

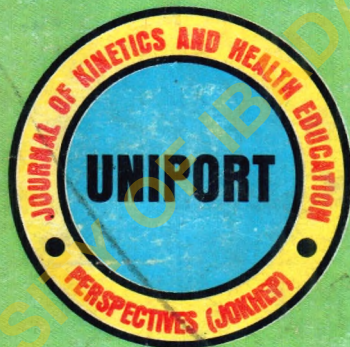
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**SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL AND ACADEMIC INDUCED
STRESSORS AS DETERMINANTS OF MENTAL HEALTH
AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF OSUN STATE COLLEGE
OF EDUCATION, ILA-ORANGUN**

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Abstract

The study attempts to identify the socio-academic induced stressors determining mental health of Academic Staff of Osun State College of Education, Ila-orangun. A total of one hundred (100) respondents were drawn from among the academic staff of the college, which represent about 50% of the population of academic staff. The study revealed that the distance of some academic staff residences, publication, lack of basic amenities, internet facilities, inadequate teaching and learning facilities, student population explosion and elongated school calendar among others are the major Socio-Academic Stressors affecting the mental health of academic staff within the college.

Introduction

Stress in the opinion of Udoh (2000) is a subject of topical importance because of its direct relevance to a large proportion of the inhabitants of the industrial as well as the non industrial communities today. Stress is a common word especially among the elites who are in top management positions, Professionals, business executives and even charismatic

religious leaders. Some psychologists conceived stress which includes cosmopolitan malady, disturbances in the body homeostasis general or acute enough to result to body responses, including respiratory, metabolic and circulatory reactions. The reaction of the human body to real or perceived changes in what the body is used to, or desires thereby, leading to a change in equilibrium which calls for adapting to the human physical and social environment (Moronkola 2003).

Moronokola (2003) stated further that, Nigeria as a nation HAS for several years been laden with stressors. Stressor is a particular activity serving as a stimulus evoking a stress response. Causes of stress or rather, stressors are diverse. For example; the impeachment move against any elected political office holder, rumour of wars, death of a loved one among others are stressors. Parents, government, teachers/lecturers, adolescents, and industrious students undergo a serious stress whenever there is instability in tertiary institutions.

Academic staff in any tertiary institution, particularly in a developing country like Nigeria usually have more than one stressors to cope with. Many of these stressors are usually socio-academic induced. The social environment in which an institution is sited often poses as a stress on its own. Particularly to those lecturers who have had to contend with working in an institution sited in remote places where social amenities and infrastructures are either unavailable, available but not functioning or inadequate.

Occupational stress has also been seen as a global phenomenon. According to United Nation's Reports (1997) as reported in Akeredolu and Adeogun (2001). It has been observed that, more often than not, people complain of stress and suffer from stress-related illness, and this has become one of the most serious physiological and health issue of the 20th Century. Its presence in the work place is seen at every facet of the organization.

Academic staff in institutions sited in remote places also have to cope with academic induced stressors like their counterparts in urban sited institutions, apart from the socio-environmental induced stressors stated earlier. Those academic induced stressors include inadequate sleep resulting from preparation or studying in advance of classes to be taken the following day(s), fatigue from actual teaching of

class/classroom management, inadequate facilities for academic activities which places too much demands on the academic staff, uncondusive offices, lack of many basic amenities like fan/air conditioner; computers/TV/Radio and Internet facilities. The 'publish or perish' syndrome is also a stressor that does not make things easier for the lecturers. All these, with scripts marking, results computation, examination, projects supervision, course registration elongated school calendar and sandwich programmes are definately stressors that affect the mental health of many academic staff in most institutions.

Mental health is seen as a dynamic process that enables and promotes the individual's social functioning, while threats to mental health create stress that undermines functional, interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions which diminishes the individual's ability to pursue and achieve life goals (Moronkola and Okanlawon, 2003). A mentally healthy person according to Sunberg, (1989) is someone Who functions adequately in the family and in the society, exhibiting positive attitudes about things, relatively happy, being productive and able to love. He exhibits some mentally unhealthy mental behaviour occasionally under excessive stress, but without seriously affecting functions or relationships.

Contrary to the above expectations of a mentally healthy individual, it is not uncommon to see some academic staff exhibiting behaviours that could be viewed as mentally unhealthy, for instance, sexual abuse and harassment, rape, failing students because of personal grudges that make some students complain and cite instances of some lecturers who are somewhat unapproachable, unassuming, too rigid, always frowning, exceptionally "wicked" and who derives joy in failing students. Some are smokers and episodic excessive drinkers.

Based on these, one is left with no choice than to wonder on why a supposedly learned fellow, an icon to the nation, exhibits such behaviours, could it be due to occupational stress. If yes what exactly are those perceived stressors making some academic staff to exhibit these mental behaviours?

Academic staff as focused in this study point to academic lecturers, technologists and instructors who are actually teaching, researching and performing other academic duties such as scripts marking, projects and

examination supervision, results computation, among others in Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun. The college was sited at the ancient town of Ila-Orangun where (at present) electricity power supply is epileptic, communication system is mal-functional, roads within the campuses are in bad condition, lecturers compete with large students' population on public transportation. Facilities within the school campus are also grossly inadequate and this explains the reason why examination exercise in the campus usually takes three months, Internet facilities unavailable, lecture rooms are not conducive particularly for large classes which of course is unavoidable. Lecturers' offices with poor accommodation spaces are also stressful on its own, hence, the reason why the college is suitable for this type of study.

Statement of the Problem

Very often, many academic staff are seen often putting up a perpetual appearance of being moody, depressed, too rigid, restless, unapproachable, and also too busy. Some take to substance abuse as a means of escaping boredom, which ultimately affects their mental health and their behaviours to the students and even their contemporaries. Perhaps the major problem here is that what are the stressors affecting these academic staff under study? Do they see these events as stress or stressors? In order of priority how would they rate each of the identified stressors if they were to solve them?

Purpose of the Study

The study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

The purpose of this study was to identify the major stressors among the academic staff of Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun and to prioritise them as identified by the sampled academic staff of the college.

Research Questions

The study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are the likely stressors affecting Academic Staff of Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun?

2. What are the major stressors affecting Academic Staff of Osun State college of Education, Ila-Orangun in ranking order?
3. What are the least stressors affecting Academic Staff of Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun in ranking orders?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population 'for the study consisted of all the academic staff of Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun, while the sample for the study were 100 respondents, drawn from among the academic staff of the College. Purposive and maximum variation sampling technique were used to select the respondents.

The instrument for this study was a self-developed and structured questionnaire named Socio-Academic Stressors Measuring Instrument (SASMI). The instrument has two-point rating scale of 'Agreed' and 'Disagreed'. The descriptive statistics of percentages score was used to analyse the data. The instrument was also presented to other lecturers in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education at the University of Ibadan for construct and content validity. Four-point likert scale format was used to obtain useful information from the respondents so that the variation of the responses can be obtained and analysed. The data obtained from the respondents was used to calculate the mean for each item in order to reject or retain the statement as one of the causes of stress in Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun, Osun State.

The result shows that among academic staff of Osun State College of Education, Publications ('Publish or Perish syndrome') like conference proceedings, journals, textbooks, in order to gain promotion is the greatest stressor threatening them. This was made manifest with the fact that those things that could actually make this easier for them are either not available or inadequate. These accessories include Internet facilities, well-stocked libraries, appealing offices stock with computers and other basic amenities, which of course are not available.

Results

Table 1: Summary of Percentage Analysis on Likely Socio-Academic Stressors as Identified by Respondents

S/N	Stressors	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)
1	Non-availability of standard private schools for the Academic Staff Children cumulating in the preferability of some lecturers to reside in the state capital (about 45 km away from Ila) and jostle in-between Osogbo and Ila is a major stressor.	86.4	13.6
2	Inadequacies of teaching and learning facilities in the college is also a stressor.	81.5	18.5
3	Epileptic power supply and power outages is a major stressor	82.3	17.7
4	Bad roads within the college are stressors.	60.7	29.3
5	Student population explosion vis-à-vis the available facilities and materials	86.0	14.0
6	Inadequate furnishing of the lecturers offices.	92.7	7.3
7	Non-availability of computer and computer accessories in lecturers' offices.	60.2	39.8
8	In-availability of Internet facilities	79.7	20.3
9	Publication ('Publish or Perish Syndrome')	96.5	3.5
10	Competing with students, particularly in the morning and afternoon for public transport	53.4	46.6
11	Infrequent and inadequate supply of portable water	53.8	46.2
12	Examination Supervision/Invigilation	89.1	10.9
13	Students' project supervision	70.4	29.6
14	Scripts marking	63.4	36.6
15	Elongated School Calendar (Jan - Dec)	91.8	8.2
16	Students' Indecent dressing	48.1	51.9

Elongated school calendar was next on the rating with 92.7% agreeing against the 7.3% that disagreed. The usual practice of the school calendar starting in January and obviously ending in December no doubt gives little room for the academic staff to rest, thereby accumulating more stress which ultimately affects their mental health. Examination supervision was also seen as a major stressor with (89.1 %) and this may be due to the fact that the available facilities are

grossly inadequate for the enormous students' population. This no doubt may pose stress and problems for the chief invigilators and invigilators during the examination supervision. The ancient town also usually witnesses epileptic power outages/supply from the Power Holding Company of Nigeria. This forms part of the major problems affecting academic performances of Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun's Academic Staff.

The distance of some lecturers' residences to the college was also identified as a major stressor. This may be due to the fact that some feel the town lacks basic social infrastructures good enough for their families. Some prefer living in places like Osogbo, Ilesha, Ede, Ikirun, etc. covering distances between 45 -55 km everyday to work.

Table 3: Least Stressors

S/N	Least Stressors	Agreed	Disagreed
1	Preparation for classes to be taught	24.5	75.5
2	Students' indecent dressing	48.1	51.9
3	Infrequent and inadequate supply of portable water	53.8	46.2

Conclusion

The duty of an academic staff in any part of the world are stressful, but the stressors being experienced by each academic staff are different and usually caused by some external factors, which may be academic or socio-environmental. Identification of these stressors in peculiarity with a particular institution, will definitely go a long way in assisting the academic staff to reduce to the bearest minimum the number of stress to cope with.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun in liaison with Osun State Government should consider it as matter of importance or priority to improve and upgrade the existing facilities in the college.

The college management should also establish a standard school to cater for the wards of the Academic Staff and even for the benefit of the children in their immediate host community. Classrooms and lecture

halls should be made conducive for academic activities. Classes should be equipped with public address systems and other teaching aids that are "functional and relevant".

The school academic calendar should be reviewed and planned well in order to give intervals of rest for lecturers in between the semesters. This will afford them the ample opportunity for script marking and result computations. For any good academic work and researches to be carried out, there is the urgent need for internet facilities and also a well-equipped library should be made available on the campus for both academic staff and students.

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