

Etiological Factors of Stress and Coping Strategies among Management Staff of Colleges of Education in South West, Nigeria

I. O. Akindutire; J. A. Adegboyega and J. T. Adigun

1Department of Human Kinetics & Health Education, Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado – Ekiti, Nigeria, 
2College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: I. O. Akindutire

The purpose of the study was to investigate the causes of stress among the management staff of Colleges of Education in Nigeria. It also examined the level of stress as well as the strategies adopted by the management staff in coping with stress. The study is considered significant because, stress is one of the key factors usually associated with sudden death, especially among top working class individuals. A total of 271 management staff were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. This study used a self-report questionnaire to assess the relationship between stressors and stress. The instrument was validated and had a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics, t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. The study revealed a significant relationship between all the identified stressors (self-induced stressors, organisational stressors, domestic stressors, macro-environmental stressors and miscellaneous stressors) and stress. However, there was no significant difference in the causes of stress between the management staff of Federal and State Colleges of Education. The study revealed that nearly half of the respondents 47.2% (n=128) experienced high level of stress. Also, more than half of the respondents were able to cope with stressful situations. It was recommended that workshops and seminars that focus on occupational stressors and effective coping strategies should be organised for all management staff in the Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Also, Colleges of Education should provide self-care outlets by making available recreational activities to all management staff.

Keywords: stressors, stress, management staff, coping strategy, tertiary institution

INTRODUCTION
Stress has been a major health problem in all walks of life. It is inherent in all human activities and endeavours. This is because life itself is full of an ever-endless array of challenges, many of which present themselves as obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of the most cherished life goals. Coleman (1978) explained that all human beings are constantly under siege and anything deliberately sought or accidentally found, pleasant or unpleasant, has a degree of pressure (stress) associated with it. Similarly, Selye (1978) described stress as the rate of wear and tear in human body that affects productivity. In the same vein, Adebanwi (1995) asserted that stress is a condition or situation which an individual finds himself under frustration, fear and anger, resulting in tension, anxiety, depression, loss of appetite and in extreme cases, loss of sleep at night.

Stress is generally seen as a threat to the fulfillment of basic need to the functioning of the nervous system. Not all stressors are negative. Some degree of stress is necessary to keep people alert. Long term or chronic stress creates excessive wear and tear and the system breaks down (Hales, 2007). It is further asserted that chronic stressors that is profound and seem endless may suppress immune responses. Stress, is one of the key factors usually associated with sudden death, most especially, among the top working class in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a nation for several years, has been laden with stress caused by urban violence, demonstrations, terrorist attacks, incessant transfer of government workers, success, failure and weather conditions (Moronkola, 2003). Supporting this assertion, Eni (2004) observed that most people in Nigeria are dying from stress-related disorders in greater number than in the past owing to increase in tension and hardship. Tension is created by the fact that most Nigerians in urban cities wake up early, go through the terrible traffic hold-ups to and from work, arrive home late, have little or sometimes no sleep, before hitting the road again at the break of dawn. This type of lifestyle is definitely stress-inducing. Long term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems such as, high blood pressure, suppression of the immune system, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, infertility, acceleration of aging process and vulnerability to anxiety and depression (Dada, 2010). The consequences of stress related disorder was confirmed by Adeniyi (2010) who reported a case of a Chief Judge who was hale and hearty, presided over
a case, had a meeting with Magistrates and died later that day. Similarly, Ogunmola (2010) revealed another case involving a Chairman of a Local Government Council in one of the states in Nigeria who suddenly collapsed while serving as a mediator between another Chairman and his people during a crisis of financial mistrust.

Indeed, medical practitioners contended that the longer the hours an individual works, the more exposed he will be to the problem of ill-health occasioned by work-related stress. Dada (2010) in his assessment of the situation, opined that those prone to work stress are those who did not rest, hence, workers such as journalists, bankers, doctors and nurses are likely to suffer work-related stress. It is not out of place to include the management staff in tertiary institutions among the category of workers who could suffer from work-related stress. The daily roles of management staff in tertiary institutions in Nigeria seem tasking and enormous. This tends one to believe that the enormity of roles can initiate heightened anxiety which may increase their stress level particularly, in a situation characterized by dwindling resources, poor infrastructures, frequent conflicts, moral decadence and frustration. The extent to which they are able to cope with such situation determines their effectiveness on the job. Ekpo (2004) asserted that administering tertiary institutions and other post-secondary educational institutions is a stressful business. The multiplicity of problems which affect all Nigerian tertiary institutions range from lack of funds, poor or low infrastructural facilities, shortage of personnel and examination malpractices. Others include, certificate racketeering, over population, indiscipline of all sorts, cult activities and protracted period of meetings.

In view of these problems, it is sad to note that a high percentage of the time and resources of the management staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is devoted to handling and resolving these man-made impediments in order to ensure effective administration of the institutions. The Management Staff in Colleges of Education in Nigeria appear to be facing stressful situation, which may cause serious harm to individual’s physical and psychological makeup as well as the administration of the institutions. The management staff within the context of this study, refers to the Provost and Registrar of the institution, the Librarian, the Bursar, the Director of Works, Deans of Schools, Medical Directors, and Heads of Department and Administrative Units. It has been observed that management staff of Colleges of Education exhibits certain behaviours which include absenteeism due to stress related-health problems, such as migraine, tension, headaches, anxiety, lower back pains and so on, which may keep them away from office. There may be other physical and mental fatigue signals that may make the administrators look pale and sickly even without complaints of illness from him.

There are many factors that may induce stress in a management staff within and outside the campus. These include management of community relation pressure and management of politics and poor economy of the society. Others are running around and lobbying for funds to run institution, trying to reduce and eliminate cult activities, contending with work over load, attending academic board meetings, getting results ready for convocation, managing students’ population with inadequate hostel facilities and transport problems within and outside the campus. The manner in which the management staff of Colleges of Education handle the above problems may differ according to their individual differences as well as the extent of their coping abilities and strategies. If the problems are not well managed, it may lead to grave physical, social and psychological problems. Few studies undertaken on stress in Nigeria have generally limited their scope on industrial workers and civil servants (Agulana, 2001 and Oraegbunam, 2004). However, it is not out of place to reason that administrators in tertiary institutions are not exempted from stressful situations which may, interfere with the day to day running of the institutions. Based on this premise, it therefore, becomes imperative to determine empirically the causes of stress among the management staff of Colleges of Education. Also, the study examined the level of stress as well as the strategies adopted by the management staff in coping with stress.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
The study employed the descriptive research which describes the existing situations regarding stress among management staff of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Population
The population for this study consisted of all the management staff in all eleven Colleges of Education in South West, Nigeria. There are five Federal and six States Colleges of Education in South West, Nigeria. The respondents for this study consisted of 271 management staff selected from eight Colleges of Education. The multi-stage random sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample for the study. This involved the selection of the states used out of the 6 States in South West, Nigeria, the selection of the participating Colleges of Education and the purposive selection of the category of staff from the Colleges involved.

Instrument
The researchers developed a questionnaire titled Stress Among Management Staff of Colleges of
Education (SMSCOEQ). The instrument had four sections A – C. Section A sought information on demographic data of the participants such as ownership of institution, position held and status of the respondents. Section B consisted of 26 items which sought information on the stressors or causes of stress. While section C consisted of items on the strategies adopted by the management staff in coping with stress. The original instrument was given to three experts in the area of Health Education, Test and Measurement and Counselling. These experts scrutinized the questionnaire items for face and content validity. The items as certified by the experts were tested in a pilot-study for reliability. A test-retest method was used. The instrument was administered on staff of a College of Education which was not included in the study. The scores from the two sets of responses were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Statistics to determine the level of reliability. A reliability Co-efficient of 0.79 was obtained for the instrument. This was considered high enough for reliability.

Data Collection
The instrument (SMSCOEQ) was administered by the researchers with the help of trained research assistants. The consent of the respondents were sought before the administration of the instrument. The researchers had personal contact with some of the selected respondents which facilitated the speedy and effective response to the instrument. Out of 320 copies of the instrument which were administered on management staff, 271 (85%) copies of the questionnaires were properly filled and returned.

Data Analysis
Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected. The descriptive statistics used were frequency counts, means scores, standard deviation and percentages. Inferential statistics used include, t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the relationship between stressors and stress. An alpha level of 0.05 was set to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS
Demographic Information
A total of 320 management staff completed the paper and pencil survey. Close supervision ensured a 100 percent return rate. However, only 271 questionnaires which were adequately completed and free from inconsistence were used in the analyses. The demographic information revealed that 55.4% (n=150) of the respondents were from the Federal Colleges of Education while 44.6% (n=121) respondents were from the State Colleges of Education.

Causes of Stress
The respondents were asked to indicate how the identified stressors could cause stress among them. The responses are reported in table I.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation of identified stressors and stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of stressors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Stress (r-cal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-induced stressors</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>13.04</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>0.525*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational stressors</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>0.723*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroeconomic stressors</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>0.614*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental stressors</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>0.715*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous stress</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>0.664*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P<0.05

Table 1 shows that the ‘r’ calculated is greater than the ‘r’ table of 0.195 in all the major dimensions of identified stressors in the study. This implies that there is a significant relationship between each of the categories of stressors and stress. Thus, the identified major stressors were the cause of stress among the respondents. In order to determine if differences exist in the causes of stress between the management staff of Federal and State Colleges of Education, a t-test was computed. The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of t-test on the causes of stress among the management staff of Federal and State Colleges of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>47.93</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>46.88</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.05

Table 2 shows that the t-calculated is less than the t-table of 1.96. It therefore, implies that there is no significant difference in the cause of stress between the management staff of Federal and State Colleges of Education.

Level of Stress
The level of stress among the management staff in Colleges of Education was investigated. The responses under Always; Occasionally and Never were scored and classified under high, moderate and low levels of stress. The result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Level of stress among management staff in Colleges of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>55.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows that 47.2% (n = 128) of the respondents experienced high level of stress, while very few of the respondents 19.6% (n = 53) had a low level of stress.

Displacement

Table 4 shows the strategies adopted by the respondents in coping with stress. More than half of the respondents used proper time management 66.1% (n = 179); immediate response to stress issues 55.0% (n = 149); proper planning 50.6% (n = 137); and maintenance of cordial relationship 50.2% (n = 136) more often than any other strategies. However, almost half of the respondents 47.8% (n = 135), did not expose their staff and students to workshop on stress. Similarly, more than half of the respondents engaged occasionally in regular exercise 61.6% (n = 167); sleeping well everyday 58.3% (n = 158); and consultation with superiors or subordinates 56.5% (n = 153). However, only a few of the respondents 20.7% (n = 56) indicated that they did not engage in regular exercise. In order to determine if the strategies adopted by the respondents in the Federal Colleges of Education differ significantly from those at the State Colleges of Education, the t-test analysis was computed and presented in table 5.

Table 5: Summary of t-test on strategies used in coping with stress by Respondents of Federal and State Colleges of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>22.19</td>
<td>3.051</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>2.139*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>22.99</td>
<td>3.059</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P <0.05

Table 5 shows that t-cal (2.139) is greater than t-table (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there is significant difference in the strategies adopted by the respondents in coping with stress between Federal and State Colleges of Education. Thus, the respondents in the State Colleges of Education engaged in strategies for coping with stress more than the respondents in Federal Colleges of Education.

Discussion

One major premise of this study was to examine the causes of stress among the management staff in the area of the study. The results revealed a significant relationship between all the stressors and stress. The reason for this could be attributed to the inevitability and universality of stress, and could also be based on the fact that man is rooted in his environment, which is charged with stressors of various configurations from which he cannot escape. The finding revealed that there was significant relationship between self-induced stressors and stress. This implies that majority of the management staff in this study is always striving to achieve great success in their job career. As a result, they keep away from visitors, relations, battling with time, always at work all days without even going on annual leave which weigh them down. This finding is consistent with the assertions of Agulanna (2001) and Adesua (2007). These authors posited that some executives or managers, through their perception of life, their expectations and value system, their belief system, impose excessive demands and unrealistic high standards on themselves, thereby creating unnecessary stress.
and financial inadequacy in the family. This finding corroborated the observations of Zarah (2004), Rita (2006) and Ellen, Mellinda and Liza (2007). The authors observed that financial problems, care of ill or elderly family members could be a potent source of family stress. In view of the economic pressure in most homes in Nigeria, the pattern of life of women as caring wives and home makers have changed to that of taking a more active role outside the home. Furthermore, the desire to produce children as well as concerns over their health, education and safety and other aspects of bringing them up can often be a leading stress factor for either or both parents.

This study found out that micro-environmental stressors are significantly related to stress. This might be because there were poor infrastructures, poor state of the economy and high level of corruption. This is in support of Agulanna (2001) who asserted that poor infrastructure, poor economy, corruption and tribalism are some of the geopolitical variables in Nigeria that put many people into unnecessary stress. The finding also revealed significant relationship between miscellaneous stressors and stress. The reason might be that most of the management staff who responded were contending with the daily hassle in their various institutions and the society, problem of staff, unionism, examination malpractice and drug abuse. This finding is in line with Auerbach and Gramling (2003) who stated that much of the stress results from hassle pertaining to the jobs, personal relationship and everyday living circumstances. The study revealed a significant difference in the strategies adopted between management staff of Federal and State Colleges of Education. The reason might be that Federal Colleges of Education are better funded, equipped with physical resources, more staffed than the State Colleges of Education. The implication of this is that the management staff of Colleges of Education are more exposed to intense stressors of different configuration. The opinion of Ekpo (2004) supported the result of this finding who asserted that there is hardly enough money available to state tertiary institutions which the management staff could use to facilitate their various plans. This usually leads to frustration and stressful situation in managing their physical resources.

CONCLUSION
Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:
1) Stress among the management staff were related to the various stressors such as self-induced, organisational, domestic, macro-environmental and miscellaneous stressors.
2) Management staff experienced high level of stress as elicited by the stressors.
3) More than half of the respondents in this study were able to adopt some strategies in coping with stress. However, management staff in the state Colleges of Education engaged in strategies in coping with stress more than their counterparts at the Federal Colleges of Education.

RECOMMENDATION
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:
1) The Federal and State Governments should provide stress free and conducive environment to enable the management staff of Colleges of Education performing their duties without stress.
2) Workshops and in-service seminars that focus on occupational stressors and effective coping strategies should be organised for all management staff in the Colleges of Education in Nigeria
3) Colleges of Education in Nigeria should make provision for health counselors with expertise in stress management and coping strategies in their institutions.
4) Management staff in the Colleges of Education should be encouraged to practice stress management techniques and use appropriate coping strategies on a daily basis
5) Colleges of Education should provide self-care outlets by making available recreational activities to all management staff.

REFERENCES


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