The Influence of Some Demographic Factors on Occupational Stressors among Heads of Academic Departments in Nigerian Colleges of Education

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of institutions on occupational stressors among HoADs in Nigerian Colleges of Education. The sample consisted of 40 HoADs selected from two Colleges of Education (one federal, one state owned) using simple random sampling technique. Frequency counts, percentage scores, t-test statistics and one way ANOVA were used to analyzed the data. The study revealed that the major occupational stressors among the HoADs were community services, career development, research, interpersonal relationships with members of the academic community and administration of their departments. Moreover, age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of institutions did not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs. It was recommended that the HoADs should evolve effective strategies of coping with occupational stressors. These include proper time management, relaxation, sharing feelings with trusted friends, adequate sleep, getting help from mentors and expressing feelings instead of bottling them up.

Introduction

The roles of Heads of Academic Departments (HoADs) in the administration of tertiary institutions cannot be over-emphasized. Apart from the enormous tasks of providing leadership in their various departments, they teach the students, conduct researches and render services to the community. These multiple and competing roles expose them to stress particularly when they find it difficult to cope with challenges of living up to expectations on their job. Stress has been identified as a 20th century disease and has been viewed as a complex and dynamic transaction between individuals and their environments (Evans and Kelly, 2004).
Stress is the body’s reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustments or response. McGrath (1976) defined stress as the interaction between three elements: perceived demand, perceived ability to cope and perception of the importance of being able to cope with the demand. Stress is feeling of tension that is both emotional and physical (Ellis, 1999). It has been diagnosed as a state of psychological tension produced by the forces of pressures (Reber and Reber, 2001). It is a state of mental or physical strain. Stressor is a chemical or biological agent or an event that causes stress to an organism. Therefore occupational stressor can be referred to as causes of stress attributed to occupation or nature of occupation of an individual or group of individuals.

Heads of academic departments could be exposed to various stressors on their job. These stressors if not properly managed could retard their productivity thereby jeopardising the accomplishment of the goals of their institutions. Abouserie (1996); Winefied and Jarret (2001); Rutter, Hezberg and Paice (2002); Ofoegbu and Nwadiani (2006); and Archibong, Bassey and Effiom (2010) identified various stressors among academic staff in tertiary institutions. These include workload, conflict, demands from colleagues, lack of research facilities, conflicting job demands, slow career advancement, unrealistic expectations from management, sourcing funds for research and career development among others. Kutty (2000) also found reasons for stress at workplace as follows: work pressure; meeting deadlines; politics in the workplace; interpersonal relationships; job content or profile; promotion and growth opportunities; imbalance between personal and professional commitment; commuting time especially from long distance sub-urban areas to the office.

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the influence of sex on job stress. While De frank and Stroup (1989), Pelsma, Richard, Harrington and Burry 1989 found no significant correlations between sex and job stress, Kryciacou and Sutcliffe (1978), McFaden (1982) and Chen (2003) found significant correlations between sex and job stress.

On age and job stress, Chiu (2004) found that younger age was correlated with higher job stress, and that older faculty members experienced higher job stress with regard to interpersonal relationships. Studies (Hawng 1999; Lin 2003, and Chiu 2004) found significant associations between administrative experience and job stress.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the major occupational stressors among Heads of Academic Departments (HoADs) in Nigerian College of Education. It also investigated the influence of some demographic factors on occupational stressors among the HoADs. These factors include age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of institutions.

Research Question

1. What is the level of stress among the HoADs in Nigerian Colleges of Education?

Research Hypotheses

1. Age will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs
2. Sex will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.
3. Administrative experience will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.
4. Ownership of institutions will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.

Methods

The survey research design was used in the study. Two colleges of education were selected for the study namely Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo (Federal) and College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti (State). The sample consisted of 40 HoADs selected using simple random sampling technique. Twenty HoADs were selected from each college. A self designed instrument titled “Questionnaire on Stress Management among Heads of Academic Departments in Tertiary Institutions” (QSMHADTI) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated and had a reliability coefficient of 0.746 which was considered adequate for reliability. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage scores, t-test statistic and one way ANOVA. The hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the major occupational stressors among the HoADs in Nigerian Colleges of Education?

Table 1: The major occupational stressors among the HoADs in Nigerian Colleges of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stressful</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>stressful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Administration of my department</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationship with members of the academic community</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 1, the major occupational stressors among the HoADs are career development (97.5%); community services (97.5%); interpersonal relationships with members of the academic community (70%); administration of their departments (65%); and research (60%).
**Hypothesis 1:** Age will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs

**Table 2:** One way ANOVA on influence of age on occupational stressors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-crit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>20.700</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.900</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>397.300</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.036</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418.000</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P > 0.05

Table 2 shows that the F-cal (0.625) is less than F-crit (2.84) at 0.05 level of significance; hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that age did not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.

**Hypothesis 2:** Sex will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs

**Table 3:** t-test analysis on the influence of sex on occupational stressors among the HoADs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>t-crit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14.97</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.14</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P > 0.05

According to table 3, the t-cal (0.12) is less than t-crit (2.02) at 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that sex did not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.

**Hypothesis 3:** Administrative experience will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs

**Table 4:** One way Anova on Influence of Age on Administrative experience on Occupational Stressors among the HoADs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-crit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>18.225</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.075</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>399.775</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418.000</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P > 0.05

As shown in table 4, f-cal (0.547) is less than f-crit (2.84) at 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that administrative experience did not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.
Hypothesis 4: Ownership of institutions will not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs

Table 5: t-test analysis on the influence of ownership of institutions on occupational stressors among the HoADs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>t-crit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State College of Education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.35</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal College of Education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.65</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P > 0.05

Table 5 shows that t-cal (1.26) is less than t-crit (2.02) at 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that ownership of institutions did not significantly influence occupational stressors among the HoADs.

Discussion

The study revealed that the major occupational stressors among the HoADs were career development, community services, interpersonal relationship with members of the academic community, administration of their departments and research. This means that the performance of these competing and conflicting roles exposed them to stress. It must be emphasized that if the dysfunctional effects of stress generated by these roles are not minimized, the HoADs may not be effective on their job. The finding is in line with Kutty (2000), Herzberg and Paice (2002), Ofoegbu and Nwadiani (2006), and Archibong, Bassey and Effiom (2010) which identified some of the stressors as causes of stress among academic staff.

It was also found that age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of institutions did not significantly influence the occupational stressors among the HoADs. This implies that the occupational induced stress among the HoADs has nothing to do with their age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of their institutions. This suggests the need for more attention on strategies that can be used to manage the occupationally induced stress rather than focusing on these demographic factors. While the finding is consistent with Defrank and Stroup (1989), Pelsma, Richard, Harrington and Burry (1989), Lin (2003), and Chiu (2004) which reported no significant influence of age, sex and administrative experience on stress, it partially contradicts Kryciaou and Sutcliffe (1978) and McFaden (1982) and Chen (2003) which found significant correlations between sex and job stress.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The HoADs were stressed on their jobs as a result of some occupational roles. These include career development, community services, and interpersonal relationships with members of the academic community. Age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of institutions were not important factors in the occupational stressors among the HoADs.
Therefore, the HoADs should evolve effective strategies of coping with occupational stressors. These include proper time management, relaxation, sharing feelings with trusted friends, avoiding unreasonable demands, adequate sleep, getting help from mentors and expressing feelings instead of bottling them up. In the course of using these strategies emphasis should not be laid on demographic factors such as age, sex, administrative experience and ownership of institutions.

References


