International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies

AJ ACADEMIC JOURNALS

Full Length Research Paper

Stress coping strategies used by the management staff of colleges of education in Nigeria

YUSUF, Musibau Adeoye[1*], AFOLABI Festus Oluwole[2] and ADIGUN Johnson Tayo[3]

[1]Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
[2]Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Nigeria.
[3]Department of Curriculum Studies and Instructions, College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria.

The study examined stress coping strategies used by the management staff of colleges of education in Nigeria. A descriptive research of the survey design was used for the study. The sample of the study consisted of 1500 respondents, comprising 294 principal officers, 294 deans of schools and 910 heads of departments. Purposive stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample. A questionnaire titled Stress Coping Strategies among Management Staff of Colleges of Education Questionnaire (SCSMSCOEQ) was designed for the study. The validity of the instrument was established by giving the instrument to experts in the Department of Educational Management and Test and Measurement, Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, while the reliability of the instrument was ensured through test-retest method. The reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained for the instrument which was considered high enough for reliability. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, means, percentages and t-test analysis. The research questions raised were answered descriptively, while the null hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.005 level of significance using t-test analysis. The study revealed that the level of stress among management staff was high during the period understudy. The findings further indicated that, consultative management, maintenance of cordial relationship, sleep well, immediate response to issues and proper planning are the major strategies used by the management staff. The stress coping strategies being used by management staff of Federal Colleges of Education are quite different from those used by the State owned Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that in order to make stress management strategies being used more effective and that there was no significant difference in the stress coping strategies between Federal and State owned Colleges of Education, the working environment should be made conducive by the stakeholders in order to have similar strategies to cope with stress in the colleges of education.

Key words: Stress, coping strategies, management staff, college of education.

INTRODUCTION

If one is contending with high levels of stress, one is putting his entire wellbeing at risk. Stress wreaks havoc on one's emotional equilibrium as well as one's physical health. It narrows one's ability to think clearly, function

effectively and enjoy one's life. The goal of stress management is to bring one's mind and body back to balance situation, by choosing the best alternative ways of coping with stress and adopting a positive attitude, learning healthier ways to cope with incidence of stress. Managing stress is all about taking charge of one's thought, emotions, schedule, environment and the ways to deal with problems. The ultimate goal in life is a balance life, with work environment, relationship, relaxation and managing stress issues. Some people are able to cope with stress more than others, by behaving in a way that meets the environmental challenges. Some personalities seem more predisposed to stress, that is they are able to cope or adapt to the stress provoking situations. According to Marshall and Cooper (1979) and Ifeoma and Emenike (2007), many factors are responsible for coping strategies with stress, such as personality ability to cope with stress issues, being motivated well, fluctuation in abilities with age, ill-equipped to deal with problems in a particular area of expertise and so on.

There are so many ranges of actions which can be taken by individuals, organisations and society to deal with stress situations. Cummings and Dunham (1980) asserted three approaches of coping with stress as changing the stressor; treating the response, and changing the person. They stated further that changing the stressor is likely to be most thorough and permanent method of dealing with stress from a particular source. This approach involves making a change in the environment. For instance, role ambiguity is a critical stressor, which leads to a high level of stress, negative work responses. The probability of a high level of stress occurring can be reduced through laws and regulations. Specific laws and regulations can be created to control the noise levels at work place; also role ambiguity can be reduced by making rules and regulations that spell out roles and expectations of a particular job. Ajala (1987) opined that the treatment of responses to stress is often initiated by the individual. He stressed further that person seeks medical treatment and that organization can also help workers treat responses to stress by providing medical treatment and medical insurance and psychological services at work place.

Furthermore, in examining the factors, which are intrinsic to the job and the individual, Marshall and Cooper (1979) and Ptzer (2005) identified several possible stressors and preventive steps that can be considered. Coyne and Downey (1991) opined that another way of coping with some of the stress associated with the relationship between the individual and the job is by training. Marshall and Cooper (1979) further maintained that training programmes and techniques are available or could be designed to help the individual to perform his or her job effectively with less stress or to cope with work overload or to improve his or her relationship with others. This involves training people increasing their tolerance and coping abilities. Techniques such as time management training, personal growth, groups and team building activities and so on can be used in stress prevention and reduction programmes.

An important factor associated with an individuals' role in the organization is that of participation. Based on the research made by Barrow and Prosen (1981), it has been known that stress can result from low participation or lack of autonomy, which leads to job dissatisfaction. It has been suggested by these researchers that greater participation in programme goes a long way to reduce stress. However, stress is reduced by increasing participation, supportive supervisor and cohesive work among individuals. Also participation should not be trivial to the people concerned, but also relevant and legitimate part of the work. Career development factors such as over-promotion and under promotion which depends on an accurate assessment of the individual's potential and performance at work is also a way of coping with stress by individuals.

Glembiewski and Meconkie (1975) and Auerbach and Gramling (2003) opined that ineffective communication and lack of trust within an organization could lead to poor relations, which in turn could also lead to stress among the staff of the organization. Moreover, organisational trust building on improving communication channel leads to the development of a supportive organisation climate and norms.

Moreover, people are likely to use problem focused coping strategies, if they think that they can do something to change their situation. According to Hockenbury and Hockenbury (1997), these include cracking jokes in the face of trying situation, using minor tension relievers such as valium, lexotan or using alcohol or cigarette to blunt the effect of the stress, engaging in prayer for solution, seeking social support from people, taking a walk, focusing attention on other things, so as to be able to cope with trying situation. Associated with all these, efficacies are many therapies based on individuals approaches to stress management. According to Adigun and Yusuf (2009), first of its kind is forced tension discharge therapy otherwise known as emotional management. They further remarked that such therapy is a way of making conscious and strenuous effort to forget each day's worries before one goes to bed. That is, after one leaves his or her working place and gets home, he or she should forget all about the office and its stress. This was further asserted by Mccormack (1984) which he described as "compartmentalising", leaving the emotion of a particular situation locked within the confines of the situation.

However, it has been observed that there is stress in work place, which is leading to health problems and untimely death of individuals in the tertiary institutions. Observations have also shown that the stress coping strategies used differ from individuals, male and female, old and young. Furthermore, it has been observed that management staff of Colleges of Education exhibits certain behaviours which include absenteeism due to

Table 1. Level of stress among management staff in Colleges of Education.

Stress level	Frequency	Percentage
High	1280	85.3
Moderate	167	11.2
Low	53	3.5
Total	1500	100

stress related health problems, which keep them away from office. There may be other physical and mental fatigue signals that may make the administrator look pale and sickly even without complaints of illness. It is against this background that this study examines stress coping strategies used by the management staff of colleges of education in Nigeria, with a view to making feasible measures for improvement.

Statement of the problem

The task of managing colleges of education in Nigeria is becoming more stressful as a result of various problems being faced by the management staff. These problems include students' rampage, students' population explosion, youth exuberance poor funding, poor infrastructures, persistent conflicts, moral decadence and work over load to mention a few. It appears that the inability of some of the management staff to promptly resolve these problems often results in such symptoms as anxiety, headache, insomnia, excessive smoking, tension and absenteeism and a host of others. The attendant effects of the stress being experienced by management staff of the College of Education could be attributed to poor coping strategies being adopted by them.

However, the problem of this study is to find answers to the following research questions:

(1) What is the level of stress among management staff of Colleges of Education?
(2) What are the strategies adopted by the management staff to cope with stress in College of Education.

Research hypothesis

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the strategies adopted by the management staff in coping with stress between Federal and State Colleges of Education.

Purpose of study

The study specifically set out to examine stress coping strategies used by the management staff of Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The study also investigates the

level of stress among the management staff of Colleges of Education.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is a descriptive research of the survey type. This research is descriptive, as it describes vividly the existing situations regarding stress coping strategies among management staff of Colleges of Education without manipulation of variables.

The population of the study consisted of all the management staff in all eleven Colleges of Education owned by the Federal and State Government in South-west Nigeria. The sample for this study consisted of 1500 management staff from eight Colleges of Education. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the tertiary institutions, top management level, middle management level and low level management staff. A structured questionnaire titled Stress Coping Strategies among Management Staff of Colleges of Education Questionnaire (SCSMSCOEQ) was designed and used for this study. The validity of the instrument was ensured by given the questionnaire to experts in Educational Management, Administration and Test and Measurement. Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University. Based on their comments suggestion and recommendations, the instrument was restructured to meet both face, content and construct validity. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method, the reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained for the instrument. This was considered high enough for reliability of the instrument.

RESULTS

Question 1: What is the level of stress among management staff of the Colleges of Education?

Table 1 shows that 1280 (85.3%) of the respondents experienced high level of stress, 167 (11.2%) of them had moderate level of stress, while 53 (3.5%) of them experienced low level of stress. It therefore shows that the level of stress among the management staff is relatively high during the period under investigation.

Question 2: What are the strategies adopted by the management staff to cope with stress in Colleges of Education?

Table 2 shows the strategies adopted by management staff in colleges of education to cope with stress. On

Table 2. Strategies adopted by the management staff to cope with stress in Colleges of Education.

S/N	Items	Frequency			
		Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
1	Proper time management	1335	89	165	11
2	Sleeping well	1425	95	75	5
3	Consultative management	1440	96	60	4
4	Proper planning	1395	93	105	7
5	Stress workshop	1155	77	345	23
6	Avoid any source of stress	750	50	750	50
7	Exercise	1185	79	315	21
8	Immediate response to stress issues	1410	94	90	6
9	Delegation of duties	1350	90	150	10
10	Maintenance of Cordial relationship	1440	96	60	4

Table 3. t-test analysis of strategies adopted by Federal and State management staff in Colleges of Education in coping with stress.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Level of significance	t-cal	t-table
Federal	544	22.19	3.051	1498	0.005	2.14	1.96
State	956	22.99	3.059				

proper time management, 1335 (89%) of the respondents agreed that proper time management is one of the strategies used by them, while 165 (11%) disagreed. Also, 1425 (95%) agreed that sleeping well is one of the strategies being used to cope with stress, while 75 (5%) of them disagreed. 1440 (96%) of the respondents agreed that consultative management is being used to cope with stress, while 60 (4%) held a contrary view.

On proper planning, 1395 (93%) of the respondents agreed in using proper planning as a strategy to cope with stress among them, while 105(7%) of them disagreed. While 1155 (77%) of them agreed that stress workshop is one of the management strategies used to cope with stress, 345 (23%) disagreed. Also on avoidance of source of stress, 750 (50%) of the respondents agreed that avoidance of any source of stress is one of the strategies used to cope with stress, while 750 (50%) of them disagreed. While 1185 (79%) agreed that performance of exercise is one of the strategies being used to cope with stress, 315 (21%) of them disagreed.

Moreover, 1410 (94%) of the respondents agreed that immediate response to stress issues is one of the strategies used to cope with stress, while 90 (6%) disagreed. Also, 1350 (90%) of them agreed that delegation of duties is one of the strategies used to cope with stress, while 150 (10%) disagreed. Lastly on the table, 1440 (96%) of the respondents agreed that maintenance of cordial relationship as one of the strategies being used to cope with stress among them, while 60 (4%) held a contrary view.

Table 2 shows that the major strategies adopted by the management staff to cope with stress are consultative management, maintenance of cordial relationship, sleeping well, immediate response to stress issues, delegation of duties, proper time management, performance of exercise and stress workshop.

Research hypothesis

HO_1: There is no significant difference in the strategies adopted by the management staff in coping with stress between Federal and State Colleges of Education.

Table 3 shows that t-calculated value of 2.14 is greater than t-table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the strategies adopted by the management staff in coping with stress between Federal and State Colleges of Education.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that the level of stress is relatively high among the management staff of Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The implication of this finding in the area of study is that most of the respondents exhibited emotional, physiological and behavioural responses all the time such as anxiety, headache, tension, loss of appetite, excessive smoking, escapist drinking, sleep disorders, increase in blood pressure, boredom and so

on. The probable reason for high level of stress among the respondents may be due to self- inflicted demand, job demand on them of their various institutions. This study supports the work of Olanipekun (2005) who asserted that the high level of stress among management can have negative effects on their performance.

The study revealed that consultative management maintenance of cordial relationship, sleeping well, immediate response to issues, proper planning and proper time management are the major strategies used by the management staff in the area of study. This study is in line with the opinion of Pitzer (2005), and Ifeoma and Emenike (2007), that some management strategies which the managers could adopt to combat their stress are, agreed on shared objectives, ensure effective communication, sleeping well and proper time management among others. Since the daily operations of the management staff to a large extent depends on the presence and support of the student academic and non-academic staff, it is therefore imperative for them to be well acquainted with management strategies to douse or reduce students' crisis that could emanate at all point in time.

It is also important for managers to know that, no one strategy is enough in itself but a combination of two or more depending on the cause of action. The study further revealed that there was a significant difference in strategies being adopted between management staff of Federal and State Colleges of Education during the period under study. The reason for this differential in the strategies being adopted could not be far-fetched. This might not be far from the fact that Federal Colleges of Education are better equipped, financed and better staffed than the State Colleges of Education. The implication of this is that the management staff of State Colleges of Education are more prone to intense stressors of different configurations. The opinion of Ekpo (2004) supported the result of this study by succinctly remarking that funds are the scarcest commodity in running tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it could be concluded that the level of stress experienced by management staff is relatively high. Strategies of coping with stress are many and managers should endeavour to use more than one strategy for effective coping with stress. Ownership of institutions makes a difference in the strategies used by management staff to cope with stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the level of stress of the management staff is relatively high, they should not place too much emphasis on the need to achieve; they should manage their time properly and should not spend more than necessary hours in their place of work daily. The working environment should be made conducive by the stakeholders.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

Adigun JT, Yusuf MA (2009). Comparative study of Stress among Teachers and Nurse in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. Ikere Journal of Education 12(1):123-131.

Ajala JA (1987). Essential guiding principles in dealing with sex education for parents of teenagers and young adults. The Nigerian Nurse. 7(1):24-28.

Ajala JA (1987). Recreation and Leisure Education for Sound State of Mind and Stress Reduction. Zaria Journal of Education 1(1):34-44.

Auerbach S, Gramling SE (2003). Stress Psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Barrow JC, Prosen SS (1981). A model of stress and counselling interventions. The Personnel and Guidance Journal 60(1):5-10.

Coyne JC, Downey G (1991). Social Factors and Psychopathology: Stress, Social Support and Coping Processes. Annual Review of Psychology 42:401-425.

Cummings LT, Dunham RB (1980). Introduction to organisational Behaviour Illinois: Unwin.

Glembiewski BT, McConkie M (1975). The Centrality of Interpersonal Trust Theories of Groups New York: Wiley Press.

Hockenbury DH, Hockenbury SE (1997). Psychology. New York: Worth Publishers: P 569.

Ifeoma O, Emenike O (2007). Stress Management. Awka: Sunrise Publication.

Marshall J, Cooper CL (1979). Executive under Pressure (1st Ed) London: Macmillan Press Limited.

McCormack M (1984). What They Don't Teach You at Harvard, Business School. New York: Bantam Books pp. 315-327.

Olanipekun OF (2005). Bea Success without Stress Ibadan: University of Ibadan Printers.

Pitzer L (2005). Stress: Its Causes and Effects. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman Company.