

Managing Stress among Management and Staff of Colleges of Education in Ghana: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine stress, coping behaviors, and institutional support among teachers and administrators of Colleges of Education in Ghana. The study employs a qualitative research paradigm in which we employed the multiple case study design consisting of 18 purposively selected participants from Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education and St. Vincent College of Education. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed by applying Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis model. As the study found, the situation of occupational stress was highly prevalent among staff. The stress that arose from the heavy workload, resource shortage and competing institutional responsibilities were among stress sufferers: all these things made employees very unhappy and uninspiring. These stressors have had a deleterious impact on staff well-being with exhaustion and lack of motivation; workers had even lost their ability to produce more work or report effectively at any given time. Coping strategies involved problem-focused strategies such as increased work and planning, as well as emotion-focused strategies including prayer and an inclination to use networks for social support. But those interventions were often insufficient due to the ineffectual nature of the institution's structural and systemic issues. It also indicated a low level of institutional interventions such as counseling, continuing professional development and adequate workload policies, thus adding a layer of stress. The results also correspond with theoretical models such as Job Demand-Control model and Person-Environment Fit theory, which stress an equilibrium of institutional pressures and available resources and autonomy. They find that occupational stress in Colleges of Education does not operate solely as an individual strain but is also part of a systemic problem that can and should be addressed through systemic institutional reform. It suggests better workload management, resource allocation, professional learning, counseling and participatory governance mechanisms to develop durable coping styles that protect employees' welfare, and to improve organizational performance.

Keywords: stress, coping strategies, workplace well-being, institutional support, employee performance, Colleges of Education.

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1. Introduction

Stress in the workplace exists as an unavoidable workplace reality which affects modern organizations including educational institutions. Among tertiary institutions in Ghana, Colleges of Education represent a critical component of the national human resource development agenda, as they are entrusted with the preparation of professional teachers who form the backbone of the country's education system. The colleges operate effectively because their management team and staff members maintain academic and administrative operations. The core members who maintain teacher education in Ghana experience multiple stressors which negatively impact their work performance and their health status. Stress experiences in higher education environments have been documented numerous times throughout various student and staff populations (Amponsah et al.,2020; Dickson, 2024). Yet, the particular experiences of management and staff in Ghanaian Colleges of Education remain underexplored, even though their roles are pivotal in shaping the trajectory of educational quality in the country.

Stress functions as a vital element in educational settings because it holds essential value. Unmanaged stress creates major consequences which result in lower employee productivity and job satisfaction and health issues and work absences and staff member departures (Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017). The high stress levels in Colleges of Education create problems that affect institutional administration efficiency and damage teacher mentorship and disrupt collegial relationships. The implementation of appropriate coping strategies together with institutional support helps staff members reduce their exposure to management and staff-related risks which enables them to perform their duties effectively. The subject presents itself as a vital yet ambiguous matter because stress functions as a two-edged sword which breaks down individuals yet appropriate handling enables them to build stronger resistance. Why do some members of staff and management thrive under similar stressors while others succumb to burnout? Why do some institutions succeed in creating effective coping systems but others fail to solve their problems properly? The survey questions demonstrate how stress affects people based on their institutional environments and cultural backgrounds.

The research examines three vital elements of stress management in Ghanaian Colleges of Education which include stress sources and employee coping strategies and organizational support for staff members. The research investigates stress and coping behaviors among teacher education staff at Tamale College of Education and Bagabaga College of Education and St. Vincent College of Education. The aim is to uncover not only the personal strategies adopted by individuals but also the institutional interventions that either alleviate or exacerbate workplace stress.



The research study uses previous findings to determine which elements need investigation for this study. Research studies indicate that academic staff members and students throughout Ghana and other African nations experience high levels of stress. The research conducted with lecturers demonstrates that teachers face extreme stress because they need to manage big student groups and excessive paperwork and insufficient resources and opposing institutional requirements which drive them to use unhealthy coping methods including problem avoidance and reality denial (Lawer et al.,2025; Lawer et al.,2025). The university supporting staff face similar problems because they deal with job description uncertainty which causes stress and receive insufficient recognition and have restricted career advancement possibilities (Azumah, 2014). Students experience their highest levels of stress because of excessive academic work and insufficient money and unsuitable living environments which drive them to use emotional coping methods instead of tackling their problems directly (Pariat et al.,2014; Azumah, 2014). The studies by Munawar and Choudhry (2021) and Smith et al. (2021) show workplace stress impacts all health professionals and emergency personnel globally yet different work settings create specific stress factors which staff members handle through individual coping strategies. 2020).

The research has achieved significant results, yet multiple critical gaps exist in its development process. Much of the existing literature focuses on students and lecturers, while relatively little is known about the stressors affecting management and administrative staff in teacher education colleges. Research about staff stress fails to recognize the distinct operational characteristics of Colleges of Education because it makes universal assumptions about university environments. Research studies have focused mainly on stress origins but they need to study coping methods and institutional backing systems which could help workers develop from stressful situations. The current body of knowledge offers useful information yet fails to resolve the research question because it lacks analysis from specific institutions.

The research makes a unique contribution through its examination of management and staff members at Ghanaian Colleges of Education who have received minimal attention in stress research studies. The research investigates stress experiences and coping mechanisms and institutional support to deliver findings that maintain both practical value and local relevance. The research design of this study stands apart from previous studies because it employs qualitative methods to obtain participant narratives instead of using quantitative survey data. The research design allows scientists to conduct in-depth studies of management and staff members' personal stress and coping experiences which generates fresh knowledge that goes beyond statistical information.



The research results will help institutions create policies which support employee health and work performance to improve teacher education standards in Ghana.

2.Literature Review

2.1. Stress Management

Organizations have understood for many years that stress management stands as a vital factor which supports both employee health and workplace wellness. Higher education institutions along with other institutional settings generate stress because employees must handle various duties while working under time constraints to achieve their performance targets. People use intentional stress management approaches and methods to control their stress levels which leads to improved work performance and better health results (Lazarus, 1984). Staff members at universities and Colleges of Education need to manage their stress because they perform multiple duties which include teaching and research work and administrative tasks and student guidance responsibilities. The University of Ghana staff research shows that stress management practices including time management and peer support and institutional counseling units help staff members deal with their occupational stress (Azumah, 2014).

The scientific basis for stress management stems from cognitive appraisal models which show that people experience stress when they perceive their resources are insufficient to meet their present needs (Lazarus, 1984). Management needs to establish both preventive measures and systems which boost employee resilience. Research indicates that technical universities and distance education systems generate new work obstacles and technological barriers which result in elevated employee stress until staff adopt organized management approaches that include workload management and stress reduction methods (Aminu, 2020). Stress management exists as a dual obligation between people and their organizations because employees need to develop their own coping methods while their workplaces must create supportive systems (Lawer et al.,2025).

Furthermore, workplace stress management cannot be generalized, as strategies vary depending on the occupational category. Frontline healthcare providers need immediate functional approaches which include teamwork and emergency debriefing but academic personnel dedicate their time to research leave and sabbaticals and mentorship programs (Munawar & Choudhry, 2021). The research results show that people require specific stress management techniques which depend on their individual circumstances. The development of new approaches has not eliminated the existing challenges which prevent institutions from using complete intervention methods at every organizational level. Research indicates Ghanaian institutions do not have established stress



management policies so people must create their own coping methods (Lawer et al., 2025). The system produces unequal results because staff members respond to stress in distinct ways.

Educational institutions need to establish multiple stress management approaches because students' stress management abilities depend on their individual strength and the policies of their school and outside support systems. Research has investigated university staff and students but Colleges of Education remain understudied because their organizational changes and restricted financial resources generate specific challenges that need systematic solutions (Azumah, 2014; Aminu, 2020).

2.2. Major Sources of Stress Experienced by Employees/Staff in Institutions

Research studies have discovered various stress factors which impact staff members who work in educational and organizational environments including Colleges of Education. Academic staff members experience high levels of stress because they must handle heavy workloads while meeting strict deadlines and limited resources and multiple duties between teaching and administration and research responsibilities. Azumah (2014) identified workload pressure and job insecurity and insufficient recognition as major stress factors which affect University of Ghana staff according to his research. The teaching responsibilities at Ghanaian universities along with insufficient educational resources according to Lawer et al. (create stress for university lecturers, 2025). The current situation in Colleges of Education matches their actual situation because they receive restricted funding after their transition to tertiary education status.

Research shows that technical university staff experience work-related stress because of insufficient job clarity and inadequate management methods and restricted professional freedom (Aminu, 2020). Staff members at Colleges of Education experience higher stress levels because their institutions receive less funding than research universities do. Their experience differs from others because of this distinct situation which needs personalized medical treatment. The types of stressors that affect staff members depend on their job roles because management team members experience policy implementation stress and funding problems and human resource management responsibilities but teaching staff members deal with classroom obstacles and student conduct and curriculum teaching challenges (Lawer et al., 2025).

Research studies demonstrate that role conflict and ambiguity function as critical stress elements which affect human behavior. Munawar & Choudhry (2021) found that health workers and university lecturers often face uncertainty regarding their responsibilities, particularly when institutional structures are weak. The Colleges of Education experience high levels of stress because their staff members perform multiple



duties as administrators and community mentors which creates role ambiguity. The teaching responsibilities of lecturers have increased because students want better educational value from their studies and institutions need to adopt contemporary teaching approaches and digital educational resources (Lawer et al.,2025).

The lack of proper support systems within institutions creates additional stress for students. The research with distance education students showed that students experience higher stress levels because of delayed feedback and restricted resources and technical issues (Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017). Staff members who oversee these programs face identical challenges to the program participants. Aminu (2020) demonstrates that Ghanaian institutional workers experience high stress levels because their workplaces enforce rigid hierarchical structures and limited communication options and organizational political activities.

Personal and environmental factors further aggravate stress. Staff members who need to travel long distances to work and those who handle family duties and have limited social connections experience elevated stress levels. Research shows that banking staff in Ghana experience work-life imbalance as a major stress factor which also applies to educational staff who deal with identical work-family conflicts (Asiedu-Appiah, 2016).

Stress patterns show different distribution between male and female populations and between different age groups. The younger workforce members face career advancement stress and employment uncertainty but their older colleagues deal with health problems and institutional changes (Lawer et al.,2025). The ongoing problem of female staff members who need to manage their work responsibilities with family obligations stems from existing gender-based distribution of work tasks.

Staff members in institutions experience stress from various sources which include their heavy workloads and unclear job responsibilities and insufficient resources and political conflicts within the organization and their individual personal issues. Research studies about this topic have shown valuable results but most investigations have concentrated on universities together with other institutions while Colleges of Education remain understudied. Research should focus on Tamale and Bagabaga and St. Vincent Colleges of Education because their specific institutional obstacles and expanding student needs produce unique stress patterns which need tailored solutions (Azumah, 2014; Aminu, 2020).

2.3. Coping Strategies Adopted by Employees/Staff in Addressing Workplace Stress

People use coping strategies as their behavioral and cognitive methods to handle stressful situations. Research shows that institutional staff members use different coping methods which include problem-oriented and emotion-oriented strategies. People



develop coping strategies through their stressor appraisal methods according to the Lazarus (1984) framework which leads to problem-solving or emotional reduction approaches. The Ghanaian educational environment shows that teachers along with their assistants handle stress by seeking social support and through their ability to organize time and tasks effectively (Azumah, 2014).

University lecturers who use peer support and collegial networks experience stress reduction because they work together to share their workload responsibilities. Similarly, mentorship and teamwork have been emphasized as coping strategies in technical universities and distance education systems (Aminu, 2020). The individual level needs lecturers and administrative staff to apply their personal resilience and spirituality through relaxation practices which include meditation and physical exercise (Lawer et al.,2025). People in Ghana frequently use religion and faith-based coping methods because these practices help them find emotional comfort and create purpose when dealing with work-related stress (Lawer et al.,2025).

Staff members who use adaptive coping strategies pursue professional development to learn new skills which help them handle their work better and adapt to modern technology requirements. The research by Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) demonstrated that tutors who received ICT training developed better abilities to manage virtual classroom challenges. Health workers who worked under stressful conditions in frontline positions used teamwork alongside debriefing and responsibility rotation to achieve balance according to Munawar and Choudhry (2021).

On the other hand, maladaptive coping strategies also appear in the literature. Staff members who face overwhelming situations tend to stay away from their work or refuse to acknowledge its existence or lose touch with their duties which results in poor performance and negative effects on their health. Research shows that staff members who experience stress develop negative coping mechanisms by using substances and missing work and avoiding their duties (Lawer et al.,2025). Short-term solutions create additional problems which result in negative impacts on health results and work productivity during future periods.

People use their situation-based coping strategies based on the support systems which institutions offer. Staff members who get counseling services and health insurance and staff development opportunities from their institutions tend to use adaptive coping methods (Azumah, 2014). Staff members at Colleges of Education need to use their own methods for support because these institutions do not provide structured assistance which leads to variable student outcomes. Research studies demonstrate that organizations which establish official stress management programs achieve better employee morale and reduced employee absences (Aminu, 2020).



Research indicates that people use different coping methods yet their success depends heavily on the support structures which institutions provide. The cultural aspect of coping emerges through Ghanaian spirituality and social networks yet stress outcomes continue to be unpredictable because of lacking structural changes. The research on coping strategies at Colleges of Education will help scientists understand how workplace restrictions affect staff reactions to stress and which support methods produce enduring results (Azumah, 2014; Lawer et al.,2025).

2.4. The professional performance and well-being of employees/staff experience negative impacts when they experience stress.

Research conducted at higher education institutions and related organizations demonstrates that prolonged occupational stress leads to performance decline and mental deterioration and physical health issues and reduced motivation and work dedication. Studies about Ghanaian university systems demonstrate that staff members who experience continuous workload problems and insufficient resources and ambiguous job duties will develop decreased job satisfaction while they start leaving their positions and their performance ratings deteriorate which results in negative impacts on service delivery and academic standards (Lawer et al.,2025). The research shows these effects exist beyond personal opinion because organizations with limited employee involvement and strict management structures lead to higher stress levels and worse performance results (Shen, 2021). The University of Ghana conducted quantitative research to study staff support which revealed that staff members experience three main stress factors from managing multiple urgent tasks and receiving low pay and insufficient staff and resources. The research conducted by Azumah (2014) showed that staff members who experienced moderate stress because of these factors produced lower quality work which resulted in decreased productivity. The research findings showed that educational level and gender identity affected stress levels which then impacted team performance according to Azumah (2014).

Research studies conducted worldwide confirm the Ghana-based findings through their identification of particular operational procedures. Academics at universities who teach long hours while receiving limited research funding and dealing with insecure employment status experience rising psychological distress which leads to decreased job satisfaction and reduced creativity and innovation and lower research productivity (Lawer et al.,2025). Research across different countries demonstrates that teachers experience higher stress levels because of faShenst-changing policies and promotion barriers and administrative work which leads to emotional exhaustion and reduced teaching performance (Shen, 2021). Research shows that stress exists in two forms which impact performance differently because acute stress creates short-term

performance improvement but chronic stress results in employee burnout and work absences that organizations can measure (Shen, 2021). The supporting-staff study demonstrates that workplace stress leads to significant problems which cause medical tests and fatigue among employees and decreased work performance (Azumah, 2014). The results of knowledge work become more pronounced because academic positions need employees to maintain continuous mental adaptability and focus and social work activities; ongoing stress causes people to focus less and avoid tasks while deteriorating their ability to solve complex problems which contradicts the requirements of colleges of education.

The technical university libraries in Ghana demonstrate matching stress-to-service deterioration because their field-based research indicates librarians experience ongoing psychosocial stress because of inadequate stress management education and resources (Aminu, 2020). Research on workplace health shows that organizations face major financial losses because of employee absences and job changes and decreased work output which indicates stress creates institutional performance risks (Azumah, 2014). The research shows that work-related stress creates multiple adverse effects which start in professional settings before spreading to affect sleep patterns and causing anxiety while decreasing employee morale. The relational aspects of educational work create a chain reaction which affects classroom interactions and student assistance and teacher teamwork leading to ongoing stress that weakens team performance (Lawer et al., 2025). The combination of occupational stress functions as an organizational barrier which blocks professionals from achieving their best work and maintaining their health in educational institutions and their related organizations with colleges of education facing the most significant impact.

The following institutional support systems and interventions help employees/staff develop better coping strategies while decreasing their stress levels.

Research shows that institutional backing rather than personal strength determines how well staff members handle workplace stressors. Three intervention classes appear at the systems level which include (i) workload and role design (clarity, autonomy, staffing), (ii) capability and climate supports (training, professional development, collegial support) and (iii) targeted well-being services (counseling, HR policies, recognition). Organizations need to address core problems by aligning personnel levels with customer needs and improving their equipment infrastructure and supply chain operations and establishing specific job duties to reduce workplace disputes and confusion (Azumah, 2014). The report offers Human Resource Organizational Development units three structural recommendations to minimize employee stress exposure through performance-based recognition systems and strategic hiring practices



and workload management (Azumah, 2014). The research into higher education institutions has two primary goals which focus on improving staff participation in institutional decision-making and enabling staff to lead their work activities. The research shows that college of education governance reforms help staff members decrease their work-related stress while strengthening their institutional commitment through these two vital elements (Horta et al.,2019).

Academic institutions demonstrate the greatest interest in implementing capability and climate interventions. The research uses international data to demonstrate that professionals require training programs which focus on time management and resource allocation and stress management because these competencies directly support their ability to handle obstacles. The research demonstrates that inadequate training programs result in poor coping skills so management needs to create continuous development programs and supportive workplace environments (Azad et al.,2022). The program provides students with workshops and seminars and orientation sessions about modern teaching methods and technological tools which help them organize their work more efficiently (Azad et al.,2022). The library studies in Ghana teach information workers stress management through organized programs which let staff members seek help right away to prevent stress from developing into chronic problems (Aminu, 2020). Studies about lecture-based learning demonstrate that peer mentoring and team teaching and communities of practice function as protective elements which help students share responsibilities and develop problem-solving coping methods (Lawer et al.,2025). The survey of supporting staff showed employees used problem-focused strategies by putting in more effort and creating action plans and emotion-focused strategies through prayer; the institution needs to create planning resources and workflow improvements which support problem-solving approaches while respecting the cultural value of emotional coping methods (Azumah, 2014).

Third, targeted well-being services and HR policies complete the intervention portfolio. The Ghana supporting-staff study suggests stress-management seminars and counseling services and performance-based recognition programs which match existing organizational strategies to reduce burnout risk (Azumah, 2014). Research from around the world demonstrates that stress trajectories will not change when policies exist without proper execution because of the failure to convert policy intentions into operational practices (Hudson et al.,2019). The research identifies three affordable college of education policies which include workload caps and transparent promotion criteria and equal administrative task distribution to enhance university teacher performance (Lawer et al.,2025). The implementation of functional counseling and staff-well-being units which operate within HR or library systems in Ghanaian cases creates



accessible entry points for early intervention and triage that supports preventive measures (Escribano-Ferrer et al., 2016).

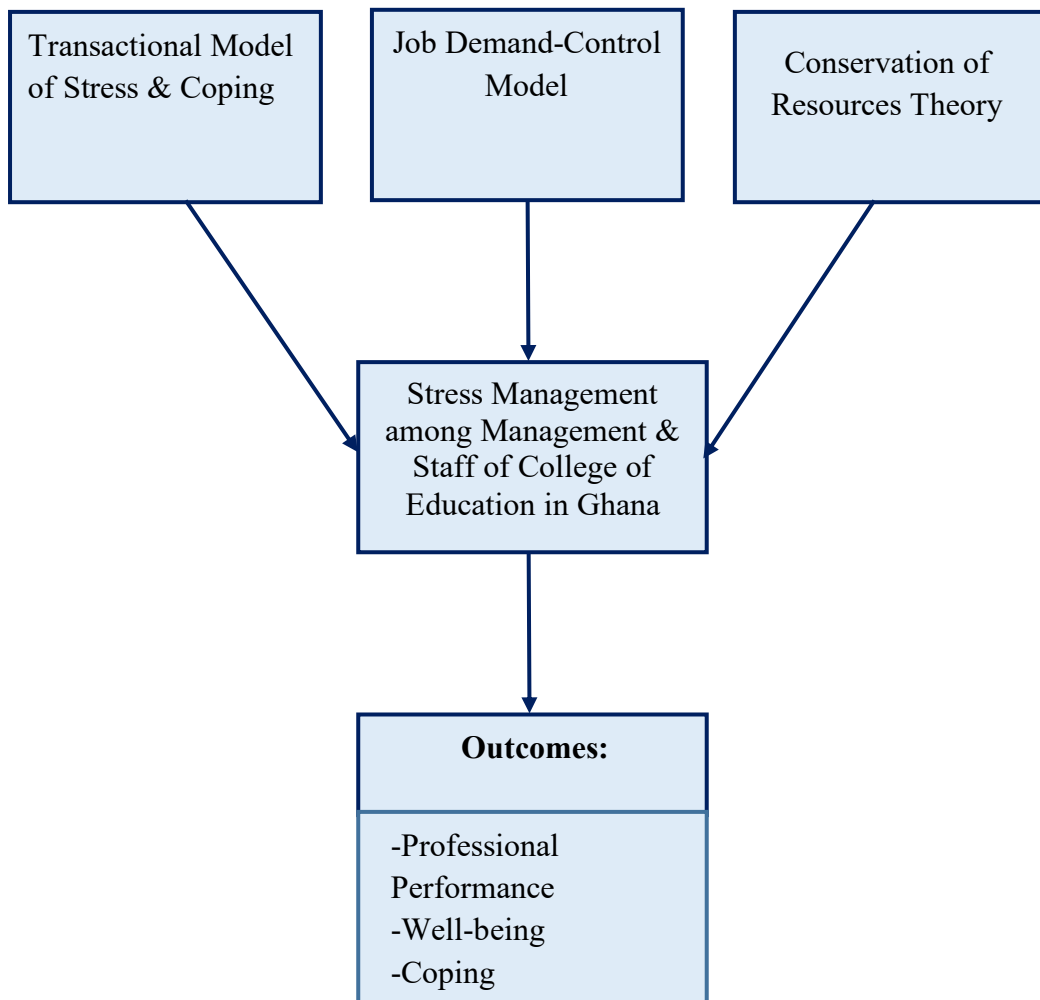
The design challenge of institutional stress management exists at multiple levels because it requires organizations to decrease employee exposure to stressors and build their capabilities through training and networking and establish supportive systems for counseling and recognition and fair career advancement. The first evidence-based steps for colleges of education need to address three essential areas which include adequate staffing during peak periods and scheduled professional development and standardized promotion systems and workload distribution rules. Crucially, several sources stress that interventions must be continuous and embedded: fragmented or one-off seminars are insufficient without structural alignment; conversely, when organizational supports and culture shift together, employees report stronger problem-focused coping and lower distress, ultimately improving retention, performance, and the student experience (Azumah, 2014).

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The research framework of this study uses Lazarus (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping together with the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). People experience stress according to the transactional model because they assess situation requirements against their current coping skills through problem-solving and emotional management activities. The framework works for higher education and allied institution staff because they experience workload issues and unclear roles and insufficient resources which create stress that damages their work quality and health conditions. The JD-R model explains that stress develops when employees face high job demands such as workload and role conflict and time pressure while lacking sufficient resources including autonomy and collegial support and professional development. The model shows job resources function as protective elements which reduce work-related stress while simultaneously promoting employee motivation and resilience and job engagement. The complete framework for studying work-related stress effects on performance and staff health emerges from the combination of these theories which show that counseling services and training programs and workload equity and recognition systems function as fundamental institutional support systems. The research combines two approaches to study stress because it looks at how people think about stress as an individual process and how organizations create stress through their structures.



Figure 1:
Theoretical Framework Diagram



Its theoretical basis in this study is with reference to the theoretical framework of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and JD-R Theory by examining the mechanism of stress generation, managing and moderation in Colleges of Education system in Ghana. Transactional stress is seen as a dynamic process from a transactional perspective described by Lazarus (1984) in which individuals consider their work-related demands as going beyond their resource-based coping for stress. This model concerns cognitive appraisal whereby staff interpret institutional barriers – like heavy workloads, ambiguous roles, lack of resources, and unclear duties – as feasible or challenging. The appraisal then acts on individual coping responses, which can be

problem-focused (e.g., solution seeking, task planning) or emotion-focused (e.g., prayer, avoidance). The JD-R Theory extends this to highlight how job demands (e.g., heavy workloads and administrative pressures) contribute to strain, while job resources (e.g., supportive colleagues, autonomy, and institutional interventions) buffer such stresses, promoting resilience. The two theories are thus understood as working in tandem as two lenses of individual perspectives and institutional context as predictors of the associated stress consequences. This framework also helps to explain how organizational policies, professional development, and support systems may build coping capacity to navigate the risks of professional performance and well-being in Ghanaian Colleges of Education. The integration of these two frameworks roots the study deep in psychological and organizational theory

3. Methodology

This study employed qualitative research design using multiple case study methodology with semi-structured interviews as the only method of data collection. The qualitative study design was an appropriate decision due to its capacity to extensively map and explore participants' lived experiences and thus provide access to rich and nuanced narratives around stress, coping factors, and institutional support systems. This choice of multiple case study design allows for comparisons from various research environments and for a qualitative consideration of variations and similarities among management and staff experiences. This research was executed in three Colleges of Education purposively selected in the Northern Region of Ghana, Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education. Participants were selected based on purposive sampling to ensure that they had the necessary knowledge and experience. Interviews were conducted with a sample of 18 individuals (six from each institution, three from management, and three from staff). Interviews were individual face-to-face and participants' informed consent was taken before recording the interviews. Each session was audio-recorded, transcribed word for word, and checked for accuracy. Data were thematically analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage framework, consisting of: familiarization with data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting. This was a methodological approach focused on a straightforward but flexible set of methods for identifying patterns and emergent themes. Ethics approval was obtained from the appropriate institution and participants were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity and were expected to participate voluntarily throughout the study.



4. Findings/Results

This section of the paper details the findings of semi-structured interviews with 18 respondents from three Colleges of Education: Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education. The thematic analysis revealed four themes; • Major Sources of Stress Experienced by Staff • Coping Strategies Adopted by Staff • The Effects of Stress on Professional Performance and Well-being • Institutional Support Systems and Interventions We supplement each theme with quotations and interpretations to gain insight into the lived experiences and complex perspectives of the management and staff.

4.1. Primary Distress Sources for Staff

The participants put forward many things that explain the fact that the workplace is actually a place where stress does not disappear. “The workload is too much, especially when we have to carry out teaching, administrative, and supervision tasks,” one participant said. This is an example of the primary stressor, role overload, in which many responsibilities vie for attention and resources. All of the work piling up creates work which is hard to focus on and this again disrupts work efficiency. “Our pay is small, and sometimes delayed; it makes life difficult and adds to the stress,” another staff member said. This shows strain financially as a stressor showing how being ill paid cuts into material wellbeing, a factor which also lowers morale. Financial instability is particularly closely linked to stress in education, where staff members generally think they cannot do much work and a sense of loss. “A lack of logistics, especially with the inability to find things like teaching aids, supplies, things such as the equipment for classrooms and office space, makes our work grinds us down,” said one participant, again another employee added. That stress is highlighted as a long-term stressor in a chronic stressor, indicating resource scarcity as a poor situation, “When staff are incentivized not to have the tools, frustration is built, and stress is made, the gulf between what is perceived and what is received becomes more apparent”. “Students can occasionally misbehave in the classroom, and addressing disciplinary issues heightens tension,” A participant said. This is a signal that, in a context where disruptive behaviours result in heightened frustration, behavioral management is part of emotional burnout as a stressor. Academics are expected of faculty during the reign of order, putting extra pressure on faculty. Lastly, a participant said, “There is pressure from management to meet deadlines, even when the workload is already heavy.” From the top down, it shows the process that the stress is compounded by a demand for results without accompanying support. Unrealistic deadlines create a sense of futility and drive staff to burnout. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the pressure is linked to the

workload in Colleges of Education related to workload, pay, resources, discipline, or management expectations – such that collegiality, discipline or even high pressure are the main predictors of high stress environment.

4.2. Coping Strategies of Staff

Some stressors were mentioned, though participants told of ways in which they have coped by managing stress at work. "When I'm stressed, I go to pray and meditate; it brings me great moments of peace." For these people it indicates how an ethic of spiritual practice underlies a whole body's ability to sustain a state of stress despite overwhelming circumstances. "I usually talk about my frustrations with colleagues and it helps me feel lighter," a second respondent added. This shows peer support as an abundant source of coping to a variety of people, for talking about their frustrations makes other people feel part of the same experience, something they usually escape from, and gives their emotions some peace. Collegial networks can be a cushion in high-pressure circumstances. One staff member said, "At work, sometimes I step away for short breaks to clear my mind and then continue, at least some work." It mimics mindfulness practices, such as taking breaks, so that you don't feel too flooded with information, cognitive and emotional, at once and leaving yourself hanging too long and too quickly. In this way, disrupting the mental routine is a mental reset to fend off stress escalation. "Sometimes, you can't cope, so I make an effort to prepare and prep my jobs ahead of time; you can have a 'set-up' and avoid having to worry about something crazy," says another employee, also a member of management. It also suggests an active approach to self-care, both in time management and in managing time in various tasks. It also enables us to craft and remove, to the greatest extent possible, tasks and pressure. And also, one of the participants said, 'I get active by walking in the evening and as for myself, I relieve a lot of stress.' This indicates that movement can be a coping mechanism, as movement can release tension of one's body, so that health benefits can be attained. These coping mechanisms are often spiritual, social, self-care, organization and physical in staff. Although these interventions can facilitate the continuation of staff work, and serve to minimize stress to others, but when applied under chronic stress conditions like this one, their impact on individual coping ability seems to have been greater than institutional supports. On how the Workplace affects Well Being as a Professionally Responsible Individual

Stress is "imperative" for professional performance and personal well-being, participants reported. "Sometimes the workload is so heavy that I feel my concentration goes down, and then I'm making errors in my reports," said one staff member. This is in line with how work-related stress, and cognitive overload, inhibit detail and effectiveness, and therefore compromise professional integrity. It's proof that stress is a



burden and not only an emotional weight in practice but a threat to quality in institutional performance. Another person said: “The relentless stress is making me do things I used to love less and less – and that definitely impacts on my motivation to do the job.” This shows a disheartening effect of long periods of stress on the mind, work you used to enjoy is very exhausting. Transitions from enthusiasm to boredom indicate waning intrinsic motivation, which is central to maintaining long term output effectiveness. “Stress is bad for me; I live with heavy headaches and sleepless nights and it hurts my health; it slows me down during work and during the day,” one of the management members said, adding on another day, “Stress is bad for me.” It explains the emotional impacts of stress and how stress can affect mental and physical health and result in underperformance in the workplace. Sleep deprivation, in particular, reduces wakefulness and judgment, both critical tools in leadership. For instance, a staff member said, “Sometimes I want to get away from work for a rest because I am constantly drained.” This illustrates stress-induced absenteeism in tangible terms that is bad for an institution. The lack of attendance also increases the workload on the work staff, which in turn increases the workload stress, he added. By the end, a participant explained it best: “In my workplace, even with the amount of stress I experience there, I feel disconnected; I am at work in person but absent mentally.” This represents presenteeism in which the employees go to work and cannot perform because of the mental fatigue. These levels of disengagement not only reduce productivity, but also undermine teamwork and morale on a team. Coupled together, these reports illustrate how Stress manifests itself in subtler, cognitive, emotional and physical ways that ultimately translate to a decline in performances as a professional and decreased well-being.

4.3. Institutional Support Systems and Intervention

That is why facilitators spoke here about the role of institutional support in the fight against stress — about gaps and possibilities. “Our institution has absolutely no counseling services, so when you get stressed, you just handle it yourself,” one lecturer put it. This implies that, in the absence of any mechanisms for granting psychological support, employees simply manage the difficulties they face alone. In the absence of institutional structures chronic stress is exacerbated by a lack of structure. “If the management could hire more staff, the workload would decrease, and we wouldn’t be stretching ourselves too thin,” said the staff member in initial remarks. This speaks to the distribution of loads as being one of the leading causes of stress and is suggestive of lack of staff as a structural issue. Recruited strategically might alleviate some of that stress, perhaps by sharing responsibilities more widely. “We do get workshops to help us grow professionally, but stress management, that’s not ever there,” said another participant. Integrating stress-management workshops could enhance employees’ ability to manage



their stress. “When staff contributions are recognized and acknowledged, it decreases the stress we feel, but recognition is seldom,” one participant said. Therefore motivation and recognition are oftentimes the factors that institutionalize things. “Being unappreciated has a negative effect on morale and helps fuel stress,” but positive acknowledgment mitigates this impact. Lastly a person said, “Sometimes, just talking to your management helps, but the avenues aren’t really available.” So this is a case for the participatory decision-making and for the very open systems of communication. Open communication also reduces uncertainty, which is a known stressor, and promotes a supportive workplace environment. The findings suggest that meaningful intervention at institutional level will involve structural (e.g., personnel, workload) and psychosocial (e.g., counseling; recognition; and communication) dimensions, as these are the building blocks of intervention. Without an interdependent, joined-up approach of measures such as the above ones, stress persists and can be detrimental to staff well-being as well as to the performance of the institution.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the association of occupational stress, coping and institutional support systems in Ghanaian Colleges of Education was intricate. In line with the literature, employees reported that work stress is widespread and adversely affects performance, job satisfaction and well-being. Respondents’ stories of workload-related stress, role ambiguity and lack of resources reflect what previous researches have found as structural stressors at risk of undermining the overall service and organizational performance (Azumah, 2014). We contend that these findings are not surprising and belong to the literature of this view. Stress is not simply an individual problem but a systemic problem that needs combined organization-wide intervention. One of the major findings emphasized how stress affects one’s professional performance and the well-being of the employees. It was once again the number one. Staff reported multiple times about their multitasking, insufficient resources and inequitable workloads, multiple to the barriers to effective work on their part. This was also true, as previously, stress results in low productivity and motivation with absenteeism and even in the worst-case scenario, burnout (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016). Moreover, the studies underscored that long-term stress is detrimental to mental and physical wellbeing, is associated with physical complaints (somatic symptoms and morale disturbances), is evident via somatic signs and the participants reported negative side of fatigue, diseases (physical health problems) and demotivation in this current survey. On another note, the challenges faced at Colleges of Education in Ghana are consistent with broader trends in occupational health across the world, especially in higher education. On the other hand, some of staff coping strategies reflect exposure to both problem- and



emotion-focused strategies, which have been described in the literature. Respondents reported making personal effort more meaningful, finding prayer and social support, and planning such endeavors as coping strategies for stress. These strategies corroborate the existing research findings that in the face of chronic workplace stress, individuals alternate pragmatic and spiritual coping modes to survive stress (Offei et al., 2021). But they're very overdependent on that (albeit delivering it for a minimal amount of time, but which also means employees are starting to have to respond to the psychological toll on their lives) and that institutional support has been lacking. This is consistent with the literature that suggests the coping strategies are inadequate to relieve the cumulative strain from the stress due to its impact, without proper structural support. The findings further emphasized institutional support as a robust factor on the management of staff work-stress. This phenomenon has been recognized in the literature (e.g., Azumah, 2014) which has demonstrated that organizational characteristics such as clarity in the role in a company and the extent of decision-making power and available resources affect the worker's well-being. If these supports are not present in institutions, the stress becomes worse, leading to disengagement and decreased productivity. Moreover, the contrast between policy frameworks and implementation, reported by the participants is further evidence supporting previous findings which indicate that policy is formulated on a vague level and may lack an operational implementation that could influence the experiences of staff (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016). Interestingly, professional development has yet to fill in—if at a basic level, a mechanism for inoculating—stress. Staff training or preparation was lacking, especially in stress management, resulting in a necessity for frequent renewals and creating their own resilience (as some of the participants did observe). This result corroborates the literature that identifies professional development, peer mentoring, and routine training as protective against work-related stressors (Offei et al., 2021). So, the findings of the study support that staff require more than the resource support institutions provide but also structured activities to help build coping abilities and this call needs a more institutionally based approach to fill that gap. Findings are aligned closely with the Job Demand-Control model and also support the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which is the theoretical framework. High job demands and little control — heavy workloads, scarce resources, undefined roles — are directly reflected in the level of stress participants experience, lowering their performance and wellbeing. Similarly, employees' use of both problem-focused strategies (effort, planning) and emotion-focused strategies (prayer, social support) is comparable to Lazarus (1984) coping model, which has been found to have a role for appraisal processes and coping resources in stress outcomes. Based on research found in this article all three results add up to suggest that workplace stress at Colleges



of Education is both structural and individual. Structural and individual factors that influence how employees respond to stress include workload, inadequate autonomy and lack of resources, institutional support. While these strategies do enhance some kinds of resilience, they do nothing to address the root causes of stress — some of which remain ingrained in organizational structures. However, to our knowledge this is a huge caveat in that the amount of evidence is indeed pushing for institutional interventions (and not just work redesign and resource allocation with a shift on the workload and with how people are deployed, or professional development programs and counseling services with a shift focused on how to manage stress and performance and well-being) more consistently. Consistent with literature prescriptions, and in line with the responses of the respondents' personal experiences, this study puts in the centre stage stress management for the reform of academic institutions in Ghana.

6. Conclusion

The study concentrated on the causes, coping skills, stress, its effects and support from the organization in the management and employees of Colleges of Education in Ghana. Findings revealed that occupational stress is pervasive and a result of heavy workload demand, insufficient resources and conflicting roles compromising on their workforce's ability to perform and well-being. The results suggest that the effect of stress is felt both in terms of low productivity and motivation, as well as on the physical and emotional fatigue which imperils organizational effectiveness. Participants also cited coping strategies involving both problem-focused strategies (e.g., increasing individual effort and action planning) and emotion-focused strategies (e.g., prayer and social support). Such practices, although comforting and reducing certain levels of anxiety, were impeded by structural features of the institutions. It also revealed that a lack of institutional interventions — such as no counseling services, poorly defined policies and scant training — exacerbate stress. In line with theoretical perspectives from Job Demand-Control and Person-Environment Fit theory, the mismatch in demands and resources was at the core of staff stress experiences. The study finds the stress of work within Colleges of Education is systemic that can only be addressed through structural as well as cultural reform. As long as resources go unused (or insufficient, or not tailored at all), there will exist only insufficient coping mechanisms and all those staff can be left in burn-out, unproductive conditions.

- Recommendations

The study proposes multi-layer interventions to address occupational stress among staff in Colleges of Education. Initially, institutions have to emphasize workload



management by enlisting extra staff and distributing workload evenly so academic and non-academic staff are not burdened with additional duties. Second, there is a need to improve the adequacy of resources through the provision of new products, e-tools, and logistic support to ensure that staff can implement their duties with the proper tools (Smith et al., 2014). Third, it is incumbent upon institutions to implement formal supports and provide staff professionals that are readily accessible (e.g., counseling units and stress management seminars). These have to be ongoing, not ad hoc, with earlier warning signs of possible stress and its potential to be minimized. Fourth, Colleges of Education should institutionalize developmental programmes in time-management, leadership and stress-management skills that will increase staff's resilience and coping skills. On governance reforms that will improve participation in decision making and a flow of transparent career advancement, autonomy and motivation will improve and the level of stress will be reduced. A system of institutional acknowledgement and incentives should also be used to reward the staff and enhance productivity. Combined, these measures will promote better work conditions, enhanced coping and enhanced staff motivation and wellbeing.

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