

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Prevalence of job stress among primary school teachers in South-west, Nigeria

O. 'Lanre Olaitan<sup>1\*</sup>, O. O. Oyerinde, O. Obiyemi and O. O Kayode

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University Of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Accepted 29 July, 2009

The study determined the job stress among primary school teachers in South-west, Nigeria. A total of 624 teachers were chosen as subjects using a multistage sampling technique, and a structure questionnaire was used to gather information from the subjects. Research hypotheses were formulated and inferential statistics of test and analysis of variance ANOVA were employed to analyze significant differences at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level. The differences were significant only for age and gender. Majority of the teachers have headache as symptom of poor health and majority of them engage in watching TV as a strategy for coping with stress. The major source of stress for the subjects is the society. It was recommended among others that, teachers working condition should be improved by planning educational ergonomics and of some social facilities such as: satellite TV; computer connected with Internet; and that the school curriculum should take into cognizance, sporting activities especially for the teachers which should be given a bit of knowledge in health education so to be able to understand themselves and generate more coping techniques for job stress.

**Key words:** Job, stress, ergonomics.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been an enormous increase in research into job stress over the last decade. Many studies have implicated stress in the etiology of a number of physical and psychiatric ailments (Coronary heart disease), skin diseases, Ulcers, e.t.c. (House, 2007; Copper, 2005). In addition, job stress can hinder effectiveness at work and can lead to low performance, job dissatisfaction, poor motivation, absenteeism and turnover (Copper, 2002).

Reglin and Reitzammer (2008) and Tnetteman and Punch (2005) opined that, teachers regardless of what level they teach are exposed to high levels of stress. In some extreme cases, they may suffer from burn out as well (Seldman and Zager, 2001). The fact that teachers are exposed to high level of stress can be an international phenomenon (Mokdad, 2005).

Teaching in Nigeria, however, has been regarded by many as no job, to the extent that most people who engage in teaching today hold on to the job because they have nothing else to do. Even though, they teach to earn their living yet, they engage in the job pending the time

they get a better offer. The question one would ask is that, is the job stress regarded as the problem and why do they believe they have to find another job? Or is the income the problem that does not comesirate with the job stress or the motivation is not in place? Personal interaction with some teachers showed that teaching at all levels in Nigeria is terrible and not rgarded as a noble profession, with the exception of teaching at the university level, why?

## Research questions

- 1.) What are the sources of job stress to which Nigeria teachers are exposed?
- 2.) What symptoms of job ill-health have teachers developed after they became teachers?
- 3.) How do teachers control the effects of job stress?

## Purpose of the study

The study seeks to find out various sources of job stress that teachers are exposed to. It also seeks to identify the symptoms of job ill-health that teachers have developed after they became teachers. The study will also look into

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [lanreolives@yahoo.com](mailto:lanreolives@yahoo.com). Tel: +234(0)80763-33-763.

**Table 1.** Socio demographic characteristic of the teachers, N = 624.

Variable		Number of teachers	( %)
Age (years)	≤ 39	567	90.9
	≥40	57	9.1
Gender	Male	337	54.0
	Female	287	46.0
Working experience (years)	≤ 9	304	48.7
	10 - 19	278	44.6
	≥ 20	42	6.7

how teachers control the effects of job stress.

### Research hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference in the job stress experienced by teacher based on their age.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the job stress experienced by teachers based on their gender.
- 3) There is no significant difference in the job stress experienced by teachers based on their work experience.
- 4) There is no significant difference in the job stress experienced by teachers based on their training.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A multistage sampling technique was adopted to select 636 teachers from south west, Nigeria. A total of 106 primary school teachers were chosen from Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo and Ekiti States. These subjects answered the study questionnaires. Some characteristics of the teachers are shown in Table 1.

A job stress questionnaire was developed by the researcher and it comprised four major areas, such as: teachers personnel information, sources of stress, symptoms of poor health; and coping strategies for stress. The first part (sources of stress) contained eleven items about teaching while the other two part (symptoms of poor health and strategies for coping with stress) contained six and ten items respectively.

The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale rating for section B with five alternative responses thus: 4 = very high stress; 3 = high stress; 2= moderate stress; 1 = weak stress; and 0 = very weak stress.

A test-retest method was used to ensure reliability. The reliability coefficient of  $r = 0.86$  with regard to validity, the content validity was adopted. For this purpose, the questionnaire was administered to thirty primary school teachers from six primary schools in Kwara State which is not part of the studied population. The questionnaire was rewritten on the basis of the suggestions and comments of the experts.

To speed up and ease administration of the questionnaire, the test items were given to primary school teachers who were distributed over various school in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. Twelve teachers (6 men to deal with male teachers and 6 women to deal with female teachers) were chosen to assist the researcher.

Within two weeks, the questionnaires were distributed and collected with the return rate of 98% that is 624.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With regards to stress, Table 2 showed that the teachers' major sources of stress were colleagues, curriculum, marking, parents, pupils, school authority, society, supervision/teaching, teaching environment and wages (income). Table 2 also showed that teachers suffered from many health problems. More than seven out of every ten teachers (73%) reported headaches; other health problems (malaria, arthritis, diabetes, heart problems, ulcers, respiratory problems) were also reported by some teachers but not by the majority. This is in line with Levi (2009), who concluded that there existed a relationship between work related stress and stress related disorder, such as ischaemic heart disease, duodenal ulcers, headaches, fever, neurosis and mental health stress.

As to strategies for coping with stress (Table 2), 61.9% of teachers said they watch TV programmes, 58.9% listen to music, 53.3% talk with friends and 51.7% pray to cope with job stress. This is supported by Siegrist (2004) who pointed out that workers health can be protected through helping them to cope with stress, using various stress coping techniques such as motivation, incentives and provision of social amenities and infrastructure at no cost for the workers. In the hypotheses (Table 3), the differences were significant only for age and gender, while for work experience and training, no significant differences existed.

The above showed clearly that teaching work needs to be ergonomically designed, especially at all levels. For this reason, it would be desirable to develop and apply a new kind of ergonomics that is educational ergonomics. Educational ergonomics according to Olaitan (2004) in his paper presented at the Nigeria Association of Physical Health Education Recreation Sports and Dance (NAPHER-SD) day on stress in motivation educational setting; refers to the application of theories, models, laws, and methods of ergonomics to educational settings. He showed in his paper that major areas of educational ergonomics are:- teaching (teaching methods, teaching aids, increasing learners' motivation); academics curricular (design, development, enrichment, evaluation); assessment of academic performance (developing evaluation tools, assessing evaluation tools, academic achievement tests, examinations); development of individuals (students, teachers, administrators); the design of context design (study place, the design of classrooms and multipurpose hall, computer stations, the physical environment); and the legislative frame work (laws and regulations).

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is expected that if educational ergonomics are put in place and applied in practice, much job stress among teachers would be eliminated.

**Table 2.** Sources of stress, symptoms of poor health and strategies for coping with stress, N= 624.

Source of Stress		Symptoms of poor health			Strategies for coping with stress		
Source	Means (x)	Symptoms	No of teachers	(%)	Strategies	No of teachers	(%)
Colleagues	2.26	Arthritis	179	28.7	Forgetting work	210	33.7
Curriculum	2.61	Diabetes	9	1.4	Internet browsing	68	10.9
Marking	3.53	Heacache	54.9	73.6	Listening to music	363	58.2
Parents	3.57	Heart problems	29	4.8	playing sports	156	25.0
					Praying	336	53.8
					Hypertension	30	4.8
Pupils	3.05	Malaria	209	33.5	Relaxation	236	37.8
					School authority	2.01	Respiratory problems
Society	3.62	Ulcers	136	21.8	Traveling	140	22.4
Supervision	2.82				Watching TV	390	62.5
Teaching	3.49						
Teaching environment	3.31						
Wages (Income)	3.25						

**Table 3.** Results of hypotheses testing on differences on basis of age, gender, work experience and training, N = 624.

S/No	Variable	Alternatives	X	SD	Calculated value statistical test	Critical value	Decision on H <sub>0</sub>
Ho1	Age (years)	≤39	44.42	21.16	t-test = 4.92	1.90	Rejected
		≥40	12.61	10.12			
Ho2	Gender	Male	26.3	14.17	t-test = 3.33	1.90	Rejected
		Female	14.8	8.22			
Ho3	Work experience (years)	≤9	25.53	11.22	F-test = 7.37	37.4	Accepted
		10 - 19	22.30	10.14			
		≥20	5.41	3.76			
Ho4	Training	Trained teachers	20.13	9.18	t-test = 1.68	1.90	Accepted
		Non-trained teachers	28.44	11.33			

P ≤ 0.05.

The findings of the study showed clearly that teaching work needs to be restructured. This is

because there are more non-trained teachers than trained teachers in primary schools in Oyo state.

Majority of the subjects have less than or equal to 9 years work experience. In the gender issue, fe-

male teachers are slightly more than their male counterpart in this study. Moreso, majority of the teachers are less than 40 years of age.

Majority of the teachers usually have headache as their symptoms of poor health, while very few members have diabetes. Watching of TV as a strategy for coping with stress is what most of the teachers engage in and only a few will engage in traveling as a strategy for coping with stress.

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

- 1) Teachers' working conditions should be improved by providing some social facilities such as satellite TV, computers with Internet connections, so that they can use them as coping strategies for stress
- 2) Teachers should also create time for themselves to relax in some designated recreation centres.
- 3) Teachers should cultivate the habit of playing sports as a means to cope with stress
- 4) The school curriculum should be restructured to include both teachers-centered and students-centered co-curricular activities as regards to inter-house sporting activities in the schools
- 5) All teachers in the schools should have general knowledge of health education to be able to cater for their well-being at work and beyond.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful for the valuable comments and suggestions of Professor D. B. Parakoyi, the Head of the

Department of Epidemiology and Community Health, and Professor O. O. Obiyemi, Director of Institute of Education, University of Ilorin, Kwara State. Also to my research assistants who are teachers of various schools for taking pains to go round the selected schools for the distribution and collection of questionnaires.

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