

Influence of Gender, Qualification and Experience on Incidence of Stress and Coping Strategies among Primary School Teachers in Ekiti State

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Abstract

The study explored the influence of gender, qualification and experience on incidence of stress and coping strategies among primary school teachers. This study adopted descriptive design of research type. The population for the study consisted of primary schools in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 21 primary schools, 378 teachers participated. Two instruments were used for the study. They are the sources of stress and coping strategies adapted from Ugwuja (2009). When validated by Ugwuja, the instrument yielded the reliability co-efficient indices of .73 for sources of stress, .71 for stress management, and .81 for overall instrument respectively. The data collected were analysed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result indicated that significant difference existed in the incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on gender with male teacher having highest incidence of stress, no significant difference in incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teacher qualification and there is no significant difference in incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teaching experience. The study recommended that marital counselling should be organized for both the divorcee and married in order to reduce their stress level. The school management should look for a way to reduce the work load of the teachers generally. In addition to this, the government should make teaching more attractive by increasing teacher salary

Keywords: *Incidence of stress, Coping Strategies, Qualification and Experience*

Introduction

Education is the backbone of development of any nation as it is capable of improving the quality of a society through refinement of its potentials. Education enhances the application of man's achievement towards improvement of his environment. The role of education, therefore, cannot be ruled out in the quest for national development. It is in this regard that Obayan (2006) described education as a vehicle for economic, socio-cultural and political development of nations and individuals. The quality of a nation and its education, to a great extent, lies in the hands of the teachers, as no nation can grow beyond the quality of its teachers.

As crucial as the roles of teachers in educational development is, their efforts at ensuring quality services are clogged by unavoidable situation called “stress” which is a common phenomenon in the human endeavour. In an educational system, both teachers and students suffer stress because none of them is operating under conducive environment especially in the Nigerian current social environment. . Stress is defined as an uneasiness and anxiety brought about by various problems of life (Sun, Dunne, Hou, & Xu, 2011). Despair, malnutrition, substance use, and negative effect self-care skill are by products of stress. Izgar (2008), therefore, stated that these changes brought about by stress may lead to physical and psychological damages, which may vary with personality and external conditions. The consequences of suffering from stress can be classified into three categories which are physiological, psychological and behavioral consequences. The physical consequences are chronic stress that causes absenteeism, indecisiveness, nervousness etc. The physiological consequences of stress are blood pressure, headaches, increased heart rate etc. The behavioral consequences of stress are sleeping disorders, increased drinking and smoking habits, annoyance and so on. Some of the responses to behavioral stressors are to confront the situation (Jarret, 2007). In the views of Manson (2007), stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension and if not controlled or if not tackled properly, may result into very serious problems among teachers. At secondary level, it is common to see teachers complaining of stress probably due to the nature of their job which involves physical and mental exertion. This is owing to the fact that teaching profession requires regular use of various parts of the body such as brain, head, eyes, hands and legs each having roles to play simultaneously in the teaching and learning process. Stress has become a common issue that almost everyone has to cope with especially those who engage in intellectual activities in the present economic condition in Nigeria. Teaching as a profession is a demanding job that requires highly intellectual activities but very poorly catered for in the Nigerian social environment. Symptoms of stress can be lack of concentration, while the emotional symptoms can be anger, irritation, mood swing, and depression, which always have adverse effects on the teachers’ functionality (Morgan & Kitching, 2007). Just as there are various symptoms of stress, there are also numerous sources from which one’s stress can emanate. This suggests that there are different sources of stress. Sources of stress among others include too much work load, lack of motivation, trouble with subordinate, insecurity, financial difficulties. Similarly, Kyriacou (2001) listed pupils’ lack of motivation, maintenance of discipline, time pressures and workload, coping with changes, being evaluated by others, dealing with colleagues, self-esteem and status, administration and management, role conflict and ambiguity among sources of teachers’ stress. However, teacher’s ability to make headway in the midst of stress will depend on his/her coping strategies adopted when faced with stressful situation.

Gender is an important issue in the context of incidence, causes and management of stress among teachers. Gender identity is a salient issue, which has been generating a lot of interest. It is certain that male and female teachers will show measurable differences in handling stress. For instance, Sukhadeepak (2006) opined that women are more adept at handling stress because of their coping mechanisms and that men seem to be more stress prone since they are more likely to get into other things that add to stress such as alcoholism, smoking and so on. Sukhadeepak added that while women are better equipped to deal with emotional issues, men find it difficult to express anxiety and sorrow. This means that the role of gender cannot be neglected in coping with stressful situations. The level of stress is both different among male and female teachers. Just as gender influence stress experience, male and female teachers also vary in the coping strategies adopted when faced with stressful

situations. This means that men and women differ in their use of coping strategies to manage stress. Wallnäs and Hampus (2017) who explored the relationship between physical activity, social support and hardiness as predictors of occupational stress in Swedish upper secondary school teachers and found among others that female teacher reported significantly higher levels of stress compared to males. Bada Falana (2012) studied the influence of gender on stress of University Lecturers in Ekiti State and found that there was no significant difference in male and female teachers' stress management strategies.

Academic rank is one factor that may have positive or negative influence on incidence of stress and one's ability to manage it effectively. With respect to educational settings, Abe and Adu (2013) opined that, a teaching qualification or teacher qualification is one of the criteria for becoming a registered teacher in primary or secondary school. Such qualifications include, but are not limited to, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). Education background and the strength of one's qualification could be crucial for effective management of stressful situation(s). For example, a trained teacher knows the methods of dealing with different situations and students from different home background.

Research showed that workers at lower academic qualification reported feeling more alienated than those working with higher academic qualification, and they also reported experiencing less job satisfaction and more occupational stress (Mazlan, 2002; Jepson & Forrest, 2006). In addition, they also tend to show more days off because of sickness. On the contrary, Vagg, Spielberger, and Wasala (2002) in their study reported that dealing with crisis situations perceived more stress for employees with higher qualification, than workers with lower qualification. Another finding was employee who perceived that they received inadequate salary and lack of progression for their career was more stressful than employee who perceived that they got adequate salary and career development. Adequate salary and career development could be a function of one's academic qualification. Similarly, Oshagbemi (2003) found that overall stress level decreases and job satisfaction increased progressively with rank. This phenomenon likely occurs because a higher-level academic rank tends to be more complex and have been better working conditions, pay, promotion prospects, supervision, and responsibility and all this condition may be contributed to reduction in one's perception of stress and increase in job satisfaction

Years of teaching experience also goes a long way in determining the means through which teachers' stress would be managed. Experienced teachers have a richer background of experience to draw from which could contribute insight and ideas to the means of coping with stress. This is in line with the saying that experience is the best teacher since experienced teachers will use the challenges experienced in the past as a yard stick for adapting to new stressful situation(s). With respect to the place of years of work experience in stress management, some research findings showed that inexperienced teachers tend to report greater stress than experienced ones (such as Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002), while other researchers have found that teaching experience does not correlate with stress levels (such as Jepson & Forrest, 2006).

Segal, Hook, and Crolidge (2001) investigated the coping strategies adopted by a sample of community college teachers and found out that the less experienced teachers received higher scores on the dysfunctional coping strategies of focusing on the venting emotions, mentally disengaging, and using alcohol and drugs. While the highly experienced

teachers, by contrast were more likely to use impulse control and turn to their religion as coping strategies

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of gender, qualification and experience on incidence, sources of stress and cooperating strategies among primary school teachers in Ekiti State.

1. Incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on gender;
2. Incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teachers' qualification;
3. Incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on experience.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested in the study.

- a. There is no significant difference in the incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on gender.
- b. There is no significant difference in the incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teacher qualification.
- c. There is no significant difference in the incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teacher experience

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive design of research type. The population for the study comprised all primary school teachers in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study involved only public secondary school teachers in Ekiti State. There are 16 Local Government Areas and three senatorial districts in Ekiti State. From each of the senatorial districts, one Local Government Area was selected for the study using simple random technique. According to Ekiti State Teaching Service Commission (2018), there were 203 secondary schools and 7,538 teachers across the three senatorial district of the state. Thus, seven schools were randomly selected from each of the Local Governments to make a total of 21 schools. From each of the schools, 18 teachers were randomly selected to make total of 378 teachers that participated in the study. This is in accordance with the 2006 Research Advisor that 365 (4.8%) sample is appropriate for population of 7,500.

The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire on incidence, sources of stress and coping strategies adapted from Ugwuja (2009). The instrument had once been administered on some administrative staff of Nasarawa State University, Nasarawa, Nigeria. When validated by Ugwuja, the instrument yielded the reliability co-efficient indices of .73 for sources of stress, .71 for stress management, and .81 for overall instrument respectively.

To establish the validity of the adapted questionnaire, experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation were consulted to face validate the items that make up the test. The comments and suggestions from these experts were considered before the final copy was drafted. The instrument yielded reliability coefficient value of 0.84 and 0.63 for sources of stress sub-scale and coping strategies sub-scale respectively. The reliability coefficients justified the suitability of the instrument for the purpose of the study.

The independent t-test was used in testing null hypothesis a. The choice of independent t-test was based on its potency in testing differences between two groups. Null hypotheses b and c was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). All the hypotheses were tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

Hypotheses Testing

Three hypotheses were formulated in the course of this study. Hypothesis one was tested using independent t-test while hypotheses 2, and 3 were tested using One-way ANOVA, all at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on gender.

Table 1: Independent t-test on Incidence of Stress among Primary School Teachers in Ekiti State Based on Gender

Gender	No	Mean	Std.	Df	t-cal.	p-value	Remark
Male	108	58.94	6.11				
				375	2.43	0.02	Significant
Female	270	56.78	8.40				

Results in Table 1 show a calculated t-value of 2.43 and p-value of 0.02 that is less than 0.05 ($0.02 < 0.05$). Since 0.02 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that significant difference existed in the incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on gender with male teacher having highest incidence of stress.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the incidence of stress among primary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teacher qualification.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance on Difference in Incidence of Stress among Primary School Teachers in Ekiti State Based on Teacher Qualification

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	166.860	2	83.430			
Within Groups	23185.616	375	61.828	1.34	0.26	Not Significant
Total	23352.476	377				

P>0.05

Results in Table 2 show F-value of 1.34 and p-value of 0.26 which is greater than 0.05 ($0.26 > 0.05$). Since 0.26 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implied that there is no significant difference in incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teacher qualification.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teaching experience.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance on Difference in Incidence of Stress among Primary School Teachers in Ekiti State Based on Teaching Experience

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	168.220	2	84.110			
Within Groups	23184.256	375	61.825	1.36	0.26	Not Significant
Total	23352.476	377				

P>0.05

Results in Table 3 show F-value of 1.36 and p-value of 0.26 which is greater than 0.05 (0.26 > 0.05). Since 0.26 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teaching experience

Discussion of the Findings

the result of this study showed that there was significant difference in the incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on gender. This meant that stress among secondary school teachers was influenced by gender. The result showed that male teachers were more stressed than their female counterparts. This result is possible where the burdens of financial difficulties, extra-curricular activities, students' misbehaviour, excessive work load, and irregularity in the promotion are much on male teachers than their female colleagues. This result corroborated the work of Wallnäs and Hampus (2017) who explored the relationship between physical activity, social support and hardiness as predictors of occupational stress in Swedish upper secondary school teachers and found among others that female teachers reported significantly higher levels of stress compared to males. On the contrary, the result of this finding refuted the work of Bada and Falana (2012) who studied the influence of gender on stress experience of University Lecturers in Ekiti State and found that there was no significant difference in male and female teachers' stress management strategies. Differences observed in the result of this study and that of Bada and Falana (2012) might be due to variation in the occupational status of respondents.

Another finding of interest was that there was no significant difference in incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teacher qualification. This meant that academic qualification did not influence incidence of stress among secondary school teachers. This result was applicable where secondary school teachers experience equal incidence of stress, irrespective of their academic qualification. This suggests that teachers with higher academic qualifications and lower academic qualifications were working on the same condition. This result refuted the earlier finding of Vagg, Spielberg, and Wasala (2002) who found that workers with higher qualifications are more stressed than workers with lower qualification. The result of this study further disagreed with that of Eyupoglua and Sanerb (2009) who studied the job satisfaction and stress level of University lecturers in Northern Cyprus and found that professors, assistant professors, and lecturers with a PhD had lower level of stress, while associate professors and lectures with a master degree had high level of stress. The variation observed in the result of this study and that of Eyupoglua and Sanerb (2009) might be due to variation in study location and occupational status of the sampled respondents. Eyupoglua and Sanerb (2009) carried out their study in Northern Cyprus among university lecturers while the current study was done in Ekiti State, Nigeria among secondary school teachers.

The result of this study further revealed that there was no significant difference in incidence of stress among secondary school teachers in Ekiti state based on teaching experience. This meant that incidence of stress among secondary school teachers was independent of academic qualification. This result is possible where secondary school teachers were under the same conditions and under the same government level. This result is in consonance with that of Mohd, Aznan and Suzana (2013) who investigated factors that contribute to stress and level of occupational stress among special education teachers who are currently teaching in special education classes in the state of Penang, Malaysia and reported that there was no significant difference in stress based years of working experience

Recommendation

1. Since lack of basic facilities for teaching were revealed as one of the sources of stress among secondary school teachers, it is suggested that teachers should be adequately catered for and be provided with adequate facilities that will enhance their teaching.
2. Marital counselling should be organized for both the divorcee and married in order to reduce their stress level.
3. In helping the male teacher to reduce their stress, it is recommended that the school management should look for a way to reduce the work load of the teachers generally. In addition to this, the government should make teaching more attractive by increasing teacher salary

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