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Academic-related Stress among Language Lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano: Counselling Intervention

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Abstract

This study assessed the academic-related stress among Language Lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano and explored some counselling interventions. Descriptive survey design was employed in the study in which a sample of 62 participants from a population of 94 lecturers was randomly selected. The instrument for data collection was a scale called Academic-related Stress Inventory (ASI) whose reliability of 0.87 was measured via Cronbach's Alpha procedure. Data collected with ASI was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to answer three research questions and three hypotheses respectively. Findings revealed a significant prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers (p.000 < .05); male and female lecturers do not differ on prevalence of academic stress (p.057 > .05); academic stress differs among lecturers in the various language departments in the college (p.002 < .05). A major recommendation offered suggests training of language lecturers on stress control and inoculation techniques such as relaxation, biofeedback, and cognitive restructuring.

Keywords: Academic-related stress, prevalence, counselling interventions

Introduction

Academic functions in tertiary institutions are most often associated with some risk factors of stress (Haruna, 2016). Such risk factors otherwise referred to as stressors have been linked to cases of stress related illnesses being suffered by many academic staff in Federal College of Education [FCE], Kano (Haruna, 2019). The primary duties of every lecturer in the College of Education (COE) system is to teach and examine students (National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE], 2015). However, they shall carry out other academic functions assigned to them by their Heads of Departments or Deans of Schools or both. Such assignments can over-stretch staff's resilience and become potential stressors. Haruna (2019)

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identified some sources of academic stressors peculiar to lecturers in COE as: lecturing in an overcrowded classroom; exams administration/invigilation; marking of exams' scripts; results computation; field trip/excursion; practical activities; student's project supervision; excess work load; continuous assessment; verification of students' results; teaching practice supervision; students' registration exercise among others. The aforementioned functions (stressors) have been found to be the source of distress and fatigue to many academic staff in FCE, Kano. For instance, given the overcrowded lecture halls academic staff are subjected to these days as against the minimum standard requirement of 25 students per lecturer (NCCE, 2015), and coupled with poor or inadequate facility, lecturers would go extra miles to over work themselves before meeting the needs of the students; this may lead to stress.

Moreso, the enormous academic activities and functions being embarked upon by language lecturers in FCE, Kano are potent risk factors of stress and its related illnesses. Stress is said to be a major cause of life threatening illnesses and eventual death of many lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano (Haruna, 2019). For instance, between 2005 and 2019, 76% of cases of stress related illnesses (high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack etc.) that occurred among academic staff of Federal College of Education, Kano were linked to stress (Haruna, 2019). Although, official records of the effect of stress in the college was not available at the time this study was carried out, the potential consequence of academic related stressors on lecturers cannot be over emphasized. In FCE, Kano lecturer – students' ratio is grossly unbearable when compared with the NCCE requirement of 1:25. While the institution is seriously under staffed, enrolment of students maintains a steady increase thereby over stretching the available facility and workforce. For example, in 2019/2020 session, record of enrolment for all NCE and undergraduate programmes shows a total population of 27,753 students; school of languages constitutes about 40% (Arabic= 2,220; English= 3,885; French=890; Fulfulde= 667; Hausa= 3,219; Igbo= 111 & Yoruba= 108). This means that English Department (for instance) whose staff strength is 32 has a ratio of 1:121; this exceeds the NCCE recommended ratio of 1:25, which is no doubt a potential risk factor of stress.

World Health Organization [WHO] (2010) corroborates that about one half of the entire working population are unhappy in their jobs and as many as 90% may be spending much of their energy and time in work that brings them no closer to their goals in life. Levy (1990) reported that about 75% of those who consult psychiatrist are experiencing problems that can be traced to lack of satisfaction or inability to unwind. This establishes the fact that workplace stress is a key problem of modern working life; a similar trend being experienced among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano.

A variety of counselling interventions for stress management abounds. Today, many educational institutions have begun to use viable stress management programmes for lecturers who have difficulty adjusting to workplace stress. Some academic activities no doubt are stress stimulators (Haruna & Mayanchi, 2015) therefore should be handled via psychological approaches. There are a couple of ways educational institutions today try to alleviate stress on their staff. One way of alleviating stress among lecturers is individual intervention (Koochaki, Charkazi, Hasanzadeh, Saedani, Qorbani & Marjani, 2010). The intervention procedure starts off by monitoring the stressors in the individual then attacking the stressor and identify ways

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to alleviate them. Another way is to develop social support for individual intervention; being with others to help one cope, has proven to be a very effective way to avoid stress (Yusoff, AbdulRahim, & Yaacob. 2010). More importantly, avoiding the stressors all together is the best possible way to get rid of stress but that is very difficult to do in institutions of learning. However, changing behavioral patterns, may in turn, help reduce some of the stress that is put on at work as well (Kemeny, 2003).

Behaviour modification procedure like Individual Stress Control (ISC) and Inoculation techniques such as relaxation, biofeedback, and cognitive restructuring have been found to be very effective in alleviating stress (Haruna, 2019). Studies show that these programmes can reduce the level of physiological arousal associated with high stress (Yusoff, AbdulRahim, & Yaacob. 2010; Haruna, 2015; 2019). Participants who master behavioral and cognitive stress-relief techniques report less tension, fewer sleep disturbances, and an improved ability to cope with work stressors (Kemeny, 2003).

Another way of alleviating academic stress is by simply reducing the workload for lecturers (Mosharraf, 2013). Some may be too overwhelmed that they have so much courses to teach, assignment scripts to mark, too many students to advice etc. Improving communications between students and lecturers also sounds like a simple approach, but it is very effective for helping reduce stress (Mosharraf, 2013). Lastly, changing the physical qualities of the learning environment may reduce stress (Koochaki, Charkazi, Hasanzadeh, Saedani Qorbani & Marjani, 2010). Changing simple things, such as the lighting, air temperature, odor, and up to date technology as well as sporting facilities.

A recent study by Haruna (2019) employed descriptive survey design and examined 200 lecturers on prevalence of academic related stressors and stress management strategies in Federal College of Education, Kano. Result of the study reveals 70% prevalence rate of academic stress among lecturers in the college. Although, finding from Haruna's study does not reveal specific rate of academic stress among language lecturers in FCE, Kano, the figure is no doubt a reflection of what is being experienced by the staff. In a related (though earlier) study by Ekundayo and Kolawole (2013) to determine stress among Secondary School Teachers in Ekiti State, results showed that poor working environment, poor relationship with subordinate and late payment of teachers salary were the major triggers of stress among teachers. And about 80.2% of teachers in Ekiti were stressed. Although, the study did shows the rate of prevalence of stress, the target population and sources of stressors were not similar to the ones in the present study.

In a related study by Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014) on stress among academic staff in Nigerian university, 313 respondents were examined to find out the effect of academic work load, students related issues, research etc. on stress. Results revealed does not show any significant difference between male and female respondents. Although, population of the study was drawn from the university sector, findings from the study have relative contribution to the present research. In an earlier study, Salami (1994) examined sources, frequency and degree of stress and coping methods among lecturers in University of Ilorin. Using quantitative data analysis procedure, it was found that lecturers occasionally report incidence of stress and that work load and inadequate teaching facilities were the stressors. The study

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concluded that relaxation and sleeping were the coping strategies employed by the lecturers. Salami's study was supported by Omoniyi (2013), Masuku and Muchemwa (2015). Omoniyi's study examined sources of workplace stressors among 364 University Lecturers in South West Nigeria and found a significant prevalence of stress. The study further revealed that male and female lecturers do not differ in the incidence of stress (Omoniyi, 2013). The result of the study by Masuku and Muchemwa (2015) on occupational stress among university lecturers in Zimbabwe which was conducted in Solusi University revealed that most lecturers were stressed and that no gender difference was found.

Whereas the above mentioned studies focused on University Lecturers, the research by Peddy et. al. (2018) examined academic stress and its sources among University Students. Participants were drawn from four streams (Commerce, Humanities, Management and Sciences) in University of Bengaluru, India. Results showed high prevalence of stress among students in the various streams. Although, no gender difference was established in the study, a statistical difference in incidence of stress was found among the various streams in the university. The significance of Peddy et. al.'s finding to the present study can be viewed from the perspective of stream difference which is likened to Language Departments (Arabic, English, French, Fulfude, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) in Federal College of Education, Kano. Even though the nomenclature used in the categorization of streams in the university system varies from the one in the Colleges of Education sector, language subjects are in some cases placed in the humanities, hence could serve as a reference point.

Although victims of academic related stress cut across ranks and files of lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano (Haruna, 2019), language lecturers' dimension and extent of the problem in the college as well as appropriate counselling interventions have not been established. In this study, academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano and viable counselling interventions was assessed. Similarly, in the distribution or allocation of functions and workload to academic staff in Colleges of Education system, male and female language lecturers are expected to participate in all academic functions peculiar to their Departments. Naturally, those with little resilience to excess workload may be at risk of stress and its related ailments.

Nowadays, teacher education programme enjoins mass enrolment due to high quest for paper qualification. In order to accommodate the demand of applicants, language education courses receive a large percentage of the enrolment. This means, as enrolment increases so also the workload and stress among lecturers in the various Language Departments. Although, there may be apparent variation in the nature and stress triggering academic functions among language lecturers in the various Departments in FCE, Kano such differences have not been empirically ascertained. While this assertion may be true, viable counselling interventions for language lecturers who may be at risk of academic stress in Federal College of Education, Kano is not yet revealed. Given the above-mentioned gap, the present study purports to assess academic-related stress and its differentials among language lecturers in the college as well as establishing viable counselling interventions.

Purpose of the Study:

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The major purpose of the study was to determine the academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano, specifically the study sought to:

1. determine the prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano.
2. determine the difference in the prevalence of academic related stress between male and female language lecturers in the Federal College of Education, Kano.
3. determine the difference in the prevalence of academic related stress among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano.

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano?
2. What is the difference in the prevalence of academic related stress between male and female language lecturers in the Federal College of Education, Kano?
3. Does the prevalence of academic related stress differs among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano.
2. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of academic related stress between male and female language lecturers in the Federal College of Education, Kano?
3. Prevalence of academic related stress does not significantly differ among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano?

Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey which involved collection of data from a representative sample of the population (Haruna, 2012) in other to assess the prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in FCE, Kano State. To achieve this, the entire population (94) was subjected to stratified random sampling procedure. This ensured that every language lecturer was given equal opportunity to participate in the study. Consequently, an appropriate sample size of 62 language lecturers was selected following the Research Advisors (2013) procedure. Participants were drawn from the various Language Departments (Arabic, English, French, Fulfulde, Hausa, Igbo & Yoruba) in the college. The instrument used for data collection was Academic-related Stress Inventory (ASI) whose reliability coefficient measured via Cronbach's Alpha was .87. ASI consists of 20 items and response pattern of the scale is 4-point rating scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree) format. Instrument's item appropriateness to the research objectives was assessed by experts drawn from the Departments of Educational Psychology (because stress is a psychological construct), Foreign and Nigerian Languages. Data obtained via ASI was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. mean score was employed to describe the data and answer the research questions; whereas, one sampled t-test was used to test null hypothesis one, independent sampled t-test and One way ANOVA were employed to analyze hypotheses two and three respectively. A threshold of .05 was set as the level of significance.

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Results

The descriptive statistics of language lecturers' responses to Academic-related Stress Inventory (ASI) are presented in Table 1. For descriptive purpose, the calculated mean of the lecturers' responses were compared with the cumulative (total) mean (46.37). Results of the comparison are used to answer the three research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano?

This question was answered using mean score of the responses of language lecturers to the inventory (ASI) and results of the statistics were compared with the cumulative mean (46.37). The outcome of the computation is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for prevalence of Academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano

Departments	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	Min	Max
Arabic	9	48.56	4.391	1.464	43	56
English	22	42.14	7.039	1.501	29	56
French	5	57.00	10.512	4.701	39	65
Fulfulde	5	43.20	2.490	1.114	41	47
Hausa	13	46.31	8.360	2.319	30	59
Igbo	4	51.75	3.594	1.797	47	55
Yoruba	4	50.25	6.898	3.449	41	56
Total	**62**	**46.37**	**8.007**	**1.017**	**29**	**65**

The statistics presented in Table 1 show prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in FCE, Kano. The calculated mean scores of the distribution reveal a relative cluster around the cumulative mean (i.e. 46.37). From Table 1, therefore, it is worthy to say that; although, academic-related stress prevails among staff of Arabic (mean=48.56), French (mean=57.00), Hausa (mean=46.31), Igbo (mean=51.75) and Yoruba (mean=50.25), it is however mild among English (42.14) and Fulfulde (43.20) lecturers.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the prevalence of academic related stress between male and female language lecturers in the Federal College of Education, Kano?

This question was answered using mean score of the responses of male and female language lecturers to the inventory (ASI) and results of the statistics were compared with the normative mean (46.37). The outcome of the computation is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Difference between male and female language lecturers in prevalence of academic-related stress

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Min	Max
Male	38	46.34	9.154	1.485	29	65
Female	24	46.42	5.934	1.211	35	59

Total	62	46.37	8.007	1.017	29	65

Figures displayed in Table 2 reveal gender differential in the prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano. The mean scores of male and female respondents are marginal (46.34 & 46.42, respectively) when compared with the cumulative mean score (46.37), hence does not show apparent difference in the prevalence of stress between male and female language lecturers in FCE, Kano.

Research Question 3: Does the prevalence of academic related stress differs among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano?

This question was answered using mean scores of the responses of language lecturers to the inventory (ASI) and results of the statistics were compared with the cumulative mean (46.37). The outcome of the computation is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Mean scores of responses on difference in prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various language departments in Federal College of Education, Kano

Departments	N	Mean	Std. Dev	%
Arabic	9	48.56	4.391	14.516
English	22	42.14	7.039	35.484
French	5	57.00	10.512	8.065
Fulfulde	5	43.20	2.490	8.065
Hausa	13	46.31	8.360	20.968
Igbo	4	51.75	3.594	6.452
Yoruba	4	50.25	6.898	6.452
Total	62	46.37	8.007	100

The statistics in Table 3 show the mean, Std. deviation and percentage of responses on prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various language departments in Federal College of Education, Kano. As apparently displayed, mean scores of Arabic (48.56), French (57.00), Igbo (51.75) and Yoruba (50.25) are greater than cumulative mean (46.37) while the mean scores of English (42.14), Fulfulde (43.20) and Hausa (46.31) are less than the cumulative mean (46.37). This reveals that a marginal difference exists in prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various language departments in FCE, Kano.

Null Hypotheses Testing

Inferential statistics such as t-test of one-sample and independent samples were employed in testing null hypotheses one, two and four. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypothesis three. Level of significance was set at 0.05.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano.

One-sample t-test was used to analyze language lecturers' responses to the items on Academic-related Stress Inventory (ASI) and result of the statistics is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: One-sample t-test for the significance of prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano

Variable	N	M	SD	Std. Error	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Decision P<0.05
Prevalence of Stress	62	46.37	8.007	1.017	43.144	61	.000	Reject H_01

One-sample t-test analysis for null hypothesis one presented in Table 4 reveals a significant result. The p-value of .000 is less than the threshold of 0.05 hence, the null hypothesis which says; there is no significant prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano is hereby rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of academic related stress between male and female language lecturers in the Federal College of Education, Kano

Independent-sample t-test was used to analyze language lecturers' responses to the items on Academic-related Stress Inventory (ASI) and result of the statistics is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Independent-sample t-test for the difference in prevalence of academic-related stress between male and female language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano

Gender	N	M	Std. Dev	Std. Error	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Decision P<0.05
Male	38	46.34	9.154	1.485	-.035	60	.057	Retain H_02
Female	24	46.42	5.934	1.211	-.039	59.934		

The statistics in Table 5 show result of independent sample t-test for gender difference in the prevalence of academic-related stress. The p-value for male and female (p=.057) respondents exceed the decision threshold of 0.05, hence the proposed null hypothesis is hereby retained.

Null Hypothesis 3: Prevalence of academic related stress does not significantly differ among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano.

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze language lecturers' responses to the items on Academic-related Stress Inventory (ASI) and result of the statistics is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: ANOVA for significant difference in the prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano

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Academic Stress	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision (P<0.05)
Between Groups	1228.585	6	204.764	4.199	.002	Reject H_03
Within Groups	2681.882	55	48.761			
Total	3910.468	61				

The result presented in Table 6 is one-way ANOVA showing difference in the prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various Language Departments in Federal College of Education, Kano. The statistics show that; p-value of .002 is less than the decision threshold of 0.05. This reveals a significant difference in the prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various Departments. In other to identify the departments were the difference occur, a Post Hoc test for multiple comparison using Scheffe procedure was carried out and result indicates that statistical difference exists between lecturers in English and French Departments only (P .011 < .05). The mean difference between respondents in English and French Departments (±14.864) is significant at .05 threshold. Therefore, the proposed null hypothesis is rejected and alternative one which states that; there is a significant difference in prevalence of academic-related stress among lecturers in the various language departments is retained.

Summary of Findings
The following findings were revealed by the present study:
1. There is a significant prevalence of academic-related stress among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano.
2. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of academic-related stress between male and female language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano.
3. Although, academic-related stress differs in its prevalence among lecturers in the various Language Departments, the difference is however significant between English and French departments only.

Discussion of Findings
In the present study, statistical analysis of data obtained from language lecturers on prevalence of academic-related stress was found to be significant. This establishes that language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano are over burdened with stress related academic tasks. This finding corroborates the study by Haruna (2019), Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014) who found a high incidence of academic stress among lecturers. Similarly, Salami (1994) examined sources, frequency and degree of stress among lecturers and their coping methods in University of Ilorin. It was found that lecturers occasionally report incidence of stress. The present study was also supported by Omoniyi (2013), Masuku and Muchemwa (2015) who reported high rate of stress among university lecturers in South West Nigeria and Zimbabwe respectively.

Another finding by the present study reveals that male and female language lecturers do not differ on prevalence of academic-related stress in Federal College of Education, Kano. This result is similar to the findings by Omoniyi (2013) and Masuku and Muchemwa (2015),

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in which no significant difference existed between male and female lecturers on academic/occupational stress. Omoniyi's study examined sources of workplace stressors among university lecturers in South West Nigeria and found that male and female lecturers do not differ in the incidence of stress (Omoniyi, 2013). The result of the study by Masuku and Muchemwa (2015) on occupational stress among university lecturers in Zimbabwe which was conducted in Solusi University revealed that most lecturers were stressed and that no gender difference was found. In a related study by Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014) on stress among academic staff in Nigerian university, results revealed does not show any significant difference in prevalence of stress between male and female respondents. Although, population of the study was drawn from the university sector, findings from the study have relative resemblance with the present research.

The present study also found that although, academic-related stress differs in its prevalence among lecturers in the various language departments, the difference is however significant between English and French departments only. This finding agrees with the study by Peddy, et. al. (2018) on academic stress and its sources among university students. In the study, Peddy and associates found statistical difference in academic stress among respondents in the various streams (Commerce, Humanities, Management and Sciences). Although, the study by Peddy et. al did focused on students in the various streams of the institution, findings obtained have relative resemblances with the present research especially that language category falls under humanities. The significant of Peddy et. al.'s finding to the present study can be viewed from the perspective of stream difference which can be likened to language departments (Arabic, English, French, Fulfude, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) in Federal College of Education, Kano. Even though the nomenclature used in the categorization of streams in university system varies from the one in the colleges of education sector, language subjects are in some cases placed in the humanities, hence the similitude.

Conclusion

Following the findings generated by the present study, it is therefore worthy to conclude
that; academic-related stress significantly prevails among language lecturers in Federal College of Education, Kano and that the incidence does not differ between male and female lecturers. Although, academic stress may differ in its prevalence among lecturers in the various language departments, the difference is however significant between English and French departments only. Finally, in lieu of the above results, viable counselling interventions are required to enable staff who are at high risk of academic stress alleviate and manage all potential risk factors of stress that may interfere with their ability to function effectively in the discharge of their dutuies.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are offered:

1. Work load of lecturers should be reduced as much as possible. This can be achieved by the College Management adopting the 1:25 ratio recommended by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).
2. Clinical Psychologists /Counsellors should teach male and female language lecturers stress control and inoculation techniques such as relaxation, biofeedback, and cognitive restructuring. These programmes can reduce the level of physiological arousal associated with high stress among lecturers.
3. College management should improve on the physical qualities of the learning environment in the various language departments. Changing simple things, such as the lighting, air temperature, odor, and up to date technology as well as sporting facilities may reduce stress among lecturers.

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