

Extent of School-Related Stress Occurrence among Secondary School Teachers in Anambra State: Implication for Health Counselling

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Abstract - School-related stress has become a noteworthy issue and of serious concern to scholars and stakeholders in education. This study determined the extent of school related stress occurrence among public secondary school teachers in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which school related stress is associated with instructional delivery and social support/climate work domain of teachers. The study was carried out in Anambra State of Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. The sample comprised of 1,574 teachers drawn from a population of 5,634 teachers using a multi-stage sampling procedure. A validated instrument titled "Extent of Occurrence of School-Related Stress Inventory for Teachers" was used for data collection. The instrument has reliability coefficient of 0.60 and 0.80 for the two clusters. Data collected were analysed using SPSS. Summated scores and percentages were used to answer research questions. Findings revealed that most secondary school teachers experienced school related stress associated with instructional delivery and social support/climate work domain to a high extent. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the school management should focus intervention at a targeted area where the highest school-related stress occurred. Intervention efforts should therefore be channeled at helping secondary school teachers' deal with the job demand in the domain which often leads to stress.

Keywords – Stress, school-related, occurrence, teachers, secondary school, counselling, Anambra State.

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress today has become a worldwide phenomenon and occurs in various forms in every workplace. It is today a common element in any kind of job and many organizations in the world are witnessing an alarming increase of the negative effects of it on employee's productivity and wellbeing. This perhaps could be the reason why school related stress has become a noteworthy issue and of serious concern to scholars and stakeholders in education. The prevalence of school related stress sometimes could arise from teachers' enthusiastic pursuit of better academic performance of students in a wide range of subjects, and this has attracted ample research attention. For instance, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2018) survey of self-reported work-related illness indicated that more than half a million individuals were suffering from stress or a stress related disorder caused or made worse by stressors at work.

Although stress is a well-known phenomenon, researchers are yet to agree upon a specific definition. However, early definition of stress by Selye (1978) described stress as any external events or internal drive which threatens to upset the organism's equilibrium. The definition put forward by Selye implies that stress is a psycho-physiological process, which results from the interaction of the individual with the environment. This could as well result in disturbances caused to the physiological, psychological and social systems, depending upon individual characteristics and psychological processes. Therefore, in the context of this study, the definition put forward by Selye will serve as the contextual delineation of stress.

Stress tends to arise from various aspects of life including developmental and social changes, financial and accommodation problems, work demands, and the specific demands of the school. It can be the result of any number of situations in the workplace including workload, physical environment, role in organisation, organisational structure and climate among others. Akhlaq, Amjad, Mehmood, Hussan and Malik (2010) posited that stress results from the interaction of the individual with the environment and could lead to disturbances caused to the physiological, psychological and social systems, depending upon individual characteristics and psychological processes.

Adeniyi, Aremum, and Adeyinka (2010) identified four factors of stress in school as; stress factors due to student's characteristics, stress factors due to the school environment, stress factor due to administrative procedure and stress factors due to the condition of service. These stress factors according to Adeniyi, Aremum, and Adeyinka may arise from the attitude of some students toward the teacher, their studies and/or to other members of the class. A study by Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014) have also shown that psychosocial hazards can severely damage the working environment in schools and that the main stress factors for teachers are workload/work intensity, role overload; increased class size per teacher and unacceptable pupils' behaviour. These factors can lead to burnout/depression and emotional exhaustion, high absenteeism, sickness and sleeping problems among teachers.

The teacher is a significant element in the educational process and the cornerstone in the process of the professional development. He or she is directly responsible for the achievement of the educational targets, and equally the most influential person in impacting in the students' behaviours (Talafhah, 2010). Due to the enormous role usually ascribed to teachers, they tend to experience work-related stress. The major sources of stress usually experienced by the teachers as Al-Abdali (2012) noted include work, role organization, stages of growth, environmental and climate regulations, internal relationships in the environmental regulations, higher regulations, and personality components.

School requirements are essential sources of stress, and stress levels can also be affected by various stressors in the teachers work domains. This study therefore captured secondary school teacher stress events that evolve from different work domains. The work domains of teachers investigated in this study include; the instructional delivery domain and the social support domain. The instructional delivery refers to the teachers' personal approach and teaching characteristics while social climate and support refers to the overall social climate of the school, as well as the nature of social interactions between secondary school teachers and other school staff. Stress measures were conducted in these domains to determine the extent of occurrence of school-related stress among teachers in secondary school in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The problem of school-related stress is one major challenge facing school, especially as the secondary level of education in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anambra State is one of the States in Nigeria with notable record of increased access to primary and secondary schooling. Today, with a good number of people having access to secondary education, a great demand is being placed on teachers in managing large classes with the attendant workload and inadequate facilities, often leading to stress. Although effort has been made by the previous government to address the human capacity and infrastructural gap in schools, most teachers still work under stress in overcrowded classrooms with little or no incentives.

The major concern with teacher stress in schools is that a prolonged experience of stress can precipitate both mental and physical ill health. As teachers are being exposed to stressors at various work domains, stress reactions would likely appear. More so, when the stress reactions persist over a longer period of time without any preventive measure being implemented at the workplace, the stress may develop into more permanent, less reversible consequences for the teachers' health.

Backe, Seidler, Latza, Rosnagel and Schumann (2012) observed that stress is one of the main determinants of health status. Hence, the occurrence of stress is of prime interest in both public health and counselling. The reason is that teachers' wellbeing tends to have significant impacts on their behaviour along with their professional performance in the school. The teachers' effectual or ineffectual performance

could be attributed to their mental, social, professional conditions that often tend to prevent them from acclimatizing with the work settings and getting on well with their students. A situation like this could lead to lower achievement and creativity both for the teacher and the students as well.

The detrimental effects of school-related stress are no longer a hidden fact; as such knowledge is expounded in literature and it is increasingly becoming a source of concern to various stakeholders in education, not only in Anambra State, but around the world. Teachers' responsibilities in school have become greatly challenging due to much workload, student-related issues and role conflicts associated with rising population of students. This often tell on the teachers health and the way they handle issues and will likely exert a serious negative effect on learners.

Efforts made by previous researcher have not been able to address the teachers' experience of work-related stress as such study was not targeted at specific work domains of teachers. The problem of this study therefore was to assess and reveal the extent of work-related stress experienced by secondary school teachers in the teachers' work domains. This study thus is set out to determine the extent of occurrence of school-related stress associated with teachers' instructional delivery and social support/climate work domains among secondary school teachers in Anambra State. This is the motivation for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent of occurrence of school-related stress among public secondary school teachers in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to determine: the extent of school-related stress associated with:

- i. Instructional delivery.
- ii. Social support/climate.

Significance of the Study

Findings of this study will benefit teachers and will likely help the teacher appraise their work domains where the stress is likely to emerge from. This will likely enhance their working life which eventually may as well hold benefits for teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria. The findings will also benefit counsellors. Having knowledge of the extent of stress occurrence in teachers work domains would likely be of help to counsellors in order to forecast possible stress occurrence and be well prepared to manage the situation to a minimal level.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is the extent of occurrence of school-related stress among public secondary school teachers in

Anambra state associated with formal instructional delivery?

2. What is the extent of occurrence of school-related stress among public secondary school teachers in Anambra state associated with social support/climate?

II. METHOD

The study was carried out in Anambra State of Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. The sample comprised of 1,574 teachers drawn from a population of 5,634 teachers, comprising both male and female teachers. This was done using a multi-stage sampling procedure, where different sampling techniques were employed at different selection stages. A validated instrument titled "Occurrence of School-Related StressInventory for Teachers (OSRSIT)" was used for data collection. The instrument was structured from related literatures reviewed. The reliability of the instrument was established through internal consistency estimate, yielding reliability coefficient of 0.60 and 0.80 for the two clusters. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents and were allowed up to a whole day to respond and return to the researcher. The questionnaire were retrieved and scored based on the assigned numerical rated scale (1 – 4) for response options to obtain the teachers stress scores. Data collected were analysed using SPSS. Summated scores and percentages were used to answer research questions.

III. RESULTS

Data collected from the field for this study are presented in tables to highlight the findings as follows:

Research Question 1

What is the extent of school-related stress occurrence among public secondary school teachers in Anambra State associated with instructional delivery?

Figure 1: Range of Scores on the Extent of School-related Stress Occurrence Associated with Instructional Delivery Experienced among Secondary School Teachers (n = 1566).

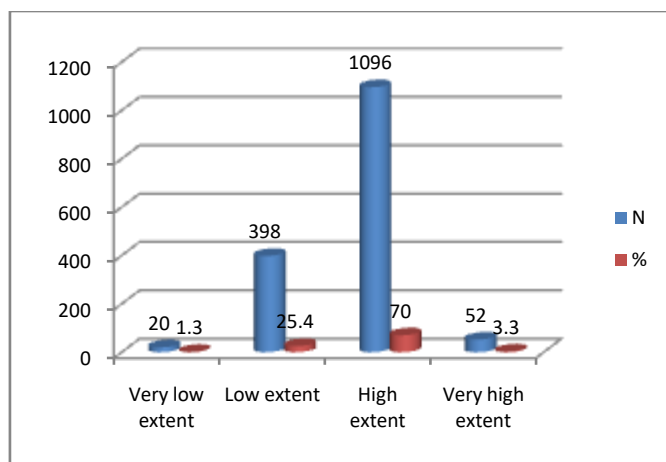


Figure 1 shows that with the scores ranging from 25 to 28, 52(3.3%) of the secondary school teachers indicated that they experienced school-related stress associated with instructional delivery to very high extent, while 1096(70.0%) of those who scored between 18 and 24 believed that they experienced them to high extent. Again, as 398(25.4%) of the teachers who scored between 11 and 17 believed that they experienced school-related stress associated with instructional delivery to low extent while 20(1.3%) of the teachers who scored between 7 and 10 indicated that they experienced stress to very low extent.

Research Question 2

What is the extent of school-related stress occurrence among public secondary school teachers in Anambra State associated with social support/climate?

Figure 2: Range of Scores on the Extent of School-related Stress Occurrence Associated with Social Support/Climate Experienced by the Public Secondary School Teachers

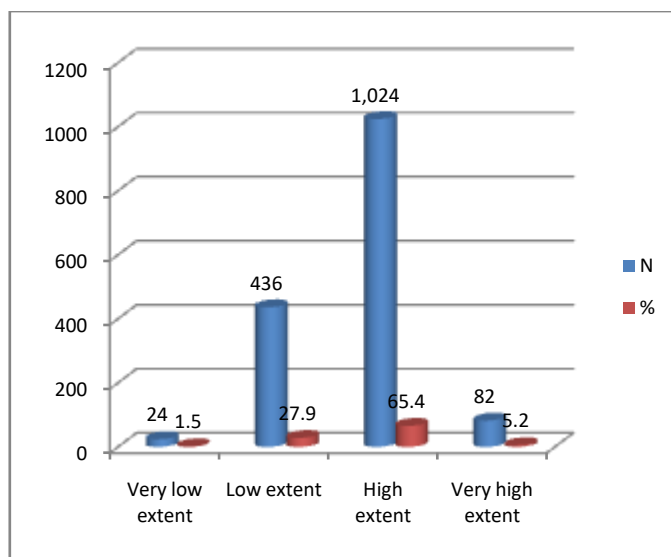


Figure 2 reveals that with the scores ranging from 25 to 28, 82(5.2%) of the secondary school teachers indicated that they experienced school-related stress associated with social support/climate to very high extent, while 1024(65.4%) of those who scored between 18 and 24 believe that they experienced them to a high extent. Again, as 436(27.9%) of the teachers who scored between 11 and 17 believed that they experienced school-related stress associated with social support/climate to low extent while 24(1.5%) of the teachers who scored between 7 and 10 indicated that they experience them to very low extent.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are discussed as follows:

Extent of School-related Stress Associated with Instructional Delivery

Findings from the study revealed that most of the public secondary school teachers indicated that school-

related stress associated with instructional delivery occurred to them to a high extent. What this means is that public secondary school teachers of this study, experienced more stress associated with instructional delivery which included classroom management practices, lesson planning, delivery of instruction among others. This finding was not too surprising; the reason for this may be because instructional delivery tends to combine the complexities of teaching with instructional expectation and students demand for quality instruction. The finding is in line with Weinstein (2013) whose study highlighted multiple aspects of teachers' work settings that impact their work stress. The findings observed stress occurrence in structural delivery domain which occurred on high scale. This finding equally agrees with some earlier research findings such as Aralu (2012) and Agai-Demjaha, Minov, Stoleski and Zafirova (2015). The findings of the study by Agai-Demjaha, Minov, Stoleski and Zafirova revealed that among six categories of factors that generate work related stress (job demands, control, relationships, role, changes and support) control and support had the highest mean scores. It was thus observed that factors related to teachers instructional delivery contributed more to occurrence of stress among teachers.

Extent of School-related Stress Associated with Social Support/Climate

Findings from the study revealed that most public secondary school teachers of this study indicated that they experienced school-related stress associated with social support/climate to a high extent. What this means is that the extent of stress occurrence among teachers associated with overall social climate of the school, as well as the nature of social interactions between public secondary school teachers and other school staff was high. This finding may not be too surprising because negative school climate was indicated by teachers as a stressor throughout much of the published research literature. For instance, in previous research, such as York-Barr, Ghore and Sommersness (2007), lack of principal support resulted in various teacher stressors, such as a lack of developed protocol to discipline students effectively and an inability by teachers to implement needed changes in their classrooms.

Implications of the Study

The results of the present study are important for the potential they have in terms of public health counselling and policy implications, especially because some easy to implement measures to change conditions or behaviour at work could help improve the conditions of teachers. Also, better information for teachers could improve teacher behaviour, which could have an impact on the occurrence of problems that could exacerbate stress among teachers. More so, evaluation of some areas, such as adopting new stress management strategies and levels of extra-curricular involvement, could provide a better regulatory framework within which secondary school teachers would be able to find solutions to some of their problems. Other interventions, such

as stress management, can be carried out to reduce stress in the schools.

Another implication of this study is that when school management finds that the most frequent or severe stressors for their teachers occur within a specific domain, this will allow for the management to focus intervention at a targeted area. For example, in this study, the highest levels of stress occurred in the instructional delivery domain. More teachers indicated that they experienced school-related stress at this domain from high to very high extent. Intervention efforts such as health counselling would therefore be channeled at helping the teachers cope with the stress in this domain.

The high extent of occurrence of stress experienced by the secondary school teachers is capable of increasing risks of health problems, lead to reduced productivity and impact significantly on the teachers and the school, its staff, students and the state as a whole. However, stress management programmes could be initiated in secondary schools by the health counsellors to assist teachers manage their stress. This is because management of stress is an aspect of health promotion in the worksite, especially the school.

Findings from the study also provided reliable and useful statistics to support national teacher unions in their national Social Dialogue structures when they deal with Health and Safety issues in schools. The data also helps the unions to establish concrete and sustainable Health and Safety strategies in schools.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Teachers should be exposed to stress management/coping techniques. This can be done through seminars or workshop. Counselling sessions should be organized for teachers.
2. The school management should focus intervention at a targeted area. For example, in this study, the highest school-related stress occurred in the instructional deliver domain. Intervention efforts should therefore be channeled at helping secondary school teachers' deal with the job demand in the domain which often leads to stress.
3. This finding should be used by training institutions as a training tool for teachers, as it is an indicator of what the teachers needs to know at the teacher training level and how they could apply the knowledge manage it stress in school.

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