

# **BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: MATTERS ARISING**

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## *Chapter Six*

### **WORKPLACE CONDITIONS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ESSIEN UDIM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.**

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#### **Introduction**

Work place conditions especially within the school need to be conducive, friendly and stress free to promote quality health and wellbeing of staff whose demands are ever-increasing. The physical condition of workplace should promote staff effectiveness in exercising expected roles. In the school setting, teachers work is not tailored to the classroom alone but involved helping the school,

parents and community members to achieve expected goals. Therefore, it is very important to provide a convenient workplace conditions where the teachers can exercise their duties judiciously and provide high quality services.

As teachers work towards improving the academic successes of students, certain work conditions found in the school such as physical office make-up, salary payment, supportive social relationship, and workload and so on are very essential for teachers to exercise their roles effectively. According to Jain and Kaur (2014), poor workplace condition may pose serious stress on the teacher and discourage productivity. Workplace conditions where salaries and other fringe benefits are insufficient, staff are not promoted when due, workplace pressure, poor social relationship with staff, facilities are inadequate and so on often poses workers to stress.

Poor workplace conditions could lead to unpleasant stressful conditions such as tension, frustration, fatigue, lack of interest, anger and depression, resulting in reduction of work as a teacher (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013). Stress is inevitable in today's society because the world is continuously changing. It is part and parcel of human's lives. It is a body condition that occurs in response to actual or anticipated difficulties in life. Sell and Bryan (2011) defined stress to be any external stimulus that causes wear and tear on one's psychological, social and physical well being. Such condition arises from the interaction of people within different spheres of work; and teachers are no exception.

Stress can manifest itself in either positive or negative way. It can be positive when a situation offers an opportunity for one to gain something, but when constraints of demands are placed on us, then it is negative (Decenzo & Robbins, 2006). Positive stress motivates, usually with good outcome but if it is repeated or prolonged, it may cause psychological discomfort. Roy (2005) maintained that though the positive aspects of stress are considered good and improved performance, high level of stress adversely affects the performance of most important tasks and contributes to falling performance rates.

Stress at work may contribute to ill-health, human suffering, productivity loss and compensation claim if not adequately managed by the person experiencing it.

Stress management has to do with cultivating useful habits, thoughts and actions in dealing with stressful condition. As observed by Bamba (2011), workplace conditions where staff are not paid salary promptly, fringe benefits denied, facilities for learning inadequate and where staff are over-worked adversely affect productivity. The author further maintained that if teachers fail to cultivate useful habits, thoughts and action towards managing stress, it could result in workers absenteeism, sickness, low staff morale, poor time keeping, decrease in productivity and replacement costs. The effect of such stress include headaches, irritation in the eyes, susceptibility to viral infections, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, absent mindedness as well as failure in performance (Ekundayo, & Kolawole, 2013). The success or failure of any educational system depends mainly on the teachers. For teachers to exercise their roles effectively without stress demands that they should be adequately motivated. Teachers can only be motivated to work when they are not influenced by work-related stress. They are prone to accomplish their task when necessary attention and priority are given. Thus, improving teacher's workplace conditions means that all work-related stress should be discouraged so as to achieve purposes of learning.

Certain workplace conditions could influence stress management of secondary school teachers. One of the conditions is workload pressure. Workload is the amount of work a person is expected to carry out. In the school system, teachers are often involved with curious blends of duties and in the pursuit of meeting deadlines; they get pressured with high level of stress. According to Etuk (2002), teachers are often faced with the pressure or challenges of preparing adequately for their lessons, teaching many subjects in a term, going to school regularly and punctually, attending classes as scheduled, teaching the students well, giving and marking

assignments, test and examinations as well as attending to other official and extra-curriculum assignments within the school. Teachers who usually experience work over load may likely not be able to manage the situation, hence causing depression, burnout, sickness, absenteeism, anxiety, headaches and failure in performance among others.

Another workplace condition that could influence stress management of teachers is supportive staff relationship. School heads are expected to have good human relation skills for accomplishing educational goals. Such attainment could be achieved by established strong, communicating, motivating, interacting and supervisory ability. Akpan (2008) suggested that supportive staff relationship could be enhanced if school principals usually consider staff emotional feelings and needs for the establishment of a mutually satisfying relationship. The author added that supportive staff relationship exist in a condition whereby school heads allow teachers to participate in the decision making process of the school. Thus, teachers with inadequate administrative support often feel isolated, unsupported and also feel a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Workplace conditions are the physical and psychosocial aspects of the workplace which may contribute to staff wellbeing, development of social relationship and skill as well as enhancing productivity. It could also be physical and psychosocial aspects of work which may cause hazard, ineffectiveness and less productivity on the part of the teachers (Haggvist, 2004). Some examples of the physical conditions are resources of schools like asset, teaching and office facilities, salary, numbers of students, workload pressure, students' violent behaviour and role conflict (Direk, 2003). Both physical and psychosocial aspects of workplace have great importance on teachers' well-being. Good working conditions such as good relationship and a suitable workload at schools have positive influences both on schools and teachers. Some of these positive influences are reducing teachers' stress, turnover, and absence of

sickness and increasing teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, cooperation and effectiveness in classrooms, and increasing students' achievement (Direk, 2003).

On the other hand, crowded classroom, inadequate salary, students' academic behaviour, poor office facilities, lack of fringe benefits, poor school discipline, lack of necessary resources, poor physical conditions, and low support from administrators have a negative impact on teachers. Some of the negative impacts are high level of stress, poor morale and low job satisfaction (Isikhan, 2004).

Teachers can work comfortably and healthily if they are able to manage stress. Stress management according to Boyle, Lewin and Sager (2009) is the process of using thoughts and actions in dealing with stressful situations. It could also be described as a process of cultivating useful habits, thoughts and actions in dealing with stressful conditions. The process of managing stress is to control the stress level through the implementation of some useful strategies.

Some of the strategies according to Kalejaiye-Matti, Abdullahi, Garba and Balogun (2007) are having good planning and effective use of times, being careful not to bother about things one cannot change, having a positive outlook on life, learning to relax, having regular physical exercise, reduction in teaching load through conscious means among others. Bamber (2011) added that workers in school could manage stress by making a problem list, prioritizing one's problems, setting goals, establishing criteria of success, developing self-help treatment plan, monitoring and reviewing progress. In order to manage stress successfully, Smith and Siegel (2012) argued that the teachers need to find out what causes stress, look for ways to reduce the amount of stress and learning healthy ways to relieve stress or to reduce its harmful effects.

Workload pressure is the amount of work a teacher is exposed to which may likely lead to stress. According to Macrae (2011) when demands on work are threatened, impulses are conveyed to the adrenal glands which secrete hormone called adrenaline that is chemically identical to non-adrenaline. Adrenaline is secreted

though in minute quantities but it is released into the blood streams and it is spread throughout the body. It promotes variety of response likely increasing the rate and strength of the heart beat which eventually increase the blood pressure, blood sugar level and metabolic rate. A long hour of work could possibly cause grey hair which is also linked to demands at work by workers. Long hours at work lead to stress emotion which is hazardous to man's health. As noted by Simon (2009) long hours of work may likely exposed workers to heart attack, exhaustion and mental stress.

In most public schools, some workers are always busy that they hardly remember to eat their meals. Some who ate are often not regular. They skip the meals as a result of demands on work assigned to them, no enough time for eating (Simon, 2009). All these are parts of the daily hassles which most teachers could not manage. Studies have shown a strong relationship between workload pressure and stress management among teachers. One of such study was conducted by Tenibiaje (2013) who examines the work-related stress among employees and the risk factors peculiar to such stress in Ekiti State. The author found that most teachers could not manage stress in school due to work overload; and that teachers who experience excessive workload are most likely to be unproductive and exposed to health hazards. Also, Dankade, Bello, and Deba (2016) also found that workload pressure significantly influence teachers' performance in exercising their teaching task.

School administrator need to have good human relation skills with staff. This refers to the ability to work effectively as a team leader and build cooperative effort. Such skills include communicating, motivating, interacting and supervisory ability. The school administrator should be able to encourage all subordinate to work in accomplishing educational goals with confidence and keenness. Values in interpersonal relationship include the ability of the principal to be aware of emotional feelings of teachers and needs to the extent that he can establish a mutually satisfying relationship. In a study conducted by Akpan (2000) on managers interpersonal

relationship and it influence on effectiveness of staff in Akwa Ibom State, the author found that where there is high interpersonal relationship and support between principals and the teachers, the teachers will be able to discuss their problems freely with the principal, thus resulting in positive work relationship and stress-free work environment. The author added that teachers are likely to manage stress when there is mutually satisfying relationship with and support from the principal. This finding corroborates that of Porter (2004) who found that teachers who are often motivated and encouraged by the principal are most likely to gain satisfaction in role performance and manage stress.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework** **Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (1954)**

Abraham Maslow propounded the human need hierarchy theory in 1954. According to the theorist, human beings do not need things at random but rather, their complex are ordered in a hierarchy of prepotency postulating that human behaviour is motivated to satisfy certain needs. These needs start in an ascending order that is from the lowest to the highest. Maslow noted that when a set of needs are satisfied, it ceases to be motivator. Human needs, as seen by Maslow (1954) are the physiological needs, security needs, belongingness or social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs.

Physiological needs according to Maslow are the basic needs of the individual, which are controlled by chemical and nervous organs within the body. They include the need for food, water, sex, sleep, shelter and clothing. Maslow contended that when physiological needs are not satisfied, the other needs could serve as a basis for motivation. Security needs include protection against danger, threat, deprivation and protection from physical or psychological harm, economic disaster and the unexpected. Also, belongingness or social needs involve need to feel needed, loved, need for affection, association and support, friendship, interaction and acceptance in relationship with others. While esteem needs has to do with needs to

feel important and receive recognition from others, self-actualization needs as noted by Maslow refers to an individual's search for self-fulfillment, that is, desire to use one's self-abilities and realization of one's potential for continued self-development.

Therefore, Maslow theory of human needs is relevant to this study in that it showed the relationship between work place conditions and stress management of teachers. It is clarified that if teachers' needs such as being loved, need for affection, support and friendship, interaction and acceptance in relationship with school heads are satisfied, such condition will reduce the stress level of a teacher.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Successful achievement of the educational goals and objectives, needs and demand of the society is highly determined by the teachers. Teachers are most likely to be productive and stress-free when they are offered pleasant working conditions. However, as observed by the researchers in Essien Udim Local Government Area, most teachers usually complain of feeling uncomfortable-physically, mentally and emotionally because of poor working condition. Workload pressure seems to be one of the major unpleasant conditions that make some teachers unable to manage stress. Most teachers usually complain about undertaking more than one teaching subject, putting more hours in weekly lesson notes, involving in extra-curricular events, taking part in after school lessons, supervision and marking of test and examination as well as other official duties. These make it difficult for most teachers to wind down, relax and recuperate.

In addition, the researchers observed that the kind of relationship established between the teachers and school heads sometimes makes it difficult for most teachers to manage stress. Most teachers usually complain of dissatisfaction in the working behaviour of school heads. Most of them often complain about their principals being hot tempered at a slight provocation, being intolerant, hostile and unapproachable which de-motivates them and causes stress.

In the course of this study, the researchers perused other empirical works and found out that most of the researches conducted by eminent scholars and authors on similar topic of research differ in terms of variables used as well as the study area. Therefore, the present study shall determine the relationship between workplace conditions and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between workplace conditions and stress management, among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area.
2. The relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What relationship exists between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area?
2. What is relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien

Udim Local Government Area.

- There is no significant relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area.

**Delimitation of the Study**

The study was delimited workplace conditions and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area. Workplace conditions variables understudied shall include workload pressure, supportive social relationship. Specifically, only public primary school teachers within the study area were selected.

**Research Methodology**

The co-relational research design was adopted for the study. This design is used whenever the researcher wants to determines the magnitude and direction of relationship that exists between the dependent and independent variables (Udoh & Joseph, 2005). Therefore, this design was considered suitable for this study because it enabled the researcher to measure the interrelationship between workplace conditions and stress management among primary school teachers' in Essien Udim Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised all the 1,085 public primary school teachers in the 55 public primary schools that make up the study area (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, Research and Statistics Division, 2018-2019).

A sample of 108 public primary school teachers which represents 10% of the study population was selected using simple random sampling technique. In order to determine the sampled schools, systematic random sampling technique was adopted. A systematic random sampling is one in which every second, third or fifth or tenth member is chosen from a list of or other array of the universe (Udoh & Joseph, 2005). Thus, the schools where arranged numerically from 1 to 55, thereafter, every "third numbered schools" were selected,

resulting in 18 sampled schools. Also, in selecting the respondents per school, 6 teachers each were selected randomly from 18 schools using hat and draw method, which gave a total of 108 sampled respondents.

The researcher developed and validated questionnaire entitled "Workplace Conditions and Stress Management among Primary School Teachers (WCSMPST)" was used for data collection. To establish the reliability of the instrument, split-half reliability method was used. In this method, the instrument was pilot-tested on 30 Public Secondary School Teachers in selected schools not included in the sample of the study. The test was administered on them once; thereafter, the test scores were divided into two comparable halves for the purpose of scoring. The scores gotten were statistically treated using Cronbach Alpha statistics. The reliability co-efficient of .84 was gotten for workload pressure, .87 for supportive staff relationship, .72 for stress management of teachers respectively. This index according to Udoh and Joseph (2005) is a very high reliability index since reliability co-efficient is above 0.50. Therefore, the instrument was deemed reliable for use in the study.

The research instrument was personally administered to the respondents in their respective schools by the researcher together with two research assistants. Data generated was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) for answering the research questions. In answering the research questions, the r-value was used to determine the weight or extent of relationship between variables. The same statistical tool (PPMC) was used for testing of hypotheses by comparing the r-value with the critical value, so as to determine the significant of the relationship between variables all at .05 level of significance and at 106 degree of freedom.

The research questions were answered using the decision rule for answering questions in a co-relational study, as presented by Uzoagulu's (2011) as follows:-

Coefficient (r)	-	Relationship
±.00 to ±.20	-	Negligible, weak, very low,

- little or none
- $\pm .21$  to  $\pm .40$  - Present, slight, but low
- $\pm .41$  to  $\pm .60$  - Average, moderately high, fairly high
- $\pm .61$  to  $\pm 1.00$  - Very high

For the null hypotheses, the standard for decision was to reject the null hypotheses when the calculated r-value is greater than or equals to the critical value, and retained when the calculated value is less than the critical value.

## Result / Findings

### Question 1

What relationship exists between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area?

**Table 1:** Correlation analysis of responses on the relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers

Variables	N	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma xy$	r-value	Remark
Workload Pressure	108	662	8061			
Stress Management of Teachers	108	534	4043	1928	0.74	Very High Positive Relationship

Result in Table 1 shows that a very high positive relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area. This is evidence on the correlation co-efficient of 0.74, which means that workload pressure is highly associated with stress management of teachers. The implication of this result is that primary school teachers are most likely to manage stress and work satisfactorily if the amount of work or responsibilities they are to exercise are less and vice versa.

### Research Question 2

The relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area?

**Table 2:** Correlation analysis of responses on the relationship supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers

Variables	N	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	r-value	Remark
Supportive Staff Relationship	108	662	8061					
Stress Management of Teachers	108	534	4043			1928	0.86	Very High Positive Relationship

Result in Table 2 reveals a very high positive relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area. This is evidence on the correlation co-efficient of 0.86 which means that supportive staff relationship is highly related with stress management of teachers. The implication of this result is that primary school teachers are most likely to manage stress if school heads established good relation skills which considers staff emotional feelings, needs, participation in decision making process, staff feeling of personal accomplishment and mutual trust and vice versa.

### Hypotheses Testing

#### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area

**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of responses on the relationship between workload pressure and stress



**management among primary school teachers**

Variables	N	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	r-value	r-crit	decision
Workload Pressure	108	662	8061						
Stress Management of Teachers				1928	0.74	0.062	S		
	108	534	4043						

S = Significant; P < .05; df = 106; critical r = 0.062

Result in Table 3 shows that the calculated r-cal of 0.74 exceeds the critical value of 0.062 at the degree of freedom of 106 and at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that the more teachers' workload is reduced, the greater their advantage of managing stress which often results from workload pressure and vice versa.

**Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of responses on the relationship supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers**

Variables	N	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	r-value	r-crit	Decision
Supportive Staff Relationship	108	662	8061						
Stress Management of Teachers				1928	0.86	0.062	S		
	108	534	4043						

S = Significant; P < .05; df = 106; critical r = 0.062

Result in Table 3 shows that the calculated r-cal of 0.86 exceeds the critical value of 0.062 at the degree of freedom of 106 and at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that the more school heads consider teachers emotional feelings, needs, participation in decision making process, staff feeling of personal accomplishment and mutual trust, the greater the possibility of teachers managing stress and vice versa.

**Discussion of Findings**

The researcher made a combined discussion of findings from the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

**Workload Pressure and Stress Management of Teachers**

Results from research question one and hypothesis one showed a very high positive and significant relationship between workload pressure and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area. This finding is in agreement with the finding of the study conducted by Tenibiaje (2013) who examines the work-related stress among employees and the risk factors peculiar to such stress in Ekiti State. The author found that most teachers could not manage stress in school due to work overload; and that teachers who experience excessive workload are most likely to be unproductive and exposed to health hazards. This finding is also in line with the finding of the study conducted by Dankade, Bello, and Deba (2016). The authors found that workload pressure significantly influence teachers' performance in exercising their teaching task. From the above finding, the researchers wish to observe that excessive workload leveled upon the teacher would rather increase stress level of teachers, decrease teachers' competence in exercising their duties judiciously and provide high quality

service.

### **Supportive Staff Relationship and Stress Management of Teachers**

Results from research question two and hypothesis two showed a very high positive and significant relationship between supportive staff relationship and stress management among primary school teachers in Essien Udim Local Government Area. This finding is in agreement with the finding of the study conducted by Akpan (2000) who found that where there is high interpersonal relationship and support between principals and the teachers, the teachers will be able to discuss their problems freely with the principal, thus resulting in positive work relationship and stress-free working environment. The author added that teachers are likely to manage stress when there is mutually satisfying relationship and support with the principal. This finding also corroborates the finding of the study conducted by Porter (2004) who found that teachers who are often motivated and encouraged by the principal are most likely to gain satisfaction in role performance and manage stress. From the above finding the researchers wish to observe that positive social relationship and support between the school heads and teachers would increase the possibility of the teachers managing stress.

### **Conclusion**

Unmanaged stress in school environment reduces output and may lead to ill-health, depression, burnout, absenteeism, anxiety, failure in performance and death. It is concluded from the finding that teachers will be unable to manage stress when they are often given excessive workload. Also, positive support and mutual relationship between the school heads and teachers through the understanding of staff emotional feelings, needs satisfaction and involvement of teachers in decision making process has the likelihood of sustaining teachers stress management ability.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made from the finding:

1. School heads should ensure that teachers are relieved of greater amount of work so that they can exercise their duties judiciously and provide quality services.
2. School heads should establish good human relation skill with the teachers by always considering staff emotional feelings and needs, provide support and encourage active participation in decision making process. This will go a long way in motivating teachers to work, be productive and sustaining teachers stress management ability.

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