



ADMINISTRATIVE STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF PRINCIPALS IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated administrative stress and coping strategies of principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive and survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 267 Principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 107 was drawn from the population using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a 30 item questionnaire based on 4 point Likert scale, developed by the researchers. The reliability coefficient of the instrument for the variables under study was 0.80. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level significance. The findings showed that demand for high standards without adequate resources to achieve them, urgent need to meet up deadlines, having too many decisions to make and poor condition of service constitute administrative stressors on principals. Hypersensitivity and withdrawal, procrastination and missed deadlines, decrease in job performance, lack of concentration, aggressive behavior are the influence of administrative stress on principals, while engaging in some physical exercise, delegation of duties to staff developing close staff relationship, maintaining an appropriate balance between work and non-work related demands are the coping strategies used in the managing administrative stress by principals. Based on the findings, recommendations were made, among which was that there is need for provision of professional counseling services and training on stress management skills for principals; government should provide sufficient funds to schools and the condition of service of principals should be improved.

Keywords: Stress; Administrative, Stress, Coping strategies, Principals, Stressors

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INTRODUCTION

The principals of secondary schools as administrators are inherently subject to the various demands and pressures from school. They are accountable in different ways to the school board, tax payers, community organizations, parents, students, teachers, supervisors, non-teaching staff, government and its agencies. The differing expectations and demands of each group or organization lead to conflicting pressures on the school principals which may impede effective administration to the schools. According to Slyers (2011) the school principal as the administrator of the school initiates, organizes and directs the activities of teaching and non-teaching staff and students towards the achievement of secondary school goals as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) as well as the development of positive school-home relationship. Principals are to ensure that teachers are present in the class at all times, taking all steps to promote the well-being of students within the school and also that of others personnel.

The role of principals has long been brought with it a considerable burden of responsibility for student's attainment in all areas such as curricular, day-to-day running of the school, for liaison with parents, interest groups and external agencies and to the government regarding any matter associated with school life. Running in tandem with this responsibility has been form of accountability for the schools deliveries of the curriculum and its performance in the areas mentioned above. They have to deal with a wide range of students' academic needs and providing pastoral care and discipline.

Also according to Owhonda (2005) principals administrative responsibility includes engaging the co-operative effort of staff, allocating instructional time, preparing time tables, providing for supervision of students during the school day and school activities, by also ensuring that teachers maintain proper order and discipline, register students and ensure their attendance is recorded, collect and report information as required by the relevant agencies, report to parents on student progress, promptly report the existence of communicable diseases and unsanitary conditions. Larchick and Chance (2017) asserted that the role of the Principal include leadership functions, administrative roles, management skills, task dimensions, human resource activities as well as profiles of both effective and ineffective principals. Other responsibilities of the principals include: staff appraisal, bargaining, conflict management, chairing meetings.

In the words of Offia (2015) principals need to support their schools and staff through a changing world in which they must maintain a clear focus on the schools' strategy for improvement while at the same time responding to external research, government requirements, advice, guidance, and requirements relating to local or national priorities for improvement. All these multifaceted job of the school principals suggest that they are working under pressure. Based on this, one is moved to think that principals are stressed up, since stress according to the Health and Safety Executive (2017) is the reaction people have due to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.

Sabina (2014) states that the role of principals is entrenched with many challenges and responsibilities, it is only natural that principal's roles should be considered a stressful position. Queen and Queen (2005) found that 50 to 70% of principals believe that the role of principal is the most stressful job in education. Studies carried out in the United Kingdom by Travers and Coopers (1991) found that employees working in educational institutions especially the high school principals and their deputies reported high level of stress and increased levels of stress related illness.

A study in Ghana shows that teachers and educational administrators are experiencing series of stress situations (Schroeder, Akatia & Apekey, 2001). Mushemiva and Olamini (2015), and UK National Association of Head Teacher (2005) concluded that generally the worth of a school head is a stressful one because of the many roles and duties they are expected to perform.

In Kenya, Ngari, Ndungu, Muncinta, Ngumi, Muniukha (2013), in their study on level of stress among secondary school administrators and its implication in education management in Kenya established that the school administrators experience stress in their work. 54.5% of the respondents recorded high levels of stress compared to deputies and heads of departments.

According to United States Bureau of Labour (2008) cited in Perry (2016) report revealed that the increasing demands placed on principals lead to greater stress. It was reported that 35% of the 415,000 education administrators in the United States worked more than 40 hours per week. Principals address new policies; understand socioeconomic issues, school violence and the main deadlines for attaining educational goal etc.

These challenges can be stressful and the stress impacts on principals because they are responsible for the education of all students under their watch. In view of this, it is obvious that principals are faced with many responsibilities and them to thrive and effectively manage the secondary schools for productivity and quality the sources of the administrative stress and coping strategies must be explored.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the fact that the work of the principals is highly demanding and with great expectations on the part of the government and the public at large, there is no doubt that they can easily get stressed as a result of the performance of duties expected of them. It has been observed that principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State go through a number of daily routines as schedules of activities. Many of these activities can be said to be quite tasking if not out rightly demanding and extremely stressful. This in effect can bring about administrative stress because of the physical, mental, emotional and psychological effect they have on the principals. No doubt, administrative stress can lead to ineffectiveness, low performance, job dissatisfaction, poor motivation absenteeism, and turnover.

Due to the importance of maximum achievement and its negative impact, most countries are carrying out researches on stress. The few studies done in Nigeria are Anynawu, Ezenwaji, Okenjom and Enyi (2015) and Offia (2015) respectively. Nevertheless, it appears that little or no work has been done in examining administrative stress and coping strategies of principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Hence, the study intends to fill the gap.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explore the causes of administrative stress and the coping strategies among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, this study intends to;

- Determine factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Examine the influence of administrative stress on principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

- Determine the coping strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- What factors constitute administrative stressors among principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- What is the influence of administrative stress on principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- What coping strategies do principals utilize in managing administrative stress in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated below guided the study.

- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the influence of administrative stress on principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the coping strategies utilized in managing administrative stress among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study is anchored on the theory of Cognitive Appraisal postulated by Lazarus (1991). Cognitive Appraisal theory is a theory of emotions, which states that a person's evaluative judgment for appraisal of a situation, event or object determines or contributes to his or her emotional response to it. He explained that cognitive appraisal processes play a major role in how a person reacts in different situations. A person would react with anger, guilt or joy, depending on how he or she sees a given situations. The cognitive appraisal process can be divided into three categories: primary, secondary and reappraised.

Primary Appraisal

An environmental situation is regarded as one being positive, stressful, or irrelevant to well-being. In case a situation is not perceived to be detrimental in any way, the primary appraisal is seen as irrelevant, as the outcome of the situation does not affect human in any way. A situation is perceived as being positive when the possible outcome is positive and likely to help human in

same way. The emotions related to this appraisal include joy, peacefulness and love. A situation is said to be stressful if the outcome is likely to be negative, and in the form of challenge, threat or harm. The emotions associated with this appraisal include fear, anger and sadness.

Secondary Appraisal

Secondary appraisal: account is taken of the resources that the individual has and available to cope with the situation. When we are in an adverse situation, something needs to be done to control it and avoid any subsequent repercussions. Secondary appraisal follows primary appraisal of a situation. This necessarily includes evaluation of the situation and a suitable reaction (i.e. individuals evaluate what can be done in the face of the stressful encounter like, they taxing their coping options). This essentially addresses what can be done to cope with a particular situation. The reaction to the situation is decided by carefully analyzing what is at stake and what can be done to reduce negative consequences.

Reappraisal

Re-appraisal: the stimulus situation and the coping strategic monitored, with the primary and secondary appraisals modified if necessary. Reappraisal is rethinking the strategy to cope with situation in view of new information. This may add to or relieve stress depending on the new information. For instance, if you not ready for interview, a postponement in the date will relieve the stress, however, if the interview is taken earlier than decided, it will add to the stress.

Emotions and Cognitive Appraisal

Cognitive appraisal theory suggests that your reaction to a situation is based on the way it is interpreted by you and not on the situation itself. Thus, a situation which is stressful for someone may not be so for others. For instance, school examinations may be stressful for some students, while some may perceive it as a challenge. Lazarus (1991) states that, emotions are the outcome of cognitive appraisal of the situation, followed by physiological response and suitable action to cope with the situation. For instance, seeing a snake will naturally be seen as a threat, followed by rapid breathing and heart bate, and finally resulting in the person running away from it. For those not afraid of snakes, seeing one may be interesting and the person angling for a better view.

The descriptions of these forms of appraisal seem to imply that they involve deliberate conscious processing. However, that is not necessarily the case, for example, Lazarus (1991:169) referred to “two kinds of appraisal processes as one that operates automatically without awareness or volitional control and the other being conscious, deliberate, and volitional”. There have been two major developments in appraisal theory through the theoretical formulation Lazarus (1991). First, it is increasingly claimed that each distinct emotion is elicited by a specific and distinctive pattern of appraisal.

For example, Lazarus (1991) argued that there are six appraisal components, two involving primary appraisal and four involving secondary appraisal:

- Primary: motivational relevance (related to personal commitments?).
- Primary; motivational congruence (consistent with the individual's goals?).
- Secondary; accountability (deserves the credit, or blame?).

- Secondary; problem-focused coping potential (can the situation be resolved?).
- Secondary': emotional focused coping potential (can the situation be handled psychologically?).
- Secondary: future expectancy (how likely is that the situation will change?).

According to Lazarus (1991) different emotional states can be distinguished on the basis of which appraisal components are involved and how they are involved. For example anger, guilt, anxiety, and sadness all possess the primary appraisal components of motivational relevance and motivation; incongruence (these emotions only occur when goals are blocked). However, they differ in terms of secondary appraisal component. Guilt involves self-accountability, anxiety involves low or uncertain emotion-focused coping-potential, and sadness involves low future expectancy for change.

Second, most early appraisal theories (including that of Lazarus, 1991) focused on the structure of appraisal rather than the processes involved. In other words, they emphasized the intents of any given appraisal but largely ignored the underlying mechanisms involved in producing appraisals. This issue has been addressed in several recent theories. Of particular importance is the theoretical approach of Kalu (2006). According to their theory, various appraisals processes; occur in parallel. There are three basic mechanisms.

- First, there is associative processing, which involves priming and activation of memories. This form of processing occurs rapidly and automatically, and lacks flexibility.
- Second, there is reasoning. This process involves deliberate thinking, and is slower and more flexible.
- Third, there are appraisal detectors that continuously monitor appraisal information coming from the associative and reasoning processes. The emotional state an individual experiences at any given moment is determined by the total information registered by the appraisal detectors.

Lazarus (1991) assumed that cognitive appraisals play a crucial role in the stress process. On the basis of primary and secondary appraisals, individual start their coping processes which can stimulate reappraisal processes. To arrive at a better understanding of the stress process and how it develops over time, Lazarus (1991) suggested putting more emphasis on an intra-individual analysis of the stress phenomenon, by studying the same persons in different contexts over time. Principals can be described as high-achieving, well-educated individuals who have been found to generally have effective coping capabilities (Hussung, 2015).

However, there is a point for an individual when the demands outweigh his or her coping abilities and stress results. The levels of stress can range from very low to very, high, or anywhere in between. Stress levels that remain high for extended periods of time are of particular concern, as are the abilities of the individual to identify and cope with the stressor(s) (Jaiyeoba & Jibril, 2008). Therefore, in addition to identifying the stress levels of principals, it is important to examine principals 'personal coping strategies and compare them with research-based stress management strategies in order to determine the effectiveness of the techniques that principals are currently employing.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

According to Melgosa (2009), the term stress comes from the middle English word 'stresse', which simply refers to as stress. The verb can be traced to a combination of the middle English word *Stressen*, the middle English word *distresse* (distress) and the middle French word *estrecier* (to constrain or to force); and the Latin word *strictus* which is participle of *stringere* which means to draw tight or to press together. From this analysis, stress may simply mean being subjected to external forces or pressures that can be either positive or negative depending upon the effect of the external force. However, the underlying negative meaning associated with distress is attached to the word.

Yambo, Kindiki and Tuitoek (2012) opined that the term 'stress' is borrowed from the word of mechanics and physics where stress is described as the physical pressure asserted upon, and between parts of a body. In addition, Willies (2005) stated that, historically, Dr. William Bradford Cannon was the first clinician to identify the physical characteristics of the initial phase of stress. In every profession or work that has a goal to achieved, a deadline to be met, a supervisor to report to and to be supervised, normally is not stress free.

Stress is the inability of the body mechanism to function at the equilibrium level. It is experienced when a worker is experiencing pressure that is above his equilibrium level, which makes that work to take some extra steps to overcome the pressure (Uzoeshi, 2017). Oboegbulem (2007) in Anyanwu, Ezenuaji, Okenjom and Enyi (2015) defined stress as a process in which environmental events or forces, called stressors threaten an organisms existence and well-being and how the individual responds to such threat. It could also be seen as a feeling which occurs when an individual's working or living conditions or circumstances make demands beyond the individual's capacity to handle such situation, physically or emotionally (Brimm, 2001).

Lazarus (1991) defined stress as the demands on a person which tax exceed his adaptive resources. Stress can be explained as a physical factor such as injury or mental state like anxiety that disturbs the body's normal state of functioning. Stress may contribute to the development of some illness, including heart diseases and cancer. Leach (1984) stated that stress creates anxiety of exerts chronic pressure on the individual.

According to Gmelech in Perry (2016), the concept of stress can be associated with anxiety, frustration, strain, conflict and tension. Slyers (2011) asserts that stress has to do with a general response which the human body makes to any demand on it. It is a worry which is physical, psychological, physiological and sociological which may result from not meeting up with certain demands at the work place. Stress is being in a pressure situation, having an upright feeling, being nervous, feeling frustrated, having feeling of tension or being in conflict situation.

It is important to note that not all stresses are negative. Stress can also be positive known as Eustress. Eustress is necessary to perform well. A moderate amount of tension is vital and certain levels of stress are actually health stress helps one attain higher goals and solve difficult problems. Selye in Melgosa (2009) stated that a complete absence of stress mean death. In other way, distress is a negative stress experienced by an individual who fails to achieve. A state of distress produces feeling of insecurity, helplessness, or desperation. When stress is greater than the level of support, it makes out to decrease. Distress has been linked with coronary heart disease, the speeding up of aging through hormonal imbalance, nervous conditions, and the development of degenerative disease.

Administrative stress has been viewed as an interactive process which occurs between principals and their school environment which leads to excessive demands being placed on them

and resulting in physiological and psychological distress (Forline & Hattie in Offia, 2015). Administrative stress is an unpleasant negative feeling such as frustrations, tension or anger resulting from some aspects of the work of principals (Kyriacou, 2001). In this study, administrative stress is defined as the arousal of both physical and mental situations or events that administrators (principals) perceive as threatening or challenging.

Stages of Stress

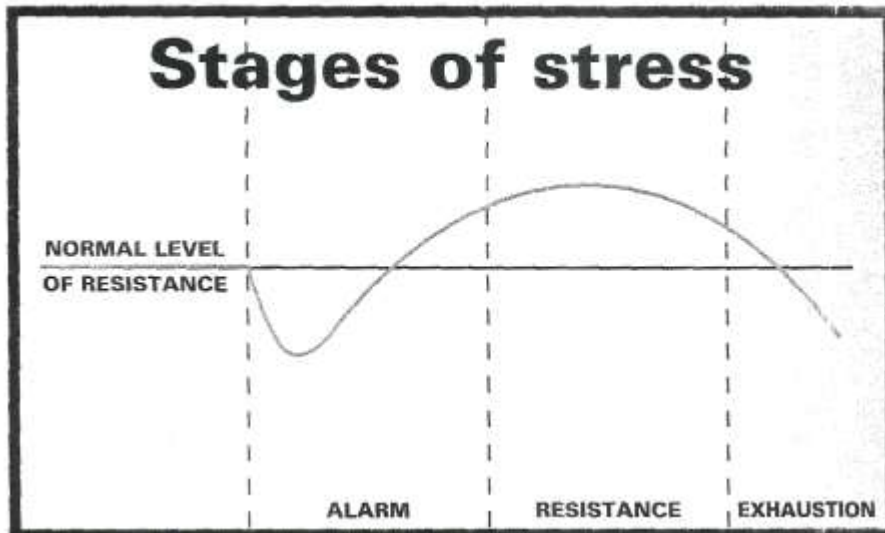


Figure 1: Stages of Stress. Source: (Melgosa, 2009)

Stress does not sneak up on its victim, capturing him or her in an unpredictable surprise attacks. Fortunately, the human body is made in such a way that it can detect a series of signals which indicate danger. According to Selye (1950) in Ezoeshi (2017), stress passes through three stages from the time it appears until it reaches its most acute unit. The three stages of stress are: the alarm, resistance, and exhaustion stages.

The Alarm Stage

The alarm stage is also known as the fight or flight response. During the alarm stage, the brain sends an emergency signal to other parts of the body, which lets those parts know that there is a dangerous situation. As the body mobilize itself to react, one can choose between a fight or flight response. When one is in the alarm stage, the nervous system is prepared to fight or flight. The heart starts beating faster, which provides more blood and oxygen to the arms and legs.

Resistance Stage

This is the second stage of the general adaptation syndrome. During this stage the body has increased capacity to respond to the stressor. Due to high energetic cost, the body cannot maintain high levels of resistance to stress forever, and if the stressor persists the body may advance into exhaustion.

Exhaustion Stage

This stage is reached after prolonged high-stress situations. In this stage of stress, the body feels depleted. The chronic production of stress hormones has worn out physiological functioning, causing deep physical exhaustion, and fatigue even when not doing very much. There can also be mental and emotional effects such as depression. The body has depleted its energy, as well as its ability to combat disease. The body is both mentally and physically on the verge of collapse.

Long term chronic stress weakens the body due to the stress hormones that circulated constantly through it. The physiological systems aren't made to work on overdrive for long periods. They will eventually start to lose efficiency, breakdown, or even collapse and stop working (Adele, 2018). Chronic stress can cause serious illness, as well as burnout like;

- Chronic fatigue
- Depression
- Adrenal exhaustion
- Relationship issues
- Behavioural problems

Signs/ Symptoms of Stress

In recent times, researchers like, Mariammal, Amutha and Sornaraj (2012), Hussung (2015) and many more have listed the following in their work as signs/symptoms of stress:

- **Impaired sleep:** Inability to sleep well, after the person has fallen asleep, it is characterized by frequent waking up.
- **Gastrointestinal upset:** Untoward changes in bowel movement or pains which can also manifest as constipation or diarrhea.
- **Compromised relationships with family and friends:** Stressed people are not in good relationship with family members and others.
- **Insomnia:** Differently falling asleep or staying asleep, even when a person has the chance to do so.
- **Low productivity:** The principal perform below expectation or does not meet up with set target.
- **Poor sexual performance:** Lack of sexual urge as a result of stress, low libido, erectile dysfunction and importance.
- **Headaches:** A condition characterized by pain in the head or neck region.
- **Fatigue:** Extreme tiredness resulting from mental or physical exertion.
- **Increased use of alcohol and drugs:** Some people who are stressed manifested the sign through excessive drinking of alcohol and intake of drugs. This they do to have relief, but it does not provide a solution to the problem of stress.
- **High blood pressure:** The principal will experience increase in blood pressure due to stress example is blood pressure rising above 120/80mmHg.
- **Nervousness:** Feeling of being tensed most of the time without relaxation with increased heat rate.
- **Difficulty in concentration:** Inability to focus on a particular activity, he is easily distracted.

- **Anxiety:** Dominant symptom; worrying that they are getting servile. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2018) defines anxiety as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.
- **Asthma and Peptic Ulcer:** Difficulty in breathing which can result in death. Peptic ulcer i.e. excessive secretion of hydrochloric acid in the stomach which in turn can create an injury in the stomach resulting in peptic ulcer.
- **Loss of appetite:** Not feeling hungry as a result of stress.

Hussung (2015) characterized early warning signs and symptoms of stress under three main classifications; emotional, behavioural and physical signs and symptoms. They are summarized in table 1 below:

Signs/Symptoms of Administrative Stress

Emotional	Behavioural	Physical
Apathy	Avoiding things	Excessive worrying
Anxiety	Doing things to extremes	Illness
Irritability		Physical exhaustion
Mental fatigue	Administrative problems	Reliance on self-medication
Overcompensation or denial-grandiosity	Legal problems	Ailments such as headaches, insomnia, appetite changes weight gain or loss

Symptoms of stress are further classified into four. These include: Emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioural symptoms. It is important to note that the points listed above as signs/symptoms of administrative stress are also symptoms associated with other diseases. For this reason the school administrator cannot therefore conclude that he or she is experiencing high level of stress when having any of them. It is advisable to consult a physician.

Types of Administrative Stress Faced by Secondary School Principals

Abrecht as cited in Offia (2015) stated four common types of administrative stress. These include: time stress, anticipatory stress, situational stress and encounter stress.

Time stress: This occur when an administrator worry about time, or the lack thereof. He or she worries about the number of things that he or she has to do and there is fear of not achieving something important. Principals might feel trapped, unhappy or even hopeless.

Anticipatory stress: Anticipatory stress describes stress that the administrator experience concerning the future. Sometimes this stress can be focused on a specific event.

Situational stress: The principal experience situational stress when he or she is faced with situation that he or she has no control over. This could be an emergency. More commonly, however, it is a situation that involves conflicts, or a loss of status or acceptance in the eyes of your group, for instance, making a major mistake in front of a team.

Encounter stress: This happened as a result of worry about interacting with certain persons or group of people.

Causes of Administrative Stress

Administrative stresses experienced by principals are of unpleasant emotion such as anger, tension, depression, frustration and nervousness, resulting from their work as principals. Doring (1993) and Friedman (1997) in Yambo, Kindira and Tuitoek (2012) suggested that principals exhibit such unpleasant emotions because it is a psychological and physiological response to threatening or over demanding situations. Oboegbulem (2011) in Anyanwu, Ezenwaji, Okenjam and Enyi (2015) identified those stressors which are intrinsic to the job and which border on unpleasant working conditions of principals as: total school working hours, physical factors like overpopulation of students, problem with school plant, inadequate and ill-equipped teachers with lackadaisical attitudes toward work, students with poor academic background and negative attitude towards learning, low motivation, inadequate resources to run the school and poor staff development programmes. According to Adebola and Mukhtari (2008), other causes of administrative stress are personal problems such as societal problems and pressure, role conflicts, financial problems and domestic worries.

A research carried out by Mayo (2018) states that lack of power and influence, and office politics are among main causes of administrative stress within the school system. In a research conducted by Jaiyeoba and Jibril (2008) on the causes of secondary school principals stress in Kano state, Nigeria, concluded in their findings revealed that administrative routine, workload, conflicting demands and role between work and family were the highest sources of stress. They added that 77.5 percent of the principals reported their job was stressful. Kalu (2006) identified personal/organizational demand, family versus organizational demand, role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, under promotion, large school population, inadequate funds and students' indiscipline as factors that constitute stress to Principals in Delta State. Other causes of stress include: lack of promotion, poor relationship with staff, low self-esteem, urgent need to meet up deadline, technological change and going from one challenging situation to the next without taking time to relax.

EFFECTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRESS

Principals who are often under stress need to learn to manage it well because stress can affect their well-being. Willies (2005) posited that stress on principals is capable of leading them to negative behaviour and thoughts, problems of emotions, physical health which may hinder effective school administration. Research by Larchick and Chance (2002) found a big impact on principal's health, well-being and performance from their related job stress. Robbins and Judge (2007) asserted that an individual who is experiencing a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers, irritability, difficulty in making routine decision, loss of appetite, accident proneness, and the like. Mayo (2018) added that stress that is left unchecked can contribute to many health problems, such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, chest pain, muscle pain, sleep problem, lack of motivation or focus, sadness or depression, angry outburst, social withdrawal and drug or alcohol abuse.

According to Uzoeshi (2012), extreme stress can have deep psychological effects such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, aggression, frustration, apathy, emotional instability and loss of self-esteem. Others include: poor interpersonal relationships, health challenges (ulcer, high blood pressure, headache, fever, stroke, sexual dysfunction, fatigue, low body immunity, heart attack,

cancer and insomnia, decrease in job performance, exhaustion, loss of concentration, poor eating pattern, death and absenteeism.

Stress can also affect work life of principals in the following ways:

- Stressed principals may find it difficult managing work responsibilities.
- Stressed principals cannot face their work effectively.
- Principals under stress are prone to having conflicts with other workers, this hindering successful teamwork.
- Stress has negative impact on productivity. According to Dr. Frans Korb, a psychiatrist and clinical psychologist, an employee who is stressed but is at work, is five times less productive than an employee who is absent as a result of stress (SADAG, 2018 in Kinanee, 2018).

Other consequences of stress include coronary and pulmonary complications, tuberculosis and sudden death. Data from European countries and North America show that between 50%-80% of diseases have their origin in stress. According to a recent study it is estimated that 25% of an all death in United States of America have stress complications (Silva & Coun in Onyemenam, 2016). Uzoeshi (2017) asserted that overdoes stress in a worker can make him to be ineffective and open to health challenges, thereby making life to be meaningless.

Although, stress have negative effects, it is important to note that not all of them are bad. Stress can facilitate our behaviour. Optimum stress level can improve concentration, prolong endurance, build strength and reduces errors (Hebb, 1958 in Kalu, 2006). Mckee and Seppala in Meija (2017) defined “good stress” as a product of our human fight of flight response, where the human bodies prepared to fight off a potentially deadly attack or run away. Stress in small doses can help individuals achieve short-term goals, which may resonate with plenty of procrastinators. Stress can often be the spice of life.

The human bodies and minds were built to take stress and to thrive on it and the occasional shock of adrenalin is a great cure for boredom and indifference. When handled well, stress gives added motivation to overcome obstacles and brings strength, for somebody to handle threatening situations which might damage one’s happiness, safety or self-esteem. Principals of secondary schools need stresses for adjustments and growth. With stresses, redirection of energies can easily be affected for the better (Kalu, 2006). The problem comes with over load. Beyond a certain level, which is different for every individual, stress becomes destructive. Intense and persistent anger, fear, frustration or worry can threaten health. It is this build-up of stress without release of tension which leads to trouble. The principals need to know the limits of their abilities beyond which they reap negative and harmful results.

Coping Strategies of Administrative Stress

Coping is defined as any effort, healthy or unhealthy conscious or unconscious, to prevent, reduce or weaken stressors or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner (Offia, 2015). Uzoeshi (2012) defined stress coping strategies as necessary step taken by an individual when faced with situations that exceed his or her level of equilibrium.

Here are some steps in managing stress. Mckee and Seppala in Meija (2017) offered two steps in coping with stress. These include:

- Determine the sources of stress. According to him if an individual is stressed from working too much, they recommend that such individual should asked himself or herself if he or she really need to over labour oneself or if it is only out of habit.
- Learn how to be resilient. According to Mckee and Seppala resilience is the ability to quickly bounce back from the stressful situations individual face every day. He recommends that if a situation at work has made a school head to feel stressed, he or she should counter his or her body's automatic tendency to be negative, worry and over think by taking deep breaths. Breathing is a rapid and reliable pathway into the nervous system dedicated to helping to regain optimal state. It also normalizes the level of cortile, known as stress hormone. Another way recommended by them to quickly bounce back from stress is to engage in slow-paced activities like going walks in a tree-lined street or park.

Kalu (2006) in his research came up with the following strategies on how principals can cope with stress:

- Doing some physical exercise
- Encouraging stress-reducing techniques
- The specification of job roles
- Interacting with people during break
- Adopting passive attitude towards some problems
- Being prudent in financial management.
-

Oboegbulem and Onuwurah (2011) outlined the following strategies that can be used to cope with administrative stress by secondary school principals.

- Developing close staff relationship
- Improving team management
- Utilizing colleagues as human resource
- Adopting problem solving approach with teachers
- Hiring competent personnel to assist in administration.

Ezekiel in Kalu (2006) has also identified other strategies for coping with administrative stress. These include:

- Effective planning: allotting time for work, rest and relaxation
- Setting goals and priorities: establish daily goals and set priorities, most effective principals accomplish their most important objectives early in the morning to avoid stressful rushing later in the day.
- To reduce stress, establish long range goals, school heads with only a general or vague notions of what they expect to accomplish in life often find themselves in conflict situations.

Other stress management strategies include: happiness, relaxation, time management, being optimistic always, getting actively involved in social and religious activities, diet, counseling and medication.

METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive and survey design. It is a descriptive and survey design because it aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, in line with the facts and characteristics of a given population (Osaat, 2014). The population of the study comprised two hundred and sixty-seven (267) principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample for the study consisted of one hundred and seven (107) principals and stratified random sampling technique was used to select the required number of principals.

The instrument used for data collection was a four-point Likert scale researchers developed questionnaire titled “Administrative Stress and Coping Strategies Questionnaire” (ASCSQ) which contains 30 items in three clusters. The response modes were; Strongly Agreed (SA) - 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point. The instrument used has two sections namely; section ‘A’ which is concerned with personal data of the respondents and section ‘B’ which contains 30 items which is in three clusters. The instrument used was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument a test-re-test method applied using 20 Principals that was not part of the sample. Internal consistency reliability index of 0.80 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Any item with mean of 2.50 and above was taken to mean that the respondent is in agreement with the option while a mean score of 2.49 and below showed disagreement to the items of the instrument.

RESULTS

Research question one: What factors constitute administrative stressors among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean response on factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
1.	Inadequate fund to run the school	76	20	7	4	3.57	0.78	Agreed
2.	Demand for high standards without adequate resources to achieve them.	35	53	14	5	3.10	0.80	Agreed
3.	Urgent need to meet up deadlines.	39	42	18	8	3.04	0.92	Agreed
4.	Having too many decisions to make.	35	49	9	14	2.98	0.97	Agreed
5.	Poor condition of service.	49	39	13	6	3.44	0.87	Agreed
6.	Family versus school demands.	28	57	17	5	3.00	0.78	Agreed
7.	Large school population.	45	36	13	13	3.06	1.02	Agreed
8.	Students’ indiscipline.	52	48	5	2	3.40	0.67	Agreed
9.	Sudden educational change.	12	51	16	28	2.44	1.00	Disagreed
10.	Poor cooperation among staff around the school	29	28	21	29	2.53	1.16	Agreed
Total						3.06	0.90	

The table above shows that item 1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8, and 10 are factors that constitute administrative stressor among principals in senior secondary school as the calculated mean of the items are

above 2.50 while item 9 is not among the factors that constitute administrative stressor among principals in senior secondary school as the calculated mean of item 9 is below 2.50

Research question two: What is the influence of administrative stress on principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean response on the influence of administrative stress on principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
11.	Difficulty in managing work responsibilities	11	22	32	42	2.02	1.01	Disagreed
12.	Hypersensitivity and withdrawal	32	47	21	7	2.97	0.87	Agreed
13.	Procrastination and missed deadlines	31	48	22	6	2.97	0.85	Agreed
14.	Increase intake of alcohol	8	21	47	31	2.06	0.89	Disagreed
15.	Decrease in job performance	35	46	18	8	3.01	0.89	Agreed
16.	Lack of concentration	30	28	53	6	3.25	3.02	Agreed
17.	Aggressive behavior	37	47	9	13	3.02	0.97	Agreed
18.	Health challenges such as ulcer, headache, sexual dysfunction	31	55	15	6	3.037	0.82	Agreed
19.	Prolong endurance and build strength	10	32	40	25	2.25	0.92	Disagreed
20.	Improve productivity	10	22	44	31	2.10	0.93	Disagreed
Total						2.67	1.12	

Table 3 shows that item 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18 influence administrative stresses on principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State as the items calculated means are above 2.50 while principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State disagreed that 11, 14 19 and 20 influence administrative stress as the items calculated means are below 2.50

Research question three: What coping strategies do principals utilized in managing administrative stress in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean response on coping strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
21.	Engaging in some physical exercise	33	55	13	6	3.07	0.81	Agreed
22.	Delegation of duties to staff	28	29	20	30	2.51	1.16	Agreed
23.	Developing close staff relationship	65	21	16	5	3.36	0.90	Agreed
24.	Maintaining an appropriate balance between work and non-work related demands	18	60	23	6	2.84	0.77	Agreed
25.	Identifying the sources of administrative stress and avoiding them	27	47	27	6	2.89	0.85	Agreed
26.	Attending social and religious activities reduces administrative stress	75	19	8	5	3.53	0.83	Agreed
27.	Adopting passive attitude towards some problems	12	26	40	29	2.20	0.97	Disagreed
28.	Going on vacation and relaxation	18	41	35	13	2.60	0.91	Agreed
29.	Taking balanced diet	18	33	32	24	2.42	1.02	Disagreed
30.	A collaborative effort of all staff	42	34	21	10	3.01	0.99	Agreed
Total						2.84	0.92	

Table 4 shows that principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State agreed to the fact that item 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28 and 30 are the coping strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State as their calculated means are above 2.50 while they disagreed that item 27 and 29 are strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State as their calculated mean are below 2.50

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: Summary of z-test on the mean difference of male and female principals on the factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	z-test	z-crit.	Sig.	Remark
Male	77	30.64	5.44	105	1.68	1.98	0.095	**
Female	30	28.67	5.43					

**=Not Significant

Table 5 showed that the mean score and standard deviation of male were 30.64 and 5.44 while the mean scores and standard deviation of female were 28.67 and 5.43. Also, the table further showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the calculated value of z (1.68) is less than the critical value of z (1.98), hence, the H_{O1} was accepted at a 0.05 level of significance.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the influence of administrative stress on principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: Summary of z-test on the mean difference of male and female principals on the influence of administrative stress on principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	z-test	z-crit.	Sig.	Remark
Male	77	30.23	5.64	105	2.36	1.98	0.020	*
Female	30	27.23	6.54					

*= Significant

Table 6 showed that the mean score and standard deviation of male were 30.23 and 5.64 while the mean scores and standard deviation of female were 27.23 and 6.54. Also, the table further showed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the influence of administrative stress on principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the calculated value of z (2.36) is greater than the critical value of z (1.98), hence, the H_{O2} was accepted at a 0.05 level of significance.

HO₃: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on coping strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 7: Summary of z-test on the mean difference of male and female principals on the coping strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	z-test	z-crit.	Sig.	Remark
Male	77	30.04	4.97	105	2.36	1.98	0.011	*
Female	30	27.27	4.92					

***= Significant**

Table 7 showed that the mean score and standard deviation of male were 30.04 and 4.97 while the mean scores and standard deviation of female were 27.27 and 4.92. Also, the table further showed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the influence of administrative stress on principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the calculated value of z (2.36) is greater than the critical value of z (1.98), hence, the H₀₂ was rejected at a 0.05 level of significance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Factor that constitute administrative stress among Principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State:

The result of the data analysis on factors that constitute administrative stressors among principals of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State showed inadequate und to run the school, demand for high standards without adequate resources to achieve them, urgent need to meet the deadline, having too many decision to make, poor condition of service, family versus school demands, large school population, students' indiscipline and poor cooperation among staff around the school. This finding is in agreement with that of Kalu (2006) who reported that personal/organizational demand, family versus organization demand, role overload, large school population, inadequate funds and students indiscipline are factors that causes stress to principals of Post primary Schools in Delta State. Also, it concur with that of Okoroma and Robert-Okah (2007), who identified inadequate funding, inadequate school facilities, work overload and poor condition of service as the causes of administrative stress for secondary school Principals.

The test of hypothesis one showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and the female Principals on the factors that constitute administrative stressors among Principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State since the calculated value of z(1.68) is less than the critical value of z(1.98), hence, the H₀₁ was accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

Influence of administrative stress on Principals of public senior secondary schools.

The findings of this study further revealed that the influence of administrative stress on principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State include: hypersensitivity and missed

deadlines, decrease in job performance, lack of concentration, aggressive behaviour, health challenges such as ulcer, headache, sexual dysfunction and prolong endurance and build strength. The findings is in agreement with that of Kyriacou (1980), which stated that head teacher/teacher stress comes from the demands place on them. This results in anger, anxiety, depression and pathogenic physiological changes. They argue that the effects of stress in general result in three ways; physical, psychological and behavioural.

The test of hypothesis two showed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female Principals on the influence of administrative stress on principals of Public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the calculated value of $Z(2.36)$ is greater than the critical value of $z(1.98)$, hence, the H_{02} was rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Coping strategies used in managing administrative stress among principals

The findings of this study revealed that the coping strategies for managing administrative stress among principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State include: engaging in some physical exercise, delegating duties to staff, developing close staff relationship, maintaining an appropriate balance between work and non-work related demand, identifying the sources of administrative stress and avoiding them, attending social and religious activities, going on vacation and relaxation and collaborative effort of all staff. This findings is in line with the findings of Anyanwu, Ezenwaji, Okenjom and Enyi (2005), and Offia (2015) who reported that delegation of duties, taking regular exercise, maintaining an appropriate balance between work and non-work related demand are coping strategies for managing stress.

The test of hypothesis three revealed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the influence of administrative stress on Principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State, since the calculated value $z(2.36)$ is greater than the critical value of $z(1.98)$. Hence, the H_{03} as rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

CONCLUSION

The principals are stressed up by inadequate fund to run the school, demand for high standards without adequate resources to achieve them, urgent need to meet up deadlines, having too many decisions to make, poor condition of service, family versus school demands, large population, students' indiscipline and poor cooperation among staff around the school. The influences of administrative stress on principals include hypersensitivity and withdrawal, procrastination and missed deadlines, decrease in job performance, lack of concentration, aggressive behaviour, health challenge such as ulcer, headache, prolong endurance and build strength. The coping strategies for stress management by public senior secondary school Principals include engaging in some physical exercise, delegation of duties to staff, developing close staff relationship, maintaining an appropriate balance between work and non-work related demands, identifying the sources of administrative stress ad avoiding them, attending social and religious activities, going on vacation and relaxation and collaborative effort of all staff.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- There is a need for provision of professional counseling services and training on distress management skills for school principals.
- Due to the rising cost of medical care, and the risk of stress related diseases, there is need for Health Insurance to cover psychological counseling.
- Ministry of Education should emphasize on enrichment, proper goal setting and positive reinforcement on principals duties in order to reduce stress and its impact.
- Government should provide sufficient funds to schools for day-to-day administration and reequip schools for effective teaching and learning.
- Principals should maintain discipline in the school through collaborative effort of all staff.
- Government should assist in building a supportive school network among teachers and administrators to develop cooperation and team spirit between teachers and their principals.
- The condition of service of principals should be improved. This will cause excitement and satisfaction in doing their work.

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