

An Assessment of Job Burnout, Job Stress and Coping Strategies among Early Childhood Education Teachers in Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State

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Abstract

This study examined Job Burnout, Job stress, and Coping strategies among early childhood education teachers in Ijebu-North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The study employed the descriptive research design. One hundred and fifty (150) teachers were randomly sampled to participate in the study. Instruments used in the study were Job Burnout Scale (JBS), Job Stress Scale (JSS) and Coping Strategies Scale (CSS). The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that nervousness, high hopes and expectations, among others were factors that lead to job stress among early childhood education teachers. Fatigue, Frustration and Emotional drained at work were some of the causes of Job burnout among early childhood education teachers. There were no significant gender differences in Job burnout, Job stress and Coping strategies among early childhood education teachers. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that employing positive ways of handling stress will allow teachers to maintain their drive and commitment. Developing positive responses to stress will allow teachers to be more satisfied with their roles as educators.

Keywords: Stress, Burnout, Coping Strategies, Teachers and Early Childhood Education

Introduction

Teachers are the most valued assets of any country, they have a vital role to play, they educate the most valued assets of the country like the students, professional e.t.c (Akhlag, Amjad & Mehmood 2010).Recent global changes have resulted in creation of new challenges in shape of global competition, technological advancements, quality assures, standardization and cost minimization, which hardly hit each and every sector throughout the world, the educational sector has no exemption. The academician working in different educational institutions are under immense pressure to meet the expectations of students. In the process of meeting the expectations of students, the teachers are exposed to certain unwanted internal or external environmental Factors which hamper their routine abilities in developments of Feeling of exhaustion and strain. Once teachers develop such symptoms, then their performance and satisfaction level is decreased and thus the overall productivity of educational institution is suffered (Bakko & Bal 2010).

Job stress is a body's non-specific response to the demand placed on it from a particular job. It is a state of emotional breakdown of a body being worked out by a particular job (Selye 2002).

The stress gained from a particular job is what causes burnout in a body, each job available has its own stress, but this study specified on the stress on teaching job. Stress may also elicit physical or physiological responses from teachers. Some physical symptoms of stress include fatigue, tiredness, headache, chest pains, and stomach aches (Blase 2000). If constant stress has you feeling disillusioned, helpless and completely worn out, you may be suffering from burnout. When a teacher is burned out, problems seems insurmountable, everything looks bleak, and its difficult to muster up the energy to care for students (Roche & Jarrod 2011). Stress is any action or situation that places special physical or psychological demands upon a person, anything that can unbalance his or her individual equilibrium. And while the physiological response to such demand is surprisingly uniform, perhaps the one incontestable statement that can be made about stress is that it belongs to everyone- to businessmen and professors, to mother and their children, to factory workers but this study is specified on the early childhood education teachers. Teachers stress can be managed but not simply done away with (Van Dierendonck & Visser A, 2005).

Teachers' stress in particular means a situation where the teachers are exposed to certain unwanted environmental factors which exist within the educational institution or outside the educational institution. The factors hamper the normal routine life of teachers by negatively affecting their performance at work. A routine stress is also right, and has no effects on teachers, but if the stress continuously affect teachers,' then they react in different ways like showing job dissatisfaction, less morale, weak performance and general exhaustion. The stress contributing factors among teachers vary from situation to situation, but there is a general agreement on certain factors which exists either within institution or outside institution, which contribute to stress among early childhood education teachers (Gillespie, Walsh, Dua, & Stough 2001). Teachers stress can be caused from an ineffective performance with the students which is a direct sign of decrease in work satisfaction, involvement and effort. Stress often comes about when teachers have difficulty negotiating various aspects of interaction with students or from any circumstances that are considered too demanding, depriving of time and interfering with instructions. Burnout affects also social relationship and attitudes making interactions at home and work difficult either because of social withdrawal of the burned out person or of making him prone to conflict. Withdrawing is a type of defence mechanism but in fact this has a negative effect because of social interactions for ones well-being. Burnout in early childhood education teachers may lead to general health problems because of the stress becoming chronic, symptoms like headaches, colds, insomnia, may appear together with overall tiredness (Hear 2011).

Job stress in teachers can produce many different signs and symptoms. Teachers may experience emotional symptoms such as being nervous around students, having intrusive thought, panic attacks and bursting into tears, teachers may experience behavioural symptoms such as losing interest in things, neglecting his or her personal appearance and experiencing periods of confusion. Teachers may experience physical symptoms such as stomach upset, dizzy spells, feeling light-headed and headaches, prolonged stress may also lead to anxiety and depression (Dave Smith, 2004).

Burnout and job stress in early childhood education teachers are part of cogent factors militating against the performance of teachers, early childhood teachers are faced with different challenges which often leads to stress and burnout. Reasons have been advanced that the cause of high rates burnout includes: environmental factors such as pupils misbehaviour, learning difficulties, poor relations, work overload, and students performance, and so on. It is on this premise that this study intends to investigate these problems teachers faced and alter a solution in alleviating stress among early childhood teachers in Ijebu-North Local Government area of Ogun State.

Objective of the Study.

The objective of this study is to examine burnout and job stress of early childhood education teachers and identify the coping strategies teachers use in response to these stressors. Moreover, the study would help early childhood education teachers know the physical, psychological or material factors to be used in overcoming the related stressor and achieve valued outcome. The study will help teachers to have the knowledge in guiding and assessing the students in the best way even when they are exhausted.

Research Questions

The research would like to answer the following specific questions:

1. What are the causes of stress for early childhood education teachers?
2. What are the causes of burnout for early childhood education teachers?
3. What strategies do these particular teachers use to cope with their identified stressors?

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted for the study is the descriptive research design. This offered the researcher opportunity to collect data without manipulating any of the variables of interest in the study. It also gives the opportunity to describe the variable as they naturally exist among respondents.

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprises of all early childhood education teachers in Ijebu-North Local Government area of Ogun State. The sample for this study comprises of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents that was used to select the sample for the study. Ten schools out of seventy-three schools in the Ijebu-North Local Government were selected for the study, from each of the selected schools; five Nursery and Primary private schools and five Government primary schools were selected using stratified sampling.

Instrumentation

The study utilized four (4) validated instruments for data collection.

Perceived Stress Scale

It is a 10-item scale designed and developed by Blau (1970). The scale has a response format ranging between “never” (0), “almost never” (1), “sometimes” (2), “fairly often” (3), and “very often” (4). High scores in the scale reflect high level of perceived stress while low scores reflect low level of perceived stress. PSS is a standardized scale of which validity and reliability have been ascertained by its original authors. Some Nigerian researchers have also found sufficient evidence for the reliability of the PSS with Nigerian subjects. (Azeez & Adenuga, 2012). In their study, a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.72 and a Guttman Split-half reliability coefficient of 0.77 were reported for the scale.

Workburnout Scale

It is an Eleven (11) item scale developed and designed by Maslach (1984). The scale has a response format ranging between “A few times a year”- (1) “Monthly” - (2) “Few times in a month”- (3) “Every week”- (4) “A few times a week” - (5) “Everyday”- (6). High scores in the scale reflect high level of job burnout while low scores in the scale reflect low level of job burnout. Based on this study, a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81 and a guttman split-half reliability co-efficient of 0.73 were reported for the scale.

Coping Strategies Scale

It is a Ten (10) item scale developed by Sudhaker and Gomes (2010) to elicit the responses of the respondents. The scales has a respond format ranging from “Strongly Disagree”- (1) “Disagree”- (2) “Agree”- (3) “ Strongly Agree”- (4). High score in the scale reflect low level of coping strategies. The instrument was subjected to content validity before its use. Indetermining its reliability, the test–re–test procedure was adopted. The instrument was administered twice on a sample of 20 teachers at an interval of 2 weeks. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.56, which was considered high enough to justify the use of the instrument in the study.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers visited the selected schools personally for the administration of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to the various teachers of the selected schools. After collection, the questionnaires were thoroughly examined to ensure that they are filled properly. At the end of the exercise, the researcher had a total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from the ten selected schools in Ijebu-North Local Government area of Ogun State.

Method of Data Analysis

This study adopted and utilized both Descriptive and Inferential Statistics. The descriptive statistics was meant to obtain Mean and Standard deviation. The inferential statistics of independent t-test was employed to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What are the causes of Stress?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics showing the Major Causes of Stress (Mean = 2.00)

S/N	C a u s e s	M e a n	S D	Remark
1	I was upset because of something that happened unexpectedly	1 . 8 6	1 . 1 5	Rejected
2	I was unable to control the important things in my life	1 . 6 6	1 . 2 7	Rejected
3	I f e l t n e r v o u s a n d s t r e s s e d	2 . 0 4	1 . 0 4	Accepted
4	I felt confident about the ability to handle personal problem	2 . 4 8	1 . 3 5	Accepted
5	I f e l t t h i n g s w e r e I m y w a y	2 . 2 0	1 . 2 4	Accepted
6	I could not cope with all things that I had to do	1 . 4 9	1 . 1 5	Rejected
7	I felt I was able to control irritation in my life	2 . 2 7	1 . 3 1	Accepted
8	I f e l t I w a s o n t o p o f t h i n g s	2 . 1 2	1 . 1 7	Accepted
9	I was angry because of things that were outside of my control	1 . 7 5	1 . 2 2	Rejected
1 0	I felt difficulties were putting up so high that I could not overcome them	1 . 6 6	1 . 3 3	Rejected

The Table above presents the descriptive statistics of the major causes of stress among early childhood teachers. The result as indicated above showed that there is a lot of cause of stress. Based on the result above, individual could be stressed because, they were nervous, things were on their way, ability to handle personal problem, ability to control irritation in my life and maybe individual was on top of things among others as indicated with mean values of 2.04, 2.20, 2.40, 2.27, and 2.12 respectively.

Research question Two: What are the causes of Burnout?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Showing the Major Causes of Burnout (Mean = 3.50)

S/N	C a u s e s	M e a n	S D	Remarks
1	E m o t i o n a l l y d r a i n e d a t w o r k	2 . 5 8	1 . 5 5	Rejected
2	B o r e d a b o u t m y w o r k	2 . 4 7	1 . 5 1	Rejected
3	Powerless about work and situation	2 . 6 5	1 . 5 5	Rejected
4	Fatigue when I got up in the morning	2 . 9 2	1 . 7 5	Rejected
5	Frustrated about my work	2 . 5 4	1 . 6 8	Rejected
6	Dissatisfied about my work and reward	2 . 3 4	1 . 4 8	Rejected
7	Colleagues immensely irritated	2 . 0 3	1 . 3 8	Rejected
8	I envy other who are happy in their work	2 . 4 5	1 . 8 0	Rejected
9	Ability to be rude to co-worker, boss or client	1 . 8 7	1 . 4 4	Rejected
10	I n a d e q u a t e a b o u t m y j o b	1 . 9 7	1 . 4 1	Rejected
11	I deserve to give-up and get away	2 . 1 8	1 . 5 5	Rejected

The table above presents the descriptive statistics, showing the major causes of burnout for early childhood teachers. The result as indicated above showed that the major causes include: Fatigue when I got up in the morning, Powerless about work and situation, Emotionally drained at work, Frustrated about my work, Bored about my work, I envy other who are happy in their work, Dissatisfied about my work and reward, deserve to give-up and get away as indicated by the mean values of 2.92, 2.65, 2.58, 2.54, 2.47, 2.45, 2.34, and 2.18 respectively.

Research question three: What are the perceived coping strategies?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Showing the Perceived Coping Strategies (Mean = 2.50)

S/N	S t r a t e g i e s	M e a n	S	D	Remark
1	Accept the fact that sometimes stress is unavoidable	1 . 7 1	0 . 7 7		Rejected
2	Feel that the problem is temporary and vies for the future	1 . 7 9	0 . 7 4		Rejected
3	I get the prepared to accept the situation	1 . 9 2	0 . 7 3		Rejected
4	I try to accept the situation as it is	2 . 0 2	0 . 8 1		Rejected
5	I discuss the problem with colleagues	2 . 0 9	0 . 7 9		Rejected
6	I leave the problem and discuss it latter on with others	1 . 9 5	0 . 6 9		Rejected
7	I e n g a g e d i n h u b b y	1 . 7 0	0 . 6 3		Rejected
8	I s e e k h e l p f r o m s u p e r i o r	1 . 8 5	0 . 8 2		Rejected
9	I think for alternative solution	1 . 8 9	0 . 8 3		Rejected
10	I p u t t h e p r o b l e m a s i d e	2 . 4 3	0 . 9 1		Rejected
11	I lower the expectancy for work satisfaction	2 . 2 3	0 . 8 4		Rejected
12	I spend the day with my family outdoor	2 . 4 8	0 . 8 3		Rejected
13	I make phone and take suggestion from many	2 . 2 3	0 . 9 1		Rejected
14	I v i s i t p l a c e o r w o r s h i p	1 . 7 5	0 . 7 6		Rejected
15	I meditate or use other relaxation techniques	2 . 0 5	0 . 7 5		Rejected
16	I simply avoid the other co workers	2 . 6 7	0 . 9 7		Accepted
17	Icompare other profession and think that mine is better	2 . 2 0	0 . 8 9		Rejected
18	I t a k e d r i n k	2 . 7 4	0 . 9 3		Accepted
19	I lose temper and displace feelings on others	2 . 6 8	1 . 0 3		Accepted
20	I t a k e a d a y o f f	2 . 6 5	0 . 9 6		Accepted

The table above presents the descriptive statistics, showing the strategies that can be best adopted in coping stress for early childhood teachers. The result as indicated above showed that there are diverse strategies than an individual can adopt to reduce work related stress. The findings of this study suggest among others that in reducing stress one could adopt the following strategies. This include: One can decide to take a drink, lose temper and displace feelings on others , avoid the other co workers, take a day off, spend the day with my family outdoor, put the problem aside, lower the expectancy for work satisfaction, make phone call and take suggestion from others , compare other profession and think that the present job is better than the other , discuss the problem with colleagues, meditate or use other relaxation techniques and accept the situation as it is as indicated by the mean values of 2.74, 2.61,2.67, 2.65, 2.48, 2.43, 2.23, 2.23, 2.20, 2.09, 2.05 and 2.02 respectively

Hypothesis One: There is no significant gender difference in perceived stress among the respondents’

Table 4: T-Test Showing Gender Differences in Perceived Stress among the Respondents’

G e n d e r	N	M e a n	S D	t	P	R e m a r k
M a l e	2 7	20.70	8.15	0 . 8 3 9	>0.05	Not Significant
F e m a l e	1 2 3	19.30	7.75			

The table above present and independents sample test showing significant gender differences in perceived stress among the respondents. The result of the descriptive analysis presented above showed that the mean score for male perception on stress is 20.70 while that of female is 19.30 with standard deviation of 8.15 and 7.75 respectively. The mean differences were not significant at 0.05 levels. Thus, there is no significant gender difference in perceived stress among the respondents Nevertheless, the result of the independents sample test of 0.839 whose probability close to one percent shows statistically that at 0.05 level of significant, there is a statistical evidence to conclude that gender is a determinant factors for stress among workers. Therefore, there are no significant gender differences in perceived stress among the respondents

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant gender difference in work burnout among the respondents’

Table 5: T-Test Showing Gender Differences in Work Burnout among the Respondents'

G e n d e r	N	M e a n	S T D	t	P	R e m a r k
M a l e	2 7	28.33	12.05	1 . 2 3	>0.05	Not Significant
F e m a l e	1 2 3	25.46	10.69			

The table above present and independents sample test showing significant gender differences in work burnout among the respondents. The result of the descriptive analysis presented above showed that the mean score for male workers work burnout is 28.33 while that of female workers is 25.46 with standard deviation of 12.05 and 10.69 respectively. The mean differences were not significant at 0.05 level. Thus, there is no significant gender difference in work burnout among the respondents. Nevertheless, the result of the independents sample test of 1.23 whose probability close to one percent shows statistically that at 0.05 level of significant, there is no statistical evidence to conclude that gender is a determinant factors for work burnout in an organization. Therefore, there is no significant gender difference in work burnout among the respondents

Hypothesis three: There is no significant gender difference in perceived coping strategies among the respondents'

Table 6: T-Test Showing Gender Differences in Perceived Coping Strategies among the Respondents'

G e n d e r	N	M e a n	S T D	t	P	R e m a r k
M a l e	2 7	41.44	6.93	1 . 3 8 7	>0.05	Not Significant
F e m a l e	1 2 3	43.35	6.39			

The table above present and independents sample test showing significant gender differences in perceived stress coping strategies among the respondents. The result of the descriptive analysis presented above showed that the mean score for male workers perceived stress coping strategies is 41.44 while that of female workers is 43.35 with standard deviation of 6.93 and 6.39 respectively. The mean differences were not significant at 0.05 level. Thus, there is no significant gender difference in perceived stress coping strategies among the respondents

Nevertheless, the result of the independents sample test of 1.387 whose probability close to one percent shows statistically that at 0.05 level of significant, there is no statistical evidence to conclude that gender is a determinant factors for perceived stress coping strategies among workers in an organization. Therefore, there is no significant gender difference in perceived stress coping strategies among the respondents.

Discussion of the Findings

The first research question states that- What are the cause of stress for early childhood teachers? The result of the analysis in Table 4.1 showed that there are a lot of factors that can lead to stress. This include- Nervousness, highly expectant, too much of work ahead among others. Developing positive responses to stress will allow teachers to be more satisfied with their role as an educator and become more effective educator in the classroom. A decrease in work satisfaction results in teachers being less involved and motivated causing teachers to demonstrate feelings of resentment, frustration, boredom, irritability, anger, and depression. This corroborate the findings of Blasé(2002) who discovered finding positive ways to handle stress will allow teachers to maintain their drive and commitment, thus making them continue to put the effort needed to be involved, satisfied and effective teachers. The result of this study is not in alignment with, the findings of Klassen and Chiu (2010) who found out that low self-efficacy are related specifically to high classroom stress. Teachers with higher classroom stress, referring to the stress felt specifically in the context of the classroom also reported feeling less effective in classroom management and handling behavioural issues. According to Griffith, Steptoe, and Cropley (2000), they discovered that primary teachers suffer more stress than secondary teachers. Primary teachers are responsible for one class throughout the entire school year which make teachers not only responsible for education activities, but for moral and social development as well.

The second research question states that- What are the causes of burnout for early childhood teachers? The result according to table 2 showed that fatigue in the morning, powerless about work and situation, emotionally drained at work, frustration about work, dissatisfaction about work are caused of burnout among early childhood teachers.

This is not surprising because Burnout in early childhood education teachers results from the chronic perception that one is unable to cope with daily life demands.

Given that early childhood teachers must face a classroom full of pupils every day, negotiate potentially stressful interactions with parents, administrators, counsellors and other teachers. This corroborate the findings of Howard and Johnson (2004) who discovered that teachers were more likely to become burned out when they are not recognised for their job efforts, which resulted in more stress. They also found out that teachers experiencing more burnout feel role overload and conflict. Teachers with characteristics such as low social support and overall well-being apply have also been associated with burnout. This agree with Troman and Woods (2001) who discovered that feeling like not going to work, having overwhelmed by workload and having a related sense of inadequacy to tasks given, withdrawing from colleagues or engaging in conflictual relationships with co-workers are easily symptoms of teachers burnout. According to Cates, Templating, and Satcher (2002), discovered that work overload for example, high case loads and work environment leads to burnout. Various symptoms are indicative to burnout, including affective, cognitive, physical, behavioural and motivational symptoms. In their review, they reported burnout as a phenomenon of physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness, associated with chronic stress.

The third research question states that- What are the effect of burnout on early childhood education teachers? The result according to Table 3 showed that there are two effects of burnout, which are- Teachers feel forced to do low quality work or not finish their work at all. This often leads to lower self-esteem, high blood pressure, and anxiety. Secondly, Teachers may choose to keep up with the demand. This often leads to family problems, and a lack of sleep and relaxation. The findings of Hastings and Bham (2003) stated that Teachers can be considered burnout if they show attitudes that depersonalise students, as well as exhibit low levels of personal accomplishments in their work. According to Fisher (2002), who discovered negative mental effects of burnout? As described in the Affective Events Theory, work environment characteristic can cause various attitudes and emotions among teachers. According to Mc Grath and Huntington (2007), the most common health risks to individuals working in the early childhood education field are exposed to infectious diseases, musculoskeletal strain, and accidental injuries. They also discovered that highly burnout teachers are more likely to develop negative dietary habits, experience high blood pressure, and express their emotions in unhealthy manners.

The fourth research question states that- What strategies do these particular teachers use to cope with their identified stressors? The result according to table 4 showed that strategies like drinking of alcohol, lose temper and displace feelings on others, avoid other co-workers, take a day off, spend the day with family, lower the expectancy for work satisfaction among others can be used to cope during stress. Howard and Johnson (2004) discovered a palliative technique in dealing with stress through physical and or mental activities such as exercise and even alcohol drinking or smoking. Direct action techniques in alleviating with stress and it is a "response aimed at eliminating a perceived threat". This agree with Gulwadi (2006) who discovered that common strategies teachers use to alleviate stress include exercise, social resources, reading, and movement. These coping strategies used by teachers affect their outlook on situation, thereby altering perception of stress. To alter perception of stress, teachers may invoke inward or outward coping strategies. Inward strategies, such as concentrating on something narrow in the field of stimuli around oneself, it include seeking stillness and focus, while outward strategies such as exercise, seeking connections and movement. According to Berkman and Devoldre (2000) who discovered that teachers consider a co- worker as a coping strategy that they use to exchange lesson plans or even emotional support in order to deal with job stress.

Conclusion

There has been some success achieved in respect of assessing burnout, job stress, and coping strategies in country like Ghana. Liberia, however several efforts on teachers' harmonization in Nigeria had given birth to severe differences of opinions in respect of the concept. This study investigated the assessment of burnout, job stress, and coping strategies on early childhood teachers in Ijebu-North Local Government area of Ogun State. The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study. There are lot of factors that can lead to stress- This include- Nervousness, too much of work ahead among others, fatigue in the morning, powerless about work and situation, emotionally drained at work, frustration about work, effects of burnout which makes teachers feel forced to do low quality work or not finish their work at all which often leads to lower self-esteem, high blood pressure and anxiety.

Strategies like drinking of alcohol, avoid other co-workers, take a day off, and spend the day with family outdoor, lower the expectancy of work satisfaction among others can be used to cope during stress. There were no significant gender differences in perceived stress among early childhood teachers.

There were no significant gender differences in work burnout among early childhood teachers. There were no significant differences in perceived stress coping strategies among the early childhood education teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusion drawn, the following are suggested for implementations.

- * Government should employ more teachers in other to ease teachers' workload and job related stress.
- * Government should provide a stable environment in which teachers and pupils can experience the kind of continuity that promotes healthy development.
- * Government should provide teachers enriched and accelerate educational programmers, including the use of school wide programs or additional services that amount to quality of instructional time.
- * Government should ensure that high quality academic assessment, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum and instructional materials are aligned with challenging teachers' standard so that teachers, pupils, parent and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for teachers' burnout.
- * Government should provide greater decision making and authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for well performance.
- * Government should increase teachers' salaries, pay teachers' salaries as at when due, because it will encourage teachers to put more effort in teaching.
- * Parents should demonstrate interest through involvement with teachers, parents involvement enriches early childhood programs. They can supplement the resources of teachers by providing one-to-one attention to individual.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Since this study is limited to the perception of early childhood teachers on assessment of burnout, job stress and coping strategies on early childhood teachers in Ijebu-North Local Government area of Ogun State, it is advisable that this kind of study is extended to other part of the country for its result to generalise and again the assessment of these early childhood teachers should be assessed.

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