



PSYCHO-SOCIAL CORRELATES OF STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN OLUGBO LESS-CITY, ODEDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE

DELE OLANISIMI

*Department of Guidance & Counselling Psychology
Tai Solarin University of Education
Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria
Tel: 08066106465, 07037180076
dokita2004@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

The study was guided by Social Cognitive Theory, employed to examine the psycho-social environments of serving primary school teachers in Olugbo-Less City, Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. 100 rural active teachers currently undergoing in-service training in Ogun State Universal Basic Education Bureau/Tai Solarin University of Education in Teacher's Professional Development Programme, 2014 were randomly selected for the study. The instrument adopted was 3 point – Rural Teachers Stress Inventory (RTSI) with the 0.05 level of significance. Five research questions were raised and answered. Descriptive statistics and t-test statistical tools were employed to analyze the data collected. Results showed among others that mental-health problems such as anxiety disorders, mood and substance related disorders, lack of social support, delayed promotion, family problems and job pressure are identified as major sources of stressful experiences among the participants. Secondly, the effects of the stressors on the teachers' mental health are reduced mental capability, poor participation in community development and emotional problems (frequent anger, inability to relax, increase use of medication). It was also discovered that women are more prone to the various stressors than their male counterparts. A significant difference exists among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to working experience. Conclusively, rural development is people oriented, these people are rural dwellers and not urban settlers, and the primary school teachers in the rural areas are part of this population. Hence, the mental health of the primary school teachers is very essential, and if allowed to be impaired by the various occupational stressors, can lead to least or non-participation in the rural development. Based on the findings of the study, it was therefore recommended that the educational policy makers should equally think more of the implementers of the policy rather than the curriculum and the pedagogy. Social support services should be extended to the rural areas, though teachers go to churches and mosques for counselling, modern counselling psychological services offered by appropriate government and non-governmental agencies should not be limited to urban centres.

Keywords: *Psycho-social correlates, stressful experiences, primary school teachers, Olugbo Less City*

INTRODUCTION

Urban development could be seen as a development process embracing the efforts of individuals, self-help groups, non-governmental and governmental organisations, collective thinking, collective actions and participation (Dube, 1986) cited in Ugboh and Tibi (2002). Rural development means a process of social action in which people of the rural area organize themselves for the identification of their needs, planning to meet those needs with maximum reliance and on their own initiative and resources supplemented with assurance in any form from government or non-governmental organisations (Bello, 1980) cited in Ugboh, Tibi, (2002).

Given these definitions of the rural and urban development, it is clear that real development is dependent on the mentally healthy individuals among whom are the teachers. Therefore, if the mental health of the teachers is undermined by stressful experiences the issue of rural development will be far from being a reality.

Stress is not something strange to our daily life nowadays. Generally, the word stress has been used in social sciences research for a long time. Selye pioneered the research for psychological stress in 1950's. Cox and Brockley (1984) stated that stress is a perception phenomenon which exists from a comparison between the command given and ability of a person to execute the task successfully. Unbalanced situation in this mechanism will lead into stress experience and ultimately into stress reaction.



Teachers' stress according Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978a) is defined as an uncomfortable feeling, negative emotion such as anger, anxiety, pressure and disappointment arising from their work. A stressed teacher is someone with uncontrollable emotions to the extent that he could not adapt to changes in educational culture. Yahaya (2010) reported that teachers have to work more, doing clerical jobs, preparing for teaching aid materials, and attending courses in training and re-training programmes, meant for professional development. These require teachers to adapt themselves with new teaching techniques.

According to Yahaya (2010), high level of stress will lead to burn-out, low productivity, work absenteeism and work abandonment, he stressed further that indices of stress among teachers include anxiety, headache, high blood pressure and attitude related problems like alcohol, smoking addiction and sleep disorders

Durban and Alontaga (2013) identified teaching as one of the most stressful profession because it is people-oriented. Common causes of stress among teachers according to Ughoh and Alontaga (2013) include work pressure, workload and conflicts, professional growth lack of resources, poor professional relations with colleagues, low pay, unacceptable student behaviour, relations with the students' excess workload, parents teachers' expectations and lack of communication.

The theoretical root of stress can be traced to the work of Holroyd and Lazarus (1982) who provided a commonly accepted definition of stress as a situation that exists when environmental and internal demands task or exceed the individual's resources for managing them.

The purpose of the present study is to identify the various psycho-social factors that are capable of igniting the stressful experiences of the primary school teachers in Olugbo Less city in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State. Some studies have been conducted on teachers job satisfaction (Imam, 1990) teachers self-efficacy (Salam, 1996), teachers self-concept (Aremu, 1997), teachers perception of work environment (Haq & Sheikh, 1993). But not many studies have been found to have investigated the dimension of teachers stress in rural Nigeria in recent time. This study therefore is an attempt to investigate the relationship of psycho-social factors as they contribute to stressful experiences among rural teachers in Nigeria and its implication for counselling.

Social cognitive theory (SCT) is a psychological model of behaviour that emerged primarily from the work of Albert Bandura (1977, 1986) initially developed with an emphasis on the acquisition of social behaviours, SCT continues to emphasize that learning occurs in a social context and that what is learnt is gained through observation. SCT rests on many assumptions about learning and behaviour. One assumption concerns the view that personal behavioural and environmental factors influence one another in a reciprocal fashion, that a person's on-going functioning is a product of a continuous interaction between cognitive behavioural and contextual factors.

Therefore, the rural area primary school teachers working condition in which there is little or no social amenities, teaching materials, portable water and motor-able roads is a precursor for poor mental health lifestyle that translate into stressful experiences.

Stress is simply a reaction to a stimulus that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium. In other words, it's an omnipresent part of life. A stressful event can trigger the "fight-or-flight" response, causing hormones such as adrenaline to surge through the body. A little bit of stress, known as "acute stress," can be exciting—it keeps us active and alert. But long-term, or "chronic stress," can have detrimental effects on health. You may not be able to control the stressors in your world, but you can alter your reaction to them. According to Akinade (2012), studies have shown that mental stress and smoking increase the levels of cortisol, cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood and also lead to high blood pressure. He further stated that data from a cooperative study by the School of Aerospace Medicine and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio support the



hypothesis that cortisol, a hormone released during mental stress, is a biochemical link between mental stress and atherosclerosis (Akinade, 2012).

Work or occupational stress according to Nagra (2005) occurs when there are discrepancies between the demands of the workplace and the individuals ability to carry out and complete these demands. The Canadian safety Reporter (2014) noted that mental stress, workplace violence and workplace harassment are the biggest health and safety issues affecting Ontario 76,000 elementary teachers and educational professionals. Responses to stress among the teachers vary as they have a variety of manifestations, while some experience physical symptoms others experience psychological disturbance. Teacher stress is defined as an uncomfortable feeling, negative emotion such as anger, anxiety, pressure and disappointment sourced from their work aspects as teachers (Yahaya, 2005).

Anxiety disorder as pointed out by Yahaya (2010), is taken to mean a state of tension and apprehension that is a natural response to perceived threat and the symptoms include headache, breathlessness, nervousness, chest pain, tiredness, apprehension, palpitation, dizziness, faintness and excessive sweating. Psychologists view stress in three ways: as a stimulus, as a response and as an ongoing interaction between the organism and its environment.

Maisamari (2000), in an effort to provide a way out of stressful experience, submitted that social support will be very effective. According to him, social support is the kind of physical presence in terms of financial, moral, spiritual and academic assistance given by close relatives, government and non-governmental agencies, professional groups, social club members, etc. The purpose as amplified by Selye (1974), is to provide strong support systems that would positively affect immune system in order to make them happy and healthy. Although, social supporters usually give positive effects, however, social supporters in exhibit negative effects occasionally. Recent works by ex-psychologists, indicated that socially supportive relationships will mutes the effect of stress, help people to cope with stress and enhanced help. (Jackson, 2004) asserts that people who have little or no social or community support tend to die faster than those who have it.

Akinade (2012) pointed out that stress despite its negative aspects is not without its goodness; to him stress is capable of keeping us from being bored, increase the production of proteins and help repair body cells including brain cells enabling them to work at peak capacity. Effects of stress and other mental health problems on individual teachers and the developmental efforts in the rural area cannot be overemphasized. Citizen participation in the developmental project demands that the people must be involved in planning utilization and assessment of the social amenities. The task is best conceived when the people involved are happy and mentally healthy (Anyichi, 1995).

Gerontologists like Sunder, Lai, Adareh and Pankaj (2009) believe that aging is related to stress especially the aging process laden with effects of diseases or unhealthy lifestyle and environmental factors. Family health care (2003) asserted that aging teachers do have multiple health problems like constipation, low back pain diabetes mellitus, hypertension, stroke, poor eyesight, insomnia, poor mobility, etc. These have been supported by many empirical studies (e.g.) as inseparable from aging in the teaching profession.

Statement of problem

Stressful experiences are not helpful for productivity at work as affected individuals are under pressure. This study is investigating the various psycho-social problems that primary school teachers face in the rural areas. These problems include mental-health problems like anxiety disorders, mood and substance related disorders), lack of social support, delayed promotion, family problems and job pressure.

However, primary school teachers in the rural areas may feel stressed and consequently have strained relationships with colleagues and the school management. As



a result of this, teachers are faced with other forms of problems like disciplinary problems with students, low pay, and unsatisfactory conditions of service, impaired mental health in form of anxiety, high blood pressure, sadness all which have implications for productivity and teachers' participation and involvement in community development.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the psychosocial sources of stress on the teachers.
2. examine the major effects of the stressors on the teachers' mental health
3. examine the major effects of the stressors on developmental efforts in the rural area
4. investigate the differences among the effects of stress and primary school teachers when classified according to years of working experience
5. examine the differences among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender

Research Questions

In order to achieve the set objectives for the study, five research questions were raised and answered:

1. What are the major sources of stress for rural primary school teachers?
2. What are the major effects of the stressors on the teachers mental health?
3. What are the major effects of the stressors on developmental efforts in the rural area?
4. Is there a significant difference among the effects of stress and primary school teachers when classified according to years of working experience?
5. Is there a significant difference among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to examine the psycho-social correlates of stressful experiences among primary school teachers in Olugbo Less-City, Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Population

The population for the study consisted of all primary school teachers in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State in which there are twenty-five primary schools with an average population of teachers of 400. Odeda Local Government Area is one of the twenty(20) local governments in Ogun State. There is no pipe-borne water and the electricity supply is epileptic and the socio-economic status of the inhabitants is generally low as many of them are petty traders and peasant farmers. Hence, the income of the parents determines the economic status of the primary school pupils.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 100 primary school teachers was selected as respondents through random sampling technique. 100 respondents cut across five (5) primary schools in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State. For the purpose of this study, the multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted. These five (5) schools were randomly selected through multi-stage random sampling technique.

Five (5) local governments were randomly selected from the twenty local governments of the state, and one local government was randomly selected from the selected local governments. In the selected local government, there are one hundred and six primary schools out of which five(5) schools were selected in Olugbo, Odeda Local Government of the State.



The instrument for the study was an inventory named *Rural Teachers Stress Inventory (RTSI)* designed by the Department of Guidance and Counselling Psychology, Tai Solarin University of Education with the reliability coefficient alpha of 0.82; and it was validated by psychometric experts in the Department. Descriptive statistics and t-test were used to analyse the variables.

A total of 100 respondents participated in the study; 45 males and 55 females; they have varied years of experience. Different levels of educational background: NCE (41%), B.Ed (31%), OND (19%) and Grade II (9%). All participants are married.

Procedure of Data Collection

The study was carried out during the cluster meeting of the UBE/TASUED professional training programme designed for the head teachers and primary school teachers. Each cluster has a total number of 10 schools of which each school was represented by five teachers making the total number of 50 teachers in a cluster. The inventory was focused administered in two clusters simultaneously, 100 questionnaires were given out, and all were retrieved. The data collected were analyzed by experts.

Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-test statistics.

RESULTS

Table 1: Participants Demographic Factors; gender, years of experience, educational qualification and age

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS	RESPONSE		
	Freq.	No	Total (%)
Gender			
Male	45	45	100%
Female	55	55	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0
Years of Experience	Freq.	(%)	Total (%)
1yr – 5 yrs	22	22	100%
6yrs – 15 yrs	20	20	100%
16yrs – 20 yrs	37	37	100%
21yrs and above	21	21	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0
Educational Qualification	Freq.	(%)	Total (%)
NCE	41	41	100%
B.Ed	31	31	100%
OND	19	19	100%
Grade II	9	9	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0
Age	Freq.	(%)	Total (%)
20yrs – 25 yrs	26	26	100%
26yrs – 45 yrs	53	53	100%
46yrs – 55yrs	21	21	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0

Research Question 1: What are the major sources of stress for rural primary school teachers?

**Table 2:** Frequency Percentage of major sources of stress for rural primary school teachers

Variables	Freq.	(%)	Total (%)
Mental-Health problems(anxiety disorders, mood and substance related disorders)	40	40	100%
Lack of Social support	17	17	100%
Delayed promotion	15	15	100%
Family problems (divorce, single parenting)	8	8	100%
Job Pressure (work overload)	20	20	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0

Research Question 2: What are the major effects of the stressors on the teachers' mental health?

Table 3: Frequency percentage of major effects of the stressors on the teachers' mental health

Variables	Freq.	(%)	Total (%)
Reduced mental capability	21	21	100%
Substance related problems (tolerance, withdrawal, impaired memory, dry mouth)	17	17	100%
Poor participation in community development (inactivity)	19	19	100%
Burn-out (boredom)	18	18	100%
Emotional problem (frequent anger, inability to relax, increase use of medication)	25	25	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0

Research Question 3: What are the major effects of the stressors on development efforts in the rural area?

Table 4: Frequency percentage of major effects of the stressors on development efforts in the rural area

Variables	Freq.	(%)	Total (%)
Local leaders (males / females)	30	30	100%
Leaders of women groups	20	20	100%
Leaders of age grade	25	25	100%
Primary school teachers	10	10	100%
Leaders of community institutions	15	15	100%
Total	100	100%	100.0

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to working experience

**Table 5:** t-test analysis of effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to working experience

Paired Samples Test							
Variable	N	Mean	Std	t-cal	t-tab	df	Alpha level
High working experience	58	78.95	21.05	5.118	1.980	99	0.05
Low working experience	42	71.05	28.95				

The result in the above table shows that the calculated value of t-cal(5.118) is greater than its tabulated value (1.980) at 5% level of significance. In view of this, the result showed that there is significant difference among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to working experience.

Research Question 5: Is there a significant difference among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender

Table 6: t-test analysis of effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender

Paired Samples Test							
Variable	N	Mean	Std	t-cal	t-tab	df	Alpha level
Male	45	72.5	27.5	6.206	1.980	99	0.05
Female	55	77.5	22.5				

The result in the above table shows that the calculated value of t-cal(6.206) is greater than its tabulated value (1.980) at 5% level of significance. In view of this, the result showed that there is significant difference among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender.

DISCUSSION

The demographic data for primary school teachers in the rural Nigeria as exemplified by this study showed that there are more female teachers than their male counterparts in the primary schools, this is perhaps because teaching profession in Nigeria give more time to women to take care of their homes unlike other professions like banking and other financial institutions. Most men prefer their women to take up jobs in teaching so that they can have more time to take care of their homes. Secondly, the lower rung of the ladder in the teaching profession tend to be more saturated with lower qualifications and inexperienced on the job. This is in contrast to the higher rung to the ladder where we have more experienced, more qualified and retiring group of teachers among which we have the administrators like the Headmasters and Headmistresses.

The summary of the rankings of the sources of stress among the primary school teachers in the rural area showed that the teachers experienced mental health related problems (anxiety disorders, mood and substance related disorders) 40% ranked first. Ranking second is job pressure (work overload) – 20%. Lack of social support 17% ranked third, delayed promotion 15% ranked fourth while family problems (divorce, single parenting) 8% ranked fifth. These findings are not strange, as most of the teachers are vulnerable to more stressful experiences because of the multiple causes of stress for the working population in the rural areas.

Research Question 2 x-rays the ranking of effects of the stressors on the teachers' mental health and it was discovered that emotional problem (frequent anger, inability to relax, increase use of medication) 25% ranked first, the attendance of reduced mental capability (21%) ranked second, poor participation in community development (19%) ranked third, burn-out (18%) ranked fourth while substance related problems (tolerance, withdrawal, impaired memory, drymouth) 17% ranked fifth. Although other forms of mental



problems have their share as the respondents claim to have being treated one time or the other. As a result of stimulus stress, response stress and transactional stress, the teachers suffered reduction in mental capabilities which have severe implications for productivity at work; while some take drugs / sleeping pills to relax their muscles and sleep, others take time to recreational activities with family members.

Research question 3 sought out the major effects of the stressors on development efforts in the rural area. It was discovered that the contribution of rural primary teachers is very low compared to other group of individuals in the community. Local leaders (political, economic and social groups) ranked first with 30%, leaders of age grade ranked second with 25%, leaders of women groups ranked third with 20%, leaders of community institutions ranked fourth with 15% while primary school teachers ranked the least of 10% contribution to community development. This is perhaps because work overload, delayed promotion and emotional problems caused by these stressors to the extent that they are not interested in any other work outside the school work. Other groups may have access to public fund as a working tool while the primary school teachers depends solely on their monthly salary. This view point is amplified by Oleta, Okide (2012) who is of the opinion that primary school teachers are not involved in core-project leadership, grassroots planning which is one of the problems affecting rural development in Nigeria.

Research question 4 tested the t-test analysis of effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to working experiences. The result showed that the low working experience of teachers is more vulnerable to stressful experiences, perhaps because of inexperience and inability to adjust, to relatively new working environment. This indicates that the government is not employing new teachers, and the job pressure keep mounting to the extent that we have what is called multi-grade teaching in which a teacher teaches several arms of class as a result of paucity of personnel, hence, this incidents make them prone more to stressful experiences compared to their higher working experience counterparts. Consistent to this, Sunder, Lai, Adarch and Pankaj (2009), founded that the result showed that the higher the number of years of experience in teaching, the more stressed up the teachers become; this is supported by the findings of the gerontologists. They further stated that aging in teaching is related to stress.

Research question 5 sought to know the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender. The result showed that calculated value (χ^2_{cal}) is greater than the tabulated value (χ^2_{tab}) [(6.206 > 1.980)] which implies that there is significant difference among the effects of stress among primary school teachers when classified according to gender. This is understandable bearing in mind that the women folk have more responsibilities starting from the home front with its concomitant effect like home management, childbearing, child rearing, home keeping. Therefore, there is little wonder when women were often given maternity leave in the course of their professional career which their male counterparts do not need. Female gender with are more vulnerable to stressful experiences than their male counterparts. The results also show that the female gender are more stressed up than female counterparts. This can be explained against the backdrop of feminism that involves child bearing and home management and other stereotyped commitments on the part of the female gender. Even though, the male gender is the bread winner in the society, but there are some situations in which the women are both the bread winners and the bread bakers, a position that is hardly occupied by the men, and this when combined with the teaching job, the women are more vulnerable to stressful experiences than their men counterparts.

Conclusions

Rural development is people oriented, these people are rural dwellers and not urban settlers, and the primary school teachers in the rural areas are part of this population. Hence, the mental health or the primary school teachers is very essential, and if allowed to be impaired by the various occupational stressors, can lead to least or non-participation in



the rural development. This paper has been able establish a strong link between the mental health and healthy lifestyle of the teachers and rural development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. That the educational policy makers should equally think more of the implementers of the policy rather than the curriculum and the pedagogy. Since they are human beings, their well being should be permanent in the heart of the policy makers.
2. Social support services be extended and straightened in the rural areas; as most of these services are limited to the urban centres, though the teachers go to churches and mosques, which is enough as there is the need for counselling centres in the rural areas. The relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies should extend their psycho-social services that are limited to the urban centers to the rural areas.
3. That rural primary school teachers be involved in rural development projects; this is needful because they have the understanding in the stake on the plans that concern them.
4. That the female primary of school teachers be prioritized in the scheme of beings; this is because of the sensitive position and vulnerability to stressors.
5. That as teachers advance in age and their career, special scheme be put in place to take care of their health.

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