

An Assessment of Work Stress among Secondary School Teachers in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria

Terna M. Fiase¹, Emmanuel O. Chukwu², Habu Haruna³, Kabiru K. Dawa⁴

^{1,2}*School of Nursing Mkar, Gboko*

^{3,4}*Department of Nursing Science, College of Medical Sciences, University of Maiduguri*

Email: fiaseterna@yahoo.com

Abstract

Background: Teachers' job is fast becoming more stressful in recent times, and this tends to affect the level of teaching effectiveness. Stress may be conceptualized as a complex, multivariate process, resulting from a broad system of variables involving inputs, outputs, and the mediating activities of appraisal and coping.

Objective: The main objective of the study was to determine work stress among secondary school teachers in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically to determine the major stressors among secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state, to identify the effects of these stressors on the health of secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state and to identify the various methods of stress coping strategies used by secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State.

Methodology: Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used for the study to determine the work stress among teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State. A total of 5 teachers (respondents) each from the randomly selected 39 secondary schools were selected to make a total of 195 sample size. The instrument of the study was questionnaire and formulated hypothesis was tested using chi-square

Results: The findings showed that secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A were experiencing stress in their teaching job as nearly all the teachers agree with items identified in the instrument as stressors. Inadequate salary, delayed payment of salary, delayed promotions; involuntary transfers are among poor working conditions considered highly or extremely stressful to the respondents.

Conclusion: The stress experience was found to have both physical and mental effects on the respondents. The findings also revealed that the secondary school teachers frequently use the active behavioral and inactive (escape) strategies in managing stress 2

Background of the study

Teaching is perceived as the oldest and the noblest of all professions. Akindutire (2011) posited that teaching are those actions by the teacher and the learner that make learning successful than it would have been without such teaching. The extent to which the objectives of teaching are achieved determines teaching effectiveness. This is why a very good teacher ensures that the objectives of teaching are achieved at the end of his teaching. However, it appears that many teachers have not been effective in Benue State in recent times. Many factors have been adduced for the ineffectiveness of teachers in the state but the most prominent among them appears to be the stress experienced by the teachers (researchers' observation).

Teachers' job is fast becoming more stressful in recent times, and this tends to affect the level of teaching effectiveness. Stress may be conceptualized as a complex, multivariate process, resulting from a broad system of variables involving inputs, outputs, and the mediating activities of appraisal and coping (Lazarus, 2006; Lazarus, DeLongis, Folkman and Gruen, 2008). Stress as viewed by Olley (2009) is the psychological, physiological and behavioral response of an individual seeking to adopt and adjust to both the internal and external pressures.

In most third world nations, the educational systems have always seemed to be tied to a life of crisis occasioned by shortage of funds, teachers, classrooms, teaching materials and shortage of virtually everything except students. Hence, the teachers could be identified as the ones most susceptible to stress. In recent times in Nigeria, the working life of teachers and school administrators seem be characterized by conflicts, anxieties, frustrations, aggressions, angers, fears, hostilities and job insecurity. All these lead to tension.

Medical researchers have shown that there were no better explanations of why heart disease strikes millions of people, why hypertension takes such a great toll or why arthritis and rheumatic fever wreck devastation other than because of stress (Kemeny, 2007; Galvas and Weinberg, 2006; Okoro, 2004). Hence, there is the need for a study of this nature to help find out the major stressors and their effect on the health of Nigerian school teachers with a view to making some possible suggestions for reducing the stresses and helping people to cope with their jobs. 3

Therefore, this study attempts, to investigate the major stressors on teachers in some selected secondary schools in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State with a view to raising the level of awareness about the potential dangers of stress and the various techniques of coping with and reducing stresses.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the major stressors among secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state.
2. To identify the effects of these stressors on the health of secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state.
3. To identify the various methods of stress coping strategies used by secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State.

Hypothesis

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between gender and effect of stress on the mental health of the teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state.

Methodology

Research Design

Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used for the study to determine the work stress among teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State.

Settings for the Study

The study was conducted at Gboko L.G.A. of Benue State. Gboko L.G.A comprises five major towns or clan namely; Ipav, Yandev, Mbayion, Mbatlav, and, Mbatyerev. Gboko L.G.A has about 65 secondary schools. The people are mainly Tiv speaking citizens and their major occupation is farming.

Study Population

The target population consists of all teachers in secondary schools in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State. Gboko L.G.A has about 65 secondary schools comprising of all government secondary schools.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total of 39 schools were randomly selected from the 65 secondary schools found in Gboko L.G.A. of Benue State. Then, 5 teachers (respondents) each from the randomly selected 39 secondary schools was selected to make a total of 195 sample size. 4

Method of Data Collection

A total 195 questionnaires were distributed to respondents by the researchers with help of three trained research assistants using simple random sampling technique. The questionnaires

were given to the respondents at their respective schools and same retrieved them subsequently.

Method of Data Analysis

Data was analyzed after collection by the researchers using descriptive and inferential statistics (simple frequencies, percentages and chi-squares was used for testing the relationship at 0.05 level of significance). All data were presented in table

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of the Respondents

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage%</i>
1	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Male</i> <i>Female</i>	95 100 195	49 51 100
2	<i>Age bracket</i>	<i>18-23</i> <i>24-28</i> <i>29-33</i> <i>34-38</i> <i>39 and above</i>	40 55 36 40 24	21 28 18 21 12
3	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Single</i> <i>Married</i> <i>Divorce</i>	124 71 0	64 36 0
4	<i>Educational qualification</i>	<i>Secondary certificate</i> <i>NCE</i> <i>OND/HND</i> <i>Degree</i> <i>Masters</i>	0 96 52 45 0	0 49 27 23 0
5	<i>Teaching experience</i>	<i>1-4 years</i> <i>5-8 years</i> <i>9-12 years</i> <i>13-16 years</i> <i>17 years and above</i>	74 43 38 28 12	38 22 19 14 6
6	<i>How many subjects do you teach in the school?</i>	<i>1</i> <i>2</i> <i>3</i> <i>4</i>	90 102 3 0	46 52 2 0
7	<i>How many times in a week do you normally have classes</i>	<i>1-3</i> <i>4-7</i> <i>8-10</i>	50 138 7	26 71 4
8	<i>Which of the following represent your salary scale</i>	<i>5,000-10,000</i> <i>11,000-20,000</i> <i>21,000-30,000</i> <i>31,000-40,000</i> <i>41,000 and above</i>	35 97 63 0 0	18 50 32 0 0
9	<i>Do you think your payment commensurate with qualification and work?</i>	<i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>	0 195	0 100
10	<i>Do you experience stress related to your work?</i>	<i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>	195 0	100 0

Source: **Research survey, 2013.**

From table 1, 49% of the respondents were male, while 51% were female. The table also shows that 21% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-23 years, 28% were between the ages of 24-28 years, 18% were between the ages of 29-33 years, 21% were between the ages of 34-38 years, while 12% of the respondents are between the ages of 39 and above.

On the respondents' marital status the table shows that 64% of the respondents were single while 36% are married. In respect of the educational qualification, 49% of the respondents have NCE, 27% have OND/HND while 23% of the respondents have degree. The table also shows that 38% of the respondents has 1-4 years of teaching experience, 22% has 5-8 teaching experience, 19% of the respondents has 9-12 years of teaching experience, 14% of the respondents has 13-16 years of teaching experience, while 6% have 39 years and above of teaching experience.

In respect of the number of subjects each teacher teaches, the table shows that 46% of the respondents teach one subject, 52% teaches two subjects, while 2% teaches three subjects. The table also shows that 26% of the respondents do have 1-3 lessons in a week, 71% was having 4-7 lessons in a week, while 4% was having 8-10 lessons in a week.

The table also shows that 18% of the respondents received monthly salary of #5-10,000.00, 50% of the respondents received between #11-20,000.00 while 32% of the respondents received between #21-30,000.00. The table also shows that 100% of the respondents believe that their monthly payment does not commensurate with their qualification and work. The table also shows that 100% of the respondents agree that they have work related stress.

Table II: Stressors on the teachers

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage%</i>
1	<i>Inadequate salary</i>	195	100
2	<i>Delayed payment</i>	138	71
3	<i>Skip in promotion</i>	106	54
4	<i>Delayed promotion</i>	96	49
5	<i>Job Insecurity</i>	186	95
6	<i>Involuntary transfer</i>	115	59
7	<i>Distance to school</i>	69	35
8	<i>Family problems</i>	65	33
9	<i>Pressure of work</i>	195	100
10	<i>Noisy and disruptive students</i>	128	66
11	<i>Poor work attitude of students</i>	96	49
12	<i>Personal Problems</i>	54	28
13	<i>Unfulfilled social expectation</i>	110	56

Source: **Research Survey, 2013**

From table II, 100% of the respondents indicates that inadequate salary constitute their stressor, 71% pointed out that delayed in payment is their major stressor, 54% of the respondents said that skip in promotion is a major stressor to them, 49% agree that delayed promotion as the major stressor to them, 95% said that job insecurity as the major stressor to them, 59% reported involuntary transfer as their major stressor, 35% of the respondents also said that long distance to the school as their major stressor, 33% of the respondents said that family problems constitute their major stressor, 100% said that pressure of work constitute their major stressor, 66% said their major stressor is noisy and disruptive students, 49% of the respondents said their major stressor is poor work attitude of students, 28% said their major stressor is personal problems while 56% of the respondents said their stressor is unfulfilled social expectation.

Table III: Effect of Stressors on the physical health of teachers

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage%</i>
1	<i>Fever</i>	187	96
2	<i>Body pains</i>	195	100
3	<i>Stomach upset</i>	99	51
4	<i>Frequent colds</i>	75	38
5	<i>Fatigue/Dizziness</i>	195	100
6	<i>Procastinating/neglecting responsibilities</i>	32	16
7	<i>Sleeping too much or too little</i>	135	69
8	<i>Loss of sex drive</i>	45	23
9	<i>Rapid heart beat</i>	55	28

Source: *Research Survey, 2013*

From table III, 96% of the respondents said the effect of the stressors on their physical health is fever, 100% said is body pains and headache, 51% said is stomach upset, 38% of the respondents said is frequent colds, 100% said is fatigue and dizziness, 16% said is procrastinating or neglecting their responsibilities, 69% said it 7 makes them sleep too much or too little, 23% said it makes them have loss of sex drive, while 28% said it makes them have rapid heartbeat.

Table V: Stress management methods employed by the respondents

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage%</i>
1	<i>Engage in physical exercise</i>	98	50
2	<i>Watch television/films</i>	125	64
3	<i>Try to avoid situations/people that causes stress</i>	195	100
4	<i>Using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax</i>	68	35
5	<i>Isolating yourself from others</i>	100	51

Source: *Research Survey, 2013*

From table IV, 50% of the respondents said they manage their stress by engaging in physical exercise, 64% said is by watching films, 100% of the respondent said is by avoiding situations and people that causes stress, 35% said is by use of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax, while 51% of the respondents said is by isolating themselves from others.

H01. Relationship between Gender Stressors on the mental health of teachers

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		<i>Male (n=95)</i>	<i>Female(n=100)</i>			
1	<i>Irritability/Short tempered</i>	93(101.01)	92(83.95)	185	X ² _c =5.4780 X ² _t =11.0705	Null Hypothesis is rejected
2	<i>Feeling overwhelmed</i>	81(84.66)	74(70.34)	155		
3	<i>Depression/general unhappiness</i>	78(73.74)	57(61.26)	135		
4	<i>Agitation/inability to relax</i>	94(98.31)	86(81.69)	180		
5	<i>Inability to concentrate</i>	74(68.27)	51(56.73)	125		
6	<i>Forgetfulness</i>	53(46.97)	33(39.03)	86		
	Total	473	393	866		

The calculated χ^2 is 5.4780 while the tabulated value of χ^2 (11.0705), $df = 5$, $p = 0.050$.

Since the calculated value of χ^2 is less than the tabulated value of χ^2 , the null hypothesis is rejected. By rejecting the null hypothesis, we therefore, conclude that there is a significant relationship between gender and effect of stress on the mental health of the teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state. 8

Discussion of findings

Socio-Demographic Data

Table 1 revealed that 49% of the respondents were male, while 51% were female. This implies that majority of the respondents were female. On the respondents' age the study revealed almost equal proportion of age distribution with age 24-28 carrying the highest percentage (28%), those between the ages of 18-23 and 34-38 were having the same percentage of (21%), while 12% of the respondents were between the ages of 39 and above. This implies that most of the respondents were within their middle adult age in which one is more capable of managing stress. 38% of the respondents had 1-4 years of teaching experience, 22% has 5-8 teaching experience, 19% of the respondents has 9-12 years of teaching experience, 14% of the respondents has 13-16 years of teaching experience, while 6% has 39 years and above of teaching experience. This lack of many years of teaching experience could be as a result of lack of job satisfaction secondary to stress in teaching hence, even while teaching at secondary level many are still looking for better less stressed job.

Regarding subjects each teacher teaches, the study revealed that 46% of the respondents teaches one subject, 52% teaches two subjects, while 2% teaches three subjects. 26% of the respondents do have 1-3 lessons in a week, 71% was having 4-7 lessons in a week, while 4% was having 8-10 lessons in a week. Having so many lessons in a week as displayed by majority of the respondents (71%) explains added reasons for teachers stress at secondary school level.

On the remuneration of the respondent, 18% of the respondents received monthly salary of #5-10,000.00, 50% of the respondents received between #11-20,000.00 while 32% of the respondents received between #21-30,000.00. The table also shows that 100% of the respondents believe that their monthly payment does not commensurate with their qualification and work.

What are the major stressors on the secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue state?

Table 2 shows that 100% of the respondents reported inadequate salary and pressure of work constitute their stressor, 95% indicated that job insecurity is a major stressor to them, 71% acknowledged delayed in payment of their salary as their major stressor, 66% reported noisy and disruptive students, 59% said involuntary transfer as their major stressor, 56% of the respondents said their stressor is about their unfulfilled social expectation, 54% said skip in promotion as major stressor to them, 49% agree that delayed promotion and poor work attitude of students as a major stressor to them, 35% of the respondents said long distance to the school is their major stressor, 33% of the respondents said that family problems constitute their major stressor, while 28% said their major stressor is personal problems.

These findings showed that secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State experience considerable stress in their work and that, age, qualifications, gender and teaching experience do not matter on how the teachers perceive stress as most of the respondents agree with the items measuring their stressor. This finding agrees with study findings by Aralu (2012) on "Sources of stress and stress management strategies among secondary school teachers in Onitsha Urban" using population of 1820 teachers, which showed that generally, the secondary school teachers agreed with all the items that measured their sources of stress and also stress management strategies. The finding of this study is also in agreement with Melinda et al (2004) who identified sources of teachers stress to include: students, difficult parent/ teacher relations, social and personal pressures, economic pressures, and the school as a stressful workplace.

What are the effects of these stressors on the health of the secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State?

From the table III, 100% of the respondents said that the effect of the stressors on their physical health is body pains and headache, fatigue and dizziness, 96% said that the effect of their physical health is fever, 69% said it makes them sleep too much or too little, 51% said is stomach upset, 38% of the respondents said is frequent colds, 28% said it makes them have rapid heartbeat, 23% said it makes them have loss of sex drive, while 16% said is procrastinating or neglecting their responsibilities.

This finding could be because of the exhausting effects of stress on the body system owing to the fact that during stressful state, the individual tends to utilize his thinking abilities above normal thus leaving the system exhausted. This findings agreed with that of Christian(2012) who identified aches and pains, diarrhea or constipation, nausea and dizziness, loss of sex 10 drive and frequent colds as some of the physical effects of stress on the victims. Carson and Heth (2007), Judy (2013) identified similar effects of stress on the physical health of the victim among other things to include: back pain, chest pain, cramps or muscle spasms, erectile dysfunction, headache, sleeping difficulties, stomach upset.

From table III, 100% of the respondents said stressors had affected their mental health by making them have apathy and loss of interest in work, 95% of the respondents said stressors have affected their mental health by making them feel irritable and short tempered, 92% said the effect on their mental health is feeling of agitation and inability to relax, 79% said it makes them feel overwhelmed, 69% of the respondents said it causes them depression and general unhappiness, 64% said it causes them inability to concentrate, 45% said the stressors has caused them to be forgetful, while 17% said the stressors has made them have poor judgment and reduced mental capability.

This findings agrees with Christian (2012) who identified the following as some of the effects of stress on the mental health of the victim: memory problems, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, seeing only the negative, anxious or racing thoughts and constant worrying, irritability or short tempered, and general unhappiness or depression. Carlson and Heth (2007), and Judy (2013) also identified irritability, anger, anxiety, depression, forgetfulness, sadness and fatigue among other things as the effects of stress on the mental health of an individual.

What methods of stress coping strategies employed by the secondary school teachers in Gboko L.G.A of Benue State using?

In table IV, 100% of the respondent said they manage their stress by avoiding situations and people that causes stress, 64% said is by watching films, while 51% of the respondents said is by isolating themselves from others. 50% of the respondents said they manage their stress by engaging in physical exercise, and 35% said is by use of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax.

The finding agrees with Study carried out by Arikewuyo(2010) on “Stress Management Strategies of Secondary School Teachers in Nigeria” using a total of 3466 teachers, drawn from secondary schools in Ogun State of Nigeria, which indicates that teachers frequently use the active behavioural and inactive (escape) strategies in managing stress. While the majority of the teachers never engage in physical exercises or, say, watch films in order to manage any stressful situation, they prefer to keep away from any situation that could cause stress, as well as endeavouring to separate themselves from people who cause stressful situations. The 11 findings also agree with Jeanne et al (2012) who identified the followings among other things as some better ways of managing work related stress: avoidance of nicotine and moderate intake of alcohol, getting enough sleep, and regular exercise. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2013) recommended the followings as better ways of managing stress which is in agreement with the findings of this work: moderate exercise, avoidance of alcohol and drugs consumption otherwise cut down, and making time for relaxation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has the following recommendations to make;

1. Both government and proprietors of private schools should put more effort at ensuring prompt payment of the teacher's salary.
2. Teachers should also reduce work related stress by prioritizing, creating a balance schedule, and organizing their work.
3. Government should ensure that teachers are being paid salaries which commensurate to the work they do.
4. Before going into the class, the teacher can reduce work related stress by being centered, practice stress relief regularly and laugh with the class while in the class.
5. Government and proprietors of private schools should employ more teachers to reduce work stress among teachers which are secondary to work overload due to shortage of teachers.
6. Government should put more effort in granting teachers loans in order to assist them meet up with their social expectations.

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