to examine the quality of the research studies.

Literature Review

Tertiary education today demands more from university teachers who are expected to equip students with the skills and knowledge required to contribute to societal development. In the process of accomplishing this task, academic staff gives classroom instructions to students, carry out research studies which also aid their classroom delivery and enrich lectures, and as well contribute to community service. The tasks demand of academic staff to constantly function both in their institutions and at home. Kinman (1998) observed that due to the escalation in demands of the job, it is not surprising that academic staff report difficulties in maintaining firm boundaries between the workplace and the home, as for many, it appears that the home is the extension of the workplace. This, according to some academic staff interviewed has had negative effects on their ability to scale promotion hurdle, for lack of sufficient research output in terms of journal articles, chapter contributions in books and paper presentations at conferences. This, academic staff reported, results from their tight work schedules and pressure of work.

Earlier writers have established that university teachers are under great stress in the performance of their tasks which had resulted in organizational inefficiency, high turnover, absenteeism due to sickness, decreased quality and quantity of practice, increased costs of health care and decreased job satisfaction (Reddy and Poornima, 2012). Their research concluded that there was a positive relationship between occupational stress and professional burnout of university teachers. Association of University Teachers (2003) reported excessive overload and work life imbalance among the most frequently reported stressors by academics; while Boyd and Wylier (1994) observed that academic staff workload had expanded significantly in recent years.

Other studies like Hogan, Carlson and Dua (2002) in the United States; Winefield and Jarret (2001), Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua and Hapuarachchi (2002) in Australia; and Van Iersal-Van Sillfhout (2001) in the Netherlands have found that academic stress has become a cause for concern as a result of increased work pressures and reduced support. Kinman (2001) reported that the causes of stressors consistently identified in the research literature are workload and time pressure, research, educational change,

management styles, re-organization and restructuring, and inadequate resources (Dua, 1994; Winefield and Jarret, 2001; Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua, Hapuarachchi and Boyd, 2003) Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper and Ricketts (2005) study concluded that occupational stress in university staff is widespread and further establish that universities no longer provide the low-stress working environment they once did. From the studies reviewed, there are evidences of scarcity of reports on work pressure and academic staff research effectiveness, this prompted the present study which is a modest contribution to filling the gap in previous studies.

Statement of the Problem

Research activities of academic staff in higher institutions has been consistently more rated that the teaching and community development services of academic staff. It is an important criterion for employment promotion and sustenance on the job. For staff of these institutions to become successful academics there is the need to actively and constantly get engaged/involved in carrying out research studies. This, many academics say is hampered by the heavy workload and many administrative assignments given to them. The insinuation prompted the researcher to carry out the study on relationship between academic staff work pressure and their research effectiveness, with a view to establishing the claim, verifying the quality of academic staff research, in the effort at enhancing quality research output of university academic staff.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of earlier studies had been on other variables outside the effects of work pressure on academic staff research effectiveness. The present study is therefore an effort at investigating the relationship of work pressure with academic staff research effectiveness in Nigerian universities. This is with a view to enhancing optimum performance of academic staff in their research/publications activity. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. Frequency of academic staff attendance at conferences, from Nigerian universities;
2. Frequency of academic staff publications in national and international academic journals;
3. The level of work pressure on academic staff in Nigerian universities;
4. The relationship between academic staff work pressure and conference attendance, and
5. The relationship between academic staff work pressure and their publications in academic journals.

Research Questions

The study sought to provide answers to the following questions generated to guide the study:

1. What is the frequency of academic staff attendance at conferences, in Nigerian universities?
2. What is the frequency of academic staff publications in national and international academic journals?
3. What is the level of academic staff research/publications effectiveness, in Nigerian universities?
4. What is the level of work pressure on academic staff in Nigerian universities?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between work pressure and conference attendance of academic staff in Nigerian universities.
2. There is no significant relationship between work pressure and academic staff publications of articles in national and international journals.
3. There is no significant relationship between work pressure of academic staff and their research effectiveness, in Nigerian universities.

Methodology

This study was a descriptive survey. The population comprised of academic staff in Nigerian universities, with six universities selected from the North-Central and six universities from South-Western geo-political zones of Nigeria. Sixty-seven respondents were randomly selected from the twelve (12) universities, using stratified random sampling technique.

The basic instrument used for the collection of data was the questionnaire tagged "Research and Publications Effectiveness Questionnaire" (RPEQ). Research/publications information section contained questions relating to conference attendance, publications, sponsorships, and access to grants. Section C contained questions relating to web visits, collaboration, work pressure, factors encouraging research, obstacles to research and publications, and uses of research. Section D sought information on application of research findings, students' access to research findings, roles of institutions and government at enhancing research and publications.

The questionnaires were administered by research assistants, who were staff of the institutions. The questionnaire was validated by experts, to assess appropriateness of content, while the reliability value, obtained from the test-retest method, was .82. For the analysis of results, percentages were used to test research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics was employed, to provide answers to the hypotheses generated. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

The result of the study is presented below:

Question 1: What is the frequency of academic staff attendance at conferences, in Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Frequency of academic staff attendance at conferences

S/N	Institutions	Frequency of conference attendance (%)	Proprietor
1	Al-Hikma University, Ilorin	29.14	Private
2	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	20.00	Private
3	Bowen University, Iwo	8.57	Private
4	Federal Univ. of Agric. Abeokuta	62.24	Federal
5	Joseph Ayo Babalola Univ. Arakeji	8.57	Private
6	Kogi State University, Anyigba	26.86	State
7	Kwara State University, Malete	30.78	State
8	Lagos State University, Ojoo	30.48	State
9	Tai Solarin Univ. of Educ. Ijebu	55.00	State
10	University of Abuja	25.71	Federal
11	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	48.33	Federal
12	University of Mkar	60.00	Private
	Average	33.81	

The result in table 1 revealed a low frequency of conference attendance by academic staff of universities (33.81%). Again, academic conferences were better attended by academic staff of federal universities (45.43%), followed by state universities' academic staff (35.78%); while academic staff of private universities poorly attended academic conferences (25.26%).

Question 2: What is the frequency of academic staff publications in national and international academic journals?

Table 2: Frequency of academic staff national and international publications

S/N	Institutions	Frequency of conference attendance (%)	Proprietor
1	Al-Hikma University, Ilorin	35.00	Private
2	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	20.00	Private
3	Bowen University, Iwo	50.00	Private
4	Federal Univ. of Agric. Abeokuta	56.67	Federal
5	Joseph Ayo Babalola Univ. Arakeji	30.00	Private
6	Kogi State University, Anyigba	64.00	State
7	Kwara State University, Malete	21.43	State

8 Lagos State University, Ojoo	35.00	State
9 Tai Solarin Univ. of Educ. Ijebu	80.00	State
10 University of Abuja	80.00	Federal
11 University of Ilorin, Ilorin	70.83	Federal
12 University of Mkar	30.00	Private
Average	47.75	

Evidences from table 2 showed that academic staff publications in national and international journals are moderate (47.75%). Academic staff of Federal universities performs best among the staff with a performance level of 69.17%, which is high. Academic staff of State universities had a performance level of 50.11%; while academic staff in Private universities had an average performance of 33.0% which is very low.

Question 3: What is the level of academic staff research/publications effectiveness, in Nigerian universities?

Table 3: Frequency of academic staff research/publications effectiveness

S/N	Institutions	Research/publications Effectiveness	Proprietor
1	Al-Hikma University, Ilorin	34.60	Private
2	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	31.00	Private
3	Bowen University, Iwo	31.00	Private
4	Federal Univ. of Agric. Abeokuta	66.00	Federal
5	Joseph Ayo Babalola Univ. Arakeji	24.00	Private
6	Kogi State University, Anyigba	42.60	State
7	Kwara State University, Malete	26.71	State
8	Lagos State University, Ojoo	38.42	State
9	Tai Solarin Univ. of Educ. Ijebu	63.25	State
10	University of Abuja	51.00	Federal
11	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	60.75	Federal
12	University of Mkar	48.00	Private
	Average	43.11	

The result in table 3 revealed that research/publications effectiveness of academic staff in the universities was generally moderate (43.11%). This shows a poor research output by academic staff of universities. The result also revealed that academic staff of federal universities performs better, with an average of 59.25%, academic staff in state universities had an average of 42.75%; while those in private universities had an average performance of 33.72% in their research/publications effectiveness.

Question 4: What is the level of work pressure on academic staff in Nigerian universities?

Table 4: Analysis of academic staff work pressure

S/N	Institutions	Level of work pressure	Proprietor
1	Al-Hikma University, Ilorin	35.00	Private
2	Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo	33.33	Private
3	Bowen University, Iwo	100.00	Private
4	Federal Univ. of Agric. Abeokuta	29.17	Federal
5	Joseph Ayo Babalola Univ. Arakeji	100.00	Private
6	Kogi State University, Anyigba	40.00	State
7	Kwara State University, Malete	45.71	State
8	Lagos State University, Ojoo	37.50	State
9	Tai Solarin Univ. of Educ. Ijebu	21.88	State
10	University of Abuja	50.00	Federal
11	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	43.75	Federal
12	University of Mkar	25.00	Private
	Average	46.78	

Evidences in table 4 revealed that the level of work pressure on academic staff is moderate (46.78%). The breakdown of the result shows that academic staff work pressure was highest in private universities (58.67%), followed by staff in federally owned universities (40.97%); while academic staff in state universities had the lowest work pressure (36.27%).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between work pressure and conference attendance of academic staff in Nigerian universities.

Table 5: Summary of PPMC result on work pressure and conference attendance of academic staff

Variables	N	X	SD	r Cal.	Critical r	Decision
Work Pressure		46.78	25.07			
	67			-0.756	.553	Accepted
Conf. Attendance		33.81	17.74			

The result in table 5 showed that there was no significant relationship between work pressure and conference attendance by academic staff in Nigerian universities. This is because calculated r (-0.756) is lower than the critical r (.553).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between work pressure and academic staff publications of articles in national and international journals.

Table 6: Summary of PPMC result of work pressure and frequency of academic staff publications

Variables	N	X	SD	r Cal.	Critical r	Decision
Work Pressure	67	46.78	25.07	-0.126	.553	Accepted
Conf. Attendance		47.74	21.17			

The result in table 6 revealed that the calculated r (-.126) is lower than critical value (.553). There is therefore no significant relationship between work pressure and the frequency of academic staff publications of journal articles and book publications.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between work pressure of academic staff and their research effectiveness, in Nigerian universities.

Table 7: Summary of PPMC result of work pressure and research/publication effectiveness

Variables	N	X	SD	r Cal.	Critical r	Decision
Work Pressure	67	46.78	25.07	-0.564	.553	Accepted
Res./Pub. Effectiveness		47.74	21.17			

The result in table 7 showed that the calculated r (-.564) is lower than the critical value (.553), therefore there is no significant relationship between work pressure and research/publications effectiveness of academic staff in Nigerian universities.

Discussion

The result in table 1 revealed a low frequency of conference attendance by academic staff of universities (33.81%). This is at variance with Mawoli & Babandako' (2011) submission that conference attendance among university staff was high. Academic staff of federal universities perform better than the others (45.43%), followed by state universities' academic staff (35.78%); while academic staff of private universities poorly attended academic conferences (25.26%). The high percentage of academic staff of federal universities attending conferences may have resulted from their ability to access to TETFUND. The generally low performance in conference attendance may be because it is less rated, for promotion, compared to journal articles.

Table 2 showed that academic staff publications in national and international journals are moderate (47.75%). This is mostly affected by publications fees that many respondents say is high and the claim that they are

saddled with too many other tasks apart from their teaching activities. This agrees with Creamer's (1998) findings that institutional policies and practices contributes but do not determine whether a faculty member initiates and sustains a substantial record of scholarly publishing.

The result in table 3 revealed that research/publications effectiveness of academic staff in the universities was generally moderate (43.11%). This, according to the staff was as a result of heavy teaching and advising loads, limited access to internet, high cost of publications, poor power supply among many others. This agrees with the findings of Sterner (1999) who observed that barriers faced by faculty members, with regards to research effectiveness included heavy teaching and advising loads, as well as too many administrative assignments.

Evidences in table 4 revealed that the level of work pressure on academic staff was moderate (46.78%). The breakdown of the result shows that academic staff work pressure was highest in private universities (58.67%). The high level of work pressure in private universities may be due to high students' enrolment that far outweighs the number of academic staff employed to teach and attend to other administrative and advisory tasks.

The result in table 5 showed that there was no significant relationship between work pressure and conference attendance by academic staff in Nigerian universities. This implies that other factors influence academic staff conference attendance among which respondents have mentioned: availability of grants, well equipped libraries, availability of internet service, access to statistical software, etc.

Evidences in table 6 revealed that there was no significant relationship between work pressure and the frequency of academic staff publications of journal articles and book publications. This implies that academic staff strives to meet promotion conditions despite work pressure; although the quality of the studies may not be as high as expected going by the number of international publications, in relation to other publications.

The result in table 7 showed that there was no significant relationship between work pressure and research/publications effectiveness of academic staff in Nigerian universities. This therefore implies that the claim by academic staff that work pressure negatively impacts upon their research activities is not statistically found to be true. This is at variance with the outcome of Mohamedbhai (2011) study which reported that heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities affects the quality of education; while crowding out research and other non-teaching academic activities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have revealed the following:

1. A low frequency of conference attendance by academic staff of universities (33.81%); while their publications in national and international journals was moderate (47.75%). This will deny staff the opportunities to share the outcomes of their research studies with others and learn from the varying thoughts and presentations of other researchers.
2. That publications effectiveness of academic staff in the universities was generally moderate (43.11%). This has implications for promotion, and could result in delayed promotion at some levels, resulting from insufficient journal publications. This may negatively affect staff morale, and lead to low staff productivity.
3. That there was no significant relationship between work pressure and conference attendance; as well as between work pressure and frequency of publications by academic staff in Nigerian universities. This implies that there was no justification for the clamour for a reduction in the task assigned to academic staff in Nigerian universities, although institutional managers should ensure a fair work distribution, to ensure effective staff performance in teaching, research and community service.

Recommendations

The study sought to determine the relationship between work pressure and research/publications effectiveness. It was carried out bearing in mind the importance of research and publications to academic staff in universities and to enhance optimum performance of academic staff in the research and publications functions. On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Universities must thoroughly scrutinize academic staff in order to recruit competent and research oriented individuals; while adequate academic and supportive staff must be employed to allow for maximum research output of academic staff.
2. Superior officers (Deans, HOD's, accomplished professors) need to mentor young and upcoming subordinates' in the mastery of the research function, and be ready to assist them towards improving on their research output.
3. There is the need for universities to ensure conducive environment through; provision of functional internet services, well equipped libraries, steady power supply, exposure to statistical software, provision of equipment and research facilities, research funding, etc in order to encourage improved performances in research activities of academic staff.

4. Universities must develop a mechanism to regularly detect weaknesses in academic staff research activities, and put in place means to help them overcome same.
5. Academic staff in private universities should be motivated to carry out research studies through access to TETFUND and other grants, which will encourage them to be more involved in research activities and as well attend conferences and publish articles in academic journals more regularly.
6. Universities should put in place an effective workload management system to ensure that academic staff are neither overloaded, nor allowed to have work under-load which can result in loss of interest and low productivity.
7. There is the need for universities to organize regular training sessions for her academic staff on research writing and accessing grants.

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