



# Job Stress Management among Secondary School Principals in Rivers State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This article investigated job stress management among secondary school principals in Rivers State. It focused on the nature, sources, influence of stressors on administrative roles and strategies employed in the management of such stressors. Descriptive and a survey design were used for this study. The study's population comprised Principals, Vice principals and HoDs of 286 public secondary schools in Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for this study and eighty six (86) respondents making thirty percent (30%) of the target population formed the sample for the study. The questionnaire used for data gathering comprised of two parts: 'A' and 'B'. Part 'A' addressed demographic information of the respondents while part 'B' sought to obtain information on job-related stress that affects educational managers. The instrument was subjected to analysis by specialists in the area of educational management. The test re-test technique of assessing reliability was used. Responses from the first test correlated with those from the second test using Pearson Product moment Coefficient and a value of .832 was obtained. Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis in this study. The data was presented by use of frequency tables and percentages and analyzed using 'regression' to establish the relationship between the variables. The results of the study were discussed in relation to the study objectives with an aim of answering the research questions. The study found that significant positive and negative relationship exists in job stress management among principals in Rivers state. Recommendations were proffered.

**Keywords:** Job, Stress Management, Physical Tiredness, Emotional Strain, Mental Fatigue, Secondary School, Principals, Rivers State, Nigeria

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress has been viewed variously from several perspectives. However, it has been viewed mostly from what happens to an individual that causes him unhappiness and restlessness. The

term can be defined as the inability of an individual to cope with his or her environment particularly the responses the body makes while striving to maintain equilibrium and deal with the demands of life. It can be observed as a situation in which environmental or internal demands tax or exceed the adaptive responses of the individual.

Cole (2002) described stress as the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of their being unable to cope with the demands being made on them. It is an individual's adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's wellbeing. In the opinion of Cole in Amah (2006), pressure comes on all individuals but the inability to deal with it is what manifests as stress. Stress is therefore a reaction to a situation that can have a positive or negative effect. It is the individual's perception of the situation that determines whether the pressure is a challenge or a threat. The psychological perception is the individual's perception.

Since stress has been seen as the challenge the body experiences in its effort to meet the demands of the environment, every occupation carries with it what is generally referred to as job stress or occupational stress. Job or occupational stress also refers to a mental and physical condition which affects an individual's productivity at the workplace, as well as his effectiveness, personal health and quality of work. Job stress can be described as the experience of negative emotional states such as frustration, worry, anxiety and depression. Job stress can also be seen as an employee's mental state aroused by a job situation or a combination of situations perceived as presenting excessive and divergent demands.

Within the education scene, stress has become a serious issue in recent years as school principals attempt to cope with frequent changes in school management processes. Stress in the teaching profession has also become a focus for teacher unions as they seek to support educators in their attempts to cope with work related stress. According to Gold and Roth (2008) from their study that sought to determine stress and satisfaction levels of principals, causes of their stress and professed coping strategies in Australia, it was found that stress comes as a result of physical and emotional reactions. It can either be positive or negative, depending on one's interpretations. Stress can be positive (eustress) or negative (distress). The positive stress (eustress) is associated with achievement and exhilaration which stimulates an individual to better performance. On the other hand, distress is the negative stress associated with loss of security, helplessness, disappointment and desperation which results in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger and depression. It is this negative aspect of stress that is worrisome to both employees and employers. Therefore, this research focused more on the negative stress (distress) especially as it relates to Secondary School Principals in Rivers State.

Principals have multiple roles to play in secondary schools among which include running and controlling the schools through establishing the school's educational objectives, interpreting and communicating educational policies, personnel management, management of physical facilities and equipment, supervision of school curriculum, evaluation and even actual classroom teaching. Due to workload pressures, principals in turn express anger and frustration that adversely impacts on educational outcomes hence leading to work related stress. Some principals especially in the rural areas do not have vice principals, hence they lack administrative support in undertaking increasing external demands. This lack of support leads to job dissatisfaction against excessive expectations and responsibilities put on principals.

The conditions under which secondary school principals operate in some secondary schools are deplorable. Most of the schools lack physical structures, good and adequate buildings, library facilities, playing grounds, furniture, class rooms and staff rooms. These factors have contributed greatly towards principals' work-related stress. The conditions under which students learn militates against their holistic contributions to the achievement of set

academic goals which sometimes could result in students' unrest. Managing schools under such conditions bring untold stress to school principals thus bringing to fore the need to train administrators to imbibe stress management strategies in order to more effectively and efficiently perform their roles to achieve the set educational goals.

Several factors have been advanced by different stakeholders as the underlying nature and root causes of the job-related stress among secondary school principals. These include finance which is a major factor in education expansion and access, inadequate facilities and lack of specialized trained teachers, students' unrest and indiscipline, variation in enrolment rates, overloaded curriculum and inexperience among the school principals. O'brians (2008) observed that poor living conditions in schools, lack of effective guidance and counseling services, pressure for excellent academic performance, adolescence identity crisis and mass media influence pose a lot of challenges to school management and administration. The appointment of Principals is done based on experience. The more the number of years one has taught, the higher the chances of promotion to principal level.

However, some principals usually assume their headship roles in the office without having undergone formal training to prepare them for their new management roles. Lack of training contributes to incompetence in their roles hence work related stress. Training therefore is a prerequisite for the effective performance of duties and management of school related challenges. In order to deal with challenges related to school unrest, indiscipline, financial management, staff related issues, parents and the wider community, training of school principals on leadership and management upon appointment needs consideration. Principals of secondary schools must learn to use and capitalize on the unique strengths, talents and potential of their employees, just as employees must continually reassess their capabilities, talents and potential contributions to their institutions if schools' principals are to achieve effective learning in their schools. They should device ways of creating structures that continuously support teaching and learning and enhance school adaptation, develop institutional culture and climate that is open to change and present vicious and illegitimate politics from displacing the legitimate activities of teaching and learning hence prevent administrative-related stresses that emanate from such sources.

Brown (2005) identified stress management strategies such as developing and maintaining good habits of nutrition and a balanced lifestyle including exercise. There is need to develop good habits of active and non-active leisure activities and recognize that these are legitimate and appropriate activities in the management of stress. Small (2009) noted that there was need for the beginning principals by ten percent to undergo training in their first years and improve the preparation of administrators' roles, conflict resolution, mediation, confrontation and provide training for principals in understanding stress, stress reducers and stress management. The demands of academic excellence and a decade rich with increased accountability have placed additional pressures on principals hence principals must prepare to experience pressure from parents, political leaders, educationists, students and community.

The workload of principals has expanded in both complexity and quantity. From this perspective, exploring the work characteristics of principals in the context of how they manage time, develop and maintain relationships and handle a variety of administrative duties is valuable to the profession.

The complexities of school safety, public relations, curriculum reforms, student activities and so much more have created a job that appears to extend far beyond the normal work hours. The time required for working with teachers and students, reviewing curriculum and even serving parents in need have turned principalship job into a job with high demands resulting to job or occupational stress.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Rivers State has experienced in the last one-decade great pressure for the expansion of access to quality secondary school education in the government-owned schools due to the increasing financial burden placed on parents by the privately owned secondary schools which placed such financial burdens on the parents because of quality services rendered. This has in turn accelerated the need for more principals to head the government-owned secondary schools. To meet up with the need for demanded standard, some persons without any form of training for a principalship job are promoted to become principals. These principals go into the field only to be confronted with the reality of the pressures involved in the job. Such pressures may include the running and controlling of schools through establishing the school's educational objectives, interpreting and communicating educational policies, personnel management, management of physical facilities and equipment, supervision of school curriculum, evaluation and even actual classroom teaching.

In addition to dealing with pressure for excellent academic performance, they are equally faced with the abdication of parental responsibility, incompetent board of governors, culture of impunity in the society, adolescence identity crisis and mass media influence. All these among many other factors pose threat to the emotional, psychological and physical demeanor of principals thereby causing a situation that translates into stress. The researcher is therefore concerned about what has to be done to minimize the influence of job-related stress on effectiveness and how to develop coping strategies for practicing administrators.

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate job stress management among secondary school principals in Rivers State. It focused on the nature, sources, influence of stressors on administrative roles and strategies employed in the management of such stressors. Specifically, the study was to:

- Examine the nature of job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State.
- Examine the sources of job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State.
- Examine the influence of job-related stress on administrative roles among secondary school principals in Rivers State.
- Examine the coping strategies employed for job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

## **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What is the nature of job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State?
- What are the sources of job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State?
- What is the influence of job-related stress on administrative roles of secondary school principals in Rivers State?
- What coping strategies do secondary school principals employ in managing job-related stress in Rivers State?

## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

- There is no significant relationship between the nature of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State.
- There is no significant relationship between the sources of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State.
- There is no significant relationship between the influence of job stress on administrative roles and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State.
- There is no significant relationship between coping strategies to job-related stress employed and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Theoretical framework

This study is based on the theory of motivation by Abraham Maslow (1971). Maslow's theory of motivation states that human needs exist in a hierarchical order.



Figure 1: A Diagram showing Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs which is a classification of needs ranging from basic ones to higher order of needs. When lower needs are met, people move to higher needs. The first level of needs include food, shelter, clothing, fresh air and water among others. The second level includes safety needs which include shelter, protection, security, education and a sense of belonging. Level three involves love and belonging needs. People desire to belong to a family or an institution that is loving and caring. The fourth level is concerned with esteem needs. After people have been accepted and belonged to a good, loving and caring people that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth. The fifth level is called self-actualization which is the ultimate goal or purpose of human behaviours. At this level, people want to realize their full potential and continue with self – development so as to direct their entity in creative ability.

In relation to the work, if principals' needs are not well met, they get frustrated, hence stressed. If the school working environment is not conducive enough for them to execute their daily duties for example, uncooperative staff, undisciplined students and poor performance of students in their various schools, low salaries and unrealistic societal demands can lead to job stress. They lack self-confidence, independence, freedom and general purpose in life hence lack of commitment in their school related duties thus poor performance. Therefore, they need to be helped to value themselves and their work as well as learning to acquire stress management skills, social and personal skills that enhance social interactions and value for work. These principals need to be provided with a working environment that will stimulate their professional growth and development hence find sense in hard working and producing positive results in their work place.

### **The nature of job-related stress among Secondary School Principals**

Occupational stress describes physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of job and capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands Mwangi (2003). Finance is a major factor in education expansion and access. Due to exipation in the demand for secondary school education, the schools demand finances for the construction of physical facilities and provision of teaching-learning equipment. Parents in areas of low economic productivity especially the rural areas cannot therefore afford to pay fees promptly hence inadequate finances for running the schools.

In this rapidly changing environment, principals are faced with many challenges, uncertainties and ambiguities in their administration practice and management. Digolo (2005) observed that within these constraints, the capacity of a school to succeed and to produce excellent educational outcome is the result of the intellectual assets of the school, the school working environment, and the development and utilization of resources. Wright (2007) observed that in Australia most principals get little in the way of administrative support, auxiliary personnel, and ground staff hence get stressed as they multi task in order to ensure that the institutional goals are attained. Principals still have an obligation to comply with educational and government obligations and standards. Such unmet demands are good examples of job related stress.

One of the biggest concerns expressed by principals is the increased amount of mandatory administrative and compliance work. In addition to their increased workload, principals are also in the classrooms teaching especially in the rural areas. Workload pressures also steal time from family and social life. Principals in turn express anger and frustration with increasing work load that adversely impacts on educational outcome hence leading to work related stress (Star, 2008). The escalating role multiplicity makes the principals see their main role as instructional leaders. Some principals especially in upcoming schools do not have deputy principals hence lack administrative support in undertaking increasing external demands. This lack of support and money leads to job dissatisfaction against too many expectations and responsibilities put on principals.

The sidelining of important educational matters and unrealistic expectations are burdens on principals. The increase in responsibility also covers an increase in managerial tasks, feelings of isolation, rising stress levels and a decrease in professional satisfaction. These concerns distract them from the real issues of leadership because of lack of rewards for their work, as they receive no tangible evidence if there are any positive outcomes (Morgan, 2006).

Local community interests' conflicts still exist over the purpose of schooling. Although schools serve a vital role in creating communities' in a highly mobile,

industrialized society, they are often plagued with educational problems such as isolation from specialized services, limited accessibility to quality staff development and other services, teachers shortages and decreasing funding.

Many schools offer less support to co-curricular programs often tying the school performance in fewer areas hence bringing conflicts between the school administration and the community leaders (Mutai, 2009). The school environment encompasses ambience atmosphere, security and safety. Many schools lack this kind of environment hence discourage the deeper level and more achievement oriented teaching learning strategies that teachers and learners would prefer. In an effort to create such an environment, principals get a lot of stress mostly due to inadequate funding and political interests.

There is an erosion of our cultural values and norms due to the complexities of society changes necessitated by the invasion of foreign cultures in our society resulting to gross indiscipline among students. Parents no longer supervise their children sufficiently and are not usually present to inculcate acceptable moral behaviors to their children (Waweru, 2006). The economic situation of the nation has so affected parents negatively that parents no longer have time to relate with their children but always on the move to make money for the purpose of making ends meet. This lack of parental affiliation with children gives the children an opening to fraternize with their peers who influence them negatively and as a result, principals find themselves struggling to keep crime out of the system and restore sanity. Sometimes, it is a case of destruction of property worth millions of naira through protests over poor living conditions and bad management resulting from lack of funds. This eventually translates to stress situation for the principals.

There is much stress among principals when students engage in such indiscipline cases. According to Mutai (2009), there are no set criteria enumerating the skills a person should possess to qualify for appointment as a principal. This creates a managerial gap in public schools since without management training, the school principals are less likely to be knowledgeable in basic management practices and cannot readily grasp the provisions of the Education Act. The issues of managerial skills are a big challenge to many principals especially among the rural areas schools principals. The issue of low enrolments of students in some secondary schools impacts negatively on the day to day running of the schools as the fee paid cannot manage the upkeep of the students and pay the teachers and support staff thus amounting to stress among school principals.

### **Sources of Job Related Stress among Secondary School Principals**

Stress is an unavoidable characteristic of life and work. In any job, there are wide variety of potential causes of stress, some of which are common to both men and women, and others are specific to each group. Job stress is the type that arises in the course of one discharging one's duties and responsibilities in an organization. They include role conflict, role ambiguity, poor interpersonal relationship between superior/subordinate or subordinate/subordinate, lack of career development, work overload/underload, poor working environment (lack of clean water, good offices, recreational facilities) and not being involved in decision making (Uzoeshi, 2004).

There are unquestionably a number of causal factors in principals' stress. In the rapidly changing society, schools have become complex institutions to manage because of the challenges involved in providing for a wider range of interests among stakeholders. Schools have been seen as the property of the society, controlled by the government and hence a right to demand an account of what is going on in the schools. School principals are struggling with challenges ranging from outbreaks of violence, strikes, crumbling physical facilities, staff shortfalls, busy parents, orphans, drug and substance abuse, economic burdens and low

academic expectations. The school principal has the overall responsibility over the operations of influencing and redesigning the activities of the school towards goal setting and goal achievements. These factors cause a great amount of stress to school principals. According to Waweru (2006) in her study on the real principals role with consideration for special education, to achieve the set goals, the task of knowing and managing the learners, teachers, support staff, management committee, Board of Governors, sponsors, other stakeholders and the government at various levels harmoniously, responsively and sensitively is not easy on the side of the principal hence leading to work related stress.

In the past, school principals were expected to comply with the Ministry of Education (MoE) regulations and guidelines, balance programme budgets, address staff issues and keep the facilities and play grounds safe but today, they must know academic contents and pedagogical techniques, work with teachers to strengthen reading and learning skills, collect, analyze and use data in ways that will fuel excellence. They must rally learners, educators, parents and the communities around the common goal of raising the learners' performance. They must have the leadership skills and knowledge to exercise the autonomy and authority.

According to Kapena (2004) schools are changing drastically and therefore principals heading established schools cannot afford the luxury of sitting back because of much work demands, and the responsibility is enormous. They must keep on acquiring skills to 'keep up' in the face of rising expectations; complex learner needs, enhanced accountability, expanding diversity, record enrolments and staff shortfalls. As time depicts, the students are more numerous and diverse than ever. They continue to bring many of the society's problems to the school door-steps. Academic achievement is the priority for professional accountability and therefore school principals are expected to lead in an atmosphere of constant volatile changes. Some school principals lack the required training on school management and support to help them deal with these emerging challenges. The school of the 21st century required principals whose role is defined in terms of; Instructional leadership that focus on strengthening teaching and learning professional development, data driven decision making and accountability. Community leadership is manifested in an awareness of the school's role in society, shared leadership among educators, parents and learners, advocacy for school capacity building and resources. There is need for visionary leadership that demonstrates energy, commitments, entrepreneur spirit, values and conviction that all children can learn at high level as well as inspiring others with the same vision both inside and outside the school. The changing demands of the job including increased accountability, responsibility of raising learners to higher standards, legal and special education issues cause a lot of stress to school principals.

Many educators feel that the input made into the profession is not worth the salary that they take home. The organizational factors seem to have most significant influence on an individual. The relationships between the organizational factors such as work, work roles, personal development, interpersonal relationship, organizational climate and stress of the individual have great impact of job performance. Tharaka (2009) studied occupational stress and job satisfaction among working class and non – working individuals. He observed that professional people experience more stress than non-professionals. He also noted that the size of the workloads, the complexity of tasks and responsibility are major causes of stress. (Latha, 2007) found out that in the teaching profession four main causes of stress include student's misbehavior, poor working conditions, poor staff relations and time pressures to meet deadlines.

## **Influence of Job Stress on Administrative Roles among Secondary School Principals**

According to Hussein (2008), people react differently to stress, some coping much better than others and suffering fewer of the effects of stress. All types of stress strain health relationships and have an impact on the organization or institution. Both physical and mental illness renders the principal unfit for work, and combine both to lessen the satisfaction obtained from work and reduce job performance and productivity levels. Stress symptoms are reflected in the work place in a number of ways.

Evidence from a growing body of research suggest that certain individuals, within a variety of occupations, are increasingly exposed to unacceptable levels of job-related stress (Shultz and Schultz, 2005). Job stress is a discomfort felt and perceived at a personal level and triggered by instances, events or situations that are too intense and frequent in nature and tends to exceed a person's coping capabilities and resources to handle them adequately hence leading to poor job performance. According to Zizinga (2008) in his longitudinal study of teacher burn out and perceived self – efficacy in classroom management, stress – related disorders encompassed a broad array of conditions, including psychological disorders and other types of emotional strain such as disaffection, fatigue and tension. Maladaptive behaviors such as aggression, substance abuse as well as cognitive impairment which is manifested through lack of concentration and poor memory problem. In turn, these conditions lead to poor work performance.

The overloading effects of administrative responsibilities cannot be over emphasized because any administrator who decides to do almost everything and refuses to delegate responsibilities under the neurotic fear that mistakes might be made, soon becomes overloaded and exhibits inertia, inefficiency and a high level of stress. The intention to do everything is soon eclipsed by desperation to find some help when the yoke becomes unbearable. According to Khan and Khan (2005), job stress among principals has become very common in our modern living. This has had negative impact in the education sector. It leads to frequent absenteeism from work, negligence of duty, frequent health complains hence lowering the academic standards.

## **Strategies to Stress Management among Secondary School Principals**

Small (2009) observed that the task of running a school requires imagination and common sense. However, the principals also need technical, human and conceptual skills that aid them in: - effective identification of problems, logical problem solving, critical and big picture thinking, listening and analytical skills and an ability to identify cause and effect of relationships. Zizinga (2008) observed that a great leader must have Emotional Intelligence (EI) and without it, even the best trained and highly intelligent person may negatively suffer the consequences of work related stress. The school principal ought to be in constant observation of the students' frequent mischievous deeds, teachers' omissions and oversights, complains of support staff and intrigues by saboteurs.

The principal must use emotional intelligence to balance and sustain untold stress. Stress coping strategies or stress management means any necessary step taken by an individual when confronted with situations that exceed his level of equilibrium (Uzoeshi, 2012). Coleman and Hammen, Lazarus, Selye, Ivancevich and Matteson in Uzoeshi (2017) explained 'coping strategies' as all the steps an individual takes when faced by a stressor or any threatening situation. According to Enugu (2006) in his study on management and maintenance of physical facilities and associated stress in secondary schools, certain strategies could be used to manage principals' job stress in secondary schools. Several stress management programmes have been developed aiming at teaching coping techniques.

Augia (2004) investigated the different stress management techniques used by 75 working managers and 75 non-working men in Addis-Ababa city. Results showed that majority of the respondents in the both categories were using various stress management techniques such as relaxation, music, prayer, play and recreation with the family. Relaxation and playing were the most professed techniques among both groups. However, according to Mwangi (2003), religious people are able to cope with stress better than non-religious people. Religious belief, faith and virtues make stressful events more bearable by providing a meaningful coherent explanation and orderliness to events in the universe. Religion provides a source of hope and comfort as well as establishment of guidelines on how to handle stressful events. It nurtures a sense of belonging, promotion of identity and a sense of intimacy with both God and the religious community.

### Conceptual Framework

Kimanzi (2014) in her conceptual framework diagrammatically explains the relationship and interconnections between the independent and dependent variables.

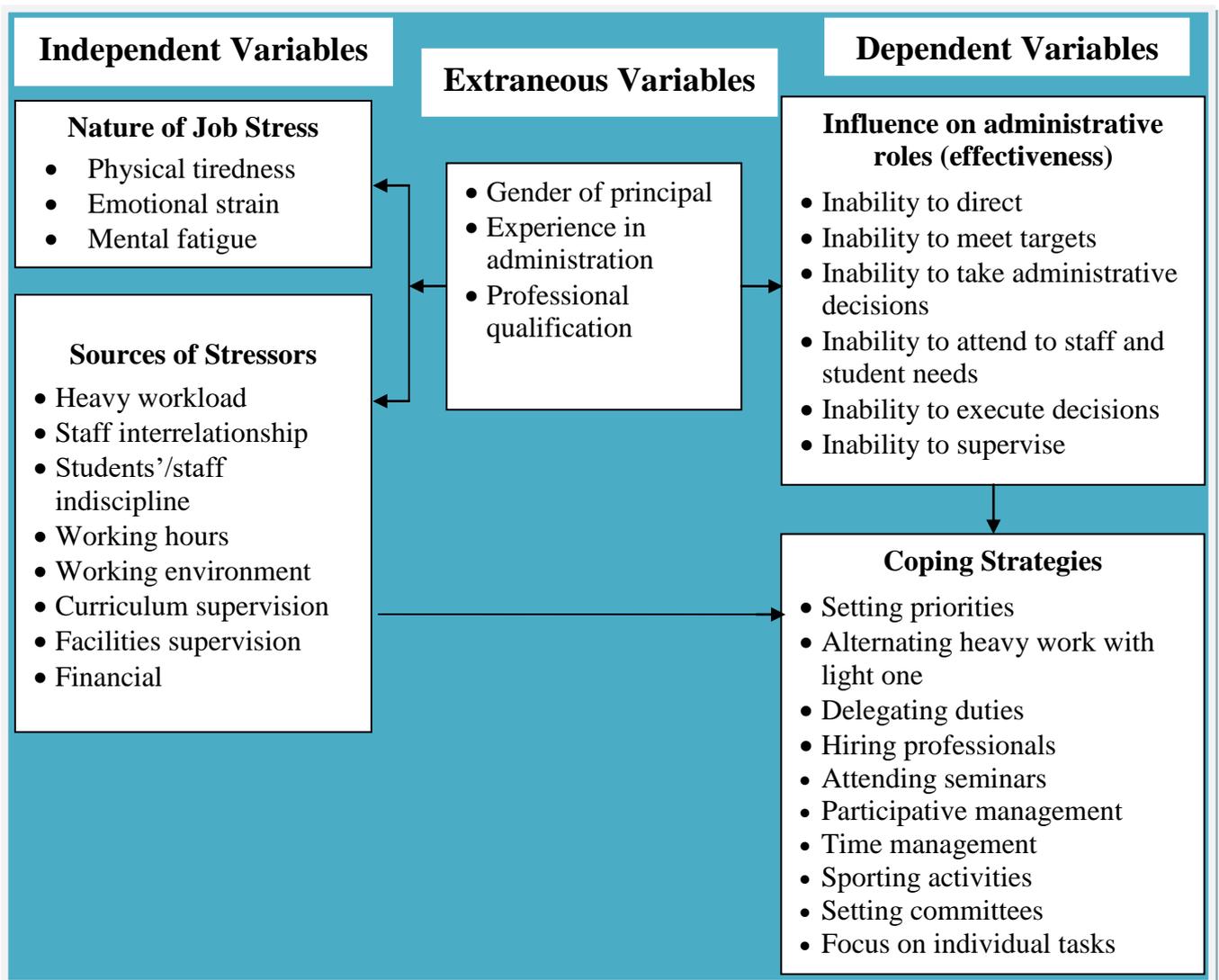


Figure 2: Relationship between stressors and job performance. Source: Kimanzi, (2014)

The conceptual framework for the study was based on the objectives of the study. Figure 2 shows how different types of management related job stress emanating from different sources impact on principal's administrative roles and the coping strategies employed to cope with such stressors. Though the principals may have strong coping strategies in their management roles, various types of management related occupational stress impact on their day to day duty performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive and a survey design were used for this study.

### **Population of the study**

There are two hundred and eighty six (286) public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Therefore, this study population comprised principals, Vice principals and HoDs of 286 public secondary schools in Rivers State. The Vice principals and HoDs were selected as part of the respondents because they are also educational administrative heads at certain levels and so share in the stressors.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Forty six (46) principals, twenty two vice principals (22) and eighteen (18) HoDs from eighty six (86) senior secondary schools were selected as the sample population. Eighty six (86) respondents making thirty percent (30%) of the target population formed the sample for the study.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

The researcher used a 30-item structured questionnaire titled 'Job Stress and Management Strategies Questionnaire' (JSMSQ) to obtain data from the respondents. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents and a period of one week was given to respondents to respond to the questions after which the researcher collected the questionnaires back.

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire for this study comprised of two parts: 'A' and 'B'. Part 'A' addressed demographic information from the respondents while part 'B' sought to obtain information on job-related stress that affects principals.

### **Validity of Research Instrument**

Data was obtained simultaneously from the different respondents. The instrument was subjected to analysis by specialists in the area of educational management.

## Reliability of Research Instrument

The test re-test technique of assessing reliability was used. Responses from the first test correlated with those from the second test using Pearson Product moment Coefficient and a value of .832 was obtained.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis in this study. The data was presented by use of frequency tables and percentages and analyzed using Regression to enable drawing of conclusions to establish the relationship between the variables. The results of the study were discussed in relation to the study objectives with an aim of answering the research questions.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics of Respondents Demographic Variables

Table 1: Gender, Experience and Status Distribution of Respondents

Demographics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	34	42.0
	Female	47	58.0
Experience	5 or less	19	23.5
	6-10	29	35.8
	11-15	19	23.5
	16 and above	14	17.3
Status	Principal	45	55.6
	Vice principal	20	24.7
	HOD	16	19.8

Table 1 shows that 34 (42.0%) of the respondents were males whereas 47 (58.0%) were females. This was followed by work experience of the participants in years. At 5 or less years were 19 (23.5%), 6-10 years were 29 (35.8%), 11-15 years were 19 (23.5%) and respondents for 16 years and above were 14 (17.3%). Finally, the status of the respondents shows that 45 (55.6%) were principals 20 (24.7%) were vice principals and 16 (19.8%) were HoDs.

**Research Question 1:** What is the nature of job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean responses on the nature of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers state

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Physical tiredness	27	37	11	6	3.05	0.88	Agree
2	Emotional strain	15	27	33	6	2.63	0.87	Agree
3	Mental fatigue	17	25	26	13	2.57	1.00	Agree
	<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.75</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 shows the mean responses on the nature of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers state. It shows that the respondents strongly opined that physical tiredness is the highest job related stress producer among secondary school principals in Rivers state (M=3.05, SD=0.88). Thus physical tiredness is a factor that is implicated the

highest as a possible cause of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State. This was followed by emotional strain (M=2.63, SD=0.87) and mental fatigue (M=2.57, SD=1.00).

This result simply indicates that the nature of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State is caused more by physical tiredness than emotional strain and mental fatigue. Results from table 2 indicated that though secondary school Principals experience stress in three aspects of life which included; physical, emotional, and mental, they experience it most from the physical aspect which may influence the performance of their administrative roles hence need to device effective coping strategies for higher productivity.

**Research Question 2:** What are the sources of job-related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean responses on the sources of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers state

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
4	Work overload	33	28	18	2	3.14	0.85	Agree
5	Staff inter- relationships	12	24	33	12	2.44	0.92	Disagree
6	Students/staff indiscipline	9	35	26	11	2.52	0.87	Agree
7	Inadequate funds	17	33	23	8	2.73	0.91	Agree
8	Curriculum supervision	14	35	25	7	2.69	0.86	Agree
9	Facilities supervision	14	35	21	11	2.64	0.93	Agree
10	General conditions of service (working hours/working environment)	14	37	22	8	2.70	0.87	Agree
<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>2.70</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>Agree</b>

The result on Table 3 shows the mean responses on the sources of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State. It shows that the participants strongly agreed that Work overload (M=3.14, SD=0.85) is a key source of job related stress among secondary school principals in Rivers State. This was followed by inadequate funds (M=2.73, SD=0.91), General conditions of service (M=2.70, SD=0.87), Curriculum supervision (M=2.69, SD=0.86), Facilities supervision (M=2.64, SD=0.94), Students/staff indiscipline (M=2.52, SD=0.87) and Staff inter-relationships (M=2.44, SD=0.92) The grand mean rating of 2.70, SD=0.48 shows that these situations actually contribute to making principalship job stressful to secondary school principals in Rivers State.

**Research Question 3:** What is the influence of job-related stress on administrative roles of secondary school principals in Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean responses of the influence of job related stress on administrative roles among secondary school principals in Rivers State

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Inability to direct	14	20	39	8	2.49	0.90	Disagree
12	Inability to supervise	5	28	37	11	2.33	0.79	Disagree
13	Inability to meet targets	14	23	32	12	2.48	0.95	Disagree
14	Inability to take administrative decision	14	23	31	13	2.47	0.96	Disagree
15	Inability to execute decision	12	18	37	14	2.35	0.94	Disagree
16	Inability to attend to staff and students' needs	9	25	35	12	2.38	0.87	Disagree
<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>2.42</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

Table 4 shows the mean responses of the influence of job related stress on administrative roles among secondary school principals in Rivers State. It shows the degree of influence of job related stress on administrative roles among secondary school principals in Rivers State. The mean ratings of inability to supervise (M=2.33, SD=0.79), inability to execute decisions (M=2.35, SD=0.94), inability to attend to staff and students' needs (M=2.38, SD=0.87), inability to take decisions (M=2.47, SD=0.96), inability to meet targets (M=2.48, SD=0.95) and inability to direct (M=2.49, SD=0.90) and the grand mean rating of 2.42, SD=0.70 shows that the influence of job related stress on administrative roles of secondary school principals in Rivers State is minimal.

**Research Question 4:** What coping strategies do secondary school principals employ in managing job-related stress in Rivers State?

Table 5: Mean responses on the coping strategies secondary school principals employ in Rivers State

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
17	Setting priorities	35	27	15	4	3.15	0.90	Agree
18	Alternating heavy work with light work	25	34	17	5	2.98	0.88	Agree
19	Delegating duties	30	33	15	3	3.11	0.84	Agree
20	Hiring technical experts	18	36	20	7	2.80	0.89	Agree
21	Attending seminars	26	27	21	7	2.89	0.96	Agree
22	Participative management	20	38	20	3	2.93	0.80	Agree
23	Setting targets with time frame	23	36	21	1	3.00	0.77	Agree
24	Engaging in some sporting activities	14	36	24	7	2.70	0.86	Agree
25	Setting up committees	17	41	16	7	2.84	0.86	Agree
26	Focusing on individual tasks	16	35	23	7	2.74	0.88	Agree
<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>Agree</b>

The above result on table 5 shows the mean responses on the coping strategies secondary school principals employ in Rivers State. It shows that the respondents strongly opined that setting priorities (M=3.15, SD=0.90) was the highest coping strategy secondary school principals employ in Rivers State. This was followed by delegating duties (M=3.11, SD=0.84), setting targets with time frame (M=3.00, SD=0.77), alternating heavy work with light work (M=2.98, SD=0.88), participative management (M=2.93, SD=0.80), attending seminars (M=2.89, SD=0.96), setting up committees (M=2.84, SD=0.86), hiring technical experts (M=2.80, SD=0.89), and focusing on individual tasks (M=2.74, SD=0.88). The grand mean rating of 2.91, SD=0.48 indicate that the respondents agree to these as coping strategies secondary school principals employ in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between the nature of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers state.

Table 6: Summary of regression analysis on the relationship between the nature of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers state

<b>A: Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.010 <sup>a</sup>	.000	-.013	.61378

a. Predictors: (Constant), nature of job related stress

<b>B: Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.678	.295		9.089	.000
	nature of job related stress	.009	.104	.010	.088	.930

a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness

$$y=2.678+0.009x$$

<b>C: ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.003	1	.003	.008	.930 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	29.761	79	.377		
	Total	29.764	80			

a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness  
b. Predictors: (Constant), nature of job related stress

Table 6 shows that the relationship between the nature of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State was positive but weak (Beta=0.10). The r-square value of .000 shows a contribution of 0.0% by nature of job related stress to job effectiveness as shown on Part A of Table 6. The regression equation,  $y=2.678+0.009x$ , in Part B of Table 6 shows that any increase in the value of x (nature of job related stress) may not lead to a decrease in the job effectiveness. The F-statistic result on Part C of Table 6 shows that there is no significant relationship between the nature of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State ( $F_{1, 79}=.008, p > .930$ ). The null hypothesis one was retained at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between the sources of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers state.

Table 7: Summary of regression analysis on the relationship between the sources of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers state

<b>A: Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.116 <sup>a</sup>	.014	.001	.60964

a. Predictors: (Constant), sources of job related stress

<b>B: Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.309	.385		5.996	.000
	sources of job related stress	.146	.141	.116	1.041	.301

a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness

$$y=2.309+0.146x$$

C: ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.403	1	.403	1.084	.301 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	29.361	79	.372		
	Total	29.764	80			

a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness  
b. Predictors: (Constant), sources of job related stress

Part B of Table 7 shows that the relationship between the sources of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State was positive but weak (Beta=0.116). The r-square value of .014 shows a contribution of 1.4% by nature of sources of job stress to job effectiveness as shown on Part A of Table 7. The regression equation  $y=2.309+0.146x$ , in Part B of Table 7 shows that any increase in the value of x (sources of job stress) may not lead to a decrease in the job effectiveness. The F-statistic result on Part C of Table 7 shows that there is no significant relationship between the sources of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State ( $F_{1, 79}=1.084$ ,  $p > .301$ ). The null hypothesis two was retained at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant relationship between the influence of job stress on administrative roles and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State.

Table 8: Summary of regression analysis on the relationship between the influence of job stress on administrative roles and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State

A: Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.299 <sup>a</sup>	.090	.078	.58567

a. Predictors: (Constant), influence of job related stress on administrative roles

B: Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.069	.237		8.734	.000
	influence of job related stress on administrative roles	.263	.094	.299	2.788	.007

a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness

$$y=2.37+0.263x$$

C: ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.666	1	2.666	7.772	.007 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	27.098	79	.343		
	Total	29.764	80			

a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness  
b. Predictors: (Constant), influence of job related stress on administrative roles

Part B of Table 8 shows that the relationship between the influence of job stress on administrative roles and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State was

positive and strong (Beta=.299). The r-square value of 0.090 shows a contribution of 9.0% by influence of job stress on administrative roles to job effectiveness as shown on Part A of Table 8. The regression equation  $y=2.37+0.263x$ , in Part B of Table 8 shows that any increase in the value of x (influence of job stress on administrative roles) will lead to an increase in the job effectiveness. The F-statistic result on Part C of Table 8 shows that there is significant relationship between the influence of job stress on administrative roles and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State ( $F_{1, 79}=7.772, p > .007$ ). The null hypothesis three was rejected at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

**Hypothesis Four:** There is no significant relationship between coping strategies to job related stress employed and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State.

Table 9: Summary of regression analysis on the relationship between the coping strategies to job related stress employed and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State

<b>A: Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.187 <sup>a</sup>	.035	.023	.60293
a. Predictors: (Constant), job related stress management strategies employed				

<b>B: Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.937	.457		4.241	.000
	job related stress management strategies employed	.263	.155	.187	1.696	.094
a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness						

$y=1.937+0.263x$

<b>C: ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.046	1	1.046	2.877	.094 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	28.718	79	.364		
	Total	29.764	80			
a. Dependent Variable: effectiveness						
b. Predictors: (Constant), job related stress management strategies employed						

Part B of Table 9 shows that the relationship between the coping strategies to job related stress employed and job effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State was positive but weak (Beta=0.187). The r-square value of .035 shows a contribution of 3.5% by coping strategies to job related stress to job effectiveness as shown on Part A of Table 9. The regression equation,  $y=1.937+0.263x$ , in Part B of Table 9 shows that any increase in the value of x (coping strategies to job related stress) will lead to an crease in the job effectiveness. The F-statistic result on Part C of Table 9 shows that there is no significant relationship between coping strategies to job related stress employed and job effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State ( $F_{1, 79}=2.877, p > .094$ ). The null hypothesis four was retained at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Nature of Job Related Stress among Secondary School Principals**

The findings in table 2 are in agreement with findings from other parts of the world including Wright (2007) who observed that most principals in Australia get little in the way of administrative support, auxiliary personnel, and ground staff hence get stressed as they multi task in order to ensure that the institutional goals are attained. Principals still have an obligation to comply with educational and government obligations and standards. Such unmet demands lead to physical, emotional and mental wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of job and capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with the job.

Mutai (2009) however, in addition to this, noted that principals experience intellectually related stress because there are no set criteria enumerating the skills which a person should possess to qualify for appointment as a principal. This creates a managerial gap in public schools since without management training the school principals were less likely to be knowledgeable in elementary management practices hence mental torture.

### **Sources of Job Related Stress among Secondary School Principals**

The study also sought to find out sources of management related stress. Some sources identified, were: work overload, staff interrelationships, students/staff indiscipline, inadequate funds, curriculum supervision, facilities supervision, and general conditions of service (working hours/working environment). These findings are presented in table 3 which shows the mean scores of the responses on the sources of management related stress among secondary school principals identified. The findings of the study identified work overload, inadequate funds, general conditions of service (working environment and working hours), curriculum supervision, facilities supervision, students/staff indiscipline and staff interrelationships.

The findings in table 3 indicated that the major source of management related occupational stress is work overload as numerous expectations and many administrative responsibilities are required to be met and carried out by the principals. Here, it was believed that in spite of their human limitations, principals are expected to deal with a lot of challenges and administrative responsibilities referring to work demands in which the principals have the task of knowing and managing the learners, teachers, support staff, management committee, Board of management, sponsors, other stakeholders as well as ensuring that the school works harmoniously with other government agencies. This is a heavy and sensitive responsibility which may lead to work related stress.

Inadequate funds were identified as the second source of job stress. The respondents felt that finances were a major factor in education expansion and access, and that schools need them for the construction of physical facilities and provision of learning and teaching equipment. As a result of the 'Free education' policy for students in public secondary schools in Rivers State, parents do not pay school fees and the government is unable to meet up with the financial demands of the various sectors of the state one of which is the educational sector and this directly affects the smooth running of the public schools in Rivers State.

Another source of job stress identified is General conditions of service (working hours/working environment). It was discovered that the number of hours principals are expected to put in the job considering the numerous tasks they are saddled with, does not in any way help with their total wellbeing thereby translating into stress. Again, it was indicated that the working environment which is in most cases not conducive as there are no provision

of suitable offices and equipment in addition to inadequate infrastructure, greatly affects principals' output on the job. It was noted that some schools lack a welcoming, secure and safe environment which contribute to risky conditions or threats that may cause accidents, emotional and psychological distress. It was further observed that many of the schools that lack this kind of environment discourage the deeper level and more achievement oriented teaching learning strategies that teachers and learners would prefer. In an effort to create such an environment, principals get a lot of psychological, emotional and physical fatigue. This situation as observed by the respondents culminates into principals' job stress. Curriculum supervision was also identified as a stressor on the job of principals.

Responses from the respondents showed that curriculum supervision was fourth source of occupational stress among principals. The school principals are charged with the responsibility of planning, directing, controlling and evaluating instructional programmes and provision of resources for program implementation. Management of the teaching and learning process and evaluation of the programmes coupled with other administrative roles become a major challenge to principals hence bringing management related occupational stress to them.

Another source of management related stress indicated in the study was facilities supervision. Facilities in this context refer to classrooms, laboratories, staff offices and furniture for both students and staff which are necessary for smooth running of an institution. Proper supervision of these facilities which are in most cases not well provided for the smooth running of the school becomes a challenge to the principals because often times than not, the principals try to devise means to keep the minimally available ones in good shape even when they are over used and at the same time try to make maximum use of these facilities. These practices coupled with lack of instructional materials can be disturbing to a principal and as such becomes a source of management related stress.

Students and staff indiscipline was the next source of job stress identified which suggests that deviations from the expected norms in a school setting constitute what is described as indiscipline. Such deviations may include fighting in school, students unrest, truancy and disrespect to other members of the school community, destruction of school physical facilities to mode of conduct of some members of staff among others. Some staff members lacked the training expected of them as professionals and so behave untowardly to acquaintances both of fellow staff members, students, the school authority and other stakeholders even to individual tasks assigned to them on the job. These were seen as likely sources of management related occupational stress because the principal to be effective will have to put in extra effort to balance situations. The last source of job stress identified in this study was staff interrelationships. Most principals get little in the way of administrative support, auxiliary personnel, and ground staff because of non cooperation of staff which is most times a direct result of tensions caused by conflicts among staff members hence the principals get stressed as they multi task in order to ensure that the institutional goals are attained.

The findings in table 3 on the sources of job stress as experienced by principals in Rivers State are similar to that of Tharaka (2009) who studied occupational stress and job satisfaction among working class and non-working individuals and found out that professional people experience more stress than non-professionals. He also noted that the size of the workloads, the complexity of tasks and responsibility are major causes of stress. The findings differ from that of Latha (2007), who found out that in the teaching profession the main causes of stress include poor working conditions, poor staff relations and time pressures to meet deadlines.

Kapena (2004) noted that schools are changing drastically and therefore principals cannot afford the luxury of sitting back because of much work demands, and the responsibility is enormous. They must keep on acquiring skills to juggle the 'live' in the face

of rising expectations; complex learner needs, enhanced accountability, expanding diversity, high record of student enrolments and staff shortfalls. He further added that as time depicts, the students are more numerous and diverse than ever hence they continue to bring many of the society's problems to the school door-steps. Academic achievement is the priority for professional accountability and therefore school principals are expected to lead in an atmosphere of constant volatile changes. Kapena (2004) found out that some school principals lack the required training on school management and support to help them deal with these emerging challenges. He added that the school of the 21st century required principals whose role is defined in terms of: - Instructional leadership that focus on strengthening teaching and learning professional development, data driven decision making, transparency and accountability. Trying to achieve all these ultimately translates to work pressure hence, job stress.

These findings were in agreement with the argument by Kapena (2004), Tharaka (2009) and Latha (2007). It can therefore be concluded that secondary school principals in Rivers State did indeed confront work overload, inadequate funds, general conditions of service (working environment and working hours), curriculum supervision, facilities supervision, students/staff indiscipline and staff interrelationships as sources of management related occupational stress in their course of duty.

### **Influence of Management Related Occupational Stress on Administrative Roles among Secondary School Principals**

Again, the study sought the opinions of respondents on the influence of management related occupational stress on administrative roles among secondary school principals in Rivers State. The findings revealed that there were six major effects of management related occupational stress. These effects included; inability to direct, inability to supervise, inability to meet targets, inability to take administrative decisions, inability to execute decisions taken and inability to attend to staff and students needs. The findings are presented in table 4.

The findings in Table 4 showed that inability to direct was common among principals in Rivers State. Respondents observed that principals seem to lack the ability to give directives to subordinates when they are under pressure of work. Respondents also indicated inability to meet targets as an indicator of influence of job stress on administrative roles of principals. In their opinions, job stress makes principals to complete tasks later than stipulated time. Again, principals' inability to take decisions at a time such should be done was identified as another effect of job stress on administrative roles of principals in Rivers State. It was observed that when a principal is encumbered with a lot of tasks to be carried out and much expectations are hinged on the principal, such a principal tends to operate under confusion on what to do and what not to do at what time or not thereby finding it difficult to make valuable decision at a time he ought to make one. Failure to attend to the needs of staff and students was another influence factor observed by the respondents. Here, it was opined that principals tend to take other administrative duties to be more important than attending to staff and students needs. According to them, the principals feel these are human beings like the principal who can in one way or the other take care of their needs without necessarily waiting for the principal.

Inability to execute decisions was another factor identified as an effect of job stress on the administrative roles of principals in Rivers State. It is in the opinion of the respondents that because of the so much pressure exerted on the principal in relation to meeting up with so many assignments almost at the same time, multitasking becomes the norm for the principal hence, the tendency that decisions taken may not be executed promptly which otherwise may negatively affect the attainment of organizational goals. Failure of principals

to supervise teaching and learning programmes through non supervision of curriculum implementation and other task performances of staff members was also identified as an effect of job stress on principals' administrative roles. It was opined that principals are unable to supervise the implementation of curriculum and other duties to be performed by staff members because of several tasks placed on them (the principals). These issues were presented by respondents as indicators of impact of management related stress on secondary school principals.

The results of the current study are similar to the findings of Khan and Khan (2005) who, studying occupational stress among teachers established that stress has become very common in modern living. This has had negative impact in the education sector. It leads to frequent absenteeism from work, inability to take up responsibilities resulting to negligence of duty, frequent health complains hence lowering the academic standards. Teaching profession has lower esteem now than before and this has increased the teacher turn over and has impacted negatively on teacher recruitment, retention and time wastage. He also went further and noted that poor academic results are a product of management related job stress.

The findings of the current study differ with that of Zizinga (2008) who, in his longitudinal study of teacher burn out and perceived self-efficacy in classroom management, found out that stress – related disorders encompassed a broad array of conditions, including psychological disorders and other types of emotional strain such as disaffection, fatigue and tension. It can therefore be argued that the main reason for declining standards in administrative roles among principals of secondary schools in the education sector is as a result of management related occupational stress and poor stress coping strategies.

### **Job Related Stress and Coping Strategies among Secondary School Principals**

Furthermore, the study sought the respondents response on management related occupational stress and coping strategies among secondary school principals in Rivers State. Analysis from the questionnaires revealed such coping strategies as used by principals in the management of occupational stress to be setting priorities, alternating heavy work with light work, delegating duties, hiring technical experts and attending seminars. Other strategies identified were participative management, setting targets with time frames, engaging in some sporting activities, setting up committees and focusing on individual tasks. The responses from these respondents are tabulated in table 5.

Table 5 presents the strategies employed by school principals in managing occupational stress resulting from their administrative roles. Setting priorities was identified as a key strategy in managing stress. Majority of the respondents indicated that schools principals need to prioritize their work roles hence allocate enough resources. One of the principals indicated that failure to prioritize projects and activities caused a lot of stress among the principals.

Another coping strategy identified to be key is; delegation of duties. According to them, when principals assign duties to other capable hands in the organization, they (the principals) tend to feel relieved knowing that the job can still be done while having time to attend to other tasks. Next in line for coping strategies identified was setting targets with time frames. Practice of good time management which involves meeting deadlines in undertaking administrative obligations was a key factor. Respondents indicated that it was important for school principals to be equipped with time management skills which would help them reduce and also effectively manage stress related effects on their administrative roles. The study also revealed that alternating heavy work with light work was also an effective way of managing stress. Again, the respondents agreed that putting participative management to practice in carrying out their daily tasks goes a long way in helping them out of stressful situations. They

affirmed that bringing other capable hands in to the job gives them the opportunity to get ideas on how to tackle some difficult tasks easily and without much effort from them. It was also noted by the respondents that attending seminars was also a significant coping strategy for stress used by the principals. In their opinions, meeting people of like minds and similar challenges during seminar outings, gives them the opportunity to share their work related challenges with other professionals as they ask questions and get useful answers to performing their tasks more productively and learn more about the entails of their job. This was an important way of relieving oneself from pressures resulting from administrative roles. Other strategies cited included setting up committees, hiring technical experts, focusing on individual tasks and engaging in sporting activities.

The findings of this study are in agreement with Munyu (2006) who attempted to reveal the coping styles of teacher stress among educated women. He found out that exercise and time management among other factors are the best ways adopted to manage stress by educated working women. It was also found that attending seminars and talking to someone played a major role in managing management related occupational stress. Taking time out for leisure and taking rest as well as alternating of heavy work with light work was another strategy that was used to cope with occupational stress. The findings also concur with Augia (2004) who investigated the different stress management techniques used by 75 working managers and 75 non – working men in Addis-Ababa city. Results showed that majority of the respondents in the both categories were using various stress management techniques such as relaxation, and recreation with the family. It can therefore be argued that good time management, and setting priorities play a key role in helping secondary school principals cope with management related occupational stress.

However, Mwangi (2003) had different findings where he noted that religious people are able to cope with stress better than non-religious people. According to him, religious belief, faith and virtues make stressful events more bearable by providing a meaningful coherent explanation and orderliness to events in the universe. Religion provides a source of hope and comfort as well as established guidelines on how to handle stressful events. It nurtures a sense of belonging as promoting identity and a sense of intimacy and support with both God and with the religious community. Walking and playing, deep breathing and drinking water, taking sleeping pills and mood altering drugs and offering prayers and Bible reading were used to cope with stress.

Table 6 having  $M^2 = .003$ ,  $df = 79$ ,  $f = .008$  and  $p > 0.930$  indicates that there is no significant relationship between the nature of job-related occupational stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State. To this end, the null hypothesis was upheld.

This result agrees with Mutinda (2008) who said that the escalating role multiplicity makes the principals see their main role as instructional leaders which makes them to merely give instructions to subordinates without exerting strain on their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, hence do not experience ineffectiveness resulting from the nature of job-related occupational stress. However, this result disagrees with Wright (2007) who observed that in a bid to achieve institutional goals, principals multitask thereby risking themselves for physical, emotional and mental wear and tear.

The result of table 7 having  $M^2 = .403$ ,  $df = 79$ ,  $f = 1.084$  and  $p > .301$  showed that there is no significant relationship between the sources of job stress and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld.

This result is in agreement with Barkey (2004) who said that for a principal to be effective, he needs to devise ways of creating structures that continuously support teaching and learning and enhance school adaptation, develop institutional culture and climate that is open to change and prevent vicious and illegitimate politics from displacing the legitimate

activities of teaching and learning hence, prevent administrative related stress that emanate from such sources. However, the result is in contrast to Tharaka (2009) who studied occupational stress and job satisfaction among working class and non-working individuals and noted that the size of the workloads, the complexity of tasks and responsibilities robs a worker of being efficient and effective.

The result of table 8 with  $M^2 = 2.666$ ,  $df = 79$ ,  $f = 7.772$  and  $p < .007$  showed that there is a significant relationship between the influence of job stress on administrative roles and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The result of this table is totally in agreement with Khan and Khan (2005) who said that stress which has become very common in modern living has had negative impact in the education sector as it leads to frequent absenteeism from work, inability to take up responsibilities resulting to negligence of duty, frequent health complains hence lowering academic standard, increased teacher turnover and has impacted negatively on teacher recruitment and retention.

The result of table 9 having  $M^2 = 1.046$ ,  $df = 79$ ,  $f = 2.877$  and  $p > .094$  indicated that there is no significant relationship between the coping strategies to job stress employed and effectiveness of secondary school principals in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld.

This is in contrast with Zizinga (2008) who stated that a great leader must have Emotional Intelligence (EI) for without it; even the best trained and highly intelligent person may negatively suffer the consequences of work related stress. The school principal ought to be in constant observation of the students' frequent mischievous deeds, teachers' omissions and oversights, complains of support staff and intrigues by saboteurs. The principal must use emotional intelligence to balance and sustain untold stress. In his opinion, stress coping strategies or stress management refers to any necessary step taken by an individual when confronted with situations that exceed his level of equilibrium and principals tend to take certain measures to ease tasks delivery in order to attain organizational goals.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the management related occupational stress and the coping strategies among secondary school principals in Rivers State of Nigeria. To achieve this purpose, four research questions and four hypotheses were formulated. The discussion in this section is based on the specific objectives, namely: Nature of Management Related Occupational Stress among Secondary School Principals, Sources of management related occupational stress among secondary school principals, Influence of management related occupational stress on administrative roles among secondary school principals and Management related occupational stress and coping strategies among secondary school principals.

The research results have revealed that principals do experience stress such as: physical tiredness, emotional strain and mental fatigue. This was in agreement with the findings of Wright (2007) in Australia who observed that owing to principals' obligation to comply with educational and government expectations and standards, there arose some unmet demands which could lead to physical, emotional and mental wear and tear. It can therefore be concluded from this study that principals in Rivers State did experience physical tiredness, emotional strain and mental fatigue.

It was also discovered that a lot of factors contribute to create stressful situations for the principals. Such factors among which are 'work overload' was identified as key factor. The influence of management related occupational stress comes in form of resultant actions

that principals take upon encountering stressors. Such actions include; inability to direct, inability to meet targets, inability to take administrative decisions, inability to attend to staff and students needs, inability to execute decisions taken and inability to supervise which may lead to the administrator quitting the administrative position all together. Such actions are evident from the findings of this study and so it can be concluded that management occupational stress negatively influences the administrative roles of secondary school principals.

Against the background of the nature of management related occupational stress that were identified by the study, it was reported that the principals used stress coping strategies which included: setting priorities, delegating duties, setting targets with time frames, alternating heavy work with light work, participative management, attending seminars, setting up committees, hiring technical experts, focusing on individual tasks and engaging in sporting activities. The secondary school principals in Rivers State therefore had some ways which they use to mitigate the effects of management related occupational stress.

### **Recommendations**

The following were recommended based on the findings of the study relating to each objective.

- The Ministry of Education (MoE) should periodically organize seminars and workshops for principals to identify the nature of job-stress and its effect on life and duty performance.
- The principals should consciously eliminate the various stressors to achieve high job performance.
- Principals should be trained by the government and stakeholders to be well equipped for carrying out principalship roles.
- Principals should employ participative leadership style in dispensing their duties.

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