

Job Demand, Hardiness, and Coping Skills as Predictors of General Health among Academic Staff in Public Universities in Ogun State Nigeria

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Abstract. The world over, the importance of the human dimension to organizational sustainability and survival cannot be overemphasized. It is on this premise that this study investigated the combined and relative predictive capacity of job demand, hardiness and coping styles on general health of academic staff in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of an ex-post facto type. Two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were collected using a four validated instruments. The instruments were administered to three hundred (300) academic staff randomly selected from the three (3) public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Data were analysed using Multiple Regression statistical methods. The findings of this study revealed that job demand, hardiness and coping skills accounted for 26.7% of the variance in the academic staff general health ($R = .517$; $R^2 = .267$; Adj. $R^2 = .267$; $F_{(2, 298)} = 21.057$; $p = .000$). Also, the study revealed that job demand ($\beta = .128$; $t = 4.009$; $p = .000$), coping skills ($\beta = .111$; $t = 2.917$; $p = .000$) and hardiness ($\beta = .107$; $t = 2.008$; $p = .000$). In conclusion, this study enhances our understanding of the contributive power of job demand, hardiness and coping skills on employees' general health. Through this study it is hoped that organizations and individual employee will become more aware of how job demand, hardiness and coping skills can affect employees' general health in different situations. It is therefore recommended that a organizations should always look for ways to improve the occupational health of their employees.

Keywords: Job Demand, Hardiness and Coping Styles on General Health of Academic Staff

1. Introduction

The educational sector in Nigeria just like every other viable organizations is gradually becoming a mountain hill to climb. The sector is beset with varied problems such as work overload, long working hours, stiff competition, relationships at work, regulatory bottlenecks and difficult clients (parents and students) that characterizes every activities. The identified challenges appear to be taking its toll on the the general health of the employees especially the teaching staff. For examples, teaching staff at higher institutions are believed to be at an increased risk of work-related stress. This is likely to be due to the innate high pressure of maintaining quality services on the job, as well as pressures caused by staff shortages, high number of students to teach and supervise, as well as lack of adequate managerial support.

Health is the major pathway to human development. It is the cornerstone for a healthy, wealthy and prosperous life. Health is also well reflected and self-evident in the proverbial saying "Health is Wealth". It is a gradual process, which takes time and hinges on many things. As a multifaceted aspects, health has been defined by World Health Organization (WHO, 2012), as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The health of an individual or of a community is concerned

not only with physical and mental status, but also with social and economic relationship (Chakrabarty, 1999).

Employees in a service delivery organizations suffer greater levels of job demand than comparable occupational groups. Time pressures, excessive demands, role conflict, ergonomic deficiencies, job security and relationship with customers are particularly common stressors amongst employees in the financial services sector (Barretho, 2018, Ezeokoli & Ayodele, 2017, Nseabasi, 2017). The physical and emotional well-being of professionals that determine or shape the economic status of the society and indeed the nation's future wealth, in all its guises is an all important issue. However, many factors have been identified to influence employees' health behaviour and wellness. These include personal characteristics like hygiene and alcohol consumption and social support from families and friends (Rafi, *et al.*, 2004); role conflict (Kirk-Brown & Wallace, 2004); job autonomy, task identity and profession (Adebayo & Ezeanya, 2010); working hours and work load (te Brake, *et al.*, 2003) gender, shift work and good working relationship with superior (Maccacaro, *et al.*, 2011); gender (Adekola, 2010, 2012; Ronen & Pine, 2008) and work home conflict (Dyrbye, *et al.*, 2011).

Of the parameters affecting employee's general health, job demand is one important factor. The term "job demand" in this study refers to the amount of workload or responsibilities placed upon an individual. Increasing the workload as well as time limit of the individual to cope with it may result in psychological pressure in the workplace. Control or the ability of decision-making over one's work has a strong impact on perceived stress. The most stressful situation occurs for the employees when experiencing both high job demands and low job control (Akbari, Akbari, Shakerian, & Behzad, 2017). Those high job demands accompanied with high decision latitude are not stressful since the active jobs are considered as challenging situations, in which people can extend the defending behaviors. The passive jobs with high demands and low decision latitude are not able to trigger

such behaviors leading to decreasing activity and increasing stress. The situations under pressure are those in which the employees expose to the high job demands but low decision latitude.

Job demands are usually divided into two: challenge job stressors and hindrance job stressors. The term hindrance job stressors" refers to "unpleasant, undesirable and excessive" factors in the course of work which get in the way of the ability of an individual to achieve goals associated with the specific job that he or she does such as role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity and are viewed as negative aspects of job demands (Adebayo & Ezeanya, 2011; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). On the other hand, the term "challenge job stressors" refers to stressors which have the potential to promote the employee's personal growth and career growth as well and may include factors like high levels of workload, time pressure and numerous responsibilities and are viewed as positive stressors due to their characteristic potential to reward the employee (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

Job demand outcome such as mental stress and fatigue influences employees' performance, health and well-being. Rahman (2013) reported that employees' poor performance, health and well-being as a result of job demand emanated from long working hours, workloads, and lack of sufficient time for rest and exercise. According to Newstrom (2010) stress resulted from Job demands could result in disorderliness in the functioning of the body systems. Also, Beh and Loo (2012) reported in their findings that heavy workload, routine work and poor working condition trigger stress in the workplace which may result to occupational health problem if not managed properly.

On the other hand, hardiness could be seen as a personality trait that is associated with a person's ability to manage and respond to stressful life events with coping strategies that turn potentially unfortunate circumstances into learning opportunities. It is characterized by a tendency to be deeply involved, a need to be in control, and a desire to learn from life's events

regardless of the outcomes. Dunkel, Schetter and Dolbier (2011) define hardiness as the process involving an ability to withstand and cope with ongoing and repeated demands and maintain healthy functioning in different domains of life such as work and family. This definition is comprised of three interconnected components: (1) recovery as returning to baseline functioning following a major stressor; (2) sustainability as the capacity to continue forward during exposure to traumatic or demanding stressors and maintain functioning without any disruption; (3) growth as the enhanced adaption beyond original levels of functioning. These three components outline the mechanisms of hardiness or resilient behaviour rather than the outcome of hardiness behaviour (Zautra *et al.*, 2010).

The above mentioned skills and resources refer to hardiness resources: characteristics of the individual and (social) environment that stimulate the ability to maintain functioning despite the demands of the situation and moderate the effects of stressors on health and adjustment indicators (Gowan, Kirk & Sloan, 2014). Hardiness is associated with basic protective systems, which include problem solving, mastery, reasoning, meaning making and self-regulation (Theron, 2012).

Another variable in the domain of this study is the coping style. According to Daniels, Beesley, Cheyne, and Wimalasiri (2008) as well as Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) coping styles are seen as active or passive efforts to respond to the circumstances and situations that create stress, to avoid or reduce stress and include problem focused style (efficient styles) and emotion focused style (inefficient styles). Problem focused styles include methods such as ‘problem solving’ (that means a set of semi-centralized ideas or efforts with stressors in addition to using analytical approach to solve the problem), ‘positive reappraisal’ (that include efforts to make positive concepts in dealing with problems), ‘taking responsibility’ (that include a series of reactions that are based on accepting one’s role in making the problem and result in constructive and continuous effort in correcting the situation), and finally it includes ‘social support seeking’ (Cooper, 2010; Dewe, O’Driscoll & Folkman, 2011; Ramos, 2011).

In contrast, emotion focused styles, that is, direct confrontation (a series of aggressive and direct behaviours with stress causing problems in order to immediately change the stress source), self-restraint or suppression (avoiding the stress source) and denial (denying the stress making situations) include passive (inefficient styles) coping styles (Brown, Westbrook & Challagalla, 2005; Dewe, O’Driscoll, & Cooper, 2010, 2012). Efficient coping styles have a negative relationship with perceived stress level and in contrast, inefficient coping styles have a positive relationship with the perceived stress (Fortes-Ferreira, Peiro, Gonzalez-Morales & Martin, 2006; Guppy & Weatherstone, 1997; Li & Yang, 2009). Theoretically, the role of coping styles in decreasing or increasing the stress is related to the role of these styles in removing or not removing the stress source (Moneta & Spada, 2009).

From the aforementioned, it is pertinent to investigate the predictive capacity of job demand, hardiness and coping styles on employees' general health. This study therefore, is interested in the combined and relative predictive capacity of job demand, hardiness and coping styles on general health of academic staff in Ogun State, Nigeria.

2. Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses will be tested in order to provide answer to the research questions:

- There is no significant combined influence of job demand, hardiness, and coping skills on the general health of academic staff.
- There is no significant relative influence of job demand, hardiness, and coping skills on the general health of academic staff.

3. Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive survey design. This is so, because the researcher is only interested in determining the

combined and relative influence of the independent variables on the criterion variable.

Population: The population for this study is all the academic staff in the three public universities in Ogun State Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample for this study consist three hundred (300) academic staff from three (3) public universities in Ogun State Nigeria. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. At the first stage, the three public universities (Olabisi Onabanjo University; Federal University of Agriculture, Tai Solarin University of Education) in Ogun State Nigeria. At the second stage, 100 academic staff were randomly selected from each of the university which make up a total of three hundred (300) staff.

3.1 Research Instruments

Healthcare behaviour Scale: Underutilization, disengagement, and non-compliance related to healthcare in the past 12 months were measured using a checklist that included five items used in previous studies. Each of these items has been previously found to be associated with mistrust of healthcare institutions (e.g., A physician gave me advice that I did not take; I did not seek medical care at all even when I felt I needed it; LaVeist, Isaac, & Williams, 2009; I delayed seeking healthcare that I thought I needed; Mollborn et al., 2005). Analysis of data from the pilot study yielded a construct validity coefficient alpha of 0.71 and a test re – test reliability of 0.77 for the health behaviour scale in this study.

The Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale (CD-RSC; Connor & Davidson, 2003) is a 25-item self-report scale was used to assess hardiness among the academic staff. Participants are to rate these experiences from not true at all (0), to rarely true (1), sometimes true (2), often true (3) and to true nearly all the time (4). For this study the Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Coping Styles Scale Brief Form (CSS-BF): This is a 14-factor scale prepared by Bacanlı, Sürücü, and İlhan (2013) based on the brief form of Coping Styles Scale developed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) and reviewed by Carver (1997). Scores on the CSS-BF range from 1 (I never do that) to 4 (I mostly do so).

Job Demand: This is assessed the NASA Task Load Index. This scale is comprised of 6 dimensions measuring mental demand, physical demand, temporal demand, performance, effort and frustration. It has a 5-point response format ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much. Example of items on the scale are “how hurried or rushed is the pace of your job?, how stressful are you in accomplishing what you are asked to do?” Ziael, Mohammad, Moradi and Khandan (2015) used this scale and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.897.

Procedure for data collection: The researcher and four research assistants were involved in the administration of the instruments to each of the sample respondents chosen for the study. The research assistants were the postgraduate students of Babcock University trained for the purpose of this study.

Method of Data Analysis: The data collected were analysed descriptively and inferentially (multiple regression) set at the .05 significant level.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Model Summary of the Regression Analysis on the combined influence of job demand, hardiness, and coping skills on academic staff general health

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	d f 1	d f 2	Sig. F Change
Predictor Variables	.517	.267	.267	6.321	.267	21.057	2	298	.000

a. Predictions: (Constant), job demand, hardiness, coping skills

b. Dependent Variable: academic staff general health

The results presented in Table 1 indicated that job demand, hardiness and coping skills are significant predictors of academic staff general health ($R = .517$; $R^2 = .267$; $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .267$; $F_{(2, 298)} = 21.057$; $p = .000$). The implication of these findings is that job demand, hardiness and coping skills accounted for 26.7% of the variance in the academic staff general health. The null hypothesis which stated that "There is no significant combined influence of job demand, hardiness and coping skills on academic staff general health" cannot be sustained by this finding while the alternate hypothesis was retained.

Therefore, there is a significant combined influence of job demand, hardiness and coping skills on academic staff general health. The implication of this finding is that academic staff general health is significantly associated with job demand, hardiness and coping skills which in turn will help with the wellness of the staff, make them secured and also promote their work effectiveness. As noted by previous studies such as Ezeokoli and Ayodele (2016) many factors have been identified to influence employees' health behaviour and wellness. These include job demand and personal characteristics like age and gender (Adebayo & Olowodunoye, 2018); coping styles or skills (Newness, 2011; Olanrewaju, 2017); job autonomy, task identity and profession (Adebayo & Ezeanya, 2010).

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of relative influence of job demand, hardiness and coping skills on academic staff general health

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.112	3.555		7.234	.000
Job demand	.547	.243	.128	4.009	.000
Hardiness	.197	.120	.107	2.008	.000
Coping skills	.243	.137	.111	2.917	.000

The relative contribution of each predictor variable (job demand, hardiness and coping skills) to the variance observed in the academic staff general health. It was revealed that job demand has a beta value of .128 and t-value of 4.009 significant at less than .05 alpha level, coping skills has a beta value of .111 and t-value of 2.917; and hardiness has a beta value of .107 and t-value of 2.008 all significant at less than .05 alpha levels. Therefore, all the predictor variables (job demand, hardiness and coping skills) are potent factor to the prediction of academic staff general health. However, the most potent predictor is job demand followed by coping skills, and hardiness.

The implication of this study is that job demand do not only may not only have negative effect on the employees' health but as well will have a strong relationship with their general health - physically, socially, and mentally. This result is in with the findings of Adebayo and Olowodunoye (2018) who investigated job demand, age and gender as predictors of occupational health and reported that job demand has a significant relationship with

occupational health. Job demand outcome such as mental stress and fatigue influences employees' performance, health and well-being. Rahman (2013) reported that employees' poor performance, health and well-being as a result of job demand emanated from long working hours, workloads, and lack of sufficient time for rest and exercise. According to Newstrom (2010) stress resulted from Job demands could result in disorderliness in the functioning of the body systems. Also, Beh and Loo (2012) reported in their findings that heavy workload, routine work and poor working condition trigger stress in the workplace which may result to occupational health problem if not managed properly.

The outcome of this findings equally lend credence to the studies of Newness (2011) and Olanrewaju (2017) that individuals' health behaviour and attitudes has significant association with the workplace stress coping styles. The relationship between coping skills and employees' health in workplace is crucial for organization survival. Dunkel, Schetter and Dolbier (2011) affirmed that hardiness helped individual to withstand and cope with ongoing

and repeated demands and maintain healthy functioning in different domains of life such as work and family

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study gives an empirical evidence with regards to the need for academic staff general health in terms of wellness as result of job demand, hardiness and coping skills. Specifically, the findings revealed a combined influence of job demand, hardiness and coping skills on academic staff general health. And that over one quarter of academic staff general health will be affected due to job demand, hardiness and coping skills. Among these predictors, job demand is the most potent factor followed by coping skills, and hardiness.

In spite of this empirical evidence, the researcher is of the opinion that the outcome of these findings should be interpreted with serious cautions in mind. First, it should be noted that the respondents of this study were academic staff of three public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Therefore, the findings could not be generalized to a large population. There is still need to increase the sample size and cut across all the states of the federation. Second, the sample covered public universities alone. It will be needful to extend the study to private institutions and evaluate potential school ownership and school climate differences in greater detail in future studies, particularly as job demand, hardiness and coping skills may predict employees' wellness.

In conclusion, this study enhances our understanding of the contributive power of job demand, hardiness and coping skills on employees' general health. Through this study it is hoped that organizations and individual employee will become more aware of how job demand, hardiness and coping skills can affect employees' general health in different situations.

It is therefore, recommended that organizations should always look for ways to improve the occupational health of their employees. Unfortunately, most employees today are continuously dealing with high job demands and

stress-induced tasks in other to meet the organizations' goals. It is also important for organizations to select and promote the employees whose dispositional traits align with the demand of the organization's goals.

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