



## **Sources of Stress Among Female Teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The core mandate of this research was to examine the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions were raised to guide the study; the study adopted a descriptive research survey method. The total population of the study was 921 which comprise the entire 612 female teachers in government secondary schools and 309 female teachers in private secondary schools that are domiciled in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. No sample size was derived because the researcher considered the population to be small and manageable. The sample technique utilised was purposive sampling method. The instrument for data collection was a self structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled: "Sources of Stress Among Female Teachers Questionnaire" (SSFTQ). Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions. The research findings reveals that menstrual pain, death of a child or husband, abusive husbands, difficult and troublesome in-laws, child care and family upkeep, students' misbehavior are the possible sources of stress among female teachers. It was also discovered that, regular and effective exercise, relaxation and meditation, professional counselling and advise, change of lifestyle and medication are the identifiable ways of managing stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was concluded that stress on female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State affects their general well-being and personal development. It was recommended that as part of their welfare packages, female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State should be armed with basic stress containment strategies that seek to enable them cope with stress and at the same time, effectively carry out their core mandate as professional and trained teachers.

**Keywords:** Stress, Sources of Stress, Teachers and Female Teachers

### **INTRODUCTION**

Female teachers in contemporary educational system have been confronted by some stressors which often times, culminate into stress on their teaching-learning experiences. These factors could be intrinsic or extrinsic and they usually range from child care to family upkeep. As key factors in the educational arena, female teachers' quest to teach even in stress prone situations usually yields abysmal or even unproductive results. This tends to negate the fact that teaching which entails the inculcation of norms, values, skills, aptitude, or morals with the cogent aim of character refinement requires a moderate, temperate and modified stress conditions.

The word stress was coined from a Latin maxim called: *Stringere* which means *to draw tight*. The first use of the word stress as a concept of potential dysfunctional consequences of disrupting the balance of any organism is credited to the French psychologist Claude Bernard. Stress is anything that possess challenge or threat to our well-being. Stress is the feeling we have when we are under pressure. It is a

discomfort and inconvenience of our well-being arising from some environmental controllable and uncontrollable factors like; unpleasant people and neighbours, restlessness of mind and body, abuse, pressure from family and workplace, poor interpersonal relationship, unrealistic goals among others. Stress could be explicated to mean those intrinsic and extrinsic elements that tend to undermine and aggravate our emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Thus, stress is a distinctive force that tends to strain and deform our particular or general health condition.

When a female teacher is profusely and indiscriminately stressed, she tends to become forgetful and left with low degree of concentration requisite for effective and efficient teaching endeavor. However, even though some psychologists have articulated that the absence of stress in a human being would be boring and probably feel pointless, stress in the life of female teachers should be considered to be a misnomer especially when they tend to undermine their mental and physical well-being. The female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area are to guide the students or pupils through planned activities so that they may acquire richest learning possible from their experiences. These female teachers are also to interact with the students under their responsibility in order to bring about the expected change in the students' behaviour despite their stress (Awotua-Efebo, 1999).

A teacher could be seen as an individual who consciously and meticulously attempts to cause a much needed transformation in the learning abilities, attitudes and skills of another individual or group of individuals under her guidance and supervision. A teacher is one who consciously attempts to mould character, transfer knowledge and desirable skills in another. In fact, the teacher influences expected change in behaviour as a result of learning experiences (Ohaka, 2017). Usually, the teacher is seen as an individual who is mostly trained in the arts, science and theories of teaching (George, 2011).

The teacher in the cause of her teaching helps the students to; acquire, retain, and be able to use knowledge; understand, analyze, synthesize and evaluate skills; establish habits and develop attitudes. The teacher is one charged with the corporate onus of transmitting to the contemporary generation the accumulated knowledge and values of the past and thus, interprets this information with reference to the present with a view to embellishing and improving the future. How these teachers especially the female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State respond to stress affects their health considerably. Different female teachers respond to stress disparately. For example, if two female teachers are encountering financial encumbrances, both female teachers are likely to adopt different remedial measures in a bid to respond to the stressors. While one may decide to seek advice and professional counselling, the other may resort to isolation, alcoholism, drug abuse, being petrified and peppery.

Also, it is worthy of note to opine that even though stress on female teachers in Obio-Akpor may have many identifiable factors, the perception of these factors by the female teachers usually differ and this makes them to react to them according to their different temperaments. Thus, loss of beloved one (husband or child) or benefactor, domestic violence, troublesome in-laws, noisy and quarrelsome neighborhours, inability to foot bills, amongst others are possible factors that can induce stress on female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.

Following these factors that serve as sources of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, sometimes, their general psychology and philosophy of teaching is altered. Since they are overstressed, they tend to experience anger, anxiety, depression, sadness, fatigue, restlessness, forgetfulness and burnout. Stress leaves them with a feeling of academic and educational insecurity as they begin to see themselves as being grossly incompetent for a particular academic teaching enterprise. They also end up losing focus and concentration due to bad feelings and condition about their stressed condition. Therefore, there is a dire need for stakeholders in the educational economy of Rivers State to put in concerted effort in ensuring that these sources of stress among female teachers are identified and stress management strategies are deployed to generally contain the condition.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Experience and possible observations have revealed that female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area are usually stressed by some factors ranging from family problems to job working conditions. These stressors tend to affect their attitude towards their students and their response towards

their subsequent professional development. The female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area sometimes resort to withdrawing to themselves and become a loner instead of engaging in a more fruitful social and academic interpersonal relationship that will bring about new knowledge development in their field of endeavour due to stress. However, worried that this situation has lingered in the educational spectrum unabated, the researcher has decided to embark on the research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study was aimed at investigating the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to;

- 1) Determine the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
- 2) Determine the effects of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
- 3) Determine the ways in which stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State could be managed.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

- 1) What are the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
- 2) What are the effects of stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
- 3) What are the ways in which stress among female teachers in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State could be managed?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study is 921 which comprised the entire 612 female teachers in government secondary schools and 309 female teachers in the government approved private secondary schools that are domiciled in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State (Universal Basic Education, 2017). No sample size was derived for the study since the population was considered to be small and manageable. The sampling techniques utilized were purposive sampling method. Data for the study was collected by means of a questionnaire entitled: *Sources of Stress among Female Teachers Questionnaire (SSFTQ)*. The SSFTQ has two (2) sections: section 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' sought information on the demographic data of the respondents and contains three questions items. Also, section 'B' of the questionnaire instrument seeks information about the views of the respondents regarding the topic of the study with a total of 40 question items. The questionnaire adopted the four point likert scale which are: Strongly Agreed (SA: 4points), Agreed (A: 3 points), Disagreed (D: 2points) and Strongly Disagreed (D: 1point). The draft was subjected to preliminary face and content validation by three (3) experts. The reliability of the study was established using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistical tool and the computation yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.81. The data which was collected through the administration of questionnaire and which was also based on the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The decision rule was that any mean from 2.50 and above should be agreed while any lower than 2.50 was to be Disagreed.

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *What are the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State?*

To answer this research question, the mean ratings of the responses were calculated and the result presented in table 4.1.

**Table 1: Mean analysis of the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.D	Remark
1.	Menstrual pain	549	300	45	10	3.512	1.27	Strongly agreed
2.	Biological growth and development	386	320	154	50	3.145	0.89	Strongly agreed
3.	Child birth	70	379	119	342	2.194	1.03	Agreed
4.	Death of a child or husband	679	202	26	3	3.710	3.44	Strongly agreed
5.	Abusive husbands	720	173	15	2	3.770	0.47	Strongly agreed
6.	Child care and family upkeep	370	446	84	10	3.292	0.68	Strongly agreed
7.	Troublesome and difficult in-laws	554	310	40	6	3.551	0.61	Strongly agreed
8.	Lack of time	71	350	489	9	2.530	2.53	Agreed
9.	Excessive work hours	362	497	8	43	3.294	0.71	Strongly agreed
10.	Excessive workload	402	495	10	3	3.424	0.53	Strongly agreed
11.	Workplace bullying	200	93	506	111	2.419	0.96	Agreed
12.	Working environment	511	252	130	17	2.632	2.27	Agreed
13.	Conflicting job demands	320	480	199	11	3.965	2.11	Strongly agreed
14.	Financial matters	30	466	412	2	2.575	0.56	Agreed
15.	Students' misbehavior	667	204	29	10	3.679	0.59	Strongly agreed
16.	Large class size	631	239	25	15	3.632	0.62	Strongly agreed
<b>Total Mean</b>						<b>51.324</b>		
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.208</b>		

**Source:** Research Survey, (2018).

The result in table 4.1 above shows the sources of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area in Rivers State. 5 respondents agreed while 11 respondents strongly disagreed to the items. This implies that stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State is caused by menstrual pain, biological growth and development, death of a child or husband, abusive husbands, child care and family upkeep, difficult and troublesome in-laws, excess workload, conflicting job demands, students' misbehaviour and large class size.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the effects of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State?*

To answer this research question, the mean ratings of the responses were calculated and the result presented in table 4.2 below.

**Table 2: Mean analysis of the effects of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State.**

S/N.	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.D	Remarks
17.	Regular and effective exercise	550	316	40	4	3.551	0.60	Strongly agreed
18.	Relaxation and meditation	588	310	9	13	3.630	0.51	Strongly agreed
19.	Division of labour	318	509	76	7	3.250	0.64	Strongly agreed
20.	Professional counseling and advise	486	400	20	4	3.503	0.57	Strongly agreed
21.	Shopping	19	230	253	408	1.846	0.87	Strongly disagreed
22.	Sleeping	530	270	93	17	3.443	0.75	Strongly agreed
23.	Talking to neighbours	10	69	330	501	1.547	0.69	Strongly disagreed
24.	Listening to music	30	90	480	330	1.824	0.73	Agreed
25.	Change in lifestyle	401	490	2	17	3.390	0.66	Strongly agreed
26.	Medication	581	300	28	1	3.605	0.55	Strongly agreed
<b>Total Mean</b>						<b>29.589</b>		
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.959</b>		

**Source:** Research Survey, (2018)

The result of the findings as presented in table 4.2 above reveals the possible avenues which stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State could be managed. From the table above, it is evident that the respondents strongly agreed to the items in the table. While only three respondents disagreed. Therefore, it could be inferred that for stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area to be adequately contained, they will have to carry out regular and effective exercise, relaxation and meditation, division of labour, professional counselling and advise, consider a change of lifestyle and also go for regular medication; while items 7, 5 and 8 where strongly disagreed by the respondents. What this means is that shopping, talking to neighbours and listening to music are not always realistic and dependable avenues of stress management among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State.

**Research Question 3:** *What are the ways in which stress among female teachers in Ohio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State local government area of Rivers State could be managed?*

To answer this research question, the mean ratings of the responses were calculated and the result presented in table 4.3.

**Table 3: Mean analysis of the ways in which stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State could be managed.**

S/N.	Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.D	Remarks
27.	Physical discomfiture	660	210	38	2	3.673	0.57	Strongly agreed
28.	Psychological discomfiture	790	105	12	3	3.848	0.41	Strongly agreed
29.	Emotional discomfiture	810	77	21	2	3.973	0.82	Strongly agreed
30.	Intellectual effects	209	610	80	11	3.118	0.59	Strongly agreed
31.	Behavioural effects	393	507	9	1	3.420	0.52	Strongly agreed
32.	Career inadequacies	278	510	72	50	3.116	0.77	Strongly agreed
<b>Total Mean</b>						<b>21.148</b>		
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.525</b>		

**Source:** Research Survey, (2018)

The result of the findings as presented in table 4.3 above shows the effect stress has on female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The respondents strongly agreed to all the items in the instruments. This outcome then indicates that; physical discomfiture, psychological discomfiture, emotional discomfiture, intellectual effects, behavioural effects and career inadequacies constitutes a great effect of stress on the female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1

In table 1, the result of research question 1 was revealed and presented. The findings inadvertently show that the female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State concur to the rare truism that there are some avoidable and unavoidable elements that constitutes stress for them. They identified the following; menstrual pain, biological growth and development, abusive husbands, death of child or husband, child birth, child care and family upkeep, excessive work hours, excessive work load, troublesome and difficult inlaws as being incontrovertible stressors for female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. This result is no doubt in consonance with the works of Ohaka (2015); who highlighted menstrual pain, biological growth and development, coping with difficulties that deals with child development during pregnancy, child birth, troublesome, abusive and difficult in-laws, abusive husbands, troubles arising from stubborn and quarrelsome children, large class with male dominated students who are grossly gender insensitive and discriminatory, sudden death of a child or husband as being some of the recognisable sources of female teachers stress.

Surinder (2011) study also has a relationship with this study. Surinder (2011) identified excessive working hours, excessive workload, rising class size, pupil misbehaviour as also being the sources of

stress on female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. Yahayi (2017) is another researcher who made similar finding with this empirical work. Yahayi (2017) revealed that teachers have to work more doing clerical and material jobs, preparing for teaching aid and attending courses or educational workshops amidst their daily routine of family upkeep and care. Conversely, the findings of the study did not align with the works of Manjula (2009) who highlighted threat, fear, uncertainty, cognitive dissonance, life causing frustrations, conflicts, pressures, environment, fatigue and over work as being the possible sources of stress. The findings of the study were also in variance with the works of some other scholars like that of Brown, Ralph & Brember, (2002) and Troman, (2009).

Kumar, Wain and Paney (2013) and Rutter, Herzber and Paice (2002) also made a finding similar to this. Their studies revealed that extensive hours of work, difficult relationship among coworkers, securing financial support for research, inadequate salary, role overload, managing students' misbehavior, salary among others. This clearly shows that female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State are really being confronted by different stressors emanating from both the internal and external environments respectively which tend to constitute a major encumbrance to the effectiveness and efficiency of the teachers. Thus, these stressors must be examined and identified so as to salvage the female teachers and their teaching profession generally.

### **Research Question 2**

In table 2, the result for the research question as was presented above shows the way in which stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State could be contained. The result reveals that although, there are other key players in the management of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State, the female teachers themselves have a key and pivotal role to perform in this instance. However, as revealed above, some of these ways of containing this stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State involves; regular and effective exercise, relaxation and meditations, division of labour, professional counselling and advise, change in lifestyle, medication, among others.

This result is similar to that of Alan, Chan, Chen and Elaine (2010) who identified self relaxation, doing more exercise or sports, shopping, talking to friends, sleeping and talking to neighbors as being the possible antidotes to female teacher stress in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. In the same vein, The result of the study is also very much in agreement with the work of Ohaka (2015) who stated that engaging in regular and effective exercise, relaxation and meditation, division of labour and seeking of professional counselling and advise as being possible of ameliorating stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The implication of this research finding is that, no matter how grave stressful conditions could be, there is the possibility of them to be contained. Also, it also means that all forms or sources of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State could be contained provided the right measure(s) are identified and deployed accordingly.

### **Research Question 3**

The results in table 3 presents the responses to the research question which shows the effect of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. From the table, it is indicative of the fact that stress affects female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State diversely covering major aspects of the female teachers' personal life and endeavours. Such effect however, may include the physical discomfiture, the emotional discomfiture, the psychological discomfiture, the intellectual effects and the behavioural effects. The study also shows that though stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State may also have positive effects, the negative effects are more dominant and potent. The study is in tandem with the works of Ohaka (2015) who also highlighted physical discomfiture, emotional discomfiture and psychological discomfiture as being the broad categorization of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The findings of the study also slings with the work of Manjula (2007) who also stated that the effects of stress could either be intellectual, physical, emotional and/or behavioural in nature.

On the other hand, there seem to exist a slight dissimilarity of the results of this empirical study with that of Eva, Lima and Lima (2006). In their findings from early studies on health related problems associated with teacher stress showed that the negative effects could range from minor physical symptoms such as mouth sores to more serious psychological symptoms like depressions and suicidal ideations. Obviously, these revelations as have been seen in this empirical work as regards the effects of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State should serve as an Eye-opener to all stakeholders concerned. It means that in the nearest future if the degree of stress among female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State if not drastically minimized, the teaching effectiveness and efficiency of the female teachers will be at stake and subsequently culminating in the jeopardizing of the noble teaching profession. It also implies that the optional productivity of the school system will continue to be gradually dwindling thereby bringing about a gradient decay in the educational enterprise of Obio/Akpor in particular and Rivers State.

### **CONCLUSION**

The core mandate of this empirical study was to find out those elements that constitutes stress for the female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The study then looked at the disparate sources of stress among female teachers, their effects and how they could be possibly managed in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The study was also predicated on three discrepant theories. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that; the sources of stress for female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State are intrinsic and extrinsic, controllable and uncontrollable, natural and artificial which makes it debilitating for the female teachers to effectively and efficiently discharge their onus in the selected system. It is also concluded that, stress on female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State affects their general well being and personal development; thereby, constituting retardation to their professional efficiency and reliability.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are duly recommended for policy considerations;

- 1) As part of their welfare packages, female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State should be armed with basic stress containment strategies that seeks to enable them cope with stress and at the same time, effectively carry out their core mandate as professional and trained teachers.
- 2) There should be in place well-equipped professional counselling units with adequate professional staff in our schools that will be there to provide professional valid and reliable counselling services to those stressed female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. This will obviously help to bearably reduce the regular reported cases of female teachers' physical, psychological and emotional breakdown which are very much consequent upon stress.
- 3) Family members such as husbands, children and in-laws should provide regular clement atmosphere and peaceful precinct that will be devoid of rancour, pandemonium, violence, abuses and bickering in order to contribute to bringing female teachers' stressors to a close check. When this done, the female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area will tend to experience constant peace of mind and body which will make also for effective classroom teaching.
- 4) Apart from classroom teaching which is the core and primary mandate of every teacher, the female teachers in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State should not be excessively charged with copious responsibilities appointed into plethora of committee and/or made to carry out functions that requires much physical energy considering their natural physiognomy especially these female teachers that are either pregnant, bereaved or physically weak, among others. This will enhance their classroom and out-of-classroom capacity in a great measure.
- 5) The spirit of gender sensitivity and spirit of egalitarianism should be invoked into the system of the school. This gesture if properly implemented will make the stakeholders to appreciate their sexuality by assigning roles according to individual capacities.

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