

# Stress Management Among Academic Staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria: Implications to Health Education

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## Abstract:

This study examined stress management among academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria: Implications to Health Education. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The population for this study consisted of all 1,097 academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample for this study consisted of 250 academic staff selected from 10 Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample was selected through multi stage sampling procedure. An instrument tagged Academic Staff Stress Management Questionnaire (ASSMQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. The face and content validity of the instrument were determined by Health Education and Test and Measurements experts. In ascertaining the reliability of the instrument, the test re-test method of reliability was adopted. A correlation co-efficient value of 0.815 was obtained, which was considered high enough to make the instruments reliable. The responses obtained were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean standard deviation and graph. The findings of the study revealed that the use of relaxation activities is the strategy used mostly by academic staff in managing stress but the level of stress management in Colleges of

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Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria was low. It was recommended among others that Health educators and other health providers should educate academic staff on how to manage stress, so as to protect their physical and mental health.

**Keywords:** Stress Management, Academic Staff, Implications, Health Education,

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## Introduction

Colleges of Health Technology, like any other tertiary institutions depend on its workforce to ensure that the objectives of the organisation are achieved. This workforce are regarded as most significant and noticeable assets in the organization (Onyeizugbe & Orogbu, 2015). It is a popular understanding that no institution or organisation will grow beyond the worth of human resources that constitute the academic and non-academic staff.

It appears some academic staff of colleges of health technology no longer place importance on their main role, which is teaching. In the aspect of teaching, the researcher observed that some academic staff appear go late to the classroom while some who are punctual do not go to classroom to teach. The major criterion for promoting academic staff from one level to the other is research publications in national and international journals. However, the researcher observed that most academic staff in colleges of health technology do not conduct independent study for publication. It has been observed over the years that most academic staff in colleges of health technology do not attend research conferences.

The significance of teaching, research, and community services cannot be overemphasised among academic staff in colleges of health technology. It appears that stress is one of the factors that are responsible for the observed low academic productivity of the academic staff. Inadequate stress management could be responsible for the observed decline in productivity of academic staff in colleges of health technology. The observed low academic staff productivity could be attributed to so many factors which include; lack of job design, poor welfare package, excessive workload, lack of team work, inadequate relaxation activities, lack of counselling service, poor health service, lack of social support and poor work environment.

Robbins and Judge (2013) defined stress as an unpleasant psychological development that may happen as a reaction to environmental pressures. Walsh (2011) describes a stressor as “any emotion, biological process or thought”. Thoits (2010) pointed out that stressors can have significant damaging influence on mental and physical health. Stress constitutes a prodigious phenomenon in our daily life. The burdens of modern life, combined with the demands of a job, can lead to emotional differences that are collectively categorised as stress. Stress exists in all aspects of life and it is difficult to avoid. Stress has become a universal issue that affects both individuals in their personal lives and workplaces (Thoits, 2010).

Gaurav (2011) defined stress as a state of physiological and psychological imbalance ensuing from the inconsistency between situational request and the individual’s ability and motivation to come across those needs. Stress creates a feeling of physical, psychological, emotional and mental tension that impends the ability of academic staff to cope with challenges related with their job. Since stress is difficult to diagnose, coping with or managing stress becomes inevitable.

Workplace stress is indeed a critical issue in colleges of health technology, especially among the academic staff. Academic stress is prevalent in higher institutions all around the world, especially in Nigeria. Nowadays, global competition, rapid development, use of modern technology and changes in the nature of professions today could make the profession more demanding than ever, and workers could be prone to injuries and illnesses. Stressors such as



work-life balance, work relationship, job overload, attitudinal issue, job security, poor welfare packages, poor communication and poor resources, as well as other aspects of the profession could also be the basis of pressure in the workplace. Stress can be damaging if not well managed. In addition to its consequence on the health of the individual, it also has a direct impact on the individual's well-being (Melgosa, 2013).

The implications of stress on an academic staff and institutions they work for can have long lasting consequences. For example, a person may find they are unable to work again. They may find that they experience long term physical and health problems as well as mental difficulties. Work stress does not only negatively influence the productivity and creativity of academic staff, but also their overall well-being, health and morale. Some of the symptoms of stress include irritability or short temper, agitation, moodiness, inability to relax, sense of loneliness and isolation, feeling overwhelmed, depression, aches, nausea, dizziness, constant worrying, rapid heartbeat, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, neglecting responsibilities, isolation, among others.

It is evident that in educational institutions, stress level is very high because nothing is more tasking and overwhelming than the use of one's brain to subsist a situation. But unfortunately, stress management is something that is not so common in our colleges of health technology, or rather scarce and not effective. The issue of stress management cannot be ignored as it could be a major predictor of academic staff productivity.

Effective stress management through workload management, job design, team work, relaxation activities, welfare package, health service, social support, counselling service and work environment among academic staff seems to be scarce and often not properly deployed where such is available.

It has been observed that workload of academic staff have not been properly managed. Academic staff has been observed to struggle with teaching large classes combined with other educational responsibilities, therefore high level of stress is inevitable. Also, relaxation facilities that can enhance the engagement in recreational activities by academic staff to manage work stress are not up to standard and usable in most colleges of health technology in Southwest, Nigeria.

As it could be observed by the researcher, the use of team is a collective effort in an academic setting. The use of team have been limited to administrative issues alone while other matters regarding the collective coordination of academic staff duties which could affect their level of productivity have been subjected to organizational politics within the institution. The use of counselling services has been observed by the researcher to be dysfunctional. Most of the academic staff appear not to have access to consistent, up to date and relevant counselling services which could help reduce stressful conditions through the help of the counsellor's recommended professional solution to academic staff various work concerns.

The health facilities in most colleges of health technology have been observed not to be up to the required standard. Due to the fall in standard of these health facilities, academic staff could not access adequate health services they need in the course of their professional duties within the school system. Also, it could be observed that most of the academic staff could not make use of their health insurance package provided by the government (NHIS) in



the health facility provided within the school system. Therefore, it renders the health insurance system non effective.

Welfare packages in most colleges of health technology in Southwest, Nigeria have been observed to be inefficient in enhancing productivity. Allowances and fringe benefits seem not to be given to the academic staff on regular and consistent bases. Salaries are not regular and paid up to date. These occurrences greatly influence the motivation of academic staff toward stress management and consequently influence their level of productivity.

All these could seriously affect the quality of teaching, research and community services which academic staff are expected to carry out as their responsibilities. This study therefore examined stress management among academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria: Implications to Health Education. This study specifically examined:

1. the stress management techniques used by academic staff; and
2. the level of stress management among academic staff.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study:

1. What are the stress management techniques used by academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of stress management among academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria?

### Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The population for this study consisted of all 1,097 academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria (Source: Administrative Department of the Colleges of Health Technology). The sample for this study consisted of 250 academic staff selected from 10 Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample was selected through multi stage sampling procedure. However, the instrument administered was retrieved from 245 academic staff.

An instrument tagged Academic Staff Stress Management Questionnaire (ASSMQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. ASSMQ consisted of two sections A and B. Section A sought for general information of the academic staff, while section B consisted of 36 items which sought for information on stress management techniques. Likert 4 point rating scale was used as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The face and content validity of the instrument were determined by Health Education and Test and Measurements experts. The instrument was said to have facial relevance and concerned with the subject matter, the instrument claim to measure. In ascertaining the reliability of the instrument, the test re-test method of reliability was adopted. A correlation co-efficient value of 0.815 was obtained, which was considered high enough to make the instruments reliable. The responses obtained were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean standard deviation and graph.



## Results

**Question 1:** What are the stress management techniques used by academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Strategies of Managing Stress among Academic Staff in Colleges of Health Technology**

S/N	Forms	N	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Workload management	245	12.33	1.00	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2	Job design	245	11.34	1.08	6 <sup>th</sup>
3	Team work	245	10.62	1.15	8 <sup>th</sup>
4	Relaxation activities	245	12.60	0.99	1 <sup>st</sup>
5	Welfare package	245	10.71	0.99	7 <sup>th</sup>
6	Health service	245	11.76	0.98	5 <sup>th</sup>
7	Social support	245	12.53	0.84	2 <sup>nd</sup>
8	Counselling service	245	9.17	0.91	9 <sup>th</sup>
9	Work environment	245	11.89	0.93	4 <sup>th</sup>

Table 1 revealed the strategies of managing stress among academic staff in in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria. The table revealed that the use of relaxation activities is the strategy used mostly by academic staff in managing stress while the least was counselling service.

**Question 2:** What is the level of stress management among academic staff in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria?

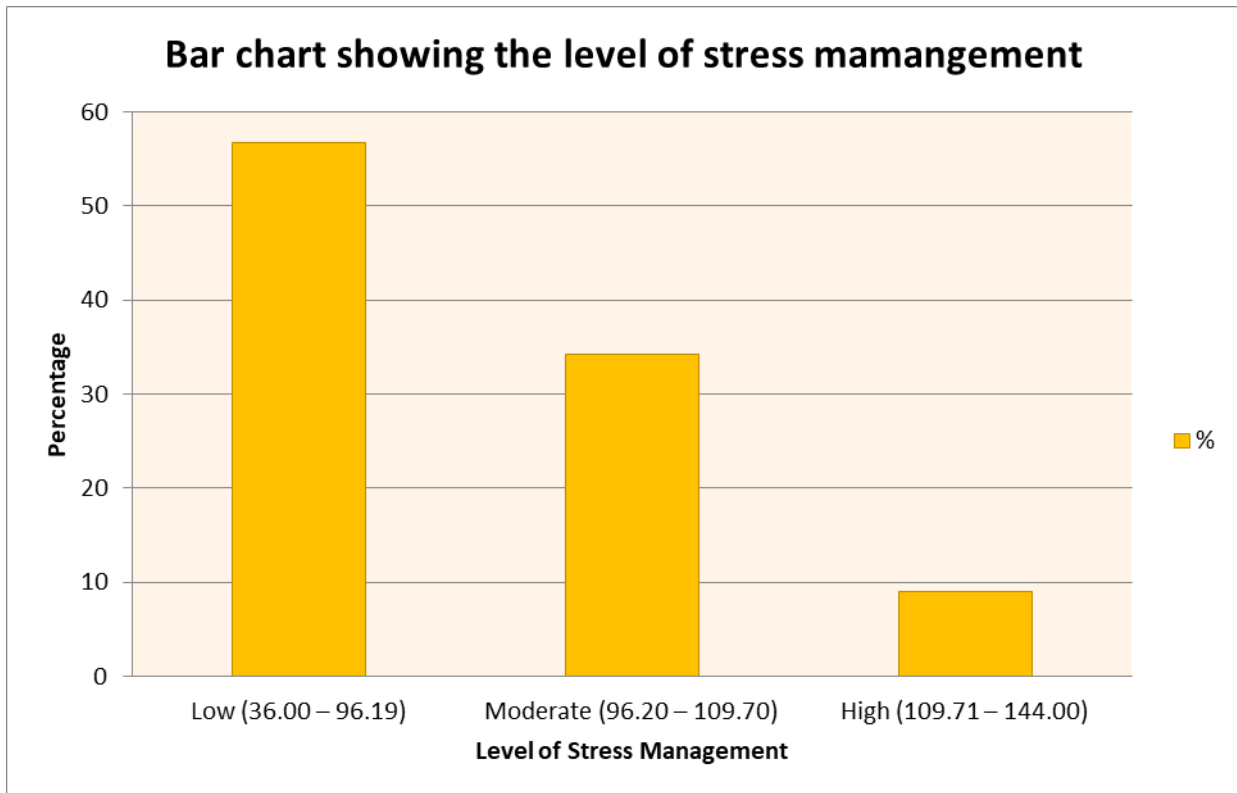
In analyzing the question, respondents' scores on stress management were used. Frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation score were used to analyse the responses to items 1 – 36 in section B of Academic Staff Stress Management Questionnaire (ASSMQ). To determine the level of stress management (low, moderate and high), the mean score and standard deviation of the responses were used. The low level of stress management was determined by subtracting the standard deviation from the mean score ( $102.95 - 6.76 = 96.19$ ). The moderate level of stress management was determined by the mean score (102.95) while the high level of stress management was determined by adding the mean score and standard deviation ( $102.95 + 6.76 = 109.71$ ). Therefore, low level of stress management starts from 36.00 to 96.19, the moderate level starts from 96.20 to 109.70 and the high level of stress management is from 109.71 to 144.00. The level of stress management in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria is presented in table 2 and figure i.

**Table 2: Level of Stress Management in Colleges of Health Technology**

Levels of Stress Management	No of Respondents	Percentage
Low (36.00 – 96.19)	139	56.73
Moderate (96.20 – 109.70)	84	34.29
High (109.71 – 144.00)	22	8.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100</b>







**Figure i:** Level of Stress Management in Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State

Table 2 and figure i revealed the levels of stress management in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria. The result showed that out of 245 respondents, 139 respondents representing 56.73 percent experienced low level of stress management. Those whose experience of stress management was at moderate level were 84 respondents representing 34.29 percent while only 22 respondents representing 8.98 percent experienced high level of stress management. This showed that the level of stress management in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria was low.

### Discussion and Implications of Findings to Health Education

The findings of the study revealed that that the use of relaxation activities is the strategy used mostly by academic staff in managing stress while the least was counselling service. Relaxation activities stimulate the health of staff in an organization (Mokaya & Gitari, 2012). These activities are designed to motivate academic staff, increase morale and heighten their job productivity and satisfaction.

Counselling is one of the mechanisms that can help increase productivity in an organization. To deal with anxiety and work-related stress, academic staff have to get a social support. Counselling is social support mechanism which involves solving the individual problems of employees, and by doing that it increases the productivity of the employees which create both short and long term mutual benefits for the organization (Thabo, 2010).

It was further revealed that the level of stress management in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria was low. The implications of findings to health education are

- a) This study will ensure that initiatives aimed at larger scale studies integrated with prevention and management of stress are included in the education programs for health educators.
- b) A thorough review of health education core curriculum can be instigated by this study, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to ensure the inclusion of information on stress management in educational modules in order to provide adequate, relevant and appropriate information and subsequently equip health educators to effectively educate academic staff on stress management.
- c) Information from this study can be used in identifying the key areas of knowledge deficit which will serve as a framework and structure for the development of appropriate educational module(s), aimed at improving health educators' knowledge and attitudes regarding stress management.
- d) Right from the training schools, health educators should be offered the opportunity to learn how to regulate their stress, restore their energy and perform self-care.
- e) Shortage of health educators increase academic staff burden and therefore increase the chances for stress. Colleges of Health Technology administrators will therefore work to avoid this, thereby reducing stress among academic staff.
- f) The health implication of the study lies in the scope for expanding the quality of orientation given by health educators. In this era of evidence based practice, publication of this research work and other studies on stress management will take health education to a new horizon.

## Conclusion

Sequel to the findings of this study, it was concluded that the use of relaxation activities is the strategy used mostly by academic staff in managing stress but the level of stress management in Colleges of Health Technology in Southwest, Nigeria was low.

## Recommendations

- Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that
- i. There should be early assessment of academic staff by management of each institution, using appropriate instruments for signs of stress.
  - ii. Health educators and other health providers should educate academic staff on how to manage stress so as to protect their physical and mental health
  - iii. The appropriate governing bodies in colleges of health technology should ensure that information on the knowledge, prevention and management of stress is available for all academic staff.
  - iv. The government and proprietors of colleges of health technology should ensure favourable working condition for academic staff as this can go a long way to manage stress.





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