

STRESS CAUSATIVE FACTORS AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE

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Abstract

Stress is a phenomenon of life that affect individual in all spheres of life. This study investigated stress causative factors among academic staff of the Federal College of Education (FCE), Abeokuta, Ogun State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research method and a self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. The population comprised 108 academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Three research questions were answered and analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage. The result of the study revealed that academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State experienced one form of stress or the other, identified causative factors of stress include work overload 106(98.15%) being the highest and administrative-related duties 54(50.00%) being the lowest. The symptoms of stress among them include overeating or lack of appetite 100(92.59%), followed by headache 99(91.67%) and the least of the symptoms reported by them was frequent illness 12(11.11%). Also, the respondents used several strategies to manage stress with prioritizing their work 95(87.96%) being the highest. The researcher thereby recommended that staff workload should be reduced and also staff should be continually trained on how to develop personal coping strategies for stress. Also, the management of the college should always develop the school calendar to accommodate academic staff's annual leave.

Keywords: Stress, Causative Factors, Academic Staff

Introduction

Stress is a phenomenon of life that is supposed to put everyone on his or her toes, but when stress becomes too much it tends to impinge on an individual's health. Stress is the combination of both internal and external forces and pressures acting on an individual whether at home, at the workplace, community, and in some other sphere of life man finds himself or herself. Stress at work is a serious issue that affects the entire workforce globally, though the intensity may vary from one place, region, and country to the other. When workers are stressed, they may be poor and less motivated, inactive or less active, show low productivity, and even less safe at work. Work-related stress is defined as the response people may have when

presented with work demands and pressure that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which eventually challenge their ability to cope (WHO, 2003). Phillip, Richard and Andy (2016) noted that teaching is stressful work and there are challenges with working in academia which appear that work is never ending and that may lead to internal conflict, pressure, and stress. Health and safety executive (HSE) (2020) reported that about 0.8million of the working population experience work-related stress, depression, or anxiety.

Several studies have shown that stress level is getting increasing day by day among academic staff and its effect cannot be overemphasized. Stress may be caused and associated with a number of stressors. Studies have shown that a series of factors can lead to stress in the workplace. Unconducive work environment, inadequate teaching, and learning infrastructure, inadequate instructional facilities, teaching and examination overload, administrative-related duties, strenuous promotion criteria/guidelines, student-related issues, research and career development, and so on may cause stress, tamper with mood and have a negative influence on individual's effectiveness (Amusan and Olaniyi, 2012; Mate, 2014; Akinmayowa and Kadiri, 2014; Azila-Gbettor, Atatsi, Dodor, Adade, Tsorhe and Neequaye, 2017; Mailumo and Ivagher, 2019; Zvada and Thomas, 2019; Kabito, Wami, Chercos and Mekonnen, 2020).

Stress at work may affect individuals' health and well-being. Otaroghene (2003) stated that excessive levels of stress may break down a person's physiological and mental health system and consequently the individual's performance may begin to deteriorate. Phillip, Richard and Andy (2016) also pointed out that stress may have long-lasting negative consequences on the people and organisation they work for and such negative consequences range from experience of long-term physical and health problems as well as mental difficulties which may deprive such people from not able to work again and possible work opportunity in the future.

Work stress is usually accompanied by some signs which may serve as warning signals for an individual going through it. Symptoms may vary from one person to the other, it may be but are not limited to not wanting to go to work, feeling irritated at any slight behaviour of others, getting bored easily with work, eating less or too much (eating disorder), shouting at student every time, isolating oneself, feeling overwhelmed with the workload, having an unusual disagreement of a fight with other colleagues and so on. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (2003) opined that stress symptoms in the workplace can be in form of Physical (headache, chest pain, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, muscles ache, fatigue, indigestion, insomnia, constipation or diarrhea, frequent illness, increased perspiration, Etc), psychosocial (anxiety, sadness, irritability, anger, defensiveness, mood swing, depression, apathy, feeling of hopelessness or helplessness, slow thinking, Etc) and behavioural (overeating or lack of appetite, quick to argue, increased drinking or smoking, impatient, procrastination, poor

performance, poor personal hygiene, neglect of responsibility, Etc). A study conducted by Zvada and Thomas (2019) reported that most of their respondents indicated that they have experienced work-related stress symptoms, especially headaches, hypertension, exhaustion, irritation, and sometimes frustration.

In order to manage stress, individuals need to develop some coping strategies to reduce the effect of stress on their health. Alabi, Joshua and Bolarinwa, (2018) reported that respondents in their study used proper time management, relaxation with family and participation in religious activities of praying and meditation to cope with stress. Also, Zvada and Thomas, (2019) in their study reported that their respondents developed coping strategies to stress by participating in exercises (Such as indoor games, gym, aerobics and yoga), attending church, and time management such as prioritising work, recreation with friends and spending time with positive people and family. Faisal, Noor and Khair, (2019) suggested that workplace stress should be managed by creating a culture of social interaction through which coworkers help by maintaining a positive and supportive relationship with each other and help colleagues to improve and enhance their performance at work.

Studies on stress should not be limited to a particular group of people since almost every occupation has its own work-related stress at one time or the other. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, few studies have been carried out on academic staff in Colleges of Education, whereas most that have been carried out involved university academia (Phillip, Richard and Andy 2016; Azila-Gbettor, Atatsi, Dodor, Adade, Tsorhe and Neequaye, 2017; Aina and Adeleke, 2018; Kabito, Wami, Chercos and Mekonnen, 2020). Examining stress causative factors among academic staff in FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun state will help individuals and the employer to know and devise coping and management strategies that may help to bring the effect of stress at work to the barest minimum which will eventually improve the health and wellbeing of the academic staff and at the same time improve their work productivity.

Research Questions

Three research questions were answered in the course of the study

1. What are the causes of stress among the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State?
2. What are the symptoms of stress among the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State?
3. What are the strategies employed by the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State to cope with the effect of stress on their wellbeing?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study were the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State. 108 academic staff were selected from all the five schools in the College. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage were used for the analysis of data.

Results and discussion

Demographic distribution of the respondent

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to selected demographic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	42.00	38.89
Female	66.00	61.11
Total	108.00	100.00
Age		
Less than 30 years	15.00	13.89
30-40 years	40.00	37.04
41-50 year	31.00	28.70
51-60 years	16.00	14.82
61 years and above	06.00	05.56
Total	108.00	100.00
Religion		
Christianity	82.00	75.93
Islam	26.00	24.07
Total	108.00	100.00
Highest level of qualification		
First Degree	16.00	12.96
Masters	66.00	61.11
PhD	28.00	25.93
Total	108.00	100.00

The result of the study revealed that there were 42(38.89%) male and 66(61.11%) female respondents, in the research; this implied that females participated more than males in the study. The respondents less than 30 years were 15 (13.89%), 30-40 years were 40 (37.04%), 41-50years were 31 (28.70%), 51-60 years were 16(14.82%), 61years and above were 6(5.56%); this implies that ages between 30years to 40years were more represented than others in the study. The result also showed that Christians 82(75.93%) were more represented in the study than Muslims who were 26(24.07%). The study further revealed that 28(25.93%) were

Ph.D. holders, 66(61.11%) had Master's degree and 16 (12.96%) were first degree holders; this implied that Master's degree holders were more represented than others in the study (Table 1).

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What are the causes of stress among the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State?

The result as shown on Figure 1 revealed that there are a series of factors causing work-related stress among the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta. This includes workload (lecture, marking of scripts, examination supervision, collation of results, grading, Etc) 106(98.15%), inadequate instructional facilities 99(91.67%), research and career development 98(90.74%), strenuous promotion criteria/guidelines 90(83.33%), student-related issues 81(75.00%) and administrative-related duties 54(50.00%). The majority of the respondents reported that workload is a major challenge causing stress among them, this may not be unconnected with the fact that most Nigerian higher institutions of learning are short of academic staff in most of the departments. This study is in line with that of Archibong, Bassey and Effiom, (2010) who reported that their respondents experienced stress resulting from many factors such as teaching workload, research and career development exercises and activities. Omoniyi (2013) also noted that sources of stress among academic staff in their study included excessive academic workloads such as delivering lectures and supervising students' projects. Also, Kusi, Mensah and Gyaki (2014) reported that academic staff in their study passed through stress from stressors such as excessive workload, too many courses to teach even with a large number of students, and supervision of students' project work which consequently resulted into insufficient and inadequate time for adequate preparation before lectures. The research of Malik, Björkqvist and Österman (2017) also revealed that a major cause of academic-related stress among lecturers is the pressure to publish in order to get promoted in their place of work.

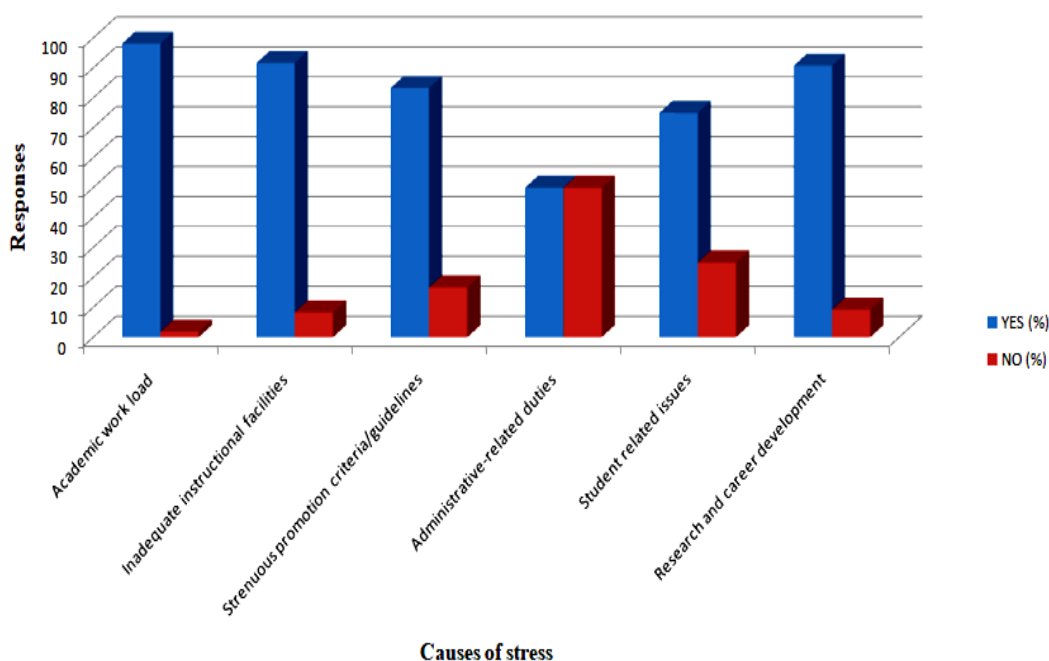


Figure 1: Causes of stress among academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State?

Research question 2. What are the symptoms of stress among the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State?

This study revealed that the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta experienced a series of symptoms of stress ranging from physical to psychosocial and to behavioural. In the physical symptoms, it was discovered that the majority of the lecturers reported that headache 99(91.67%) was the major symptom of stress, followed by an increase in perspiration 96(88.89%) and the least of the symptoms as reported by them was frequent illness 12(11.11%).

Also from the psychosocial symptoms, lectures reported that anger 90(83.33%) was their major symptom of stress, followed by anxiety 82(75.93%) and the least reported was feeling of hopelessness or helplessness 13(12.04%). Moreover from the behavioural symptoms, it was discovered that overeating or lack of appetite 100(92.59%) was the highest symptom, followed by procrastination 78(72.22%) and the least being increased drinking 23(21.30%) (Table 2). This study is in line with that of Zvada and Thomas (2019) who reported that most academic staff who are respondents of their study experienced stress symptoms, especially headaches, hypertension, exhaustion irritation and sometimes frustrated with their work. Also, Kusi, Mensah and Gyaki (2014) reported that academic staff displayed stress symptoms like ill health, anxiety, frustration, unfriendly attitude towards students and other staff, in addition to the inability to meet up with deadlines. Furthermore, Jabari and Sheykhjan (2015) noted that lecturers experienced stress in their line of duties with psychological

symptoms which thereby affect their communication with their students and colleagues. The study is also in line with Emodi, Adesope, Albert and Nwokoma (2012) who stated that symptoms of stress among their respondents included anxiety, depression, pain from unexplained origin, hopelessness, insomnia, headaches, and marital and family conflicts.

Table 2: Symptoms of stress among academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State?

Symptoms of stress	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can't remember (%)
Physical symptoms			
Headache	99(91.67%)	09(8.33%)	-
Chest pain	61(56.48%)	42(38.89%)	05(4.63%)
Shortness of breath	20(18.52%)	88(81.48%)	-
High blood pressure	40(37.04%)	68(62.96%)	-
Muscles ache	23(21.30%)	85(78.70%)	-
Fatigue	56(51.85%)	52(48.15%)	-
Indigestion	46(42.59%)	60(55.56%)	02(1.85%)
Insomnia	80(74.07%)	28(25.93%)	-
Constipation or diarrhea	15(13.89%)	90(83.33%)	03(2.78%)
Frequent illness	12(11.11%)	96(88.89%)	-
Increased perspiration	96(88.89%)	12(11.11%)	-
Psychosocial symptoms			
Anxiety	82(75.93%)	26(24.07%)	-
Sadness	75(69.44%)	33(30.56%)	-
Irritability	67(62.04%)	41(37.96%)	-
Anger	90(83.33%)	18(16.67%)	-
Defensiveness	23(21.30%)	85(78.70%)	-
Mood swing	45(41.67%)	63(58.33%)	-
Depression	67(62.04%)	41(37.96%)	-
Feeling of hopelessness or helplessness	13(12.04%)	95(87.96%)	-
Slow thinking	56(51.85%)	52(48.15%)	-
Behavioural symptoms			
Overeating or lack of appetite	100(92.59%)	08(7.41%)	-
Quick to argue	57(52.78%)	51(47.22%)	-
Increased drinking	23(21.30%)	85(78.70%)	-
Impatient	68(62.96%)	40(37.04%)	-
Procrastination	78(72.22%)	30(27.78%)	-
Poor performance	56(51.85%)	52(48.15%)	-
Poor personal hygiene,	62(57.41%)	46(42.59%)	-
Neglect of responsibility	60(55.56%)	48(44.44%)	-

Research Question 3. What are the strategies employed by the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State to cope with the effect of stress on their wellbeing?

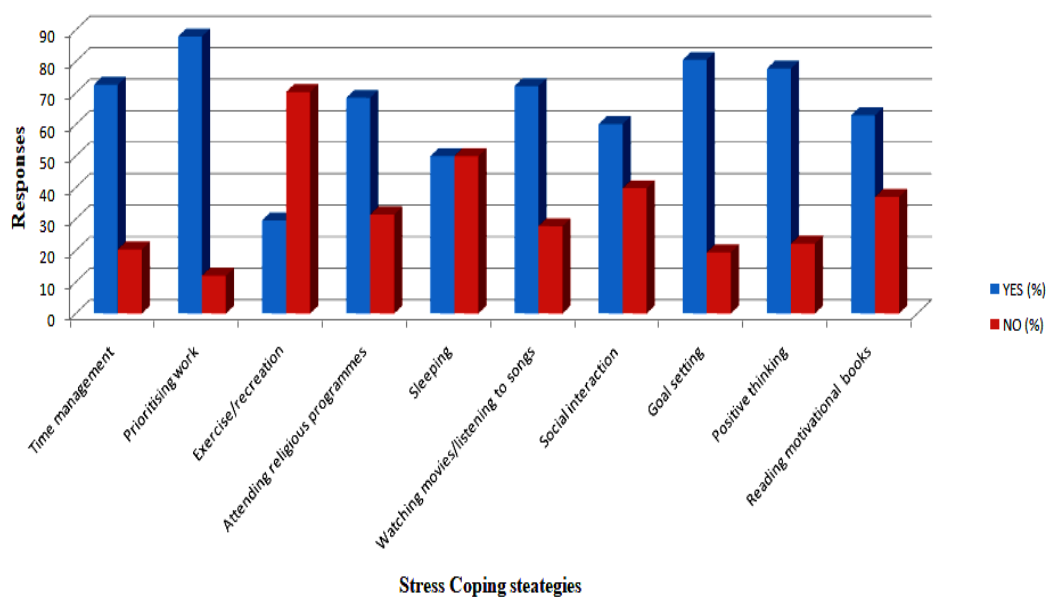


Figure 2: Strategies employed by academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, Ogun State to cope with the effect of stress on their wellbeing?

The result on Figure 2 above revealed that academic staff in FCE, Abeokuta, employed different strategies to manage and cope with the effects of stress in which prioritising their work 95(87.96%) was the highest strategy employed by them, this was followed by goal setting 87(80.56%) and the least coping strategy was participating in physical exercise or recreation activities 32(29.63%). This study supported Alabi, Joshua and Bolarinwa, (2018) who reported that their respondents used proper time management, relaxation with family and participation in religious activities of praying and meditation to cope with their work-related stress. It also corroborated that of Zvada and Thomas (2019) who reported that their respondents developed coping strategies to stress by exhibiting proper time management and setting appropriate priority on their various work-related duties and activities. Also, Emodi, Adesope, Albert and Nwokoma (2012) who reported that their respondents developed coping strategies to stress such as prioritizing tasks through time management, being positive at all times, setting attainable goals, improving self academically, maintaining healthy relationships with co-workers, looking out for better opportunities, hoping in better tomorrow, being optimistic and being receptive to new ideas. This is in support of Yusuf, Afolabi and Adigun (2018) who noted that maintenance of a cordial relationship, sleeping well and enough, immediate response to issues, and proper planning are the major strategies

employed by their respondents to cope and reduce stress. The study is also in consonance with Du Plessis (2020) who noted that academic staff in higher institutions of learning used stress coping strategies such as cognitive related (reading) and emotional related strategies, social support, active leisure period, taking a vacation, and attending religious activities.

Conclusion and recommendations

Stress is a serious issue among academic staff in the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun state with academic work overload as the highest causative factor. Other factors that cause stress as revealed by the study were inadequate instructional facilities, research and career development, strenuous promotion criteria/guidelines, student-related issues and administrative-related duties. The study also revealed that academic staff showed various stress symptoms, ranging from physical to psychological and to behavioural. The study also revealed that different coping strategies employed included prioritising work, goal setting and positive thinking. If urgent and critical attention is not given to the various causes of stress in order to mitigate its effects on the overall well-being of the academic staff of FCE, Abeokuta, it may lead to low job performance and health challenges among them.

Based on the above findings, the researcher thereby recommended that;

- i. The management of the College should ensure that adequate academic staff are employed in different departments especially those that are short of staff in order to reduce the workload on the few available ones.
- ii. Also, the management of the College should always develop the school calendar to accommodate the academic staff's annual leave and also to create activities to promote leisure, recreation and physical activities among the academic staff.
- iii. Health and wellness programmes should be organised for academic staff consistently, in order to create and improve a positive and healthy emotional intelligence.
- iv. Sporting facilities and equipment should be made readily available for the staff to encourage them to participate in recreational activities which may help to reduce individual stress.

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