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THE PREDICTIVE VALUE OF LENGTH OF SERVICE, ROLE BURDEN AND ALCOHOL USE ON SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STAFF

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Abstract

Employee subjective happiness at various organisations has continued to receive research attention in recent times. Perhaps, this might be linked to the idea of enhancing the overall employee efficiency and organisational effectiveness. In view of this, we examined the independent and joint predictive values of length of service, role burden and alcohol use on subjective happiness among staff in a Nigerian University. This study adopted a cross sectional design and conveniently sampled 255 (134 males; 121 females) teaching and non-teaching staff of ages between 20 and 57 years (M= 36.45, SD= 7.02) in Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Nigeria. The participants responded to a questionnaire comprising demographic characteristics and reliable scales measuring role overload (burden), alcohol use and subjective happiness. Results of a three-model hierarchical multiple regression showed that independently, University staff with longer length of service reported higher levels of subjective happiness and those with less role burden reported higher level of subjective happiness. However, no direct associations were observed between alcohol use and gender on level of subjective happiness. Length of service, role burden and alcohol use jointly predicted subjective happiness with a remarkable 43% (R^2 =.43) variation of subjective happiness; and role burden recorded highest and substantial contribution. In conclusion, University staff with longer service and those with less job-related roles are more delightful at work. We recommend stress management training coupled with discouragement on the use of alcohol as a coping method for all University staff irrespective of their gender.

Keywords: Alcohol use, happiness, role burden, University staff, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Management of universities is expected to ensure the wellbeing and happiness of its staff. This is important because, the overall happiness of university staff may contribute to their efficiency at work, which in the long run may lead to organisational effectiveness. In other words, happy university staff are expected to be more productive, committed to work and loyal to the institution. Evidence has shown across various categories of organisation that there is a strong positive

relationship between employee happiness and level of productivity (Wesarat, Sharif & Majid, 2015; Djoen & Hewagamage, 2016; Bellet, De Neven & Ward, 2020). For instance, Rashid et al., (2014) reported that low level of happiness among university staff could lead to negative staff behaviour. These negative staff behaviours may include failure to complete assigned duties, negativity, unexcused absences and failure to give best efforts at work, among others. Nevertheless, evaluation of subjective happiness and its probable associated factors in the university staff population is still largely understudied across countries (Jeffrey at al., 2017), including Nigeria. One benefit of such a study is that findings would inform management of universities about the motivating factors that can ensure sustainability of human capital and organisational development.

Subjective happiness occurs when an individual is full of positive emotions with love, optimism and pleasure. The concept of subjective happiness is important because it explains how individuals personally evaluate their own feelings. Mohammed (2019) explains happiness as an expression of pleasant forms of emotions, mood, optimistic attitude and wellbeing, which are vital at workplace. In the university setting, happy teaching and non-teaching staff will like and recall their fellow staff, the students and the management in more favourable terms than those who are unhappy. To be happy as an employee would make the person to have a sense of purpose and meaning in the workplace. However, the feeling of happiness in some individuals is hindered by some factors (Diener & Diener, 1996), which may be categorised as individual or job-related factors. Investigation into the roles of these two categories of factors in University staff's happiness is important.

Individual-related factors are inherent in the employees themselves and may have influence on their subjective happiness. Some of the individual-related factors associated with employees' wellbeing may include genetics, knowledge, attitudes, skills and personal characteristics. In the context of the current study, alcohol use is an individual-related factor in that a university staff member who highly values his or her wellbeing is more likely to quit alcohol intake or not; depending on his or her attitude toward alcohol use. Job-related factors emanate from job itself and may contribute to employees' happiness. These may include work environment, promotion at work, work and family roles, content of work and co-worker relationship or support, among others. For example, job title and workers in managerial or administrative positions have been reported to have relationship with happiness in workplace (Weaver, 1980). In view of this, presence of role burden as a job-related factor may reduce level of happiness among University staff.

Reilly (1982) defined role overload (burden) as a state of conflict that occurs when there is a discrepancy between the degree of demands and the resources available for a worker to complete a lot of pressing tasks in workplace. We therefore, explain role burden as a situation where conflicting directives, conflicting work demands, conflicting instructions, conflicting role communications exceed the time and resources given to university staff. Role

burden has been reported to have association with a number of variables such as time constraints, management of resources and others (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001). Other variables found to have correlated with role burden include job satisfaction, job performance, job stress, job control (Iroegbu, 2014; Salam, 2014; Huang, 2017; Ida I Dewa Gede, Saraswati & Hariadi, 2017; Kim, Lee & Shin, 2019). Most of these previous studies reported considerable contributions of role burden in explaining some organisational outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction among employees. However, how role burden contributes to level of subjective happiness of staff in university setting is largely unattended to. However, this is important to ensure quality teaching and non-teaching staff and their wellbeing, and increase organisational productivity and effectiveness.

Generally, alcohol use among employees has been reported to be prevalent and have some behavioural consequences such as health problems, poor role or work performance, absenteeism, loss of job, workplace accidents, among others (Normand, Lempert & O'Brien, 1994; Elliot & Shelley, 2006; Rehm, Taylor & Room, 2006; Bouchery, Hardwoond, Sacks, Simon & Brewer, 2011; Frone, 2013). Alcohol use among University staff is also a recurrent subject of research that could have contribution to their subjective happiness. Alcohol use is an individual-related factor that may have a negative effect on staff's level of happiness. There are several motivations identified in the literature for the use of alcohol by different populations. For examples, Frone (2016) stated that employees use alcohol for self-medication in order to reduce the resultant negative affect of exposure to work-related stress. Other studies have showed that alcohol use could have negative effect on employees' wellbeing. In Nigeria, Onyishi and Ugwu (2012) reported that alcohol use is negatively associated with University staff's work engagement. From the aforementioned studies, it can be inferred that alcohol use has negative implication on employee workplace outcomes. It means that some university staff might resort to the use of alcohol as a method of coping with work-related or life challenges in order to make them feel happy.

Asides role burden and alcohol use, the period a staff spends in a workplace may have a link with his or her subjective happiness. Thus, length of service in a university is considered an important demographic variable that can predict level of subjective happiness among staff. For instance, length of service has been reported to have a strong influence on employee workplace loyalty (Strenitzerova & Achimsky, 2019), especially among happy employees. Also, gender disparity is expected in how individuals feel happy at their workplace. Studies have reported that there is gender difference in happiness (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015; Hori & Kamo, 2017). Thus, examining gender difference in subjective happiness among University staff is relevant. The aims of study were to examine the role of length of service; role burden and alcohol use on subjective happiness among University staff in Nigeria and observe gender difference in level of happiness. Expectations for each of these roles in explaining happiness is crucial. The purpose of this study was twofold: First, the study examined if role burden and alcohol use independently

and jointly predicted subjective happiness among staff in a Nigerian university. Second, the study explored gender difference in subjective happiness among staff in a Nigerian university.

Hypotheses
Based on the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses are tested:
i. Length of service, role burden and alcohol use will independently and jointly predict subjective happiness among University staff.
ii. Male and female University staff will differ in subjective happiness.

METHOD

Design
The present study made use of a cross sectional research design. The design was chosen because data were collected once from the participants. The predictor variables are length of service, role burden and alcohol use, while the criterion variable is happiness. Length of service was measured on ratio scale. Role burden, alcohol use and subjective happiness were measured on interval scale since they are behavioural concepts that an individual cannot have absolute score when assessed. The gender of the university staff was measured on nominal scale.

Participants
The authors used a convenience sample of staff of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The inclusion criterion for those who participated in the study was that all participants should be above 18years old. Altogether, 255 participants comprising 134 (52.5%) males and 121 (47.5%) females participated in the study. Ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 57 years ($M = 36.46$, $SD = 7.02$), while a minimum of one year and a maximum of 28 years were recorded for the length of service and an average of 5.55 years. Two hundred and two (79.2%) of the participants were Christians, 47(18.4%) were Muslims and 6(2.4%) were adherents Traditional African religion. The distribution of marital status showed that 64(25.1%) of the respondents were singles, 174(68.2%) were married and 17(6.7%) were divorced. In terms of ethnic groups of those who participated in the study, 192(75.3%) of them were Yoruba, 53(20.8%) were Igbo and 10(3.9%) were Hausa.

Analysis of the respondents' educational attainment indicated that 7(2.7%) had Doctoral degree, 22(8.6%) had Master degree, 116(45.5%) had Bachelor's degree, 39(15.3%) had Higher National Diploma, 19(7.5%) had National Certificate of Education, 32(12.5%) had Ordinary National Diploma and 20(7.8%) had Senior Secondary School Certificate.

Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. This questionnaire comprises of a demographic variable and scales measuring role burden, alcohol consumption and happiness as follows:

Demographic variables: This comprises of the question requesting the sex, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity and educational attainment.

Role Burden: This was assessed using the Role Overload scale consisting of 13 items. The Reilly Role Overload Scale was developed by Reilly (1982). Respondents are expected to indicate their level of agreement to the tests items in 5-point Likert response format. Strongly disagree (scored 1) to strongly agree (scored 5). High score on the scale indicates higher role burden, while low score indicates lower role overload. Example of item in the test is "I don't ever seem to have any time for myself". The scale has a well-established Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 was obtained.

Alcohol Use: This was measured using the 5-item Alcohol Use Questionnaire developed by Piccinelli et al., (1997). Respondents are expected to indicate their level of agreement to the tests items in 5-point Likert response format. Never (scored 1) to Always (scored 5). High score on the scale indicates higher alcohol use, while low score indicates lower alcohol use. Example of item in the test is "How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?" A Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 was reported for the scale, while 0.84 reliability coefficient was obtained in the current study.

Subjective Happiness: This was measured by the Subjective Happiness Scale developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999). This is a 4-item scale, which respondents chose one of five options that finish a given sentence fragment in the scale. High score on the scale indicates higher subjective happiness, while low score indicates lower subjective happiness. Example of item in the test is "In general, I consider myself happy". The scale has a well-established Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, and 0.89 was reported for the scale in the current study.

Procedure and Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration is the method, procedure or perspective the authors took in reaching the participants, and how they were briefed about the study's objectives. Institutional ethical approval was obtained for the study. The authors sought for the participants' informed consents; and these were verbally given. Participants were approached at their various offices. Directions on how to complete the questionnaire were given and participants were encouraged to be as honest as possible. They were assured of confidentiality concerning the information supplied in the questionnaire. Those who could not complete the questionnaire at the time of giving it to them collected it and requested they submit it later. Although, 300 questionnaires were distributed, 291 were retrieved from the staff, and 255 properly completed copies of the questionnaire were used for data analysis in the study. The response rate of 85% was recorded from the total number of the

questionnaires distributed. At the end of the exercise, the participants were thanked for the time spent.

Data Analysis

The data were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (IBMM SPSS Statistics 20). Demographic characteristics of respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics consisting of frequencies, percentages, mean, range and standard deviation. The analysis also involved the use of inferential statistics to test the two hypotheses stated in the study. Specifically, the first hypothesis was tested using hierarchical multiple regression in order to determine the joint and respective independent contributions of the predictor variables to the criterion variable. The second hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples in order to compare means of male and female staff on the dependent variable. All results were significant at 0.05 level.

RESULTS

Bivariate results

Table 1 presents the bivariate correlation of all variables. This indicates how each of the variables relates with each other. The results showed that length of service negatively related to role burden $r = -.33, p < .01$ and alcohol use $r = -.22, p < .01$, but positively related to subjective happiness $r = .19, p < .01$. These results imply that the longer is the year of service, the lower the role burden and alcohol use. Role burden positively related to alcohol use $r = .49, p < .01$, but negatively related to subjective happiness $r = -.66, p < .01$. The results suggest that staff with less role burden scored lower in alcohol use, but higher in subjective happiness. Also, alcohol use is negatively related to subjective happiness $r = -.30, p < .01$, suggesting that staff with lower alcohol use reported higher subjective happiness.

Table 1: Bivariate Correlation of all Variables *(N = 255)*

Variable	1	2	3	4
Length of service	-			
Role burden	-.33**	-		
Alcohol use	-.22**	.49**	-	
Subjective Happiness	.19**	-.66**	-.30**	-
M	5.55	47.99	15.55	11.60
SD	3.99	8.96	3.07	2.68

*Note: ** p <.05, * p<.01, M =mean, SD – standard deviation*

Tested Hypotheses

The first alternate (Hi) hypothesis stated that length of service; role burden and alcohol use would independently and jointly predict subjective happiness among university staff. The hypothesis was tested using hierarchical multiple regression and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Subjective Happiness by Length of service, Role burden and Alcohol use among University staff *(N = 255)*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SEB	β	β	SEB	β	B	SEB	β
Length of service	.13	0.04	.19**	.02	0.04	.03		0.04	.03
Role burden				-.20	0.04	-.67**	0.02	0.02	-
Alcohol use							-	0.05	.69**
R		.19			.66		0.21	.66	.05
R^2		.04			.43		-	.43	
Adj. R^2		.03			.43		0.04	.43	
R^2 Change (%)		.04			.39			.00	
F		9.05**			91.55**			61.18**	
F Change		9.05**			167.80**			0.68	

*Outcome variable: Subjective happiness, * p < .05; ** p < .01*

Table 2 presents a three-model hierarchical multiple regression analysis In the first model, length of service was added and the result showed that it significantly predicted staff subjective happiness $F(1, 242) = 9.05$; p <.01, with $R^2=.04$; suggesting 4% variance in the prediction of staff subjective happiness. Also, the result showed a positive association between length of service and staff subjective happiness $\beta= .19$; $t = 3.01$; $p< .01$. In the second model, role burden was added together with length of service and they both jointly predicted staff happiness $F(2, 241) = 91.55$; p <.01, with $R^2=.43$; suggesting 43% variance in the prediction of staff happiness. Independently, role burden negatively associated with staff subjective happiness $\beta= -.67$; $t = -12.95$; $p< .01$, while length of service did not. At the third model, alcohol use was added and the result showed that length of service, role burden and alcohol use jointly predicted staff happiness $F(3, 240) = 61.17$; $p <.01$, with $R^2=.43$; suggesting 43% variance in the prediction of staff subjective happiness. It means that inclusion of alcohol use did not add anything to the model. Independently, only role burden negatively associated with staff subjective happiness $\beta= -.69$; $t = -11.78$; $p< .01$.

The second alternate (Hi) hypothesis which stated that male and female university staff would differ in subjective happiness was tested using t-test for independent samples. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: t-test Summary Table showing Gender difference in Subjective Happiness of University staff

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	T	P
Subjective Happiness	Male	134	11.6493	2.6111	253	0.308	.758
	Female	121	11.5455	2.7689			

Table 3 showed that male university staff (*M* = 11.6493) were not significantly different in level of happiness compared to female university staff (*M* = 11.5455),

$t(253) = 0.308$; $p = .758$. The result implies that there is no gender difference in levels of subjective happiness among university staff.

DISCUSSION

This is a cross sectional study with the objectives of examining the predictive values of length of service, role burden and alcohol use on subjective happiness among staff in a Nigerian university and further establish gender difference in level of their happiness. It was found that length of service, role burden and alcohol use jointly predicted subjective happiness among university staff with a substantial 43% variance in the prediction and role burden recorded highest contribution. The current finding agrees with Gillespie et al., (2001) that has reported that a number of individual and job-related factors influenced employees' wellbeing. The present finding suggests that individual and job-related factors may interactively explain level of happiness among university staff.

Independently, it was found that length of service was positively associated with subjective happiness among university staff. This finding confirms a previous study that has shown that length of service has a strong influence on employee loyalty (Strenitzerova & Achimsky, 2019); and it takes a happy employee to be loyal to the organisation. This means that members of staff of university with longer years of service are subjectively happier than those with shorter years of service. Better still, the longer the length of year of service, the happier the university staff. Employees who might have spent longer years at work would have garnered experience that could make them feel good about work and feel less distressed. Similarly, it was found that role burden was negatively associated with subjective happiness among university staff. This implies that university staff who reported less of role burden were subjectively happier than those who reported more of role burden. The present finding agrees with other previous studies that have equally established that role burden is associated with job-related outcomes among employees (Iroegbu, 2014; Huang, 2017; Kim, Lee & Shin, 2019). The finding infers that university staff might be experiencing continuous conflicting roles that could be affecting their positive wellbeing. On the contrary, it was found that alcohol use was not associated with subjective happiness among university staff. This suggests that the use of alcohol by the staff has nothing to do with their happiness. This finding contradicts numerous previous studies that have proven that negative association exists between alcohol use and behavioural consequences (Normand et al., 1994; Bouchery et al., 2011; Frone, 2013). The current finding indicates that alcohol use among university staff might be for social fitting and not to make them feel happy.

The finding also showed that there was no gender difference in the level of subjective happiness among university staff. This finding, however, contradicts previous studies that have reported gender difference in happiness (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015; Hori & Kamo, 2017). The reason for the current finding of no gender difference in subjective happiness may be due to the fact that distribution

of assignments in the university setting does not consider whether a staff is a male or a female. In summary, this study has been able to reveal that length of service, role burden and alcohol use jointly explained subjective happiness among university staff to a large extent; with role burden making the highest contribution than others. In addition, gender disparity does not exist in the level of subjective happiness among staff of university.

CONCLUSION

Based on our findings, we conclude that length of service, role burden and alcohol use have substantial joint contributions in explaining level of subjective happiness among university staff in Nigeria. In addition, university staff with longer service at work and those who have less job-related role are more delighted in their work compared to those who have shorter years of service at work or experience higher level of job-related roles. Further, it is concluded that how the happiness of the University staff is not a function of being male or female; rather both sexes display similar levels of subjective happiness at their workplace.

Implications and recommendations
Findings of the current study have implication for stress management training and proper use of coping strategies. We therefore recommend that management of universities should engage the services of Clinical Psychologists to consistently organise stress management training for their staff; and give proper guidance of how to adopt problem-solving coping strategies in the face of work stress. All these could work hand-in-hand with the management and co-workers in the workplace to ensure overall staff efficiency and organisational effectiveness.

Limitation
The study was faced with two limitations that need to be considered in further studies. First, it is the small sample size of the university staff who participated in the study. This might have effects on the generalisation of the findings to other universities in Nigeria. Thus, a larger sample size may be required for further studies with similar focus or objectives. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaire to assess the university staff role burden, alcohol use and happiness might not have given accurate situation of things in the University; either over or under report on the question asked. This method might be used along with direct observation of university staff in terms of their job-related roles given to them, record of number of units of alcohol taken daily or weekly and observation of their responses when presented with positive emotions. All these aforementioned methods could give more comprehensive reports about the happenings of the variables investigated in the university used as a setting in the current study. Nevertheless, the present study has revealed that length of service, role burden and alcohol use could have an enormous combined contribution on levels of subjective happiness of the university staff. Further studies should broaden the scope to

accommodate other job and individual-related factors affecting employees' subjective happiness for robust findings.

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Conflict of interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest for the study

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