



Stress Management Among Heads of Departments in Nigerian Colleges of Education

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1. Introduction

Heads of Academic Departments (HoADs) occupy strategic position in the administration of tertiary institutions. Apart from the enormous tasks of providing leadership in their various departments, they are expected to teach the students conduct researches and render services to the community. These competing roles cause stress for the heads of the departments, particularly when they find it difficult to cope with the challenges of living up to expectations on their job.

Stress has been identified as a 20th century disease and has been viewed as a complex and dynamic transaction between individuals and their environments [6]. According to [4], stress is the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet tough situation with focus, strength, stamina and heightened alertness. Stress is also defined as the perception of discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands ([13], [11], [9]). The concept of stress as the physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources and needs of the employees [5].

Some Heads of Departments in the tertiary institutions are unable to cope with pressures arising from their competing roles. This makes them exhibit various symptoms of stress that could impede their productivity. Studies have identified some various symptoms of stress. Some of these are sleep difficulties, loss of appetite, poor concentration, emotional outbursts, performance dip, drug abuse, tension and anger ([7] and [2]). Others include high blood pressure, depression, restlessness, anxiety among others ([10] and [1]).

Some of the healthy ways of managing stress identified in various studies include self-control, proper time management, keeping sense of humour, relaxation and non competitive exercise, positive thinking among others ([8], [3] and [12]).

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate stress management among the Heads of Academic Departments in Nigerian Colleges of Education. The study examined the level and causes of stress among the heads, as well as the strategies they used to manage stress. It also examined the influence of ownership of institution on stress and strategies used by the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress.

2.1 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

1. Are the Heads of Academic Departments stressed?
2. What strategies are used by the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress?

2.2 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated:

1. Ownership of institutions will not significantly influence stress among the Heads of Academic Departments.
2. Ownership of institutions will not significantly influence the strategies used to manage stress among the Heads of Academic Departments.

3. Methods

The survey research design was adopted in the study. Two Colleges of Education were selected for the study: Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo (Federal) and College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti (State). The sample comprised 40 Heads of Academic Departments selected using simple random sampling technique. A self designed instrument tagged "Questionnaire on Stress Management among Heads of Academic Departments in Tertiary Institutions" (QSMHADTI) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated and had a reliability coefficient of 0.746 which was considered adequate for reliability. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage scores and t-test statistic. The hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.



4. Results

Research Question 1: Are the Heads of Academic Departments stressed?

Table 1: Symptoms of stress among the Heads of Academic Departments

S/N	Items	Frequency		Percentage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Poor concentration	29	11	72.5	27.5
2.	Worry	19	21	47.5	52.5
3.	Anxious	21	19	52.5	47.5
4.	Hopeless	36	4	90	10
5.	Angry	24	16	60	40
6.	Worthless	34	6	85	15
7.	Overwhelmed	10	30	25	75
8.	Loss of appetite	30	10	75	25
9.	Isolated	33	7	82.5	17.5
10.	Pessimistic	33	7	82.5	17.5
11.	Sleep difficulties	28	12	70	30
12.	Emotional outbursts	26	14	65	35
13.	Alcohol or Drug abuse	34	6	85	15
14.	Performance Dip	24	16	60	40
15.	Tensed	20	20	50	50
16.	Depressed	24	16	60	40

As shown in table 1, prominent among the symptoms are hopeless (90%); alcohol or drug abuse (85%); worthless (85%); isolated (82.5%); pessimistic (82.5%); loss of appetite (75%); poor concentration (72.5%); emotional outbursts (65%); angry (60%); performance dip (60%); and depressed (60%). This shows that the Heads of Academic Departments were stressed to a large extent.

Research Question 2: What strategies are by used the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress?

Table 2: Strategies used by the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress

S/N	Items	Frequency		Percentage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
17.	Self control	25	15	62.5	37.5
18.	Proper time management	29	11	72.5	27.5
19.	Deliberately avoiding stressful situations	20	20	50	50
20.	Relying on supportive colleagues	24	16	60	40
21.	Going for clinical counseling	20	20	50	50
22.	Getting help from a mentor	30	10	75	25
23.	Non competitive physical exercise	30	10	75	25
24.	Relaxing from routine work	35	5	87.5	12.5



25.	Expressing feelings instead of bottling them up	37	3	92.5	7.5
26.	Positive thinking	34	6	85	15
27.	Sharing feelings with trusted friends	39	1	97.5.	2.5
28.	Forgiving others	36	4	90	10
29.	Adequate sleep	33	7	82.5	17.5
30.	Eating a healthy diet	27	13	67.5	32.5
31.	Keeping a sense of humour	32	8	80	20
32.	Taking vital medications	34	6	85	15
33.	Creating time for leisure activities	39	1	97.5	2.5
34.	Saying no to unreasonable demands	35	5	87.5	12.5

Table 2 shows that the predominant strategies used by the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress include sharing feelings with trusted friends (97.5%); creating time for leisure activities (97.5); expressing feelings instead of bottling them up (92.5%); and forgiving others (90%). Others include relaxing from routine work (87.5%); positive thinking (85%); and taking vital medications (85%); keeping sense of humour (80%); and getting help from a mentor (75%); and non competitive physical exercise (75%)

Hypothesis 1: Ownership of institution will not significantly influence stress among the Heads of Academic Department

Table 3: The influence of ownership of institution on stress the Heads of Academic Departments

Variable			N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
State	College	of	20	28.65	3.01	38	2.41	2.02
Federal	College	of	20	31.15	3.54			

P<0.05

As shown in table 3, ownership of institution significantly influenced stress among the Heads of Academic Departments. The mean scores show that the Heads of Academic Departments in the Federal College of Education were more stressed than their counterparts in the State College of Education. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Ownership of institution will not significantly influence the strategies used by the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress.

Table 4: The influence of ownership of institutions on the strategies used by the Heads of Academic Departments

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
State College of Education	20	91.80	6.13	38	0.77	2.02



Federal College of Education	20	98.40	6.97			
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P>0.05

Table 4 shows that ownership of institution did not significantly influence the strategies used by the Heads of Academic Departments to manage stress. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

5. Discussion

The study revealed that the Heads of Academic Departments (HoADs) were stressed to a large extent. If this stress is not properly managed, it could adversely affect their job performance as they may not live up to expectations in their enormous tasks of providing leadership in their departments and promoting academic excellence. The stress experienced by the HoADs could be attributed to their multiple and conflicting roles amidst the seemingly poor resource situation of the institutions. This scenario exposes the HoADs to physical and emotional disorder which make them prone to stress. Such stress could have adverse effects on their job.

It was also found that in a bid to manage stress, the predominant strategy used by the HoADs includes sharing feelings with trusted friends; creating time for leisure activities, expressing feelings instead of bottling them up; forgiving others; relaxing from routine work; positive thinking; taking vital medications; adequate sleep; keeping sense of humour; getting help from a mentor; and non competitive physical exercise. These strategies which are appropriate for managing stress are in line with the ones identified by [8] and [12]. However, the effectiveness of these strategies will depend on the ability of the HoADs to take cognizance of the various stressful situations in their choice of strategies. The study also revealed that ownership of the institution significantly influenced stress among the HoADs in favour of the State College of Education. This means that the HoADs in the Federal College of Education were more stressed than their counterparts in the State College of Education. The implication is that the latter could be more effective on their job than the former. The findings suggest that there is more job pressure for the HoADs in the Federal College of Education.

It was also revealed that ownership of institution did not, significantly influence the strategies used by the HoADs to manage stress. This implies that ownership of institution does not make difference in the strategies required to manage stress. What is important is the use of appropriate strategies to manage stress.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The HoADs were highly stressed and they used appropriate strategies to manage stress. Moreover, while the ownership of institution made a difference in the stress experienced by the HoADs, it did not make a difference in the strategies they used to manage stress. It was therefore recommended that the HoADs should continue to make use of the various strategies of managing stress as a way of life in order to reduce their stress. For the purpose of ensuring effective management of stress, they should take cognizance of the various stressful situations in their choice of strategies. The HoADs in the Federal College of Education should put in more effort to manage stress than their counterparts in the State College of Education.

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