

# LEISURE ACTIVITIES AS COPING STRATEGIES AGAINST STRESS AMONG TEACHERS IN ANAMBRA STATE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

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## **Abstract**

*This study was aimed at finding out the stress coping strategies adopted by teachers in Anambra State. The researchers used a total of 800 subjects, made up of 500 female and 300 male teachers drawn from the five educational zones of the state. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were formulated. Questionnaire was the only instrument used in data collection which rating was based on four point Likert Scales. The instrument was subjected to both reliability and validity tests. The data collected were analyzed using mean and t-test. The result revealed that teachers generally adopted aerobics/jogging as their stress coping strategies. Other forms of ball games were not favored because of lack of skills. The null hypothesis of no significant difference which stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between male and female teachers in their responses to the leisure activities adopted as stress coping strategies was upheld.*

## **Introduction**

Very unfortunately, teaching as a profession, in Nigeria has been a thankless job and relegated to the background; hence, it is much stressed and “pressure cooking” (Njoku and Onwuzulike, 2007). Anambra State teachers are fraught with pressure conflicts and frustrations. These teachers work under excruciating conditions that induce stress. Records available in the Ministry of Education shows that Anambra State has never employed new teachers within the past few years. The Governor of Anambra State Mr. Peter Obi keeps on promising that new teachers will be employed in the state school system to alleviate the suffering of teachers whose population has dwindled due to retirement of the aged ones. This places serious stress on the few teachers in the field due to overload. In an open letter to well meaning Anambrarians by the association of unemployed youths of Nigeria, Nnebe (2009) regretted that graduates are produced yearly without any hope of getting job. He expressed disappointment that Peter Obi could not offer jobs to graduates since the inception of his administration.

Suffice it to say that factors associated with the teacher’s stressed situation abound. Teachers’ salary is poor compared with their counterparts in other professions. Similarly, the Anambra State teachers’ salary is low compared to their counterparts in other states. Some states of the federation have started paying the 27 1/2 % approved by the Federal Government. Njoku and Onwuzulike (2007)

observed that teachers leave allowances were hardly paid and if paid it was always in arrears. Classroom environment are poorly equipped and ventilated coupled with indiscipline among children of today and economic hardship arising from the economic policies of the present administration. All these are enough to cause stress to teachers. Other factors listed by Pithers and Fogarty (1995) are staff relationships, lack of resources, lack of professional recognition which has been with teachers in our society. The result of this is the misplacement of values and high premium placed on material wealth more especially in Anambra state where majority of people are businessmen, who do not see teaching as a means of livelihood. Russel and Wiley (1993) as well as Pithers and Fogarty (1995) reported a high level of stress, among teachers they have studied. This stress, Nakajima (1994) stated could lead to both physical and mental illnesses. Diseases like colds, herpes and allergies seem worst when individuals are severally stressed at work and even home (Herbert, 1994)

Sutcliff and Kyriacou (1978) saw teachers' stress as unpleasant emotion as a result of pressure of work. Stress is however, destructive to health. Some researchers in the past decades showed that stress would lead to lowered health status. Powell and Enright (1990) observed that an estimated eight percent of all modern diseases have their beginnings with stress and four to five percent out of the population are treated for diagnosed anxiety complaints each year.

Therefore, for teachers to enjoy healthy life they should be able to manage their stress level and this could be achieved through leisure activities. Leisure is that period of time at the complete disposal of an individual after he has completed his work and fulfilled his other obligations. The international charter for leisure (1993), Parker (1996), Haralambos and Holborn (2000) conceived leisure as that part of free will and choice for intrinsic rewards, experience and satisfaction that also contributed towards a happy community life. Research indicates that regular participation in leisure activities may contribute to the improvement of work production, as increase in quality of life, an improved health status and lower risk of cardiovascular diseases (Shepherd and Bouchard (1993) and Murray (2000)). It is therefore evident that effective participation in leisure activities as well as an improvement in the life style may result in several health and professional benefits for the teachers in Anambra State School system. Based on the above assertion, the development of stress management strategy by using leisure activities has become necessary for teachers in Anambra State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was aimed at investigating the involvement of teachers in Anambra State of Nigeria, in leisure activities as a means of coping with work stress.

### **Research Questions**

What are the leisure activities adopted by the teachers in Anambra State as stress coping strategies

Is there any relationship between the male and female teachers in their responses on leisure activities as stress coping strategies?

## Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between male and female teachers in their responses to the leisure activities adopted as stress coping strategies.

## Methodology

The descriptive survey method was adopted for this study. This method is most appropriate when one is studying a large population that involves the use of questionnaire. About 800 teachers were used in this study. This is made up of 500 female and 300 male teachers. This was achieved through simple random sampling techniques by selecting 100 female teachers and 60 male teachers from each of the five educationa zones viz. Awka, Nnewi, Onitsha, Ogidi and Aguata.

The research instrument used was a data collection model designed by Sivan and Robert (1996) called Leisure Participation Scale (LPS). This is an integrated mechanism to measure leisure participation behaviour of individual irrespective of age. It has a list of activities ranging from active sports and games to passive activities. The researcher used a 4 point Likert Type of questionnaire of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and strongly disagree for the study.

## Reliability and Validity

The instruments' reliability was given as 0.95 (Sivan and Robert; 1996). To ascertain its validity and reliability after modification of the questionnaire, the instruments were subjected to criterion contents validity by expert in the Department of Health and Physical Education, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe before it was adopted. Before, the distribution of questionnaire, a field testing was carried out in few secondary schools in Awka that were not used in the study. This testing was used to measure the internal consistency and reliability coefficient of 0.85 was recorded using product moment correlation coefficient method.

## Data Analysis

The researcher use mean  $(\bar{x})$  and t-test statistics in data analysis 2.50 mean level was used as a baseline in rejecting or accepting the hypothesis. T-test at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypothesis of no significant difference between the two variables (male and female teachers).

## Data Analysis and Result

### Table 1

Male and Female Teachers Leisure Participation Profile.

N=800

S/N	Activities	Male		Female	
		$\bar{X}$	$\sigma$	$\bar{X}$	$\sigma$
1	Soccer	1.95	0.64	1.44	0.50
2	Badminton	1.73	1.16	1.42	0.93
3	Aerobics/jogging	3.55	0.77	3.81	1.06
4	Volleyball	2.06	1.43	1.39	1.06
5	Basketball	1.52	0.67	1.45	0.72
6	Handball	1.60	0.75	1.44	0.54

7	Hockey	1.49	0.60	1.60	0.62
8	Tennis/Table Tennis	1.89	0.88	1.58	0.70
9	Singing/Dancing	2.04	1.03	3.26	0.75
10	Meeting with friends	2.79	0.78	2.85	1.02
11	Night Clubs	1.64	0.54	1.40	0.48
12	Excursions	1.56	0.69	1.54	0.71
13	Wedding Parties	3.30	0.89	3.24	0.47
14	Gambling, Net Working	2.12	0.00	3.10	1.06
15	Play card, Ludo, Chess etc	1.84	0.96	2.35	1.01
16	Book reading, Newspapers/periodicals	3.34	0.95	1.79	1.08
17	Prayer	3.65	2.54	3.73	0.00
18	Listening to radio/watching T.V	3.22	0.86	3.60	0.67
19	Walking along the paths	1.26	1.32	1.92	0.87
	Total	2.23	0.91	2.25	0.08

From the analysis in the above table items 3, 10, 13, 17 and 18 for both men and woman had above mean value level of 2.50. It is only in items of 9 and 14 that woman had above mean value of 2.50 than men. It is also only in items of 16 that men had 2.50 mean value level than women. All the other items had below mean value level of 2.50.

All these variables had a total mean score of 2.23 and standard deviation of 0.91 for male while that of female were 2.23 total mean and 0.08 standard deviation respectively. This result has a lot of implication for teachers in Anambra.

### Table 2: Hypothesis

T-test Summary of statistical significant relationship between male and female teachers in their responses to the leisure activities adopted as stress coping strategies.

Respondents	No	$\bar{X}$	$\sigma$	df	t-cal	t-critical	Decision
Male	300	2.23	0.91				Ho
Female	500	2.25	0.80	36	0.28	1.960	Accepted

$P > 0.05$   $\therefore$  not significant

It can be deduced from the above table that at 0.05 level of significance, the calculated value of t-test is 0.28 which is less than the t-test critical value of 1.960. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This shows that the male and female teachers do not significantly differ in their responses to the leisure activities adopted as stress coping strategies.

### Discussion and Results

Analysis of leisure participation of male and female teachers revealed that they have favorable participation in aerobics and jogging, meeting with friends, wedding parties and prayers. On the other hand, female teachers participated very effectively in singing, dancing, gambling such as “net working”, personal observation revealed that some leisure activities like dancing and singing are mostly engaged by women as

can be seen on the table 1. Atare and Eboh (2006) observed that participation in some leisure activities depended on special skills, interests and training to be able to participate in them. Therefore, it is not surprising that female teachers had interest in dancing and singing much more than men. Similarly, women engaged much more in gambling such as “net-working” which is of different kinds. This helps the workers to generate fund as well as making companies to sell their products. Very unfortunately male teachers did not indulge themselves in this business because it takes some time. Naturally, females exercise patience much more than men. There is a speculation that child bearing and rearing had some impacts in this type of behavior.

On the other hand, male teachers engaged in reading newspapers, magazines and periodicals to let-off steam, this was evident in the result of a research conducted by Njoku and Onwuzulike (2007) stating that the majority of male teachers engaged in reading interesting novels, newspapers and magazines as a panacea for stress. Female teachers found it uninteresting, which is not surprising because naturally most women are not interested in reading newspapers and magazines. This is revealed by personal observation. Men are highly interested in getting information much more than the women in this part of the world. Almost always, they are found on newspaper stands reading assorted newspapers and magazines. Some men have even formed an association called “free readers association”.

Jogging/aerobics is the only active physical exercise engaged by men and female teachers. This was evident in the result of a research conducted by Amaefuna and Okuma (2008) whereby greater number of male and female academic staff of Nwafor Orizu College of Education engaged in jogging/aerobics as a way of promoting their health. Very unfortunately many other active leisure activities were neglected and less favored. The problem is that they have not acquired recreational skills in ball games early in life for voluntary participation in active leisure hours. Atere and Eboh (2006) observed that active recreational participation contributes to the perceived quality of life and psychological well being. Hence, this is not to deny the recreational value of any specific passive or observational leisure activity but merely to infer that if a person leisure behavior profile is characterized by participation in passive activities, his life satisfaction is likely to be lower than that of the person whose leisure behavior is dominated by active participation. Well, for leisure activities to actually promote quality of life, the individual must be provided with the opportunities to express himself undue constraints or limitations.

### **Recommendations**

Results and implications of this demonstrated that majority of the teachers (male and female) did not favor participation in ball games. There is therefore, a clarion call for making physical Education compulsory at the primary and secondary school levels of our educational system. This will enable people acquire sports skills that will be useful in life time sports because acquisition of skills has a carry over value.

Conditions of service of teachers must be reviewed more especially their allowance and salaries need an improvement by the state government. This will go a long way to improve their social status and reduce their stressful situation. Gone are the days when teachers reward was in heaven. Anambra State Government should as a matter of urgency employ more teachers in the state. This will help to reduce their work load.

In house seminars should be organized for teachers periodically on how to cope with stress in their work places. This could be done through the auspices of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT).

#### Conclusion

Teachers in Anambra state are under enormous stress. They have never had it good since the inception of the third democratically elected government in Nigeria for the past 10yrs. Teachers have been retiring and no administration had thought it wise to employ new teachers in Anambra State. There was a speculation that the remaining teachers in the field are those from grade level 13 and above. This leaves one to imagine what goes on in the primary and secondary schools in Anambra State. This makes teachers in Anambra State to be “pressure cooking” and stressful. There is however, an urgent call for teachers in Anambra State to adopt a particular stress coping strategies to promote their health for sustenance of life.

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