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Occupational Stress and Job Performance Among Academic Staff of A Plateau State College of Health Technology: A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Survey

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Abstract

Background: Occupational stress is a workplace concern that may affect employees' health, well-being and ability to perform assigned responsibilities. Academic staff in tertiary institutions may experience stress arising from workload, working conditions, role demands and organizational relationships.

Objective: This study assessed occupational stress and its perceived effects on the job performance of academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan, Nigeria. It examined the experience and sources of occupational stress, reported symptoms and perceived effects on job performance, and strategies for managing workplace stress.

Methods: A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 184 academic staff across six schools of the College, from which 115 respondents were selected. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

Results: Ninety-two respondents (80.0%) reported experiencing work-related stress. Poor working conditions were identified as a major source of stress by 76 respondents (66.1%). Superiors were identified as a source of stress by 66 respondents (57.4% of the full sample; 72.5% of the 91 valid responses). Headache (34; 29.6%) and elevated heartbeat (31; 27.0%) were among the commonly reported symptoms. Recruitment of additional academic staff was the most frequently selected organizational strategy for managing stress (38; 33.0%).

Conclusion: Occupational stress was commonly reported among the academic staff surveyed. Poor working conditions, workload and organizational factors were prominent reported stressors. Institutional interventions addressing staffing levels, workload distribution, working conditions, rest periods and workplace relationships may help reduce occupational stress and support staff performance.

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Keywords: Occupational Stress, Job Performance, Academic Staff, Workload, Working Conditions, Health Technology Institution, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is an important workplace issue because it may influence employees' health, job satisfaction and performance. In academic institutions, staff responsibilities extend beyond classroom teaching to include student assessment, preparation of academic records, research, supervision, administrative duties and participation in institutional activities. These responsibilities may become demanding where staffing levels, working conditions and available resources are inadequate.

Academic staff in health training institutions perform responsibilities that contribute to the preparation of health professionals. Their duties require effective time management, adequate institutional support, appropriate teaching facilities and a conducive working environment. Where these conditions are inadequate, employees may experience increased workload, conflicting responsibilities, pressure from supervisors and other organizational stressors.

The MSc thesis on which this article is based investigated occupational stress among academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan. The thesis identified workload, poor conditions of service, the working environment, role conflict and inadequate rest periods as important concerns. It also examined reported symptoms of stress and workplace manifestations such as absenteeism, lateness and delayed submission of students' results.

Despite the importance of staff well being to the effective delivery of health professional education, institutional evidence on occupational stress can help identify workplace conditions requiring management attention. This study therefore assessed the experience and reported sources of occupational stress among academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan, described associated symptoms and perceived performance-related manifestations, and identified strategies proposed by respondents for managing stress.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to assess occupational stress and its perceived effects on the job performance of academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan.

The specific objectives were to:

1. determine whether academic staff experienced occupational stress and identify its reported causes;
2. identify the signs and symptoms of occupational stress among academic staff;
3. examine the perceived influence of occupational stress on academic staff job performance; and
4. identify strategies for managing occupational stress among academic staff.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Study design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to assess occupational stress and job performance among academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan.

3.2 Study setting

The study was conducted at Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan, Plateau State, Nigeria. The thesis describes the College as comprising six schools: Environmental Health Science, Community

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Health, Medical Laboratory Science, General Health Science, Health Information Management and Pharmacy Technician.

3.3 Study population

The target population comprised 184 academic staff across the six schools of the College. The thesis attributes this population figure to information obtained from the Office of the Registrar in 2019.

3.4 Sample size and sampling procedure

A sample of 115 academic staff was selected from the target population. The thesis refers to random sampling in the methodology and to systematic random sampling in the abstract and other sections. The precise sampling procedure, sampling frame, allocation across schools and selection steps could not be established consistently from the extracted material.

3.5 Data collection instrument and procedure

A questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The thesis reports that secondary information was obtained from books, journal articles, institutional documents and other published and unpublished materials. The questionnaire included items on respondents' characteristics, work-related stress, possible stressors, symptoms, perceived effects on work and suggested stress-management strategies.

3.6 Data analysis

The thesis reports that quantitative data were summarized using frequency distributions and percentages and presented in tables. The extracted material does not establish that inferential statistical tests were performed. Accordingly, this manuscript reports descriptive findings and does not make statistical claims of association or causation.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval, informed consent and confidentiality procedures were not sufficiently documented in the material extracted for this draft.

4. RESULTS

A total sample of 115 academic staff was reported in the thesis. The results below reproduce the thesis data where the frequency counts are available. Percentages with known arithmetic inconsistencies are flagged for verification.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 115)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	67	58.3
	Female	48	41.7
Marital status	Married	90	78.3
	Single	19	16.5
	Divorced	2	1.7
	Widow	2	1.7
	Widower	2	1.7

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Age group (years)	25–30	12	10.4
	31–40	38	33.0
	41–50	27	23.5
	51 and above	38	33.0
Educational qualification	HND/PGD	66	57.4
	BSc/BA/BEd	29	25.2
	MSc	19	16.5
	PhD	1	0.9

The respondents included 67 males (58.3%) and 48 females (41.7%). Most respondents were married (78.3%). The largest age categories were 31–40 years and 51 years and above, each comprising 33.0% of respondents. Most respondents were reported to hold HND/PGD qualifications (57.4%).

Table 2. Overall experience of work-related stress

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	92	80.0
No	23	20.0
Total	115	100.0

Most respondents (92; 80.0%) reported experiencing work-related stress.

Table 3. Selected workplace stress indicators

Item / response	Frequency	Percentage reported (%)
Job is stressful — strongly agree	63	55.7
Job is stressful — agree	16	13.9
Lost sleep because of work — strongly agree	51	44.3
Lost sleep because of work — agree	24	20.0
Work environment affects performance — strongly agree	36	31.3
Work environment affects performance — agree	27	23.5
Too much work demand to cope with — strongly agree	64	55.7
Too much work demand to cope with — agree	5	4.3
Unable to satisfy conflicting demands — strongly agree	65	56.5
Unable to satisfy conflicting demands — agree	11	9.6

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The thesis reports agreement with several indicators of work-related pressure, including job-related stress, loss of sleep, excessive work demands and difficulty satisfying conflicting demands. The detailed percentages require verification because some tabulated values do not match their frequencies.

Table 4. Reported major sources of stress

Reported source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family problems	15	13.0
Poor working conditions	76	66.1
Poor working environment	24	20.9
Total	115	100.0

Poor working conditions were the most frequently reported source of stress (76; 66.1%), followed by poor working environment (24; 20.9%) and family problems (15; 13.0%).

Table 5. Persons identified as sources of stress

Source	Frequency	Percentage of full sample (%)
Superiors	66	57.4
Colleagues	13	11.3
Friends	12	10.4
Valid responses	91	79.1
Missing responses	24	20.9

Among the 91 recorded responses, superiors were the most frequently selected source of stress (66 responses). Twenty-four responses were missing for this item.

Table 6. Reported symptoms of occupational stress

Symptom	Frequency	Percentage of full sample (%)
Headache	34	29.6
Late submission of students' results/official assignments	22	19.1
Elevated heartbeat	31	27.0
Forgetfulness	14	12.2
Valid responses	101	87.8
Missing responses	14	12.2

Headache and elevated heartbeat were the most frequently reported symptoms. The thesis recorded 101 responses for this item and 14 missing responses.

Table 7. Suggested strategies for managing occupational stress

Suggested strategy	Frequency	Percentage of full sample (%)
Employ more staff	38	33.0

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Provide a good working environment	17	14.8
Plan tasks	16	13.9
Division of labour	15	13.0
Allow reasonable time for tasks	14	12.2
Provide rest periods	14	12.2
Valid responses	114	99.1
Missing responses	1	0.9

Recruitment of additional staff was the most frequently suggested strategy (38; 33.0%). Other suggestions included improving the working environment, task planning, division of labour, allowing reasonable time for tasks and providing rest periods.

4.1 Additional reported performance manifestations

The thesis describes absenteeism, lateness to work and late submission of students' results as manifestations associated with workplace stress. A table in the thesis lists 66 reports of absenteeism, 13 of lateness and 12 of late submission of students' results, but its reported percentages and totals are internally inconsistent. These figures have therefore not been included as a definitive quantitative result in the main tables.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that occupational stress was commonly reported among the academic staff surveyed: 80.0% indicated that they experienced work-related stress. This provides evidence that workplace stress was a notable concern in the study institution at the time of data collection. Because the study used a descriptive questionnaire survey, this finding represents respondents' self-reported experience rather than a clinical assessment of stress.

Poor working conditions were the most frequently identified source of stress. The thesis associates these conditions with inadequate motivation, irregular salary payment, limited promotion opportunities and insufficient office facilities. These findings suggest that the reported stressors were not confined to individual workload but also included institutional and organizational conditions.

Superiors were frequently identified as a source of stress. This may reflect perceived pressure associated with supervision, task allocation or workplace relationships. However, the survey results do not establish the specific behaviour or management practices responsible for these responses. Further qualitative investigation would be useful to understand the nature of these supervisory stressors.

Respondents also reported physical symptoms, particularly headache and elevated heartbeat. These findings are self-reported and should not be interpreted as medically confirmed outcomes or as proof that occupational stress caused the symptoms. The cross-sectional descriptive design does not establish temporal sequence or causation.

The thesis links stress with performance-related manifestations such as absenteeism, lateness and delayed submission of students' results. It also reports that some staff found work demands and conflicting responsibilities difficult to manage. These observations suggest a potential operational concern for academic institutions, although objective performance records were not presented to independently

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measure job performance.

Recruitment of additional academic staff was the most frequently selected stress-management strategy. Other suggestions focused on improving working conditions, distributing work, planning tasks, setting reasonable deadlines and allowing rest periods. Collectively, these responses emphasize the importance of organizational-level approaches rather than relying solely on individual coping strategies.

6. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The study provides institution-specific descriptive information on occupational stress among academic staff in a health training college and documents practical strategies suggested by respondents. Its limitations include the use of a single institution, reliance on self-reported questionnaire responses, descriptive analysis and incomplete responses for some items. The thesis also reports practical constraints during data collection, including limited time and funds and delays in questionnaire return.

The extracted material does not establish whether the questionnaire underwent formal validity and reliability testing, whether objective performance indicators were collected, or whether potential confounding factors were controlled. Inconsistencies between some frequencies, percentages and narrative interpretations further limit confidence in selected estimates until the original data-set is checked.

7. CONCLUSION

Occupational stress was commonly reported among academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan. Poor working conditions, workload and organizational factors were prominent reported stressors. Respondents identified headache and elevated heartbeat among the symptoms they experienced and described work-related manifestations including absenteeism, lateness and delayed submission of students' results. Recruitment of additional staff, improved working conditions, better workload distribution, task planning, reasonable deadlines and rest periods were identified as potential management strategies. Institutional action on these issues may help improve staff wellbeing and support effective academic service delivery.

The findings should be interpreted as descriptive and self-reported. They do not establish a causal effect of occupational stress on job performance.

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Review academic staffing levels and address staffing gaps that contribute to excessive workload.
- Review the allocation of teaching, assessment, administrative and other institutional responsibilities to promote equitable workload distribution.
- Improve working conditions, including office facilities, staff support and transparent administrative processes.
- Promote constructive supervisory relationships, effective communication and timely resolution of workplace conflict.
- Establish reasonable task timelines and opportunities for rest during demanding work periods.
- Consider a staff well being or stress-management programme, with referral pathways where professional support is required.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on occupational stress and job performance among academic staff of Plateau State College of Health Technology, Zawan, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Recruitment of Additional Academic Staff:** The College management should employ more qualified academic staff to reduce excessive workloads, distribute teaching responsibilities

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appropriately, and minimise work-related stress among existing staff.

2. **Improvement of Working Conditions:** Management should provide adequate teaching and learning facilities, office equipment, instructional materials, and other essential resources required for effective academic activities.
3. **Provision of a Conducive Working Environment:** The College should improve the physical working environment by ensuring adequate ventilation, comfortable offices, functional facilities, proper sanitation, and a supportive atmosphere for staff.
4. **Promotion of Effective Management and Supervision:** Heads of departments and other supervisors should adopt supportive management practices, maintain effective communication with staff, and avoid unnecessary pressure that may contribute to occupational stress.
5. **Staff Welfare and Support Services:** The institution should establish appropriate staff welfare mechanisms, including counselling services, stress-management programmes, and opportunities for staff to discuss work-related challenges.
6. **Regular Training and Professional Development:** Management should organise periodic workshops and seminars on stress management, time management, interpersonal relationships, and effective approaches to balancing academic responsibilities.
7. **Improvement of Staff Motivation:** The College should strengthen staff motivation through timely promotion, recognition of outstanding performance, fair allocation of responsibilities, and appropriate welfare incentives.
8. **Promotion of Healthy Workplace Relationships:** Management should encourage cooperation, mutual respect, teamwork, and effective communication among academic staff, departmental heads, and other members of the College community.
9. **Periodic Assessment of Occupational Stress:** The institution should conduct regular assessments to identify the major sources of occupational stress among academic staff and develop appropriate interventions based on the findings.
10. **Monitoring of Staff Job Performance:** Management should establish supportive performance-monitoring mechanisms to identify how occupational stress affects punctuality, attendance, timely submission of students' results, and the overall discharge of academic responsibilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further studies should be conducted to:

1. Examine the relationship between occupational stress and specific indicators of academic staff job performance.
2. Investigate the effects of workload, working conditions, and management practices on occupational stress among academic staff in other colleges of health technology.
3. Assess the effectiveness of institutional stress-management interventions in improving staff productivity and job satisfaction.
4. Compare occupational stress levels among academic and non-academic staff in tertiary health institutions.

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