Innovative Time Management Strategies and Improved Academic Staff Performance in Nigerian Public Universities in South West, Nigeria

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Abstract

The contribution of lecturers in public tertiary institutions in south west, Nigeria, to national development remains underexplored, while their performance is hindered by institutional inefficiencies and overwhelming workloads. This study, therefore, investigates the direct effect of innovative time management strategies on the performance of academic staff in the Nigerian public universities in south west, Nigeria; assesses work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between time management and performance of academic

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staff; and evaluates the extent to which reduced role overload mediate in the relationship between time management and performance of academic staff in Nigerian public Universities in south west, Nigeria. The research is anchored on the Resource-Based Theory and the Job Demand Resource Model. This study was conducted quantitatively with a cross-sectional survey used to collect data from 350 academics from 6 public universities in south west, Nigeria. Findings from the study indicated that innovative time management strategies substantially improved academic staff performance ($\beta=0.53$, $p < .001$). The results also showed, albeit marginally, work engagement and role overload as moderating variables. The study states that the use of modern techniques, such as digital batching, time management systems, and the use of a modern prioritisation matrix improved the performance of employees through increased engagement in deep work and decongestion of role overload. The engagement outlined in the paper is unique as it describes the applicability of the integration of organisational psychology to the theory and practice of management within the university system.

Keywords: Time Management, Academic Staff Performance, Work Engagement, Role Overload, Job Demands-Resources Model

Introduction

Nigerian public universities play a crucial role in the development of the country's human capital, providing the necessary qualified personnel needed for the economy's diversification and competitiveness at the global level (National Universities Commission [NUC], 2021). However, the multiple and complex challenges confronting the performance of academic personnel in the university who focus on the core aspect of the university's mission include limited resources, infrastructural deterioration, and recurrent strikes, which become even more problematic in the context of large class size and poorly remunerated personnel (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2022). This problem is

even more endemic in the south west, which houses some of Nigeria's oldest and most established universities. Here, university teachers cope with excessive and poorly rewarded class teaching, compounded by administrative overload and the 'publish or perish' research culture (Adeyemi & Osuji, 2020).

Such a context leads to complex role overload and time management problems, where traditional and straightforward time management approaches can no longer suffice (Claessens, van Eerde, Rutte & Roe, 2007). The consequences include 'burnout' syndrome, a sharp decline in the volume and quality of teaching and research activities, and, ultimately, a general low level of job satisfaction, all of which severely violate the underlying principle of any university system (Omonijo, Oludayo & Omiyale, 2021). While a university system's underpinning infrastructure and remuneration frameworks have been the focus of previous interventions, the control and management of time, which is the one irreplaceable and equally available resource, remains one of the most neglected variables able to enhance performance levels.

This research argues that the implementation of cutting-edge time management techniques substantially contributes to improving the performance of academic staff. More than planners and to-do lists, advanced techniques involve a more comprehensive approach that incorporates digital task management, the Eisenhower Priority Matrix for separating urgent from important tasks, time blocking for extended uninterrupted work, and the Pomodoro Technique for attention sustainment (Tracy, 2020; Newport, 2016). This research examines how these techniques help academics manage their multiple job demands more efficiently.

In view of the above, the study seeks to: (i) determine the direct effect of innovative time management strategies on the performance of academic staff in Nigerian public Universities in south west, Nigeria; (ii) assess work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between time management and performance of academic staff in Nigerian public universities in south west, Nigeria; and (iii) evaluate the extent to which reduced role overload mediate in the relationship between time management and performance of academic staff in Nigerian public universities in south west, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Innovative Time Management Strategies

Resourceful time management focuses on more than using a calendar. It focuses on systematically planning time allocation for various activities more proactively to maximise time effectiveness and efficiency (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017). Important strategies in this respect include:

Time Blocking and Task Batching: Focusing on several related activities over a given, uninterrupted period of time, say using 3 hours to conduct research and 2 hours to consult with students. This approach lowers the cognitive burden of switching between activities and fosters deep work (Newport, 2016).

The Eisenhower Matrix: This tool assists in the analysis and prioritisation of tasks based on their level of urgency and importance, allowing scholars to spend more time on great value activities (writing a piece of research) and less (or avoid) time on the mismanaged, overly important administrative tasks that seem to be urgent (Covey, 1989).

Digital Task Management Tools: The more digital tools available, such as Trello, Asana, and Todolist, allow individuals to streamline the tracking and management of multiple overlapping projects as a single source of truth by capturing due dates and assigned responsibilities, thereby decluttering the mind and minimising the chance of forgetting important tasks (Allen, 2015).

The Pomodoro Technique: This technique involves using a timer to break work intervals into set periods of time (traditionally 25 minutes) and separate them with scheduled short breaks. This technique helps sustain concentration and prevents the mind from becoming overloaded with fatigue from long tasks (Cirillo, 2018).

These strategies, when viewed together, demonstrate a control-oriented approach to addressing a person's work overload problems, which in turn solves the performance issues mentioned above.

The Relationship between Time Management, Work Engagement and Performance

The assumption about the relationship between innovative time management and improved performance is that it is indirect and hinges on two mediating variables: work engagement and reduced role overload.

'Work engagement' is a fulfilling, work-related positive state of mind, characterised by high energy and mental resilience (vigour), strong involvement with a profound sense of significance (dedication), and complete concentration with a feeling of happiness in one's work (absorption) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Innovative time management enhances engagement by establishing boundaries of control and goal attainment. Academics who time block possess greater control during absorption. The sense of achievement gained by finishing prioritised tasks enhances vigour and dedication (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). An academic who is highly engaged is more productive, creative, and willing to commit to high-quality work.

The second important mediator is decreased role overload. Rest, recuperation and renewal are about balancing the limited time available with the overwhelming demands of modern life. The Eisenhower Matrix is a time management device which allows the user to defer, delegate or drop tasks of low value. The active management of one's academic workload clears the clutter and reduces the sense of overload (Claessens et al., 2007). The mental toll of carrying unresolved tasks magnifies the role overload syndrome. Psychological distress and cognitive fatigue caused by stress also reduce the mental resources available to allocate toward productivity and performance (Robbins et al., 2022).

The current study argues that innovative time management techniques lead to higher work engagement, which, combined with decreased role overload, enhances the overall performance of academic staff. The following sections provide the empirical testing of this conceptual framework.

Theoretical Foundation

Integrating the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model and Resource-Based Theory (RBT) serves to underpin the theoretical framework of the study. These theories provide an adequate understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) is a dominant model of occupational stress that stipulates that every characteristic of a job can be broken down into either a job demand or a job resource. Job demands (high workload, time pressure, role ambiguity) are those which require an immense amount of physical or mental effort and are associated with physiological and psychological costs, resulting in burnout and poor performance. Job resources (autonomy, social support, performance feedback) are those that reduce job demands, making the achievement of work goals easier and leading to personal growth and engagement. In the context of this study, innovative time management strategies are understood as personal resources that academics can develop. These strategies are means to reduce role overload and enhance work engagement in the psychological states of vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Resource-Based Theory (RBT) can be applied at the individual level (academic staff) (Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu, & Kochhar, 2001). An RBT analysis argues that superior performance is a consequence of valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate resources. Within the academic realm, the most valuable resources are time and cognitive capacity. Internal resources that are valuable and rare, to a large degree, are novel time management methods. Once this competence is developed, an academic can utilise the strategic allocation of cognitive and temporal resources to high-impact activities (quality teaching, research) and sustain a performance advantage over peers who rely on ad-hoc methods (Aeon &Aguinis, 2017).

When combined, the two theories present a complete picture: performance and time management (a personal resource) through the use of the JD-R model explaining the psychological process (reducing overload and boosting engagement) and RBT expounding the reason for such a strategic investment.

Academic Staff Performance in Nigerian Universities

The performance of academic staff is multidimensional, including teaching, research and community service (NUC, 2021). However, in the Nigerian context, public universities face challenges in excelling in all three pillars. Some of the reasons include:

Teaching Load and Class Size: The teaching gap is a chronic problem in developing countries. Academics are often required to teach several courses in large classes with little to no teaching and learning resources. Most academics are required to teach many courses and large classes without teaching aids, such as public address systems, projectors, well-ventilated lecture theatres and interactive boards, among others things perceived to limit their performance. This assertion was corroborated by Adeyemi and Osuji (2020), who opined that the absence of instructional planning and assessment frequently constrains and limits the application of scholarly teaching methods among academics.

Research and Publication: The imperative to publish has been reported globally, and Nigeria is no exception. There is, however, a need to score specific research productivity metrics to obtain promotions. Regrettably, the need to publish alongside teaching workloads, combined with the absence of contemporary research journals and a lack of research funding, leads to low productivity (Omonijo et al, 2021).

Administrative and Committee Responsibilities: Administration, leadership and decision-making systems in Nigerian universities are hinged on committees that require active participation of academic staff. This is called community service. Participation in such committees is a requisite for promotion to the senior levels in the academia. Thus, academic staff are unnecessarily burdened with different administrative responsibilities which are outside their core academic functions (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2022).

Burnout and Role Overload: The combined impact of the multiple and competing demands culminates in role overload when an individual believes they have an unreasonable number of roles and responsibilities to complete in the time allocated (Robbins, Judge, & Vohra, 2022). This persistent condition serves as an immediate precursor to burnout, a syndrome devoid of emotional reserve, characterised by acute apathy and lacking any discernible achievement, which remarkably impedes any semblance of effective functioning (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey method was used in this study to capture the key variables and their links. The choice was driven by the method's practicality

and effectiveness in connecting Innovative Time Management Strategies (ITMS), Work Engagement (WE), Role Overload (RO), and Academic Staff Performance (ASP). The study population comprised academic staff in public universities in the six Southwestern states of Nigeria: Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, and Ekiti. A multi-stage sampling procedure involved the purposive selection of one university from each state. From each of the selected universities, academic staff were randomly selected from the faculties of Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Management Sciences. A total of 350 responses were collected and deemed valid.

For detecting a target of medium effect size, the G* Power software indicated a sample size of 129. The collection of 350 valid responses surpasses this sample size and, thus, dramatically enhances the reliability of the study. The data collection involved a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections: demographic data and information related to the study's constructs. The four sections employed a 5-point Likert scale for measurement.

The 10-item scale Innovative Time Management Strategies (ITMS) assesses the employment of modern methods such as the use of time blocking and digital aids (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017; Claessens et al, 2007).

The three dimensions of work engagement, namely vigour, dedication and absorption, were measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), for a total of 9 items.

Perceptions of role overload were measured by the 5-item Role Overload scale (Robbins et al., 2022).

The self-assessment of academic staff performance, attributable to teaching, research and service, was gauged by the 8-item Academic Staff Performance scale (NUC, 2021; Omonijo et al., 2021).

All Cronbach's Alpha scores greater than .78 confirmed the reliability of the pilot study (N=30), thus demonstrating the instruments were constructed properly. SPSS 28 and Hayes' PROCESS macro were used for data management and analysis. Analytic procedures included descriptive statistics, tests of reliability and validity, correlation and regression, and mediation using 5000 bootstrap samples to estimate direct and indirect effects.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Demographics

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=350)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male Female	210 140	60 40
Academic Rank	Lecturer II Lecturer I Senior Lecturer Professor	95 110 85 60	27.1 31.4 24.3 17.1
Years of Experience	1-5 years 6-10 years 11 years and above	80 120 150	22.9 34.3 42.9
University	University of Ibadan University of Lagos Obafemi Awolowo University University of Benin University of Ilorin Federal University of Technology, Akure	70 65 60 55 50 50	20 18.6 17.1 15.7 14.3 14.3

*Note: *Universities in South-South and North Central were included in the South West sampling frame for this study's context.*

Source: *Authors' Compilation, 2025*

Three hundred and fifty (350) completed copies of the questionnaire were received and analysed. The demographic composition of participants is presented in Table 1. The sample consisted of more males at 60.0%, which is in line with the current gender ratio in the academic workforce. The distribution of respondents with respect to academic rank and accompanying years of service was sufficiently balanced, thus ensuring that the sample adequately represented the entire spectrum of junior, middle, and senior academic professionals.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Innovative Time Management (ITMS)	3.25	0.81
2. Work Engagement (WE)	3.55	0.76
3. Role Overload (RO)	3.85	0.72
4. Academic Staff Performance (ASP)	3.4	0.79

Source: *Authors' Compilation, 2025*

The primary study variables' descriptive statistics, shown in Table 2, reveal the following insights. Its average score for Innovative Time Management (ITMS) was 3.25 (SD=0.81), which is slightly above the scale midpoint, reflecting a moderate level of adoption. The sample's work engagement (WE) was approximately 3.55 (SD=0.76), suggesting that the sample was fairly engaged. Role Overload (RO), which was the highest, scored 3.85 (SD=0.72), indicating that this issue was quite prevalent. Academic Staff Performance (ASP) was less than the sample's work engagement, averaging 3.40 (SD=0.79).

Reliability and Validity Assessment

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Innovative Time Management (ITMS)	0.88	0.9	0.57
Work Engagement (WE)	0.91	0.93	0.62
Role Overload (RO)	0.85	0.88	0.6
Academic Staff Performance (ASP)	0.89	0.91	0.58

Source: *Authors' Compilation, 2025*

The assessment of construct validity confirms that all metrics of the measurement model have passed rigorous reliability and validity checks. Table 3 demonstrates that all Cronbach's Alpha values were above the accepted lower bound of 0.70, thus all measurement instruments had strong internal reliability. Additionally, all Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.88 and all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.57, thus satisfying the criteria for convergent validity.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. ITMS	**0.75**			
2. WE	.52**	**0.79**		
3. RO	-.48**	-.61**	**0.77**	
4. ASP	.53**	.65**	-.58**	**0.76**

*Note: *$p < .01$; Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square roots of the AVE.*

Source: *Authors' Compilation, 2025*

Discriminant validity is examined through the Fornell-Larcker criterion. An empirical indicator supporting discriminant validity is that the square root of the AVE for each construct (bolded) surpassed each of the constructs' correlations with other constructs.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 5: Regression Analysis for Direct Effect (H1)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p-value
(Constant)	1.75	0.21		8.33	<.001
Innovative Time Management (ITMS)	0.53	0.06	0.53	8.83	**<.001**

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.28, F(1, 348) = 78.01, p < .001$

Source: *SPSS v.28, 2025*

Direct Effect (H_1): A simple linear regression was conducted for the first hypothesis (H_1). It was established that Innovative Time Management has a direct positive effect on Academic Staff Performance. The result was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < .001$). The model indicates that the use of innovative time management strategies is associated with a 0.53 unit increase in academic staff performance. ITMS accounted for 28% of the variance in ASP ($R^2 = 0.28$). Hence, H_1 is supported.

Table 6: Results of Mediation Analysis (H2 & H3)

Effect Type	Path	B	Boot SE	95% Boot CI	Conclusion
Total Effect	ITMS → ASP	0.53	0.06	[0.412, 0.648]	
Direct Effect	ITMS → ASP (controlling for MVs)	0.2	0.07	[0.065, 0.335]	
Indirect Effects					
	ITMS → WE → ASP	0.18	0.04	[0.108, 0.262]	**H2 Supported**
	ITMS → RO → ASP	0.15	0.03	[0.092, 0.218]	**H3 Supported**

Note: ITMS=Innovative Time Management; WE=Work Engagement; RO=Role Overload; ASP=Academic Staff Performance. Boot CI = Bias-Corrected Bootstrap Confidence Interval based on 5000 samples.

Source: *SPSS v.28, 2025*

Mediation Effects (H_2& H_3): As details of the parallel mediation analysis were determined by the use of Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4). The overall impact of ITMS on ASP remains significant ($B = 0.53$, $p < .001$). Adding the mediators retains significance but decreases ($B = 0.20$, $p < .01$), indicating partial mediation. Work Engagement demonstrated a significant indirect effect ($B = 0.18$, 95% CI [0.108, 0.262]), thereby supporting H_2. The indirect impact of Role Overload showed significance ($B = 0.15$, 95% CI [0.092, 0.218]), thereby supporting H_3.

Discussion of Findings

This study sought to evaluate the effects of innovative time management strategies on the performance of academic staff of public universities in

South West Nigeria. The findings are supportive of the model proposed. First, there exists a significant positive direct relationship between innovative time management and performance. Second, this relationship was partially mediated by increased work engagement and reduced role overload. This implies time management improves performance in two ways: psychologically by energising the academics and structurally by alleviating the feeling of being overworked.

There is a strong positive correlation with H_1. For this reason, systematic and future-oriented time management is a significant determinant of academic success. This is also in line with Resource-Based Theory, which holds that internal strengths may act as a competitive edge. Those academics who have mastered these techniques can spend their limited time on more productive activities such as research and high-quality teaching (Aeon & Aguinis, 2017).

The mediation effect of work engagement on time management as a personal resource (the psychological state of work engagement) is one of the reasons for the H_2 results. As the JD-R model suggests, academics who structure their work temporally and create time blocks for focused work are more likely to experience waves of intense focus and strong feelings of success, which in turn elevate their energy and commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). An academic who demonstrates engagement is more likely to exhibit innovation, resilience, and commitment to their work.

The mediation effect of reduced role overload (H_3) illustrates burden management. Innovative techniques allow academics to manage and simplify their workflows purposefully (Claessens et al., 2007). This mitigates the key precursor to burnout—feeling overwhelmed. When reduced, overload liberates cognitive processes and resources, thus fully unleashing performance (Robbins et al., 2022). Notably, work engagement had a slightly higher indirect effect (B=0.18) than reduced overload (B=0.15). This suggests that work engagement, in contrast to reduced overload, is a more effective predictor of performance. This finding illustrates that while minimising negative work strain is essential, actively enhancing positive work constituents is likely to yield better performance outcomes.

Managerial Implications

Theoretical Implications

This work contributes to the theory in several important ways. First, it applies the Job Demands-Resources model to the specific context of academic work in a developing country, reinforcing the need to consider time management as a personal resource. Second, it maps the separate and distinct mediating effects of work engagement (motivational) and role overload (strain-reduction) to provide a more comprehensive description of the dynamics involved. It integrates the personal productivity literature with the occupational health and performance domains.

Practical Implications

This research presents actionable recommendations for university stakeholders:

Institutional Training and Workshops: Every university should organise and fund multiple annual workshops on time management for faculty members. These sessions should be taught only by the top professionals in the field.

Promote a Culture of Deep Work: University management must practise and encourage activities that defend focused work time, such as the scheduling of 'no meeting' periods in a week and valuing outcomes rather than activity level.

Providing Digital Tools: These universities must acquire and distribute project and task management software with proven performance (e.g., Asana, Trello) for administrative ease.

Review of Administrative Load: The university administration should systemically evaluate its committee and administrative task structures in order to reduce the burden of unproductive work on academics.

Integrating with Orientation Programmes: New faculty members should be taught advanced time management techniques as part of their orientation to ensure high productivity.

Conclusion

The results from this research indicate that time management innovation is not simply a personal productivity efficiency, but a crucial institutional lever for enhancing the performance of academic staff in public universities in Nigeria. By equipping staff with modern time management methods, the universities can directly encourage greater work engagement and address the widespread issue of role overload. The most significant contribution of this work is the novel evidence stating that, for attaining the desired academic success in south west Nigeria and beyond, building the prospective time management abilities of the staff is as critical as infrastructural or research funding. Empowering the academic workforce calls for the ability to manage time.

Recommendations

Consideration of the definitive findings of this study yields the following recommendations:

Policy and Practice:

i. The NUC is expected to enhance its accreditation standards to include guidelines on managing workloads and assisting staff development in productivity skills.
ii. Senates of Universities are expected to implement a formulated "Policy on Workload Management" which is designed to advocate and facilitate the adoption of the most effective time management practices.
iii. It is required that Heads of Departments be trained to mentor their staff on the effective management of work priorities in relation to time.

Recommendations for Further Research:

i. **Longitudinal Studies:** Academic research ought to focus on tracing the behaviours of academics over extended periods to identify the correlation between time management training and performance indicators.
ii. **Qualitative Inquiries:** Research employing a mixed methodological framework should incorporate interviews to better understand the particular challenges academics encounter in embracing these strategies and the complex ways in which their performance is enhanced.

iii. **Broadened Approach:** It would be beneficial to replicate this research in other geopolitical zones in Nigeria and also in private universities for comparative purposes.

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