



Research Article

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Variables of Occupational Induced Stress and Coping styles among Teachers in Selected Special and Regular Primary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the variables of occupational induced stress and coping styles among Teachers in selected Special and Regular Primary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive research design and specifically used descriptive statistics to analyze the data. In a bid to arrive at the sample, multistage sampling procedure and purposive sampling techniques were used. 100 teachers therefore formed the sample that was purposively drawn from special and regular primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two instruments were used for the study named respectively: Teachers' Occupational induced stress Questionnaire (TOISQ) and Teachers' Coping styles Questionnaire (TCSQ). These are structured Questionnaire constructed by the researchers. They adopted modified likert scale with four response options to the ten item-statement respectively. The Instruments were face and content validated by three experts. Cronbach Alfa was used in each case to establish the reliability coefficient. The respective reliability coefficient was .83 and .81. The result and findings from the study disclosed occupational induced stress to include among others: heavy work loads, time pressure, technical demanding skills, insufficient teaching materials while the coping styles among others were practicing classroom management and associating with people for emotional stability. The recommendations among others include exposing the teachers in training and serving teachers to occupational induced stress and the coping strategies

Keywords: Stress, Coping, Teachers, Special school, Regular school, occupational induced stress

1. Introduction

The place of teachers in education of persons with special needs and those without special needs cannot be over emphasized. Eke (2000) remarked that teachers are live bow from which the learners as living arrows are sent forth. The above has spoken volume of the duties of teachers in the teaching profession. Teacher and education are very much related hence the former is agent of the latter.

Knowledge, acceptable attitudes and skills for self relevance and societal development are sourced from teachers through education. This profession as well as occupation is no doubt challenging. Eke and Olayi (2018) noted that in teaching profession there are esoteric knowledge, kernel of profession and service ideals. These three aforementioned come to play amidst stress. Opinni in Fowowe and Akinkuotu (2011) perceived a teacher as that professional individual who enlightens, elaborates, encourages, enthuses, explains, edifies, educates, inspires, instructs, imparts, indoctrinates, transforms, trains, inculcates and transmits ideas, information, virtues, values, skills, knowledgeable, good mannered, sociable, adaptable, productive, competent and complete human being in the society

No doubt stress is intricately interwoven with life and living (Eke, 2000). It is worthy to note that in some situations stress is much more pronounced. Stress can be mild or intense and vary across time in individuals, between and among individuals. There are many perceptions or definitions of stress. The father of stress, Selye (1978) saw stress as a non specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. This emphasizes that reaction to stress by individuals differ remarkably. Cogne and Holroyad in Anakwe (2003) conceptualized stress in three ways where one approach focuses on the environment describing stress as stimulus, events and circumstances that we perceive as threatening or harmful, thereby producing feelings of tension called stressors. The second approach deduced by same authors treats stress as a response focusing on people's reaction to stressors which has two interrelated components. One is psychological components which involves behavior, thought patterns and emotions as when one feels nervous. The psychological components involve heightened bodily arousal where heart pounds, mouth goes dry, stomach tightens and one perspires. One's psychological and physiological response to stressor is called strain. The third approach in the view of the authors describes stress as a process that includes stressors and strains but adds an important dimension which is the relationship between one and the environment. Stress is further perceived as intense exertion, strain and effort, the wear and tear of life. It is a state produced by a change in the environment that is challenging, threatening or demanding to the person's dynamic equilibrium. Brunner and Suddearth in Anakwe defined stress as an actual or perceived imbalance in capability to meet the demands of the new situation.

Cursory look at the foregoing makes it thinkable that teachers are faced with stress in the occupation and profession of teaching. The issue now is the types or forms or variables of the stress. This seems or appears as challenge or problem that awakened the curiosity of the present researchers to investigate. There are teachers found in regular schools as well as teachers found in special schools both seemingly trained. Their occupational stress ought to be identified. The stress could be true of teachers in both regular and special schools or otherwise. Eke(2000) perceived regular schools as school where most learners are without special needs and therefore can be taught by regular trained teachers whereas special school is where most or rather all learners are with special needs and therefore can be taught by special trained teachers. These teachers are most likely exposed to stress best described as occupational stress yet not categorically known. Anakwe (2003) conceived occupational stress as negative environmental factors or stressors such as work overload, role conflict, ambiguity, poor condition of services among others that are associated with a particular job. Moreover, Kyriacous (1987) defines teacher's stress from the experiences of unpleasant emotions such as tension, frustrations, anger and depression resulting from aspects of his or her work as a teacher. The author identified six sources of teachers' stress which include time pressures, low status, pupil indiscipline, poor working conditions, conflicts with colleagues and poor motivation in pupils. In another development Wiseman in Anakwe (2003) identified ten sources of teachers' stress that include large class, inadequate school building and equipment, teaching loads, more time needed, feeling of inadequacy as a teacher, poor human relations among the staff, rigidity of school organization, deficiency in teaching skills and loose school organization.. Moreover, Dunham in Anakwe disclosed six stress situation of teachers which include educational and social stress, role conflict and confusion, problem pupils, poor inter professional communication and cooperation and problem teachers. The researchers felt challenged hence no work along this line has addressed that of

teachers capturing those in regular and special schools to establish the specific kind of occupational induced stress in this Cross River State of Nigeria.

It is worthy of note that when stress is mentioned, it is a common place to hear coping. For short, according to Anakwe (2003), coping is the process by which people try to manage the perceived discrepancy between the demands and resources they appraise in a stressful situation. Effective coping is a matter of realistic appraisal of the stressful situation and the imaginative perception of possible coping strategies and choice of the right strategy. Lazarus in Nanjwan, Eke and Plang (2019) adduced two ways to cope with stress. According to the author, the first one is to direct efforts to deal with the source of stress that is direct action technique. The second one according to the author is dealing with the subjective experience of the stress which is also called palliative techniques. The author aptly stated that most individuals try direct action techniques first and if not successful or practicable they fall back on to palliative techniques. The protective function of coping behavior can be exercised in three ways: by eliminating or modifying conditions giving in a manner that neutralizes its problematic character, and by keeping the emotional consequences of problems within manageable bounds. Akinboye (2002) suggested ways to reduce stress to include among others ensuring workload in line with workers' capabilities, clear definition of work roles, provision of effective leadership at work, improved communications, opportunity for social interactions, employees' development of emotional intelligence, emotional control, happiness strategies, time management, life simplifications techniques and meditation. In an empirical study that involved teachers, Kyriacou in Anakwe (2003) showed that 42 school teachers rated the frequency with which they used 33 actions to cope with stress at work where the most often used included keeping things in perspective, avoidance of confrontations and relaxing after work.

The coping styles which serve as way of fixing challenges arising from stress abound and it has found awesomely that teachers in regular and special primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria shows no evidence in research available to the present researchers any investigation along that line. This vacuum inspired the present researcher to fill the gap. It is based on the back drop above that the researchers premised this study on variables of occupational induced stress and coping styles of teachers in regular and special primary school in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

It is obvious that life cannot be lived without stress. Nonetheless, there are most likely occupational induced stress on teachers found both in regular and special schools. Ideally, these occupational stress are bound to have coping strategies generated from the teachers to be able to manage the stressful situation.

It is appalling as it seems that the occupational induced stress of the teachers abound unidentified and unrecognized despite their outrageous effect. Worse still, there are available coping styles yet seemingly neither known nor utilized by the teachers. This seems to maximize its far reaching effect on the teachers and teaching profession. There are regular teachers and special teachers with differing backgrounds due to their training bias. There had been studies identifying effect of stress on the regular teachers alone without due consideration to special teachers that have learners with special needs. The present researchers are challenged to address both special and regular teachers' stress and coping styles hence to the best knowledge of the researchers no work or study in the state has addressed this.

There are many thinkable problems that teachers face due to aforesaid stress. Occupational induced stress can jeopardize the good result of teachers and in the end the learners may not benefit therefrom hence it is said when the learners did not learn, the teachers did not teach. The quality of product of teachers can adversely be affected. It is on this premise that the researchers wished to investigate the variables of occupational induced stress and coping styles of regular and special teachers in selected schools in cross river state of Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the variables of occupational induced stress and coping styles of teachers in selected regular and special primary schools in Cross River State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to identify the variables of

1. Occupational induced stress of teachers in selected regular and special primary schools in C.R.S
11. Coping styles of teachers in selected regular and special primary schools in C.R.S

4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What variable of occupational induced stress abound among teachers in regular and special primary schools?
2. What variables of coping styles abound among teachers in regular and special primary schools?

5. Methods

The design used for the study was a descriptive survey that was targeted to investigate the variables of occupational induced stress and coping styles of teachers in regular and special schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of study comprises all teachers in regular and special primary schools across three educational zones in Cross River State, Nigeria.

In a bid to arrive at the sample, multistage sampling procedure was employed. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling technique thence selected regular and special schools from among others. In cognizance of the spread of the education zones, five special schools were drawn from where ten special teachers were drawn. In like manner, regular schools were drawn: five schools from where ten regular teachers were drawn. By and Large, 100 teachers served as the sample thence with 50 regular teachers and 50 special teachers.

The Instruments for data collection were two in number. They are *Teachers' Occupational induced stress Questionnaire (TOISQ)* and *Teachers' Coping styles Questionnaire (TCSQ)*. These are two sets structured Questionnaire constructed by the researchers. They adopted modified likert scale with four response options to ten item-statements respectively. The Instruments were face and content validated by three experts. Cronbach Alfa was used in each case to establish the reliability coefficient. The respective reliability coefficient was .83 and .81. The aforementioned result demonstrated the reliability of the instruments which were used by the researchers.

The method of data Analysis was use of frequencies for the research questions. The rule of decision was deduced from summation of frequencies of Strongly Agreed (SA) and Agreed (A) against each item statement and summing up Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) of the respective items. In the end, any item that has up to 30 and above after the summation was considered significant and therefore a popular finding.

6. Results

6.1 Research question one

Analysis of Research Question 1: What variable of occupational induced stress abound among teachers in regular and special schools?

Table 1: Induced occupational stress of teachers in selected primary regular and special schools

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Heavy workloads	20(26)	25(24)	3(0)	2(0)
2	Time pressure from frequent datelines	21(23)	20(21)	7(6)	2(0)
3	Technical demanding skills	20(22)	21(23)	8(5)	1(0)
4	Challenges from overcrowded classroom	15(2)	10(2)	15(26)	10(20)
5	Insufficient teaching materials	22(24)	23(26)	5(0)	0(0)
6	Mastering the ever emerging latest techniques	15(20)	20(23)	10(7)	5(0)
7	Resolving differences among the learners	21(24)	23(23)	5(7)	0(0)
8	Writing Lesson Notes	26(25)	22(23)	2(2)	0(0)
9	Marking Pupils' works	23(20)	24(22)	3(5)	0(3)
10	Demands from supervisors	22(21)	20(19)	7(8)	1(2)

Research question one sought to elicit the variables of occupational induced stress that abound among the teachers in regular and special primary schools. The raw data in parenthesis disclosed that of teachers in special primary schools whereas the first that appear without parenthesis showed that of teachers from regular primary schools. It was therefore found from the gathered data that most items had frequencies of 30 and above after adding frequencies of Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A). This therefore suggests that among occupational induced stress of both teachers in regular and special schools are Heavy workloads, Time pressure, Technical demanding skills, Insufficient teaching materials and Mastering the ever emerging techniques. The other occupational induced stress include resolving difference between and among learners, writing lesson notes, marking pupils' works and demands from supervisors. Each of the foregoing are so judged thence with frequencies of 30 and above on summing up according to the rule of the decision.

6.2 Research Question 2

Analysis of Research Question 2: What variables of coping styles abound among teachers in regular and special schools?

Table 2: Coping styles of Teachers in selected Primary regular and special schools.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Time management skills to avoid clashes	3(0)	2(0)	20(24)	25(26)
2	Goal setting skill for all demands	6(5)	3(4)	20(21)	21(20)
3	Team working spirit for success	6(15)	3(14)	20(13)	21(8)
4	Built in rest periods	5(4)	6(5)	20(21)	19(20)
5	Practices Classroom management	20(21)	21(22)	6(7)	3(0)
6	Associating with people for emotional stability purposes	20(21)	21(22)	6(7)	3(0)
7	Study to acquire more skills	5(4)	3(3)	23(24)	20(19)
8	Utilizes behavior modification for the pupils.	4(5)	3(5)	22(20)	21(20)
9	Ask colleagues to assist fix challenges	5(6)	5(8)	20(20)	20(16)
10	Consistent physical exercises.	4(6)	6(4)	20(20)	20(20)

Research question two sought to elicit the variables of coping styles that abound among the teachers in regular and special primary schools. The raw data in parenthesis disclosed that of teachers in special primary schools whereas the first that appear without parenthesis showed that of teachers from regular primary schools. It was therefore found from the gathered data that only two items had frequencies of 30 and above after adding frequencies of Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree(A). This therefore suggests that among coping styles of both teachers in regular and special schools are practicing classroom management and associating with people for emotional stability. The other coping styles which include time management, goal setting, team work spirit, built in rest periods,

studying to acquire more skills, utilization of behavior modification, asking colleagues to assist fix challenges and consistent physical exercises are not among the coping styles of these teachers thence with less number of frequencies against Strongly Agreed(SA) and Agreed(A) . Based on decision rule the findings confirmed that only coping styles that the teacher have are in the two afore mentioned.

7. Discussion

It has been found in the study that among the teachers in both regular and special primary schools occupational induced stress include; Heavy work loads, Time pressure, Technical demanding skills, Insufficient teaching materials and Mastering the ever emerging techniques. The other occupational induced stress found from the study are resolving difference between and among learners, writing lesson notes, marking pupils' works and demands from supervisors. It is truly saying the obvious as remarked by Eke (2000) that stress is intricately intertwined with life and living but the stress from the teachers in this study is outstanding. No wonder, the study corroborated the findings of Wiseman in Anakwe (2003) that identified ten sources of teachers' stress which include large class, inadequate school building and equipment, teaching loads, more time needed, feeling of inadequacy as a teacher ,poor human relations among the staff, rigidity of school organization, deficiency in teaching skills and loose school organization. The study findings are reinforced by Anakwe conceiving occupational stress as negative environmental factors or stressors such as work overload, role conflict, ambiguity, poor condition of services among others that are associated with a particular job. Lending credence to the findings of the study Kyriacous (1987) disclosed teacher's stress as the experiences of unpleasant emotions such as tension, frustrations, anger and depression resulting from aspects of his or her work as a teacher. The foregoing have supported the findings of the study but notwithstanding one would have cause to wonder why the findings became so when it comes to mind that teacher in respective schools were trained for purpose of teaching and of course found selves in such occupation. This is worth looking at as it can be asserted that there is no work without stress. This reminds all the definition of teacher disclosed by Opinmi in Fowowe and Akinkuotu (2011) as that professional individual who enlightens, elaborates, encourages, enthuses, explains, edifies, educates, inspires, instructs, imparts, indoctrinates, transforms, trains, inculcates and transmits ideas, information, virtues, values ,skills, knowledgeable, good mannered ,sociable, adaptable, productive, competent and complete human being in the society. Anyway the authors might have articulated ideal teacher which in reality may be far fetched: and truly for that to come by makes occupational induced stress inevitable as evidenced in the present study.

The study found coping styles of the teachers in the regular and special primary schools to include; practicing classroom management and associating with people for emotional stability. By implication other coping styles such as time management, goal setting, team work spirit, built in rest periods, studying to acquire more skills, utilization of behavior modification, asking colleagues to assist fix challenges and consistent physical exercises are not among the coping styles of these teachers. It is shocking to observe that hence the only antidote for stress is coping. Taking a cursory look at definition of coping by Anakwe (2003) as the process by which people try to manage the perceived discrepancy between the demands and resources they appraise in a stressful situation, one wonders how teachers can manage stress without the skill or knowledge of coping styles. It is revealed in this study that the teachers under study are at cross road hence with disturbing stress but much less evidence to fix them with corresponding coping styles. The study, to some extent has support of Akinboye (2002) that suggested ways to reduce stress to include among others ensuring workload in line with workers' capabilities, clear definition of work roles, provision of effective leadership at work, improved communications, opportunity for social interactions, employees development of emotional intelligence, emotional control, happiness strategies, time management, life simplifications techniques and meditation. This can be testified hence the study found classroom management and associating with people for emotional stability as the only available and usable coping styles in face of seemingly intimidating occupational induced stress found in the present

study. The place of coping in fixing challenges arising from stress cannot be over emphasized. This is further demonstrated by Kyriacou in Anakwe (2003) reporting that 42 school teachers rated the frequency with which they used 33 actions to cope with stress at work where the most often used included keeping things in perspective, avoidance of confrontations and relaxing after work.

8. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that both teachers in regular and special primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria are exposed to many occupational induced stress. There are limited coping styles to arrest the stress in question. In as much as occupational induced stress is practically unavoidable for the teachers under study, the lee way is acquisition of the coping styles. The coping styles upon mastery shall cushion the effect of stress to a significant level to present and prospective teachers in regular and special primary schools in the state and beyond.

9. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion reached, the following recommendations are made.

1. The Curriculum planners of teacher training institution should include areas that shall deal with occupational induced stress of teaching profession to keep potential teachers abreast of such areas and above all equip them with coping styles or strategies.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops for the serving teachers in both regular and special schools on different coping styles/strategies of the occupational induced stress and corresponding coping styles.
3. The state and or Federal government should sponsor some persons overseas to take a course in stress and coping styles/ strategies to equip people in different occupations especially teachers for stress today is now a threat to humanity.
4. There is need to for Ministry of Education to commence inclusive education which is now in vogue to remove discrimination and labelling therefrom paving way for interaction of special and regular teachers to learn from one another and each other.

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