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Causes of Stress among the Management Staff of a Nigerian College of Education: College of Education, Ikere Ekiti: A Case Study

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Abstract:

This study investigated the causes of stress among management staff of Nigerian College of Education. A descriptive research, design of the survey type was used in the study. The sample consisted of 150 respondents who occupied various administrative positions in the College of Education. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. A self-designed Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage scores and bar chart. It was found that, the major causes of stress among the management are First In Last Out (FILO) complex. It was also revealed in the study that self-induced stressor was the predominant among the management staff. In order to reduce stress among the management staff, they should not place too much emphasis on the need to achieve; they should manage their time properly and should not spend more than necessary hours in their places of work.

Keywords: Pedagogy, management of staff and stress management

1. Introduction

Stress is now becoming a serious global health issue. Man living with high levels of stress is putting his entire well-being at risk. Stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset man's personal balance in some ways. There are differences in stress definition and its extent due to individual or group perceptions and orientations. According to Olanipekun (2005) stress can be described as a demand of physical, mental energy or distress caused by physical or mental energy. It implies reactions of the body to forces of a deleterious nature. Efeoma and Ernenike (2007) defined stress as the "Wear and Tear" of our experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment, it has physical and emotional effects on UK and can create positive or negative feelings. Hornby (2000) stated that stress is a Latin word which had been used in the 17th century to mean hardship, strains, adversity and affliction. It implies anything that causes change in one's life can cause stress. It does not matter if it is a "good" or a "bad" change. For instance, with the death of a loved one, the birth of a new relation, we experience stress as we adjust our lives. Therefore, in adjusting to different circumstances, stress helps or hinders us depending on how we react to it. In another way, Olanipekun (2005) asserted that, stress is the reaction of man's body to forces of deleterious nature, infections and various abnormal states that tend to disturb normal physiological equilibrium and the resting force set up in a body as a result of an externally applied force.

Ellen, Gill, Melina and Lisa (2007) asserted that stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset one's personal balance in some ways. These events or demands are known as stressors. We usually think of stressor as being negative such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that forces us to adjust can be a stressor. This includes positive events such as getting married or receiving a promotion. Regardless of whether an event is good or bad, if the changes it brings strain our coping skills and adaptive resources, the end result is the subjective feeling of stress and the body's biological stress response. The causes of stress are numerous. Stress could be linked to outside factors such as the state of the world, the environment in which one lives or works or one's family. Stress can also be traced to negative behaviours, attributes and/or setting unrealistic goals.

Causes of stress depend on the nature of and differ from individual to individual. A situation that is stressful to one may be neutral or even enjoyable to someone else. Efeoma and Ernenike (2007) maintained that the uniqueness of human beings in responding to pressure is not solely due to what happens to them but also the way they think and interpreted what happens. In other words, people react differently to stressful situations.

In line with the above assertion D'Archy (2005) maintained that, for an event or a situation to be stressful to an individual, he must have appraised the situation as threatening. This is because a stressor is any situation that requires an individual to make psychological and behavioural adjustment. Furthermore Pitzer (2005) also regarded events that provoke stress as stressors and emphasized that they cover whole range of situations from outright physical danger to physiological stimulation.

For the purpose of this study the causes of stress can be grouped into five categories namely,

- Self-Induced Stressor- endogenous stressor – over-centralization – improper timing
- Organizational Stressors –lack of promotion, lack of appointment, over-promotion and underpromotion.
- Domestic Stressors
- Macro-Environmental Stressors
- Miscellaneous Stressors

According to Ellen, Gill, Melinda and Lisa (2007), self-induced stressors are stressors created by individuals through their actions. This is in line with Agulanna (2001) that, some executive or management staff through their perception of life, expectations and value systems, belief systems impose excessive demands and unrealistic high standards on themselves, thereby creating and exposing themselves to endogenous stressors.

Improper time management as a stressor is seen by Ifeoma and Emenike (2007) as stress ever load created by work overload. This stressor is experienced by a worker who has many things to accomplish in little time or when a set of performance standards are very high that the worker cannot satisfactorily complete them no matter the time at his disposal. The worker can interpret these events as a response to stimuli.

Uris (1972) described organizational stressors as those stress-induced factors peculiar to people in different organizations. He further maintained that some very hard working and qualified executive or management staffs are left out of promotions and appointments in their organizations as a result of federal character, quota system, tribalism, nepotism, statism and ethnicism.

Over promotion in a place of work could also lead to stress. According to Ekpo (2004), overpopulation is a way of promoting people above their level of competence. Perhaps promotion could be as a result of tribalism, nepotism statism, which often than normal exposes the promoted individual to intense stress. The over promoted individual may try all sorts of gimmicks to make his/her incompetence.

Levinson (1990) noted that, some people are just not comfortable moving into higher socio-economic brackets where they have to dress differently in ways unfamiliar to them. Some of course, see themselves as incapable of learning new things and are afraid of making fools of themselves. Such people live in anxiety and tend to be too sensitive to comments which they deem related to their organizational performance. Levinson (1970), described domestic stressors as those induced factors related to home which affect a person or executive on his job. It is evident that home and the office exist in a dynamic reciprocal relationship. Problems at home may be inadvertently transferred to the office while organizational stress can be brought home from work. This is in accordance with the principles of the transferability of stress. The home could be a source of happiness and while on the other hand, it could be a "war front and an earthly hell", charged with stressors of all configurations and dimensions. No family in the world exists without some elements of friction, pain, turbulence and difficulty. Levinson (1970) opined that no marriage is free of conflicts and that at one time or the other, most marriages turn around behaviours and Education of children. For instance, interference in family affairs by mother-in-law, father-in-law and sister-in-law may generate large doses of stress in many families. All other stressors are macro-environmental and miscellaneous in nature. Some notable ones are poor economy, politics and corruption in the country; others are daily frustration and irritation from subordinates, examination malpractices, drug abuse, cult activities and religious riot. For instance, religious riots are creating another portfolio of palpable stress for people in Nigeria. People have been killed, maimed and mutilated during religious riots and business premises have been destroyed, burnt, or looted during religious riots.

According to Auglanna (2001), many of the problems being experienced in Nigerian society and possibly higher institutions are forces of poor management tracts, politics of tenure, public relation pressure and dysfunctional administrative or management staff. Furthermore Auglana (2001) opined that, Nigerians are wallowing and drowning in the sea of stressors. These stress inducing elements do not seem to have an end in Nigeria. Some of the elements of miscellaneous stressors are indiscipline, moral decadence.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the causes of stress among the management staff of a Nigerian College of Education. The study investigated the predominant stressor among the management staff. Based on the findings, recommendations were made on how to reduce stress among the management staff.

2. Methodology

The study is a descriptive research of the survey type. The population of the study consisted of all the management staff of College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The management staff is of 3 categories, that is, the top, middle and low levels. The top-level management comprises Provost, Deputy Provost, Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Director of Works and Principal Medical Officer. The middle level management staff consists of the Deans of Schools and they are the executors of the policies made for the college while Heads of Department are the low-level management staff whose statutory roles are executors in nature.

The sample for the study was 150 respondents consisting 7 top level officers, 7 Deans of schools and 34 heads of departments who were purposively selected because of their statutory roles. Moreover, 102 principal lecturers and above were purposively selected for the study, and these were made up of 3 principal lecturers from each department. They were included in study due to their involvement in the decision-making process at the academic board, the highest decision-making body on academic matters in the College of Education.

A self-designed questionnaire tagged Stress among Management Staff of College of Education Questionnaire (SMSCOEQ) was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire comprised 3 sections "A", "B" and "C". Section A

consisted of some items which seek information about the (designation or status) bio-data of the respondents (i.e., designation/status, and position held). Section B consisted of 26 items which sought information on the causes of stress among management staff.

While Section C consisted of 5 items on the predominant stressors among the management staff. The instrument was validated by research experts in the areas of Physical Education, Educational Management, tests and measurement both within and outside the College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti. The statistical tools used to analyze the data were frequency counts, percentage scores and bar charts.

3. Results

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY		PERCENTAGE	
		AGEEEE	F	AGREE	DISAGREE
1	Need To Achieve	F 149	F 1	% 99	% 1
2	First In Last Out Complex (FILO)	140	10	93	7
3	Executivities	131	19	87	13
4	Improper Time Management	143	7	95	
5	Improper Planning	58	65	56	43
6	loneliness	130	20	87	13
7	Lack of Participation in Decision Making	110	40	3	27
8	Responsibilities	135	15	90	10
9	other people Over promotion	39	111	26	74
10	Under promotion	64	86	42	58
11	Work overload	99	51	66	34
12	Behaviour of Children	42	108	27	72
13	Dependant in the home	26	124	17	83
14	Interference in the family	60	90	40	59
15	Quarelling with spouse	59	91	39	60
16	Children Education	68	82	45	54
17	Poor infrastructures	129	21	86	14
18	Poor economy	113	37	75	25
19	Corruption	116	34	77	23
20	Politics	114	36	76	24
21	Poor working conditions	113	37	75	23
22	Lack of adequate personnel	102	48	68	32
23	Frustration from subordinates	104	46	69	31
24	Examination Malpractices	99	51	66	34
25	Cult Activities	99	51	66	34
26	Religious riot	78	72	52	48

Table 1: Causes of Stress among Management Staff of College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria

Table 1 shows the causes of stress among management staff of the College. Prominent among the perceived causes are the need to achieve (99%) p improper time management (95%); Filocomplex (93%); responsibilities for other people (89%); executives (87%); loneliness (86%) and poor infrastructures (77%), corruption (75%); poor economy (75%); and frustration from subordinates (69%) among others. One can therefore infer from the table that the prominent causes of stress among management staff in the College are, the need to achieve, improper time management, First In Last Out (FILO) complex, responsibilities for other people, executives and loneliness in that order.

Table: Predominant Stressor among the Management Staff of College of Education, Ikere Ekiti

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY		PERCENTAGE	
		AGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE
1	Self induced stressor		21	86	14
2	Organizational stressor	90	60	60	40
3	Domestic stressor	51	99	54	66
4	Macro-environment stressor	118	32	78	22
5	Miscellaneous stressor	99	51	66	34

Table 2: Predominant Stressor among the Management Staff of College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti

Table 2 shows the predominant stressor among the management staff of College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti. As revealed in table 2, on item 1, 129 (86%) of the respondents agreed that self-included stressor is predominant while 21 (14%) of them disagreed. On item 2, 90 (60%) of the subjects agreed that organizational stressor is the predominant while 60 (40%) of them disagreed. Also, on item 3, 51 (34%) of the respondents agreed that domestic stressor is the predominant stressor while 99 (66%) of them disagreed. As revealed on item 4, 118 (78%) of the respondents revealed that macro-environmental stressor is the predominant stressor while 32 (22%) of them disagreed and bound with these, on item 5, 99 (66%) of the respondents, agreed that miscellaneous stressor is the predominant stressor while 51 (34%) of them disagreed. One can therefore infer from the table that in order of ranking, self-induced stressor is the predominant stressor among the stressors affecting the respondents in the area of study. Figure 2 further shows the predominant stressor among the management staff.

3. Discussion

This study revealed that, one of the perceived causes of stress among the management staff of College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti is the need to achieve. The implication of the need to achieve to the subject in the area of study is that in an attempt to answer this type of a call, the subject's mental activity is interwoven with the chemical and electrical operations of the body. Thereby turbulence in the mind leads to disturbance in the body. Suffice it to say, this can lead to self-denial, blank staring, soliloquy, absentmindedness and a host of others. The probable perceived reasons behind the need to achieve is directly proportional to the activity undertaken as asserted by Boyd and Grumpet (1983). According to Ifeoma and Emenike (2007), the need to achieve is related to personal stressors such as desire for status and material wealth which puts unimaginable pressure on people thereby leading to stress. It was also found that improper time management was one of the major causes of stress among management staff of the college. The improper time management might not be unconnected with pressures and deadlines of getting one or two academic work done in this area of study. The finding of this study is in line with the assertion of Ifeoma and Emenike (2007) that, improper time management is an organizational stressor which often than not causes psychological, emotional burdens and occupational syndrome such as apathy, anxiety, depression and other job-related diseases.

The study further revealed that, first in last out (FILO) complex is one of the prominent causes of stress among management staff in the area of study. This may be as a result that, these management staff in the area of study do not want a demystification or disproof of their assumed indispensability or do not want any reduction of their assumed importance to both their subordinates and the institution they work for. Also, they are afraid that, their absence from work could lead to the training and development of younger subordinates, thus leading to his early retirement. And perhaps, they want their corrupt practices to remain hidden. This implies that, the family of these management staff would be suffering from the necessary attention needed at home. This could in turn create domestic stressors for them and experienced profuse nasal bleeding which is found diagnosed as a symptoms of high blood pressure. The finding corroborates that of Wright (1975), Carlson (1993) and Seleye (2004). The study also revealed that responsibilities for others were one of the major causes of stress among the management staff in the area of study. This may be as a result of queries given to their subordinates, motivation or make other decisions about them. The implication of this is that, the management staff found in this position, experience emotional strains. This finding is also in line with McLean, (1980) and Baron (1986) assertions that, people who are in organizational positions to motivate other people, reward or punish them or other decisions about them, experience high levels of stress than people working in other sections of the organization. These people in charge of other people are more likely to show overt symptoms of stress such as ulcers or hypertension, than their counterparts in finance or supply.

The study also revealed that the predominant stressor in the area of study is self-induced. This might not be unconnected with the perception of life, the expectations, the value and belief systems of the management staff in the area of study which impose excessive demands, unrealistic and unprincipled high standards on themselves, thereby creating their own unique and endogenous stressors. This implies that the management staffs in the area of study like any other people in an organization want everything out in life and insist on achieving them in a very short time span. They are the perfectionist who set idealistic rules and regulations that are impossible to attain. This action usually leads to low productivity in an organization. When subordinates' actions are at variance with that of super ordinate being (management staff) in the area of study. These findings of Seleye (2004), Agulanna (2001) and Rita (2006) corroborated the find of the study. They jointly opined that executives through their perception of life, their expectations, expect the entire world to revolve around their set rules, regulations and standards, which lead to stress when not achieved

Conclusion and Recommendations

The management staff in the area of study showed some incidence of stress as a result of the various stressors confronting them. They are mostly affected by self-induced stressors which have direct bearing on their personal life

which often than not could lead to low productivity and ineffectiveness on the job. To this end, the management staff should not place too much emphasis on the need to achieve, they should manage their time properly, and they should not spend more than necessary hours in their places of work.

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