STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

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Abstract
The study investigated the stress management among secondary school teachers in Idemili North L.G.A. and the implications for counselling. Three research questions, two null hypotheses guided the study. A thirty item structured questionnaire that was developed and validated by experts were used. A descriptive survey design was utilized for the study and stratified random sampling technique was also used to compose the 200 respondents (160 female teachers and 40 male teachers). Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that the extent the stress causing factors cause stress on secondary school teachers is high. Teachers recognize stress when they have it and manage stress in their own way using some strategies. Also gender and grade levels were not significant factors in stress management among teachers. Based on the finding, recommendations were made.

All individuals from all works of life are understandably concerned about stress. Certainly, stress is the topic of many conversations. We talk about the stress of balancing work and home life, the stress of traffic jams, the stress of living in a hurried-up society and even the stress of dealing with a crying or winning child. Stress is becoming increasingly problematic in the teaching profession as teachers work longer and harder hours to see better output in teaching and learning activities. Mgbodile (2004), saw stress as a condition or situation, internal or external that imposes demand for adjustment on the individual. Therefore stress is the pressure or worry on our bodies as a result of problems we encounter in our daily living.

Stress management comprises measures taken to cope with trying periods, so that a state of psychological and physiological equilibrium is re-established and subsequently maintained (Cooper 1986 in Oboegbulam, 2004). Stress management therefore is the skill of dealing in a successful way with the pressure or worry caused by the problems in somebody’s life. The responsibility of imparting knowledge to the learner at the secondary school level is the duty of the teachers at the same level. To help learners master more challenging contents, teachers must go far beyond dispensing information, giving test, and giving grades. Besides, they must themselves know their subject areas deeply and understand how students think (Odogwu, 2002). The Federal Government of
Nigeria (FGN 2000:39) in Nworgu (2007), state that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers”. There is the optimism to produce highly motivated, conscientious, efficient and hardworking students who will be encouraged to further the spirit of enquiry and creativity. Secondary school teachers are the people who help children move from the early phase of learning to a deeper knowledge of some of the same subjects they were introduced to in elementary school. The goal of teachers at this level is to teach skills that students will need as they go into institutions of higher learning, enter the job market or function as reasonable enlightened citizens of the society. Teaching at this stage can be especially tough. As children become adolescents, they go through rapid physical and emotional changes that put them at risk of all sorts of problems. Many schools grapple with problems of drugs, violence, gang activities and over population. These teachers do their jobs in this social context, teaching children from a wide spectrum of racial, religious and economic backgrounds.

Mgbodile, (2004), identified some factors responsible for stress among secondary school teachers. These factors are poor work attitude of students, time pressure arising from heavy workload, lack of discipline in the school; teacher’s incompetence and lack of confidence in his ability; bureaucratic interference exemplified by frequent and arbitrary changes of school policy, non-payment and delay payment of teacher’s salary. According to Hansen (2007), the symptoms of stress and burnout in teachers are – apathy, negativism, low morale, boredom, anxiety, frustration, fatigue, depression, alienation, anger/irritability, physical problem (headache, stomach problem), absenteeism. When we talk of stress and its bad effects, our concern most of the time is stress in its overdosed form (Okere and Onyechi 2007).

Based on the fact that the success of the entire nation, educational system to be precise depends on the availability of competent, well trained, conscientious, healthy, efficient and highly motivated classroom teachers, stress management strategies among teachers call for investigation.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is generally believed that stress is inevitable as long as one is living; hence the problem lies on its management. The secondary school system is a veritable environment for teaching and learning activities. Stress is a very serious threat to teachers’ abilities to meet up with the challenges in the school. Poor stress management among secondary school teachers could be a barrier to the attainment of educational excellence in that level. When a teacher is under stress, he is faced with disrupted emotional, cognitive and psychological functioning. For an effective and efficient performance in the classroom, stress reduction among teachers becomes imperative. What then, are the stress management strategies for secondary school teachers? It is against this background that this study is faced with the problem of establishing validly stress management.
strategies among secondary school teachers in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study
The broad purpose of the study is to investigate strategies for stress management among secondary school teachers. Specifically, the study sought to find out
1. The extent the factors responsible for stress cause stress among secondary school teachers.
2. Symptoms of stress as perceived by secondary school teachers.
3. Strategies these teachers use in managing stress.

Research Questions
1. To what extent do the stress causing factors cause stress among secondary school teachers?
2. How can stress be recognized among secondary school teachers?
3. What are the strategies the secondary school teachers use in managing their stress?

Hypotheses
\(Ho_1\): Gender is not a significant factor in the mean responses of secondary school teachers on stress management.  
\(Ho_2\): There is no significant difference between the mean responses of secondary school teachers who are on grade levels 07 – 13 and those who are on grade levels 14 – 16 as regards management of teachers stress.

Method
The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The population comprised of 334 teachers in 15 public secondary schools in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 9 schools from 15 public secondary schools in this Local Government Area. The sample was made up of 200 teachers (40 males and 160 females) selected using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged Stress Management Strategies for Secondary School Teachers (S.M.S.S.S.T.). It was face validated by 3 experts in Guidance and Counseling and Measurement and Evaluation, Departments of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument had two sections. Section A, with personal data while Section B, with items regarding information on stress management of Secondary School Teachers. The instrument was trial-tested using twenty (20) secondary school teachers (10 males and 10 females) in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to calculate the index, which gave reliability co-efficient of 0.91.
The researcher personally administered and collected the questionnaire within one week with the help of two research assistants. For the data analysis, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the 2 null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results**

**Table 1:**

Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses of Teachers on the Extent to Which the Stress Causing Factors Cause Stress Among Secondary School Teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>$\bar{X}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Poor remuneration</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>High teaching load</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Lack of teaching aids</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Poor attitude of principals to teachers</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Non availability of transportation to the school</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Low self esteem</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Poor condition of the classroom</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Threat from rude students</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Over population of students</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Dead lines with regards to computing students results</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cluster mean and SD**

3:12 1.04 A

Data in table 1 above shows that, teachers responded positively to all the items with mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50, with cluster mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 1.01. This is an indication that the extent that the stress causing factors cause stress among secondary school teachers is high.

**Table 2:**

Mean and Standard Deviation of secondary School Teachers on Recognition of stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$\bar{X}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>When I’m under stress, I lack concentration</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I often experience constant headache when I have stress</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>When I am stressed up I have high blood pressure</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. When I am under stress, I experience sudden gray hair 2.30 1.03 NA
5. I have leg pains when I am stressed 3.13 1.02 A
6. I usually have low sex drive when I am under stress 2.65 0.77 A
7. When I am under stress I experience Insomnia 3.14 1.01 A
8. I have loss of appetite when I am stressed up 3.12 1.14 A
9. I have indigestion when I am under stress 2.70 0.64 A
10. When I am under stress, I experience faster heart beat 3.19 0.85 A

Cluster mean and SD 3.08 0.90 A

Table 2 above shows that all the items except (item 4) requiring teachers opinion on sudden gray hair as a manifestation of stress, have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50 with cluster mean of 3.08 and standard deviation of 0.90. This indicates that teachers agreed with the items as manifestations of stress.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I try to manage my stress by having adequate rest</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I try to manage my stress by taking natural supplement</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I try to manage my stress through financial discipline</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I try to manage my stress by consulting the counselor</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I try to manage my stress by prioritizing commitments</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I try to manage my stress by being at peace with God</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I try to manage my stress by having regular medical check up.  
I try to manage my stress by sharing my worries with people.  
I try to manage my stress by developing good sense of humour.  
I try to manage my stress by engaging in social and humanitarian activities outside work.  

| Cluster mean and SD | 3.19  | 0.94  | A |

Table 3 above shows that secondary school teachers responded positively to all the item on stress management strategies except item 4 which had a mean below 2.50, all other items have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50 with cluster mean of 3.19 and standard deviation of 0.94. This implies that secondary school teachers adopt these strategies in managing their stress.

Table 4  
t– test Analysis Of The Difference in the Mean Scores of Male and Female Secondary School Teachers on Stress Management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>t-critical</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, one can observe that the calculated t – value is 1.22 at 1.98 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t – value of 1.22 is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted. In other words, Gender is not a significant factor in the mean responses of secondary school teachers on stress management.
Table 5
T-test Analysis of the Difference in the Mean Scores of Secondary School Teachers on Grade Level 07 – 13 And 14 – 16 As Regards Stress Management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>r-crit.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade level 07-13</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level 14 – 16</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, one can observe that the calculated t-value is 1.33 at 1.98 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 1.33 is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of secondary school teachers who are on grade level 07 – 13 and teachers on 14 – 16 as regards management of teacher’s stress.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the descriptive analysis on the first research question revealed that the extent the factors responsible for stress cause stress among secondary school teachers were all rated high above the mean cut off point of (2.5). These factors are poor renumeration, High teaching load, Lack of teaching aids, Attitude of principals to teachers, non- availability of transportation to the school, Low self esteem, Poor condition of the classrooms, threat from rude students, over population of students, Dead lines with regards to computing students result. These findings are consistent with the study of “Mgbodile (2004) that some factors responsible for stress among secondary school teachers are poor work attitude of students, time pressure arising from heavy workload, lack of confidence in his ability, non-payment and delayed payment of teachers’ salary”.

Again the result revealed that the manifestation of stress among secondary school teachers include: when a teacher is under stress, he/she lacks concentration, experiences constant headache, has high blood pressure, experiences low sex drive, has leg pains, experiences insomnia, has poor appetite, experiences indigestion, experiences faster heart beat. This result is in line with what authorities like Ngoka (2000), Iheele (2001), Omeje (2007), have noted.

In addition, the findings are in line with Olaitain (2007), who observed that symptoms of short term stress are headache, poor attention, loss of concentration, nervousness, poor sleep, poor appetite, palpitations, restlessness, insomnia, hypertension, accelerated aging process.
Furthermore, the findings revealed that the strategies the secondary school teachers use in managing stress include: having adequate rest, taking natural supplement, financial discipline, prioritizing commitments, being at peace with God, having regular medical check-up, sharing worries with people, developing good sense of humour, engaging in social and humanitarian activities outside work. The findings are in line with Olalekan (2004), in a study that frequently use the active behavioural and in-active (escape) strategies in managing stress. However, the respondent disagreed with item 24 which stated that I try to manage my stress by consulting the counselor.

In the study also, further statistical analysis of the first null hypothesis of no difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on stress management is upheld. The value of t-calculated is less than the t-critical of (1.96). This implies that both male and female secondary school teachers use the same strategies in managing their stress by sharing worries with people. It was revealed that female teachers manage their stress by sharing their worries with people while their male counterparts do not.

Furthermore, in the second null hypothesis of no significant difference in responses of secondary school teachers on grade level 07 – 13 and 14 – 16 as regards stress management, the findings revealed that teachers on both grade levels had their t-calculated less than the t-critical therefore the null hypothesis is upheld. The above result indicates that both teachers on grade levels do manage their stress by using the same strategies.

Counseling Implications

Counseling is a helping process involving individuals with problems hence seeking solutions to those problems. Deng (1989) sees counseling as a personalized dialogue between the counselor and the counselee during which the client seeks expert’s assistance from the counselor regarding the resolution of his problem. The role of a counselor in a school cannot be overemphasized. Part of the duty of a counselor in a school setting is to help the students, the teachers and any other person in the school community. Findings indicated that teachers do not resort to consulting counselors to assist them when stressed up. There are therefore urgent need for the counselor to intensify effort in creating awareness on the need and importance of guidance and counseling on stress management among teachers which could be done through teachers forum.

Also counselors have to intensify group counseling where valid, adequate and reliable information on stress management could be given to teachers.

In addition, the guidance counselors, psychologists and other experts need to intensify group guidance programmes to educate teachers on stress management. Such group programmes may include symposium, seminars and workshops.
Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher has come to the conclusion that the extent the factor responsible for stress cause stress among teachers in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State is high. Also these teachers recognize stress when they have it hence they manage their stress in their own way using different strategies except consulting the counselor.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

Government needs to improve on teacher’s incentives and pay package, recruit more teachers in the teaching profession so as to ease the heavy workload on teachers. The necessary instructional materials and teaching aids should be provided for teaching and learning activities. Also a minimal number of students of about 40 per class should be approved to enhance effective class control by the teacher during teaching and learning activities.

The school should be able to assist counselors to provide pamphlets and printed materials on stress management which could be made available free of charge.

The school should also provide an enabling environment for guidance and counseling activities in the school.

Adequate emphasis should be given to teachers on the need for rest, physical exercise, maintaining a balanced diet.

References


