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Effect of Excess Workload on Academic Staff Performance in Staff Colleges of Education in South East Nigeria

[1]Ogbaga Fidelis Ogbonna, PhD., [2]Prof. Femi Adeyeye & [3]Asso. Prof G.O.C Udu

[1]Department of Business Education Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo

[2&3]Department of Business Administration and Faculty of Management Sciences, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo

GSM: [1]08068635942., [2]08023177595 &[3]08037416277

[1]ogbagaf@gmail.com [2]adeyeyefemij@gmail.com & [3]drgocudu66@gmail.com

Abstract

Academic environment is inherently stressful, with staff facing multiple responsibilities, including teaching, supervision of student projects, pressure to publish research work, and administrative tasks. The studies previously carried out were either in the university or in the polytechnics which is different educational sub-sector to colleges of education sub-sector hence this study to cover the gap. Excess workload has become a pervasive issue affecting the well-being and productivity of academic staff in State Colleges of Education in Southeast Nigeria. Due to increase in the number of responsibilities where every staff is required to hasten examination marking, results compilation and uploading of same within a short period of time, this result to overwork and burnout. The main objective of this study is to assess the effect excess workload has on academic staff performance of state colleges of education in south east Nigeria. This study adopted descriptive survey research design with the use of questionnaires in data collection. The population for the study was 705 academic staff in the five states Colleges of Education in the South-East Nigeria. And the sample size stood at 255 after applying Taro Yammene formular. The key findings specifically showed that increases in teaching above the minimum lecturer-student ratio and teaching above the minimum course per semester has the strongest negative correlations as observed. The researcher strongly recommends that institutions should analyze lecturer workloads, including administrative tasks and teaching hours, to identify potential imbalances. For instance, management should carefully manage the number of courses lecturers are assigned per semester to prevent burnout and maintain high teaching standards among other things.

Keywords: Effect, Excess, Workload, Academic Staff, Performance

Introduction

In the context of higher education, Academic Staff in State Colleges of Education are not immune to the pressures and demands of their roles. The academic environment is inherently stressful, with staff facing multiple responsibilities, including teaching, supervision of student projects, pressure to publish research work, and administrative tasks. Work-related stress arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope (Cooper, 2011).

Ifelunni (2017) opined that excess workload could be referred to as the total energy output of a system, particularly of a person performing a strenuous task over time. In some institutions a number of the workers suffers a lot of excess work load due to under staffing, this ranges from increasing duration of teaching hours, number of courses handled by an individual, pressure to work for longer hours and among others (Agbo, 2017). Excess workload (such as heavy teaching schedule for lecturers), large class size, incessant strikes, school interruptions,

students' delinquencies, obnoxious institutional policies, and poor working environment could be other unfavourable conditions contributing to stress and attempts to impede the performance.

A person with too many obligations and poor organizational skill could find himself exhibiting stress symptoms. On the other hand, excess workload could also have severe implications for academic staff's physical, psychological and mental health. Effect of teaching above minimum lecturer/student ratio could bring both negative and positive result. This is because it results to presenting diverse perspectives and experience to the classroom. It could also result to economies of scale, this is because handling large classes could be cost effective for the institutions. There is no doubt that there are negative effects also. This negative effect includes decreased individual attention. Okocha (2022) argues that teaching many students makes instructors struggles to provide individualize attention. This could have negative effect on the teaching quality of the instructor or lecturer.

Also, Bakker, Demorouti and Verbeke (2014) agrees that teaching above the minimum courses per semester have both negative and positive effect on teaching quality of academic staff. This is because it could provide lecturers with variety and challenge, potentially increasing their engagement and motivation. However, Bland and Schmitz (2014) states that one of the major negative effect is overload and burnout. Teaching above the minimum courses per semester could lead to instructor overload and burnout, potentially affecting teaching quality leading to student poor academic performance.

Academic staff performance is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of their roles, including teaching, research, and community service. Several factors influence their performance, which can be evaluated through different lenses. Here's a breakdown of key points:

Teaching Performance: This refers to the effectiveness in delivering lectures, student engagement, and assessment methods. Research Performance: This refers that quality and quantity of research output, publications, and grants secured. Community Service: This also refers to the contributions to the community, professional service, and engagement with industry partners by the academic staff.

Statement of the Problem

Excess workload has become a pervasive issue affecting the well-being and productivity of academic staff in State Colleges of Education in Southeast Nigeria. The unique challenges faced by State Colleges of Education in Southeast Nigeria, such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and limited resources, exacerbate excess workload levels and seems to affect the performance of academic staff of the State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the degree of the effect of excess workload on the Performance of Academic Staff of State Colleges of Education in Southeast Nigeria, and make recommendations that will improve their performances.

Objective to the Study

The broad objective of this study is to determine the degree of effect of Excess Workload on the Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria.

The specific objectives to the study are to:

1. Ascertain the extent of effect of teaching above the minimum lecturer/student ratio on the teaching quality of Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria.
2. Determine the extent of effect of teaching above the minimum courses per semester on the teaching quality of the Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What extent of effect has teaching above the minimum lecturer/student ratio on the teaching quality of Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria?
2. What extent of effect has teaching above the minimum courses per semester on the teaching quality of the Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant effect of teaching above the minimum lecturer/student ratio on the teaching quality of Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria.
2. There is no significant effect of teaching above the minimum courses per semester on the teaching quality of the Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This work adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is the plan of study which enables the researcher to collect data from a well-defined population and systematically selected segments of the population in order to determine the attribute of the population. This definition is in line with Nworgu cited in Okocha (2022) who defined descriptive surveys as those studies concerned with collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic features or facts about a given population. Thus, the researcher deems it necessary to adopt descriptive survey design in carrying out this research work as it would help to illustrate the effect of excess workload on the performance of Academic Staff of State Colleges of Education in South East Nigeria. That is, it investigates already established situation and no variable was manipulated in the course of this research.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for the study is 255 respondents made up of 129 males and 126 females academic staff. The above sample was arrived at using Taro Yamane formular for finite population.

Taro Yamane Statistical Formula.

Taro Yamane Formula for Finite Population

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$= \frac{705}{1+705 \times (0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{705}{1+1.7625}$$

$$= \frac{705}{2.7625}$$

$$= 255.2$$

$$= 255$$

That is to say that the sample population for this study is 255 academic staff respondents.

That means that sample of male academic staff was 358 x 255 = 129 respondents.

The sample of female academic staff was 347 x 255 = $\frac{705}{705}$ $\frac{1}{1}$ nts

Below are the breakdown.

Population Distribution of Academic Staff and the Institutions

GENDER	EBSCOEI	ESCET	ABSCOE	IMSCOE	NOCOE	TOTAL
Male:	134	53	45	33	93	358
Female:	32	86	27	33	169	347
Total:	166	139	72	66	262	705

Sample population drawn from different Institution

EBSCOEI = $\frac{166}{705} \times \frac{255}{1}$ = 60 respondents

ESCET = $\frac{139}{705} \times \frac{255}{1}$ = 50 respondents

ABSCOE = $\frac{72}{705} \times \frac{255}{1}$ = 26 respondents

IMSCOE = $\frac{66}{705} \times \frac{255}{1}$ = 24 respondents

NOCOE = $\frac{262}{705} \times \frac{255}{1}$ = 95 respondent

TOTAL = 255 respondents

Instrument for Data Collection

. The instrument for data collection was researcher-developed questionnaires titled 'Effect of excess Workload on Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria' (EEWPASCOESEN). The questionnaire has two sections (A & B). Section A addresses the personal data of the respondents, while Section B contains seventeen (17) items structured to examine the effect of excess workload on the performance of academic staff at State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria. This section is divided into three (3) clusters: A, B, and C. Cluster A focuses on the effect of teaching above the minimum lecturer/student ratio on teaching quality and academic staff performance in these colleges.

Cluster B examines the impact of teaching more than the minimum courses per semester on teaching quality and staff performance. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents, employing a 5-point Likert-type rating scale. The five-item Likert-type questionnaire was used to assess students' perceptions of lecturers' teaching above the minimum course load by gauging their agreement or disagreement with statements about the lecturer's teaching effectiveness and workload This structure also provides a framework for gathering valuable insights into the student experience with lecturers teaching above the minimum course load. This allows for a nuanced understanding of how lecturers feel about the balance between their teaching, research, and administrative duties. This approach provides a structured way to collect quantitative data on student experiences and can be used to identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was face validated by three (3) experts: two experts in the Department of Business Education and one expert in the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation) all from Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo. These experts were requested to review the items in terms of their clarity, the appropriateness of the language and expression to ensure unambiguity and the relevance of the items to the problem under investigation. The experts made corrections and the corrections shaped the modification of the instrument into the final copy.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was trial tested with thirty (30) academic staff in Cross Rivers State College of Education Akamkpa, which is not part of the study area to ensure its non-interaction of the instrument with subjects of the main study. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument Cronbach's Alpha technique is used for its analysis. The overall reliability coefficient was r = 0.96. This is because according to Ogbazi and Okpala (2015), if the correlation coefficient obtained of an instrument is up to 0.60 and above, the instrument should be considered good enough to be used for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument would be administered and retrieved by the researcher with the help of five (5) research assistants who were briefed on modalities of administering and retrieval of the questionnaire. The total of two hundred and fifty-five (255) copies of the questionnaire would be administered to both male and female academic staff of the Five (5) State Colleges of Education in South East Nigeria, which would as well be collected.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. This statistical tool is a powerful tool for data analysis and are widely used in fields such as social sciences, management sciences, and marketing. It offers a range of statistical tests, data management features, and sophisticated data manipulation capabilities. The researcher performs frequency, descriptive statistics, and Pearson correlation. Pearson correlation was used because it is the best technique that predicts the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Results

The results of data analysis based on the three (3) research questions and the (3) null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The findings of the study are also below

Table 1: A low lecturer-student ratio enables more in-depth discussions in class.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	39	18.5	18.5	18.5
	Disagree	28	13.3	13.3	31.8
	Neutral	20	9.5	9.5	41.2
	Agree	70	33.2	33.2	74.4
	Strongly agree	54	25.6	25.6	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The table presents survey data on the relationship between low lecturer-student ratio and in-depth class discussions. A majority of respondents, 58.8%, agree or strongly agree with the statement, suggesting a positive perception of the link between smaller class sizes and richer discussions. Conversely, 31.8% disagree or strongly disagree, indicating a sizable group who do not see this connection. A small percentage (9.5%) remain neutral.

Table 2: I feel more engaged in classes with a low lecturer-student ratio.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	48	22.7	22.7	22.7
	Disagree	51	24.2	24.2	46.9
	Neutral	13	6.2	6.2	53.1
	Agree	46	21.8	21.8	74.9
	Strongly agree	53	25.1	25.1	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The data suggests a tendency towards positive correlation between lower lecturer-student ratios and increased student engagement. A large portion of the participants (46.9%) either disagree or strongly disagree with the idea that they feel more engaged in classes with lower ratios, which suggests that a higher proportion of participants prefer a lower lecturer-student ratio. Conversely, only a small portion of participants (6.2%) are neutral, suggesting the statement is generally accepted.

Table 3: A low lecturer-student ratio enhances the overall learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	47	22.3	22.3	22.3
	Disagree	51	24.2	24.2	46.4
	Neutral	10	4.7	4.7	51.2
	Agree	46	21.8	21.8	73.0
	Strongly agree	56	26.5	26.5	99.5
	11	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The provided table indicates that a majority of respondents either agree or strongly agree that a low lecturer-student ratio enhances learning, with a cumulative percentage reaching 73.0%. A small percentage (24.2%) disagree with this statement, and 4.7% are neutral. One respondent (0.5%) is excluded from the valid percentages due to an unknown response.

Table 4: I feel more comfortable asking questions in a class with a low lecturer-student ratio.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	50	23.7	23.7	23.7
	Disagree	44	20.9	20.9	44.5
	Neutral	17	8.1	8.1	52.6
	Agree	47	22.3	22.3	74.9
	Strongly agree	53	25.1	25.1	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The table presents the results of a survey question asking about comfort level in asking questions in classes with low lecturer-student ratios. It shows that 25.1% of respondents "strongly agree" they feel more comfortable, while 23.7% "strongly disagree." The majority of respondents either "agree" (22.3%) or "disagree" (20.9%) with the statement, with 8.1% being "neutral."

Table 5: The lecturer's course load is manageable alongside other courses.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	49	23.2	23.2	23.2
	Disagree	95	45.0	45.0	68.2
	Neutral	11	5.2	5.2	73.5
	Agree	38	18.0	18.0	91.5
	Strongly agree	18	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The frequency distribution indicates that most respondents disagree that the lecturer's course load is manageable. A majority (45%) selected "Disagree," and 23.2% chose "Strongly disagree," resulting in a cumulative percentage of 68.2% indicating negative sentiment. A small percentage (5.2%) chose "Neutral," while a minority (18%) agreed and only 8.5% strongly agreed.

Table 6: The workload for this course is appropriate, given the lecturer's overall teaching commitment.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	53	25.1	25.1	25.1
	Disagree	89	42.2	42.2	67.3
	Neutral	1	.5	.5	67.8
	Agree	50	23.7	23.7	91.5
	Strongly agree	18	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The provided frequency table indicates a generally negative perception of the course workload relative to the lecturer's overall teaching commitment. A majority of respondents either strongly disagreed (25.1%) or disagreed (42.2%) that the workload was appropriate. Only a small percentage (8.5%) strongly agreed, with a further 23.7% agreeing. The single "neutral" response (0.5%) suggests a lack of strong opinions on the matter from a small subset of students.

Table 7: The lecturer effectively manages their time to cover the course material adequately.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	63	29.9	29.9	29.9
	Disagree	79	37.4	37.4	67.3
	Neutral	12	5.7	5.7	73.0
	Agree	33	15.6	15.6	88.6
	Strongly agree	24	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The table shows how students responded to the statement "The lecturer effectively manages their time to cover the course material adequately." A large portion (67.3%) either "Strongly disagree" (29.9%) or "Disagree" (37.4%), indicating a significant perception that the lecturer's time management is not effective. Only a minority felt the lecturer was effective, with 15.6% "Agree" and 11.4% "Strongly agree." The "Neutral" response (5.7%) suggests some students may have been unsure or ambivalent.

Table 8: I feel the lecturer is adequately prepared for each class, despite their heavy workload.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	63	29.9	29.9	29.9
	Disagree	76	36.0	36.0	65.9
	Neutral	18	8.5	8.5	74.4
	Agree	30	14.2	14.2	88.6
	Strongly agree	24	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

The provided frequency table analyzes student responses regarding their lecturer's preparation for class, despite a heavy workload. A majority of students (65.9%) either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, indicating a perception that the lecturer is not adequately prepared. Specifically, 36% of students disagree and 29.9% strongly disagree. Conversely, only 25.6% of students agree or strongly agree with the statement. The neutral response from 8.5% suggests a middle ground or uncertainty about the lecturer's preparation.

The cumulative percentages show that as you move from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," the percentage of people agreeing with the statement increases. For example, 65.9% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree, while 88.6% either agree, strongly agree, or are neutral.

Table 9: The lecturers do not effectively utilize available teaching resources (e.g., online platforms) because they teach above the minimum course load per semester.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	59	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Disagree	78	37.0	37.0	64.9
	Neutral	14	6.6	6.6	71.6
	Agree	30	14.2	14.2	85.8
	Strongly agree	30	14.2	14.2	100.0
	Total	211	100.0	100.0	

This frequency table summarizes the results of a survey asking respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement "The lecturers do not effectively utilize available teaching resources (e.g., online platforms) because they teach above the minimum course load per semester." It shows that a majority of respondents (64.9%) either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, suggesting that many believe lecturers are not effectively using online resources due to their heavy teaching workload.

Interpretation: Based on this data, it appears that a substantial portion of respondents believe that lecturers' high teaching load is preventing them from effectively utilizing available online teaching tools. However, it's important to note that this is just a snapshot of one particular group's opinion, and further research would be needed to confirm these findings on a wider scale.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statis	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Total Minimum lecturer student ratio	211	6.00	25.00	16.156	5.207	-.134	.167	-1.009	.333
Total teaching above minimum course per semester	211	6.00	22.00	12.241	4.166	.491	.167	-.620	.333
Total teaching quality	211	5.00	25.00	13.407	6.388	.248	.167	-1.537	.333
Valid N (listwise)	211								

This response discusses the descriptive statistics provided in the table for four variables related to lecturer performance and quality. The table presents descriptive statistics for four variables: "Total Minimum lecturer student ratio", "Total teaching above minimum course per semesterand "Total teaching quality". For each variable, the following statistics are provided: N, Minimum, Maximum, Mean, Std. Deviation, Skewness (Statistic and Std. Error), and Kurtosis (Statistic and Std. Error). The sample size for all variables is 211.

Data Analysis

Table 11: Testing of Hypotheses

Correlations

		1	2	3	4
Total above the Minimum lecturer-student ratio	Pearson Correlation	1			
Total teaching above the minimum course per semester	Pearson Correlation	.205**	1		
Total teaching quality	Pearson Correlation	-.432**	-.600**	-.691**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistical significance was determined by a "p" value less than 0.05. The study's four dependent variables all had alpha values that were greater than the 7 acceptance standard, meaning they were all considered acceptable. The preliminary analysis was executed to ensure no violation of the expectations of normality and linearity for all the hypotheses in this study.

The correlation between the effects of teaching above the minimum lecturer/student ratio on the teaching quality of Academic Staff Performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria was examined using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. It was found that there was a strong positive correlation between the two variables (r = -.432, n = 211, p < .000). Teaching above the minimum lecturer-student ratio has a moderate negative correlation with total teaching quality (-.432). This suggests that as the lecturer-student ratio increases (meaning more students per lecturer), teaching quality tends to decrease. This study support the theory of Meijman and Mulder (1998) posits that prolong effort expenditure (due to excess workload) can lead to strain and decrease performance if not balance with sufficient recovery opportunities

The correlation between the effects of teaching above the minimum courses per semester on the academic staff performance of State Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria was examined using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. It was found that there was a strong positive correlation between the two variables (r = -.600, n = 211, p < .000). Teaching above the minimum course per semester: has a strong negative correlation with teaching quality (-.600). This indicates that when lecturers are teaching more courses than the minimum, their teaching quality tends to decrease. The finding of this study corroborate the theory of Demerouti and Bakker (2018),which proposes or suggests that job demands (excessive workload) can lead to burnout and decrease performance if not balanced with sufficient job resources (support, autonomy). The work also supports finding the previous studies where excessive workload led to burnt out (Kusi, Mensah and Gyaki (2014).

The finding the work of supported the work of Omobolanle and Becky (2023) which revealed that high work load induces stress associated with psychological and physiological

problem with negative effect on performance. It also finds that excess work load led to negative performance of Academic Staff of Nasarawa State University.

Findings

The correlation table indicates negative and statistically significant correlations between various aspects of workload and teaching quality. Specifically, higher lecturer-student ratios, more teaching per semester, are all associated with lower reported teaching quality. Suggestions include optimizing workload distribution, potentially through more efficient administrative processes or reduced teaching loads, to improve overall teaching quality.

Lecturer-Student Ratio & Teaching Quality: A negative correlation (-.432) suggests that as the lecturer-student ratio increases (more students per lecturer), teaching quality tends to decrease. Teaching Load & Teaching Quality: A strong negative correlation (-.600) indicates that teaching more courses per semester is strongly linked to lower perceived teaching quality. The negative signs in the correlations indicate that as the independent variable increases (e.g., more students, more courses) the dependent variable (teaching quality) tends to decrease.

Recommendations

1. **Optimize Workload Distribution:** Institutions should analyze lecturer workloads, including administrative tasks and teaching hours, to identify potential imbalances. Implementing strategies to redistribute tasks or reduce the administrative burden on lecturers teaching more courses could be beneficial. For instance, management should carefully manage the number of courses lecturers are assigned per semester to prevent burnout and maintain high teaching standards.
2. **Review Minimum Requirements:** Consider whether the minimum lecturer-student ratio and the minimum number of courses per semester are optimal for maintaining high teaching quality. Adjustments may be necessary to ensure a manageable workload for lecturers. Management should consider strategies to improve the lecturer-student ratio, potentially through increased hiring or by implementing innovative teaching methods that accommodate larger classes.

By addressing these suggestions, institutions can work towards creating a more supportive and sustainable environment for lecturers, ultimately leading to improved teaching quality and student outcomes.

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