

RATING OF STRESS FACTORS IN DELTA STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study focused on principals and teachers' opinion on the rating of stress factors on human resources development in Delta state secondary schools. The population consists of 320 school principals and 9608 teachers in the area. A sample of 30 (9.4%) principals and 960 (10%), teachers were selected through the simple random sampling technique, and the design was ex-post facto. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that principals and teachers' opinion were on the average on their ratings of stress factors of human resources development in the schools. It also revealed that the rating of stress on human resources development as perceived by principals and teachers did not differ significantly in terms of variables of the study such as inadequate funding, community relations and workload. Based on the findings, it was recommended that efforts should be made to provide adequate funds for human resources development, education authorities should assist to institute individual annual school budgets, and also principals should learn to delegate supervisory functions to their vice principals and experienced teachers in the schools. In terms of school-community relations, schools should identify themselves of their host communities as may be within their reach.

Keywords: Human Resources Development, Rating, Stress Factors, Secondary Schools, Nigeria.

Introduction

Situations, circumstances or any stimulus that is perceived to be a threat is referred to as a stressor, or that which causes or promotes stress. Stress is a common phenomenon among workers in any organization in Nigeria. It is either negative or positive of the body's physical and mental interaction to living. It could sometimes, serve as a motivation to great things and at other times causes illness or diseases to individuals. In contemporary society, stress experiences have become part and parcel of our daily activities especially in secondary schools in Nigeria. Stress can be experienced from various sources in the society. It could be caused by a direct physical affair such as strenuous physical activities. On the other hand, an individual could experience stress when the person's body is subjected to external physiological stimulations. In fact, any situation in life that makes demands upon our adaptive mechanism creates stress.

In the view of psychologists, stress is a disrupter of human skilled experience and is of two types, namely external and internal stressors in every society or organization. External stressors could be caused by demands from the government, friends, environment, task, family, etc. Such causes of external stress include personal problems, teachers' interpersonal conflicts among themselves and insufficient time to perform task assigned to them. Internal stressors on its part could emanate from the pressures put on oneself by being aggressive to the society. Internal stress is caused by an individual's low self confidence, non-specific fears and selective perceptions of environmental stressors, pressure sensitivity, personality traits, rigid standards and health problems. Environmental or external stress presents demands which threaten to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting the demands.

However, it should be noted that depression and anxiety are two of the most common signs of stress. Depression has the effect of making an individual find difficulty in performing even the simplest everyday activities, much more the most complex functions of modern life. Principals and teachers in secondary schools in Delta State are faced with administrative problems in their spheres of administrative roles (Nwoabasi, and Ehiameze, 1990). These problems emanate from lack of payments of promotion arrears to the teachers for several months, unmanageable school population and lack of funds to provide for the daily instructional requirements of the schools and lack of qualified teachers.

General impression may well be reflected on the teaching profession in the words of Humphrey (1999:45), who during one of his lectures said:

teachers are so high in demand, yet they are low in spirit. They seem to have lost zest for work; all their zeal and energy would appear to be largely directed to fighting for one thing or another, which can result to stress in schools.

Many principals of secondary schools today have often expressed surprise at the increasing rate at which teachers demonstrate carefree attitude in carrying out their duties. Some teachers have turned into habitual late-comers and degenerated to the extent of absenting themselves from school whenever they feel like without any prior permission from their principals. All these tend to create a shaky stress to the principals in the schools. It is a well known fact that teachers constitute a very important part of the educational system in the state because apart from parents, teachers are the closest to students and so, their behaviour always have much influence on the students.

Statement of Problem

The secondary school system in Nigeria is fraught with frustrating elements or situations. Mention is made of some of these, such as annual increase in student's enrolment, poor remuneration of teachers, poor infrastructural facilities, etc, then narrowed down on the stress factors in Delta State secondary schools.

In addition, the centralized student's admission policy, over-crowding of schools and the diminishing ability of school administrators to cater adequately for an ever-growing number of students, are among other problems which are psychologically threatening the status of the principals including classroom teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to be answered:

1. How do principals and teachers' opinion differ in their rating of inadequate funding as a stress factor on human resources development in secondary schools?
2. How do principals and teachers' opinion differ in their rating of school community relations as a stress factor on human resources development in secondary schools?
3. How do principals and teachers' opinion differ in their rating of work load as a stress factor on human resources development in secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference between principals and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their ratings of inadequate funding as stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.
2. There is no significant difference between principals and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their ratings of school community relations as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.
3. There is no significant difference between principals and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their mean rating of work load as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

The Concept of Stress

The concept of stress and its usage in every conversation is an area of concern to the public including scholars. This explains why there is a growing volume of professional literature on the subject. Despite this fact, no generally accepted definition of the term actually exists. For instance, De Silva and Loun (1984) have opined that the term 'stress' is unfortunately an imprecise term at best; there is the lack of consensus or inconsistency in interpretation and use.

A study conducted by Lazarus et al (1982) concluded that a moderate degree of stressful condition may facilitate stress but a high degree of stress is very disruptive and damaging. A study of 130 subjects on the effect of influenced stress on school activities of both sexes support the explanation on stress in the school organization as perceived by the teachers. The study found out that all stressful situations are disruptive to individuals but some are affected negatively when under stress; others strive well under stressful conditions which is the nature of social interactions with people in performing their duties.

Stress in Work Situation

In fact, the effects of stress on teachers in the performance of tasks in Delta State secondary schools in achieving educational goals has been a matter of concern to all who perform various administrative tasks to achieve system and industrial goals in the schools. Data from other parts of the world show that about 50-80% of all the diseases have their origins from stress. In addition, Smith's (1998) discovered that 30% of all deaths in the United States have stress implications.

It is expected that in developing countries there is an increase in disease such as hypertension, stroke, sudden-death, due to emotional stress associated with industrial and technological changes. Many of the studies reviewed are towards factors that induce stress manifested by executions like poor economic conditions, work-load, poor interpersonal relationship at work, population explosion, role-ambiguity and role conflicts coupled with these factors. These have symptoms which mainly manifest in form of maladaptive behaviour as pointed out while some managers and other executives in industries experience these stress as including factors.

For example, unpublished data from Hayes (1994) which was extracted from the National Survey of Health Development show that teachers consider themselves as more under nervous strains than most other group of workers in the society. In a research conducted by Omoregie (1998) on the task stress, pressure was identified as one of the major problems which individuals encounter in daily activities. This does not exclude school administrators and teachers in Nigeria especially in Delta state secondary schools.

Similarly, in the work of Humphrey (1999), symptoms of managerial stress were identified as difficulty in thinking rationally and attending to all problems, rigidity in views, prejudices, out of place aggression and immutability, withdrawal from relationships, excessive smoking or a demand for sleeping pills to avoid tensions resulting to hypertension. Levi (1990) also identified some stress symptoms which may be observed in worries, feeling guilty uneasiness, anxiety, some psychological responses like sweating palms, high pulse rate, raised blood pressure and increased tension in the muscles.

In another research carried out by Druham (1992), stress symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders are anger, depression, feeling hopeless about the future, anxiety, loss of sexual interest or pleasure, pounding of the heart, being scared suddenly for no reason; trembling, nervousness or inside worries, carelessness, feeling easily annoyed or irritated; and difficulty in decision-making, headaches, feeling weak in all parts of the body.

The above mentioned stress symptoms were found to be common to managers and other executive officers including principals and classroom teachers in secondary schools, more especially when faced with some kind of difficulties in their administrative task performance. People generally get disturbed in their performance especially when faced with a stress situation. The principals and teachers are anxious for the fear of failure in carrying out their responsibilities. This is due to stress in the secondary schools.

The Stress Consequences

A number of researches have shown the relationship between stress and anxiety. Everyday life reveals that a contemplative stress free environment is conducive for creative thinking. Lazarus (1982) came up with his findings that anxiety and stress narrow an individual's focus and limit his ability to think creatively. In addition, studies by Warnar (1982) have shown how anxiety and stress impair memory as well as cognitive functions. This stress does not only affect an individual's performance but it also constitutes the risk of becoming sick, which can also cause onset of specific disorders like peptic ulcer, high blood pressure, and other psychosomatic disorders that have received popular attention.

Consequently, Hornomitz et al (1990) in a research discovered that poor mental health was directly related to unpleasant work conditions, the necessity to work fast and to put in a lot of physical effort, excessive and inconvenient hours. Similarly, other consequences of stress that have been documented in relation to illness include coronary

heart diseases, asthmatic conditions, chronic pulmonary tuberculosis, sudden death and ulceric conditions.

Causes of Stress

The causes of stress are known as *stressors* and there are literally hundreds of different types of stressors. Any event in life that a person finds threatening, difficult to cope with or causes excess pressure can be a potential cause of stress. It is important to bear in mind that stress is an individualistic, subjective experience and therefore what one person finds stressful another may not. Stressors can be broken down roughly into either external or internal (or a mixture of both.)

1. External Stressors

Major Life Events Research by Psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe revealed a list of common causes of stress that most people would find stressful. They called this scale the *Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Scale*. The scale is a list of 45 stressors each given a number of points, with the most stressful at the top of the list (death of a spouse) and the least stressful at the bottom of the scale (a minor violation of the law). The research indicates that if your total score is more than 150 points the chances are that it could have an impact on your health. A score of over three hundred points in one year indicates that you have a high risk of developing a stress related health problem.

One of the weaknesses of the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment scale is that it does not take into account the individual's personality, their perception of how difficult the stressor is, nor does it take into account how long the stressor continues; the scale just gives a single number for each stressor. However, it is known that the longer a stressor continues, then the more likely it is to cause stress and that the individual's perception of an event is the key to whether they will find a situation stressful or not.

For example, if a person is happy living in their house, they've lived there for a number of years, have developed close friends in the area and do not want to move but are forced to move because their home is being repossessed, then they are going to find the event of moving infinitely far more stressful than a person who has lived in their home for a short time, next to a very noisy, difficult neighbour and who wants to move to get away from the noise.

To help overcome some of the drawbacks of the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment scale Professor Cary Cooper, of The University Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), has upgraded it by allocating a scale of 1 - 10 points for each event, so allowing a person's perception of how stressful the event is, to be taken into account.

The majority of *causes of stress* that we face on a day-to-day basis are not as extreme as life events. The day-to-day causes of stress are called *daily hassles*; they are those daily, minor irritations such as misplacing our car keys, traffic jams, minor

arguments with family/colleagues, etc. Research by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), at the University of California, indicated that it was the daily hassles rather than the major life events that affected us the most. Life events do not occur every day, but daily hassles do; its the constant, daily frustration caused by these hassles that cause us the most stress, because they occur so regularly and therefore can undermine our health.

2. **Internal Stressors** Stress resides neither in the situation nor in the person; it depends on a transaction between the two. One tends to think that stress is solely caused by external events, situations and people, yet this is not strictly correct. Research has found that the Transactional Model of Stress is more accurate. This model says that stress is caused by a transaction, i.e there is an interaction between the stressor, our view of the stressor and our perceived ability to cope with it. It is our own internal beliefs, attitudes, interpretations, perceptions and other factors, in combination with the external events that tend to create stress.

Examples of Some Causes of Stress

Physical Stressors

- Sleep debt
- Excess/to little exercise
- Poor diet
- Drug misuse
- Alcohol misuse
- Excess heat
- Excess caffeine
- Chronic hyperventilation
- Excess cold
- Illness
- Smoking
- Hypoglycaemia
- Lack of relaxation
- Surgery
- Chronic pain

Psychological Stressors

- Excess anger
- Unrealistic beliefs
- Excess pessimism
- Health worries
- Unrealistic expectations
- Excessive worrying
- Unhappy childhood
- Unemployment
- Financial problems
- Perfectionism
- Loneliness

Work Stressors

- Commuting
- Time pressures
- Job insecurity
- Excess working hours
- Workplace bullying
- Company takeovers
- Understaffing
- Conflicts with colleagues
- Low pay
- Role ambiguity
- Delegation problems
- Lack of work recognition
- Poor support/supervision
- Workaholic

Family Stressors

- Caring for a chronically ill relative
- Partner with health problems
- Partner with alcohol/drug problems
- Relationship difficulties
- Arguments with children
- Bereavement
- Children leaving home

Social Stressors

- Fear of crime
- Living in an urban area
- Poverty
- Low social support

- Low self esteem
- Low levels of assertion
- People pleasing
- Boredom
- Negative self talk
- Personality
- Rigid thinking style
- Excessive self criticism
- Exams
- Giving talks/presentations
- Bureaucracy/red tape
- Rude, aggressive, unhelpful people
- Victim of crime
- Problem neighbours
- Racial harassment

Environmental Stressors

- Pollution
- Excess noise
- Poor housing
- Damp conditions
- Traffic jams

Work Load as a Stressor

From the studies on task stress on school principals, it was shown that excessive responsibility is another important factor that bothers on them in Delta State, Nigeria. According to Rosch (1998), in his study on the perception of school administrators' occupational stressfulness observed that:

- i. Four of the highest stressors perceived by class teachers to be bothersome were related to the management of school activities and time management by the principals.
- ii. Complying with rules and policies were perceived constantly by the teachers as a high stressor among all categories or levels of school administrators and also majority of the teachers perceived that more than 70% of their principals' stress resulted from the work load in schools. Furthermore, research into workload has been given substantial empirical attention. Researchers have also differentiated overload, in terms of quantitative and qualitative overload.
- iii. The quantitative overload refers to having 'too much to do' while the qualitative overload means work that is 'too difficult' to tackle.

The role of the school principal in fostering school-community relation for the efficient administration of the school cannot be over-emphasised. According to Okeke (1990), the school principal can foster interaction with the members of the community by interpreting the educational values of the community in order to elicit their support. She maintained that the use of P.T.A. by the principal has crucial effect in bridging the community closer to the school among several benefits. Also, contributing to the role of the school principal in bringing about mutual relationship, Mathurs (1969) maintained veritable avenue towards establishing and maintaining friendly relations between the school and the community.

The principal should provide the leadership role of bringing the members of the community together for purpose of unity and understanding. In this regard, Fafunwa (1971:21) stated thus:

for school to project itself into the community, it has to have a principal and a team of teachers and other staff members who are community oriented. They in turn will sensitize the child to the end for a good community relationship through oriented programmes.

In support of the above, Nwagwu (1987) affirmed that ñno school administrator can offer to ignore the role of the community in the life and work of the schoolö. This he noted because of the fact that the school exists to serve the community which on the other hand, the community provides the funds and facilities for the school programme.

He further commands that the school principals and teachers should bring parents and members of the community to share in schools developments efforts. In order for the principal to establish relations between the school and the community, Onoyase (1991) listed the following:

1. Accessibility to parents and members of the community.
2. Making some school facilities and resources available to the community.
3. Inviting parents to participate in some school activities.
4. Visiting important places in the community by the students.
5. Making school plants available for community use.
6. Identifying and solving community problems.

Okafor (1986:30) also identified several ways in which the school principal can succeed in improving and maintaining cordial human resources between the school and the community. According to him:

what the principals will have to do is to increase the consciousness of the school-community relationship. The school principal should be regarded as an agency of the society and will be expected to develop the community's interest and understanding through active participation on school affairsí .

This means that the school principal without regard to position should desire fruitful and positive community interactions on human resources development because a cordial principal-community interaction is beneficial to the school.

Methodology

The survey research design was used in the study and was conducted ex-post facto. The population comprised of 320 school principals and 9608 teachers. A proportional random sampling technique was employed based on the number of principals and teachers in secondary schools in Delta State. Based on the numerical strength of the teachers, a 10% proportional representation was adopted, while a 9.4.0% stratified and randomized proportional representation was used from the schools and principals respectively. This

enabled the researcher to select 30 principals representing 9.4%, and 960 teachers representing 10% as a sample size used in the study.

The researcher constructed an instrument designed as PTOHRDSFQ ó Principals and Teachersø Opinion on Human Resources Development in their Rating of Stress Factor Questionnaire, which was used to gather data in the study. The instrument consisted of 2 parts. Part A is designed to identify the respondentsø information on demographic variables such as; sex, school location and subject. Part B consists of 20 items designed to find out the views of the effects of stress on teachers in their ratings of stress factors in secondary schools based on the variables, such as inadequate fund, school community relation and workload. The responses to the items were based on the 4 point Likert scoring scale of Strongly Agree (SA) ó 4 points, Agree (A) ó 3 points, Disagree (D) ó 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) ó 1 point.

The instrument was validated in its face and content. To measure the content validity of the instrument, the researcher carried out pilot study and did item analysis with reference to each of the hypotheses.

In this study, the split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Split-half reliability is concerned with the internal consistency of an instrument; it is essentially very appropriate when a test or an instrument is very long. The 20 item questionnaire was administered to 20 teachers outside the sample of the study. A z-test was employed in analyzing data generated in the study to test the three (3) hypotheses formulated.

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between principalsø and teachersø opinion on human resources development in their ratings of inadequate funding as stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Table 1: z-test analysis of no significant difference between principals' and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their ratings of inadequate funding as stress factor in Delta state secondary schools

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Level of Significance	Decision
Principals	30	28.4	107.3	988	0.83	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Teachers	960	49.2	134.9					

Source: Computed from field work

In table 1, the z-test calculated value of 0.83 was less than the critical value of 1.96, hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This shows that there is no significant difference between principalsø and teachersø opinion on human resources development in their ratings of inadequate funding as stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between principalsø and teachersø opinion on human resources development in their ratings of school community relations as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Table 2: z-test analysis of no significant difference between principals’ and teachers’ opinion on human resources development in their ratings of school community relations as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Level of Significance	Decision
Principals	30	27.3	109.2	988	0.87	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Teachers	960	48.7	132.6					

Source: Computed from field work

Table 2 shows that the z-test calculated value of 0.87 was less than the critical value of 1.96. This implies that the null hypothesis was also accepted. As a result, there is no significant difference between principals and teachers’ opinion on human resources development in their ratings of school community relations as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers’ opinion on human resources development in their mean rating of work load as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Table 3: z-test analysis of no significant difference between principals and teachers’ opinion on human resources development in their mean rating of work load as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Level of Significance	Decision
Principals	30	29.4	107.2	988	0.74	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Teachers	30	46.3	123.4					

Source: Computed from field work

In table 3, the z-test calculated value of 0.74 was less than the critical value of 1.96, hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates a null significant difference between principals and teachers’ opinion on human resources development in their mean rating of work load as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Discussion

The analysis of the data showed the significant difference between principals’ and teachers’ opinion of human resources development in their rating of inadequate funds, school community relations and workload as stress factors in Delta state secondary school. The study was guided by 3 hypotheses covering the above stated independent variables. In testing for the significant difference as stated in hypothesis 1 to 3, the t-test was employed.

Hypothesis 1 showed that there is no significant difference between principals’ and teachers’ opinion on human resources development in their ratings of inadequate fund as stress factors in Delta state secondary schools. Findings from the study have revealed that

there is no significant difference between principals' and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their inadequate fund as stress factor in secondary schools. Studies by French and Caplan (1990) on action research between principals and teachers have indicated on significant difference on the effects of stress between principals and teachers in their ratings of stress factors as a result of inadequate fund in secondary schools.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant difference between principals' and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their rating of school community relations as stress factors in Delta state secondary schools. This hypothesis was rejected because school/community relations enhance principals' performance in spite of stress. The findings in hypothesis 2 clearly indicated that there was significant difference between principals and teachers on the effect of stress in their rating of stress factors as regards the school community relations. This finding supports the studies of Adeyemi (1990) on analysis of the supplementary sources of financing education by community and the government, and in Azeani (1992) in French and Caplan (1990) on doing action research in your own organization.

Findings in hypothesis 3 indicated that there was significant difference between the principals and teachers' opinion of human resources development in their ratings of stress factors as a result of work load in Delta state secondary schools, Nigeria. The rejection of this hypothesis shows that there is a significant difference between principals and teachers' opinion on human resources development in their ratings of workload as a stress factor in Delta state secondary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the findings, the researcher drew the following conclusions in the study that there is no significant difference between the principals and teachers on the effects of stress in their ratings of stress factors due to lack of adequate funds in schools.

This is concerned with planning, programming and budgeting of the principals and financial resources in schools, such as purchasing and requisition, supplies and materials accounting for school levies and maintaining of the school properties which are stress inducing factors in Delta state secondary schools.

This reveals that the administrative constraints on lack of adequate fund were perceived as being insignificant to the principals and teachers in their ratings of stress factors. More so, the major competencies required of principals in fostering a sound peaceful programme on school community relations by principals and teachers on the effects of stress is assessing community needs and aspirations, relationships and demands of the community leaders and plans for the improvement of the rating of stress factors in order to reduce stress in schools.

In addition, the students examined as the workload in the school system was revealed as another stress inducing factor in rating of stress factors for principals and teachers in the study. Principals also complained of external assignments from the Ministry of Education such as supervision of Junior Secondary School (JSS) examinations, National Examination Council (NECO), West African Examination Council (WAEC) and other extra curricular activities which are also inducing stress factors in secondary schools in Delta State. The principals created awareness on division of labour as an influencing factor on both teachers and students for an effective and efficient teaching and learning situation to reduce workload in schools.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made in the study:

- Finance was found to be a major problem in the management of schools. School heads are handicapped in motivating their teachers and administering their schools. It is therefore recommended that the education authorities from both Federal and State levels should be assisted to institute individual annual school budgeting, putting into considerations the programme of the schools and the emoluments of the entire staff. This will enable the school budget to reflect on the needs of each department in the schools.
- Every school should implement high standards of conduct for all students, staff and teachers and redesign the entire approach to discipline, teaching and learning. Efforts should also be made to provide the necessary infrastructure in the secondary schools. All these will go a long way to make the schools in the State more attractive and conducive places in the community for teaching and learning, and to eradicate stress-inducing factors in the secondary school system in Delta State.
- In terms of solution to the problem of workload for principals to organise their schools for a harmonious administrative task performance, they should learn to delegate supervisory functions to their Vice-principals and experienced teachers among the staff in schools. In this way, principals would be free to devote their time to the more crucial administrative task in schools.
- It is therefore the opinion of the researcher that principals should examine those areas of weakness leading to stressful situations and improve on them to avoid stress-inducing factors in school administration.
- In addition, human resources development programmes such as seminars, conferences and workshops on awareness and recognition of stressors should be encouraged and strengthened as organizational resources for stress management. Emphasis in such programmes should also be given to helping staff develop their skills of communication, co-operation and social support and the growth of strong teamwork to achieve objectives and organizational goals.

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