

## **The Administrator as a Stressor: A Study of the Administrative/Supervisory Behaviour of College Principals in Imo State, Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study focused on the relationship between the administrative behavior of college principals in Imo State, Nigeria and Teachers' stress. This investigation was necessitated by the fact that high level of job stress has been linked to low level of productivity, and high death rate among college teachers in Imo State. In carrying out the investigation, a survey design was used for the study. The population of the study was made up of teachers in Imo State while 61 teachers constitute the sample size for the study. Structured questionnaire was used for collection of data for the analysis while the statistical methods adopted for the study were mean, standard deviation, simple percentages and t-test. The 0.05 level of level of significance was used for retaining or rejecting the three hypotheses formulated for the study. Findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between principal's administrative behaviour and teachers' stress. Based on the above findings, the study recommends that school administrators such as the principals should take into cognizance their behavioral patterns and styles of leadership that would enhance staff morale and job satisfaction, thereby reducing teachers' stress and improving good health.*

**KEYWORDS:** administrator, administrative behaviour, principal, teacher, stress, stressor.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary lifestyle has not only provided countless comforts to human life but also has imposed on human body and mind with a plethora of demands described as stress. Stress has become part of our day-to-day living whether it is related to family, education, social activity, economic activity, organization or work. Also, we experience stress in all facets of life such as driving a car through a heavy traffic, having a row with a colleague or superior, meeting work demands, adjusting to a new living environment, developing friendships or feel snubbed by a mate or teacher. Work stress occurs when there is discrepancy between the demands of workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete those demands. "Teaching as a profession also comes under the gamut of stress making it more demanding and challenging everyday" (Ejiogu, 2018, p.36).

Ejiogu (2018) states that stress is a response to pressure in the work place and outside it. The teachers are often stressed by the changes in the school system, lack of necessary facilities

for effective teaching and learning. The situation can be aggravated by naive, unfriendly or public attitude towards the school. "Pressure from the inability to achieve set targets at workplace that are sometimes unrealistic and the fear of loss of a job as a result of the introduction of new technology, have the capacity to set members of an organization on a stressful path, which in turn will have adverse effect on an individual's performance; leading to a fall in overall organizational productivity" (Onyacholem, 2020, p.35).

Sources of stress tend to be cumulative. Hence, Okafor & Obi (2020) have found that excessive workload and teaching hours, role ambiguity, poor working conditions, overcrowded classes, uncongenial working environment, scarcity of resources, conflicting peer relations, frequently changing curriculum, assessment and evaluation strategies, accountability, lack of job security, lack of public esteem, meager salaries, indifferent student's and parents behaviour, professional development, fatigue, frustration, stagnation, boredom, and loss of motivation or enthusiasm and unsupportive parents, etc. contribute towards teacher stress. Stress has some negative effects on teachers psychological, physical and behavioural responses. The negative effects include irritability, anger, fatigue, anxiety, depression, headaches, loss of concentration, sleep disturbances, persistent negative thoughts, low appetite, gastrointestinal problems, musculoskeletal problems, blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer, suicide, etc. to highlight a few from the exhaustive list. "Teacher stress not only affects his own health but also negatively affects the students and even the school" (Ejiogu, 2020, p. 12). Continuous exposure to stress situations develops in teachers a sense of self apathy, low self esteem, deprives of motivation and will to teach, loss of confidence, irritability with colleagues, unwillingness to cooperate, frequent irrational conflicts at the place of work, withdrawal from supportive relationships, inappropriate cynical humor, dealing ineffectively with students thus, ultimately lowering the overall performance level. We cannot eliminate stress but can try to manage or cope with it to an optimal level. To keep the teacher at bay from stress it becomes pertinent to scan out ways to minimize the stress levels.

For this study, stressors refer to work related variables, which impinge on teacher work effort, and cause tension in teachers. Stressors are inherent in all school environment (although the numbers and quality tend to vary) and stressors are both psychologically internal and environmentally external to the individual teacher. The stress level of teachers increases when their jobs do not meet their expectations, when job demands are high and when they have choice in deciding how to meet their demands. The salience of job stress as a research topic has been due in part to the magnitude of its effects. In addition to being associated with a variety of physical diseases including hypertension, on the organizational level, high levels of job stress have been linked to low levels of productivity and the school as a formal organization is not an exception to expressing low productivity when the teachers are under stress.

Ejiogu (2020) observed that stress is beginning to kill the Nigerian workforce in their thousands: stress is fast bringing into our work life annihilating ailments which can only be cured by learning to manage stress. The executive cadre of the Nigerian workforce should be

preserved and not wasted. Learning how to manage work stress is one sure method of doing this. Stress does not only reduce productivity, it also causes dreaded sicknesses which finally kill the victim. Regrettably, not much work seems to have been done in the area of stress among public servants, particularly school personnel, some now dying “after brief illness”. Very few would agree that super-ordinates’ administrative behaviors can constitute nuisance to the health and well-being of their subordinates. Invariably, willingly and unwillingly, administrators (such as college principals) through acts of commission and or omission could be seen as potential stressors.

The main objective of this study is to investigate various sources of stress, how college principals would be seen as stressors and whether age, gender or years of experience of college principals differentiate them as stressors.

The study was guided by the following question and hypothesis:

- i. To what extent would the target principals be said to be stressors?

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Principals’ gender will not be significantly related to their stressor status.

Ho<sub>2</sub>; The age of principals will not be significantly related to whether or not they are stressors.

Ho<sub>3</sub>; Principals’ administrative experience will not be significantly related to their level of stress inducing behavior.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

A review of some works on stress shows that there are many known definitions of stress and definitions are still continuing among psychologists who are daily showing interest in this life phenomenon. From the various definitions, it could be inferred that individual defines or describes stress according to his or her perception, discipline, or experience in life. Obi (2019) noticed that people who suffered from chronic illness or disease showed some of the symptoms. Selye (2020) related this to stress and he began to test his hypothesis. He exposed rats to different physical stress factors such as heat, sound, poison and short they showed enlarged glands, shrunken thymus glands and lymph nodes, and gastric ulcers. Selye also showed that stress is mediated by cortisol, a hormone that is released from the adrenal cortex. This increases the amount of glucose in the body while under stress.

Keluger and Ukovic (2021), define stress from the psychological point as any condition impinging on the organism, which requires adjective reactions. They see stress as when conditions place the organism under great strain; the homeostatic no longer operate smoothly. Aderounmu (2021) sees stress as an excessive environmental force which by its actions on an individual causes him harm; and the individuals reaction on such a situation, such as irritability or inability to concentrate.

Hindle (2021) equally defines stress as any interference that disturbs a person’s mental and physical well being. He went further to explain that when the human body is placed under physical or psychological stress, it increases the production of certain hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones produce marked changed in heart rate, blood

pressure level, metabolism and physical activities. Also, Adeyeye (2021) describes stress as the state of non-specific body disturbance which follows the occurrence of an event or a change in the prevailing life situation or circumstances.

For Ejiogu (2020), stress is an environmental phenomenon. He says that environment within which an individual operates contributes to stress in one way or another. Such environment may be physical, social, political, economical and /or organizational. And in all its ramifications, stress has the unique potential to tax all of a person's physiological, social, mental and nervous response system.

Decisively, for the purpose of this study, stress is the deviation from the normal working process of the body; that is a major imbalance in the body equilibrium as a result of human reaction to any of the human senses; such reactions or stimuli are otherwise known as stressors. A teacher experiencing job stress may have more health problems and a higher rate of absenteeism than one not experiencing job stress. If left unchecked, a teacher's job stress may lead to a phenomenon known as burnout; a psychological condition in which energy and motivation are sapped. Burnout means that people have depleted energy reserves, lowered resistance to illness, increased dissatisfaction and pessimism, and increased absenteeism and inefficiency at work.

Generally, teachers experience stress from issues involving reward and recognition, time constraints, college influence, professional identity and student interaction. Little does one know that the major cause of teachers' stress is the administrative behaviours of their principals, which include his management styles and interpersonal relationship between the principal and the teacher. This is the gap, which this study attempts to fill.

### **Casual factors of Teacher Stress/Stressors**

There are unquestionably a number of casual factors in teacher stress. Although stress always involves a transaction between the individual and their environment. For heuristic purpose we can divide casual factors in teacher stress into three broad areas; factors intrinsic to teaching, cognitive factor affecting the individual vulnerability of teachers and systematic factors operating at the institutional and political level.

### **Factors Intrinsic to Teaching**

Research has suggested that a number of stressors are intrinsic to teaching. In the Travers & Cooper (1997) study, workload and long working hours emerged as particular issues for English teachers as opposed to colleagues in France. When Travers & Cooper (1997) questioned British teachers across all educational sectors high workload, poor status and poor pay emerged as three of the seven major sources of stress-the others being systematic in origin. A study by May (2018) of learning support coordinators in Further Education colleges further illustrates the importance of these factors. 35 coordinators were assessed for burnout, stress and health. Overall mixed evidence for heightened stress in this group emerged, but there was strong evidence for work overload and excessive working hours, associated with emotional exhaustion.

A factor related to workload is role overload, which takes place when an employee has to cope with a number of competing roles within their job. A study by Ejiogu and Obi (2018) has highlighted role overload as a significant stressor in teachers. They assessed levels of strain, organizational roles and stress in 322 Lagos and Ibadan vocational lecturers. Strain was found to be average in both groups, but there were high levels of stress, with role overload emerging as the major cause.

Some research has identified a cyclical pattern in the effects of overwork, contingent on the academic year. Kinnunen & Leskinen (2009) assessed 142 teachers by repeated self-report during the autumn and spring terms of an academic year. It was found that recovery from stress occurred each weekend during the spring term, but that by the end of the longer autumn term weekend recovery no longer took place.

Classroom discipline is also a significant source of stress. Lewis (2019) examined teachers' estimations of stress arising from being unable to discipline pupils in the way they would prefer. Overall, maintaining discipline emerged as a stressor, with those worst affected being teachers who placed particular emphasis on pupil empowerment. A study of 1000 student teachers (Morton et al. 2017) revealed that classroom management was their second greatest sources of anxiety, the greatest being evaluation apprehension. Of all the stressors reported, classroom management anxiety was the only one that did not decline following teaching practice. Similarly, Morton et al. (2017) found that of all the sources of stress for student teachers, evaluation apprehension was the greatest, although it declined following teaching practice, suggesting that it is reduced by exposure and positive experiences of observation feedback. The moderating effects of exposure to lesson observation are an area requiring further research.

### **Cognitive vulnerability to stress**

A substantial body of contemporary research has examined the cognitive factors affecting individual susceptibility to stress amongst teachers. Chorney (2018) investigated self-defeating beliefs by asking 41 teachers to identify what they must do to be a good teacher. 92% of responses were couched in absolute terms, such as 'must', 'need' etc. Endorsement of these beliefs was widespread in the sample and significantly associated with high levels of stress. In another study by Bibou- Nakou et al. (2019) the role of attributions was examined. 200 primary school teachers were presented with four hypothetical class management situations and they were questioned as to their attributions in each case. There was a significant association between internal attributions and symptoms of burnout, suggesting that teachers who blame themselves for difficulties are more vulnerable to stress.

Self-efficacy has also been researched as a cognitive vulnerability factor. Friedman (2020) examined the self-reports of newly qualified teachers and described his findings as the 'shattered dreams of idealistic performance'. Respondents revealed sharp declines in self-efficacy as they found that they could not live up to their ideal performances. In another study, Tomic (2020) used structural equation modeling to analyse the relations between self-efficacy and burnout in 243 secondary school teachers. It emerged that self-efficacy had a synchronous



effect on personal accomplishment and a longitudinal effect on depersonalization. However, low-self-efficacy had a synchronous effect on emotional exhaustion. The direction of the casual relationship between self-efficacy and stress symptomatology is particularly significant as it suggests that cognitive interventions designed to improve self-efficacy may mediate the effects of stress. The greatest volume of contemporary research concerning cognitive vulnerability to teacher stress relates specifically to individual differences in coping style. In another study, Grace (2019) questioned 780 primary and secondary school teachers, aiming to assess the association between stress, coping responses and social support. High levels of stress were associated with low social support and the use of disengagement and suppression of competing activities as coping strategies. Interestingly, stepwise multiple regressions revealed that coping style not only mediated the effects of environmental stressors, but also influenced teachers' perceptions of their environment as stressful. This is significant as it suggests that some of the stressors associated with teaching may not be inherently stressful but act as stressors only in transaction with coping style. A different approach to assessing the relationship between coping strategies and teacher stress was employed by Admiraal et al. (2020), concerned with active vs passive responses to disruptive behaviour in indicate their coping responses to everyday stressful classroom situations. A strong relationship emerged between a coping style involving active behavioural intervention and teacher satisfaction, and a weaker relationship with pupil time on task was also evident.

### **Systematic Factors**

In this context the term 'systematic' is used to denote a broad cluster of organizational factors that are not intrinsic to the nature of teaching, but rather dependent on the climate of the educational institution or the wider context of education including the political domain. Ejioogu (2018) found that teachers named lack of government support, lack of information about changes, constant change and the demands of the National Curriculum as among their greatest sources of stress. At the level of the institution factors such as social support amongst colleagues and leadership style have found to be important in affecting levels of stress. Dussault et al (2019) assessed isolation and stress in 1110 Canadian teachers and, as hypothesized, found a strong positive correlation. In another study Van Dick (2019) questioned 424 teachers from across all German sectors about their work stress, social support and physical illnesses. It was found that social support had both a direct positive effect on health and a buffering effect in respect of work stress.

### **Symptoms of stress**

Manifestations of excess or poorly managed stress can be extremely varied. While many persons report that stress induces headaches, sleep disturbances, feeling of anxiety or tension, anger, lack of concentration; others may complain of depression, lack of interest in food, and increase appetite (Adeyeye, 2021, p.45).

Ejioogu (2019), says that most of the cases of death "after a brief illness" may be stress associated and he listed some of the signals of stress to include; quick and loud pounding of the heart, perspiration, anxiety and irritability, clenching the jaws or gnawing the teeth, forgetfulness and loss of concentration, nervousness, escapist drinking and smoking,

sleeplessness, poor information process, high occupational accident rates, absenteeism, violence towards self and others, flagging, sexual interest or low libido, and so on. Stress-related problems among teachers may also include disturbed relationship with family and friends, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction and low morale.

### **Impact of Stress on Teachers**

Research has shown that stress reduces people's ability to deal with large amounts of information. Both decision-making and creativity are impaired because people are unable to take accounts for the common observation that highly stressed teachers will persist in a course of action even when better alternatives are available. This inability accounts for the common observation that highly stressed teachers will persist in a course of action even when better alternatives are available. It also explains why anxious teachers perform best when they are put under the additional stress, while calm teachers may need additional pressure to produce a good performance.

Stress can cause severe health problems and extreme cases, can cause death. Some stress related illness include high blood pressure, ulcers, migraine, irritability, difficulty in making routine decisions and burnout. Generally, the impact of stress on satisfaction is pretty straight forward. Job-related tension tends decrease general job satisfaction forward. Even though low-to-moderate levels of stress may improve dissatisfaction.

### **Coping /Adaptive Mechanism**

Coping could simply mean to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are approached as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. There is no standardized approach or simple "how to" manuals for developing a stress prevention program. Appropriate solutions will be influenced by several factors-the size of and complexity of the problem faced by the school especially the teachers. In order to achieve the desired coping mechanism, a teacher's personality characteristics may determine how well his stress is handled.

Hindle (2015) asserts that "gender interacts with teachers' stress". Women have a variety of roles and obligations, often both at work and at home. A satisfying job may help a women deal with the stresses at home. Ejiogu (2018), also discusses some of the things a teacher should do to put stress in check such as; proper work planning and time management, delegation of duty, create conducive work environment, use of physical exercise, positive thinking, eating healthy, insisting on annual holidays, etc.

In addition, professional development should be provided to give teachers an opportunity to acquire needed skills such as stress management; they should be given the chance to anticipate, prepare for and seek for, in group decision making.

Approaches in stress reduction procedures include seminars on anger management and relaxation classes for those going through divorce and for single adults; and programmes for parents of young children and teens (Lewis, 2018, p. 156). Kemmer (2019) observed that the

problems of working outside the home while trying to meet family responsibilities has become so overwhelming for many people that the question of health-care benefits raised to prominence on the national political agenda.

The Educational Research Service (2019) suggests peer study groups and/or support networks where teachers meet regularly to build knowledge, share concerns, and relationship with one another. Marnik in his article on professional development of school leaders says that “relationships with colleagues were critical as a from of professional development and a means of support and feedback on the behavioural changes they worked to incorporate in practice” (Marnik, 2020, p. 523).

### **Stressors and Teachers Job Performance**

The last three decades have seen a growing interest in the nature, causes, and effects of occupational stress and the fervor of interest has been no less obvious where the teaching profession is concerned. In the United States of America, there was an awakening to the importance of the role of stress in the working environment at least two decades earlier, and as a consequence, far more research into teaching stress has been conducted in the United States of America, United Kingdom anmd many other developed countries that developing countries like Nigeria.

Nevertheless, one of the earliest attempts at quantifying stress in the teaching profession was conducted in 1962 by Rudd and Wiseman as cited in Ejiogu (2018). In their work, they attempted to discover the sources of dissatisfaction in a sample of 590 teachers by means of a questionnaire administered in 1960 to assess levels of satisfaction and major sources of dissatisfaction in teaching. They discovered differences in degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction between infant school teachers and junior and secondary modern school teachers, and between men and women. They concluded that it was likely that “different causes underline the relatively high levels of dissatisfaction expressed by the teachers”. They arrived at a list of some major cause of dissatisfaction as pupils’ attitude such as lack of respect for teachers, feelings of inadequacy, teaching load, lack of time, school organization, poor human relations among staff including the head inspectors and administrators, salaries, status of profession in society and large.

Durham (2018) in a survey of 658 teachers from junior secondary schools identified the common stress situations which teachers reported they had to cope with in their work. The three common stressors he identified were reorganization; role conflict and role ambiguity; and poor working conditions. Role conflict was reported by the spectrum of expectations from pupils, colleagues, parents LEA, and even from caretakers. He saw that role of the teacher had become more diffuse and exacting, following comprehensive reorganization. Poor or unsuitable working conditions are not confined to old buildings but the problem of communication between teachers which results from inadequate support for teachers with professional and personal needs.



Cousin (2019), supports Durham in his report to factors which are conducive to occupational stress as he mentioned “comprehensive reorganization; changes in curriculum and in teaching methods, unsuitable working environments, and social and cultural changes as causes of stress for teachers”. He also identified training and development, nature of work, heading of school and the community as to have their effect on the teacher’s well being. It was also reported that the heavy teaching load of teachers is a root cause of the teacher’s inability to deal with a number of sources of stress. The role of the head-teacher comes under the sport-light when he refers to the significance of the head-teacher contribution to the ethos of the school. Lack of requirement for management training for those appointed to be head of schools could lead to stress.. The head-teacher comes in for more criticism in a survey conducted by Ejiogu and Obi (2018, p. 56), where over 60% of the respondents found their head-teacher to be a source of stress. Ejiogu and Obi (2018) consider that the pacing of a teacher’s work due to curricular demands is a cause of stress, as well as external constraints such as the way that school day is structured.

Paul Evans (2020), in his work “the relationship between management styles and teacher stress” stresses teaching force where the management styles exhibited by a head was a probable factor in the level of stress reported by teachers. He emphasized that when teachers feel they have freedom in their department and believe they reduced. Also, allowing staff to take control of their workload may cause a reduction in their stress level. However, good relationships within departments, reasonable workloads, teacher centred that they are in control of their workload are all precursors needed for successful reduction of stress. Evans (2020), also sees the degree to which teachers were allowed to participate in the decision-making process as another stressor and suggests that “involving teachers in the decision making process may cause a reduction in reported levels of stress”.

Teachers are not immune to stress. The relationship between work demands of a highly technological and complex society and personal life-stress and pressures has contributed to an increasing teacher crisis in the public schools (Emener, 2020, p. 16). Societal dynamics and increased public demands on education have produced adverse stressful classroom situations that have led to increased emotional and physical disabilities among teachers. These work related sources of stress and the potential difficulties or personal life stressors have impacted teacher performance (Dickman and Emener, 2020, p. 59).

The feeling of isolation is linked to the ongoing public criticism and lack of respect for teachers as professionals by students, parents, feeling of isolation contributed to stress that teaches experiences. Trier professional prestige and morale was worsening than they had expected it would be before they began to teach. The stress of public scrutiny and educational reforms over the years underscored teacher burnout as one of the most common and serious afflictions of this nation’s educators.

### **Leadership Style of Principle as Stressor**

Leadership has been defined in terms of an individual’s traits, leadership behaviour, interaction patterns, role relationships, follower perceptions, and influence over followers,

influence on task goals and influence on organizational culture. Leadership could be seen as the ability of an individual to influence and guide people in an organization to implement strategies and achieve objectives. One major approach to the study of leadership has been an attempt to identify various styles of leadership. Several different classifications have been developed in connection with this concept. The growth and development of an institution depends on the relationship between a leader and his or her followers. In fact, the leadership style of a principal is based on the interaction between the principal and his or her staff members. According to Okafor (2018), “the leadership style of an individual is the behaviour pattern that a person exhibits while attempting to influence the activities of others. Subordinates of a leader can perceive this behaviour pattern”. Leadership style describes the pattern of behaviour that a manager or supervisor uses in relationship with others, particularly subordinates. It is about what principals do rather than what they are.

As Nwankwo (2019) mentioned, “leadership may be viewed as a process through which others are motivated to accomplish goals”. Leadership styles are various patterns of behaviour exhibited by leaders during the process of directing and influencing workers. Leadership style has also emerged as a significant organizational factor. Harris (2019) assessed teacher stress and leadership style in three American primary schools, using the Wilson Stress Profile for Teacher. The Principal in each school was classified differently, and teachers had significantly lower stress in the school where the Principal was classified as high in both task and relationship focus. This leadership style being associated with both strategic vision and a close personal relationship with staff. Leadership style appears in part to be a response to ‘trickle-down’ stressors. Hoel et al. (2019) surveyed English teachers and found that 35% reported having been bullied by a manager in the last five years, as opposed to an average of 24% across all occupational sectors. Cooper interpreted this in terms of managers failing to cope with workloads and resorting to bullying as a maladaptive coping strategy.

This point is important because it indicates that styles can be observed, described, and therefore become known to the individual concerned. It also suggests that the manager can become aware of a range of alternative styles, or behaviour patterns, and can within limits make choices about what behaviour is most appropriate to the situation being managed. The success of a school in accomplishing goals depends upon the ability of the head to lead staff members. Leadership style is crucial, in that the style of leadership of the principal and his or her decisions will determine the success of the school. According to Mohal (2019), “the more common functions of leadership are: motivating staff members, boosting morale, supporting functions, satisfying the needs of members, accomplishing common goals, representing members, creating confidence, implementing change and resolving conflicts”.

Leadership style evidenced by a specific leader is a combination of task-oriented behaviour and people-oriented behaviour. Some leaders are very task-oriented and some are much more concerned about human relationships.

According to Ejiogu (2018), “two separate dimensions of leadership behaviour were identified: ‘initiating structure’ and ‘consideration’”. Ejiogu (2018) used these terms to describe the

leadership behaviour of school superintendents. In his description, “initiating structure” refers to the leader’s behaviour in delineating the relationship between the self and the members of the work group and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communications, and methods of procedure. “Consideration” refers to behaviour indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect and warmth in the relationship between the leader and the members of the staff.

Although several works were done on the areas of causes, symptoms, effects and adaptive mechanisms of the stress phenomenon, much has not really been done to ascertain the effects of the administrative behaviour of the principals on their subordinates and how these can be seen as stressors by the teachers. This is the gap which this research is interested in filling. The leadership styles used by most school principals have emerged as a significant organizational factor. A principal whose leadership style is mostly autocratic is definitely a stressor because he will not give the teachers a fair environment to relate freely and use their initiatives for creativity and to participate in the decision-making process. Teachers under such leaders will be frustrated and face work stress which will in turn affect their productivity. Teachers will complain that administrators are neither supportive nor sensitive to their fear of violence and do little or nothing about enforcing rules and promoting a secure teaching and learning environment.

Another closely related way in which administrators are seen as part of the problem and not the solution has to do with administrative incompetence. The image of many educational bureaucracies – as incompetent, inefficient, overly concerned with cost, and scarcely concerned with education does little to make teachers feel respected and supported. Administrators are therefore usually perceived as either indifferent to teachers’ plight or actually working against their best interest. This is also because the modern day school administrator does not appreciably acquire any special training in management skills. And so, if they are not versatile managers, they become a burden, a source of stress to their staff.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents (N= 61)**

S/N	Gender	Number	Percentage
1.	Male	13	21.3
	Female	48	78.69
2.	Age		
	30 and below	7	11.48
	31-40	37	60.65
	Above 40	17	27.87
3.	Educ. Qualification		
	OND/NCE/HND	7	11.48
	B.A./B.Sc/B.Ed	43	60.65
	M.Ed	11	18.02

Sixty-one respondents returned their questionnaires. Their gender showed that 13 were male, representing a 21.31% while 48 were female, that is 78.69%. Their age difference indicated that 7 of the respondents were 30 years and below making 11.48%. 37 people were between 31-40 years of age, which is 60. Also, 17 people were above 40 years that is 27.87%. On qualification, a total of 11.48% of the respondents were NCE/OND/HND holders, 70. 50% were B.A., B.Sc. or B.Ed degree holders, while 18.03 of the total respondents were M.Ed holders.

**Table 2: Teachers perception of their principals as Stressors**

N	Max. Mean	Mean	S.D
61	4	2.98	13.31

A mean of 2.98 out of a maximum of 4.00 is low, one can therefore conclude that the principals are stressors to their subordinate on the average because according to the scoring formular, the lower the mean, the higher the perceived stressor level.

In table 3 below, the effort was directed at determining whether or not principals' gender has a relationship with their stressor level. That is, if how the subordinates perceive stress is a function of the principals' gender. A t-test statistics was used to test this hypothesis. The table below shows the mean and standard deviations of the two groups (male and female) of principals.

**Table 3: Gender Differences in the Principals' Perceived Stressor Level**

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	t-Value	Critical Value
Male	20	3.05	13.30	1.67	0.47
Female	41	1.47	9.41	1.67	0.47

df = 59

Level of significance = 0.05

The error margin was put at 50% (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ ). To this end, the corresponding critical value of the statistic was 0.47 while the t-value is 1.67. In view of this, the null hypothesis which states that "Principals' gender will not be significantly related to their stressor level" is accepted.

In testing the hypothesis to know if there is a significant relationship between the age of the principals and their perceived stressor level. For the purpose of this study, those principals below 40 years were regarded as young, while those that were 40 years and above were regarded as old. Looking at the ages of principals and determining whether or not younger or older principals induce stress to their subordinates, which in turn, affects productivity, table 4 below shows the means and standard deviations of the two groups.

**Table 3: Gender Differences in the Principals' Perceived Stressor Level**

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	t-Value	Critical Value
Under 40 years	18	3.39	13.97	1.67	0.55
Above 40 years	43	1.42	9.19	1.67	0.55

df = 59

Level of significance = 0.05

Since the t-value of 1.67 is greater than the critical value of 0.55, the null hypothesis that states that “the age of principals will not be significantly related to whether or not they are stressors” is therefore, accepted.

Similarly. In the hypothesis that was aimed at testing whether or not, the principals' administrative experience has an effect to their stressor behaviours. Also, for the purpose of this study, the principals under 10 years are inexperienced while those above 10 years are experienced principals.

The table below shows the result.

**Table 5: principals' Experiences and their Stressor –Level**

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	t-Value	Critical Value
Inexperienced	18	1.91	10.61	1.67	0.07
Experienced	43	2.10	11.13	1.67	0.07

df = 59

Level of significance = 0.05

Since the t-value at 0.05 level of significance is 1.67, which is greater than the critical value of 0.07, the null hypothesis which states that “the principals' administrative experience will not be significantly related to their level of stress inducing behaviours” is accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

From the data analysed, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between principals' administrative behaviour and teachers' stress in the secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. In line with this, many authors had also written to support the view. In a study carried out by Ubanga (2019), to assess teachers' burnout in Cross River State, most teachers were reported to have perceived the school administrator in an adversarial role, as upholders of bureaucratic rules and regulations that undermine teachers' authority and effectiveness; as not being either supportive, inspiring, or appropriately challenging; and as contributing more to the problems that teachers face than to the help they need. Dunham (2006), reports that the head-teacher style of leadership constitutes a far greater source of stress than a poor working environment and communication problems. He points out that head-teacher leadership styles can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction among the staff exhibited by a head was a probable factor in the level of reported teachers.

The first hypothesis, which states that, “There will be no significant difference between male and female principals in their perceived stressor level” was accepted. This indicates that there



is no significant relationship between principals' gender and their stressor status. In support of this, Udeze (2013) emphasizes that the gender of the principal does not contribute to their stressor status. He notes that some female principals at times behave like their male counterpart, which makes one to wonder if they are really females. Ngonach (2013), supports Udeze's point when he asserts that it is the behaviour of a principal to his or her staff that matters and not his or her gender. Thus, "what a man can do, woman can do better".

The result of the second hypothesis, which states that "there will be no significant difference between old and younger principals and their perceived stressor level" was accepted. This means that the age of principals does not have significant relationship with their stressor status. Bordens (2015) supports this view when he states that "age is just numbered; it has nothing to do with the way a school head handles the affairs of the school." He went on to say that even younger college principals retire to their shells when faced with problems of their older teachers. This means that the age of a principal has nothing to do with his or her administration, which teachers perceive as stress.

The third hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference between experienced principals and inexperienced principals and their stressor level" was also accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between principals' administrative experience and the level of their stress inducing behaviour in Imo State secondary schools. This findings is contrary to the assertion by Ubanga (2019), that another closely related way in which administrative incompetence. He says that image of many educational bureaucracies –as incompetent, inefficient, overly concerned with cost and scarcely concerned with education does little to make teachers feel respected and supported. Administrators are therefore usually perceived as either indifferent to teacher' plight or actually working against or actually working against their best interest.

### **Summary**

The study sought to determine the relationship between administrative behavior of college principals in Imo state, Nigeria and the stress level of teachers. Some internal dimensions in two variables of administrative behavior and teacher stress were examined. These include administration, administrative behavior, principal, stress, stressor and burnout. To have clue into the nature of the main problem, examination of related literature was made into the following areas: conceptual view of stress, symptoms of stress, impact of stress on teachers, coping/adaptive mechanism, stressors and teacher job performance and leadership style of principal as stressor.

The literature reviewed emphasized that school administrators should strive hard to make their subordinates work keenly with high interest and low pressure so as to experience higher level of job satisfaction and good health.

A survey design was used. The population for study was the teachers in Imo state public secondary schools, the sample size was 61 teachers selected from the 3 senatorial districts of the state."Principal as Stressor Questionnaire" was used to collect data for the study. The

validity and reliability of the instrument were ascertained. The instrument was scored using the inverse-scoring method.

Descriptive statistics were used to analysis the data yielded from the questionnaire. The result of the findings revealed that:

“The principals’ administrative behaviors are stressors to their subordinates”

“Principals’ gender will not be significantly related to their stressor level”

“The age of principals will not be significantly related to whether or not they are stressors”

“The principals’ administrative experience will not be significantly related to their stress-including behaviors”

## CONCLUSIONS

Arising from the findings of the study, conclusions were made that the level of stress suffered by teachers in Imo State, Nigeria depends on the administrative behavior of their principals. It must be appreciated within this context that the role of the principal has changed dramatically and the present day principal is a manager to a far greater extent than was the case fifty years ago. Inherent in this role is man management. Modern day principals probably do not appreciably gain any special training in management skills and so if they are not natural managers, they become a burden, a source of stress for their staff.

Stress affects everyone in his or her work and everyday life. Some persons are more effective when they are under a certain level of stress, but there are limits to the amount of stress under which one can perform effectively. One cannot avoid stress. Therefore, teachers should try to manage the stressors that occur and minimize their negative effect.

## Recommendations

In order to improve the principals’ administrative behaviors and reduce teachers’ stress, the following measures should be taken:

Educational planners should note that the alleviation of teachers’ stress and burnout depend on the leadership skills of the principals at the building point.

There should be interpersonal relationship between the school administrators and their subordinate which must depend on mutual support, acceptance and reinforcement of self, openness where needed and appropriate, mutual trust and confidence, and compatible leadership styles.

Those campaigning for political positions that highlighted to give the people better schools should be remained of such promises if they eventually make it to the government seat in order to alleviate teachers’ stress through the provision of better infrastructures and teaching aids.

There should be a reform of the fundamental changes in both the way students and teachers learn.

School administrators should encourage the establishment of wellness programmes that will focus on the staff’s total physical and mental condition. This can be inform of workshops to

help teachers quit smoking, reduce alcohol intake, lose weight, eat healthy and so on, also relaxation centers.

It is also time we began to educate our teachers in “how to take it”. That is to say, changing organizations and enabling the individual to cope effectively in a healthful way with the stress of life should be our primary aims.

Teachers should be allowed to participate in decision-making especially on those that affect their job. This will make them feel in charge of their work and work relaxed.

In addition, professional development should be provided to give teachers and their leaders opportunity to acquire needed skills in areas such as stress management and time management. Ejioogu and Ogonor (2018), believe that such administrators should be given the chance to anticipate, prepare for, and seek group support in order to solve problems and reduce stress.

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