



# **NIGERIA JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

ISSN 1116-0381  
Volume 8, No.1 March, 2009

## SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG IN- SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ILORIN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Adolescent age is the last year before individuals become young adults. This period is described as the most fascinating and complex stage of transition in the life span of a man. In-school adolescents experience stress in their day-to-day life. Stress can have a significant effect on the adolescent's long-term physical and mental well-being as well as being one of the many obstacles they have to overcome in order to achieve their optimal academic performance and personal development. This study investigated the predisposing sources of stress among in-school adolescents in Ilorin, Nigeria. A sample of 600 in-school adolescents from 15, secondary schools in Ilorin Nigeria was selected using simple random sampling technique. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire on "sources of stress among in-school adolescents. Data analysis was done using t-test statistical method of analysis. The findings revealed that in-school adolescents go through a lot of stressful situations related to family, school and peer group and these conditions are manifested in their various acts and behaviours. It was recommended among others that school administrators, parents, psychologists and society at large should encourage in-school adolescents to live a more balanced lifestyle which could help reduce stressful conditions among them.*

### Introduction

Adolescence is one of the most fascinating and complex transitions in the life span of man a time of accelerated growth and change second only to infancy; a time of expanding horizons, self-discovery and emerging independence; a time of metamorphosis from childhood to Adulthood (Adegoke 2003). Hendickson (2006) describes adolescence as the time of life when children change into adults, going through puberty, meeting the changing expectations of others, and coping with feelings that may be new to them.

In-school adolescents in contemporary Nigeria are too stressed as they have many obstacles to overcome in order to achieve their optimal academic performance. The adolescence years are among the most stressful times in an individual's life (Eliss 1988). A number of factors according to Okoye (1984) have resulted into disruptive and stressful condition for these young ones.



Stress as stated by Cordon (1997) is a set of neurological and physiological reaction that serve as an adaptive function in the environmental, social and cultural value and structures, within which the individual act upon. Akinade (2006) also described stress as any stimulus that either raises excitement or anxiety level beyond what is regarded as above usual capacity. When stress is mentioned, most people think about how we react to problems that are difficult to deal with. Sometimes these problems are major "life events" that are unusual. Smith and Bond (1991) opined that stress is perhaps one of the most important experiences that affect people's health and adjustment. Peterson (2001) however view stress as a process in the body's general plan for adopting in all the influences, changes, demands and strains to which it might be exposed mentally, socially and physically.

Helms and Gable (1990) discovered that interactions with peers, teachers as well as academic pursuit and academic self-concept were sources of stress for students. Stressful conditions among in-school adolescents are capable of destabilizing their well-being mentally, physically, socially, academically or emotionally. Orisa (1999) and Yahaya (1998) noted inadequate supply of essential basic needs, poor accommodation and classrooms, transportation, poor library services, ineffective teaching and learning facilities as situations that could cause stress for in-school adolescents.

According to Holmes (1994), issues with forgetting, depression, frustration, anxiety, worries, nervousness and aggression, which are common among in-school adolescents today can be traced to stress. Stress for in-school adolescents can come from both internal and external sources. That is, they can have biological causes as well as from the various spheres, in which they operate, i.e family, school, peer group and society at large. Stress can be acute or chronic. Acute stress which is as a result of strain of everyday life is however manageable while chronic stress on the other hand is more serious because it is stress left unchecked or unmanaged and can have a profound impact on physical and mental well-being of the in-school adolescents. In Nigeria, there are a number of social issues or factors that seem to be encouraging stress among the in-school adolescents and stress adversely affects academic performance and could cause psychosocial problems. Low level of student's academic performance and possible psychosocial problems can be better checked if the actual sources of stress among in-school adolescents were known.

Akinade (2006) provided a comprehensive list of symptoms of stress. These includes "wet palms, heart race, tense muscles, headache, stomach churn, increase aggression, compulsive eating, excessive use of drug and alcohol, smoking, apprehensiveness, increase in defensiveness and many



other unpleasant conditions, Selye (1980) nicknamed stress a "silent killer". According to Brooks-Guma, and Peterson (1983) a good number of adolescents suffer from clinical depression, as a result of the numerous changes taking place in their bodies, they faced with several daily stressors that may lead to some of those conditions mentioned above. Girls exhibits earlier physical maturation than boys, usually between the ages of 11 – 13 years while for boys maturation starts between the ages of 13 – 15 years (Brooks, et. al., 1991).

This study therefore investigated the various sources of stress among in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Ilorin. The growing awareness of stress among adults and the realization that not many pay attention to the fact that adolescents go through a lot of stress which affects academic performance and also has deleterious effect on their health. The study mainly examined the sources of stress among in-school adolescents in Ilorin Nigeria and answers were sought to the following research questions.

1. What are the sources of stress among in-school adolescents?
2. Are there differences in the sources of stress among in-school adolescents on the basis of school type.
3. Are there differences in the sources of stress among in-school adolescents on the basis of gender.

Two null hypotheses were tested

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the sources of stress experienced by in-school adolescents in Ilorin, Nigeria on the basis of school type.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the sources of stress experienced by in-school adolescents in Ilorin, Nigeria on the basis of gender

### Methodology

A descriptive survey method was adopted for this study. The population for this study consisted of all in-school adolescents in Ilorin Nigeria. Six hundred secondary school students (JSS – SSS) were randomly drawn from 20 public and private secondary schools.

The instrument that was used for this study was a questionnaire adapted from Joda (2008). The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A sought information on the respondents' Age, gender, school type, class and family. Section B consists of information on sources of stress among in-school adolescents. The statements were responded to with Very True of me (VTM) Fairly True of me (FTM) and Not True of me (NTM) response format. Experts in the field of educational psychology, measurement and evaluation, and counselor education subjected the instrument to both face

and content validity. To establish the reliability of the instrument, an equivalent sample was tested using a test-re-test method with a time interval of two weeks. A reliability coefficient value of 0.87 was obtained. The instrument was therefore adjudged suitable enough for the study.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire with the help of three research assistants. The questionnaire were personally collected by the researcher after they had been filled.

Data collected for the study were analyzed using percentage and t-test statistical method of analysis. While the percentage was used to analyze the personal data of the respondents, t-test method of analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses all at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Results**

The results are presented as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What are the sources of stress among in-school adolescents?

**Table 1: Mean Analysis of Sources of Stress among In-School Adolescents**

| Sources of Stress  | Frequency Count | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|
| Home               | 600             | 17.98 | 4.75           |
| School Environment | 600             | 18.86 | 4.65           |

Table 1 indicates that 600 in-school adolescents participated in this study, stress sources that may come from home had mean score of 17.98, while stress sources that may come from school environment had mean score of 18.86. The mean score of sources from school environment was higher (18.86) than the mean score of (17.98) which revealed that the in-school adolescents faced stress in school environment than home environment.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the sources of stress among in-school adolescents on the basis of school type.



**Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Difference in the Sources of Stress of In-school Adolescents on the Basis of School Type**

| School Type | No  | Mean  | SD   | df  | Cal. t - value | Critical t- value |
|-------------|-----|-------|------|-----|----------------|-------------------|
| Private     | 240 | 36.06 | 5.19 | 598 | 2.99           | 1.96              |
| Public      | 360 | 37.88 | 3.37 |     |                |                   |

**Significant  $p < 0.05$** 

Table 2, shows that the calculated t-value of 2.99 was greater than the critical-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that; there is no significant difference in the sources of stress among in-school adolescents on the basis of school type was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, there is a significant difference in the sources of stress among in-school adolescents on the basis of school type. With in-school adolescents from public school experiencing more stress with mean score of 37.88 greater than those from private school with mean score of 36.06.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the sources of stress experienced by in-school adolescents on the basis of gender.

**Table 3: t-test Analysis of the Difference in the Sources of Stress of In-school Adolescents on the Basis of Gender**

| Gender | No  | Mean  | SD   | df  | Calculated t-value | Critical t-value |
|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|--------------------|------------------|
| Male   | 278 | 38.92 | 6.59 | 598 | 13.82              | 1.96             |
| Female | 322 | 38.18 | 5.06 |     |                    |                  |

**Significant,  $p < 0.05$** 

Table 3, shows that the calculated t-value of 13.82 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that; there is no significant difference in the sources of stress of in-school adolescents on the basis of gender was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance when degree of freedom (df) is 598. Thus, there is significant difference in the sources of stress of in-school adolescents on the basis of gender. With in-school adolescents male experiencing more stress with mean score of 38.92 greater than female in-school adolescents with mean score of 38.18.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study investigated the sources of stress among in-school adolescents in Ilorin Nigeria, and the differences in sources of stress on the basis of gender and school type.

Finding revealed that the in-school adolescents faced stress in school environment than home environment. This finding corroborates that of Masih and Gulrez (2006) stated that excessive or unbalanced school-work, the absence of healthy teacher-students interaction, overemphasis on weaknesses rather than on strengths, irrational rules of discipline, physical punishment and indifferent attitudes of teachers are factors that contribute to stress being experienced by students in their various schools. This also corroborates the finding of Ang and Huan, (2006) in their submission that overemphasis on academic acceleration, expectation of teachers, competition, inadequate learning materials are source of stress to students.

Hypothesis one showed that there is significant difference in the sources of stress experienced by in-school adolescents as a result of school type. With in-school adolescents from public school experiencing more stress than those from private school. The reason advanced for this is due to the fact that private schools are more likely to adopt better teaching methods, better communication between school authority and students and have fewer students in the classrooms.

The public schools on the other hand are more likely to lack these facilities which are sources of stress for the adolescent. This is in line with the submission of Adegoke, (2003), that young persons who attend public schools are more likely to exhibit negative attitudes, emotions and behaviours like depression, aggression and hopelessness. This also corroborates the findings of Orisa (1999) in his submission that inadequate supply of basic needs result in stress. The opinion of Yahaya (1998), who categorized poor accommodation, poor library, ineffective teaching and learning facilities as sources of stress can also be cited as proof for this fact.

Hypothesis two also indicated that there is a significant difference was found in the sources of stress experienced by in-school adolescents on the basis of gender. With in-school adolescents male experiencing more stress than female in-school adolescents. This means that what causes stress for the female adolescents is different from that of the male. This could so because male adolescents are lower in social control, and socialize in large hierarchical peer groups, while female adolescents on the other hand form close social bonds in small groups. Female therefore are more likely to be stressed as a result of peer group and relating with the opposite sex. This finding is in line with Parkoff and Brooks-Gunn (1991) findings that female put higher values in social relationship while males are more likely to be stressed as a result of



school related issues. This is attributed to the fact that parents expect more from males in terms of academics. This is in line with the findings of Sunday (2001), that males are brought up with more assertive training than their female counterpart. Brook-Gunn (1991) also opined that girls exhibit early physical maturation than boys and are more stressed by the physical changes that take place in their body.

#### Conclusion

There is no doubt that adolescents in secondary schools experience a lot of stress. They are struggling with issues, conflicting messages and urges, restrictions and pressures. They should know that these conditions are normal and that they will survive them if only they can discuss their situations no matter how bizarre they may look or sound. They should from early age learn the skill of self-regulation and how to plan their activities with the help of a timetable.

Parents and caregivers should know that efforts should be made to help these young ones find their optimal level of demand and reduce overload. This can be accomplished by setting units for their activity level and teaching them how to assess their own personal limitations.

In-school adolescents go through a lot of stress, in the day to day life activities of in-school adolescents stressful conditions are manifested in their various acts such as fighting, aggression, anger, school phobia, drug abuse, cheating at examinations among others. All these unwelcome behaviours have various implications for psychologists' intervention in order to make in-school adolescents relevant for Nigeria Society of today and the future.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Schools should try to make teaching and learning more fun and meaningful by providing conducive environment where proper learning can take place. Adequate facilities such as classrooms, textbooks, modern libraries and laboratories should be provided. Effective communication between students and teachers should be established to maintain cordial relationship.
- b. Seminars and workshops should be organized on a regular basis by psychologists and counselors for in-school adolescents, parents and caregivers on sources of stress among in-school adolescents.



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