

Teachers Techniques in the Management of Stress in Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Ijebu-North Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria

Hakeem J. EDUN*

Abstract

The study investigated teachers' techniques in the management of stress in Secondary Schools in Ijebu North Local Government Area. The problem of this study is that teachers' stress is so serious such that it impacts negatively on teacher's physical and psychological well-being as well as on their morale and performance. Four research questions were raised upon which the study was based. The research questions were analyzed using simple frequencies, percentages and chi-square. Some of the research questions were significant while some are not. Based on the findings, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between the techniques used by teachers in managing stress (Chi-square = 5.849, $P > 0.05$). It was therefore recommended that teachers need to be conscious of the fact that stress is an integral part of human endeavor. Stress should be seen as a test of maturity which should be taken as a challenge. The manner in which a teacher manages stressful situations will go a long way in determining his/her effectiveness on the job.

Keywords: Management, schools and techniques, stress, teachers

Introduction

The struggle for survival in the modern world of excessive urge for material acquisition has resulted in many professionals over stretching their physical and mental abilities to get to the top. In attaining the goal of their dreams, professionals, particularly teachers, are confronted with numerous obstacles, the overcoming of which taxes their energies to the utmost. Teacher stress is a wide cross-cultural phenomenon (Kyracou, 1987), the issue of occupational stress has been of concern to many people especially researchers and management experts the issue becomes pertinent because workers in all sectors experience one form of stress or the other in their places. Stress, if not properly managed, could therefore negatively affect the level of productivity of workers.

Stress as defined by Quik (1996) is the generalized, patterned, unconscious mobilization of internal energy resources that occur when a person is confronted with a stressor, or that condition that causes stress. In addition, Baron and Bryne (1977) defined stress as the response to physical or psychological events perceived by the individual as potentially causing harm or emotional distress. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines stress as "pressure, condition causing hardship, disquiet, tension or worries brought about by problematic situation in an individual life."

Narayanan (1999) observes that where the incidence of stress is traceable to a job or work situation, it is known as job stress, which could be identified as any aspect of a job or work situation such as heat, noise, too much or too little responsibility (2000). Job stress is usually attributable to unpleasant situations such as a superior officer's reprimand for poor job performance. However, a pleasant situation might equally bring about job stress, such as job promotion and transfer to another location. Anyaduba (2000). Cole, refers to stress as the bodily changes that can take place when the external pressures on an individual reach an intolerable pitch causing weakening job performance and ill health.

The symptoms of stress can be internal or external. According to Riches Olowo (1994), internal symptoms may include: feeling sick, moody or having headache. External symptoms may include throwing things, shaking with rage and weeping. It is, however, possible for many people to experience different level of stress even while working under the same conditions.

Signals of stress can also be behavioral and physiological, behavioral signal includes feeling of weakness and faintness, attacking things hurriedly, losing personal pos-

* Faculty of Education. Department of Educational Management and Business Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye Ogun State, Nigeria.

E-mail: edun.hakeem@ouagoiwoye.edu.ng; hakeemalabi@yahoo.com

session, experiencing feelings of been dominated by time or feeling oppressed by peers as well as by administrative demands (Hanseng, 1986). Adegoroye has this to say “physiological signs include high blood pressure, jagged nerves, intolerance to heat, backache, anxiety and failure in sexual performance” all these changes, according to Okorie (1997) may result in abnormal functioning in the work place. According to her, chronic lateness to work, sloppiness, absenteeism, staff turnover, feeling of not being appreciated and decrease in work quality are common symptoms of stress that can affect staff morale and quality of work. Ijaiya (2000) contended that while Nigerian teachers have clarity as to their roles, the manner in which promotion is carried out makes many of them unclear about the criteria by which their work is judged.

Statement of the Problem

Since teachers' stress is a serious problem and impacts negatively on teachers' physical and psychological well-being as well as on their morale and performance, it is therefore important that teachers find practical ways of managing or preventing stress in order to enhance efficiency and productivity. This study therefore investigated the techniques which the teachers of secondary schools use to prevent or manage stress.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. How do teachers manage stress?
2. Does location influence strategies for managing of stress among secondary school teachers?
3. Does teachers' qualification influence strategies for managing of stress among secondary school teachers?
4. Does gender influence stress management strategies adopted by secondary school teachers?

Significance of the Study

The study will be of immense benefit to teachers, students, policy makers and the Government. Teachers' stress has been found to significantly impair the working relationship of a teacher with his pupils/students and the quality of teaching and commitment to work. This study will also be of great importance in the area of techniques teachers can use in managing stress so as to provide a conducive working atmosphere for fruitful educational activities in schools.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to look at the techniques the teachers use in managing stress in secondary schools.

The specific objectives are:

- (i) To determine the relationship between unfavorable working environment and teachers' stress.
- (ii) To describe the demographic characteristics (gender, experience position held and age) of the teachers under study.
- (iii) To determine teachers' techniques in managing stress.

Methodology Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research design. The design was chosen because data was collected from a population using a sample. Generalization can be made to the whole population from the findings made on the sample.

Population

The population for the study consisted all the teachers in Ijebu North Local Government Area.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study 520 teachers in secondary schools in Ijebu North Local Government Area. Out of this number, a simple random sampling technique was used to select five schools (20 teachers from each school) which made up the sample for this study.

Instrument

The instrument used for the data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was tagged “Teachers Stress Management Techniques Questionnaire” (TSMTQ) which was developed by the researcher and critically studied by Counselors in Federal inspectorate services. The questionnaire is made up of two sections. Section A sought to elicit personal information, which included name of school, location of school (rural or urban) qualification and gender. Section B considered items based on avoidance, reduction, communication and relaxation techniques. The questions were purposely directed towards finding out the techniques used most by teachers in the management of stress. The knowledge gained from the literature review was of great importance in the formulation of these items.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire items were validated by two counselors in the federal inspectorate services of Federal Ministry of Education, Abeokuta to ensure content validity of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined with the use of test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered on two occasions within two weeks interval. Teachers used for establishing reliability of the instrument did not participate in the major study.

Method of Data Analysis

Data obtained were analyzed using frequency count and chi-square. The analysis was done at 0.05 level of significance using a two-tailed test.

Results.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

How do teachers manage stress?

Teacher assessment of their stress management technique.

S/N	Items	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
1	I try to do physical exercise	32	64	4
2	I try to keep away from this type of situation	56	36	8
3	I go to see a good film	44	56	-
4	I do my best to get out of the situation gracefully	4	56	-
5	I separate myself as much as possible from the people who created the situation because there is nothing I can do to change it	40	32	28
6	I try to be very organize so I keep on top of things	48	52	-
7	I talk with people (other than my supervisor who are involved)	44	56	-
8	I give extra attention to planning and scheduling	60	40	-
9	I try to think of myself as someone who always comes through	72	29	-
10	I devote more time and energy to doing my job	56	44	-
11	I remind myself that work is not everything	48	36	16
12	I try not to be concerned about it	28	44	28
13	I anticipate the negative consequences so that I am prepared for the worst	36	44	20
14	I try to see the situation as an opportunity to learn and develop new skills	36	64	-
15	I think about the challenge I can find in this situation	32	48	20
16	I try to get additional people involved in the situation	40	44	16
17	I decide what I think should be done and explain this to people who are affected	32	56	12

In the table above, there is no significant difference between the techniques used by teachers in managing stress. In item 2 above, it indicates that 44% of the respondents frequently do their best to get out of the situation gracefully, 56% sometimes do their best to get out of the situation gracefully while nobody never did. Also, in item 5, 40% of the respondents frequently separate themselves as much as possible from the people who created the situation because there is nothing they can do to change it, 32% sometimes separate themselves as much as possible from the people who created the situation because there is nothing they can do to change it while 28% of the respondent never did.

In item 11, 48% of the respondents frequently remind themselves that work is not everything, 36% sometimes remind themselves that work is not everything while 16% never did.

Also, in item 14, 36% of the respondents frequently try to see the situation as an opportunity to learn and develop new skills, 64% sometimes try to see the situation as an opportunity to learn and develop new skills, while nobody never did.

Lastly, in item 17, 32% of the respondents frequently decide on what they think should be done and explain this to people who are affected, 56% sometimes decide on what they think should be done and explain this to people who are affected while 12% of the respondent never did.

Research Question 2

Does location influence strategies for management of stress among secondary school teachers?

Influence of School location on stress management strategies

				Bi				df	Chi-square	P	Remarks
		Count	Expected Count	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Total				
Location	Urban	Count	Expected Count	0	32	20	52	2	5.849	0.054	NS
				2.1	33.3	16.6	52.0				
	Rural	Count	Expected Count	4	32	12	48				
				1.9	30.7	15.4	48.0				
Total		Count	Expected Count	4	64	32	100				
				4.0	64.0	32.0	100.0				

NS = No Significant ($P > 0.05$)

In the table above, there is no significant difference between urban and rural teachers' strategies for managing stress. Rural and urban teachers have the same strategies for managing stress.

Research Question 3

Does teacher qualification influence strategies for management of stress among secondary school teachers?

Influence of teacher qualification on stress management strategies. NS = No Significant ($P > 0.05$)

			Bi				df	Chi-square	P	Remarks
		Count	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Total				
Location	Graduate	Count	4	48	32	84	2	10.714	0.005	NS
		Expected Count	3.4	53.8	26.9	84.0				
	Non-Graduate	Count	0	16	0	16				
		Expected Count	6	10.2	5.1	16.0				
Total		Count	4	64	32	100				
		Expected Count	4.0	64.0	32.0	100.0				

In the table above, there are significant differences between graduate and non-graduate teachers regarding strategies for management of stress.

Graduate teachers frequently used many of the listed/identified stress management strategies while non-graduates rarely used them. For example, 32 graduate teachers indicated 'frequently' for the strategies while no non-graduate teachers did.

Research Question 4

Do gender influence stress management strategies adopt by secondary school teachers?

Influence of teachers' gender on stress management strategies

		Bi				df	Chi-square	P	Remarks
		Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Total				
Location	Male Count	0	28	23	51	2	11.089	0.004	NS
	Expected Count	2.0	32.6	16.3	51.0				
	Female Count	4	3	9	49				
	Expected Count	2.0	30.7	15.7	49.0				
Total	Count	4	64	32	100				
	Expected Count	4.0	64.0	32.0	100.0				

Significant ($P < 0.05$)

In the table above, there are significant differences in the strategies employed in stress management by male and female teachers. While no male teacher indicated 'never' in adoption of some strategies, four (4) female teachers indicated 'never'. Twenty-three (23) out of fifty-one (51) males indicated 'frequently' while only nine (9) females did. Male and female teachers therefore differ in strategies they adopt in managing stress.

Discussion

The study found that there is no significant difference in the techniques used by teachers in managing stress. It also found that there is no significant difference in the urban and rural teachers' strategies for managing stress. Rural and urban teachers have the same strategies for managing stress.

There is also significant difference between graduate and non-graduate teachers' strategies in the management of stress.

Also, it is found that graduate teachers frequently use many of the listed/identified stress management strategies while non-graduates rarely use them. Finally, there is significant difference in the strategies employed in stress management by male and female teachers while no male teacher.

This study tried to find out the techniques used by the teachers in the management of stress.

Results from the analysis of data collected showed that teachers frequently use active behavioral strategies to manage stress. The teachers prefer to appraise the problem and talk about the source of stress as well as seek further information. The result of the first research question reveals that there is no significant difference between the techniques used by teachers in managing stress. The second research question also reveals that there is no significant difference between urban and rural teachers' strategies for managing stress. This finding is in line with the study of Gaxiel (1993) which discovered that Jewish teachers frequently use active behavioral strategies in coping with occupational stress.

The present result also agrees with the findings of Schroeder et al (2001) which shows that Ghanaian teachers take time to talk about the problem and put more efforts into correcting the situation as their strategies to cope with stress.

The strategies suggest that the teacher tries to escape and avoid the source of stress. Here, whenever the teacher is stressed he/she consoles him/herself with the fact that work is not everything and therefore feels less stressed. This is in line with the suggestion of Okorie (1997) that a positive attitude towards life in general is an essential pre-requisite in any kind of stress management programme.

Conclusion

School administrators can do much to deal with the effects of stress felt by teachers. If stress is not properly managed among teachers, it will result in waste and mis-application of the enormous resources which the government invests in the education of its citizens.

Based on the findings of this study, the teachers of whatever gender or experience can use the stress technique in this research to effectively manage teachers stress. Stress in an organization is a common occurrence, it cannot be avoided. However, it is within the province of school administrators to use techniques has shown that the management of stress by teachers involved the use of many strategies. Indeed, no single method could effectively ameliorate stress among workers, including teachers. Of course, teachers are indispensable to the success of any educational system. The neglect of the teachers in the Nigerian society could well constitute a source of worry and stress to teachers.

In the words of Peter Williams, Director of Education Department, Commonwealth Secretariat: If teachers are so important and so numerous, why on earth are they so neglected? Why is it that they feel so isolated and uncared for? That they suffer indignities that other professions could be asked to tolerate?" (1995).

Recommendations

The recommendations for the study entails the following:

That government and society must show appropriate appreciation, respect and recognition to the teaching profession as a whole; efforts should therefore be made to ameliorate the correlates of teachers' stress. Indeed, stress among teachers if not adequately checked could result in physical ailments, psychological and social problems, such as a depression and anxiety, hostility towards colleagues, students and family members.

Also, teachers need to be orientated towards and to be conscious of the fact that stress is an integral part of human endeavor. Stress should be seen as a test of maturity which should be taken as a challenge. The manner in which a teacher manages stressful situations will go a long way in determining his/her effectiveness in their job.

Teacher-training institutions should develop relevant courses and programmes that deal directly with the topic of professional stress. Thus, from their training onwards, teachers would imbibe the stressful realities of the teaching profession and would be able to face the challenge more successfully.

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