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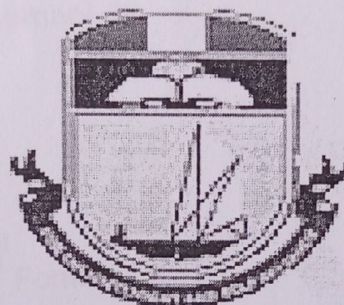
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STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ILORIN-WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the predisposing factors to stress among secondary school teachers as well as the coping strategies adopted by them. The population comprised all teachers in the 27 public senior secondary schools in Ilorin-West Local Government of Kwara State. Random sampling technique was used to select 10 out of the 27 public senior secondary schools in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State. Also, random sampling technique was employed to select 25 teachers each in all the selected schools making a total of 250 secondary school teachers used in the study. One researchers-designed instrument tagged Stress and Coping Strategies Questionnaire for Teachers (SCSQT) was used to collect relevant data for the study. This instrument was validated using content and face validation methods, while test re-test method was used to determine its reliability. The coefficient of reliability obtained was ($r = 0.84$). Percentage was used to answer the two research questions raised and t-test statistic was used to test four operational hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated that for stress factors, the teachers were significantly different as regards their being prone to stress based on sex and marital status. In the case of coping strategies adopted by the teachers based on sex and marital status there were significant differences in coping strategies adopted by secondary school teachers as regards sex and marital status. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made among others: individual should evaluate his/her coping ability with stressors; on knowing this, efforts should be made to improve on area of problems, effort should also be made to avoid situations that could expose one to unnecessary stress.

Keywords: Stress, Coping Strategies, Sex, Marital Status, Teachers

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Introduction

Stressing situations abound in our day today living which could be termed "hassles of life". It is not out of place for an individual to wake up one morning and find out that his/her car which was neatly parked outside the previous night has been stolen. Also, one could be woken up in the middle of the night with gunshots or with big bangs on the door indicating that armed robbers are around or the landlord increased the house rent arbitrarily without notice. Other stressful situations range from one's inability to own a house after several years in government service or a car or one's inability to maintain what one already has; problem of unemployment of young able-bodied men which may result in frustration or in drug abuse; failure of electricity by Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) which may result in the loss of valuables kept in the freezer/refrigerator. The taps may just go dry making people to start running around for water; or an endless traffic jam which may seem to have no origin. Spending hours in petrol stations, because of fuel scarcity; inadequate monthly salary; and so on. These daily hassles experienced by Nigerians at present have been aggravated by the present situation of the country which includes insensibility to the plight of the masses by the government, instability in government, frequent changes in government policies, transportation problem, fuel scarcity and government inability to maintain law and order leading to insecurity of lives and properties.

According to Kwara State Annual Report (2014) there are some 6,939 teachers in public senior secondary schools in Kwara State for 83, 604 students' enrolment. Many teachers teach 2 to 3 subjects depending on the discipline. For example, a qualified teacher in Physics teaches Chemistry or Mathematics in addition to his/her principal subject which is Physics. This is bad omen for the education system, because this kind of situation put the teachers under "overload" stress. None payment of salaries and allowances of teachers for seven months or more in the state put the teachers in a stressful situation which indirectly may affect their job performance negatively. The consequence of this kind of situation for the teachers would be on the students and the nation at large.

Recently, the world economic meltdown has affected Nigeria economy to a serious fall in naira value and a consequent jerking up the prices of commodities in the market, without corresponding increase in workers' salaries and allowances. The average Nigerian who works under these conditions is continually under stress. This thus forms the basis for Chizea's (2005) remarks that the lists of environmental induced stress situation in Nigeria are infinite and they seem to multiply daily.

It is an incontestable fact that work is crucial to survival and to the existence of man. According to Opekun (2004), work to the society ensures it's likelihood of future existence while for the individual it ensures a means of livelihood, recognition and status as well as affiliation. Thus, an individual's satisfaction in life cannot be totally separated from his/her job satisfaction as both are related. Boer and Robber (2004) regarded work as an occupational experience which form an essential aspect of an individual's orientation and induction into his/her culture. It is rather worrisome to note that in spite of these psychological and sociological importance of work, a large proportion of teachers do not seem to find their work interesting because they experienced work stress. It is against this that the researchers intend to carry out a study on stress and coping strategies among public senior secondary school teachers in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

Stress has negative effects on the individuals' health and productivity. Consequently, stress affects the individual teachers, their families, the community and the nation at large. Given this situation, stress is a problem that cannot be overlooked. The teachers are the pivot on which the education system rest and these pivot are currently operating in a turbulent environment which is unpredictable. In Nigeria, some

people are of the opinion that some students are badly taught as not all teachers are as efficient at their job as they might be. It is however doubtful if any teacher can be genuinely committed to the realization of school goals if he/she is under stressful conditions. Despite the gravity of this problem, not much work has been done on stress and coping strategies among senior secondary school teachers in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State. Oladimeji (2000) did her work on stress and stressors among secondary school teachers in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. Opekun (2004) carried out his own on stress and coping strategies among workers in the banking industry in Nigeria. While Omosidi (2001) conducted his study on gender status: stress and coping with stress in Nigeria.

It is however noted that none of these studies was conducted in senior secondary school in Ilorin-West Local Government Area of Kwara State. Also, the time gap between the present study and the previous ones is therefore intends to bridge the gap created by earlier studies and provide information that would be useful to teachers in secondary schools in Kwara State and every part of Nigeria. Also, some school administrators and teachers are ignorant of the causes and effects of stress and coping strategies. The study would provide adequate information to teachers in this direction.

Purpose of the Study

The research work is actually aimed at:

- i. investigating the major sources of stress among senior secondary school teachers;
- ii. investigating the effectiveness of stress coping strategies adopted by senior secondary school teachers;
- iii. investigating the significant difference in the stress experienced by male and female teachers;
- iv. investigating the significant difference in the stress experienced by single and married teachers;
- v. investigating the significant difference in the stress coping strategies adopted by male and female teachers; and
- vi. investigating the significant difference in the stress coping strategies adopted by single and married teachers.

Research Questions

The study aims at providing answers to the following research questions:

1. what are the major sources of stress among teachers in the sampled area?
2. are the stress coping strategies adopted by senior secondary school teachers effective?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated and tested:

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the stress experienced by male and female teachers.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the stress experienced by single and married teachers.
- H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the stress coping strategies adopted by male and female teachers.
- H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the stress coping strategies adopted by single and married teachers.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of the study would assist male and female teachers to identify the major sources of stressful conditions in secondary schools and coping strategies that can be adopted to reduce the stressful conditions in carrying out their responsibilities. It would also help the teachers to see that

certain stressors which are peculiar to them are identified and removed. More importantly, it would assist to evolve specific intervention procedures that might suit our socio-cultural circumstances.

Scope/Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to stress and coping strategies in one Local Government Area of Kwara State, that is, Ilorin-West Local Government Area. Only 10 out of 27 public senior secondary schools in the area were used as sample schools which form about 37.04% of the total population. Twenty-five teachers were selected in each of the sampled public senior secondary schools in the area. On the whole, a total of 250 public senior secondary school teachers were randomly selected and employed in this study. In view of this, the generalization of the findings is restricted to public senior secondary schools in Ilorin-West local Government Area of Kwara State within the period under consideration.

Nature and Causes of Stress

Stress had led to loss of lives, jobs, broken homes and illnesses. The effect of these on the individual, family and the nation at large cannot be quantified. This thus places a lot of importance on the subject of stress and the need to see to it that school administrators, teachers, educational institutions and the nation take action to prevent and control stress and stressors on all workers.

Stress does not grow without a cause. The causes of stress are what are called stressors. Due to the fact that this study is related to job, much of the stressors that would be mentioned here have to do with the work interface or work stress among workers. They are sources of pressure which include:

- Factors intrinsic to the job itself, the managerial role, relationship of the individual with other people especially colleagues on the job, career and achievement on the job, organizational structure and working climate and home work interface. Individual characteristics that is; attitude of the individual to living, his style of behaviour and his ambition.
- Locus of control, that is; organisational forces within his place of work and how he perceived it management process, individual influence within his organization and total control exercised by him or on him in the organization. How the individual copes with the stress experienced, that is; his involvement, time of the stress, home and work relationship, logic, task strategies and social support.
- The effects of stress, that is; on personal relationship, on organization processes, on organizational design and structure on the job itself, on achievement, value and growth and on mental health of the individual, on total job satisfaction of the individual, on physical health of the individual. This view is not far from the ones expressed by Cooper and Marshal in Okorie (2004) in which they classified stress factors into six different categories with a lot of other stressors related to each heading discussed there in:

- i. **Factors Intrinsic to the Job:** This has to do with the physical need of the job as well as the surrounding/environment of the work place Kornhauser (2005) found that unpleasant working condition, the necessity to work fast, to expand, a lot of physical efforts and working excessively and at inconvenient hours were related to poor mental health. Therefore, physical demands of our surrounding and the distress caused by such is immense importance. Thus, there is need to understand stress factors at work so that we can; identify potentially harmful conditions in order to improve the quality of working life and identify those individuals best suited to the job conditions (that is, to maximise person-environment fit).
- ii. **Role Stress:** In an organization, certain behaviours and demands are associated with role fulfilled. However, dysfunctions may occur at two different levels and can be a major source of work stress, that is role conflict (conflicting job demands) and role ambiguity (lack of clarity about the task). Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (2000) suggested that role conflict and role ambiguity are

related to job dissatisfaction and inappropriate organization behaviour. The issue of responsibility associated with the role of the individual will also be included within this category of potential stressors.

- iii. **Relationship at Work:** Selye (2004) suggested that having to live with other people is one of the most stressful aspects of life. Good relationship between members of a work group is considered a central factor in individual and organizational health. Poor relationships at work are defined as having "low trust, low levels of supportiveness and low interest in problem solving within the organization". Mistrust is positively related to high role ambiguity which leads to inadequate interpersonal communications between individuals and psychological strain in the form of low job satisfaction, decreased will being and feelings of being threatened by one's superior and colleagues (Kahn and Kalin, 2004). Poor working relationship among co-workers in an organization is a potential source of stress at work but as workgroup cohesiveness increases, anxiety about work related matters decreases. Relationship among co-workers can provide valuable social support and this can ease job strain. Some of the causes of stress factors as related to relationship at work include (a) Abrasive personalities (b) Leadership style (c) group pressure (d) Social density (e) Status inconvenience.
- iv. **Career Stress:** This has to do with effects of stress on the kind of career which an individual decides to stay on. The stressors include: (a) Job insecurity (b) under promotion (c) Over promotion and (d) Thwarted ambition. Individuals suffering from career stress show symptoms such as job dissatisfaction, burnout, poor work performance and unsatisfactory interpersonal relationship at work (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002).
- v. **Organizational Structure and Climate:** This stress factor is described in terms of being in the organization and the threat to freedom, autonomy and identity. Landy and Trumbo (2002) identified four factors as being very important to the individual in an organization. They are autonomy, structure, reward and consideration orientation. These factors are seen as the way by which the organization treats its members. How employees perceive the culture, customs and climate of an organization is a factor in understanding the potential sources of stress resulting from being in an organization. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are ultimately related to the perception and evaluation of structure and climate. For example, Friedlander and Greenburg (2001) found that perceived organizational supportiveness is significant predictors of success in the evaluation of a training programme. The way the programme was presented is as important as the content. Stress factor identified in this regard focuses mainly on the amount of job involvement or participation on the part of the employee and the concept of social support. Also, lack of participation in decision making processes, unjustified restriction on behaviour, office politics and no sense of belonging are all potential stressors.

The purpose of describing potential work stress or factors at work, according to Sutherland and Cooper (2002), are two folds;

Organizations need to define, identify and measure stress in the work place before changes can be made.

If pressure and strains exist that cannot be eliminated, individuals need to be aware of risks that exist and how can best cope with potentially harmful situations.

The Interface between Work and Home: The home front aspect of an individual cannot be divorced from his work life thus making it an area that cannot be left out while assessing sources of occupational stress. This was buttressed by Cooper and Marshall in Okorie (2004) who pointed out that issues concerning the family, life crises, financial difficulties, conflicting personal and company beliefs and the

conflict between organization and family demands mal all put strains on the individual at work in the same way that stress at work may spill over and have a negative impact on family and personal life.

Empirical evidence had indicated that job and life satisfaction are influenced by the demands and conflicts of home and family life. Sarason and Johnson (2002) indicated that negative life changes (divorce and bereavement) are related to lower levels of satisfaction with supervision, pay and the work itself where as positive life charges are related to satisfaction with promotional opportunities.

Methodology

The research design used for this study was a descriptive survey research method. This method has been acclaimed to be best whenever researchers intend to describe current situation as they exist and it makes possible the opportunity to study relationship among the variables, factors and hypotheses tested in the study (Kerlinger in Omosidi, 2008). The researchers intend to find out whether certain work situations and factors are actually stressful for the teachers as well as find out the various methods adopted by the teachers, in coping with such stressors.

The samples for this study were 250 teachers in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Areas of Kwara State. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered to teachers in these schools. In each school sampled, effort was made to see that returns of questionnaire were within a week. The total number of questionnaires that were returned indicated 100% total response.

The instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire titled Stress and Coping Questionnaire for Teachers (SCSQT). This is to elicit responses from participants based on the literature review. For the purpose of validating the instrument, the researchers gave the questionnaire to experts for content and face validations. This practice is acceptable for use in case of questionnaire and inventories. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument used for this study was estimated by carrying out a test re-test procedure. The instrument was administered to a sample of twenty junior secondary school teachers outside the school of the study. After an interval of two weeks, the same test was re-administered. The two set of scores were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. The reliability co-efficient was found to be .84. This value is high enough for the purpose of this study and thus makes the instrument reliable.

The data obtained were analyzed using percentage for the two research questions and t-test statistical procedure to compare the mean scores of variables. Daramola (1995), citing Cohen (1980) stated the t-test statistical is a suitable method for testing two independent variables. It was on the basis that all the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Results of the Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the major sources of stress among secondary school teachers?

Table 1: Analysis of major sources of stress being experienced by secondary school teachers

S/no	Stress Sources	No of Low Stress	% of Low Stress	No of High Stress	% of High Stress	Total No of Respondent	Total	%
1	Work schedule	119	47.6	131	52.4	250	100	0
2	Relationship with o	109	43.6	141	56.4	250	100	
3	Job Security	88	35.2	161	64.8	250	100	
4	Private life	109	43.6	141	56.4	250	100	

5.	Students	103	41.2	147	58.8	250	100
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Table 1 indicates that job security; 88 respondents or 35.2% obtained low stress scores while 162 or 64.8% obtained high stress scores. This shows that job security was found to be stressful for majority of teachers in selected secondary schools under this study. Work schedule was found to be least stressful for teachers in the selected sample secondary schools, as 119 or 47.6% obtained low stress scores while 131 or 52.4% obtained high scores. However, both stress with relationship with other staff and private life were found to be stressful for teachers as only 109 or 43.6% were found to have low stress scores while 141 or 56.4% teachers as having high stress scores for the two sources of stress respectively. The stress with student's relationship was also found to be stressful for respondents as 103 or 41.2% are found to have low stress scores while 147 or 58.8% responded as having high stress scores. It was observed from Table 1 that job security was found to have great impact among secondary school teachers under this study with 64.8% of high stress scores, followed by relationship with students 58.8%. The source of relationship with other staff and private life were ranked third with 56.4% respectively. While work schedule was ranked the least with 52.4%.

Research Question Two: Are the stress coping strategies adopted by secondary school teacher effective?

Table 2: Analysis of stress coping strategies adopted by secondary school teachers

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Strategies	No of Low Stress			% of Low Stress			No of High Stress			% of High Stress			Total No of Stress			Total % of Stress		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Combative behaviour	1	1	4	4	5	6	1	3	6	5	4	4	2	5	0	1	0	0
Preventive behav	134			53.6			116			46.4			250			100		

Table 2 reveals that combative behaviour 114 or 45.6% respondents obtained low stress coping strategies while 136 or 54.4% respondents obtained high stress coping strategies. This implies that combative behaviour of stress coping strategies was found to be effective. Also, it found that preventive behaviour respondents 134 or 53.6% stress scores obtained was low while 116 or 46.4 respondents obtained high scores coping strategies. This shows that preventive behaviour of stress coping strategies was ineffective.

On the whole 126 or 50.4% of secondary school teachers were effectively adopting to stress coping strategies, while 124 or 49.6% of the teachers were not adapting effectively to the stress coping strategies.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the stress experienced by male and female teachers

Table 3: t-test analysis of stress experienced by male and female teachers

Group	No of cases	Mean	S.D	df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	Decision
Male	160	27.811	5.8495	248	16.456	1.96	H ₀ : Rejected
Female	90	16.9313	3.0048				

rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in the stress coping strategies adopted by single and married teachers in Ilorin-West Local Government Area secondary schools in Kwara State.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings show that 56.8% of secondary school teachers used in this study were stressful on all the five major stress sources indicating that the teaching job at this time is stressful. Job security was found to be the greatest source of stress for teachers as 64.8% of them reported as experiencing stress from this source. This however is not completely out of place as Jimoh (2003) found that unpleasant working conditions, inadequate salaries and allowances, irregular promotion, salaries not commensurate with the job being done and fear of future prospects are causes that made teachers not to stay long in their job coped in addition to government policy on education in the state.

Relationship with students was found to be another highly stressing condition to teachers. About 58.8% teachers reported stressed in this respect. Pastoral services rendered by some teachers in an attempt to in solving students' disciplinary problems resulted to stressful conditions to the teachers.

Relationship with other staff and private life of the teachers were also found to be stressful with 56.4% each. Most teachers are working under economic hardship and were also exposed to stress which make them transfer their aggression to other teachers. Selye (2004) pointed out that issues concerning the family, life crises, financial difficulties, conflicting personal issues and conflict between work and family demands have put strain on the individual at work in the same way that stress at work may spillover and have a negative impact on family and personal life. Financial difficulties, transport, housing, feeding and clothing now give teachers problems thus exposing them to lots of stressful condition. Work schedule was found to be the least among sources of stress identified in this study with 52.4% of teachers experiencing stress.

The finding also indicated that 50.4% of teachers are coping effectively with stress strategies, while 49.6% of teachers were not coping effectively. This is bad indicator for our educational system bearing in mind that education is an important pivot on which the development of any nation rests.

The first hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between stress experienced by male and female teachers was analyzed and rejected. This indicates that sex has significant effect on the stress experienced by teachers. Sutherland and Cooper (2000) buttressed this point by their research findings which indicated that male and female responses to stress were quite similar.

Hypothesis two dealt with stress, marital status of the teachers. It was found that was significant difference in the stress experienced by single and married teachers. This cannot be dismissed with a wave of hand as single and married teachers might be concerned with the comfort of his/her children and spouse, as well as their future, the problem of getting a wife/husband as much as living a convenient life so much as advancement on the job might be the primary concern of single teachers.

Hypothesis three dealt with the coping strategies employed by respondents on the basis of sex. The result indicated that there was significant difference in the coping strategies by samples. This might not be unconnected with the fact that the life styles of male and female differ. For example, a female teacher might take solace in staying at home and enjoying the company of her children while a male teacher might prefer to go to clubs, watch football and recreation centres to relax.

Hypothesis four concerned the coping strategies employed by teachers on the basis of marital status. The results indicated that the married and the single employed different coping strategies. This

might not be unconnected with the fact that the orientation of the two groups differs. Married teachers might be interested in staying with the members of their family while single teachers might just prefer the company of friends and of course with no special string attached.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was found that stress was one of the main problems facing secondary school teachers. However, the education sector being a major pivot on which the development of a nation revolves makes teachers indispensable. Thus there is need to find a way of removing stress or reduce stress to the barest minimum. The reduction of this problem would shore up teachers productivity and thus improve students' academic performance.

Recommendations

Having seen that Nigerian teachers suffered from stress and bearing in mind the importance of teachers to education industries and the technological development of the nation cannot be over emphasized the following recommendations were made:

- i. Owing to the need for professionalization of teachers, there is need for the individual to decide upon his/her goals/ambitions at the point of entry. Such a decision would include whether to stay and take teaching as a profession throughout ones career or not and on the basis of this pursue the ideals of one's goal. When this is well laid out, distractions along the way which could lead to stress are easily avoided. Also, there is the need for an individual as much as possible not to go beyond this as anything contrary could easily expose one to stress.
- ii. Individual should as well evaluate his/her coping ability with stressors. On knowing this, efforts should also be made to void situations that could expose one to unnecessary stress.
- iii. Limit teachers' workload. In many secondary schools, many teachers perform the job of two or more teachers. This calls for increase in human resource in education. If this is done, it would reduce the problem of teaching different classes, different subjects or many arms the same subject.
- iv. There is also need to make teachers salary and allowance commensurate with job done and see to it that teachers are promoted as at when due.
- v. Government should also invest in the provision of recreation and sporting facilities in secondary schools. The schools should be stocked with indoor games such as table-tennis, chess, scrabble for teachers and so on. Outdoor games such as Football, Golf, Lawn-tennis and so on, could be provided. Teachers could relax properly with these after a hectic day's work
- vi. Music has been found to have subtle effects and consequently reduce tension. When it cool and low volume music is provided in the staff common room, this could go on to assist in reducing stress. Also adequate spacing is very necessary in staff room to allow freedom of movement and prevent unnecessary conflicts among teachers.
- vii. There is need to also encourage teachers of various categories to pursue degrees in their various disciplines and attend conferences and seminars. It would encourage them to perform well and be more committed to their duties thus reducing stress.
- viii. Religion is a factor that can be used to reduce unnecessary tension. Closeness to God Almighty and ability to learn to take solace in God Almighty and ability make one less worrisome and consequently reduce stress. Religionists recognize God Almighty on all human affairs and situations. Reposing hope in the Almighty and seeing things as acts of God do have positive impact on Stress.
- ix. Drug could be used to control stress but it is better prescribed by a professionally trained Medical Personnel. This should however be used as the last resort when all other strategies have failed.

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