

Research Article

Impacts of Work-related Stress on Teacher's Performance in Public Secondary School of Enugu State

Ijeoma, Evelyn. Animba*, Julie, O. Edeh** and Ngozi, Gloria. Nduba***

*Department of Educational Foundation, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria.

**Department of Educational Foundation, Enugu State College of Education (Technical) Enugu, Nigeria.

***Department of Health Education, Peaceland College of Education Enugu, Nigeria.

*Email: ijeomaevelyn27@gmail.com; **Email: edejulieo@gmail.com;

***Email: ngoonduba@gmail.com

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Abstract: Stress is not always bad. Subsequently a little of stress helps teachers stay focused, energetic and able to meet new challenges in the process of teaching and learning. This is because it is what keeps a teacher on his toes. However in today's hectic world, school is often seen like an emotional roller-coaster with ever-increasing demand leaving a teacher worried, burnout, drained and overwhelmed hence this study sought to determine impact of work-related stress on performances of teachers in public secondary schools of Enugu state. Two research questions and hypothesis guided the study accordingly. The study was conducted in Enugu state of Nigeria using descriptive survey design with a sample of 953 teachers representing 10% of population of teachers from the six educational zones of the state. Researcher structured questionnaire face validated by three experts from Psychology, Educational Foundation and Measurement and Evaluation department respectively of Enugu State University of Science and Technology was used to elicit the desired responses. 0.73 co-efficient was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Method of data analysis were descriptive statistics and Pearson moment correlation. Based on the findings, it was recommended that holistic stress management of stress should as a matter of urgency be introduced in secondary school and the need for a total overhaul of educational policies and programmes for effective teaching and learning in secondary schools in order to help teachers integrate in the modern system of teaching.

Keywords: stress, work-related, impact, teachers, performance, secondary school.

Introduction

In a competitive world, productivity of the employers is crucial factor for the success of an organization schools inclusive. Stress is inevitable part of life due to workload, challenges, responsibilities and complexity. In this technological revolution, world education institution face challenges to teach students with new techniques. As employees of educational institutions become part of various system, process and techniques which is complicated with the advancement in technologies, employees find it difficult to cope. Teaching as a profession does not exist in vacuum or limited to the classroom. It also involves inter-relationship between teachers and student, colleagues, supervisors, community and the environment with some these interactions surpasses the adaptability of the teacher invariably leading to stress. Several decades ago, teaching profession was presumed to be stress free with distinct free period attached to subjects for effectiveness of learning. However recent studies also have shown an exponential increase in the number of work-related stress

affecting the profession, with other profession taking their roots and nourishment from it thereby leading to so much pressure in order to retain its nobility (Ukonu *et al.*, 2019). Thus teaching profession can be demanding with highly intellectual activities. Amidst these activities, stress is inevitable with factors affecting teacher's stress a subject of research. This is because there are a lot of misconception and belief on the stress levels of teachers whose profession are seen as stress free and noble. However researches done in the last decade has been able to debunk these misconceptions and shown that teaching at all levels is one of the stressful profession in the world (Scott, 2020). In Nigeria, these factors are complicated by the economic situation of the country among others (Ekundayo and Kolawole, 2003).

Stress itself is not bad however too much of it can destabilize the normal body functioning and equilibrium which might lead to different diseases and disorders. This is because minimal level of stress can help individuals perform under pressure while motivating them to perform optimally (Segel, *et al.*, 2006). However when it becomes prolonged, it causes damage to one's mental, psychological and physical health which affects performance and productivity. Stress is a widespread phenomenon during all human life thus everybody experiences stress at one point since its one of special characteristics of life.

Furthermore, defining stress is an ambiguous process because of its varied characteristics and multidimensionality in coverage though it's a frequent term used in daily living. Also different definitions of stress have been formulated since the concept was used by Hans Selye in 1960. Thus stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain (Scott, 2020). It's a natural physical and mental reactions to life experiences and the body's response to anything that requires attention or action. An individual sitting in the traffic, late for an important exams, watching the minutes tick away gets the hypothalamus to send the stress hormones to trigger the body's fight /flight response leading to the heart beating faster, quickening of breath with the muscles ready for actions. These actions are normal way the body prepares reactions for emergencies however when they keep firing daily; everything about the individual becomes at risk of diseases. Furthermore stress is an individual's response to change in circumstances or to a threatening situation. It can also be viewed as a personal reactions to an external event like writing exams or an internal state of the mind like worrying about an exam. According to APA (2015), stress is a sense of being overwhelmed, worry, desperation, exhaustion and lethargy. A situation in which an individual is forced to act and cannot bear the mental tension, a bodily response to any demand either good or bad, a psychological and physiological response to a particular event that has the ability to destabilize bodily equilibrium and defense mechanism or alters the body's normal biological processes (McEvoy, 2011). Moreover it is the adverse physical and psychological reactions of an individual as a result of inability to cope with life demands.

A healthy job is one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources to the amount of control they have over their work and to the support they receive from people who matter to them (WHO, 2020). It is an environment in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health promoting ones, where staff have made health and health promotion a priority and part of their working (WHO, 2020). According to the United States National Institute for Occupational safety and Health (2014), experiencing stress in a job is a harmful physical and emotional responses that occurs when the requirement of a job do not match the capability, resources or needs of the worker hence work-related stress is a growing problem around the world that not only affects the health and well-being of employees but also the productivity of organization. It arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the individual's capacity and capabilities to cope. According to WHO (2020), work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities which challenge their ability to cope. Workplace stress is a silent and often neglected factor which impairs employee health and productivity.

Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances especially in the teaching profession however it is often made worse when teachers feel they have little support from principals, supervisors and colleagues as well as little control over teaching processes and curriculum, policies and implementation. Pressure in school is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment, pressure as acceptable by a teacher may even keep a teacher alert, motivated, able to work and learn depending on the available resources and personal characteristics however when the pressure becomes excessive or unmanageable, it leads to stress. Thus teaching is becoming stressful due to the fact that it demands excessive values and pressures that are not matched to teacher's knowledge and abilities especially when it is not in the place of the teacher to reject any subject assigned. Olusegun, *et al.*, (2014), opined that a lot of Nigerian teachers are under massive stress in relation to their work due to technological advancement, diversity, lack of resources among others hence the pressure to deliver against all odds. These pressures are manifested as anger, anxiety, frustration and depression in response to the negative state they found themselves.

Symptoms of work-related stress

The symptoms of work-related stress can be physical, psychological, behavioral and cognitive.

A) Physical symptoms includes:

- a) fatigue
- b) Muscular tension
- c) Headaches
- d) Sleeping difficulties such as insomnia
- e) Gastrointestinal upsets such as diarrhea and constipation

B) Psychological symptoms includes:

- a) Depression
- b) Anxiety
- c) Cognitive difficulties
- d) Irritability
- e) Feeling of being overwhelmed and unable to cope

C) Behavioural symptoms includes:

- a) Absenteeism
- b) Aggression
- c) Diminished creativity
- d) Low performance
- e) Mood swing and isolation

D) Cognitive symptoms includes:

- a) Memory problems
- b) Inability to concentrate
- c) Poor judgment
- d) Anxiety
- e) Pessimism

Causes of work-related stress among teachers in Enugu state

A: Large class size/ workload per teacher: In public secondary schools of Enugu state, each class is made up of 45-50 students averagely. However due to insufficient classroom to accommodate the students, these classes are joined together making it 90-100 students per class. This implies increased class size per subject teacher leading to massive dysfunctional and stressful teaching and leading both for the subject and form teacher respectively. Meanwhile both are expected to do a continuous assessment of each student reflecting the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domain while marking each student note at the end of each topic. Furthermore in these classrooms which might be

up to 10 streams with inadequate space for class management; the first 10 minutes of every teaching experience is spent in bringing normalcy in the class for proper teaching. Because these classrooms are over populated, it leads to poor class arrangement, poor ventilation, and noise pollution among others making it difficult for teaching. These scenarios are also characterized by shouting or screaming on the part of the teacher in order to get the attention of the student leading to improper discipline, increased violence and aggression by the students.

B: High living condition in Enugu/ Poor salary: Enugu state is emphatically the only state in Nigeria with the least salary structure for secondary school teachers (NLC, 2019). This has over the years demoralized teachers in the state in comparison to the efforts and sacrifice they give yet unappreciated by the state while teachers are expected to work like elephants yet eat like ants. Meanwhile the cost of living in the state is very high when compared to other states whose monthly take home are relatively high thereby leading to stress as teachers' salaries are unable to meet their financial obligations such as payment of house rent, transportation to and from school, feeding and other needs, therefore teachers resort to alternative economic means of survival. This means that much of their time is spent outside the school trying to make ends meet.

C: Administrative pressure from school management and supervisors: The manner a principal handles his/her school determines to a great extent the level of stress in the school. This is because a principal can either be a motivator or a threat to teachers. Furthermore, internal and external supervisors are also part of the problem especially when a teacher lacks the support of a principal. Sometimes principals /supervisors insist on a particular teaching methodology for students without proper consideration of other factors affecting teaching and learning. Meanwhile a lot of principals puts teachers through a lot of compulsion of making sure that students pass exams with whatever method. This they do in reaction to pressure from the various ministries of education and school board.

D: Government policies and programmes: Indiscriminate and incessant changes in government and governmental policies, programmes and reforms in the educational system in the state without consultations with the major stakeholders (teachers) leads to confusion on what and how to handle professional duties as regards to teachers' duties and expectations. Hence in the process of these adaptations a newer one which is deviant to the previous one is thrown to the teacher thereby complicating the whole process causing disequilibrium to the teacher. Lack of working resources needed for effective teaching and learning, merging of subjects like pre-vocational, national values, basic science and technology among others affects the capabilities of teachers since some lack knowledge or skills on the said subjects yet are expected to teach them.

E: Professional skills: Education in the state has gradually moved from traditional model of teaching to a more technological one hence different changes in teaching methodologies. This has also resulted to curriculum changes in order to cope with the changing society hence the curriculum is being enlarged without being enriched. Meanwhile a lot of teachers in the state are yet to move from the analog to digital teaching methodologies neither are they trained in the novel ways of teaching. This leads to low self-esteem, burnout, depression and frustration because they feel out of place with current technicality of lesson plans and lesson presentations.

Impact of Work-Related Stress on Secondary School Teachers

1: Behavioural impact: This is evident in the transfer of aggression from the teacher to student, erratic response to students, and drug and alcohol abuse among others.

2: Physiological impact: Work-related stress has a negative impact on a teacher's physical health for example, teachers who lack adequate coping mechanisms of stress always experience headache, backache, high blood pressure, arthritis etc.

3: Psychological impact: This is evident in the way brain, nervous system and cognitive processes are affected by stress resulting to memory loss, inability to solve problems etc.

Management of Work-Related Stress among public secondary schools Teachers in Enugu state

- ✓ Massive Recruitment of teachers in the state to minimize the workload of teachers.
- ✓ Enough physical structures like classrooms should be put in places in order to accommodate massive population of students.
- ✓ Adequate support should be given to teachers by the government in terms of salary, provision of instructional materials and training of teachers in different skills.
- ✓ Workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized for teachers on stress management.
- ✓ Training and re-training of teachers should be encouraged by the government in order for teachers to become acquainted with modern skills and methodologies in teaching.

Theoretical framework

Pearson-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) and Job Demand-Control (support) theory was used for the study because its major proposition provided answers on work-related stress among teachers. Pearson-Environment (P-E) fit theory as propounded by Kurt Lewin argues that stress arises due to a lack of fit between the individual's skills, resources and abilities on one hand and the demands of the work environment on the other hand. This theory shows explicit interaction between a teacher and the school environment in shaping their response to work situations and events. It also highlights the importance of a teacher's perception of the school environment and the interaction between them. Logically according to this theory, the lack of fit can be in the form of:

- ✓ When the demand of the teaching work environment exceeds the teacher's ability
- ✓ When the teacher's need fail to be met by the school environment consistently
- ✓ When there is a combination of the two where teacher's abilities are over-stretched while their needs are not met. It leads to increased stress on the teacher.

Meanwhile, Job Demand-Control (support) theory as developed by Karasek (1985) argues that work-related stress occurs as a result of interactions between psychological work-demand and work control. Psychological demands are traditional workloads, cognitive-emotional demands and interpersonal conflict dimensions of the demand while work control is an individual's ability to control their work activities through the following components:

- a) Workers ability to make decision for their jobs
- b) The level of skill used by a worker on the job.

This theory further suggests that individuals experiencing high work demand when paired with low control are more likely to experience work-related stress, poor physical and mental health complicated with psychological strain. The model was later modified to include social support that can moderate the negative impact of work-related stress on physical and mental health. These theories could be the link to increased number of work-related stress among secondary school teachers in Enugu state. Thus the adverse effect of work-related stress on performance gave rise to the investigation on work-related stress and its impact on teacher's performance in public secondary schools of Enugu state.

Purpose of the study

The specific objectives of the study were:

- a) To examine the mean differences between work-related stress and performance of teacher's in public secondary schools of Enugu state.
- b) To examine the mean differences in stress level between male and female teachers in public secondary schools of Enugu state.

- c) The above two specific objectives were restructured and used as the research question at an alpha level of $p < 0.05$.

Research Hypothesis

Two null hypotheses formulated served as guides to the study at $p < 0.05$.

- 1) The mean scores of work-related stress do not have significant relationship with performances of teachers in public secondary schools of Enugu state at the alpha level of $p < 0.05$.
- 2) The mean scores of stress levels between male and female teachers in public secondary schools in Enugu state do not have significant relationship with their performance at alpha level of $p < 0.05$.

Methods of Research

The study design was survey. A survey design is that in which generalizations are made over the entire population from a sample population (Uzoagulu, 2013). The design was used because descriptive survey research allow for the description of condition and situation as they exist in their natural setting. The area of the study was Enugu state (public secondary schools). The population of the study was 9,503. The sample of the study was 953 comprising of 600 male and 353 female selected using multistage random sampling from the six educational zones of the state. The instruments called Work-Related-Stress-and-its-impacts-on-teachers-Performance were self-designed structured questionnaires of 4 points of very high extent, high extent, low extent and very low extent. Method of data collection was face-to-face administration and collection after every rating in the questionnaire was completed by the respondents from various secondary schools in Enugu state. The data was collected, collated and analyzed. Instrument was validated by three experts (Psychology, Educational Foundation and Measurement and Evaluation) whose inputs were incorporated before the final copies were administered. Reliability test showed significant relationship between work-related stress and teacher's performance at $p < 0.05$. Method of data analysis was descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment correlation.

Results

Table 1a. Descriptive statistics of work-related stress and its impact on teacher's performance in public secondary schools of Enugu state.

S. No.	Work-related stress	Male		Female		Decision
		Mean X	SD	Mean X	SD	
1	Poor salary and high cost of living	3.0	0.4	3.0	0.4	HE
2	Poor physical Environment	2.6	0.7	3.1	0.3	HE
3	Professionals skills	3.1	0.3	2.7	0.6	HE
4	Large class size	3.1	0.3	3.0	0.4	HE
5	Excessive workload	3.1	0.3	3.1	0.3	HE
6	Management/teacher relationship	2.7	0.6	2.5	0.7	HE
7	Parent/ teacher relationship	2.8	0.5	3.0	0.4	HE
8	Government policies/programmes	3.1	0.3	2.8	0.5	HE
9	Relationship between Work/life	2.6	0.7	3.1	0.3	HE
10	Administrative/Supervisory pressure	3.0	0.4	3.0	0.4	HE
Grand Mean		2.91	0.45	2.93	0.43	

Table 1a showed the results of the first research question analyzed. It revealed the values of mean, standard deviation and decisions of the respondents. The values indicated that work related stress impacts on teacher's performance on a high extent.

Table 1b. Pearson product moment correlation of the extent of work-related stress on Teacher’s performance in public secondary schools of Enugu state.

Variables	N	r(cal)	r(crit)
Work-related stress	953	1.00	-916
Performance	953	.000	-916
Df: 951; p<0.05			

Table 1b showed results of the first null hypothesis analyzed. The values appeared in negative figures and indicated lower performance level of teachers in work-related stress. The null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation of stress level experienced by male and female teachers in public secondary schools of Enugu state

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	df	r-crit
Physical stress						
Male	353	3.33	0.42	1.48	951	1.96
Female	600	3.28	0.40			
Mental stress						
Male	353	2.96	0.51	1.86	951	1.96
Female	600	2.89	0.46			
Emotional stress						
Male	353	3.61	0.40	2.84	951	1.96
Female	600	3.51	0.37			
Social stress						
Male	353	3.25	0.51	4.30	951	1.96
Female	600	3.07	0.51			

Table 2 showed the results of the second hypothesis analyzed. It revealed the values of mean, standard deviation and decisions of the respondents at p<0.05. The values indicated that stress level between male and female teachers differs. It also portrayed that there was significant relationship between the mean scores. The second null hypothesis was also rejected and its alternative accepted at p<0.05.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 showed that there was a significant relationship between work-related stress and performances of teachers in secondary schools. This implies that work-related stress have severe impacts on them signifying that an increase in one leads to decrease in the other. This can subsequently reflect on the level of commitment towards students. The finding is in agreement with the findings of Nwaimo and Onwunaka (2015) which affirmed that present day economic situations, government policies, inadequate teaching materials and poor physical conditions of schools among others affects the performances of teachers as they carry on with the business of teaching and learning.

The second null hypothesis reflected the fact that the male and female teachers responded to stress differently. As such male teachers respond to work-related stress more than female teachers. This findings is in line with part of Michelle Calvarese (2015) who found out that gender is an important in reactions to stress. Secondly, the type of stressor determines the impact on gender. This is because no particular gender reacts 100% to all stressful factors.

Conclusion

To an average teacher, good salary paid as and when due, healthy school environment, cordial relationship with school management, adequate instructional materials, inclusive policies, training

and re-training on new teaching ideas remains a basic motivation before other incentives. By implication therefore, work-related stress is indeed a great deficit to the performance of teachers. Thus to ensure effective performance by teachers in job delivery, the need to minimize work-related stressors cannot be over-emphasized.

This study therefore concludes that there is need for a well-coordinated method of teaching and learning that will enhance stress free work as well as regular seminars and workshops for teachers on management of stress in order to enhance performance at all times.

Recommendation

- ✓ Government should employ more teachers to cushion the effects of population explosion and teacher's workload.
- ✓ More classrooms should be built in order to cushion the effects of poor ventilation, classroom management and over-crowding. A state of emergency should be declared by Enugu state government in education sector. There should be increased funding by the government too.
- ✓ Workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized for teachers regularly on the management of stress, career development and new methodologies. Every school should have a counselling unit and clinic with qualified psychologist, counsellors, doctors and nurses.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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