

# Causes of Stress among Secondary School Teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The attributes and qualities of a good teacher are numerous and fulfilling these can become a major source of stress for teachers most especially in secondary schools. As a builder of the nation with so much lying on their shoulder everyday, weekly and termly, meeting up with the task of producing and transforming individual into productive and capable citizen that can contribute to national development is a work that cannot be separated from stress. It was on this note that the researcher sought to focus on causes and management strategies of stress among secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The survey design of the descriptive type of research was used for the study. The sample size of three hundred (300) secondary school teachers was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The data gathered from the administered questionnaire was analysed using inferential statistics of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings on effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers revealed that the effect of career upgrading was statistically significant as F-value (292.525) was very high,  $df = (1, 298)$  and  $P < 0.05$  at 0.05 level of significance. Also, findings on effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers revealed that the effect of heavy workload was statistically significant as F-value (1855.050) was very high,  $df = (1, 298)$  and  $P < 0.05$  at 0.05 level of significance. From the findings, it was concluded by the researcher that workplace distance, career upgrading, and heavy workload had effect on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The researcher then recommend that teachers should endeavor to reside or stay close around the school so as to reduce the stress of transportation to school daily. School management should encourage teachers who are aspiring to upgrade their career to apply for educational leave so as to study conveniently without no stress.

**Keywords:** Career Upgrading, Heavy workload, Stress, Workplace distance

## INTRODUCTION

A teacher's role is fundamental for the success of every educational process. Stress may affect teacher's productivity, attitudes and interactions with workmates and especially students. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (2016) ranking for occupational stress level, teaching was listed among the most stressful occupations. It was documented that in these stressful occupations, the employees had insufficient control over the work, with employees feeling that they were trapped in jobs where they were regarded as quasi-machines rather than as people. Stress can manifest in employee's behaviour in various forms such as depression, anxiety, burnout, headache, frustration, fatigue, aggression and loss of concentration. It can also lead to the use of substances such as alcohol and illicit drugs and possibly abuse of these substances (Aguwa et al., 2014).

Measuring teacher stress is important and can play an important role in understanding the processes that lead to teacher burnout. Burnout is described as the inability to perform both functionally and effectively in employment settings due to extensive exposure to job-related stress. Shernoff (2011) noted that negative stress among school teachers could lead to emotional and physical depression. The stress could occur as a result of poor leadership and management skills of the teacher themselves. Among the cause that could lead to stress among school teachers is students' poor behaviour, as most of their occupational time is spent with their students (Sass et al., 2011). Students at the present time are more of disruptive behavior and every single student has different characteristics and attitudes. Therefore their poor behaviours may intensify stress among school teachers. Moreover, teachers may be easily distracted with student behavioural issues which can decrease teacher's level of concentration leading to more occurrence of stress among them.

The attributes and qualities of a good teacher are numerous and fulfilling these can become a major source of stress for teachers most especially in secondary schools. As a builder of the nation with so much lying on their shoulder everyday, weekly and termly, meeting up with the task of producing and transforming individual into productive and capable citizen that can contribute to national development is a work that cannot be separated from stress. In the wake of this, many commitments and duty are ahead of secondary school teachers and often they become overwhelmed with the pressure, expectations and demand for enhancing academic performance of students and achieving the Educational Goals stated by the National Policy on Education.

An organisation is expected to adopt their own way or method of stress management that will help employees feel calm and overcome the difficulties experienced during the work. The stress management programs are mostly practised in the private sector as this sector is highly prone to stressful activities. Every job has its own stress but working in the bank has become very stressful in terms of long hours or work, no time for breaks, tedious job schedule and the working environment which is associated with fear of armed robbery attack. These situations however could affect the health of the worker leading to sleeplessness, loss of appetite, lack of concentration, cardiovascular disorder, depression and general body dysfunction. When the health of the workers becomes poor, the organization profitability will be affected as there will be absenteeism, low job performance and job dissatisfaction (Alade, 2024).

The researcher observed that some of the teachers due to obsessiveness of work have forgotten the need or importance to manage stress for effective functioning and healthy living. However, if these obsessiveness of overwork is not being checked, feeling of tiredness and fatigue could emerge into stress and poor health status. This will likely lead to low productivity, less effectiveness in classroom teaching, poor classroom management, inactiveness in classroom activities among other things. All these would result into poor academic performance of students in secondary schools subjects. It was on this note that the researcher sought to focus on causes of stress among secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study will:

1. examine if workplace distance will be a cause of stress among secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.
2. find out if career upgrading will be a cause of stress among secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

3. determine if heavy workload will be a cause of stress among secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are formulated to be tested:

1. There is no significant effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.
2. There is no significant effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.
3. There is no significant effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

*Stress* is a normal human reaction that happens to everyone. Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Patro and Kumar (2019) in their study stated that workplace stress is a mounting problem in the organisations as it not only affects the employees work life but also impact on employees' family life as well. The researcher viewed work stress refers as pressure or tension people feel in their life. It is considered as an important fact influencing the organisational wellbeing and health of its employees. It affects the behaviour of employees in organisations. A high level of occupational stress does not only have detrimental effects on the health of the employees but also affects the employee's creativity, morale and productivity (Aguwa et al., 2014).

Makoni and Mutanana (2016) opined that stress may eventually cause mental and physical disorders and impair the immune system, resulting in sickness and absence from work and work disability. Since human resource is an important aspect of any organization, efforts must be made to guard against any threats to this resource. Thus, it is important to identify the causes of occupational stress and make an effort to reduce those stressors in order to get an effective and efficient use from human resource (Sharma & Devi, 2011) and to make them retain with the organization.

Teaching has been viewed as a stressful occupation, (Gliebe, 2013) and this has been recognized as a widespread problem in educational sector (Vaezi & Fallah, 2012). Teacher stress has been described as the teacher's experience from unpleasant negative emotions (such as anger and depression) and physiological changes (such as increased heart rate) which is as a result of some aspects of the teacher's job that constitute a threat to his self esteem or well being (Vaezi & Fallah, 2012). Nwimo and Onwuka (2015) defined teacher stress as experiences of teachers that are characterized with unpleasant negative emotions such as frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness that are as a result of some aspects of their work as teachers.

Teachers who work far from home may also face additional financial strain, that is they would have to spend more on transportation or commuting because this can take a lot of expenses especially if the teacher have to pay for the use of public transportation which may lead to spending even more than he earns as salary. This could bring mental stress and even depression because he still has a lot of expenses to handle apart from transportation. He could even be in an unwanted debt which may be hard for him to pay back. Americans Psychological Association found that financial strain can cause workplace stress. (APA, 2017).

Teachers experience stress due to their workloads as they plan lessons, organize activities, develop

curriculum, manage extra- curricular activities, supervise classes, provide information, promote discipline, provide cover for other teachers shortage and absences, maintaining records, give timetable, evaluate and access students performance, in addition to the motivation of students by words and actions (Desouky & Allam 2017). A lot of teachers are exposed to stress and have even gotten used to it because of their passion for the profession, Some teachers when teaching will not back down until their students understands what they are teaching by trying to simplify, using real-life example to make them understand and will still inculcate morals and values in them like they are his/her children because he will not be proud of his profession when his/her student misbehaves in the school environment or in the society.

Teachers will also experience, stress from dealing with the parents of some of the students who may have high demands from the teachers, for example a parent may complain to the school management about the academic performance of his/her child, may try to hold the school management and teachers that they don't teach well meanwhile it may be the child that is just not serious and not ready to learn. Some teachers have also received queries over the carelessness of his/her student which led to an injury of the student then makes the parent start to complain and question the teacher and may even cause heat argument, this will bring emotional and mental stress to the teachers. Demirel and Cephe (2015) found out that teaching hours of teachers, the level of students and the extra workload leads to teacher's burnout. It is well established that teachers psychological health, attitudes and behaviors are adversely affected by stressful psychological work characteristics (Bartholomew et al., 2014).

## METHODS

The research design for this study was a survey type of descriptive research. This type of research design enhance data collection to be done in a structured process. The area of the study was Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State. It is one town local government adjourned with settlements. The population of the study consisted of all secondary school teachers in government owned secondary institutions in the study area. There are eleven public secondary schools in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State. There are six hundred and fifty-nine teachers (659) with Five hundred and one (501) female and one hundred and fifty-eight (158) male teachers in government secondary schools in Ikere Local Government area of Ekiti State. The sample size of three hundred (300) teachers was used for the study.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select six (6) schools out of eleven (11) schools in the study area while simple random sampling was used to select fifty (50) respondents from each of the school selected. The research instrument used for this study was a self-structured closed ended questionnaire designed by the researcher. The completed questionnaire by respondents were gathered and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis was divided into two sections which is section A and B. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage and mean were used in section A for the demographic data and to answer the research questions of the study while in section B, inferential statistics of ANOVA and Pearson Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) were used to test the hypotheses postulated at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULT

### Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Educational Qualifications	NCE	84	28

	B.Sc(Ed)/B.A/B.Ed	155	51.67
	M.Sc./M.Ed/M.A	61	20.33
Age in years	25-30	42	14.0
	31-35	55	18.33
	36-40	84	28.0
	41-45	76	25.33
	46-50	33	11.00
	51 and above	10	3.33
Years of Teaching Experience	0-5	10	3.33
	6-10	70	23.33
	11-15	105	35.00
	16-20	55	18.33
	20-25	45	15.00
	26-30	15	5.00
Marital Status	Single	24	8.00
	Married	220	73.33
	Divorcee	56	18.67

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The result shows that majority of the respondents (N=155, 51.67%) were B.Sc(Ed)/B.A/B.Ed holders. Also majority (N=84, 28%) of the respondents represented in the study are 36-40 years old. Moreover, the table also revealed that majority (N=105, 35.0%) of the respondents had 11-15 years of experience. Finally, the table revealed that most of the respondents (n=220; 73.33%) were married.

### Hypothesis Testing

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Table 2: ANOVA for effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.407	1	1.407	10.087	.002

Within Groups	41.579	298	.140		
Total	42.987	299			

$P < 0.05$  (Significant)

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The result of statistical analysis for testing the significant effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers in table 2 revealed that the effect of workplace distance was statistically significant as F-value (10.087) was high,  $df = (1, 298)$  and  $P < 0.05$  at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of null hypothesis one. Hence, there is significant effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Table 3: ANOVA for effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.934	1	14.934	292.525	.000
Within Groups	15.213	298	.051		
Total	30.147	299			

$P < 0.05$  (Significant)

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The result of statistical analysis for testing the significant effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers in table 3 revealed that the effect of career upgrading was statistically significant as F-value (292.525) was very high,  $df = (1, 298)$  and  $P < 0.05$  at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of null hypothesis two. Hence, there is significant effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Table 4: ANOVA for effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	36.471	1	36.471	1855.050	.000
Within Groups	5.859	298	.020		
Total	42.330	299			

$P < 0.05$  (Significant)

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The result of statistical analysis for testing the significant effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers in table 4 revealed that the effect of heavy workload was statistically significant



as F-value (1855.050) was very high,  $df = (1, 298)$  and  $P < 0.05$  at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of null hypothesis three. Hence, there is significant effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

## DISCUSSIONS

Hypothesis 1 which stated there is no significant effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State was rejected. This implied that there is significant effect of workplace distance on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The finding supported the study by the UK Office for National statistics (2014) that people who commute more than half an hour to work have higher stress levels, lower levels of life satisfaction and poor mental health. A long distance between work and home can also make it difficult for teachers to achieve a good work life balance. Teachers who spend a lot of time commuting may have less time. For the leisure activities, exercises or spending time with family and friends, which can lead to stress and burnout. He may even experience motion sickness or allergies due to the fact that he spends a long period of time in a transportation means which can affect his physical health wellbeing. A study published in Journal of Applied psychology found that work life conflict is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion among teachers (Fernet et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 2 which stated that there is no significant effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State was rejected. Hence, there is significant effect of career upgrading on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The finding is in consonance with the assertion of Sachdeva and Kaur (2013) that teachers in low-income countries also often report that they do not have an interest in the teaching vocation because of lack of career advancement opportunities and poor remuneration, and that they are frustrated by working in a limited resource environment. Kaltenbach et al., (2015) further added that poor education of teachers are overstrained when dealing with misbehaving students. Most time teachers in low income countries have only limited access to school resources but have to educate large classes for hours for small salaries that may not be able to cater to the needs of their families and other dependents. Career upgrading can cause stress among teachers because it often involves additional responsibilities and expectations, such as taking on leadership roles or pursuing advanced degrees. These extra demands can be challenging for teachers who are already stretched thin by their regular duties and can lead to feelings of burnout and stress. The process of career advancement can be competitive and uncertain which can also contribute to stress. Teachers may also feel pressure to meet certain requirements in order to advance their career which can be stressful, teachers choose to upgrade their career due to varieties of reasons, they may do to achieve professional development, it involves taking additional courses, attending workshops or conferences, or pursuing advanced degrees such as masters or doctorate.

Hypothesis 3 which stated that there is no significant effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State was rejected. Hence, there is significant effect of heavy workload on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The finding supported the opinion of Demirel and Cephe (2015) that teaching hours of teachers, the level of students and the extra workload leads to teacher's burnout. It is well established that teachers psychological health, attitudes and behaviors are adversely affected by stressful psychological work characteristics (Bartholomew et al., 2014). Teachers experience stress due to their workloads as they plan lessons, organize activities, develop curriculum, manage extra- curricular activities, supervise classes, provide information, promote discipline, provide cover for other teachers shortage and absences, maintaining records, give timetable, evaluate and access students performance, in addition to the motivation of students by words and actions (Desouky & Allam 2017). A lot of teachers are exposed to stress and have even gotten used to it because of their passion for the profession, Some teachers when teaching will not back

down until their students understands what they are teaching by trying to simplify, using real-life example to make them understand and will still inculcate morals and values in them like they are his/her children because he will not be proud of his profession when his/her student misbehaves in the school environment or in the society.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that workplace distance, career upgrading, and heavy workload had effect on stress level of secondary school teachers in Ikere-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Therefore, the researcher recommended the following:

1. Teachers should endeavor to reside or stay close around the school so as to reduce the stress of transportation to school daily.
2. School management should encourage teachers who are aspiring to upgrade their career to apply for educational leave so as to study conveniently without no stress.
3. Teachers should try to create schedule, prioritize their workload and make use of technology to reduce workload.

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