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## THE PREVALENCE OF WORK STRESS ENCOUNTER BY LECTURERS OF MASS COMMUNICATION IN WAKE-Forest UNIVERSITY: EFFECT AND REMEDIAL MEASURES

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### ABSTRACT

*Work Stress is a psycho-physiological state or process that occurs when an individual faces events he/she perceives as threatening to his/her physical wellbeing. Stress varies, depending on how an individual perceives a stressful event. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stressful. Although some stress is a common and necessary element of life, excessive unmanaged stress can be linked to a long list of physical and mental health problems. However, lecturers are not an exemption from this stressful event. When a lecturer is stressed, it results in uncomfortable experiences on the job. This may lead to fear, anxiety, discomfort, anger, or depression, and if these conditions persist, they may generate actions and reactions that may affect principals' wellbeing and interfere with students' academic and social development. Moreover, the prevalence of work stress encountered by lecturers of mass communication makes it a necessity that involves both physical and mental exertion, which sometimes attracts rewards. Therefore, the paper concluded that stress is felt across all spheres of life, particularly at the workplace. Stress is the sum total of all non-specific biological phenomena elicited by adverse external influences. One feels stressed when one is confronted with unexpected results and situations. One of the recommendations made was that stress management programmes and training workshops should be held so as to enlighten the lecturers on the disastrous effects of stress and how to remedy the effects of stress.*

**KEYWORDS:** Work Stress, Lecturers of Mass Communication, Effect, Remedial Measures and Wake-Forest University

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## Introduction

The word stress can be defined as the sum of physical and mental responses to an unacceptable disparity between real or imagined personal experiences and personal expectations. According to Treven and Potocan (2005), "stress" was derived from an Anglo-Saxon word and was first applied in physics to designate the mechanical force in the medical industry. Stress can occur at any age and in a variety of contexts, including the workplace, family obligations, and social activities. It is a response that includes both physical and mental components. Mental responses to stress include adaptive stress, anxiety, and depression. Stress that enhances physical and mental functions is considered good stress. It is needed to promote wellbeing by serving as a catalyst for stimulants to push an individual towards achieving the target goal. If stress persists to an excessive degree, it will eventually lead to the need for resolution. This condition may lead either to anxious/escape or depressive behavior. It depletes an individual emotionally, mentally, and physically.

These days, stress is felt across all spheres of life, particularly at the work place. Stress is the sum total of all non-specific biological phenomena elicited by adverse external influences. One feels stressed when one is confronted with unexpected results and situations. Stress may vary depending on how an individual perceives stressful events. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stressful. These days, stress is emerging as a major cause of physical and mental health problems. Stress is a common human phenomenon. It is a natural, ongoing, dynamic and interactive process that takes place as people adjust to their environment. Stress is a feeling of tension that is both physical and emotional and is caused by physiological, psychological, and environmental demands. Thus, stress affects individuals physiologically, emotionally, and psychologically. Although some stress is a common and necessary element of life, excessive unmanaged stress can be linked to a long list of physical and mental health problems (Sapolsky, 2005; Weil, 2005; Wheeler, 2007; Colbert, 2008). As Colbert (2008) explains, not all stress is harmful and a certain amount of stress is a normal part of life. However, when an individual experiences high levels of ongoing stress, the excessive release of stress hormones can cause damage to cells, organs, and tissues (Wheeler, 2007 & Colbert, 2008).

In the Nigerian school system, the function of managing and administering the school falls on the principal. The school principal is regarded as the custodian of an enterprise comprising a considerable investment of resources in teams of finances, facilities, and human skills. They are expected to preside over and manage the entire school. They are important people in the school system. They have the overall task of managing the school by ensuring good balanced academic programmes, student-teachers' progress and proper supervision of work, as well as effective leadership. The school principal's ability to withhold, contain, and contend with various school responsibilities, challenges, and functions is heavily reliant on their capability and

capacity (Willies, 2005). For school principals to be able to function in this way, they will have to be able to perform several functions that require them not only to be experienced but also competent in their duties. They are to create a very conducive environment that will allow for maximum attainment of school goals and objectives, as well as educational goals in general. The environment within which school principals operate cannot be free of problems that are typical of a populous African nation with a high demand for education. Some of these problems include overpopulation of students; problems with the school plant; ill-equipped and inadequate teachers to cope with the workload; students with poor academic background; poor funding that affects management; students' negative attitude towards learning; parental ambivalence towards the educational well-being of their children; low institutional ratings; low performance and overall lackadaisical attitudes of teachers towards work; personal problems including role conflicts; societal problems and pressure; financial problems; domestic worries; and a lot more.

### **Concept of Mass Communication**

Mass communication is the process of imparting and exchanging information through mass media to large segments of the population. It is usually understood to relate to various forms of media, as its technologies are used for the dissemination of information, of which journalism and advertising are part. Mass communication differs from other types of communication, such as interpersonal communication and organizational communication, because it focuses on particular resources transmitting information to numerous receivers. The study of mass communication is chiefly concerned with how the content of mass communication persuades or otherwise affects the behavior, attitude, opinion, or emotions of the people receiving the information. Normally, the transmission of messages to many recipients at a time is called "mass communication." But in a complete sense, mass communication can be understood as the process of extensive circulation of information within regions and across the globe, including Wake Forest University.

Through mass communication, information can be transmitted quickly to many people who generally stay far away from the sources of information. Mass communication is practiced in multiple mediums, such as radio, television, social networking, billboards, newspapers, magazines, books, film, and the Internet. In this modern era, mass communication is being used to disseminate information at an accelerated rate, often about politics and other charged topics. There are major connections between the media that is being consumed, via mass communication, and our culture, contributing to polarization and dividing people based on consequential issues (Richard, 2015).

Mass communication is a field of study in the social sciences and a sub-field of communication studies. It is an expensive process that is often slow and indirect between the sender and the receiver. Usually, mass communication is one-way, meaning

the receiver of the original communication does not have any means to respond or provide feedback to the sender. This is also done at Wake Forest University.

### **Concept of Stress**

Stress is a psycho-physiological state or process that occurs when an individual faces events he/she perceives as threatening to his/her physical wellbeing. It grows out of the interaction that an individual has with the environment, occurring when there is a mismatch between situational demands (stressors) and the resources. Schwanke (2008) noted that stress is a natural way of coping with changes in our environment. Stress can also be referred to as any adjective demand that creates a state of tension or threat and that requires change or adaptation. Hines and Paulson (2006) observed stress as a condition where job-related factors interact with the workers to change their psychological condition from normal functioning. Okeke (2013) explained stress as a negative and unpleasant condition that may be experienced when a person is unable to meet the demands and pressures that are placed upon him. Stopper (2006) also explained stress as any physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stopper observed that a mild degree of stress and tension can sometimes be beneficial. Feeling mildly stressed when carrying out an academic project or assignment often compels individuals to perform academically well. Working is a necessity that involves both physical and mental exertion, which sometimes attracts rewards. Despite this, it could result in stress and eventually strain, which may be unfavorable to the individual in the work environment. Hence, performance stress is more or less a poor fit in the performance/work environment. This can lead to certain kinds of deviations: dissatisfaction, anxiety, conflict, and restlessness.

Stress can develop when teachers' expectations and reality are too far apart. According to Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006), stressors often arise with respect to career aspirations and goal expectations. When there is a gap hindering the accomplishment of goals, stress is encountered and experienced. Its effects include distrust, rejection, anger, poor teacher performance, and depression, which in turn lead to distress and related health problems.

### **Types of Stress**

#### **❖ *Acute Stress:***

Acute stress is the type of stress that throws you off-balance momentarily. This is the type of stress that comes on quickly and often unexpectedly, does not last too long, but shakes you up a bit and requires a response, like an argument with someone in your life, or an exam for which you don't feel adequately prepared. Your body's stress response is triggered by acute stress, but you can reverse it with quick relaxation techniques and then go back to your day feeling less stressed.

### ❖ *Chronic Stress.*

Chronic stress is the type of stress that tends to occur on a regular basis (Hogan, 2013). It might stem from loneliness, a difficult job, or a past trauma. This type of stress may leave you feeling drained and can lead to burnout if it's not effectively managed. When the stress response is chronically triggered and the body is not brought back to a relaxed state before the next wave of stress hits, the body can stay triggered indefinitely.

### ❖ *Emotional Stress.*

The pain of emotional stress can hit harder than some other types of stress (Slanbekova, 2013). For example, the stress that comes from a conflicted relationship tends to cause a greater physical reaction and a stronger sense of distress than the stress that comes from being busy at work. Therefore, it is important to be able to manage emotional stress in effective ways. Strategies that help you to process, diffuse, and build resilience toward emotional stress can all work well, and different approaches can work in different situations.

### ❖ *Burnout.*

Burnout is the result of prolonged chronic stress in situations that leave people feeling a lack of control in their lives. Certain job conditions, such as high demands, unclear expectations, a lack of recognition for accomplishments, and a high risk of negative consequences for mistakes, can increase the risk of burnout (Howlett, 2014).

### **Causes/Sources of Stress**

Sources of occupational stress include poor working conditions, work overload and under-load, role conflict and ambiguity, unsatisfactory career development, and erratic working hours (Quicks and Quick, 2000). This occupational stress affects mental health and thus influences teaching efficiency. Work stress is a major cause of poor mental health (Clusky, 2004; Hedin, 2004). Anxiety due to reform efforts, minimal administrative support, poor working conditions, lack of involvement in decision making, the burden of paper work, and lack of resources have all been identified as factors that can cause stress among educators (Hammond & Onikama, 2007). The daily interaction with pupils and co-workers and the increased and fragmented demands of teaching in general often lead to overwhelming pressures and challenges, which further lead to stress and strain. Okeke, Adu, and Drake (2013) found the causes of principal stress to include the school climate, learners' discipline, school management practices, high workload, resource constraints, redeployment of principals, low remuneration, low status of the teaching profession, and interpersonal conflict. Trendall (2006) found many teachers were under physical and mental strain and reported that the most frequent sources of stress were lack of time, large classes, teaching work load, and pupils' misbehavior. There are different reasons for the stress of teachers in general and female teachers in particular. Female teachers have more stressful situations when compared to

their male counterparts. It is an established fact that the performance of a teacher mainly depends upon his psychological state of mind.

Newell (2007) contended that problems such as students' indiscipline, lack of student progress, inadequate budget, lack of administrative support, etc. contributed to teachers' stress. Pratte (2008) studied primary school teachers to see the relationship between stress and the background of children's socio-economic level and found financial deprivation in the home background of children to be positively and significantly related to perceived stress among teachers. Tellanback, Brenner, and Lofgren (2003) conducted two studies on Swedish school teachers. In the first study of 1,838 teachers, 40.15% said teaching was "always" or "often" a mental strain. In the second study of 445 teachers, 31% found their work to be "very much" a mental strain. Trendall (2009) found many teachers were under mental or physical stress and reported that the most frequent sources of stress were:

- lack of time
- large classes
- teaching work load
- pupils' misbehavior

Female teachers have more stressful situations than their male counterparts. Payne & Furnham (2007) reported data from 444 secondary teachers in Barbados and found that difficulties associated with instructional and managerial demands were perceived as the most stressful aspects of their work. Manso-Prito (2009) administered the TOSFQ to a sample of 186 elementary and secondary school teachers in Chile. Four main factors were identified, i.e., administrative support, professional distress, financial security, and students' discipline, among which the lack of administrative support was perceived as the most stressful factor.

### Stress Remedial Measures

According to Ragland (2021), there are many remedies and ways to handle stress, but the fastest and easiest are mentioned below:

- **Diet:** The benefits of eating healthy foods extend beyond your waistline to your mental health. A healthy diet can lessen the effects of stress, build up your immune system, level your mood, and lower your blood pressure. Lots of added sugar and fat can have the opposite effect. And junk food can seem even more appealing when you're under a lot of stress.
- **Sleep:** A common side effect of stress is that you may struggle to fall asleep. If this happens three times a week for at least three months, you may have insomnia, an inability to fall and stay asleep. Lack of sleep can also add to your stress level and cause a cycle of stress and sleeplessness.
- **Exercise:** The physical benefits of exercise—improving physical condition and fighting disease—have long been established, and physicians always encourage staying physically active. Exercise is also considered vital for maintaining mental fitness and can

reduce stress. Studies show that it is very effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and enhancing overall cognitive function (ADAA, 2021). Exercise also seems to help with mood. Part of the reason may be that it stimulates your body to release a number of hormones like endorphins and endocannabinoids that help block pain, improve sleep, and sedate you. When your body feels good, your mind often follows. Get a dose of stress relief with these exercises:

- Running      - Swimming      - Dancing      - Cycling      - Aerobics

- ***Listening to music.*** Music can act as a stress-reducing backdrop to everyday tasks. One study found that listening to music was effective at lowering subjective stress levels. (Linnemann, 2015).
- ***Talk to a friend.*** Relationships with friends can offer several different types of social support. In addition to emotional support, friends can provide advice (informational support) and assist you with tasks you are struggling with (practical support).
- ***Write in a journal.*** Research has found that writing in a journal can be useful for reducing stress levels (Myth 2018). Expressive writing, for example, is one way to sort through stressful experiences you might be having. Gratitude journaling, which involves focusing on things you are thankful for, can be particularly beneficial.
- ***Take some time off.*** A little time away from the stresses of daily life can leave you feeling refreshed and better equipped to handle stress. Taking a break—whether it's a mental health day, a staycation, or a vacation—can help reduce stress levels and improve your ability to function well.

### **Concept of Stress Management Strategies to Mass Communication Lecturers**

According to Mali (2011), when a lecturer is stressed, it results in uncomfortable experiences on the job. This may lead to fear, anxiety, discomfort, anger, or depression, and if these conditions persist, they may generate actions and reactions that may affect principals' wellbeing and interfere with students' academic and social development. Epel (2004) opined that more qualified lecturers do not really get stressed up; anything they feel could not be completed at the moment, they give it a break. Epel further elaborated that these major sources of stress, such as heavy workload demands, public demands, and politics, have significant impact on lecturers of mass communication's personal and professional lives and engender a range of negative feelings, including feeling isolated and, often, powerless. However, in personnel meetings and in private meetings, the anger, frustration, and related stress can often become obvious. According to Akpan (2008), the major evidence that lecturers are stressed may be seen in a Wake-forest university system, which shows how difficult and un-conducive the atmosphere is for optimal educational administration, teaching, and learning.

When a lecturer does not delegate some aspects of his duties appropriately, he may encounter stress. Epel (2004) noted that up to one third of qualified lecturers perceive their occupation as highly stressful. If stress is inevitable and if so much stress is a threat to human beings, then what is important is how lecturers can manage stress. The symptoms of stress are manifested differently by different people. It could be that the symptoms are suppression of the reproductive system, anxiety, aggression, indigestion, stomach aches, pains, dizziness, and rapid heartbeat. Chronic stress creates muscle tension, fatigue, constipation, and arthritis (Siani, 2007). In research presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Education Administration, Epel (2004) reported that the superintendents he studied identified the following as their major sources of stress: relationships with the school board; heavy workload demands; public demands and politics; state and federal mandates; and personnel issues. Qualification is another factor that was investigated. A qualified teacher is one properly trained professionally and academically for the teaching profession.

### **Effect of Work Load Stress on the Productivity of Mass Communication Lecturers**

Stress at work affects workers and their communities in a negative way, with some resultant clear financial impact on businesses, the economy, and beyond. Stress manifests itself in various ways, among others, including absence from work due to sickness, the hidden cost of a sick employee, being present at work but not fully productive, and unemployment. Despite the fact that stress is a condition, not a disease, it sends signals to some looming problems. If the human body is subjected to unrestrained stress levels, this can result in malfunctioning of the body system and organs within the body through acute and chronic changes.

The strength of every organization lies primarily in its workers. This is acknowledged by Elton Mayo's Hawthorne studies of the scientific management school. However, issues relating to excess work load can generate occupational stress for workers, and this will certainly reflect negatively on the entire organization. Clearly, a high level of work load stress is present among university lecturers in Nigeria, as identified by Ofuegbu and Nwadiani (2006).

Dean (2002) postulated that illnesses related to stress are the leading cause of low productivity levels in organizations. The changing world of work, coupled with the recent global economic crisis and recession, is making increased demands on workers at local, national, regional, and global levels. Lowe (2006) noted that most managers appreciate the relationship between the quality of work life and organizational performance, though they face barriers to progress. So it is necessary to update the case for taking action to improve the quality of jobs and work environments.

### **Conclusion**

Stress is felt across all spheres of life, particularly in the workplace. Stress is the sum total of all non-specific biological phenomena elicited by adverse external influences.



One feels stressed when one is confronted with unexpected results and situations. Stress may vary depending on how an individual perceives stressful events. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes uncomfortable experiences on the job are encountered and may lead to fear, anxiety, discomfort, anger, or depression. If these conditions persist, they may generate actions and reactions that may affect principals' wellbeing and interfere with students' academic and social development.

### **Recommendations**

1. Stress management programs and training workshops should be held so as to enlighten the lecturers on the disastrous effects of stress and how to remedy the effects of stress.
2. Proper planning and efficient time management should be made to help in reduction of stress.

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