

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PREVALENCE AND CAUSES OF STRESS AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ONDO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ONDO STATE

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Abstract

This study determined the types of stress prevalent and its causes among public secondary school teachers of secondary school teachers and its influence on teaching performance in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Secondary schools teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area made up the study population. The researcher utilized the random sampling technique to select the population sample. The sample size consisted of 443 teachers, which was approximately 40% of the population (1108). A self-developed semi-structured questionnaire was used by the researchers to for data collection. Data collected were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Chronic stress, episodic acute stress, burnout, eustress, and distress were all prevalent forms of stress experienced by secondary school teachers. It was therefore recommended that modules on coping mechanisms and stress management should be incorporated in professional development programs to provide secondary school teachers with the knowledge and skills required to successfully manage workplace pressures.

Keywords: Stress, Teaching performance, Teachers, Public Secondary Schools

Introduction

The benefit of education is universally accepted in today's digital economy. Education accounts for the vast majority of budgets in all industrialized nations. Teachers play an important role in any nation's educational system since they are the ones who educate the nation's most valuable resource—students—and as a result, teacher performance is the top focus of all educational institutions. Several stress-related concerns that might arise within or outside of the educational institution have a negative impact on teachers'

performance, limiting their capacity to do their duties well and lowering both individual and institutional productivity (Kimama, et al. 2024).

Selye (2018) defines stress as any external event or internal drive that threatens to upset the organism's equilibrium. Traditionally, job stress has been described as a stimulus, a response, or a combination of the two. Excessive job stress has been linked in studies to several long-term health issues, such as substance misuse, depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and a reduced immune

system (Khadka & Khadka, 2023). Indirect effects of stressful work environments on health can also include decreased motivation or ability to engage in other health-promoting activities, such as regular exercise and a balanced diet (Annabel *et al.*, 2022; Kimama, *et al.* 2024). Stress can negatively impact an employee's health as well as the productivity of the company (Demarouti & Verbeke, 2014).

The researchers observed that despite the myriad of studies on the impact of stress on work performance (Ojukwu & Nwankwo, 2021, Anwar, *et al.*, 2012, Davina & Kristen, 2023), little or nothing has been done to find out the stress level peculiar to civil servants in Ondo State and teachers in particular. Studies delineating the stress level prevalent among secondary school teachers in Ondo State are scarce and even rare for teachers in Ondo West. The causes of stress and its impact on teaching performance have not gained considerable attention among researchers. Knowing full well that high levels of stress if not properly managed and managed from time to time can lead to devastating health effects, the researchers have considered it worthwhile to delve into this area. In light of the aforementioned, this study attempt to determine the influence that stress has on teachers' ability to teach, as reported by secondary school teachers in Ondo West LGA. The objectives of this study are to assess the types of stress prevalent among Secondary School teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area and to determine the causes of stress among secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. The following research questions served as guide to this

study; what are the types of stress prevalent among Secondary School teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area? And what are the causes of stress among secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the types of stress prevalent among Secondary School teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area
2. To determine the causes of stress among secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State

Research Questions

- i. What are the types of stress prevalent among Secondary School teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area?
- ii. What are the causes of stress among secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. There are 32 public secondary schools as of the time this study was conducted; Ondo West had 1108 secondary school teachers, according to data obtained from the Zonal Educational Office stationed there. This means that around 443 teachers would account for 40% of the teachers in Ondo West as at the time of the study, constituted the sample for this study.

The researchers employed a self-developed semi-structured questionnaire to collect information from respondents. The test-retest method was used to evaluate the

dependability and the correlation coefficient was found to be $r=0.078$ this indicate that the research instrument is reproducible of the research instrument. On the spot method of data collection was adopted in this study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23) was used to analyze the data. The data were subjected to

descriptive (frequency and percentages) and inferential (correlation and multiple regression) analyses.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the types of stress prevalent among Secondary School teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Showing Types of Stress Prevalent among Secondary School Teachers

S/N	Levels of Stress Experienced	VHL F (%)	HL F (%)	ML F (%)	LL F (%)
1.	Acute Stress	191 (43.1%)	157 (35.4%)	90 (20.3%)	5 (1.1%)
2.	Chronic Stress	66 (14.9%)	227 (51.2%)	105(23.7%)	45 (10.2)
3.	Episodic Acute Stress	100 (22.6%)	171 (38.6%)	80 (18.1%)	92 (20.8%)
4.	Burn out	136 (30.7%)	145 (32.7%)	92 (20.8%)	70 (15.8%)
5.	Eustress	176 (39.7%)	120 (27.1%)	112(25.3%)	35 (7.9%)
6.	Distress	141 (31.8%)	167 (37.7%)	60 (13.5%)	75 (16.9%)

VHL= Very High Level, HL= High Level, ML= Medium Level, LL= Low Level)

The result in Table 1 shows that 43.1% of the respondents experiences very high level of acute stress, 35.4% has high level, 20.3% has moderate level while 1.1% has low level of acute stress. More also, 14.9% of the respondents experienced very high level of chronic stress, 51.2% experienced high level of chronic stress, 23.7% experience moderate level while others (10.2%) experienced low level of chronic stress. Moreover, 22.6% of the respondents experienced very high level of episodic acute stress, 38.6% experienced high level of episodic acute stress and 18.1% experienced moderate level of episodic acute stress while 20.8% experience low level of episodic acute stress.

Furthermore, 30.7% of the respondents experienced very high level of burnout, 32.7% experienced high level, and 20.8% experienced moderate level while 15.8% of the

respondents experienced low level of burnout. Subsequently, 39.7% of the respondents experienced very high-level eustress, 27.1% experienced high level and 25.3% experienced moderate level while 7.9% experienced low-level eustress. In addition, 31.8% of the respondents experienced very high level of distress, 37.7% experienced high level and 13.5% experienced moderate level while 16.9% experienced low level of distress.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of stress among secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Showing Causes of Stress among Secondary School Teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area.

S/N	Causes of Stress	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	Challenging student behaviours are root causes of stress in schools.	130 (29.3%)	193 (43.6%)	95 (21.4%)	20 (4.5%)
2.	Lack of support from leadership and colleagues is also one of the causes of stress in schools.	182 (41.1%)	181 (40.9%)	45 (10.2%)	35 (7.9%)
3.	Feeling unappreciated is another cause of stress in schools.	141 (31.8%)	277 (53.5%)	20 (4.5%)	45 (10.2%)
4.	Societal pressure	216 (48.8%)	202 (45.6%)	10 (2.3%)	15 (3.4%)
5.	Standardized testing	95 (21.4%)	232 (52.4%)	51 (11.5%)	65 (14.7%)
6.	Difficult Parents	212 (47.9%)	201 (45.4%)	25 (5.6%)	5 (1.1%)
7.	Teaching for Long hours	297 (67.0%)	116 (26.2%)	25 (5.6%)	5 (1.1%)
8.	Lack of feeling empowered	150 (33.9%)	228 (51.5%)	55 (12.4%)	10 (2.3%)
9.	Lack of sufficient resources	268 (60.5%)	140 (31.6%)	20 (4.5%)	3 (0.7%)
10.	Large class sizes	323 (72.9%)	96 (21.7%)	5 (1.1%)	10 (2.3%)
11.	Additional responsibilities	307 (69.3%)	111 (25.1%)	10 (2.3%)	15 (3.4%)
12.	Insufficient training to cope with school duties	146 (33.0%)	222 (50.1%)	35 (7.9%)	40 (9.0%)
13.	Poor evaluation process	120 (27.1%)	223 (50.3%)	55 (12.4%)	45 (10.2%)
14.	Low salary	348 (78.6%)	55 (12.4%)	20 (4.5%)	20 (4.5%)

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The result in Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (72.9%) agreed that challenging student behaviours are the root causes of stress in secondary school while 25.9% disagreed. More also, majority of the respondents (82.0%) agreed that lack of support from leadership and colleagues is one of the causes of stress in schools while 18.1% of the respondents disagreed. Moreover, majority of the respondents (85.3%) agreed that feeling unappreciated is another cause of stress in schools while 14.7% disagreed. Similarly, majority of the respondents (94.4%) agreed that societal pressure is one of the stressors in schools while 5.7% disagreed.

Likewise, a significant proportion of the respondents (73.8%) agreed that standardized testing put additional stress on teachers while 26.2% disagreed.

Furthermore, Overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.3%) agreed that difficult parents contribute to stress among teachers in schools while 6.7% disagreed. Notably, vast majority of the respondent (93.2%) agreed that teaching for long hours (overload) stimulates stress among teachers in secondary schools while 6.7% disagreed. Besides, the largest percentage of the respondent (85.4%) agreed that lack of feeling empowered spurs stress among teachers in schools while 14.7% disagreed.

Moreover, majority of the respondent (94.4%) agreed that additional responsibilities given to teachers in schools are additional stressors while 5.7% disagreed. More also, majority of the respondents (83.1%) agreed that insufficient training to cope with school duties do trigger distress

among teachers in schools while 16.9% disagreed. Furthermore, majority of the respondents (77.4%) agreed that poor evaluation process is a contributory factor to stress among teachers in schools while 22.6% disagreed. Consequently, majority of the respondents (91.0%) agreed that low salary is one of the major factors contributing to success among teachers while 9.0% disagreed.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a pervasive and intense stress landscape among public secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. Virtually all recognized forms of stress—acute, chronic, episodic acute, burnout, distress, and even eustress—are experienced at high or very high levels by a significant majority of the respondents. Acute stress affects the largest proportion at very high intensity (43.1%), reflecting the daily pressures and sudden demands that characterize classroom teaching. Chronic stress, however, emerges as the most consistently elevated type, with over half the teachers (51.2%) reporting it at a high level and another 14.9% at a very high level, signaling prolonged, unrelenting strain that aligns with the literature on long-term health deterioration and diminished teaching effectiveness.

The identified causes paint a picture of systemic, interpersonal, and socioeconomic pressures converging on teachers. Low salary stands out overwhelmingly as the single most agreed-upon stressor (91% agreement, 78.6% strongly agreeing), underscoring the financial hardship that amplifies all other difficulties. Heavy workload factors—teaching long hours (93.2% agreement), additional administrative responsibilities (94.4%), and insufficient non-teaching staff—combine with large

class sizes and resource scarcity (92.1%) to create an environment of constant overload. Interpersonal and institutional factors compound this burden: difficult parents (93.3%), challenging student behavior (72.9%), lack of leadership and collegial support (82%), and feeling unappreciated (85.3%) erode teachers' emotional reserves, while societal expectations (94.4%), standardized testing, poor evaluation processes, and inadequate training further diminish teachers' sense of agency and competence.

Taken together, these results confirm that stress among these teachers is not an occasional occurrence but a chronic, multi-dimensional reality driven by structural deficiencies, inadequate remuneration, and insufficient organizational support. The simultaneous presence of high levels of both negative (distress, burnout, chronic stress) and occasionally positive (eustress) forms of stress indicates that while some pressure can be motivating, the balance has tipped decisively toward harmful stress that threatens teachers' health, professional performance, and, by extension, the quality of education delivered to students. The findings reinforce and localize earlier studies cited in the paper while highlighting the urgent need for deliberate policy interventions at state and school levels to reduce workload, improve remuneration and resources, strengthen administrative support, and equip teachers with effective stress-management skills.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that acute stress, chronic stress, episodic acute stress, burnout, eustress and distress were all forms of stress prevalent among secondary school teachers in Ondo West

and that these forms of stress were experienced by the teachers at high levels. The causes of stress as indicated by majority of the secondary school teachers in Ondo West Local Government Area included challenging student behaviours, lack of support from leadership and colleagues, feeling unappreciated, societal pressure, standardized testing, difficult parents, teaching for long hours (overload), lack of feeling empowered, additional responsibilities, insufficient training to cope with school duties, poor evaluation process and low salary.

Recommendations

In light of the high prevalence of chronic stress, burnout, distress, and acute overload experienced by teachers in Ondo West LGA, coupled with the clear identification of low salary, excessive workload, additional responsibilities, lack of resources, poor administrative support, and difficult interpersonal dynamics as the primary drivers, the following evidence-based recommendations are proposed:

1. Elevate teachers' well-being to a strategic priority in Ondo State's education policy, explicitly recognizing that the current levels of chronic stress, burnout, and distress directly undermine teaching performance and student outcomes.
2. Significantly increase teachers' remuneration and introduce regular salary reviews to address low pay, which was identified by 91% of respondents as a major stressor and a factor that intensifies the impact of all other pressures.
3. The Ondo State Government should urgently recruit additional qualified teaching and non-teaching staff to reduce excessive teaching hours (93.2% agreement), large class sizes, and the heavy burden of administrative and ancillary duties currently shouldered by classroom teachers (94.4% agreement).
4. Deploy dedicated non-teaching personnel (administrative officers, laboratory assistants, clerks, and counselors) in every public secondary school to handle record-keeping, procurement, parental liaison, and other non-instructional tasks, thereby allowing teachers to focus on pedagogy.
5. Establish and fund mandatory, ongoing professional development programs that equip teachers with practical stress-management techniques, emotional resilience skills, and work-life balance strategies, as recommended in the original study and reinforced by the widespread experience of burnout and distress.
6. School principals and the Ondo State Ministry of Education should institute clear support structures, including regular one-on-one welfare check-ins, peer-support networks, and rapid-response mechanisms for teachers facing challenging student behavior or difficult parents (both cited by over 90% of respondents).
7. Revise performance evaluation processes to make them fair, transparent, and supportive rather than punitive, addressing the 77.4% of teachers who identified poor evaluation as a significant stressor.
8. Strengthen school leadership capacity through targeted training so that principals actively foster collaboration, recognition, and a culture of appreciation, directly countering the widespread feelings of being unappreciated

9. Increase budgetary allocation for teaching and learning resources and infrastructure to tackle the acute resource scarcity reported by 92.1% of respondents.
10. Develop and enforce school-level and state-level policies that explicitly limit non-teaching responsibilities, cap weekly teaching loads, and guarantee protected time for planning and recovery, thereby reducing the structural causes of overload and long working hours.

Implementing these measures collectively and urgently will address the root causes of stress identified in this study and create a sustainable environment in which teachers in Ondo West and across Ondo State can thrive rather than merely survive

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