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Leadership Styles and Work Overload as Predictors Of Emotional Exhaustion among Staff of Nigerian Custom Service

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Abstract

This study investigated the contributions of leadership styles and work overload in emotional exhaustion among custom staff in Nigerian.. Five hundred and eleven workers from some states in Nigeria participated in this study. They comprise 213 females and 298 males drawn from various states of the country, and were aged between 25-50 years, with a mean age of 35.10 years (SD=7.90). Leadership Styles Questionnaire was used to access leadership styles, Work overload sub-scale of the Work Stressor Questionnaire was used to access work overload and Emotional exhaustion sub-scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to assess emotional exhaustion. Data was analyzed using the hierarchical multiple regression. Results showed that autocratic leadership style ($\beta = .41, p < .01$), laissez-faire leadership style ($\beta = .29, p < .01$), and work overload ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), positively predicted emotional exhaustion. While democratic leadership style ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$) negatively predicted emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria. The results of the study were discussed, implications outlined, its limitations were delineated, and suggestions made for future studies.

Keywords: *Emotional exhaustion, leadership styles, nigerian workers, work overload*

Introduction

Stressed while in a workplace setting is a normal phenomenon, and because it seems normal, sometimes people fail to recognize the signs and symptoms of a completely different condition called Emotional Exhaustion which is the second component of Burnout. When stress begins to accumulate from negative or challenging events in life that just keep coming, you can find yourself in a state of feeling emotionally worn out and drained. For most people, emotional exhaustion tends to slowly build up over time. People experiencing emotional exhaustion often feel like they have no power or control over what happens in life. They may feel “stuck” or “trapped” in a situation and lose motivation. Over time, this chronic, stressed-out state can cause permanent damage to your health. Anyone experiencing long-term stress can become emotionally exhausted and overwhelmed. Burnout reduces an individual's productivity, saps their energy, leaving them feeling increasingly helpless, hopeless, cynical, and resentful. Most emotional exhaustion research has been guided by Christina Maslach's and Susan E. Jackson's three-component conceptualization of burnout. This model suggests burnout consists of three interrelated parts: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment. (Maslach, 1982), (Maslach & Jackson, 1976), (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Some new perspectives on how to prevent burnout as suggested by Christina Maslach, include two approaches. These two go about burnout differently in how they do not directly address stress, but rather the situation. The first approach includes recognizing how the relationship between person and situation are interacting. There may be some adjustment required to decrease the likelihood of burnout. Second, this approach takes burnout from a different standpoint and causes the person to evaluate their control over their situation. If the person has a better sense of their current situation and their ability to make decisions, they are less likely to get burned out (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

Burnout was initially found among human service professionals (those in constant interaction with people, like nurses, doctors and teachers), with an emphasis on the interpersonal relationship between provider and recipient (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Research on burnout was then extended to the study of professions that do not necessarily revolve around interpersonal relationships between

provider and recipient (e.g., Etzion, 1988), among athletes (e.g., Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996), and students (e.g., Schaufeli, Martinez, Marques Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002).

Burnout is not a symptom of work stress; it is the end result of unmanaged work stress (Altun, 2002). This phenomenon of burnout has been found to occur among individuals who work with people in emotionally charged situations. It is prominent in the human service professions (such as nursing, paramedics, teaching, social work and counselling) where extensive and direct face-to-face contact with other individuals is involved (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). It is considered to be a response to the chronic stress of dealing with other people, particularly when they are troubled or are having problems (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Burnout is likely to occur in people who feel overworked and unappreciated (Altun, 2002). Freudenberger (1974) added that the dedicated and the committed were the ones most prone to suffering burnout, because they work too much, too long, and too intensely. Freudenberger, in 1974, defined this syndrome as the feeling of defeat that derives from demands that require a high level of energy and employees' personal involvement.

The use of the term burnout began to appear with some regularity in the 1970's in the United States. Its use was presaged by Greene's 1961 novel, *A burnout case*. Earlier writings, both fictitious and non-fictitious indicated this phenomenon as extreme fatigue and loss of idealism and passion for one's job. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) indicated that burnout was first conceptualized as a social problem by both practitioners and social commentators long before it became the object of focus and systematic study by researchers. In other words, it first emerged as a social problem, not as a scholarly construct. Thus, the initial conception of burnout was shaped by pragmatic rather than academic concerns (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). In its pioneering phase of conceptual development, the focus was on clinical descriptions. Later there was a second empirical phase in which the emphasis shifted to systematic research on burnout, and in particular the assessment of the phenomenon.

The first few articles about burnout appeared in the mid-1970s in the United States (Freudenberger, 1974, 1975; Maslach, 1976). The significance of these first articles was that they provided the initial description of the burnout phenomenon, gave it its name, and showed that this psychological syndrome was relatively common among human service professionals. Freudenberger, a psychiatrist who was employed in an alternative health care agency, was the first to note that many of the volunteers with whom he was working experienced a gradual emotional depletion and loss of motivation and commitment. At about the same time, Maslach, a social psychology researcher, was studying the ways in which people cope with emotional arousal on the job. She was particularly interested in such cognitive strategies such as 'detached concern' and 'dehumanisation in self-defence.' From interviews with human service professionals emerged the realisation that the emotional stress inherent in these occupations could be harmful and debilitating. When by chance she described the results of her research to an attorney, she was told that poverty lawyers called this particular phenomenon 'burnout'.

Maslach and her colleagues (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Pines & Maslach, 1980) subsequently adopted the 'burnout' term, and they discovered that it was immediately recognised by their interviewees; thus, a new expression was born. Much of the work during this time consisted of personal experiences (e.g., Freudenberger, 1974, 1977a, 1977b) or narratives based on specific programs or case studies (e.g., Maslach & Pines, 1977; Pines & Maslach, 1978, 1980). Perlman and Hartman (1982) compiled a listing of the multiple conceptualisations used during this period. Definitions of burnout included: to fail, to wear out, become exhausted; a loss of creativity; a loss of commitment for work; an estrangement from clients, co-workers, job and agency; a syndrome of inappropriate attitudes toward clients and toward self, often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms. Although these notions of burnout were similar, they lacked a common and precise measure of burnout.

In a nutshell, burnout is not a new phenomenon, because it stretches from the past (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). As noted earlier, the development of burnout as a psychological construct emerged in two distinct phases: the pioneer phase, where a clinical approach prevailed which was characterised by merely describing the symptoms of the burnout syndrome; and the empirical phase, where social and organisational psychologists studied burnout more systematically, using standardised measures. The most commonly accepted definition of burnout is the three- component conceptualisation proposed by Maslach and her colleagues (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Pines & Maslach, 1980).

Pines & Aronson (1988) define burnout as 'a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding' (p. 9). According to these scholars, physical exhaustion is characterized by low energy, chronic fatigue, and weakness. Emotional exhaustion, the second component of burnout, involves primarily feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment. Mental exhaustion, the third component, is characterized by the development of negative attitudes toward one's self, work, and life itself.

According to Wright & Cropanzano (1998), Emotional exhaustion is a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion that results from excessive job, personal demands, and/or continuous stress. It describes a feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. It is manifested by both physical fatigue and a sense of feeling psychologically and emotionally "drained" (Zohar, 1997).

The most widely accepted definition of burnout is Maslach's three-component conceptualization (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Maslach and Jackson (1986, p. 1) defined burnout as 'a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people work of some kind'. According to Maslach (1993), emotional exhaustion captures the stress component of burnout, whereas depersonalisation reflects a dimension of interpersonal relations, and reduced personal accomplishment incorporates a dimension of self-evaluation.

The first component of burnout, emotional exhaustion, has been the most extensively studied factor in the burnout literature. This component of burnout, emotional exhaustion, describes the affective, feeling states of the individual. It is characterised by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotion are used up (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993); a state of regular and intense fatigue. This fatigue may coexist with feelings of frustration and tension as workers realise they cannot continue to give of themselves or be as responsible for clients as they had in the past (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). A common symptom is dread at the prospect of returning to work the next day.

The second component, depersonalisation or cynicism, adds an interpersonal dimension. Depersonalization (cynicism) is considered an attitude of distancing from work or the depersonalisation of clients. This shows the development of negative, callous, and cynical attitudes towards the recipients of one's services (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Workers may display a detached and an emotional callousness, and they may be cynical to co-workers, clients, and the organisation (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Although a certain degree of psychological distance may be necessary and even beneficial when dealing with stressful and highly arousing situations, too much detachment may result in the individual developing negative attitudes towards his or her clients/patients specifically, and everyone generally (Parker & Kulik, 1995). Visible symptoms include the use of derogatory or abstract language, strict compartmentalisation of professional lives, intellectualisation of the situation, withdrawal through longer breaks or extended conversations with co-workers, and an extensive use of jargon (Maslach & Pines, 1977).

The third and final component of burnout involves feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. Also referred to as low professional efficacy. It is characterised by a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively; referring to a sense of lack of achievement or incompetence at work. In other words, the individual experiences a decline in his or her feelings of job competence and successful achievement in their work or interactions with people (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Frequently there is the perception of a lack of progress or even lost ground. Feelings of diminished personal accomplishment may result from factors suggesting one is unappreciated or that one's efforts are ineffective (Jackson, Turner, & Brief, 1987), or from factors that suggest one's competence or performance is low (Burke, Shearer, & Deszca, 1984).

The popularity of burnout definition by Maslach and colleagues and its almost universal acceptance in recent years has corresponded with the growth and acceptance of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al. 1996). Its popularity relates to its ability to assess the three dimensions of burnout as proposed by Maslach, and also evidences supporting its psychometric properties in assessing the three dimensions of burnout.

The level of emotional exhaustion which is experienced by an employee is influenced by a variety of determinants, such as: personal resources, coping strategies, emotional culture, and supervisory regulation of display rules. Personal resources, such as status, social support, money, or shelter, may reduce or prevent an employee's emotional exhaustion. According to the Conservation of Resources theory (COR), people

strive to obtain, retain and protect their personal resources, either instrumental (for example, money or shelter), social (such as social support or status), or psychological (for example, self-esteem or sense of autonomy). The COR's theory suggest that people must invest resources in order to protect against resource loss, recover from losses, and regain resources. Therefore, those with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of orchestrating resource gain, whereas, for those with fewer resources, ongoing resource loss may result in a rapid influential loss spiral (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001, 2002, 1998). In a field study, those experiencing higher levels of job autonomy (the freedom to take initiative and exercise discretion in decision-making), low task complexity, supervisory support, and the internal locus of control (a tendency to attribute events to one's own control; such as the tendency to attribute a success to internal causes, like one's ability or effort, rather than external causes, such as good luck), tend to experience lower degrees of emotional exhaustion (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003). Similarly, researchers reveal that even though higher degree of using emotion regulation on the job is related to higher levels of employees' emotional exhaustion, when employees believe that they have autonomy in their job behaviors, emotion regulation, that is otherwise exhausting, is not associated with exhaustion at all (Grandey, Fisk & Steiner, 2005).

Another field study, basing on a sample of call center workers in a large telecommunications corporation, indicate that employees who are highly identified with the service work, possess higher levels of self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to succeed), and receive social support from their supervisors, are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion (Wilk & Moynihan, 2005). In a study done with college students, burnout resulted from a lifestyle that required extremely high amounts of effort with low support systems in place to aid with stress coping. The personal resource of support mechanisms (such as social support) was determined to be a huge benefit that reduced the negative effects of stress that can lead to burnout (Neumann, Finaly-Neumann & Reichel. 1990).

Researchers suggest that emotional exhaustion may be a result of using inadequate strategies in order to cope with problematic events on the job. Accordingly, there are empirical evidences that employees who tend to use more control strategies, which are considered more productive strategies (concerned with addressing the situation; such as direct action and help seeking) tend to experience lower levels of emotional exhaustion than do those who tend to use more escape strategies, which are considered inadequate strategies used to avoid problems; such as avoidance and resignation with the problematic situation (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003). Coping strategies can be used with a problem-focused perspective (previously called control strategies) or an avoidant/emotion-focused perspective (previously called escape strategies). Empirical research has found that exercising self-awareness, as a problem-focused strategy, and spending time with family, as an emotion-focused strategy, were the most used coping strategies (Sim, Zanardelli, Loughran, Mannarino & Hill, 2016).

A construct that might be a factor in emotional exhaustion in this study is work overload. In the fast-paced business sector, work overload is given little or no attention. The focus is on increasing the numbers to the detriment of employees' mental health. Understandably, work has to be done. So, one has to learn how to prevent work overload and still get the job done to thrive. Achieving both is possible with the right information and mindset. Work overload occurs when the responsibilities of a job are higher than an individual's available time, resources, or skillset (Odogwu, 2021). Sometimes, work overload is not just about one working overtime and leaving the office later than the required job hours. It could also be about one taking up tasks that are above one's current skillset. Hence, you have to stretch yourself beyond your capacity to deliver satisfactory results (Odogwu, 2021). In today's tech-driven workplace, there's a tendency for you to squeeze in more tasks to your schedule in an attempt to be more productive. The feeling of accomplishing a lot of work is indeed a confidence booster. But sadly, you are setting yourself up for technostress by taking on more than you can handle at every point in time (Odogwu, 2021).

Work overload can be classified as either qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative work overload is the result of stretching your skillset. While you may be good at your job in general, you lack the skill for certain tasks assigned to you. In a bid to prove your competence, you stretch yourself beyond your capacity (Odogwu, 2021). Quantitative work overload, on the other hand, entails doing excess work within a limited time. In this case, you may have the skillset for the task, but time isn't on your side (Odogwu, 2021). Both kinds of work overload have diverse effects on a worker and the job in different ways. The worker must be attentive enough to detect when he or she is gliding into work overload mode and stop himself or herself from going further. The desire to be either efficient or a little more productive is an easy excuse to get immersed in

excess work. Sometimes, the signs of work overload are masked as typical job challenges. As a result of this, you might not recognize it until you hit rock bottom.

Another variable of interest in this present study is leadership style. Leadership Styles are usually the behavioural patterns that a leader adopts to influence the behaviour of his followers, i.e. the way he gives directions to his subordinates and motivates them to accomplish the given objectives. A leadership style is a leader's method of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people (Kotter, 2021). Various authors have proposed identifying many different leadership styles as exhibited by leaders in the political, business or other fields. Studies on leadership style are conducted (Lindsay, 2011) in the military field, expressing an approach that stresses a holistic view of leadership, including how a leader's physical presence determines how others perceive that leader. The factors of physical presence in this context include military bearing, physical fitness, confidence, and resilience.

A leader's conceptual abilities include agility, judgment, innovation, interpersonal tact, and domain knowledge. Leaders are characterized as individuals who have differential influence over the setting of goals, logistics for coordination, monitoring of effort, and rewards and punishment of group members (Stanik-Hutt, 2008). Domain knowledge encompasses tactical and technical knowledge as well as cultural and geopolitical awareness. One of the key reasons why certain leadership styles are blocked with positive outcomes for employees and organizations is the extent to which they build follower trust in leaders (Legood, Van der Werff, Lee, & Den Hartog, 2021). Trust in the leader has been linked to a range of leadership styles and evidence suggests that when followers trust their leaders they are more willing and able to go the extra mile to help their colleagues and organization. Trust also enables them to feel safe to speak up and share their ideas. In contrast, when a leader does not inspire trust, a follower's performance may suffer as they must spend time and energy watching their backs.

Daniel Goleman (2000) in his article "Leadership that Gets Results" talks about six styles of leadership. The autocratic leadership style particularly emphasises the distinction between authoritarian leaders and their followers. These types of leaders make sure to create only a distinct professional relationship. They regard direct supervision as fundamental in maintaining a successful environment and followership. Authoritarian leadership styles often follow the vision of those that are in control, and may not necessarily be compatible with those that are being led. Authoritarian leaders focus on efficiency, potentially seeing other styles, such as a democratic style, as a hindrance to progress. Examples of authoritarian leadership include a police officer directing traffic, a teacher ordering a student to do their assignment, and a supervisor instructing a subordinate to clean a workstation. All of these positions require a distinct set of characteristics that give the leader the position to get things in order or to get a point across. Authoritarian traits include: setting goals individually, engaging primarily in one-way and downward communication, controlling discussion with followers, and dominating interactions (Chira, 2016). Several studies have confirmed a relationship between bullying, on the one hand, and an autocratic leadership and an authoritarian way of settling conflicts or dealing with disagreements, on the other. An authoritarian style of leadership may create a climate of fear, leaving little or no room for dialogue, and where subordinates may regard complaining as futile (Salin & Helge, 2010). As such, authoritarian styles have sometimes been associated with reduced group-member satisfaction as compared to that in more democratic leadership styles (Forsyth, 2010). This form of leadership becomes very prominent during times of war, just like in the days of Stalin and Mussolini.

Paternalistic leadership is useful in advocacy and advocating on behalf of another (Hooper, 2008). A paternalistic leader acts as a parental figure by taking care of their subordinates as a parent would. In this style of leadership, the leader supplies complete concern for their followers or workers. In return they receive the complete trust and loyalty of their people. Workers under this style of leadership are expected to become totally committed to what the leader believes and will forego opportunities to work independently. The relationship between these co-workers and leader are extremely solid. The workers are expected to stay with a company for a longer period of time because of the loyalty and trust. Not only do they treat each other like family inside the work force, but outside too. These workers are able to go to each other with any problems they have because they believe it will truly help them (Erben, Guneser, Gul & Ayse, 2008). One of the downsides to a paternalistic leader is that the leader could start to play favourites in decisions. This leader would include the workers more apt to follow and start to exclude the ones who were less loyal. According to Padavic and Earnest, authors of "Business Dimensional and Organizational Counselling",

paternalism is more difficult to come by in today's market. They believe this because there is a rise in lay-offs and stronger unionization. This affects paternalistic leaders because the co-workers may not believe that their jobs are 100% ensured. When this happens, workers begin to look for bigger and better job opportunities instead of staying at one company for a longer period of time. Because of this, the leader may not fully believe an employee staying with their organization when another job opportunity is discussed. This could put the workers and leader at risk for a bad situation (Erben, Guneser, Gul & Ayse, 2008).

According to B. M. Bass, who wrote *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, workers who follow paternalistic leadership also have better organization skills. The leader encourages organization because they allow the workers to complete tasks so that they can stay on top of their work. The workers complete their tasks and this boosts self-confidence and it makes them work harder to reach a goal and exceed the goal to prove to their boss they are working hard. Having this style of leadership can also help implement a reward system. This system will allow their workers to work even better because there is something for them at the end of the tunnel. While doing this they will also be able to accomplish more work in a set time frame (Erben, Guneser, Gul & Ayse, 2008).

Even though paternalistic leadership style is practiced in majority of places such as India, South east Asia, Middle East and Africa, there hasn't been concrete empirical research on the implications of this leadership style due to the pre-conceived negative notions of the Western Literature (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang & Farh, 2004). These negative notions arise due to differences in the intrinsic cultural aspects defined by Geert Hofstede's study (1980). He stated that North American and Western European countries classify themselves as an individualistic culture that is centred around the principles of egalitarianism, lack of in-group interdependence, direct communication and low power distance. Therefore, from a western perspective, the authoritative aspects of paternalism are not accepted innately whereas the parental aspect of this leadership style is looked upon as an invasion of privacy as personal and professional lives are two separate facets of life. On the other hand, paternalistic leadership style is quite effective and successful in non-western cultures which are collectivistic in nature as these societies look up to their leaders as a fatherly figure and rely upon him for guidance and protection in return of deference and loyalty, thereby aligning with the principles of paternalistic style. It is essential that extensive research be initiated, from a Non-Western point of view to understand the implications of this leadership style on social, cultural and organisational metrics without any negative bias. This would help in better comprehension of factors which lead to successful leaders and organisations in emerging economies where paternalistic leadership style is practiced at large.

The democratic leadership style consists of the leader sharing the decision-making abilities with group members by promoting the interests of the group members and by practicing social equality (Foster, 2002). The boundaries of democratic participation tend to be circumscribed by the organization or the group needs and the instrumental value of people's attributes (skills, attitudes, etc.). The democratic style encompasses the notion that everyone, by virtue of their human status, should play a part in the group's decisions. However, the democratic style of leadership still requires guidance and control by a specific leader. The democratic style demands the leader to make decisions on who should be called upon within the group and who is given the right to participate in, make, and vote on decisions (Woods, 2010). Research has found that this leadership style is one of the most effective and creates higher productivity, better contributions from group members, and increased group morale. Democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more creative solutions to problems because group members are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas. While democratic leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles, it does have some potential downsides. In situations where roles are unclear or time is of the essence, democratic leadership can lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects. Democratic leadership works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan, and then vote on the best course of action (Martin-dale, 2011).

The laissez-faire leadership style is where all the rights and power to make decisions is fully given to the followers. This was first described by Lewin, Lippitt, and White in 1939, along with the autocratic leadership and the democratic leadership styles (Kevin Wren, 2013). Laissez-faire leaders allow followers to have complete freedom to make decisions concerning the completion of their work. It allows followers a self-rule, while at the same time offering guidance and support when requested. The laissez-faire leader

using guided freedom provides the followers with all materials necessary to accomplish their goals, but does not directly participate in decision making unless the followers request their assistance.

- The leader cannot or will not provide regular feedback to their followers.

This leadership style has been associated with lower productivity than both autocratic and democratic styles of leadership and with lower group member satisfaction than democratic leadership (Forsyth, 2010). Some researchers have suggested that laissez-faire leadership can actually be considered non-leadership or leadership avoidance (Bono & Judge, 2010).

Transactional leaders focus their leadership on motivating followers through a system of rewards and punishments. There are two factors which form the basis for this system: Contingent reward; and management-by-exception.

- Contingent reward provides rewards, materialistic or psychological, for effort and recognizes good performance.
- Management-by-exception allows the leader to maintain the status quo. The leader intervenes when subordinates do not meet acceptable performance levels and initiates corrective action to improve performance. Management by exception helps reduce the workload of managers being that they are only called-in when workers deviate from course.

This type of leader identifies the needs of their followers and gives rewards to satisfy those needs in exchange for a certain level of performance. Transactional leaders focus on increasing the efficiency of established routines and procedures. They are more concerned with following existing rules than with making changes to the organization.

Advocates of transformational leadership portray the transformational leader as a type of person not limited by followers' perception (Schultz & Schultz, 1998). Advocates should strive to assist individuals in regaining and enhancing their ideas in an efficient and timely manner which requires leadership (Hooper, 2008). The main objective is to work to *change* or *transform* their followers' *needs* and *redirect* their thinking (Schultz & Schultz, 2010). Leaders who follow the transformation style of leading, challenge and inspire their followers' ideas with a sense of purpose and excitement (Schultz & Schultz, 2010).

Transformational leaders also create a vision of what they aspire to be, and communicate this idea to their followers (Carless, Wearing & Mann, 2000). Schultz and Schultz identify three characteristics of a transformational leader:

- Charismatic leadership has a broad field of knowledge, has a self-promoting personality, high/great energy level, and willing to take risk and use irregular strategies in order to stimulate their followers to think independently
- Individualized consideration
- Intellectual stimulation

Statement of the Problem

Emotional exhaustion has drawn an increasing number of investigations right from its onset. As initially investigated and reported to occur among service workers, it came to be discovered that teachers, lecturers, government officials, workers and management of corporations, organizations and unions also experience the burnout syndrome, which has led to a number of enquiries to understand its peculiarity among workers. Although a substantial number of studies have investigated emotional exhaustion phenomena in the workplace setting, there are sparse literatures that have delved into investigating how leadership styles and work overload predict emotional exhaustion among workers especially in Nigeria. Burnout in workers occur when they feel exhausted due to variety of factors in the workplace setting that play on them, making them to be emotionally exhausted, have a detached or cynical attitude to their work, of which the resultant effect is reduced personal accomplishment in their work or career, and to the organization and society in entirety. The knowledge that will be distilled from this present study will inform policy making in organizations, since understanding how the burnout syndrome play in personnel working life and career, personal, family and social lives is pertinent to knowing how to motion and regulate policies, especially as it affects workers.

Making good policies through effective administration and legislation will help workers to achieve higher success in their various organizations and boom the productive output of their organization, and the nation at large.

Purpose of Study

The sole aim and objective of this present study is to investigate if leadership styles and work overload are predictors of emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria.

1. Autocratic leadership style will positively predict emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria.
2. Democratic leadership style will negatively predict emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria.
3. Laissez-faire leadership style will positively predict emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria.
4. Work overload will positively predict emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria.

Methods

Participants

A total of five hundred and eleven workers (41.7% females and 58.3% males) from staff of the Nigerian Customs in Kaduna State Command. Their age ranges from 25-50 years, with a mean age of 35.10 ($SD=7.90$) years. With regards to educational qualification, 52 (10.2%) were SSCE holders, 68 (13.3%) were ND, 114 (13.3%) were HND, 187 (36%) were Bachelor's Degree holders, 85 (16.6%) were Master's degree, while 5 (1%) of the participants were Doctorate. The participants included 229 persons who were never married, 214 married persons, 34 divorced and 34 widowed. Majority of the participants practice Christian religion (276); 91 practice Islamic religion; 72 were traditional worshipers and others were 72. The eligibility criterion for participating in the study was being personnel in of Nigeria custom services.

Instruments

Leadership Styles Questionnaire (Northouse, 2014)

The Leadership Styles Questionnaire (LSQ), developed by Peter G. Northouse (2014) is a self-report inventory designed to identify one's style of supervision/leadership. And to examine how one's supervisory/leadership style relates to other styles of leadership. It consists of 18-items, arranged on a 5-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree. The measure has three dimensions which include: Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-faire. Sample items on the measure includes: "as a rule, leaders should allow employees to appraise their own work", "It is fair to say that most employees are lazy", "effective supervisors give orders and clarify procedures", "it is the supervisors job to help the employees find their passion". Saad and colleagues (2020) documented evidence of face validity and back-to-back translation in a sample of Malaysian respondents. They also conducted a reliability test of which the principal component analysis and Cronbach's Alpha was done. The present researcher conducted a pilot study to validate the instrument for the present study on a sample of 193 workers (Males = 100, Females = 93). The items yielded an internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha of .737, which was considered to be good.

Work Stressor Questionnaire (Work Overload Subscale)

The 5-item Work Overload subscale measure of the Work Stressor Questionnaire (WSQ), developed by the American Institute for Preventive Medicine (2019) was used to measure the workers' stressors at the workplace which includes work overload. It consists of 5 items scored on a five-point Likert-style scale: 1 (Never) to 5 (Constantly). Sample items include: "Co-workers are inefficient", "Shortage of help at work", "Often take work at home to complete". The Work Stressor Questionnaire was reported to be reliable and validly satisfying when used for the male population especially (BMC Public Health, 2019) (APIM, 2019). The present researcher conducted a pilot study to validate the instrument for the present study on a

sample of 193 workers (Males = 100, Females = 93). The items yielded an internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha of .698, which was considered to be good.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (Emotional Exhaustion Subscale) (Maslach and Susan Jackson, 1981).

The Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach burnout inventory was developed by Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson (1981). It is the most widely used instrument to measure emotional exhaustion in the workplace and is a 9-item scale with a 7 Likert type response format 0 (never) to 6 (everyday). High scores on the scale are indicative of emotional exhaustion. Several studies carried out by Iwanicki & Schwab (1981) and Gold (1984) support internal reliability. Cronbach alpha ratings of 0.90 for emotional exhaustion were reported by Schwab; very similar ratings were reported by Gold. Time periods of a few weeks, 3 months, and 1 year were used for test-retest reliability. Scores in the few week range were the highest (.60-.82) whereas scores in the year range were the lowest (0.54-0.60).

Procedure

The study was carried out at the Nigerian Customs commands in Kaduna, (Kano, Bauchi, Rivers and Enugu States). The researcher and five trained research assistants visited these organizations from July to December, 2023. Upon arrival at each unit, the research assistants would introduce themselves, explain the nature and aim of the study, and obtain informed consent from the participants. A letter seeking the consent of the participants was also appended to the first page of each questionnaire. Participants were urged to respond to each questionnaire as honestly as possible. The study lasted over a period of six months. The questionnaires were given to those that were willing to participate in the study. There was no monetary reward given to participants. The researcher, however, appreciated the participants verbally. Out of 550 questionnaires distributed only 511 questionnaires were valid for computation and data analysis.

Design/Statistics

The study is primarily a survey, and cross-sectional design was adopted. The data obtained from participants were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS®) version 26. Pearson's correlation (r) analysis was conducted to determine the relationships that exist between the study variables, while hierarchical multiple regression was employed to statistically test study hypotheses. The choice of correlation and regression was based on Urbina (2004) assertion that correlation allow researchers to make predictions by implying a certain amount of common shared variance, while regressions play a major role in demonstrating linkages between (a) scores on different tests (b) test scores and non-test (demographic) variables, (c) scores on parts of tests and scores on whole tests, etc. (Urbina, 2004). Some authors (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001; Mendellhall, Beaver, & Beaver, 2009) assert that multiple regression analysis allows researchers to simultaneously use several predictor variables. Thus, one would be able to explain the variations or differences in the dependent variables and make more accurate predictions.

Results

The results of the findings of this study are presented in this chapter. The descriptive statistics and correlations of the demographic variables and study variables are shown in Table 1, while findings of the regression analysis are shown in Table 2 and 3.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and correlations of demographic variables, leadership styles, work overload and emotional exhaustion

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.42	.49	1					
2. Age	35.10	7.90	-.03	1				
3. Marital Status	1.78	.83	-.01	.05	1			
4. Education	3.65	1.42	-.04	.01	-.07	1		

5. Religion	1.88	1.11	-.03	-.01	.01	.01							1	
6. Ethnicity	2.11	1.07	-.03	.02	.01	.01							.01	1
7. Autocratic	11.12	3.11	-.11*	.01	-.01	.06							.01	.0
8. Democratic	10.72	2.05	-.10*	.01	.02	.04							.07	
													.04	.25**
9. Laissez-faire	9.38	1.77	-.04	.06	.01	.01	.07	.07	.11*	.40**	1			
10. Work overload	7.72	1.44	-.07	.01	-.01	.02	.04	.04	.47**	.62**	.66*	1		
11. Em. Exhaustion	16.57	2.85	-.11**	.04	.04	.01	.01	.01	.49**	.51**	.46**	.48*		
						* 1								

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, $N=511$

The correlation in table 1 reveals that there are significant correlations between religion and emotional exhaustion ($r=.35, p<.01$), autocratic leadership style and emotional exhaustion ($r=.49, p<.01$), democratic and emotional exhaustion ($r=-.51, p<.01$), laissez-faire and emotional exhaustion ($r=.46, p<.01$), and between work overload and emotional exhaustion ($r=.48, p<.01$). There are also significant relationships between work overload and autocratic ($r=.47, p<.01$), democratic and work overload ($r=.62, p<.01$), laissez-faire and work overload ($r=.67, p<.01$). There are also significant relationships between democratic and laissez-faire ($r=.48, p<.01$), and between gender and autocratic ($r=-.11, p<.05$). The correlation table also showed the means and standard deviation of the studied variables.

Table 2: Model summary table for the demographic, leadership styles, work overload and emotional exhaustion.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
						R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.696 ^a	.485	.478		2.055	.485	78.959	6	504	.000	
2	.981 ^b	.962	.962		.557	.478	2120.059	3	501	.000	
3	.987 ^c	.978	.974		.461	.012	231.191	1	500	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Marital, Gender, Religion, Age, Education

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Marital, Gender, Religion, Age, Education, LAISSEZ-FAIRE, AUTOCRATIC, DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

c. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Marital, Gender, Religion, Age, Education, LAISSEZ-FAIRE, AUTOCRATIC

The result of the regression analysis as presented in table 2 shows that the variables (demographics) accounted for 48.5% (R^2 change) variance in emotional exhaustion which is significant (F change (6, 504) = 78.96, $p<.01$). In the second hierarchical regression model, the predictor variables (leadership styles) accounted for 47.8% (R^2 change) variance in emotional exhaustion which is significant (F change (3, 501) = 2120.05, $p<.01$). In the third hierarchical model, work overload accounted for 1.2% (R^2 change) variance in emotional exhaustion which is also significant (F change (1, 500) = 231.91, $p<.01$).

Table 3: Regression coefficient results for the demographics, leadership styles and work overload on emotional exhaustion

In the regression coefficient table 3, result reveals that at the first hierarchical model, among the demographic variable gender ($\beta = -.11, p<.01$), marital status, ($\beta = .59, p<.01$), and religion ($\beta = .34, p<.01$) significantly predicted emotional exhaustion. At the second hierarchical model after demographics were controlled, autocratic leadership style ($\beta = .41, p<.01$), democratic leadership style ($\beta = -.28, p<.01$) and laissez-faire leadership style ($\beta = .29, p<.01$) predicted emotional exhaustion. Both autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles were positive predictors while democratic leadership style negatively predicted

emotional exhaustion. At the third hierarchical model, work overload positively predicted emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .19, p < .01$).

Discussion

This study investigated the contributions of leadership styles and work overload in emotional exhaustion amongst workers in Nigeria. The results indicated that work overload positively predicted emotional exhaustion. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that work overload will positively predict emotional exhaustion was supported. This finding is consistent with the findings of García-Arroyo et al. (2019). The authors examined the relationship between work overload and emotional exhaustion amongst teachers. The results also showed a positive relationship between autocratic leadership style and emotional exhaustion; positive relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and emotional exhaustion; a negative relationship between democratic leadership style and emotional exhaustion. Thereby supporting the hypothesis which states that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership style will positively predict emotional exhaustion while democratic leadership styles will negatively predict it. The current result implies that workers in Nigeria are emotionally exhausted when there are stress and tensions caused by an autocrat or autocratic leadership patterns. Workers in Nigeria do not like a laissez-faire system caused by disorganization and stress which can lead to emotional exhaustion. Also workers in Nigeria tend to overload themselves with work in order not to be replaced or sacked and also for promotion. Poor management and shortage of personnel can cause work overload as well as underpay which leads to emotional exhaustion. Democratic leadership style is most preferred by Nigerian workers as they are allowed to voice their opinions on matters involving them. They are welcomed to the round table which makes them enthusiastic and more productive thereby not feeling emotionally exhausted.

Implications of the findings

This study and other similar ones have shown that emotional exhaustion, from its inception is a dreaded phenomenon which have a negative impact on one's performance, especially as a worker. Research have shown that emotional exhaustion is implicated in employee poor performance and eventually low productivity of the organization. Thus, this present study has shown that good management, proper organization and good leadership in the workplace makes emotional exhaustion less, or takes it entirely out of the picture. When workers have a sense of belonging to the decision making process, and sees the institution as a personal and collective responsibility, by implication, they will increase their performance both in the workplace and family dimensions and reducing the chances of experiencing emotional exhaustion.

This study will inform stakeholders in various institutions, in Nigeria to implement policies that will cater to employees' welfare, such as good leadership/management organization, job appraisal, conducive environment, enhanced physical and mental health, good pay for job satisfaction and high productivity.

It is important for various institutions to adopt a preventative (instead of reactive) model regarding emotional exhaustion. The mental health and financial situation of workers should be monitored, and support structures should be established for workers by their institutions. In essence, institutions should develop intervention strategies that meet the unique needs of workers who are either at risk of, or suffering from, emotional exhaustion.

Through the use of validated instruments, mental health specialists (Psychologists) in institutions will determine the profiles of workers who are at high risk of emotional exhaustion in their workplace. Mental health practitioners in institution could then draw the attention of the organization on the consequences of emotional exhaustion, and thus, the pressure mounted on workers by their various institutions could be reduced significantly during redress. Workplace seminars, workshops and training of all personnel should be encouraged.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that the study was exclusive to few states, which may make generalization of the results to the entire population of Nigerian workers difficult, or impossible. Another limitation is that the instruments used were self-report instruments, and one of the disadvantages of self-report measures is that they encourage, or make fake or exaggerated responses from respondents possible- social desirability

bias. Another possible limitation of the study is that as a correlational study, it does not show for relationship between variables, but on the other hand, it does not show causation. In other words, correlational studies cannot prove cause-effect relationship.

Suggestion for Future Studies

Future studies should endeavour to incorporate more participants from all states of the nation, which will build in strong evidence in this area of research. Also, a larger sample should be used. This will make for credibility in the generalization of the findings to the general population. Furthermore, a longitudinal study is needed to determine trends in leadership styles, work overload and emotional exhaustion.

Summary and Conclusion

The study aimed at finding out if leadership styles and work overload will predict emotional exhaustion amongst workers in Nigeria. The theories reviewed in the course of these studies include: Inter-Role Conflict Theory, Spillover Theory, Great-Man Theory, Trait Theory, Contingency Theories (Situational), Style and Behaviour Theory, Process Leadership Theory, Transactional Theory, Transformational Theory, Cherniss Process Model of Burnout, Golembiewski's Phase Model of Burnout, Leiter and Maslach's Model of Burnout Development, Conservation of Resources Theory. A substantial amount of empirical works was also reviewed. Basically, emotional exhaustion literature among workers are sparse, hence, the concentration of the emotional exhaustion phenomenon was nurtured.

A total of five hundred and eleven students from some states in Nigeria, participated in the study. The participants included 213 females and 298 males. The participants included 229 singles, 214 married, 34 widowed and 34 divorced. Majority of the participants practice Christian religion (276); 91 practice Islamic religion; 72 traditionalists and 72 others. The eligibility criterion for participating in the study is being a worker in an organization. The instruments used in this study included: 18-item Leadership Styles Questionnaire; 5-item Work Overload subscale of the Work Stressor Questionnaire; and 9-item Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Pearson correlation and hierarchical multiple regression was adopted in analyzing the data. Also, a pilot study was conducted to validate the Leadership Styles Questionnaire and the Work Overload subscale of the Work Stressor Questionnaire.

Results showed that (a) autocratic leadership styles positively predicted emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria (b) laissez-faire leadership styles positively predicted emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria (c) democratic leadership styles negatively predicted emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria (d) work overload positively predicted emotional exhaustion among workers in Nigeria

In conclusion, institutions stakeholders' attention should be drawn on the effects of emotional exhaustion on workers' performance, so that they will make and implement policies that will take care of workers' welfare both physically, financial, and mental.

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