

Relationship Between Work Stress and Mental Well-Being of Public and Private School Teachers In Taraba State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between work stress and mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State. Three research hypotheses that were in line with the objectives guided the study. A descriptive correlational survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 15,553 secondary school teachers. The sample of the study was 280 teachers drawn using purposive sampling. The instruments used for data collection were the School Teachers Stressor Scale (STJSS) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) with reliability coefficients of 0.79 and 0.77 respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used in analyzing the data collected. Results of the analyses indicated that there was no significant relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers. The finding also revealed that there was a significant relationship between mental well-being of public and private school teachers. The study recommended among others that stakeholders involved in education should liaise with the psychologists and counsellors to implement targeted stress management programs for public and private school teachers, addressing specific stressors prevalent in each sector.

Keywords: Work Stress, Mental Well-being, Public School Teachers, Private School Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the most demanding and stressful professions in the world. Teachers are responsible for shaping the future of the society by imparting knowledge and skills to the younger generation. Oghenede et al. (2020) assert that the attainment of any educational programme depends largely on the effective way in which a teacher works. According to the researchers, teachers are the basic link in any nation's educational system and that is why teachers are called "Nation builders" as they are tasked with the responsibility of providing direction and inspiration to learners. In the course of discharging their responsibilities, teachers are faced with numerous job demands such as; increasing workloads, pressure to meet academic standards, and challenging student behaviours (Yusuf et al. 2015; Letam, 2023). These job demands can be overwhelming, thereby, leading to work-related stress that can hinder efficiency and mental well-being.

According to Comish & Swindle, as referenced in Manabete et al. (2016), job-related stress is a mental and physical illness that impairs a person's efficacy, quality of work, and productivity at work. Reddy and Anuradha (2013) assert that job stress is an employee's psychological state that is being triggered by one or more work-related circumstances that are thought to create excessive and conflicting demands. Akpochafo (2012) asserts that this stress is as a result of an employee's inability to balance their needs and skills with their job responsibilities. Work stress is a common problem among teachers, both in public and private schools, and there is evidence from studies conducted in the past that it can have negative impact on teachers' mental well-being thereby, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. Poor mental well-being can have a significant impact on a person's work, relationships, and overall quality of life. In Nigeria, there is a shortage of qualified teachers, which can lead to increased workload and stress for teachers. Additionally, teachers in Nigeria often face difficult working conditions, such as lack of resources, poor infrastructure, pressure to meet academic standards and challenging student behaviours. These factors can contribute to high levels of work stress among teachers.

Mental well-being is an important aspect of overall health and well-being. It refers to a state of mind in which a person is able to think clearly, cope with the normal stresses of life, and enjoy meaningful relationships (Sharma, 2017). World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) suggests that mental well-being is not just the absence of disease/condition but on a continuum and includes coping with everyday stresses and being able to contribute to the individuals' community. Sharma (2017) assert that it is well established fact that mentally healthy persons are well and constructively disposed towards their occupations and professions. In learning environments such as secondary schools, teachers who have quality mental well-being may deliver effective and engaging learner-centred lessons than their counterparts who do not enjoy the same. Poor mental well-being has significant impact on a person's work, relationships, and overall quality of life.

Mental well-being is an essential aspect of overall health, and it is crucial for teachers to maintain good mental health in order to perform their duties effectively. Previous studies (Dicke et al., 2015; Peltzer et al., 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) have consistently reported that high levels of stress among teachers affect their own health and mental well-being. These high levels of stress if not properly handled, will lead to negative consequences. Previous studies reported in global literatures have indicated the relationship between work stress among public and private school teachers. A study carried out by Siddiqui (2012) to determine the degree of occupational stress experienced by Indian teachers working in both public and private schools. The researcher discovered that teachers at public schools were less equipped with cutting-edge tools like the internet and a wider range of instructional strategies than their counterparts in private schools. This, according to the researcher, is a factor that influences instructors' stress levels. However, this finding may be received with skepticism in a region like Taraba State where most public and private secondary schools lack these advanced technological resources.

A study conducted by Ali and Kumar (2022) aimed to investigate the disparity in occupational stress levels between public and private school teachers. The researchers randomly selected 20 female teachers from each category in Bareilly city. They employed the Hindi version of the Occupational Stress Index to collect data. The analysis revealed that both public and private school teachers experienced similar levels of occupational stress. In contrast, a study by Kumar and Yadav (2014) found that private school teachers reported higher job stress compared to their public school counterparts. Hasan (2014) conducted a similar study in Tehsil Laksar, Haridwar, selecting 100 teachers (50 public

and 50 private). Using the Occupational Stress Scale by Jamal and Raheem, the study found that private primary school teachers were more stressed compared to their public school counterparts.

Previous research has shown a clear link between stress and stress-related symptoms, indicating that high levels of stress can contribute to various psychological issues like depression and anxiety. In a study by Sathiyaraj and Singaravelu (2013), where 300 teachers were randomly selected, it was found that teachers in private schools exhibited higher levels of anxiety compared to those in public schools. This difference was attributed to the shortage of teachers in private schools, leading to teachers being assigned tasks outside their expertise. Similarly, Mishra and Yadav (2013) conducted a study comparing anxiety levels among teachers in private and public schools, finding that teachers in public schools experienced lower levels of anxiety than their counterparts in private schools.

Work-related stress has been found to negatively impact the mental well-being of teachers in public and private schools. Taraba State, Nigeria, employs a significant number of teachers in both public and private schools. However, there is limited research on the relationship between work stress and mental well-being among teachers in these schools. This study aims to investigate the connection between work stress and mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State. The study provides insights into the levels of work stress and mental well-being, as well as the relationship between these factors among public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria. Despite the high levels of work stress and poor mental well-being observed among teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria, there is limited research on this topic. Little is known about how the experience of stress and mental well-being differs between teachers in public and private schools. This study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between stress and mental well-being among public and private school teachers, with the goal of informing policies and interventions designed to improve the well-being of teachers in both sectors.

The prevalence of stress and burnout among teachers is a well-documented issue, with negative impacts on both teachers and students. Despite this, there is a lack of research on the differences in stress and mental well-being among teachers in public and private schools in Taraba State. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between stress and mental well-being among public and private school teachers. Given the numerous job demands faced by teachers in both sectors, which often lead to stressful situations and decreased mental well-being, this research is timely. The significance of this study lies in its potential to raise awareness of the issue and inform the development of effective interventions to reduce work stress, ultimately improving teachers' mental well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between stress and mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- I. Find out the relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria.
- II. Find out the relationship between mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria.

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria.

H02: There is no significant relationship between mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive correlational survey design. The area where the study was conducted is Jalingo Education Zone. This region is located in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Taraba State; one of the six states in Northeast Nigeria. The rationale behind the selection of this region is because it is known for its high number of schools and students, but low number of teachers. The population of the study was 15,553 teachers. The population consisted of secondary school teachers from the three Local Government Areas located in Jalingo Education Zone i.e., Ardo Kola, Jalingo and Lau LGAs. The study adopted purposive sampling to draw a total of 140 public and 140 private school teachers. The instruments used for data collection were; an adopted version of Keiko et al. (2019) School Teachers Stressor Scale (STJSS) comprising of 23 items used to measure teachers' work stress. The instrument was then pilot tested on 50 teachers; 25 public and 25 private school teachers. The results of the administration were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. A scaled version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) as designed by Goldberg and Hillier (1979) was adopted to measure the overall well-being of teachers. The instrument has 12 items with an established Cronbach's reliability coefficient of 0.77.

In order to analyze the data collected, the researchers utilized Pearson Product Moment Correlation in testing the null hypotheses that were postulated. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was considered the best statistical tool for analyzing the data collected in this research because, it is a statistical tool that measures the degree and direction of the linear relationship between two variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Relationship between Work Stress of Public and Private School Teachers.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal.	P-value
Public Teachers	138	69.56	4.76	.856**	.000
Private Teachers	138	69.80	4.70		

****Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The data presented in Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship between Work Stress of Public and Private School Teachers. For Public Teachers, the mean work stress score is 69.56 with a standard deviation of 4.76, while for Private Teachers, the mean work stress score is 69.80 with a standard deviation of 4.70. The calculated correlation coefficient (r-Cal.) is 0.856, which indicates a strong positive correlation between work stress levels of public and private school teachers. This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), denoted by the p-value of 0.000. Therefore, based on this data, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between

the work stress experienced by public and private school teachers, with private teachers showing slightly higher levels of stress on average compared to public teachers.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship between Mental Well-being of Public and Private School Teachers.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal.	P-value
Public Teachers	138	26.68	2.39	.247**	.099
Private Teachers	138	23.28	2.80		

****Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The data presented in Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship between Mental Well-being of Public and Private School Teachers. For Public Teachers, the mental well-being score is 26.68 with a standard deviation of 2.39, while for Private Teachers, the mental well-being score is 23.28 with a standard deviation of 2.80. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r-Cal.) between the mental well-being of public and private school teachers is 0.247. The p-value associated with this correlation coefficient is 0.099, which is greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. The positive correlation coefficient of 0.247 indicates a weak positive relationship between the mental well-being of public and private school teachers. However, this relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, as the p-value of 0.099 is greater than 0.05. This means that while there is a positive correlation between the mental well-being of public and private school teachers, the relationship is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant.

Discussions

This study investigated the relationship between work stress and mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State. The findings have clarified the hypotheses which were raised. The first finding of this study indicates that there is significant positive relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers. This finding agrees with that of Ali and Kumar (2022) who found out that the relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers is significantly positive. Their study also concluded that both teachers from public and private schools share the same levels of stress. One possible explanation for this finding could be that both public and private school teachers face many of the same stressors, such as heavy workload, high expectations from students and parents, and limited resources. Additionally, both groups of teachers may be affected by broader factors in the educational system, such as low salaries and lack of support from the public. However, the finding of this study contradicts the study conducted by Hasan (2014) who found out that private school teachers encounter more stress than public school teachers. The finding of the present study also contradicts that of Siddiqui (2012) who found out that public school teachers have high levels of stress because they lacked advanced technologies which will make teaching easier and effective for them.

Another finding of this study reveals that the mental well-being of teachers in public and private schools is not significantly different. The result of the finding disagrees with that of Sathiyaraj and Singaravelu (2013) who found out that teachers working in private schools had more anxiety than teachers working in public schools. The finding of the current study also contradicts that of Mishra and Yadav (2013) which revealed that the mental well-being and anxiety levels of private school teachers was more than

that of their counterparts in public schools. The result of this study which shows a positive, but weak, correlation could be due to a number of factors. Teachers in both public and private schools may face similar challenges and stressors in their work, such as heavy workloads, high performance expectations, and lack of adequate support and resources (Williams, 2024). Additionally, the finding result suggests that factors beyond just the school setting, such as individual coping strategies and work-life balance may play a more significant role in determining teachers' overall mental well-being.

The implications of the findings of this study are numerous and could be targeted towards helping both public and private school teachers. One of the implications is that the strong positive correlation indicates that the factors contributing to work stress are largely similar for both public and private school teachers. However, the slightly higher average work stress score for private school teachers suggests that they may face additional stressors in their work environment, such as demanding parents, heavy workloads, or lack of resources. The finding sheds light on the need for interventions and support systems that would help teachers to address the common sources of occupational stress. Some limitations of this study are that the study only examined the relationship between work stress and mental well-being levels, but did not explore the specific factors or sources of stress for each group of teachers. Even though the sample size is adequate, it may not be fully representative of all public and private school teachers, thereby, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The reason is because what is obtainable among the sample in Taraba State, may not be obtainable in other states.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that there is significant positive relationship between work stress of public and private school teachers. The study also reports that there is a slight difference in the mental well-being of public and private school teachers in Taraba State.

The researchers recommend the following based on the findings:

1. Stakeholders involved in education should liaise with the psychologists and counsellors to implement targeted stress management programs for public and private school teachers, addressing specific stressors prevalent in each sector.
2. Educational psychologists should adopt a systematic approach for regular assessments of teachers' mental well-being.

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