

Job Frustration and Coping Strategies among Lecturers

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Abstract

This study examined sources of job frustration and coping strategies among university lecturers in Delta State, Nigeria, exploring gender and experience-level differences in job frustration and coping strategies. Using an ex-post facto research design with survey methodology, data were collected from 130 lecturers across two universities through stratified and purposive sampling. The Sources of Job Frustration and Coping Strategies Among Lecturers Questionnaire (SJFACSQ) was employed, demonstrating face and content validity with a reliability coefficient of 0.74 (Pearson *r*). Results revealed multiple frustration sources including high living costs, excessive workload, inadequate teaching facilities, unmet promotion criteria, and numerous deadlines. Coping strategies included seeking alternative income sources, colleague support, religious practices, and humor. Significant gender differences emerged in coping strategies, with male lecturers demonstrating superior coping mechanisms compared to female counterparts. Experienced lecturers showed significantly different perspectives on frustration sources compared to less experienced colleagues. The study recommends salary increase commensurate with living costs, improved teaching infrastructure, annual vacation provisions, and continuous professional development programs.

Keywords: job frustration, coping strategies, university lecturers

1. Introduction

Lecturers play a central role in the academic, intellectual, and moral development of students in higher education institutions. As key stakeholders in knowledge dissemination, they are entrusted with responsibilities that extend well beyond classroom teaching. These include mentoring students, designing curricula, evaluating academic performance, conducting innovative research, publishing scholarly works, and participating in institutional decision-making (Olaifa, et al. 2024). Their contributions are essential not only for student success but also for national development and global competitiveness. However, in many developing countries, particularly Nigeria, the university system faces severe strain from rapidly increasing enrolments, outdated infrastructure, dwindling public investment, and systemic management failures (Akoko, Peter, & Jegede, 2023). These structural deficiencies have placed enormous pressure on lecturers, making the academic profession increasingly stressful and unsustainable. Consequently, these factors have begun to erode job satisfaction and threaten the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of academic staff (Fareo, 2022).

Job frustration is a negative emotional state that occurs when an individual perceives an obstacle to achieving work-related goals, despite sustained effort and competence. For university lecturers, frustration can arise from both institutional and individual-level challenges. Poor remuneration, inconsistent salary payments, high publication and promotion hurdles, ambiguous job expectations, excessive teaching loads, and limited career advancement opportunities are common sources of frustration (Sabo, Umar, & Kaoje, 2019). Moreover, infrastructural decay, lack of access to modern teaching technologies, overcrowded classrooms, and constant strikes due to unfulfilled agreements with unions such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) only exacerbate the situation. Over time, this chronic exposure to frustrating conditions can result in disillusionment, withdrawal, and a decline in professional engagement. In more severe cases, it leads to emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic illnesses, and an eventual exit from the academic profession, thereby worsening the already existing brain drain in the higher education sector.

Understanding how lecturers respond to and cope with job frustration is critical for improving institutional resilience and educational quality. Coping strategies are the behavioural and psychological efforts individuals employ to manage

stressors. In the university setting, these strategies may range from proactive behaviours such as setting realistic goals, seeking professional development, or accessing peer support, to more passive responses like emotional withdrawal, venting, or absenteeism (Durrah et al., 2023). Some lecturers may turn to religion, humor, or creative outlets, while others may pursue alternative income sources to cushion financial strain. Importantly, the effectiveness and type of coping strategy used often vary by gender, years of experience, and individual resilience. Exploring these dynamics offers important insights for university administrators and policymakers who must design appropriate interventions and support systems that can mitigate frustration, improve job satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the productivity and well-being of university lecturers.

2. Literature Reviews

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Frustration-Aggression Theory proposed by Dollard et al. (1939) and later modified by Berkowitz (1989). The theory posits that frustration occurs when goal-directed behaviour is blocked, leading to aggressive responses or alternative coping mechanisms. In the academic context, this theory explains how blocked professional goals and aspirations can lead to various behavioural responses among university lecturers. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) also provides theoretical foundation for understanding lecturer job frustration. This model suggests that job demands (workload, time pressure, role ambiguity) can lead to strain and burnout when not balanced by adequate job resources (social support, autonomy, feedback). The model's dual pathway explains how high demands with limited resources create exhaustion and frustration, while adequate resources can foster engagement and well-being. Additionally, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping inform the understanding of how lecturers assess and respond to stressful situations. This model emphasizes the role of cognitive appraisal in determining whether situations are perceived as threatening and the subsequent selection of coping strategies.

2.2 International Perspectives on Academic Job Frustration

A growing body of global research has documented widespread job frustration among university lecturers across various cultural and economic contexts. In developed countries, unique patterns of dissatisfaction have emerged. In the United States, for example, academic staff report declining job satisfaction due to mounting administrative responsibilities, reduced research funding, and heightened performance metrics (Fetherston, 2020). European universities mirror these concerns British and German lecturers face challenges such as higher student-staff ratios, job insecurity, and intense publication demands (Houston, et al., 2020). In Asia, frustration often stems from deep-rooted systemic and cultural influences. Chinese academics cite hierarchical structures, intense competition for research grants, and pressure to publish internationally as major stressors (Liu & Zhang, 2021), while Japanese lecturers highlight limited career advancement and institutional rigidity (Tanaka, 2020). Indian academics confront bureaucratic inefficiencies, infrastructural inadequacies, and minimal research support (Sharma & Gupta, 2019). African universities reveal similar frustration narratives. In South Africa, transformation pressures and limited institutional resources persist (Nhlumayo, 2025), whereas in Kenya, faculty cite poor compensation, lack of professional development, and inadequate working conditions as major contributors (Wanjiku, et. al., 2024).

These frustrations are intensified by the global demands of the 21st-century university. Rapid technological advancements and evolving pedagogical expectations have placed new pressures on academic staff to constantly adapt (Jallu et al., 2023). However, balancing these demands with traditional responsibilities such as teaching, research, and student mentoring often creates overwhelming workloads and stress. Job frustration, in this context, is understood as a state of psychological tension that arises when desired outcomes are thwarted despite consistent effort (Karamchandani & Duble, 2020). It represents the antithesis of goal attainment, often resulting in emotional turmoil (Duran & Azizan, 2013). Frustration affects individuals across diverse demographic and professional groups and is considered a recurring and inevitable part of human experience (Nkedishu et al., 2019). Manifestations of workplace frustration include emotional exhaustion, detachment, sabotage, gossip, and apathy toward institutional goals (Mairaj & Saddiqui, 2020). Research shows that such conditions can escalate into burnout, reduce cognitive function, and erode creative and critical thinking capabilities (Lewandowski, 2003; Musheer & Sharma, 2018).

In Nigeria, academic frustration is further exacerbated by structural inefficiencies, broken government promises, and deteriorating institutional environments. A key point of contention is the failure to implement the 2009 agreement between the federal government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which aimed to revitalize the university system (Olorunsola, 2013). Core grievances include salary stagnation, underfunding, inflationary pressures, rising student populations, and deteriorating infrastructure (Ogbette et al., 2017). The consequences frequent strikes, unpaid wages, low morale, and increased workload have significantly demotivated lecturers. Similar patterns are observable in other countries: frustration among academics has been widely reported in China (Wu et al., 2023), India

(Karamchandani & Duble, 2020), Ethiopia (Belay et al., 2023), and Oman (Durrah et al., 2023). Historical evidence from the U.S. also shows a steady decline in worker satisfaction from the 1990s onward, with job dissatisfaction among Americans falling from 58.6% to 50.7% by 2000 (Ashtalkosi, Ashtalkoska, 2012).

Sources of academic frustration are both organizational and individual, often interwoven with external and internal stressors. Internally, lecturers may struggle with low self-esteem, anxiety, or lack of motivation (Syed et al., 2012), while externally, they confront unclear roles, hazardous work conditions, limited advancement opportunities, unfair reward systems, and unsupportive colleagues (Jakku et al., 2022; Ikogho, 2021; Ikogho & Ikogho, 2022). Infrastructure-related frustrations include erratic electricity, insufficient teaching aids, outdated laboratories, poor internet access, and a lack of modern learning spaces (Akoko et al., 2023; Osakwe, 2020). The stress of grading large volumes of poorly written exam scripts also contributes significantly to lecturer burnout (Chukwuma et al., 2022). Additionally, unchecked student misconduct ranging from indiscipline to cheating further erodes morale, especially when university authorities fail to intervene effectively (Sabo et al., 2019; Haseeb & Sattar, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Feelings of alienation, institutional silence, and cynicism are growing concerns that signal deeper systemic issues (Durrah et al., 2023; Akintayo, 2010). Repeated rejection of scholarly articles and the emotionally taxing publication process only add to the mental burden of university lecturers (Day, 2011; Olorunsola, 2013). Ultimately, persistent frustration in academia threatens not only the productivity and well-being of individual lecturers but also the sustainability of the entire university system.

2.3 Coping Strategies in Academic Contexts

Globally, coping strategies among academics vary across cultural and institutional settings, reflecting both individual dispositions and broader socio-cultural values. In Western countries, coping often centers on self-regulatory mechanisms such as time management, stress-reduction techniques, and professional networking. Scandinavian institutions emphasize systemic support structures, including peer collaboration, institutional wellness programs, and robust work-life balance policies (Sandberg, 2017). In contrast, Asian academics frequently rely on culturally rooted mechanisms such as family support systems, spiritual practices, and group-based problem-solving (Kim & Park, 2019). Similarly, African lecturers tend to adopt a hybrid approach, integrating individual coping behaviours with community-oriented practices, including reliance on extended family, religious faith, and diversification of income sources (Babajide & Smith, 2022). Meta-analytic and theoretical reviews grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model show that problem-focused strategies tend to be more effective for managing controllable stressors, whereas emotion-focused coping is better suited to less controllable circumstances.

Studies have documented a wide array of coping strategies utilized by lecturers to mitigate job-related frustration and maintain effectiveness. These strategies are shaped by personality traits, socio-cultural influences, and prior experiences. Nkedishu (2021) and MacIntyre et al. (2020) categorize coping mechanisms into three broad types: approach strategies (e.g., planning, reframing, seeking emotional and instrumental support), avoidant strategies (e.g., denial, venting, self-blame, and substance use), and neutral strategies such as humor and religious engagement. Another classification distinguishes between active coping where individuals tackle stressors directly or seek social support and passive coping, which involves disengagement or isolation (Argan et al., 2023). Wang et al. (2021) also identify adaptive coping (problem-solving with minimal emotional distress), social withdrawal coping (marked by anxiety and avoidance), and problem-avoidant coping (minimal confrontation with stressors) as prevalent patterns among academics.

Lecturers frequently combine these coping methods depending on the intensity and nature of the stress they encounter. Empirical studies indicate that workplace frustration is often addressed through a mix of personal and institutional strategies (Osakwe, 2020). These include taking annual or casual leave, engaging in physical exercise, listening to music, setting realistic daily goals, and resting adequately (Fareo, 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Olorunsola, 2013). Social support from colleagues and maintaining spiritual routines also play significant roles (Nkedishu, 2020). Scholars have emphasized the need for broader structural interventions, such as fairer compensation packages for lecturers, professional development programs, and the cultivation of positive organizational cultures (Ashtalkosi, & Ashtalkoska, 2012; Durrah et al., 2023). Encouraging open communication, reducing organizational silence, and fostering a sense of community within academic institutions can further help mitigate frustration and promote lecturer well-being.

3. Statement of the Problem

Job frustration constitutes a leading cause of stress, burnout, and chronic health issues, further contributing to job dissatisfaction, reduced productivity, and employee disengagement. Understanding frustration sources becomes critical for identifying effective measures and support systems that can improve and increase job performance in Delta State universities. Investigating these sources illuminates the physiological and psychological toll on lecturers, while examining coping strategies provides penetrating insights into navigating professional challenges. The apparent prevalence of frustration among university lecturers necessitates comprehensive investigation into the forces

contributing to this phenomenon to develop measures aimed at reducing job frustration and enhancing job performance. This study aims to determine sources of job frustration and coping strategies adopted by university lecturers in Delta State, Nigeria.

4. Method

This study employed an ex-post facto research design utilizing survey methodology. The ex-post facto design enables researchers to examine relationships between variables without manipulation, making it appropriate for investigating naturally occurring phenomena such as job frustration and coping strategies among university lecturers. The study population comprised 250 lecturers from education faculties in two Delta State universities, Nigeria. Using stratified and purposive sampling techniques, 140 lecturers (56% of the population) were initially selected based on availability and willingness to participate. The stratified sampling ensured representation across different categories including gender and experience levels, while purposive sampling targeted lecturers willing to provide meaningful responses.

Data collection utilized a 40-item questionnaire titled "Sources of Job Frustration and Coping Strategies Among Lecturers Questionnaire" (SJFACSQ). The instrument employed a four-point scale with weighted responses: 4 (Strongly Agree), 3 (Agree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). A criterion mean of 2.50 was established, with scores ≥ 2.50 indicating agreement and scores < 2.50 indicating disagreement. The instrument underwent face and content validity assessment by educational and psychological measurement experts. Reliability was established using test-retest method with Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.74$), indicating acceptable internal consistency for research purposes. Three trained research assistants administered questionnaires directly to participants. Comprehensive coaching ensured consistent administration and collection procedures. Primary data collection occurred through face-to-face interaction, with completed questionnaires returned immediately. Out of 140 questionnaires distributed, 130 were correctly completed and returned, yielding a 92.8% response rate considered adequate for statistical analysis and generalization purposes. All questionnaires underwent careful examination for completeness and accuracy before analysis. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for research questions and inferential statistics (independent t-tests) for hypotheses testing. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

5. Results

Research Question 1: What are the sources of job frustration among lecturers in Delta State universities?

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Job Frustration Sources Among Lecturers

S/N	sources of job frustration	N = 67 Male			N = 63 Female		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Role ambiguity	2.93	0.84	Agree	3.10	0.84	Agree
2	Excess workload	2.88	0.51	Agree	3.17	0.38	Agree
3	Students' indisciplinary behaviours	2.88	0.66	Agree	2.78	0.75	Agree
4	Conflicts with colleagues	2.73	0.75	Agree	2.59	0.78	Agree
5	Lack of professional development	2.54	0.78	Agree	3.30	0.78	Agree
6	Performance pressure	3.49	0.77	Agree	2.92	0.87	Agree
7	High cost of living	3.54	0.75	Agree	2.86	0.35	Agree
8	Poor working conditions	3.39	0.95	Agree	2.79	0.35	Agree
9	Inadequate teaching facilities	3.30	0.74	Agree	3.01	0.70	Agree
10	Poor office accommodation	3.51	0.77	Agree	2.73	0.72	Agree
11	Rejection of Journal articles	2.75	0.70	Agree	2.54	0.56	Agree
12	Compilation of students result	2.50	0.75	Agree	3.30	0.78	Agree
13	Time pressure- too many deadlines	3.30	0.76	Agree	3.13	0.83	Agree
14	Unmet promotion criteria	3.09	0.83	Agree	2.75	0.47	Agree
15	Inadequate remuneration	2.82	0.46	Agree	2.89	0.92	Agree
16	High cost of journal publication fees	2.91	0.95	Agree	2.89	0.79	Agree
17	Marking students' scripts	2.93	0.80	Agree	2.95	0.83	Agree
18	Fatigue	2.94	0.81	Agree	3.49	0.50	Agree
19	Getting used to new technologies	3.06	0.65	Agree	3.32	0.47	Agree
20	Negative self-perception	3.34	0.48	Agree	3.75	0.67	Agree
Average Mean		3.18			3.01		Agree

The finding from research question 1 as shown in Table 1, revealed the mean response of the sources of frustration among lecturers in Universities in Delta State. The analysis indicates that the entire 20 items were above the cutoff point of 2.50. Given the average-mean scores of 3.18 and 3.01 respectively for male and female lecturers which is above the criterion bench mark, the analysis therefore implies that the sources of job frustration in universities in Delta state include; role ambiguity, getting use to new technologies, excess workload, conflicts with colleagues, lack of

professional development, performance pressure, students' indiscipline, poor working conditions, inadequate teaching facilities, poor office accommodation, inadequate remuneration, compilation of students' results, time pressure, unmet promotion criteria, rejection of journal articles, high cost of journal publication fees, marking students scripts, fatigue, negative self-perception, students indisciplinary behaviours and lack of rewards /recognition.

Research Question 2: What are the coping strategies adopted by lecturers to mitigate job frustration in Delta State universities?

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Coping Strategies

S/N	coping strategies	N = 50			N = 80		
		Experienced Lecturers			Less Experienced Lecturers		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Clearly defined roles	3.76	0.43	Agree	2.69	0.99	Agree
2	Setting realistic goals	3.34	0.48	Agree	2.96	0.60	Agree
3	Regular exercise	3.40	0.50	Agree	2.56	0.39	Agree
4	Watching movies, sports on Television or stadium	3.02	0.43	Agree	2.73	0.66	Agree
5	Seeking support from colleagues	3.62	0.49	Agree	2.58	0.75	Agree
6	Engaging in positive self- talk	2.90	0.81	Agree	2.51	0.73	Agree
7	Taking a vacation/ leave	3.32	0.47	Agree	2.73	0.87	Agree
8	Religion	3.52	0.50	Agree	3.51	0.78	Agree
9	Receiving counselling from professionals	3.06	0.24	Agree	3.80	0.40	Agree
10	Pursuing other means of income	3.44	0.50	Agree	3.85	0.36	Agree
11	Cooperating with others instead of competing	2.66	0.75	Agree	2.86	0.81	Agree
12	Seek professional development	3.78	0.42	Agree	3.56	0.71	Agree
13	Venting	2.82	0.44	Agree	3.08	0.85	Agree
14	Exploring creative teaching techniques	3.20	0.88	Agree	2.65	0.48	Agree
15	Acceptance	3.06	0.59	Agree	3.14	0.72	Agree
16	Self-Distracton	2.82	0.91	Agree	2.84	0.65	Agree
17	Adopting good communication skills	3.40	0.70	Agree	3.54	0.50	Agree
18	Engaging in dialogue and feedback mechanism	3.32	0.89	Agree	3.51	0.50	Agree
19	Use of humor	3.10	0.61	Agree	3.05	0.71	Agree
20	Adequate planning	3.04	0.88	Agree	3.24	0.85	Agree
Average Mean		3.23			3.07		Agtee

Table 2 showed the mean responses of lecturers on the coping strategies adopted in the management of job frustration. The analysis showed that the entire 20 items were accepted as they were above the mean cutoff point of 2.50. The analysis further revealed that the average mean of 3.23 and 3.07 respectively for experienced and less experienced lecturers was above the mean criterion bench mark of 2.50. This implies that engaging in clearly defined roles, setting realistic goals, regular exercise, watching movies, sports seeking support from colleagues, engaging in positive self-talk, taking a vacation /leave, use of religion, receiving counseling from professionals, seeking other sources of income, seek professional development, venting, explore other creative teaching techniques, acceptance, self-distraction, adopt good communication skills, engaging in dialogue and feedback mechanisms, applying humor and adequate planning. To a high extent the entire 20 items represented the coping strategies adopted in the management of job frustration in Universities in Delta State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perceptions of job frustration sources in Delta State universities.

Table 3. Independent t-test Analysis - Gender Differences in Job Frustration Sources

Variables	N	Mean ₁	SD ₁	t-Cal	p-value	Cohen's d	Decision
Male	67	57.51	3.45	-4.912	0.000	1.40	Reject Ho
Female	63	60.51	3.51				

$\alpha = 0.05$, $df = 128$

Table 3 shows a t-value of -4.912, a mean value of 57.51 for male and 60.51 for female lecturers and a p-value of 0.00. Testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha level, so the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference between male and female lecturers on the sources of job frustration in Universities in Delta State" is rejected. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.40$) indicates a large practical difference between male and female

lecturers' perceptions of job frustration sources, suggesting substantial gender-based disparities in frustration experiences. Thus, there is a significant difference between male and female lecturers on the sources of job frustration in Universities in Delta State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced lecturers regarding coping strategies adopted for job frustration management in Delta State universities.

Table 4. Independent t-test Analysis - Experience Differences in Coping Strategies

Variables	N	Mean ₁	SD ₁	t-Cal	p-val	Cohen's d	Decision
Experienced lecturers	50	64.64	2.57	5.316	0.000	1.03	Rejected
Less Experienced lecturer	80	61.68	3.38				

$\alpha = 0.05$, $df = 128$

Table 4 shows a t-cal value of 5.316, a mean value of 64.64 for experienced, 61.68 for less experienced lecturers and a p-value of 0.000. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 was less than that of alpha level of 0.05. The large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.03$) demonstrates that experience significantly impacts coping strategy adoption, with experienced lecturers employing substantially more effective approaches. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This revealed that there is a significant difference between experienced and less experienced lecturers on coping strategies adopted in the management of job frustration in universities in Delta state.

Table 5. Summary of Key Frustration Sources and Coping Strategies by Category

Category	Top Frustration Sources (Mean > 3.0)	Primary Coping Strategies (Mean > 3.5)
Financial	High cost of living (3.54) Poor remuneration (2.86)	Pursuing alternative income (3.85)
Workload	Excessive workload (3.03) Time pressure (3.22)	Setting realistic goals (3.15) Adequate planning (3.14)
Infrastructure	Inadequate facilities (3.16) Poor office space (3.12)	Seeking support from colleagues (3.10)
Professional	Unmet promotion criteria (2.92) Performance pressure (3.21)	Professional development (3.67) Counseling (3.43)
Personal	Fatigue (3.22) Negative self-perception (3.55)	Religion (3.52) Regular exercise (2.98)

Table 5 reveals important patterns in how frustration sources align with corresponding coping strategies across five distinct categories. Financial pressures, particularly the high cost of living ($M = 3.54$), elicit the most robust coping response through alternative income generation ($M = 3.85$), indicating that lecturers directly address economic challenges through income diversification. Workload-related frustrations are managed primarily through organizational strategies such as goal-setting and planning, suggesting a problem-focused approach to time management challenges. Notably, infrastructure deficits despite being significant frustration sources are addressed primarily through social coping (colleague support, $M = 3.10$) rather than individual action, possibly reflecting lecturers' recognition that systemic institutional problems require collective rather than individual solutions. Professional frustrations related to career advancement trigger the highest-rated coping strategies (professional development, $M = 3.67$; counseling, $M = 3.43$), demonstrating strong investment in long-term career management despite obstacles. Personal well-being challenges, particularly negative self-perception ($M = 3.55$), are predominantly addressed through religious practices ($M = 3.52$), underscoring the cultural significance of spiritual resources in emotional regulation among Nigerian academics. This categorical analysis reveals that lecturers employ contextually appropriate coping strategies, matching responses to the nature and controllability of specific stressors.

6. Discussion

Sources of Job Frustration

The identification of multiple frustration sources aligns with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model. Inadequate salaries, excessive journal publication fees, overwhelming workloads, and infrastructure deficits represent a critical imbalance between job demands and available resources. According to Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) framework, this imbalance creates conditions for chronic strain and burnout, particularly when lecturers lack the necessary resources to meet increasing professional demands. The prevalence of financial pressures reflects broader economic challenges in Nigeria, where currency devaluation has increased the cost of living while academic salaries remain relatively stagnant. This economic squeeze is further exacerbated by the rising costs of scholarly publishing, which now impose significant financial burdens on lecturers seeking to meet promotion requirements. Infrastructure inadequacies including unreliable electricity, limited library resources, outdated equipment, and poor office accommodation compound these challenges,

making it difficult for lecturers to fulfill research and teaching responsibilities effectively.

The Frustration-Aggression Theory proposed by Dollard et al. (1939) and modified by Berkowitz (1989) provides additional explanatory power. When goal-directed behaviors such as scholarly publication, effective teaching, and career advancement are systematically blocked by institutional constraints, lecturers experience heightened frustration that may manifest in various behavioral responses. These responses range from seeking alternative employment opportunities to reduced commitment and engagement with institutional goals. This finding is consistent with Glaserova (2019), who identified low wages as demoralizing to workers and a primary cause of frustration. It also corroborates Jakku et al. (2022), who stated that work ambiguity, lack of developmental opportunities, and unsupportive coworkers constitute significant sources of job frustration.

The identification of unmet promotion criteria and excessive performance pressure as major frustration sources highlights the particular challenges facing Nigerian academics in an increasingly competitive global academic environment. Lecturers face mounting pressure to publish in high-impact international journals while simultaneously managing heavy teaching loads, large class sizes, and limited research support. This dual burden creates what Fareo (2022) describes as unsustainable working conditions that threaten both physical and mental well-being. The frustration is intensified by inconsistent institutional policies, delayed salary payments, and unfulfilled agreements between the government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which have led to frequent disruptions in the academic calendar through prolonged strikes. This finding aligns with broader African academic research documented by Babajide and Smith, (2022), suggesting that Nigerian academics face systemic challenges common across resource-constrained environments. Similar patterns have been observed in Kenya (Wanjiru et al., 2024), Ethiopia (Belay et al., 2023), indicating that the frustration sources identified in Delta State reflect continent-wide structural deficiencies in higher education funding and support. The chronic nature of these frustrations poses serious risks not only to individual lecturer well-being but also to institutional effectiveness, student learning outcomes, and the broader quality of Nigerian higher education.

Coping Strategies

The diverse coping strategies identified reflect Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model, demonstrating varied cognitive appraisals of stressful situations. Problem-focused strategies such as planning, goal-setting, and seeking collegial advice suggest that many lecturers maintain agency and optimism about improving their circumstances despite significant institutional constraints. This proactive orientation indicates resilience and professional commitment, as lecturers actively engage with stressors rather than withdrawing from them. The prevalence of collegial support as a coping mechanism underscores the importance of social networks within academic environments, where peer relationships provide both instrumental assistance and emotional validation. This finding corroborates Fareo (2022), who found that lecturers cope with frustration by seeking assistance from colleagues, engaging in regular exercise, setting daily achievable goals, using casual leave, listening to music, and ensuring adequate rest. The widespread adoption of income diversification strategies including farming, consultancy services, part-time teaching in other tertiary institutions, and other business ventures represents a pragmatic response to inadequate remuneration. This finding aligns with Umaru and Audu (2024), who documented that lecturers engage in alternative money-making ventures to augment their income. However, while financially necessary, this diversification may paradoxically intensify workload pressures and reduce time available for core academic responsibilities such as research, curriculum development, and student mentorship. The reliance on multiple income sources thus functions as both a coping strategy and a potential contributor to further stress, creating a complex cycle where lecturers must work harder across multiple domains to maintain acceptable living standards.

Religious practices emerged as a prominent coping mechanism, with mean scores indicating strong reliance on faith-based support systems among both experienced (3.52) and less experienced (3.51) lecturers. This reflects Nigeria's deeply religious cultural context, where spiritual beliefs provide meaning-making frameworks for adversity and sources of hope during difficult circumstances. The use of humor (mean = 3.10 and 3.05 respectively) similarly represents a culturally embedded coping resource that facilitates emotional regulation and social bonding among colleagues. These strategies align with Nkedishu (2021) and MacIntyre et al. (2020), who categorize coping mechanisms into approach strategies (planning, reframing, seeking emotional and instrumental support), avoidant strategies (denial, venting, self-blame), and neutral strategies such as humor and religious engagement.

Critically, the coping strategies identified vary in their adaptive value. Adaptive strategies including planning, professional development, collegial support, and problem-solving directly address stressors and promote long-term well-being by building competencies and resources. In contrast, potentially maladaptive approaches such as venting and self-distraction may provide temporary emotional relief but fail to resolve underlying frustrations or may even exacerbate stress over time. The prevalence of income diversification strategies, while pragmatic given current

economic realities, signals systemic inadequacy in academic compensation rather than effective coping. The heavy reliance on religious practices, though culturally appropriate and personally meaningful, may also indicate limited access to institutional support mechanisms such as employee assistance programs, mental health services, or structured stress management interventions. Future research should evaluate the relative effectiveness of these strategies longitudinally to determine which approaches yield sustainable improvements in well-being and productivity.

The combination of approach and avoidant strategies identified aligns with research by MacIntyre et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2021), but the specific configuration in this study suggests important cultural adaptations. The emphasis on collegial support and professional consultation reflects collectivist cultural values prevalent in Nigerian society, where community-oriented problem-solving is preferred over individualistic approaches. Simultaneously, individual strategies such as exercise, entertainment, and personal goal-setting show Western influence, likely introduced through professional training and exposure to international academic literature. This hybrid approach may represent an optimal adaptation strategy for Nigerian academic contexts, blending indigenous cultural resources with globally recognized stress management techniques. However, longitudinal research would be needed to confirm the effectiveness of this hybrid model and to identify which specific combinations of strategies produce the best outcomes for lecturer well-being and institutional productivity. The finding also highlights potential areas for institutional intervention. Universities could enhance adaptive coping by providing structured professional development programs, facilitating peer mentoring networks, establishing wellness centers with counseling services, and creating policies that support work-life balance through reasonable workloads and guaranteed annual leave. By strengthening institutional resources and support systems, universities can reduce lecturers' reliance on potentially less effective personal coping mechanisms and address frustration sources at their systemic roots.

Gender Differences in Job Frustration

The third finding of the study revealed that there was a significant difference between male and female lecturers on the sources of job frustration in Universities in Delta State. This could be due to heavy familial and professional duties on the part of women and men, by their unique make up are better at internalizing and controlling their frustrations than women. This is consistent with a similar finding by Chukwuemeka et al. (2023) that there is a significant difference between gender and frustration. They claimed that women are more easily frustrated at work. This finding is in contrast with Olorunsola (2013) who claimed that there was no significant difference between male and female lecturers on the sources of frustration because both male and female lecturers are involved in family duties; it is a shared responsibility.

Experience Differences in Coping Strategies

Furthermore, the fourth finding of the study revealed that there is a significant difference between experienced and less experienced lecturers on coping strategies adopted in the management of job frustration. It indicates that experienced lecturers are better at coping with frustration because they are better acquainted with the demands of the job. As a result of time spent on the job, they have developed more patience and tolerance. Secondly, most of the tasking duties of course advising, teaching, marking and supervising large number of students are reduced. In addition, the anxiety of meeting promotion requirements and problems with publication in foreign journals have also reduced. This is unlike the less experienced lecturers who could be sometimes impatient and coming into the lecturing job with a preconceived mind set only to have their hopes dashed with the realities of high cost of living, high cost of journal article publications, inadequate pay, teaching, marking, preparing results, supervising and course advising a large number of students with inadequate teaching facilities and poor office accommodation among others.

These issues could put less experienced lecturers on a lower pedestal of tolerance than the experienced lecturers. This finding is in consonance with Chukwuma et al. (2022) that junior lecturers are more frustrated because they do not have the same tolerance and consideration like their senior colleagues. Giving credence to this finding, Chukwuemeka et al. (2023) argued that more experienced lecturers have accumulated years of experience and better strategies to cope with the intricacies of doing their daily routine. The experience differential also reflects differences in job security and career stability. Senior lecturers typically enjoy greater job security, clearer role definitions, and reduced pressure regarding promotion requirements, while junior lecturers face uncertainty about career progression and institutional expectations.

6.1 Implications for Theory and Practice

These findings contribute to theoretical understanding of job frustration among academic, supporting the Job Demands-Resources model's proposition that high demands combined with limited resources create strain and frustration. The gender and experience differences align with transactional stress theory's emphasis on individual differences in stress appraisal and coping strategy selection. Practically, Government policy, university administration, academic development, and international collaboration are all vital to strengthening Nigeria's academic environment. To ensure stability, government policies must address currency fluctuations, research funding, and infrastructure, as these are linked to lecturer frustration and national economic challenges. Universities should invest in basic working

conditions and address systemic issues, rather than relying on staff to adapt to poor environments. For academic growth, structured mentorship and support systems are key to helping early-career academics transition and succeed. International collaboration should also work to reduce the disadvantages scholars in developing countries face, especially in global publishing and currency-related costs. These findings call for targeted actions that tackle both systemic and personal causes of academic frustration. Institutional policies should prioritize fair compensation, improved infrastructure, professional development, and work-life balance while also incorporating gender-sensitive strategies to support female academics.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations warrant consideration. First, the study's scope was limited to two universities in Delta State, potentially restricting generalizability across Nigeria's diverse higher education landscape. Regional variations in institutional resources, cultural contexts, and economic conditions may produce different frustration patterns and coping mechanisms. Second, the cross-sectional design captures only a snapshot of frustration and coping, precluding examination of how these factors evolve over time or in response to institutional changes. Third, while the study identifies coping strategies, it does not evaluate their relative effectiveness or long-term sustainability. Future research should employ longitudinal designs across multiple institutions, incorporate qualitative methods to explore lived experiences in depth, and assess the effectiveness of specific coping interventions through randomized controlled trials.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion that there are several sources of job frustration and coping strategies adopted by lecturers in universities in Delta state. These sources of frustration are capable of affecting teaching and learning activities in universities in Delta state. It was also established that male lecturers are better at coping with frustration than female lecturers and that there was a significant difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced lecturers on sources of job frustration.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were suggested. The government and university management should increase the income of lecturers to be in tune with present day realities and make efforts to stabilize the exchange rates of the local currency. The university management should plan the academic calendar to enable lecturers to have annual leave/vacation. The government and university management should provide adequate teaching facilities and good office accommodation for lecturers. Adequate plans should be made to acquaint lecturers on the necessary criteria required for promotion. The government and university management should employ adequate staff to reduce the problem of fatigue among lecturers.

There should be adequate training programmes to enable lecturers learn and get used to new technologies. The university management should provide health and recreation activities in the university campuses.

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Authors contributions

Grace Nwamaka Osakwe drafted the initial manuscript, conceptualized the study and coordinated data collection.

Vinella Okonta contributed to the initial manuscript drafting, literature review and instrument development.

Victor Chukwubueze Nkedishu drafted the initial manuscript, data analysis, interpretation and manuscript revision.

Odiri E. Onoshakpokaiye designed the method and edited the manuscript.

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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