

INFLUENCE OF STRESS COPING STRATEGIES ON JOB PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

**Ebinyasi, Justina Obiageli; Chukwuma, Ifeoma Salome; Diyoke Georgiana Nnenna
& Okonkwo, Amaka Rose**

Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study investigated stress coping strategies as predictors of academic staff job performance in universities in South East, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of this study comprised 3,999 academic staff in Faculties of Education and Social Sciences in ten (10) Federal and State Universities in South East, Nigeria. A sample size of 400 academic staff was drawn from four universities using two-step multistage sampling. The instruments used for data collection were Questionnaires titled: Stress Coping Strategies Questionnaire (SCSQ); and Academic Staff Job Performance Questionnaire (ASJPQ) designed by the researcher. The instruments were face validated; and the reliabilities of the instruments were tested using internal consistency through Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded reliability indices of 0.84 and 0.86. In analyzing the data, linear regression was used to answer research questions 1 while Hayes process macro was used to answer questions 2 and 3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significant level. The findings of the study revealed among others that, there is a significant and very-high predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff in public universities in South East, Nigeria. There is a significant and very-high predictive power of stress coping strategies on the job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by gender. There is a significant and very -high predictive power of stress coping strategies on the job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by job experience. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that, academic staff of universities should make use of relaxation techniques, engage in recreational activities, and adopt a positive perception/view of the stressful situation to improve their job performances. University administrators should devise more strategies of managing stress among academic staff of universities to improve their job performances and productivity.

Keywords: Stress, coping strategies, academic staff, job performance, public universities

Introduction

There is no doubt as it is in the news and social media about academic staff who were unable to complete the content of the scheme of work, collapse in office, die or suddenly fall sick and be away from work for a long time. This problem of academic staff has also adversely affected their students and their products (graduates) of the universities. This shows there is problem somewhere that needs to be solved. There is a discrepancy or mismatch between the demands of the place of work and the ability of the staff to meet those demands which resulted into stress. This means that stress is the enemy or criminal responsibly for incompetency among the university academics, collapse in office and sudden sickness and death among academic staff.

Take for instance the increased quest for formal education in South East, Nigeria today that has seen thousands of secondary school leavers jostling for the limited

admission slots available in universities. Depending on their infrastructural and staff strength, universities have a maximum number of students they are allowed to admit into every department per academic session. Consequently, many secondary school leavers, whose parents cannot afford overseas education or private Nigerian universities, remain at home only to again join the graduating senior secondary school (111) students in the quest for admission, the succeeding year. This has become a cycle where some students are admitted and the rest go back to fight for admission the following year. This has given rise to astronomical increase in the number of students seeking admission into the universities every year.

An academic staff or lecturer is also, a person who is saddled with the responsibility of planning, directing, coordinating, controlling and undertaking academic teaching, research and administrative duties within a higher academic institution for quality production of middle level manpower (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2009). For the purpose of this study, any individual under the employment of a university or any other institution of higher learning, whose primary function is to instruct and guide students to learn, as well as advance in knowledge in his area through research is an academic staff. Academic staff are ranked according to their experience and contribution to knowledge. The most common categorization used by universities in Nigeria is that, it begins from graduate assistant as the lowest cadre, through assistant lecturer, lecturer II, lecturer I, senior lecturer, associate professor/reader, and the professor, which is considered the highest cadre an academic staff can occupy in universities (Scheme of Service for Academic Staff, 2017). As their cadre increases, their job performance also increase. Considering the foregoing, overcoming stress among academic staff of universities were almost impossible if the stressors prevalent in their work environment and their habits (how academic staff try to deal with these stressors) were not first ascertained. However, when academic staff of universities experience stress due to heavy workload and un-conducive environment, their job performance and behavioral outlook become uncertain. Therefore, academic staff of universities need proper coping strategies to cope and manage stress.

As mentioned earlier, any stimulus that may result to stress is known and referred to as a stressor, which is capable of altering one's ability to perform job as expected. According to the nature of the stressor, stress can be classified into psychological and physiological stress (Agrawal, 2011). Psychological stress refers to a relationship between a person and the environment considered as taking, exceeding available resources, and endangering his wellbeing (Daly, Walsh & Moran, 2012). This kind of stress occurs as someone feels unfit or unequipped to follow/handle a situation or thinks in a way that is very negative or exaggerated. A candid example is the most recent Academic Staff of Universities (ASUU) strike action that lasted for seven and half (71/2) months; due to the psychological stress of non-payment of salaries within the duration, many of the academic staff fell sick and had no money to foot the bill of hospital, and many died within that period. Physiological stress includes physical responses that may occur as a direct impact/effect of stressor on humans, causing an upset in the homeostasis of the body, and resulting in a number of physical changes or challenges that have both short-term and long-term effects on the body mechanism (Russell, 2012).

Other categories or typologies of stress include: cumulative stress, critical incident stress, primary stress, secondary stress, systematic stress, moral stress and baseline stress (Fletcher, 2015). Stress could equally be classified as positive stress known as 'eustress', and negative stress known as 'distress', which directly or indirectly affect the body system (Stericker & Show, 2013). Positive stress emanates from positive situations like wedding,

pregnancy, and the likes. Negative stress however results from such situations as exhaustion, lack of productivity, and the likes (WebMed, 2019).

Coping has to do with conscious effort made to solve/manage/overcome personal and interpersonal problems. This aims at defeating, minimizing or tolerating the challenge of stress (Ukaigwe & Nwabueze, 2022). This study considers 'coping' to be the spectrum of strategies adopted to manage, control or overcome a challenge, which in this context is 'stress'. A coping strategy refers to specific behavioral and psychological efforts employed by a person to adjust to, tolerate or minimize stressful events, or their impacts (Onwumere, Madumere-Obike and Ukaigwe, 2017). It is also psychological patterns used by individuals to manage thoughts, feelings and actions encountered during difficult times, like when navigating through health challenges and there is no significant difference in the level of perceived stress among the respondents based on gender (Omoniyi and Ogunsami (2012)). Stress coping strategies are the methods employed by individuals to overcome stress. Strategies adopted to cope with stress could be adaptive (where they serve to reduce stress), maladaptive (where the eventual outcome of adopting them increases stress), or pro-active (where the aim is to neutralize a future stressor) (Edikpa, Nwabueze & Nwokedi, 2019). This implies that, stress coping strategies must be put forward in universities to enhance job performance of academic staff. Accordingly,

University is an institution of higher learning where graduates of several disciplines are equipped with knowledge and skills needed for global competitiveness. Bridgestock (2013) defined a university to be an institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes. Southern Utah University (2016) equally refers to university as an institution of higher learning that offers both undergraduate and graduate programmes. This study considers a university to be an academic institution which offers undergraduate and graduate courses that culminates in the award of degrees, as well as contributes to knowledge via researches. The number of students in a university has immense implication on the workload of academic staff. This implication could be positive, where academic staff have to do less, because there are fewer students in the institution or vice versa. Workload can also either increase or decrease as the rank of an academic staff increases from graduate assistant to professor. This workload may also be affected by the number of academic staff the university has in its employ. This has implication on the stress levels faced by academic staff, especially on gender and job experience.

Gender is a socio-cultural construct. This mean that it ascribe characters and roles to sexes like male and female (Okeke, 2007). Gender is the socially ascribed quality of masculinity and femininity, attributed respectively to the male and female sexes (Azikiwe, 2005). Adeoye and Okonkwo (2010) revealed that, there is no difference in the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of both male and female academic. Sofoluwe, Akinsolu and Ogbudinkpa (2015) revealed that gender and stress significantly influenced academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Adeola (2009) studied gender differences in the experience of work burnout among university staff. This has psychological, social, physical or cultural, rather than biological connotations of being 'male' or 'female'. If the proper terms of sex are "male and female", the corresponding terms for gender could be "masculine and feminine" as the case may be (Madumere-Obike & Nwabueze, 2020). Sofoluwe, Akinsolu and Ogbudinkpa (2015) revealed that gender and stress significantly influenced academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions. Sex is thus, a physical distribution whereas gender is a social and cultural attributes associated to male or female (masculine or feminine). However, masculine and feminine gender are usually associated with male or female sexes, the concept of sex, being based

upon an anatomical division of types of reproductive organs, carrying connotations of an unchangeable dichotomy between men and women. Alade (2012) observed that gender is a cultural construct developed by the society to distinguish the roles, behaviors, mental and emotional characteristics between males and females. In relation to stress, males and females experience stress in diverse ways, as well as cope with stress differently. A female academic staff might consider domestic activities very stressful but a male academic staff might not. This points to the fact that, what constitutes stress to female academic staff might not be the same for male academic staff, hence the need to study these differences in stress as well as the coping strategies among academic staff, as it relates to gender. Job experience of male and female academic staff of universities could also be a factor in the performance of their jobs.

Job experience could be seen as the knowledge acquired by teaching staff over time through training, staff development projects, skills acquired in respect to the number of years spent in an academic environment. Job experience is the process of experience gained over a period of time (Okagu, 2012). There is a positive predictive power of stress coping strategies among highly experienced and less experienced academic staff on their job performance for quality output and institutional productivity Hardy (2013). According to Jepson and Forrest (2006), job experience results from being on a job and interacting with and learning from the conditions of the job. In this present study, job experience is defined as the whole body of knowledge and skills an academic staff accumulates in the process of doing a particular job over a period of time. In that case it is assumed that when one has been doing a particular job for a long period of time, such person is bound to gain experiences.

An academic staff experienced in his or her job, can make a rational and progressive decision on better ways of improving academic instruction without being stressed-up. According to Harvard health letter (2016), possession of job experience enables academic staff to easily find solution to complex assignment or handling students' problem. The experience of an academic staff greatly influences the attitude and ability of the staff to perform expected jobs. Experienced staff according to Omoniyi and Ogunsami (2012) are usually more confident, more knowledgeable and more tactful than inexperienced ones. Hence, the ability to manage stress associated with job and organization increases with job experience (Mamood, Zamir, Nudrat & Zahor, 2013). Everyone experiences stress from time to time, especially academic staff of universities, but it is often considerably easier to manage/cope with stress when one has a lot of experiences. Thus, the experience of an academic staff has the potential to impact his or her ability to cope with stress exposed to in the Universities in South East, Nigeria.

In universities in South East, some academic staff seem to experience a lot of stress in their academic and administrative duties. It is in the news and social media about academic staff that were not able to complete the content of the scheme of work, collapse in office, die or suddenly fall sick and be away from work for a long time. They work very hard from morning till closing time; and this happens virtually every day. There is no denying fact that stress has become an integral part of the job done by academic staff of universities in Southeast, Nigeria. All these activities (such as teaching, research, administrative duties and community service) carried out by academic staff of universities may induce stress in them leading to low productivity and poor performances in their job of teaching in the school. For example, the most recent past strike action of last year (2022) saw many academic staff fell sick and had no money to treat themselves and some even died due the psychological stress of non-payment of salaries for seven and half (7,1/2) months the strike action lasted. However, some investigations have been carried out in

the time past on this issue of stress. Some work were done on job stress and demographic variables, without considering coping strategies, some that considered coping strategies did not work on university academic staff and did not take into consideration gender and job experience as moderating variables. So, there is need to investigate stress and coping strategies among academic staff of universities.

The coping strategies are likely to put a check on the problem of stress among academic staff and put smiles on their faces. It is important to note that there are differences in coping with stress among male and female academic staff of which male staff may seem to manage stress better than their female counterparts. This probably could be that, female lecturers are faced with family duties with school responsibilities resulting in stress, which must be managed to improve their performance functions in schools. But male lecturers can easily cope with stress in school organizations as their attentions are focused on better ways to deliver instructions in the schools and go about their research development. However, academic staff with high job experience faces more stress than the less experienced ones. This is so because the experienced ones have a lot of academic and administrative duties and as well mentor less experienced ones. All these can put a whole lot of problems and stress on the academic staff, which may eventually affect the growth and development of the school. It is in this light that, the study was set up to investigate the stress and coping strategies as predictors of academic staff job performance in universities in Southeast Nigeria, giving consideration to gender of academic staff and job experience.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate stress coping strategies as predictors of academic staff job performance in public universities in South East, Nigeria. Hence, the specific objectives were to:

1. examine the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff in public universities in South East, Nigeria;
2. ascertain the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by gender; and
3. find out the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by job experience.

Research Questions

The following six research questions guided this study.

1. What is the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff in public universities in South East, Nigeria?
2. What is the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by gender?
3. What is the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by job experience?

Hypotheses

The following six null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁. Stress coping strategies have no significant predictive power on job performance of academic staff in public universities of Southeast, Nigeria.

- HO₂. Stress coping strategies have no significant predictive power on job performance of academic staff in public universities of Southeast, Nigeria as moderated by gender.
- HO₃. Stress coping strategies have no significant predictive power on job performance of academic staff in universities of Southeast, Nigeria as moderated job experience.

Methods

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. Nworgu (2015) posited that, a correlational research design is the research design that measures the relationship between two or more factors to determine or estimate the extent to which the values for the factors are related. The study was conducted in the South East, Nigeria. The population of this study was made up of all the 3,999 academic staff in Faculties of Education and Social Sciences in ten (10) Federal and State Universities in South East, Nigeria. There are 656 staff from University of Nigeria Nsukka, 422 staff from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, 446 staff from Michael Okpara University Umudike, 314 staff from Federal University of Technology Owerri, 340 from Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike. Others are 410 from Abia State University Uturu, 415 from Enugu State University of Technology Agbani, 397 staff from Imo State University, 304 from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Uli, and 295 from Ebonyi State University Abakiliki. (Source: Universities Academic Planning Units' Reports, 2021). See Appendix v. Out of the 3,999 total population of the academic staff, 2,287 were male and 1,712 were female. Also, 1,393 were experienced while 2,606 were less experienced.

A sample size of four hundred (400) academic staff was drawn from the four universities, out of the total population of 3,999. Two-step multistage sampling procedure was used. At the first stage, stratified random sampling technique was used to stratify the universities based on ownership (federal and state); then simple random sampling technique was used to sample two federal universities and two state universities respectively. At the second stage, proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to draw one hundred (100) academic staff from each university. This was done by sampling 40% of the sampled academic staff of every university from the Faculty of Social Science; and 60% of the sampled academic staff from the Faculty of Education. In doing so, 60 academic staff was drawn from every Faculty of Education of the four universities sampled making a total of two hundred and forty (240) academic staff; and as well, 40 academic staff was drawn from every Faculty of Social Science making a total of one hundred and sixty (160) academic staff. However, these made up the sample size of four hundred (400) academic staff of which 220 were male staff and 180 were female staff. Also, among the 400 academic staff that was drawn for the study, 170 were highly experienced (senior lecturers and above) while 230 less experienced (assistant lecturers, lecturers I and II)

The instruments used for data collection were Questionnaire titled: Stress Coping Strategies Questionnaire (SCSQ); and Academic Staff Job Performance Questionnaire (ASJPQ) designed by the researcher. The instruments had a total of 43 items, with SCSQ 28 and ASJPQ 15. The SCSQ had two sections, 'sections A and B'. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents such as gender and job experience. Section B contains questionnaire items to measure the stress coping strategies. The SCSQ had two clusters. The second instrument ASJPQ was designed to ascertain the Academic Staff Job Performance. The ASJPQ had one cluster. A total number of 400 instruments were administered to the respondents and 360 were collected. The instruments were structured on a four point rating Scale with response options of strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

Draft copies of the instruments were face validated by three experts; two from Educational Foundations and one from Science Education, all from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In order to ensure the reliability of the instruments, twenty copies of the questionnaire were measured using internal consistency through Cronbach Alpha method on twenty academic staff in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers state. Ten copies of each questionnaire were given to ten lecturers in the Faculty of Education and as well, ten copies of each questionnaire were given to ten lecturers in the Faculty of Social Science. Thereafter, the internal consistencies of the instruments were determined as 0.89, 0.84 and 0.86. The researchers distributed the four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire to the respondents with the help of four (4) research assistants who were adequately briefed on how to distribute and retrieve the questionnaire to the respondents. Multiple regression was used for research question1- 3. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Linear regression analysis of predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.893 ^a	.797	.796	10.30732

(R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result in Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient between stress coping strategies and job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria is .893. The result implies that there exists a positivevery high relationship between stress coping strategies and job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria. The result also revealed that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of.893 was .797. The coefficient of determination (R²) of .797 indicates that stress coping strategies predicts or accounts for up to 80% of job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria. This is an indication that 20% of the variation in job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria is attributed to other factors other than stress coping strategies.

Hypotheses One

There is no significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression analysis of significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	165620.034	1	165620.034	1558.910	.000 ^b
	Residual	42283.876	398	106.241		
	Total	207903.910	399			

The result in Table 2 shows that F-ratio of 1558.901 with associated exact probability value of .000 was obtained. This probability value of .000 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant because 0.00 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant predictive power was rejected. Thus, the researcher therefore, concludes that there is a

significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by gender?

Table 3: Analysis of moderation of gender on the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria

Gender	N	R	R-sq	MSE	F	P
Male	220	.856	.733	100.5056	557.5266	.000
Female	180	.851	.724			

Result in Table 3 shows the analysis of the moderating role of gender on the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that a correlation coefficient (r) of .856 and -.851 were obtained for male and female academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria. This implies that there exists a positive high relationship between stress coping strategies and job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by gender. The analysis further revealed that a coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of .856 and .851 were .733 and .724 respectively given a difference of .9. This implies that gender moderated 9% predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria in favour of the male academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by gender.

The result in Table 3 was also used to test hypothesis two. The result in the Table shows that F-ratio of 557.5266 with associated exact probability value of .000 was obtained. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant since the probability value of .000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by gender was rejected. The researcher therefore, concludes that gender significantly moderates the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What is the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by job experience?

Table 4: Analysis of moderation of job experience on the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria

Job Experience	N	R	R-sq	MSE	F	P
Highly Experienced	170	.845	.714	105.2814	526.2485	.000
Less Experienced	230	.932	.868			

Result in Table 4 shows the analysis of the moderating role of job experience on the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of

public universities in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that a correlation coefficient (r) of .845 and .932 were obtained for high and less experience academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria. This implies that there exists a positive high relationship between stress coping strategies and job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by job experience. The analysis further revealed that a coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of .845 and .932 were .714 and .868 respectively given a different of .154. This implies that job experience moderated 15.4% predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria in favour of the less experienced academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by job experience.

The result in Table 4 was also used to test hypothesis six. The result in the Table shows that F-ratio of 526.2485 with associated exact probability value of .000 was obtained. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant since the probability value of .000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria as moderated by job experience was rejected. The researcher therefore, concludes that job experience significantly moderates the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East Nigeria.

The findings of this study equally revealed that, there is a very-high predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff in public universities in South East, Nigeria. The result showed that almost all the academic staff of universities in Southeast, Nigeria agreed they adopt almost all the items listed as stress coping strategies. The null hypothesis of no significant predictive power of stress coping strategies was rejected. Thus, the researcher therefore concludes that there is a significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of universities in South East, Nigeria. The result is in agreement with Ukaigwe & Nwabueze, 2022 who averred that stress coping strategies are the need practice to improve the performance of academic staff. For this purpose, Onwumere, Madumere-Obike and Ukaigwe, 2017 proposed that trainee teachers should be taught the strategies and skills for managing stress and burnout to enhance their job performance in the academic system. Therefore, the stress coping strategies that may be adopted by academic staff of public universities to improve their job performance include: getting adequate sleep, listening to music/singing, abstaining from alcohol, eating balanced diet, taking stress relieving medications, exercising regularly, attending clinical counselling, using relaxation techniques, engaging in recreational activities, resorting to prayers, adopting a positive perception/view of the stressful situation, turning to humour, and seeking help from a mentor or senior colleague. Others are: thinking moderately, sharing one's feeling with trusted friends, involving other people to help one navigate through stressful tasks, avoiding procrastination, reducing the number of appointments one has to take at a time, delegating responsibilities to subordinates, expressing feelings instead of bottling them up, keeping track of stressors with a stress diary, and completing tasks in line with their degree of urgency.

The findings also revealed that, there is a predictive power of stress coping strategies on the job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by gender. The null hypothesis of no predictive power of stress

coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in Southeast, Nigeria as moderated by gender was rejected. The researcher therefore, concludes gender significantly moderates the predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in Southeast, Nigeria. Omoniyi and Ogunsami (2012) in their findings indicated that there is no significant difference in the level of perceived stress among the respondents based on gender. Safaria, Othman and Wahab (2018) revealed that, gender and academic status were predictors of job stress in universities. Adeoye and Okonkwo (2010) revealed that, there is no difference in the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of both male and female academic. Sofoluwe, Akinsolu and Ogbudinkpa (2015) revealed that gender and stress significantly influenced academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Adeola (2009) studied gender differences in the experience of work burnout among university staff. The purpose of the study is to investigate the difference in the experience of work burnout among university male and female staff. It was confirmed also that female staff experience higher level of reduced personal accomplishment than their male counterpart

The findings of this study also revealed that, there is a predictive power of stress coping strategies on the job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by job experience. However, there is a positive predictive power of stress coping strategies among highly experienced and less experienced academic staff on their job performance for quality output and institutional productivity Hardy (2013). This means that, the predictive power of stress coping strategies on academic staff job performance in universities in South East could be moderated by job experience. The test of hypothesis six showed that, there is a significant predictive power of stress coping strategies on job performance of academic staff of public universities in South East, Nigeria as moderated by job experience. The findings agreed with Omoniyi and Ogunsami (2012) who stated that, there is no significant difference in the level of perceived stress among the respondents based on years of work experience. Mahmood, Qurat, Nudrat and Zahor (2013) revealed that work experience had significant relationship with occupational stress. Harvard health letter (2016) affirmed this fact by revealing that senior workers (more experienced) experience more stress than their junior counterparts.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study:

Academic staff of public universities in Southeast, Nigeria have myriads of stress coping strategies that can help them manage their stress and carry out their job performances successfully without tears. Gender can also, moderate the predictive power of stress coping strategies on academic staff job performance in universities in Southeast, Nigeria. Job experience could also moderate the predictive power of stress coping strategies on academic staff job performance of universities in Southeast Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. The government and university management should regularly encourage the application of stress coping strategies among the academic staff of universities to enhance their job performance. .
2. Let there be stress management seminars and workshops using experts in physical health, guidance counsellors and stress management experts and social workers. The stress coping strategies exposed in this study should also be explored in this regard.

3. There should be more employment of academic staff especially Ph.D holders to ameliorate the excessive work load on academic staff especially the administrators among them.

REFERENCES

- Adeoye, A.O. & Okonkwo, E.N. (2010). Gender and school types as factors responsible for job stress in Nigerian universities. *Edo Journal of Counselling*, 3 (2), 220 – 228.
- Agrawal, R. (2011). *Stress in life and at work*. London: Response Books
- Alade, I. A. (2012). Gender stereotyping and empowerment in Nigeria society: Implications for women repositioning in curriculum delivery. *Afrrev Lalignens*, 1 (1), 30-43.
- Azikiwe, U. (2005). Gender influence on academic achievement in Language. *International Journal of Art and Technology Education*, 4, 45-46.
- Bridgestock, L. (2013). What is a university? Retrieved from <http://www.topuniversities.com/blog/what-university>.
- Daly A., Walsh, D. & Moran, R. (2012). *HRB statistics series 4: activities of Irish psychiatric units and hospitals 2006*. Dublin, Ireland: Health research board.
- Edikpa, E.C., Nwabueze, A. I. & Nwokedi, O.U.C. (2019). Stress coping strategies of primary school headmasters for effective school administration in Enugu State. *International journal of educational research and policy making*, 2(2), 194-208.
- Hardy, M. (2013). Benefits of earning a college degree. Retrieved 24th April, 2013 from http://education.yahoo.net/articles/benefits_of_higher_education.htm.
- Harvard Health Letter (2016). How stress affects seniors, and how to manage it. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/aging/how-stress-affects-seniors-and-how-to-manage-it>.
- Khan, R.L. & Igbal, Y. (2013). An investigation of the relationship between work motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and employee engagement: a study on allied bank of Pakistan. (*Unpublished masters thesis*). Umea University, Sweden.
- Madumere-Obike, C. U., Ukaigwe, P. C. & Onwumere, O.A. (2017). Managing stress among principals for proper administration of secondary schools in Imo State. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development*, 9(1), 101-115.
- Madumere-Obike, C.U. & Nwabueze, A.I. (2020). Gender issues in business education, in S.O. Nwafor and S.O. Oluwuo (Eds.) *Management of education for sustainable national development in Nigeria* (09-26). Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Mahmood, A., Zamir, S., Nudrat, S. & Zahoor, F. (2013). Impact of age and level of experience on occupational stress of academic managers at higher education level. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 535-541.
- Nworgu B.G. (2015). Educational measurement and evaluation: Theory and Practice. Enugu, University Trust Publishers.
- Okeke, E. A. C. (2007). Sex difference in the understanding of some important biology concepts. *Nigeria Journal of Education*, 2(1), 125-132.
- Onwumere, O. A., Madumere-Obike, C. U. & Ukaigwe, P. C. (2017). Principals' organizational stress management in secondary schools in Imo State. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas (JEDA)*, 25(1), 179-190.
- Russell, J.A. (2003). Core affect and the psychological construction of emotion. *Psychological Review*, 110 (1), 145 – 172.

- Safaria, T; Othman, A. & Wahab, M.N.A. (2018). Gender, academic rank, employment status, university type and job stress among university academic staff: a Comparison between Malaysia and Indonesia context. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*1 (18), 250 – 261.
- Sofoluwe, A.O; Akinsolu, A.O. & Ogundikpa, I.C. (2015). The relationship between gender, stress and job performance among academic staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra state, Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*11 (34) ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431.
- Stericker, S. & Show, A. (2013). *The use of treatment facing common mental health problems through stepped care: themed learning from a review of test sites in eth North East, Yorkshire and Humber region*. UK: CSIP.
- Ukaigwe, P. C. & Nwabueze, A. I. (2022). Principals' role analysis strategy in the management of stress as correlate of teachers' attitude to work and instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 13(3), 936-945
- WebMed (2019). What is positive versus negative stress. Retrieved from <https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/qa/what-is-positive-versus-negative-stress>.