

Sources of Occupational Stress among Senior Secondary School Teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State, Nigeria

Kpe-Nobana, Christiana & Orisa-Ubi, Charity (PhD)

Department of Human Kinetics,
Health and Safety Education,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

christiana.kpenobana@iaue.edu.ng, charilove75@yahoo.com

08033417421, 08038882944

Abstract

This study investigated the sources of occupational stress among senior secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was used. The population for the study consisted of all the 1,647 senior secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State with a sample size of 270. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The finding of the study showed that environmental factors responsible for stress among teachers include: inadequate facilities and equipment (26.5%), noise arising from overcrowded classrooms (31.6%), absence of power supply and heat in the office/staff room (30.0%) while the work related factors include: workload (44.1%), number of subjects allocated to each teacher (40.4%), large class size (32.7%), number of classes given to teachers to teach (35.7%), assessment (32.4%) and writing weekly lesson plan (33.1%). It was concluded that, stressful experience among teachers was majorly due to environmental and work related activities. Therefore, it was recommended that, government should build more classrooms in all the public schools to reduce the class size to avoid stressing teachers while in class.

Keywords: *Stress, Work-related factors, Teachers, Environmental factors.*

Introduction

Teachers are the key stakeholders in the educational system and like other workers in different profession they do experience stress. According to Baraza and Simatwa (2016) stress is any external stimulus that causes wear and tear on one's psychological or physical well-being. It can be defined as tension, pressure, anxiety or worry resulting from one's life events. Stress can noticeably be either positive or negative. It is positive when a situation offers an opportunity for one to gain something, but when constraints of demands are placed on us then it is negative. In a study by Sprenger (2011), it was shown that one hundred percent of teachers interviewed reported that the teaching profession is stressful, with 72% describing the profession as extremely or very stressful. In this study, stress is defined as the pressure or tension experienced by teachers due to their workload or work related activities which are unfavourable to health.

Stress can emanate from different sources among teachers. The extensive nature of the teaching job and the central role played by teaching personnel in creating an atmosphere that fosters learning among students can enhance stress among them. Baraza and Simatwa (2016) showed from their study that employment factors accounted for 10.9% of teachers' stress level

specifically, workload was found to have a high influence on teachers' stress. Felteo (2015) revealed three major sources of stressors which include student, assessment and time. Students factors such as student attitude and unpredictability of having to deal with disruptive students; school based assessment system, not enough resources, pressure from administration, constant expectations of immediate results and reports, and ever increasing administrative task.

The teaching environment can account for the level of stress experienced by teachers. Johannsen (2011) concluded that physical environmental factors contributes to stress among teachers and identifies poor classroom lighting and ventilation, noise level in the school from learning equipment as physical environmental factors influencing stress among teachers in elementary learning institutions. Similarly, Reddy and Anuradha (2013) found that school physical environment such as dilapidated teachers houses, crowded classrooms, inadequate and informal furniture arrangement were key stressors. Adeoye (2002) stated that, the teaching job is not without stress though, the conditions under which the teachers carry out their duty can either aggravate or alleviate stress related outcomes which can have serious consequences on the mental, psychological and physical health of teachers.

For ages, teaching has been regarded as a profession that is taxing. Job related fatality report given by the Bureau of Labour Statistics (2010) shows that the most dangerous industries include construction, agriculture, manufacturing and mining, astonishingly, educational services also made the list, with a total of 169 fatalities occurring in 2010. The type or level of educational institution notwithstanding, teachers face some amount of stress related to their job. Despite the crucial role of teachers in fostering academic learning, social, and emotional well-being, addressing the environmental and workload stressors among teachers in secondary school remains a significant challenge in education. With keen observation by the researcher, there have been complains from teachers about being stressed out. This is worrisome and has prompted the researcher to embark on this study to investigate the environmental and workload stressors among teachers. However, there is paucity of study which specifically investigated the environmental and work related factors responsible for stressful experience among teachers. This study therefore perused sources of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions:

This study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What are the school physical environmental factors responsible for stressful experience among senior secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State?
2. What are the work related factors responsible for stressful experience among senior secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State?
3. What are the different coping strategies for stress among senior secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted as the research design for this study. The population for this study comprised of all the 1,647 senior secondary school teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State (Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2019). The simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 270 teachers which is about 16% of the total population. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled, "Sources of Occupational Stress Questionnaire (SOSQ) among secondary school teachers". The researcher employed the help of two research assistants in the

administration of the questionnaire to the respondents. Introduction of self and purpose of the study was made by the researcher, questions asked were answered and willing respondents were administered the questionnaire for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The analysis was based on 257 because not all copies of the questionnaire were retrieved due to the time frame hence the return rate was 95.1%. Data were presented using descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results

The results of the study are presented in table 1-3 below:

Table 1: Physical Environmental factors responsible for stressful experience among secondary school teachers

SN	Items	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)	Mean	Std
1	The school environment contributed to stressful moment I have experienced in course of performing my duty as a teacher	55(22.5)	99(3.7)	64(26.2)	26(10.6)	3.61	1.1
2	There are no facilities and equipment for relaxation in the school environment	68(28.3)	53(22.1)	83(34.6)	36(15.0)	3.50	1.2
3	My work environment is not comfortable for academic activities	55(22.9)	70(29.1)	79(32.9)	36(15.0)	3.44	1.1
4	The stress I face at work is worsened by noise arising from the overcrowded classrooms	52(21.6)	81(33.6)	64(26.5)	44(18.3)	3.43	1.1
5	The level of stress I face is influenced by the absence of power supply and heat in the office/staff room	69(27.8)	77(31.0)	68(27.4)	34(13.7)	3.64	1.1
Grand mean/std						3.24	1.1

*Non responses excluded

Table 1 revealed that the grand mean = 3.24 is greater than the criterion mean = 2.5 which indicates that physical environmental factors are responsible for stressful experiences among secondary school teachers. Such factors include: inadequate facilities and equipment (28.3%), noise arising from overcrowded classrooms (33.6%), absence of power supply and heat in the office/staff room (31.0%).

Table 2: Work related factors responsible for stressful experience among secondary school teachers

SN	Items*	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)	Mean	Std
1	The workload given to me is a major source of stress for me as a teacher	114(45.4)	69(27.5)	50(19.9)	18(7.2)	3.04	1.06
2	The number of subjects allocated for me to teach is too much for me and it is stressful	71(27.8)	103(40.4)	59(23.1)	22(8.6)	2.87	.93
3	I am always stressed up because of the large class size I handle	84(32.8)	73(29.2)	75(30.0)	18(7.2)	2.81	1.05
4	The number of classes given to me to teach is stressful for me	76(31.9)	45(18.9)	74(31.1)	43(18.1)	2.74	.99
5	Assessment (test and examination) of students is one major stressful event I encounter as a teacher	62(25.4)	83(34.0)	63(25.8)	36(14.7)	2.57	1.13
6	Writing weekly lesson plan is stressful for me	68(27.9)	85(34.8)	60(24.5)	31(12.7)	3.63	1.15
Grand mean/std						2.94	1.15

*Non responses excluded

Table 2 revealed that the grand mean = 2.94 is greater than the criterion mean = 2.5 which indicates that work related factors are responsible for stressful experiences among secondary school teachers. Such factors include: workload (44.1%), number of subjects allocated to each teacher (40.4%), large class size (32.7%), number of classes given to teachers to teach (35.7%), assessment (32.4%) and writing weekly lesson plan (33.1%).

Table 3: Coping strategies for stress among secondary school teachers

SN	Items*	Frequency	Percentage
1	Emotional self-control	233	91.1
2	Give up whatever you do at that moment and relax	169	65.0
3	I divert my attention to something else	158	61.5
4	Move to a recreational centre or look for something recreative and do	175	68.1
5	I confront the source of the stress and ensure I subdue it	222	86.4

*Multiple responses

Table 3 revealed that the coping strategies for stress among secondary school teachers include: emotional self-control (91.1%), confronting and subduing the source of the stress (86.4%), recreation (68.1%), and diverting of one attention to something else (61.5%).

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study in Table 1 showed that the physical environmental factors responsible for stressful experiences among secondary school teachers include: inadequate facilities and equipment, noise arising from overcrowded classrooms, absence of power supply and heat in

the office/staff room. This finding is expected therefore not surprising because any work environment that is not conducive is bound to increase the workers susceptibility to stress. The finding of this study is similar to that of Rusli, Edimansyah and Naing (2006) which showed that high job demand, increased environmental exposures has increased the stress level of teachers. It is worthy of note that, workplace environment described the surrounding conditions for the employee in performing their duties. Thus, if the work environment is not suitable for the employees it subjects the workers to stress. In line with this finding, Adeoye cited in Nnabuife, Onyeizugbe and Onwuka (2012) posited that there is growing evidence that schools no longer provide the low stress working environment that they once did.

The result of this study in Table 2 showed that the work related factors responsible for stressful experiences among secondary school teachers include: workload, number of subjects allocated to each teacher, large class size, number of classes given to teachers to teach, assessment and writing weekly lesson plan. This finding is expected therefore not surprising because a large number of studies show that teachers are exposed to a workload that results particularly in stress. The finding of this study is in agreement with that of Bertoret (2006) which showed that, there are several occupational stressors for teachers which include: job overload, job control, role ambiguity and conflict, pressures of the teacher's role, inadequate resources, and poor working conditions. The finding of this study is also in keeping with that of Montgomery and Rupp (2005) which revealed that the main sources of teacher stress stem from maintaining discipline in the classroom, general time pressures, workload demands, and large amounts of change, assessments and being exposed to generally poor working conditions. The finding of this study corroborates that of Klassen, Usher and Bong (2010) which showed that teachers had greater workload stress, greater classroom stress from student behaviors, and lower classroom management self-efficacy. The finding of this study is also similar to that of Ngari, Ndungu, Mwonya, Ngumi, Mumiukha, Chepchieng and Kariuki (2013) which showed that, more than half of the respondents recorded high levels of stress resulting from their school workload and other responsibilities. The similarity found between the previous studies and present study might be due to the fact that teaching irrespective of where it is carried out has some roles embedded in it which contribute to stress.

The result of this study in Table 3 revealed that the coping strategies for stress among secondary school teachers include: emotional self-control (91.1%), confronting and subduing the source of the stress (86.4%), recreation (68.1%), and diverting of one attention to something else (61.5%). It is worthy of note that, in dealing with stress issues, recreation and leisure pursuits are essential wellness programmes to manage it. The finding of this study is in line with that of Gebrekirstos (2015) where the respondents indicated some coping strategies for stress such as, emotional self-control, giving up strategy, plan full coping index, confrontative coping index and the least was avoidance coping index. This is in line with that of Dansu and Uchegbu, cited in Onifade (2006) which showed that, participating in physically motivated wellness and leisure activities can foster a range of positive and worthwhile experiences; from simple relaxation, fun, and enjoyment to personal development and fulfillment which can relieve an individual of stress.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that, the sources of occupational stress for teachers in South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State are mainly environmental factors such as: inadequate facilities and equipment, noise arising from overcrowded classrooms, absence of power supply and heat in the office/staff room and work-related factors which include:

workload, number of subjected allocated to each teacher, large class size, number of classes given to teachers to teach, assessment and writing weekly lesson plan.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the outcome of the study:

1. Government should build more classrooms in all the public secondary schools to reduce the class size to avoid stressing teachers while in class.
2. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with Non-governmental Organizations should make fund available to build more offices for teachers in the public schools to reduce the congestion of teachers in a single staff room, this will make them to be more relaxed, focused and do their work better with minimal stress.
3. The government should employ more teachers as the number of students admitted is increasing rapidly in the secondary schools to ensure that a teacher is not given a work overload due to insufficient number of teachers in the school.
4. The teachers should make out time for themselves for recreation.
5. The school administrators should organize recreation programmes for the teachers such as teachers' social gathering on weekly basis to ease the stress on them.

References

- Adeoye, E.A. (2002). Correlates of job Stress among females academics at the University of Ilorin. *The Nigerian Journal for Guidance and Counseling*, 4, 126-179.
- Felteo, G. (2015). Comparing teacher stress sources in Queensland and Hong Kong secondary school teachers. Retrieved from <http://www.atea.edu.au/confpapers>.
- Gebrekirostos, H. A. (2015). Occupational stress among secondary school teachers and their coping strategies. The case of central zone of Tigray Region. *International Journal of Academic Research in Education and Review*, 3(6), 143-157.
- Johannsen, S. E. (2011). An Analysis of the Occupational Stress Factors Identified by Certified Teachers. Retrieved from <https://www.mobt3ath.com/uplode/book/book-22963.pdf>.
- Klassen, R. M., Usher, E. L. & Bong, M. (2010). Teachers' Collective Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, and Job Stress in Cross-Cultural Context'. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 78(4), 464- 486.
- Montgomery, C., & Rupp, A.A. (2005). Meta-analysis for exploring the diverse causes and effects of stress in teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(3), 458-486.
- Ngari S M, Ndungu A, Mwonya R, Ngumi O, Mumiukha C, Chepchieng M & Kariuki M (2013). Levels of stress among secondary school administrators and its implication in education management in Kenya. Retrieved from <https://gjournals.org/2019/08/02/baraza-et-al/>.
- Nnabuiife, E., Onyeizugbe, C. & Onwuka, E. (2012). Stress Management and Occupational Performance among Female Lecturers in Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(3), 166-174.
- Onifade, A. (2016). Proceedings of the 37th conference of Nigerian Association of Physical, Health Education Recreation Sport and Dance (NAPHER.SD), Yomleks.
- Reddy, R. & Anuradha, P. (2013). A study on the school physical environment. *Industrial Pollution Control*, 22(1), 73-76.