



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS LEVEL AMONG PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR TEACHERS IN THE TECHIMAN SOUTH CIRCUIT

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Abstract:

Occupational stress is a serious health problem to the individual worker both physically and psychologically. It equally effects organizations and even the nations in terms of productivity and financial losses. Occupational stress has in recent times received close attention in America and Western Europe as is evident from the growing number of literature available and the wellness programs being developed for employees in these continents, but it does not appear to be so in developing countries as Ghana. Occupational stress is common to all occupations but it could be disastrous for any nation if it remains unchecked especially in the teaching field. The teacher is the kingpin upon which every education revolves. The issue is that, there are indications of above average occupational stress in some Ghanaian teachers; but exactly how much of occupational stress is being experienced? This study set out to examine overall occupational stress, find out the level of occupational stress among private and public sector teachers in the Techiman South Circuit in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. Administering the Weiman Occupational Stress Scale to a sample of 88 workers drawn from the population of 160 established that teachers of the Techiman South Circuit experience above average levels of occupational stress with the public sector, females and Junior High School showing the higher levels when compared to the private sector, males and Senior High School counterparts respectively. Also supporting the Weiman

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occupational stress scale, a chi-square analyses showed that there is an association between gender status and occupational stress and an association between institutional type and occupational stress.

Keywords: private, occupational stress, public, gender

1. Introduction

Stress at work is a fact and an increasing component of present day life. Indeed, its significance is revealed by the level of attention paid to it in many developed countries. Life will have been very simple if our needs are automatically satisfied (Kosslyn & Roseberg, 2006). It is however unfortunate that our everyday life leaves many stress with little room for this kind of comfort. Stress occurs in every aspect of our life including our social, job, education, marriages, and many others. Dr. Hans Selye (considered the pioneer of psychological stress) warned that to be completely free from stress is death. Some amount of stress acts as a motivating agent for achievement (Selye, 1976 as cited in Luthans, 2005). This means that some level of stress is healthy and necessary to keep us alert and occupied. It contributes to a person's adequate functioning in life. While some level of stress is good, intense stress can also overtax our physical and mental resources, making us vulnerable to stress related ailments (Sarah, 2000). Stress, a pattern of cognitive appraisals, physiological responses, and behavioural tendencies occur in response to a perceived imbalance between situational demands and the resources needed to cope with them (Passer & Smith, 2001).

Interestingly, the job we do significantly determine our day to day activities and decisions. As much as our jobs are of great importance to us, it can be of great stress when care is not taken. Stress from our occupations can in an indirect way affect other aspects of our lives, making life more complicated and difficult to live. Since we spend most of our time at work or in doing our jobs, its effects on our lives cannot be ignored whether positively or negative. Occupational stress can be deadly if attention is not paid to it. Although there has not been a definite definition to what occupational stress is, it has been captured as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job does not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker (Sauter et al, 1999). This is to say that, if the resources, tools, skills, conditions etc. needed by the worker to work in an organization do not correspond to the demands of the job, then the worker get stressed.

An individual's personality may help in determining how easily stressed we become; but we cannot ignore the fact that, there are some macro level dimensions that

are unique to organization, which may contain potential stressors to the worker (Luthans, 2005). Whilst there are different potential stressors specific to each occupation or job, there are also some common factors which include; administrative policies and strategies, organizational structure and design, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and organization processes, among others (Luthans, 2005).

Administrative policies and strategies include advances technology, competition, downsizing, merit pay plan, rotating work shift and bureaucratic rules. Examples of organizational structures and design include; centralization and formalization, line-staff conflict, specialization and role ambiguity and conflicts. Little performance feedback, lack of participation in decision-making; only downward communication and tight control, all fall under the organizational processes. Working conditions include; crowded work area, noise, heat, polluted air, strong odor and unsafe dangerous conditions (Kosslyn & Roseberg, 2006; Ellis, Gordon, Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Luthans, 2005). Studies have shown that stressors outside the workplace can be related to negative effects and feelings on the job. That is, extra-organizational stressors such as technological change, globalization, the family, relocation, economic, financial, race and community conditions can indirectly affect the stress level an individual may experience at work (Luthans, 2005). Workers may also become stressed, when exposed to prejudice regarding their age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and religion (Myers, 2006).

By all definitions, the profession of teaching has a very important place in all professions. A teacher is a kingpin in the entire system of education (Kaur, 2011). Almost every cultures of the civilized world esteem the teacher very highly. They are very often seen as “Master” “Mentor” “Guide” and “Coach”. To achieve this status, teachers throughout the history of civilization have come up to the expectations of the world around them.

Teaching has now become a very demanding occupation with a lot of stresses for a teacher who has a lot of deadlines to meet and a lot of responsibilities to shoulder besides teaching a child what are in a text book. Teachers not only have the stress of dealing with so many diverse children on a daily basis. They are also charged with educating and helping to mold these children into productive members of society. With rules, regulations, guidelines, and performance expectations all around teachers can have very high levels of stress. The job is very demanding in that it never ends.

During the past decade, various working institutions of private and public sectors in Ghana have undergone rapid changes, such as policy changes due to globalization, technology advancements, and increased competition as more private institutions enter the economic market. Private institutions compete with government

institutions for more market. In addition, proliferation of private enterprises in the country has led to intense competition among these institutions, especially in the banks, schools and hospitals. These changes may cause workers in both private and public sectors to experience high levels of job-related stress as they try to compete with high workloads, long hours of working and so on.

The research provides answers to the following questions;

1. To what extent is there a difference in the level of occupational stress of teachers in private and public schools?
2. What is the influence of gender status on the level of occupational stress of teachers?
3. To what extent is there a difference in level of occupational stress between Junior High Schools and Senior High Schools?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Causes of Occupational Stress

The causes of occupational stress have been looked at here in this study are the macro level dimensional sources of stress common to organizations irrespective of the kind of institution and sector they work in.

2.2 Role Conflict and Ambiguity

One's role in an organization can be a cause of stress. This has to do with behaviour and the demands that are associated with the job an individual must perform. To this effect, ambiguity and role conflict are causes of stress. According to Luthans (2005), role ambiguity basically is the lack of clarity about one's duties and lack of information needed to perform a task. When there is a conflicting work demand (role conflict) mostly occurring when one is engaged in two contrasting positions at work, role overload occurs. (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2001).

2.3 Workload

In addition to multiple roles, too much or too little task demand can be a stressor to an individual at work. Every individual has an optimum workload capacity, hence an inadequate or excessive workload could be perceived as a psychological strain on an individual at work (MacDonald, 2003). Workload is of two forms; quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative workload deals with the workers' affection to their job where there is a low or high self-esteem, while quantitative workload deals with period: how much work one can complete within a timeframe (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2001; Sauter et

al., 1999). Meeting deadlines on a regular basis and working long hours could be stressful.

2.4 Boredom

Boredom is closely linked to the amount of workload an individual has to accomplish at a time. Boredom can be in the form of repeating the same task over and over again or having too little task at a time leaving room for nothing to do. Doing the same work over and over again can be frustrating. Frustration can lead to aggressive behaviours (Myers, 2006). That is, boredom can lead to frustration, which could also lead to aggressive behaviours at work. When under severe stress, an individual fails to take clear-cut decisions, re-evaluate and reassess the priorities and lifestyles and ultimately, tend to fall into unproductive distractions (Sauter et al., 1999).

2.5 Interpersonal Relationship

Weak or poor interpersonal relationships cause job-related stress. Poor interpersonal relationship may be the result of personal differences existing among coworkers due to differences in culture, different upbringing and workers' background. It may also be triggered by communication breakdown in the organization (Luthans, 2005). When one works with people who do not like him or her or there is poor social environment, and lack of support from other co-workers could lead to stress at the workplace for the individual facing that problem.

Bullying and hostile manners cause interpersonal difficulties at work. Stress could also be the results of competitions and office politics that workers become involved in. Competition could breed stereotyping and conflicts among workers of the organization (Myers, 2008). Interpersonal relationships become so much of a stress when the work demands interdependence (Ellis et al., 2001, Luthans, 2005). That is, an individual worker can only achieve success in his or her assignment only when co-workers do their portion. This can be very stressing when members are not on good terms or have interpersonal problems.

2.6 Technology Advancement

Again, the expansion of technology such as computers, pagers, smart board, cell phones, fax machines and the internet has resulted in heightened expectations for productivity, speed and efficiency, increasing pressure on the individual worker to constantly operate at peak performance levels. In this case, the workers are under constant mental stress. There is also the constant pressure to keep up with technological

breakthroughs and improvisations, forcing employees to learn new software all the times (Ellis et al., 2001; Sauter et al, 1999).

Organized workplaces are going through gradual changes under intense economic transformations and consequent pressures. Reorganizations, takeovers, mergers, downsizing and other changes have become major stressors for employees, as institutions try to live up to the competition to survive. These reformations have placed high demand on individuals at work, as they try to adjust the new situation (Luthans, 2005). In Ghana where no concrete educational policy backed by law exist, both private school heads and the sitting government do as they wish at any point in time with our education and this has led many teachers to feel they sit on timed bomb. This situation can in least be said to be very stressful. The peace of mind to work is lacking as the teacher is always on the look.

2.7 Working Conditions

Furthermore, working conditions such as noise, dust, heat, humidity, lighting, overcrowding, uncomfortable chairs, toxic chemicals (white board makers), and static electricity are some intrinsic factors to the job that serve as stressors (Ellis et al., 2001, Luthans, 2005). Discomfort from heat resulting from high temperatures, high humidity and lack of airflow in the classroom can be a stressor to the teacher. Performance of perceptual and motor task is reduced when temperatures are very high. Temperature as a stressor delays work because of decreased performance, hence incomplete task and deadlines are not met which can pose stress to the worker at the work place (Luthans, 2005). Work that requires critical decision, fair judgment and performance of fast or skilled action can be affected by thermal stressors. These factors can cause different physical ailments including allergic reactions, backaches, infections, eyestrain and headache (Ellis et al., 2001).

2.8 Sense of Control

In addition, lacking a sense of control of the work one does at the workplace is a stressor. Individuals perceive been left out of important decision relating to their job and lack of say about the demands placed on them as stressful. Research has shown that relentless stress is often endured by people with little control over the nature, style of work and pace of work (Hafen, Karren, Fredsen & Smith, 1996).

2.9 The Teacher and Stress

Times have changed and the societies and cultures have drastically diversified, but the duties of a teacher are basically the same, which is the transfer of knowledge to

successive generations. With dynamics in cultural norms and traditions in the societies there has been a drastic change in the expectations from a teacher. Some of these changes have limited the measures which a teacher in the past could exercise in disciplining a student and some have put additional burden on teachers in respect to their preparation of lessons and adopting and maintaining various teaching styles. This is because most of the school systems prefer to maintain uniformity in all of their branches.

Occupational stress has become increasingly common in teaching profession largely because of increased occupational complexities and increased economic pressure on individuals. A major source of distress among teachers is the failure of schools to meet the social needs and jobs demands of the teachers. The teacher must be aware of his clear role to build up the nation. Teachers are overburdened with regular teaching load, poor working conditions, and lack of sense of control among others.

Occupational satisfaction is a necessary condition for a healthy growth of teacher's personality. Job satisfaction and security are also important factors that to look at when considering teacher stress. To be occupationally satisfied has more to do with one's personality; what may get one satisfied may not be the same for another but for job insecurity it cuts across everyone in the teaching arena. Job insecurity is a major challenge for teachers in the private sector and unprofessional teachers in the public sector.

In general, occupational stress arises from the working conditions/environment of a system. When we talk of stress among teachers, many factors cause stress. School teachers face high amounts of stress during teaching and handling students; Classroom in developing countries such as Ghana remain overcrowded and teachers face intensive verbal communications, prolonged standing, high volume of work load and poor teaching equipment. Teachers are also overburdened with regular teaching work and non-teaching work as election duties, duty in census; populations counting etc. the teachers are often heard of complaining about.

One very interesting thing in Ghana's education is the fact that teachers among all other professions are most often the lab rats for the implementation of systems and Policies especially in the public sector. The effects of poor and wrong teaching do affect the entire nation though its effects are long term as compared to other profession. Stress among teacher is not a matter of just the teaching but both the physical and emotional aspects in the teaching system.

2.10 Gender Status and Stress

In the past, women were responsible for the home. They were homemakers. That is, until recently, relatively few women worked but today, women can be expected to spend about 30 years in labour force (U.S department of labour, 1990). According to Bertz and Fitzgerald (1987), men and women have different pattern of career development. However, women largely still maintain their home making duties (Weiten & Lloyd, 1997). The reason has been that women still subordinate their career goals to their husbands' goals (Unger & Crawford, 1992) in order to maintain the family role expected of them.

Again, in the past, many teachers were males but we are now faced with the situation where many women can be seen in the teaching field particularly married women. Working and managing the home can be a very stressful duty placed on woman especially those working in the formal sector. The issue of the short maternal leave (three months) given to woman where they come back to work with babies so little and still are expected to do the work they were formally assigned to. This adds more than enough stress to woman trying to balance work with family life.

2.11 Effects of Occupational Stress

Stress at work, has significant effects on both productivity of the organization and the health of individual teacher. Stress related problems that may affect the classroom teacher includes; mood disturbance, psychological distress, sleep disturbances, upset stomach, headache and problems in relationships with family and friends. Workers may also become increasingly irritable; they cannot concentrate well, and feel less committed to their work (Sauter et al., 1999; Sarah, 2000; Luthan, 2005).

Job stress influences chronic diseases but they are more difficult to ascertain because chronic diseases develop over relatively long periods and influenced by many factors other than stress (Sarah, 2000). Nonetheless, there is some evidence that stress plays a role in the development of several types of chronic health problems including cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders such as lowered self-esteem, poor decision making among others (Luthan, 2005; Ellis et al., 2001). When stressful situations go unresolved, the body is kept in a constant state of activation, which increases the rate of wear and tear to biological systems (Sauter et al., 1999). Ultimately, fatigue or damage results, and the ability of the body to repair and defend itself can become seriously compromised. As a result, the risk of injury or disease goes up.

The effect of occupational stress on the organization is observed through high absenteeism, decreased commitment, increasing unsafe working practices, high staff

turnover, poor job performance and job dissatisfaction (Ellis et al; 2001). If an institution observes this kind of behaviour, then it means that workers may be highly stressed emotionally, psychologically or physically and that attention should be given to it. These behaviours exhibited by workers will certainly affect the production rate of goods and services that the institution brings out. Injuries occurring at the workplace cause more financial strain on the company as the company suffers with medical cost. At the end of the day, the economy of the nation will be highly affected.

3. Methodology

This chapter gives an overview of data collection procedures involved in the study. The content of this chapter includes the research design, population, sampling techniques, instrumentation, validity/reliability, data collection and data analysis. The study followed a quantitative approach. The rationale for choosing this method is because the research intends to contribute to those quantitative studies that had been done on job stress, but limited its scope to the teaching field in Techiman.

3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey design. According to Gall, Gall, Joyce and Walter (1996), descriptive survey enables the researcher to gather information from a cross-section of a given population. It also involves asking the same set of questions often prepared in the form of written questionnaire or ability test of a large number of individuals. Such a study reports the way things are and draws responses from a wide range of people (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

3.2 Population of the Study

Population of the study constituted teachers belonging to both the private and government sector school of SHS and JHS in the Techiman South Circuit of Techiman in Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana numbering one hundred and sixty (160).

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

This sample size was achieved by the use of the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination. The population was 160 therefore based on the table; a sample size of 113 was employed. This study was limited particularly to teachers handling JHS and SHS students. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to gather participants.

3.4 Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. 88 representing 78% of the teachers completely filled in questionnaire given the researcher a high confident level of generalizing the findings of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

Data entry and analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 16, a data analysis program. For qualitative variables, data are presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages and for quantitative variables ranges, means and standard deviations. The scores obtained by the scale in Part 2 of the questionnaire for this study are first chi-squared analyzed to establish dependence among variable. The scores of the questionnaire are again compared to baseline scores achieved by Weiman and other researchers in their application of the Weiman Occupational Stress Scale (WOSS) to subjects from a variety of occupations. The reliability coefficient of the scale used in this study was found to be 0.85. Though this is not as excellent as the 0.90 achieved by Weiman, it is good enough to justify the relevance of comparing scores obtained in the study to baseline averages of the WOSS.

C. Weiman designed a standardized instrument in 1978 for measuring perceived occupational stress. The Weiman Scale is also scored by adding together the total number of points for the 15 questions and then dividing the sum by the number the number of test questions. The range that can be scored by a subject is a maximum of 75 and a minimum of 15. The greater the score, the more occupational stress is being reported. Applying the scale to a wide variety of occupations, Weiman and other researchers established a baseline mean score of 33.75 and individual average of 2.25. Scores below this baseline are considered to indicate the absence of stress whereas those above indicate its presence in varying degrees.

Part 2 of the questionnaire was used to establish a baseline score for the participants in the study using means, cross tabulations and bivariate analytical techniques, groups were compared to find out differences.

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The result of the study is demonstrated in the tables below:

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics and sector categories of teachers in the sample

Sector	Institution	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	
Private	JHS	Female	4	4.5	
		Male	27	30.7	
	SHS	Female	1	1.1	
		Male	9	10.2	
Public	JHS	Female	11	12.5	
		Male	12	13.7	
	SHS	Female	6	6.8	
		Male	18	20.5	
			Total	88	100

Table 1 shows that there are 88 respondents in this study. Out of 88 school teachers, 41 (46.4%) are private school teachers and the remaining 47 (53.6%) are public school teachers. Of this number, 22 (24.9%) are females and 66 (75.1%) are males. Again Senior High School (SHS) has 34 (38.6%) respondents' whiles Junior High School (JHS) has 54 (61.4%) respondents. Among the private school teachers, 31(35.2%) belong to junior high schools and the remaining 10 (11.3%) belong to senior high schools. Out of the private junior high school, 4(4.5%) are females, 27 (30.7%) are males whiles those of the private senior high school comprised of 1(1.1%) female and 9(10.2%) males. Among the 47 public school teachers, 23(26.2%) of the teachers are in junior high schools and the remaining 24 (27.3 %) are in the senior high schools. Within the public schools also, there are 11(13.5%) females and 12(13.7%) males in JHS. Those of the public SHS comprised of 6 (6.8%) females and 18 (20.5%) males.

From Table 1 it is seen that there are more males 66 (75.1%) than females (24.9%) teaching higher school in the education ladder. This could be attributed to the fact that there are more males than females in the teaching field of education. This issue of percentage differences in gender status of teachers weighs way back to women in the kitchen and men at official job leaving more males in the field of official job with women gradually following in the Techiman South Circuit and Ghana as a whole.

Table 1 gives an indication that the percentage of teachers in the public sector (53.6%) is 7.2 higher than the private sector (46.4%). This disparity could be the fact that unlike in the public schools were teachers strictly teach one subject, in the private sector schools some teachers teach more than one subject. Some teachers of the elementary level may teach certain subjects in the junior high levels in private schools whiles still holding a permanent class. In addition, most private sector teachers are part-time teacher from public sector schools especially in the senior high schools. This practice in

the private sector schools may account for the low population in teacher numbers hence the lower percentage.

4.1 Occupational Stress Results

Analysis was done by performing a chi-square test to establish dependence among variables. Part B of the questionnaire yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.85. When reliability analyses was done, showing a good internal consistency. Despite this fact the coefficient is not as excellent as the 0.90 coefficient established by the WOSS. It suggests closeness enough to which it can be compared to the baselines by the WOSS. 3,479 points was the total score obtained in this survey of 88 teachers. This computes into a mean score of 39.53 per participant which translates into an individual average score of 2.64 on the five-point scale (Table 2). According to the WOSS, the higher the average score and individual mean score the higher the stress levels facing the respondent.

A. Research Question One: To what extent is there a difference in the level of occupational stress of teachers in private and public schools?

Table 2: Association between occupational stress and sector type of respondent
(n=88)

		I take work home due to high workload					Chi-square
		Never Count	Occasionally Count	Often Count	Usually Count	Mostly Count	
Sector type of respondent	Private	10	13	10	3	5	Chi-sq=7.439 Df=40.114
	Public	10	11	7	14	5	

Table 2 shows that at an alpha of 5%, chi-square value of 7.44 and a degree of freedom of 4 there is a significant dependence (sig. 0.11) in occupational stress and sector type respondent of respondent. This result agrees with the generic view point that there is fundamental difference ((DeSantis& Durst, 1996; Freeman, 1996) between the two sectors even in terms of the level of stress they go through.

The Figure 1 show teachers in the public sector rather than those in the private sector are stressed. The public sector shows about 85% who responded of usually having too much workload to complete hence they take some home whiles about 20% of those in the private sector responded of usually having too much workload to complete.

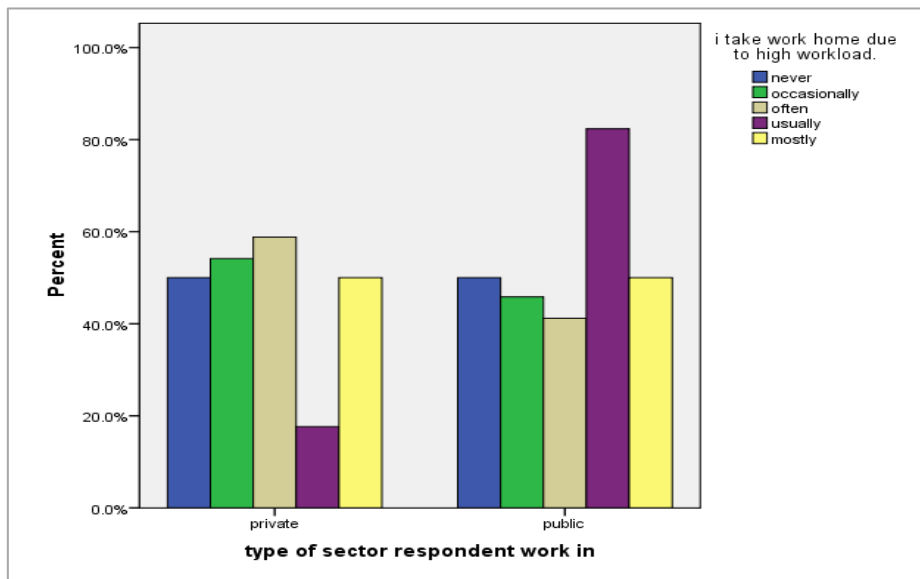


Figure 1: Showing a bar graph of sector type of respondent and having too much workload

Table 3: Average score and individual score for Private and Public Sector schools (n=88)

Respondent in Sector type	Av. Score	Individual Score
Private sector	38.17	2.55
Public sector	40.72	2.72
Total	39.53	2.64

The score for all participants ranges from a low score of 25 (1.7) to a high score of 55 (3.7) on the five point scale. The 39.53 and 2.64 mean score and individual average score respectively of this research represent about 17% high score than the WOSS mean score of 33.75 and individual average score of 2.25. From the framework of the WOSS, there is a strong suggestion of occupational stress among teachers since with the WOSS instrument, the higher the score, the greater the stress in the subject. The average score of 39.53 is 17% above that of the WOSS baseline. Although a small segment 19% (17 respondents) of the sample was scored below the WOSS average, the overall average supports the proposition that teachers experience above average levels of occupational stress. Another segment scored as high as 55 indicating the presence of a very significant level of stress. This goes to support that assertion that the teaching profession has a lot of stress.

It is important to note that the mean score for teachers in the public schools is 6.7% higher than that of private sector teachers in the study. This finding also supports the proposition that in the field of education, public sector teachers in this area are more stressed as against their private school's counterparts. The result does contradict some findings in the literature review (Thomas, 2005; Tankha, 2006) which suggested that private sector workers are more stressed as compare to those in the public sector. On

the other hand, it supports the research done by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Personnel Today, 2003) that public sector workers are more stressed than their colleagues in the private sector.

The results coming from the analysis indicating high stress in public sector than private is an interesting one as it goes to nullify the common notion that private sector workers are more stressed to their colleagues in the public sector. Usually supervision serves as a yardstick for this proposition but the results have shown a contradictory proposition when a variety of stressors were considered.

This goes to suggest that the different kinds of stressor that happen at the work place poses a lot of stress at work and that supervision only is not a true reflection to conclude one is stressed or not. Teachers in the public sector face constant threats from the governments, salaries been held for longer times only to come sometimes in years, the poor classroom and other school conditions among others that teachers must work in. Unlike the public schools, the private schools put their school environments to neat and nice order or may at least try their very best as this goes to attract some parents to bring their wards to the school.

Though workload may be much in the private sector schools, the student to teacher ratio in most public sector schools is nothing to write home about. Very large classroom sizes to manage at the same time trying to bring the best out of students can be a frustrating thing to deal with. It is no doubt that some of these thing maybe accounting for the high stress faced by teachers in the public sector.

B. Research Question Two: What is the influence of gender status on the level of occupational stress of teachers?

Table 4: Association between gender status and occupational stress in public and private sector

			I dread going to work lately due to stress							
			Never	Occasionally	Often	Usually	Mostly	Chi-square		
Sector of respondent	Private	Gender of respondent	Male	11	10	11	3	1	Chisq=3.422 Df=40.490	
			Female	1	0	3	1	0		
	Public	Gender of respondent	Male	9	4	9	2	6		Chisq=2.382 Df=40.666
			Female	7	2	2	1	5		

Table 4 describes a chi-square analysis at an alpha of 0.05. In the private sector, with a chi-square value of 3.42 at degree of freedom of 4, showing that there is an association (sig. 0.49) between gender status and job stress. Also in the public sector with a chi-

square value of 2.38 at a degree of freedom of 4, there is an association (sig. 0.66) between gender status and job stress of teachers.

Table 5: Average and individual score for the gender status of respondents

Respondent	Av. Score	Individual score
Male	39.21	2.61
Female	40.50	2.70
Total	39.53	2.64

Table 5 shows that the average score for male teachers (39.21) is approximately 3% lower than the average score for female teachers (40.50) in the circuit. This average mean of 40.50 scored by female teachers is nearly 6.7 (20%) points higher than that of the WOSS benchmark of 33.75. These results also supported the proposition that female teachers experience a higher level of occupational stress as proposed by some other researches done in the past (Michael et al., 2009; Murphy,1986) though the stressors for the various study across the different research works are not the same.

Figure 2 shows female teachers in the public sector to be stressed as compared to their male counterparts in the private sector. About 30% of females in the public sector responded mostly stressed while about 11% of males in the public sector responded mostly. What is seen in the public was contrary to what happens in the private sector as males (12%) responded mostly stressed.

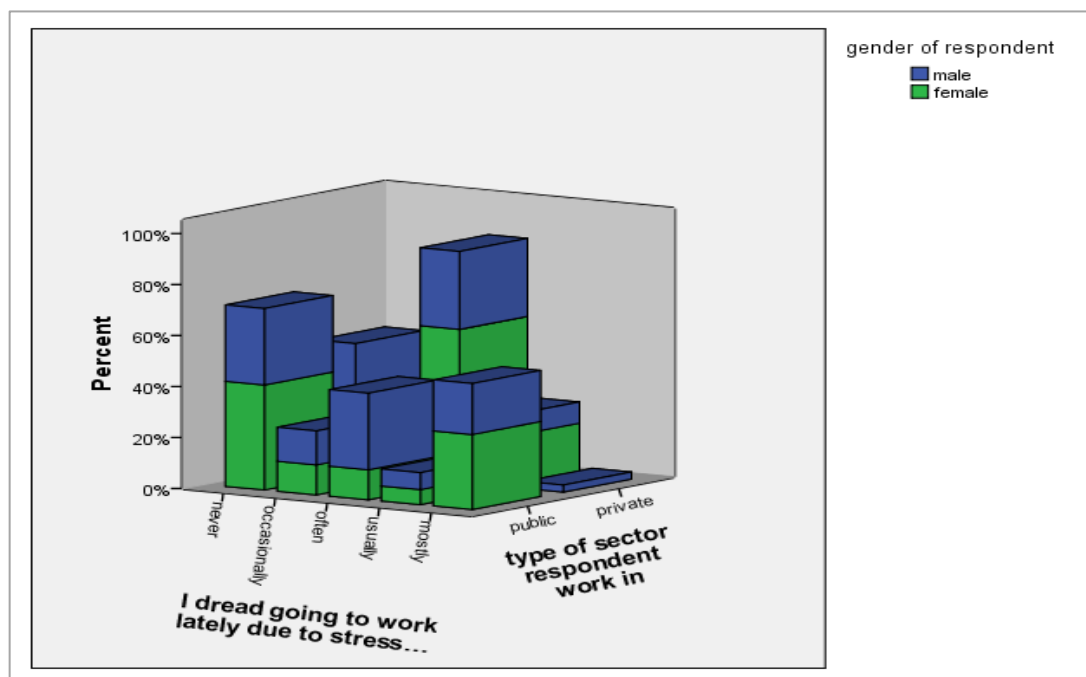


Figure 2: A 3-D bar chart showing sector type of respondent, gender status and Respondent dreading of going to work lately due to stress

Table 6: Average Score and individual score for gender status in private and public sector schools (n=88)

Sector	Gender	Av. Score	Individual score
Private	Male	38.22	2.55
	Female	37.80	2.52
Public	Male	40.40	2.69
	Female	41.29	2.75
Total		38.53	2.64

It is equally revealing in table 4.3.1 that though the average mean score in general for females (table 4.3) is 3% higher than male, males rather than females in the private sector turn to have slightly higher mean score (38.22) than the mean score of their female colleague (37.80). This represent approximately 1% points higher in males than female workers in the private schools. On the other hand, the revise is seen in the public sector teachers. The average score of female teachers is about 2% points higher than their male colleagues in the public sector. Comparing mean score of males in private sector and females in the public to the baseline mean scores show that male in private schools and females in public schools are 13% and 22% respectively higher than the baseline score by WOSS. This analysis goes to explain that males of private sector schools are more stressed as compared to their female colleagues' whiles in public schools' female teachers are more stressed.

Accounting for the high levels of stress shown by female teachers may be related to balancing work-life and home-life. For most women, a lot of stress can arise from the conflicting demands of these two variables especially as there appears no long term tendency in Ghana for housework to be taken over or shared by men. Culturally in Ghana, women have to work inside the home as well as outside.

The female teacher may occupy several positions at home but very few at the workplace. At home, she is the housewife, mother and even sometimes "breadwinner" at the same time, homemaker. Combining these demanding situations can be an overdose of stress if attention is not given to it. Before going to the workplace, she may already be experiencing some level of stress from the pressures of the home.

In addition to this, women are frequently exposed to sexual harassment at work. For instance, promotions could be withheld until sexual advances are accepted. They are often also the objects of sexual jokes and innuendos. Sexual advances or harassment can actually make the working environment hostile, intimidating or offensive for the teacher resulting in higher levels of stress.

C. Research Question Three: To what extent is there a difference in level of occupational stress between Junior High School and Senior High School?

Table 7: Chi-square analysis of institutional type respondent work and working under tight deadlines among private and public sector teacher

			I work under tight time deadlines					Chi-square	
			Never Count	Occasionally Count	Often Count	Usually Count	Mostly Count		
Sector type of respondent	Private	Type of institution	JHS	10	4	9	6	2	Chi-sq=3.260 Df=40.515
			SHS	4	2	4	0	0	
	Public	Type of institution	JHS	7	6	4	3	3	Chi-sq=1.142 Df=40.888
			SHS	6	4	6	4	4	

Table 7 shows that at an alpha of 0.05 there is a significant dependence (sign. 0.52) in occupational stress level and type of institution of teachers in the private sector. Also, at 0.05 alpha values indicate a significant association (sign. 0.88) in occupational stress levels teachers and the type of institution in the public sector. The results from the table suggest that the occupational stress levels of teachers irrespective of the type of sector faced by teachers is associated with the institution (JHS/SHS) the teacher works.

Table 8: Average and individual score for the institution type of respondents (n=88)

Respondent	Av. Score	Individual Score
JHS	40.39	2.69
SHS	38.18	2.55
Total	39.53	2.64

Table 8 shows that the average score for JHS teachers (40.39) is approximately 5.5% higher than the average score for SHS teachers (38.18). The average score obtained by both JHS and SHS teachers in addition to their individual scores against the average score and individual score of 33.75 and 2.25 respectively of the WOSS shows that teachers in the various institutions are all stressed. This average of 40.39 scored by JHS teachers is nearly 20% points higher than the 33.75 WOSS benchmark. These results also support the fact that JHS teachers experience a higher level of occupational stress.

Table 9: Average score and individual score for Institutions types in Private and Public Sector schools (private, n=41; public, n=47)

Sector	Institution	Av. Score	Individual Score
Private	JHS	38.71	2.58
	SHS	36.5	2.43
Public	JHS	42.65	2.84
	SHS	38.88	2.59
Total		39.53	2.64

Table 9 shows that JHS teacher face a higher stress levels as compared to their SHS counterparts observing from their average and individual scores. JHS (38.71/2.58) teachers are about 6% points higher than their SHS (36.50/2.43) colleagues in the private sector. Also, in the public sector JHS (42.65/2.84) teachers are about 10% higher in score than their SHS (38.88/2.59) teachers.

The outcome of JHS teachers been more stressed to their SHS colleagues could be the result kind of preparation that goes on in the JHS toward the writing of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). This examination is the first external exams taken by all JHS students in forms three “3” under the Ghana Education Service. With this exam, more student get agitated and pressured hence putting pressures in the long run on their teachers. Even for some schools, forms two and three students do not do on vacation giving both the students and teachers no time to rest and relieve themselves of the terms stress. These kinds of thing do not happen in most secondary schools across Techiman and even Ghana as a whole.

There are more elementary and junior high schools as compared to senior high schools in Techiman and Ghana as a whole hence the BECE taken by student is to help place them in the fewer senior high schools around. In this regard, most JHS teachers are under constant pressures to make sure that all their students pass this exam. In addition to this, JHS levels make the beginnings of adolescent life which has so many challenges for students. Hence, teachers at the JHS level teaching these students suffer as the students try to understand the new changes happening to them as compare to those of the SHS level who may have come to understand themselves better.

In addition to these, the teacher to student ratio is much lower in Junior High School than Senior High School. The student population in the junior level is higher than the secondary level especially the public sector where free education is practiced. Also, the various courses done in the secondary level gives room for classes to be reduced to smaller fractions at some point in time. Unlike the secondary schools, the junior high students all study the same subjects and this brings about putting all the students in one class for subject teachers to come and teacher. Teaching and

maintaining order in large classes could be very stressful. In some schools where the classes are put into small fractions for effective teaching and learning more teachers are not brought in to teach the different classes but the same teacher turn to be the ones still teaching the various classes created.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

The objective of this study was to examine the level of occupational stress of teachers in the Techiman South Circuit on their Sector type. A review of the literature found multiple sources identifying stress as common to all occupations. Literature was reviewed on the nature of occupational stress in terms of sources, individual characteristics (i.e. personality traits that predispose the worker to varying levels of stress), sector types, the teacher, gender issues and institutional types.

The study drew heavily from the perspective in which occupational stress is viewed negatively. Viewed in negative terms as the feelings of pressure placed on us by others, occupational stress has been captured as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job does not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. It is the rising tension caused in us by any characteristic of the job environment, be it excessive demands or insufficient resources to meet a need, and whose intensity and enduring nature can have a detrimental effect on our ability to adjust and our physical health as well.

5.2 Conclusions

Findings from the study supported the proposition that teachers in general experience above average work-related stress. The teachers who completed the survey instrument scored an individual average of 2.64 on a five-point scale. Past administrations of the Weiman Occupational Stress Scale by Weiman and many other researchers yielded a baseline score of 2.25. The teachers in this study therefore scored on average of 17% higher than the calculated WOSS baseline and with the Weiman Occupational Stress Scale, the higher the score, the higher the stress.

In addition, the results also supported the proposition that public school teachers experience higher levels of stress. The average test score for participants in this category was approximately 7% points higher than that those in the private schools. The notion that stress is high in the private sector has been contradicted by this study. Tight supervision and workload as mentioned before is usually used as a measure for stress among workers by the lay-man, but from studies it has been shown that there are many

stressors affecting workers. Tight supervision and workload are just but two of these many stressors. Using many other variables as done in this study has indicated otherwise the results.

Again, the results supported that female teachers were more stressed as compared to their male colleagues. Women experience several problems at work that have been associated with stress. For instance, sexual harassment at work whereby genuine rights are made conditional upon giving in to advances is another stressor peculiar to the female teachers. Such advances in addition to sexual jokes and innuendoes can create a hostile, intimidating or offensive working environment for the teacher resulting in higher levels of stress.

Depending on the cultural setting, balancing work-life and home-life can entail more stress for the woman than for the man. In Ghana's cultural environment, women have to work inside the home as well as outside. The female is thus often overloaded from home before getting to work. She may therefore already be experiencing some level of stress.

Furthermore, the result supported that stress is high among Junior High School teacher than those of Senior High School teachers. This difference in stress could be attributed to a number of factors that teachers face. The first external examination is written at the junior high schools, the teacher to student ration is much lower in the JHS and the kind of competition that goes on among the different JHS among others are the contribution reason for a higher stress in the Junior High School than the Senior High Schools.

Finally, conclusions from this study should be viewed with the necessary cautions. The survey instrument developed for measuring perceived work stress of teachers contains just 15 questions. A more extensive set of questions might be more reliable and may provide a lot more accuracy in portraying occupational stress. In addition, the instrument has no built-in scale to test for consistency. An instrument with a scale built in to allow researchers assess the tendency of respondents to distort their responses either positively or negatively could provide better data.

None the less, this study offers some insight into an overall occupational stress and its potential risks for teachers in Ghana especially those at Techiman South Circuit. Results of the study may help teachers and their institutions to become more sensitive and aware of the increased risks and difficulties they face in terms of occupational stress. Occupational stress emits negative effects for both the employee and the organization and it is important not to consider occupational stress as a mere personal issue for the employee to deal with alone and in isolation.

5.3 Recommendations

A first step towards preventing occupational stress from escalating into unbearable proportions for any teacher is to build awareness about it and how it relates to the teaching profession. The teacher should understand that in teaching operational workloads are expected parts of the job. He or she should be convinced to accept that the challenge of the profession is one of the main reasons why he or she chose the profession. Such education and guidance will make teachers consider operational demands specific to their jobs to be the most meaningful and the most motivating stressors.

However, high severity stressors may nevertheless continue to pose risks. These can then be handled through the institution of formalized peer support and guidance systems within schools. With such an intervention, teachers can have co-colleagues and professionals or leaders to talk to about difficult topics or events or situations whose intensity could cause trauma or extreme stress and to which they have been exposed.

One very common intervention that needs to be recommended for reducing stress is a system of worker participatory methods which gives workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their job. One cannot expect positive health when workers feel left out of decision-making processes of the organization. They should be consulted on their views about issues and involved in setting and managing of the school. If workers are given the opportunity to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs, the perception of stress would be reduced. They are motivated intrinsically and this alone can help reduce stress massively among teachers.

It is very important for a teacher to have a hobby which is totally different from what he teaches at school. Music, gardening, hiking and painting are a few examples of hobbies which a teacher may adopt. These can give them an outlet and take their minds off from the problems that they face at school. This is one way of getting the day's stress off from their minds (Kaur, 2011).

With regards to further research, the first recommendation to state is that studies need to be conducted in Ghana on occupational stress of teachers. Whilst there is sufficient evidence in several other countries to believe that work stress is a factor among teachers, the literature is remarkably silent on Ghana. Studies are needed to enhance the understanding of stress in Ghana and its effect on student in particular.

In add to this, because school heads, supervisors and policymakers are largely responsible for creating the environment in which teachers work, it is important to explore interventions that will reduce the stress experienced by these categories.

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