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Psychological Variables as Correlates of Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome in Delta State Universities

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ABSTRACT

The psychological variables as correlate of lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State Universities. Burnout is a pervasive problem among lecturers, affecting their well-being, job satisfaction and teaching performance. The population of the study consisted of all the teaching (academic) staff of the three universities in Delta State. Consequently, as at the time of the study (2023/2024 session), the population of the study was marginally put at 5,951 teaching staff from the three universities (Delta State University, Abraka, Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba and University of Delta, Agbor). A random sample of 500 lecturers were drawn from 5,951 teaching staff from three universities namely; Delta State University, Abraka, Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba and University of Delta, Agbor, using the stratified proportionate random sampling technique. The 500 respondents represent 8.40% of the population. Two instruments (Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome Questionnaire (LBSQ) and Psycho-demographic Questionnaire for Lecturers (P-DQL)) were used to collect data for the study. The reliability coefficients of the instruments ranged from 0.73 to 0.82 through Cronbach Alpha. Mean, standard deviation, one sample t-test, independent t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and regression statistics (simple and multiple) were the statistical tools deployed for the analysis of data collected. Based on the findings, it was concluded that emotional intelligence, anxiety and perfectionism relate to lecturers' burnout syndrome depending on their level of understanding. Based on the conclusion, it therefore recommended that emotional intelligence training programs may be beneficial in preventing burnout among lecturers. Anxiety reduction strategies, such as mindfulness and relaxation technique should be employed. Perfectionism should be addressed through interventions that promote realistic goal – setting and self-compassion.

Introduction

The phrase "burnout" was first used in the 1970s to characterize the mental and physical tiredness that employees, particularly those who offer services to others, may encounter at work (Ekechukwu & Isabella, 2020). Burnout was defined by Robinson, Ode, and Hilmert (2011) as an environment in which employees are repeatedly exposed to pressures that they are unable to handle, leaving them feeling emotionally and physically weary. Three characteristics make up burnout, according to Guillermo Elena, Lucia, Emilia, Cristina, and Jose (2018): (1) emotional exhaustion, which is characterized by a lack of vigor and energy as well as the depletion of emotional resources; (2) depersonalization, which is defined as having a negative attitude toward clients, coworkers, and the organization; and (3) minimized personal accomplishment, which is demonstrated by a tendency for a worker to have a negative self-evaluation, indicating dissatisfaction with their own performance at work.

According to Abushaikha and Saca-Hazboun (2019) burnout has also been linked to low staff turnover, high absenteeism, unfavorable job attitudes, low morale, and a decline in willingness to assist others. Because of the difficult and emotionally taxing connections that caregivers have with their receivers, human services workers often experience a particular type of occupational stress known as burnout (Ekechukwu & Obicheina, 2020). Emotional and mental tiredness, coupled with emotions of pessimism, low self-efficacy, negative self-concept, and cynicism toward people, are the hallmarks of burnout (Moczydłowska, 2016). Due to the extremely demanding nature of their work, which has a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health as well as their productivity and effectiveness as teachers, lecturers are thought to be especially vulnerable to the danger of burnout syndrome (Irena, 2017). University lecturers must put in long hours of service every day, carry a heavy workload, and deal with stress in their line of work.

According to Abushaikha and Saca-Hazboun (2019), professors who continue to be exposed to stressors run the risk of developing burnout syndrome. Accordingly, they defined burnout as a symptom of both physical and emotional weariness, involving the development of stress that may lead to a decline in job satisfaction, a negative attitude toward one's work, and a negative self-concept (Abushaikha & Saca-Hazboun, 2019). Research has indicated that educators encounter a range of stressful circumstances that have an adverse effect on their well-being and productivity.

Lecturers' emotions, interpersonal connections, and resilience are continuously impacted by the demanding nature of their work. They usually feel worn out and unsatisfied with their jobs.
Negative physiological and psychological effects, including headaches, tense muscles, exhaustion, anger, insomnia, depression, hypertension, and even suicide, have been linked to lecturer burnout syndrome. According to Ekechukwu and Isabela (2020), burnout has resulted in lecturers exhibiting negative behavioral reactions such as decreased job performance, reckless behavior, low morale, absenteeism, tardiness, and early retirement. Burnout is linked to various psychological variables. Among them, anxiety, perfectionism, and emotional intelligence are the three main areas of attention for this study.

There are arguments that suggest emotional intelligence could be a predictor of burnout among college instructors. The ability to identify one's own emotions as well as those of others, form relationships with others, differentiate between various emotions and assign the proper labels to them, use emotional information to inform behavior and thought processes, and control or modify emotions to fit one's surroundings and accomplish one's objectives is known as emotional intelligence (Coleman, 2018). Emotional intelligence is commonly believed to consist of five elements: self-awareness, self-motivation, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Isukwem & Ekechukwu, 2019). The first facet of emotional intelligence is self-awareness, which is the ability to recognize feelings as they arise or to be aware of one's own feelings. It is the capacity to keep an eye on one's emotions at all times. People who are low in this ability are more likely to experience distress and may avoid situations or tasks that are assigned to them.

Conversely, those who are high in this ability are more resilient to life's setbacks and upsets and are more confident in challenging situations. Ekechukwu

and Isabela (2020) observed that handling feelings in an appropriate way helps to build self-awareness. Self-management makes up the second element. This is sometimes referred to as emotion management. It is the capacity to control upsetting emotions like rage and anxiety as well as to restrain emotional impulses. The third element of emotional intelligence is self-motivation, which is the ability to channel emotion toward a purpose. Individuals with this trait are typically more successful and productive in whatever they undertake (Balogun, 2024). The fourth component of emotional intelligence, social awareness, includes empathy competency and is a key people skill that makes people with it ideal for helping professions like nursing and social work, like teaching (Arvey, Renz, and Watson, 2018). Relationship management, a social skill that involves the capacity to control others' emotions, is the final element of emotional intelligence.

According to Aurora and Tudor (2014) emotional intelligence is more widely recognized as a helpful instrument for enhancing employees' performance, resilience to burnout, and work attitude. They also emphasized the need for lecturers to exhibit professional traits that will help them to perform better, maintain a positive work attitude, and build resilience against burnout as they work in the field of human development and are in charge of preparing children for social and economic development. Platsidou (2010) emphasized that emotional intelligence characteristics and burnout syndrome are positively correlated. He went on to say that professors with high emotional intelligence are more likely to have a positive work attitude and be more satisfied with their jobs, whilst those with low emotional intelligence are more likely to have the opposite experience. Brown and Richard (2018) instructors possessing high emotional intelligence typically view their role as lecturers as that of trainers and reformers. They went on to say that whereas those with low emotional intelligence suffer from burnout, those with high emotional intelligence exhibit diligence, intense concern, friendliness, acceptance of diversity, and sharing of responsibilities at work.

Another psychological factor that may be connected to lecturers' burnout syndrome is anxiety. According to Cole (2014), anxiety is a widespread psychiatric disorder that serves as a defense against potentially dangerous circumstances. On the other hand, persistent anxiety may cause psychological distress that interferes with day-to-day functioning (Cole, 2014). Ahmed (2019) defines anxiety as a psychological and physiological condition with elements of physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning. It is a form of anxiety, uneasiness, and mental or emotional strain that has a detrimental impact on a person's pursuit of employment or education (Vitasari, 2010).

Turnipseed (2018) discovered a substantial correlation between anxiety symptoms and burnout syndrome, with the strongest association being identified between emotional weariness and anxiety. As was previously indicated, this interplay between people's personalities and work environments leads to anxiety, which in turn accelerates the onset of burnout syndrome. In a similar vein, Vasilopoulos (2012) found a connection between burnout syndrome and a high anxiety level. Ding (2014) also discovered a favorable correlation between anxiety and the burnout syndrome symptoms of cynicism and emotional weariness.

In the same vein, another psychological factor that may be linked to lecturers' burnout syndrome is perfectionism. Urien & Urien (2024) claim that depending on their skill level, instructors' perfectionist attitudes might have a beneficial or detrimental impact on students' performance. Notwithstanding its advantages, perfectionism has been associated in some research to a number of negative outcomes, including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and other personality disorders; in severe circumstances, perfectionism has even been connected to suicide (Delegard, 2014). One important predictor of instructor burnout disorders is perfectionism. Perfectionists set impossible standards and have unrealistic expectations, which can cause ongoing stress and disappointment. Perfectionists overwork and overcommit, taking on an enormous burden that eventually wears them out and causes burnout. Perfectionists have low self-esteem and are unmotivated because they are too critical of themselves.

Statement to the Problem
Despite the critical role lecturers play in shaping the academic and professional lives of students, many experience burnout syndromes, characterized by

emotional exhaustion, cynicism and reduced performance. Research suggest that psychological variables such as emotional intelligence, anxiety, perfectionism, self-efficacy and coping mechanism significantly contribute to the development of burnout among lecturers. However, the complex interplay between these variables and their impact on burnout remain poorly understood. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between psychological variables and burnout syndromes among lecturers, with a view to identifying potential predictors and developing targeted interventions to mitigate burnout and promote lecturers' well-being

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised in the study:
1. What is the correlative relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities?
2. What is the correlative relationship between anxiety and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities?
3. What is the correlative relationship between perfectionism and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities?

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated in the study:
1. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities
2. There is no significant relationship between anxiety and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities
3. There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities

Theoretical Framework
The theoretical framework is hinged on the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory propounded by Dr. Stevan Hobfoll (1988). The theory explained that burnout results from resource depletion, including emotional and psychological resources. Hobfoll's COR Theory posits that stress occurs when individuals experience a threat to their resources, such as:
1. Object resources (e.g., financial security, material possessions)

2. Condition resources (e.g., social support, work environment)
3. Personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, skills)
4. Energy resources (e.g., time, physical energy)

The theory suggests that individuals strive to conserve and protect their resources, and that stress and burnout result from resource depletion or loss. Hobfoll's work has had a significant impact on the field of psychology, particularly in the areas of stress, trauma, and burnout. His COR Theory has been widely applied in various contexts, including workplace settings, to understand and mitigate the effects of stress and burnout.

Emotional Intelligence and Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome
According to Bridge (2023) emotional intelligence (EI) can both positively and negatively contribute to lecturer burnout syndromes:

Negative contributions:
Empathy overload: High EI lecturers may over-identify with students' emotions, leading to emotional exhaustion. Compassion fatigue: Constantly supporting students emotionally can drain lecturers' emotional resources. Conflict avoidance: Lecturers with high EI may avoid conflicts or difficult conversations, leading to unresolved issues and increased stress. Over-responsibility: High EI lecturers may take on too much emotional responsibility for students, leading to burnout.

Positive contributions:
Stress management: EI helps lecturers recognize and manage their own emotions, reducing stress and burnout. Effective relationships: EI fosters strong relationships with students and colleagues, reducing feelings of isolation. Emotional regulation: EI enables lecturers to regulate their emotions, maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Self-awareness: EI promotes self-awareness, helping lecturers recognize signs of burnout and take proactive measures.

Anxiety and Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome
According to Marvell (2022) anxiety can be a significant predictor of lecturer burnout syndromes. Chronic stress: Anxiety can lead to prolonged stress, exhausting mental and physical resources. Emotional exhaustion: Anxiety can deplete emotional energy,

making it challenging to cope with work demands. Cynicism and detachment: Anxiety can lead to feelings of hopelessness, causing lecturers to disengage from their work and students. Reduced performance: Anxiety can impair cognitive function, judgment, and decision-making, affecting teaching quality. Hypervigilance: Anxiety can lead to an exaggerated sense of responsibility, causing lecturers to overwork and neglect self-care. Social withdrawal: Anxiety can cause lecturers to avoid interactions with students and colleagues, exacerbating feelings of isolation. Physical symptoms: Anxiety can manifest physically, such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, or sleep disturbances, further exacerbating burnout.

Perfectionism and Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome
Urien & Urien (2024) buttressed that perfectionism can be a significant predictor of lecturers' burnout syndromes. Unrealistic expectations: Perfectionists set unattainable standards, leading to chronic stress and disappointment. Overwork and over-committing: Perfectionists take on excessive workload, leading to exhaustion and burnout. Self-criticism: Perfectionists are overly critical of themselves, leading to decreased self-esteem and motivation. Fear of failure: Perfectionists fear making mistakes, leading to anxiety and hypervigilance. Lack of self-care: Perfectionists prioritize work over self-care, neglecting physical and emotional needs. Comparison and competition: Perfectionists compare themselves to others, fostering competition and decreasing collaboration. Inability to delegate: Perfectionists struggle to delegate tasks, leading to increased workload and stress. Perceived loss of control: Perfectionists feel a need to control every aspect of their work, leading to micromanaging and burnout.

Strategies to Reduce Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome
Bridge (2023) pointed out strategies to help reduce lecturers' burnout syndrome. To leverage emotional intelligence and prevent burnout, lecturers can practice self-care and self-compassion, set emotional boundaries, prioritize relationships, communicate effectively, develop effective conflict resolution skills, and engage in stress management techniques. In the same vein, Marvell (2022) highlights the ways to reduce anxiety of lecturers that can lead to burnout syndrome such as mindfulness and meditation, exercise and physical activity, social support networks, time management and prioritization.
Self-compassion and self-care. Seeking professional help when needed. In another development, Urien & Urien (2024) pointed out strategies to ease perfectionism and prevent burnout, lecturers can set realistic goals and priorities. Practice self-compassion and self-forgiveness. Develop a growth mindset. Learn to delegate and trust others. Prioritize self-care and well-being. Challenge negative self-talk and reframe failures as opportunities for growth.

Methodology
The population of the study consisted of all the teaching (academic) staff of the three universities in Delta State. Consequently, as at the time of the study (2023/2024 session), the population of the study was marginally put at 5,951 teaching staff from the three universities (Delta State University, Abraka, Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba and University of Delta, Agbor). A random sample of 500 lecturers were drawn from 5,951 teaching staff from three universities namely; Delta State University, Abraka, Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba and University of Delta, Agbor, using the stratified proportionate random sampling technique. The 500 respondents represent 8.40% of the population. Two instruments (Lecturers' Burnout Syndrome Questionnaire (LBSQ) and Psycho-demographic Questionnaire for Lecturers (P-DQL)) were used to collect data for the study. The reliability coefficients of the instruments ranged from 0.73 to 0.82 through Cronbach Alpha. Mean, standard deviation, one sample t-test, independent t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and regression statistics (simple and multiple) were the statistical tools deployed for the analysis of data collected.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities

Table 1: Summary of R value and ANOVA table showing the relationship between Emotional intelligence and Burnout Syndrome

Model	Simple R	R-Square	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error		
Values	.063	.003	.000	8.291		
Source of Variation	Sum of Square	DF	Mean Square	F-ration	Sig	Decision
Regression	68.883	2	68.883	1.105	.294	Not significant
Residual	201156.203	498	63.156			
Total	**201225.086**	**500**				

Table 1 shows an R-value of .063 and an R2-value of .003. The table also shows the test of significance relationship. The test output shows an F-ratio of 1.105, which is not significant at .05 level of significance. The implication of this test is that there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' burnout syndrome which is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. The result is that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' burnout syndrome.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between anxiety and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities

Table 2: Summary of R value and ANOVA table showing the relationship between Anxiety and Burnout Syndrome

Model	Simple R	R-Square	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error		
Values	.586	.351	.350	5.821		
Source of Variation	Sum of Square	DF	Mean Square	F-ration	Sig	Decision
Regression	6234.50	2	6234.50	106.130	.000	Not significant
Residual	16976.120	498	45.215			
Total	23210.62.086	500				

Table 2 shows an R-value of .586 and an R2-value of .351. The table also shows the test of significance relationship. The test output shows an F-ratio of 106.130, which is significant at .05 level of significance. The implication of this test is that there is positive relationship between anxiety and lecturers' burnout syndrome which is also significant. To this end, the null hypothesis is rejected. The result is that there is significant relationship between anxiety and lecturers' burnout syndrome.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities

Table 3: Summary of R value and ANOVA table showing the relationship between Perfectionism and Burnout Syndrome

Model	Simple R	R-Square	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error		
Values	.721	.431	.430	4.921		
Source of Variation	Sum of Square	DF	Mean Square	F-ration	Sig	Decision
Regression	8011.311	2	8011.311	207.130	.000	Not significant
Residual	14086.150	498	35.107			
Total	22097.461	500				

Table 3 shows an R-value of .0721 and an R2-value of .431. The table also shows the test of significance relationship. The test output shows an F-ratio of 207.130, which is not significant at .05 level of significance. The implication of this test is that there is no relationship between perfectionism and lecturers' burnout syndrome which is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. The result is that there is no significant relationship between perfectionism and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that emotional intelligence relates to lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities. This is in line with Coleman (2018) who asserted that emotional intelligence may predict burnout syndrome among university lecturers. Emotional intelligence is the capability of individuals to recognize their own emotions and those of others, establish relations with other individuals, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour, and manage or adjust emotions to adapt to surrounding environment and achieve one's goal. Thus, there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities.

The findings also showed that anxiety relates to lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities. This is in line with Cole (2014) who opined that anxiety is another psychological variable that may be linked to burnout syndrome among lecturers. Anxiety is a common psychological condition which acts as a protective factor against threatening situations. Thus, there is significant relationship between anxiety and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities.

More so, the findings revealed that perfectionism relates to lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities. This is in line with Urien & Urien (2024) lecturers' perfectionist attitude impact performance either negatively or positively depending on the ability of the lecturer. Contrary to the benefits of perfectionism, some studies associate it with a variety of issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and in extreme cases, burnout syndrome. Thus, there is no significant relationship between perfectionism and lecturers' burnout syndrome in Delta State universities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was concluded that emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with burnout, indicating that lecturers with high emotional intelligence are less likely to experience burnout. Anxiety is positively correlated with burnout, lecturers with high levels of anxiety are more likely to experience burnout. Perfectionism also positively relates with burnout, indicating that lecturers with high perfectionism tendencies are more likely to experience burnout. Based on the conclusion, it therefore recommended that emotional intelligence training programs may be beneficial in preventing burnout among lecturers. Anxiety reduction strategies, such as mindfulness and relaxation technique should be employed. Perfectionism should be addressed through interventions that promote realistic goal – setting and self-compasion. Lecturers should undergo training on the effect of burnout on their well-being and productivity. Lecturers should establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. They should learn to decline pressure of excessive commitments without due regard to their well-being. Offer flexible scheduling or remote work option.

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