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ACADEMIC ANXIETIES, ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AND LECTURERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This review aims to explore the impact of academic anxiety and environmental factors on the productivity of lecturers in Nigeria. The review examines existing literature on academic anxiety among lecturers and its effects on their productivity. It delves into the causes of academic anxiety, such as high workload, time pressure, evaluation processes, and the competitive nature of the academic environment. Additionally, the review investigates the role of environmental factors, including organizational support, leadership styles, workplace culture, and physical working conditions, in shaping lecturers' productivity levels. Findings from the literature suggest that academic anxiety negatively impacts lecturers' productivity by leading to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and decreased motivation. Moreover, environmental factors significantly contribute to lecturers' anxiety levels and overall productivity. A supportive work environment, effective leadership, fair evaluation systems, and adequate resources are identified as factors that can mitigate academic anxiety and enhance lecturers' productivity. Overall, this review emphasizes the need for comprehensive interventions to create conducive work environments that prioritize the well-being and professional growth of lecturers, ultimately benefiting both the individuals and the educational institutions they serve. The paper recommended implementing supportive policies and practices at institutional levels, offering professional development opportunities, promoting work-life balance, and fostering a positive and inclusive work environment.

Keywords: Academic Anxiety, work Environmental Factors, Lecturers' Productivity, Nigeria

Introduction

Academic anxiety among university lecturers is an increasingly recognized challenge that has profound implications for their productivity and overall well-being. Academic anxiety refers to the stress and pressure experienced by lecturers about their teaching about their teaching responsibilities, research expectations, and career advancement (Green, 2022). Academic anxiety can stem from various sources, including heavy workloads, unrealistic

expectations, limited resources, and the pressure to publish research. Nigeria's higher education system often faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and bureaucratic hurdles. Besides, studies have indicated that the academic environment, characterized by high expectations, limited resources, and complex administrative structures, often contributes to elevated stress levels among educators (Steinberger et al., 2021). In the specific context of Nigeria, a country undergoing significant changes in its higher education landscape, understanding the interplay between academic anxiety and environmental factors is essential for fostering a supportive and productive teaching environment.

The University education offered academic programmes and admission for students that yearned for knowledge. Nigeria's higher education system has experienced notable growth in response to increasing demand, yet this expansion is not without its challenges (Gunasinghe & Nanayakkara, 2021). Lecturers in Nigerian universities often grapple with inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic hurdles, and societal expectations, which can significantly impact their mental health and job satisfaction. Literature has affirmed that the teaching profession is one of the most stressful professions (Needham & Lambert, 2019). Stress was found to be responsible for the high attrition rate among teachers in many countries. The stress that teachers encounter occurs as a result of their constant interactions with students, parents, colleagues, the government, and the school. Academic anxiety, encompassing stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction, has implications not only for the lecturers themselves but also for the quality of education they provide. Environmental factors, such as a lack of resources and administrative complexities, contribute to the challenges faced by lecturers in meeting the demands of their roles. This exploration seeks to delve into the nuanced relationship between academic anxiety and environmental factors affecting lecturers' productivity in Nigeria. By examining specific stressors within the academic landscape, we aim to provide insights that inform strategies for creating a more supportive work environment

Overview of Academic Anxiety

Anxiety has been defined as a biochemical and emotional state characterized by physical, cognitive, and behavioral components in either the presence or absence of psychological stress (Taly & Paramasivam, 2020). Academic anxiety refers to the stress, worry, or fear experienced by individuals in academic settings (Green, 2022). It also involves feelings of stress, apprehension, and unease experienced by students, educators, or researchers in their academic pursuits. Studies have shown that lecturers may experience anxiety related to workload, job demands, high expectations, performance pressure, and career advancement (Young et al., 2020). Among the identified anxieties, studies have revealed that most often, lecturers are bedeviled with academic stress due to excess workload (Pourteimour et al., 2021).

Lecturers may struggle to organize their thoughts, convey information clearly, or engage with students, leading to decreased productivity. Academic anxiety can hinder lecturers' ability to engage students and create a supportive learning environment.

Anxiety can impair cognitive functions, such as memory and attention, which are essential for effective teaching and research (Zheng et al., 2021). Lecturers may experience difficulties in managing classroom dynamics, delivering lectures effectively, or responding to student queries, which can impact their productivity in facilitating meaningful learning experiences. Anxiety can also affect lecturers' research productivity (Rafi et al., 2019);(Onifade et al., 2015). It may hinder their ability to generate new ideas, design studies, collect and analyze data, and publish research findings (Yusuf & Metiboba, 2012).

As shown in the literature, anxiety is a common phenomenon that can arise from various sources and can have significant implications for individuals' academic performance, well-being, and overall educational experience (Green, 2022); (Young et al., 2020). Academic anxiety can stem from different aspects of human activities such as:

a. High Expectations: Students and educators may experience anxiety due to the pressure to meet academic standards, achieve high grades, or perform well in exams.
b. Fear of Failure: The fear of failing to meet expectations or the consequences of poor academic performance can contribute to academic anxiety.
c. Perfectionism: Individuals with perfectionistic tendencies may experience heightened anxiety as they strive for flawlessness in their academic work.
d. Time Pressure: Academic demands, such as deadlines, multiple assignments, or a heavy workload, can induce anxiety.
e. Evaluation and Judgment: The fear of being evaluated or judged by peers, teachers, or supervisors can also lead to academic anxiety.

Studies (Hall & Bowles, 2016), (Sullivan-Windle, 1993), (Akhtarul Islam et al., 2020) have also indicated that academic anxiety can have several negative consequences on individuals' academic performance and well-being, including:

a. Impaired Cognitive Functioning: High levels of anxiety can interfere with concentration, memory, and information processing, making it difficult to learn and retain information.
b. Reduced Performance: Academic anxiety can hinder individuals' ability to perform well in exams, presentations, or other academic tasks, leading to lower grades or suboptimal outcomes.
c. Negative Emotional Well-being: Anxiety can contribute to feelings of distress, low self-esteem, self-doubt, and a negative perception of one's abilities.
d. Physical Symptoms: Academic anxiety may manifest as physical symptoms, such as headaches, sleep disturbances, muscle tension, or gastrointestinal issues.
e. Avoidance Behaviors: Some individuals may engage in avoidance behaviors, such as procrastination or avoidance of challenging academic tasks, as a way to cope with their anxiety, which can further impede their academic progress.

Strategies to manage academic anxiety

Academic anxieties have to be effectively managed if lecturers are to keep their jobs. Literature has indicated that certain strategies have to be employed to effectively manage academic anxiety (Gonçalves et al., 2016), (Young et al., 2020), (Green, 2022). Such strategies to effectively manage

academic anxiety include planning and organizing academic tasks help reduce anxiety related to deadlines and workload, talking to mentors, teachers, or counselors about concerns and seeking guidance can provide valuable support and perspective, engaging in activities that promote well-being, such as exercise, relaxation techniques, sufficient sleep, and maintaining a balanced lifestyle, can help reduce anxiety, enhancing study strategies, such as effective note-taking, breaking tasks into manageable parts, and practicing active learning, can improve confidence and reduce anxiety. As well as learning and applying cognitive-behavioral strategies, such as challenging negative thoughts, reframing perfectionistic tendencies, and practicing self-compassion, can be beneficial in managing academic anxiety.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors have been described as the external conditions and influences that can have an impact on individuals, organizations, and systems. In the context of job productivity and teaching effectiveness, environmental factors can play a significant role in shaping and influencing outcomes (Flores, 2017). As shown in the literature, common environmental factors that can affect the job productivity of lecturers encompass the physical, social, and organizational conditions within which lecturers operate. In Nigeria, several environmental factors can influence lecturers' productivity, including inadequate facilities (Tella et al., 2018), classrooms, laboratories, or technology that can hinder lecturers' ability to deliver their teaching effectively and conduct research (Tahir & Inuwa, 2019). Also, limited access to teaching materials, research funding, libraries, and academic journals can impede lecturers' productivity, and the level of support provided by institutions, including administrative assistance, mentoring, professional development opportunities, and recognition (Tahir & Inuwa, 2019), can impact lecturers' motivation and productivity and excessive workloads, administrative burdens, and time constraints can lead to increased stress and reduced productivity among lecturers (Sageer et al., 2019).

Stressors of a lecturer’s low productivity include excessive workloads and time constraints which contribute to lecturers' stress and decreased productivity. In Nigeria, lecturers may face challenges such as large class sizes, administrative duties, and limited time for research and personal development (Buhalis, 2020). Besides, lack of resources can impede research progress, limit access to relevant literature, and hinder the implementation of innovative teaching methods. The physical environment in which work or teaching takes place can affect performance and effectiveness. Factors such as noise levels, lighting, temperature, comfort, and ergonomic conditions can impact concentration, focus, and overall well-being, thereby influencing performance (Samani et al., 2018). These factors can impede lecturers' ability to allocate sufficient time and energy to their core academic responsibilities.

Positive strategies that can enhance lecturers’ productivity

Environmental factors that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and access to support services, can positively influence

lecturers' productivity by reducing stress and enhancing job satisfaction.

A positive and supportive organizational culture that values learning, collaboration, and innovation can foster higher levels of performance and effectiveness; Effective leadership and management practices within an organization can create an environment that supports job performance and teaching effectiveness. Strong leadership provides clear direction, sets expectations, provides resources, and supports professional development, which can positively impact performance.

The availability and adequacy of resources, such as funding, technology, teaching materials, and administrative support, can influence job performance and teaching effectiveness. Sufficient resources and support enable individuals to carry out their work effectively and efficiently.

The availability and integration of technology in the work environment and educational settings can impact job performance and teaching effectiveness. Effective use of technology tools and platforms can enhance efficiency, communication, collaboration, and access to information.

External factors, such as accreditation requirements, regulatory standards, and public expectations, can shape job performance and teaching effectiveness. Meeting external expectations and standards often influences the actions and priorities of individuals and organizations.

Research productivity

Research productivity refers to the output and impact of a researcher's scholarly work. It is a measure of the quantity, quality, and significance of the research output produced by an individual or a research team (Basiru et al., 2018), (Obrenovic et al., 2020), (Yusuf & Metiboba, 2012). Research productivity is often assessed based on various factors, including publications, citations, grants secured, collaborations, and contributions to the field of studies (Garousi & Mäntylä, 2016). The domains of academic productivity include the following:

Quantity of Publications: The number of publications is a common metric used to assess research productivity. It includes articles published in peer-reviewed journals, conference papers, book chapters, and other scholarly outputs (Allen et al., 2019); (Salubi et al., 2018). Researchers with a higher volume of publications are generally considered more productive.

Quality of Publications: The quality of publications is an important aspect of research productivity. It is usually evaluated based on factors such as the reputation and impact factor of the journals where the research is published, the significance and originality of the findings, and the extent of peer recognition through citations and awards (Hammarfelt & Rushforth, 2017), (Spinowitz et al., 2019).

Citations and Impact: Citations are a measure of the influence and impact of a researcher's work. Highly cited papers indicate that the research has been influential and has made an impact on the field (Martín-Martín et al., 2016). Researchers with a higher number of citations are often considered more productive and influential (Vinkler, 2019), (Smith, 2013).

Grants and Funding: Securing research grants and funding is another aspect of research productivity. Scholars have argued that grants and funding demonstrate the ability to attract resources and support for research projects (Boté & Térmens, 2019). Researchers who consistently secure grants and funding are often seen as productive and capable of conducting impactful research.

Collaborations and Network: Collaboration with other researchers and institutions can enhance research productivity. Collaborative research projects often lead to increased productivity through shared resources, expertise, and a broader scope of research. According to the literature, (Onifade et al., 2015), (Berbegal-Mirabent et al., 2020), (Awogbami et al., 2020), (Opele, 2022) Building a strong network and engaging in collaborative endeavors can contribute to research productivity.

Innovation and Contribution to the Field: The significance and originality of research findings are essential indicators of research productivity. It has been established in the literature that researchers who make novel contributions, introduce innovative methodologies, or address critical gaps in knowledge are considered highly productive (Eggink, 2013), (Kumar et al., 2022).

Dissemination and Knowledge Transfer: Research productivity also includes the dissemination of research findings beyond academic publications (Igwe et al., 2022). Presenting research at conferences, sharing findings through workshops, media engagement, and other forms of knowledge transfer contribute to research productivity by reaching wider audiences and increasing the visibility and impact of the research.

Professional Engagement: Active involvement in professional organizations, editorial roles, peer review activities, and participation in research-related committees and initiatives also contribute to research productivity (Chang et al., 2022). Scholars have argued that these activities demonstrate a researcher's commitment to the scholarly community and their willingness to contribute to the advancement of the field (Li et al., 2021).

Research Supervision and Mentorship: Research productivity can extend to the supervision and mentorship of students and early-career researchers. Guiding and supporting others in their research endeavors, assisting them in publishing their work, and fostering their research skills and productivity are additional indicators of research productivity (Nagbe et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This paper argued that academic anxiety and environmental factors can significantly impact the productivity of lecturers in Nigeria. The paper concluded that, by creating an enabling environment, Nigerian universities can promote the well-being and effectiveness of their lecturers, ultimately benefiting the entire educational system in the country. Based on the outcome of this review, the following recommendations are suggested:

a. Nigerian universities should prioritize the improvement of infrastructure and resource allocation, ensuring that lecturers have access to

necessary tools and materials for effective teaching and research.

b. Support systems, including mentoring programs and counselling services, can be established to address lecturer' psychological well-being and provide them with guidance and assistance.

c. To reduce academic anxieties, there is a need to foster a positive work culture that encourages collaboration, recognizes achievements, and valves lectures' contribution is crucial.

d. Institutions should promote a healthy work-life balance and provide opportunities for professional growth and development.

e. Advocate for policies that prioritize the well-being of lecturers and provide a supportive academic environment. Engage in dialogue with policymakers, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders to highlight the importance of addressing academic anxiety and environmental factors.

f. Recognize and reward excellence in teaching, research, and service through performance-based evaluations, promotions, and awards. Provide incentives such as sabbatical leaves, research grants, and financial bonuses to motivate lecturers and encourage high-quality performance.

g. Foster collaborations and research networks both within Nigeria and internationally to facilitate interdisciplinary research and knowledge sharing. Establish partnerships with industry, government agencies, and other academic institutions to promote applied research and address real-world challenges.

h. Establishing mental support programs within educational institutions can help lecturers cope with academic anxiety. Providing access to counselling services, stress management workshops, and promoting healthy work-life balance can contribute to reducing anxiety level.

i. Encouraging lecturers to participate in professional development programs can enhance their teaching skills and confidence. These programs can provide strategies for managing classroom stress, effective time management, and innovative teaching methods, which can help reduce anxiety and increase productivity.

j. Policymakers should prioritize the well-being of lecturers and address environmental factors that contribute to anxiety. This includes improving the overall education system, ensuring fair workload distribution, and providing competitive compensation package for lecturers.

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