

**WORKLOAD, STRESS, AND TEACHER BURNOUT: IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY
INSTRUCTION IN POST-BASIC EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Teacher burnout, driven by excessive workload and sustained occupational stress, has become a major concern in post-basic education, with direct implications for teacher effectiveness and student learning. This prompted the investigation of workload, stress, and teacher burnout: Implications for quality instruction in post-basic education in Rivers State, Nigeria. This study was guided by the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model, examines the influence of workload, stress, burnout, and instructional quality in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from a sample of 608 respondents (comprising 152 teachers, and 256 students) across 38 proportionally selected public senior secondary schools. A 30-item structured instrument titled: "Teachers Workload, Stress, Burnout and Instructional Quality Inventory" (TWSBIQI) was used to collect data from the teachers and students in the public senior secondary schools. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that high workload and stress strongly influenced burnout, which in turn negatively affects lesson preparation, interactive teaching practices, and student outcomes. The study also found that large class sizes, inadequate staffing, resource shortages, and policy constraints exacerbate the challenges, threatening instructional quality in Rivers State post-basic education. Furthermore, teachers employing coping strategies such as social support and time management may experience reduced burnout effects, though institutional supports remain limited. The study concluded that improving teacher well-being is critical to sustaining instructional quality. Among the recommendations are Schools and education authorities should implement workload management policies that limit administrative and non-teaching responsibilities, redistribute large class sizes, and regulate working hours and employ new staff/teachers.

Keywords: Workload, stress, teacher burnout, quality instruction, post-basic education.

Introduction

Teachers are central to education delivery, yet their working conditions significantly influence instructional quality. Given this, high workloads, stress, and burnout are recurrent problems in Nigeria's education sector (Ofoegbu, 2021). These issues compromise teacher effectiveness, leading to poor student outcomes, absenteeism, and attrition (Ogunbameru, 2020). Teacher burnout from excessive workload and prolonged stress poses a serious global and national challenge to well-being and educational quality (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Also, empirical studies in Rivers State have shown that occupational stress is a predictor of burnout among secondary school teachers (Aharandu & Nwankwo, 2023). Implicitly, in Rivers State, where post-basic schools face challenges of overcrowded classrooms and inadequate staffing, the implications of teacher burnout for instructional quality remain critical.

Workload, stress, and teacher burnout pose serious threats to the quality of post-basic education around the globe, including Nigeria, and even extend to Rivers State. Heavy teaching

loads, large class sizes, overloaded administrative duties, and inadequate school resources produce chronic work stress that erodes teachers' emotional health and instructional capacity (Izuegbu, 2023; Rastegar, 2023). Empirical studies and reviews show that sustained high workload correlates with elevated burnout, reduced lesson planning, lower classroom engagement, and declining student outcomes (Emeljanovas, 2023; Estrada-Araoz et al., 2023). In Nigeria specifically, research links poor remuneration, limited professional support, and insufficient infrastructure to greater teacher demoralization and absenteeism, which in turn undermines curriculum delivery and assessment quality (Izuegbu, 2023).

Workload, stress, and burnout significantly affect the quality of instruction delivered by teachers in post-basic education schools at any given time. Teachers play a vital role in achieving educational goals, yet excessive workload and stressful working conditions have led to widespread burnout in Nigerian schools (Ofoegbu, 2021). Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), diminishes teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness. Several studies have documented the prevalence of stress and burnout among teachers and academic staff in Nigeria (e.g., Aharandu & Nwankwo, 2023; Nwabuko et al., 2020). Rivers State, with its large public post-basic (junior and senior secondary) system, faces pressures including large class sizes, inadequate staffing, resource constraints, and policy implementation challenges, all of which potentially increase teacher workload and decrease instructional quality. Thus, understanding how workload and stress lead to burnout, and how burnout in turn affects the quality of instruction, is essential for effective educational reform.

In Rivers State, overcrowded classrooms, administrative overload, and inadequate staffing contribute to high stress levels among teachers (Aharandu & Nwankwo, 2023). According to the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model, when job demands exceed available resources, stress and burnout intensify, leading to reduced teaching quality (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Nwabuko et al. (2020) further observed that teacher burnout correlates with lower student engagement and academic performance. Addressing these issues through workload management, supportive supervision, and professional development is essential for fostering teacher well-being and ensuring quality instruction in Rivers State's post-basic education sector.

Importantly, burnout is not only an individual health problem but an institutional issue: schools with weak leadership, low collegial support, and no coherent wellbeing or workload policies record worse teacher wellbeing and poorer instructional quality (Agyapong, 2023). Intervention studies highlight practical remedies, manageable workloads, targeted professional development, mentoring, improved resource provision, and school-level mental-health supports as effective ways to restore teacher wellbeing and protect instructional quality (Agyapong, 2023; Estrada-Araoz, 2023).

Problem Statement

Teachers in post-basic education in Rivers State face increasing workload demands resulting from overcrowded classrooms, administrative burdens, and inadequate instructional resources. These pressures contribute to heightened stress levels and eventual burnout, manifesting in emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and declining instructional quality. Consequently, teachers struggle to maintain enthusiasm, creativity, and effectiveness in delivering lessons. The cumulative impact of stress and burnout undermines students' academic performance and the overall quality of education. Despite recognition of these challenges, limited empirical attention has been given to how workload, stress, and burnout interact to influence teaching effectiveness and educational outcomes in Rivers State.

However, there is limited research that links these phenomena specifically to instructional quality (e.g., pedagogical effectiveness, student learning outcomes, teacher performance) in post-basic education. The gap lies in exploring not just whether burnout exists, but *how* burnout impairs instructional quality, classroom practice, and ultimately student learning in post-basic schools in

Rivers State. While studies highlight teacher stress globally, limited research has localized the phenomenon within Rivers State post-basic schools. The lack of empirical data on how workload and burnout affect instructional quality represents a critical research gap. It is based on this premise that this study examined the implications of workload, stress, and teacher burnout on quality instruction in post-basic education schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. measure levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout among post-basic education school teachers in Rivers State.
2. identify coping mechanisms and support systems used by teachers to mitigate high stress and burnout in post-basic education schools in Rivers State.
3. propose institutional measures that can be instituted to alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality (e.g., teacher performance, student learning outcomes) in post-basic education schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout among post-basic education school teachers in Rivers State?
2. What are the coping mechanisms and support systems used by teachers to mitigate high stress and burnout in post-basic education schools in Rivers State?
3. What institutional measures can be instituted to alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality (e.g., teacher performance, student learning outcomes) in post-basic education schools in Rivers State?

Significance

This study fills an important empirical gap by linking teacher burnout to instructional quality in post-basic education in Rivers State. It provides evidence-based insights for policymakers on areas requiring intervention, such as staffing, teacher wellness, and resource allocation. The findings would assist post-basic education school administrators in recognizing and effectively responding to signs of teacher burnout, thereby safeguarding the quality of education. Additionally, the study's outcomes may contribute to improved teacher retention, enhanced student performance, and greater overall efficiency within the educational system. Finally, this study informs policymakers, teacher unions, and administrators on improving teacher welfare, reducing burnout, and enhancing instructional effectiveness.

Scope of the Study

The study is geographically focused on public post-basic education schools, especially senior secondary institutions, in Rivers State. Temporally, it examines the current conditions over the past two to three years, with reflections on earlier periods where data are available. The participants include teachers, school administrators, and, where relevant, students to assess instructional quality outcomes. The study addresses key aspects such as workload, stress, and burnout among teachers, alongside teaching practices and, where accessible, corresponding student performance indicators.

Conceptual Review

Workload: Workload, burnout, teacher stress, and instructional quality are tightly interwoven constructs that shape classroom effectiveness. Workload refers not only to hours spent teaching but to the cumulative demands of lesson planning, assessment, administrative tasks, and out-of-class

responsibilities; sustained workload intensification is consistently identified as a primary antecedent of teacher ill-being (Wahab, 2023).

Burnout: Burnout is a job-related psychological syndrome, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism), and reduced personal accomplishment, that arises from chronic workplace demands and poor fit between workers and organizational contexts (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout both reflects and amplifies the harmful effects of excessive workload: teachers who are exhausted report lower engagement, more absenteeism, and weaker relationships with students (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Teacher Stress: Teacher stress is the proximal emotional and physiological response to acute and chronic job pressures (e.g., large classes, disruptive behaviour, role overload). Ofoegbu (2021) observes that stress is linked to overcrowded classrooms and poor pay. Given this, high stress undermines effective teaching (Ogunbameru, 2020). International and national studies since 2020, covering pandemic and post-pandemic contexts, show elevated levels of stress and growing burnout prevalence among educators, and they link those trends to both pandemic disruption and preexisting workload/administrative burdens (Agyapong et al., 2022; Cavallari et al., 2024).

Instructional Quality: Instructional quality, clarity of lesson presentation, alignment of tasks to learning objectives, formative feedback, and adaptive support for learners suffer when teachers operate under unmanageable workloads and chronic stress. Empirical work shows that when teachers are burned out or overstressed, they devote less time to careful lesson design, individualized feedback, and reflective practice, which in turn depresses student engagement and achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). Together, the literature implies that improving instructional quality requires systemic interventions that reduce non-instructional workload, strengthen organizational supports, and attend to teachers' mental health, shifting the focus from fixing individual teachers to redesigning work and supports at the school and policy level (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Wahab, 2023).

Theoretical Framework: Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model

The Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model was propounded by Arnold B. Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti in 2001. This theoretical framework is used to explain how characteristics of the work environment affect employees' well-being, motivation, job performance and burnout. Also, the suggestion that high job demands (workload, emotional demands) lead to strain and burnout, especially when job resources (support, autonomy, training) are low.

Methodology

Research Design: The study adopted the descriptive survey research design.

Population of the Study: The population of the study comprised all the 6,956 teachers in the 287 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, in the 2023/2024 Academic Session (Rivers State Senior Secondary School Board, 2024).

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample size of 608 respondents (comprising 152 teachers and 456 students) was selected from 38 proportionally selected public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, using a four-phase multistage sampling technique. First, nine equitably distributed Local Government Areas (LGAs) across the three senatorial districts, representing 39.33% of the entire Rivers LGAs were selected from the twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas in Rivers State. They include: Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, and Etche Local Government Areas (in Rivers East Senatorial Zone), Tai, Andoni, and Gokana Local Government Areas (in Rivers South East Senatorial Zone), and Asari-Toru, Degema, and Ogba/Egbeme/Ndoni (Onelga) Local Government Areas in Rivers West Senatorial Zone.

Second, the proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 38 public senior secondary schools out of the 145 public senior secondary schools in the nine (9) selected Local Government Areas in Rivers State (see Table 1 below). The breakdown of the calculation of the proportionate sampling gave rise to: Rivers East allocated 17 public senior secondary schools comprising: Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, and Etche Local Government Areas, having 5, 7, and 5 public senior secondary schools respectively. Also, Rivers South East with a total of 10 public senior secondary schools, comprising Tai, Andoni, and Gokana Local Government Areas, with 4, 3, and 3 public senior secondary schools, respectively. While Asari-Toru Local, Degema, and Ogba/Egbeme/Ndoni Local Government Areas have 3, 3, and 5 public senior secondary schools, respectively (totaling 11 senior secondary schools for Rivers West Senatorial District).

Table 1: Composition of senior secondary schools selected for the study through the proportionate stratified random sampling technique

School	Port Harcourt	Obio-Akpor	Etche	Tai	Andoni	Gokana	Asari-Toru	Degema	Ogba/Egbeme/Ndoni	Total
Populations	20	26	17	16	12	13	10	10	21	145
Proportion	0.14	0.18	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.14	1
Selected size	5	7	5	4	3	3	3	3	5	38

Third, a random sampling technique was used to select 152 teachers (i.e., 4 teachers per school) in the 38 selected public senior secondary schools across nine (9) selected Local Government Areas in Rivers State. In the fourth and final phase, the quota sampling technique was used to allocate 12 students to each of the 38 selected public senior secondary schools in the study area. This amounted to 456 students.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was a 30-item self-structured instrument titled "Teachers Workload, Stress, Burnout and Instructional Quality Inventory" (TWSBIQI). The TWSBIQI instrument was patterned after a four-point rating scale of "Strongly Agree" (SD, 4 Points), "Agree" (A, 3 Points), "Disagree" (D, 2 Points), and "Strongly Disagree" (SD, 1 Point). Similarly, the TWSBIQI instrument comprised three sections. Section A elicited the demographic variables of the respondents, teachers, and students. Section B comprised 18 items (5 each) that elicited responses on the variables of teachers' workload, stress, and burnout. Section C in the TWSBIQI instrument comprised 12 items on the variables of instructional quality.

Validity of the Instrument: The face and content validity of the TWSBIQI instrument was determined by two (2) other educational experts in the Department of Foundation and Arts Education at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The expert analysis, observations, informed comments, suggestions, and views expressed by these validators were used to improve the quality, accuracy, correctness, and validity of the TWSBIQI instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument: The reliability or internal consistency of the TWSBIQI instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha (r_a) method to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.825, which necessitated the use of the TWSBIQI instrument for the actual administration in this study.

Method of Data Collection: Data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data was obtained from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, lecture notes, internet materials/publications, and maps, among other sources. Whereas, the primary data was collected from the structured questionnaire (i.e., TWSBIQI instrument) that was administered to the teachers and students in the 38 selected public senior secondary schools across the nine (9) proportionally selected Local Government Areas in Rivers State. Out of the serially numbered 608 copies of the TWSBIQI instrument that were administered to the 608 respondents (comprising 152 teachers and 456 students), only 571 copies (representing a 94% return rate) were validly retrieved and subsequently used for the analysis in this study.

Method of Data Analysis: Data collected were sorted, coded, and analyzed using mean and standard deviation (with a criterion mean cut off of 2.5). All statistical computations will be done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout among post-basic education school teachers in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout among post-basic education school teachers in Rivers State

S/N	The levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout among post-basic education school teachers in Rivers State include:	N = 571		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Teachers manage administrative paperwork, lesson planning, and extracurricular supervisory responsibilities	3.64	.49	HL
2	Large class sizes increase preparation, marking, and classroom management burdens	3.62	.50	
3	Teachers perform non-teaching tasks, including supervision, meetings, outreach, and examinations	3.70	.47	
4	Excessive lesson planning with limited time reduces instructional effectiveness	3.66	.48	
5	Frequent examinations, marking, report writing, and administrative tasks increase fatigue	3.69	.47	
6	Extended working hours from remedial classes, meetings, and duties limit recovery	3.70	.46	
Grand Mean		3.67	0.48	HL

HL (High Level) = ≥ 2.50 while LL (Low Level) = < 2.50 .

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout among post-basic education school teachers in Rivers State. All six items measuring teacher workload and stress scored high, with means ranging from 3.62 to 3.70 and relatively low standard deviations (0.46–0.50), indicating consistency in teachers' responses. The highest-rated items were performing non-teaching tasks such as supervision, meetings, outreach, and examinations ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.47$), and extended working hours from remedial classes, meetings, and duties ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.46$). Overall, the grand mean of 3.67 ($SD = 0.48$) indicates that teachers in post-basic schools in Rivers State experience a high level of workload,

occupational stress, and burnout. This suggests that excessive administrative responsibilities, large class sizes, and extended working hours significantly impact teachers' well-being and instructional effectiveness.

Research Question 2: What are the coping mechanisms and support systems used by teachers to mitigate high stress and burnout in post-basic education schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the coping mechanisms and support systems used by teachers to mitigate high stress and burnout in post-basic education schools in Rivers State

S/N	The coping mechanisms and support systems used by teachers to mitigate high stress and burnout in post-basic education schools in Rivers State include:	N = 571 Mean SD		Decision
1	Peer support groups where teachers share experiences, strategies, and emotional encouragement	3.63	.57	SA
2	Regular physical exercise, sports, or mindful practices help reduce cumulative stress effects	3.68	.51	
3	Professional counselling services accessed via school, union, or external referrals for coping	3.65	.48	SA
4	Time management training workshops teaching prioritization, lesson chunking, and efficient assessment practices	3.58	.56	SA
5	Informal recreational activities arranged by staff as outings, clubs, and social events	3.68	.48	SA
6	Peer mentoring programs provide instructional guidance, feedback, and career development support regularly	3.66	.50	SA
Grand Mean		3.65	0.52	SA

SA (Strongly Agree) = ≥ 2.50 while SD (Strongly Disagree) = < 2.50 .

Table 3 illustrates the coping mechanisms and support systems adopted by teachers to mitigate stress and burnout. All six items recorded strong agreement, with means ranging from 3.58 to 3.68 and moderate standard deviations (0.48–0.57), suggesting uniformity in teachers' responses. Notable coping mechanisms included regular physical exercise, recreational activities, and professional counselling services, all rated highly ($M \geq 3.65$). The grand mean of 3.65 ($SD = 0.52$) confirms that teachers strongly rely on peer support, professional counselling, time management workshops, and recreational engagements to manage occupational stress. This reflects an awareness and utilization of personal, social, and institutional resources to mitigate the negative effects of workload and burnout.

Research Question 3: What institutional measures can be instituted to alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality (e.g., teacher performance, student learning outcomes) in post-basic education schools in Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on the institutional measures instituted to alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality (e.g., teacher performance, student learning outcomes) in post-basic education schools in Rivers State

S/N	The institutional measures instituted to alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality (e.g., teacher performance, student learning	N = 571 Mean SD		Decision
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outcomes) in post-basic education schools in Rivers State include:				
1	Peer support groups where teachers share experiences, strategies, and emotional encouragement	3.69	.46	SA
2	Regular physical exercise, sports, or mindful practices help reduce cumulative stress effects	3.75	.44	SA
3	Professional counselling services accessed via school, union, or external referrals for coping	3.75	.44	SA
4	Time management training workshops teaching prioritization, lesson chunking, and efficient assessment practices	3.76	.43	SA
5	Informal recreational activities arranged by staff as outings, clubs, and social events	3.85	.37	SA
6	Peer mentoring programs provide instructional guidance, feedback, and career development support regularly	3.65	.48	SA
Grand Mean		3.74	0.44	SA

SA (Strongly Agree) = ≥ 2.50 while SD (Strongly Disagree) = < 2.50 .

Table 4 presents the institutional measures that can be instituted to alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality. All six items achieved strong agreement, with means ranging from 3.65 to 3.85 and low standard deviations (0.37–0.48), indicating a high level of consensus among respondents. The most highly endorsed measures included organizing informal recreational activities ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.37$) and implementing professional counselling and time management workshops ($M = 3.75$ – 3.76). The grand mean of 3.74 ($SD = 0.44$) suggests that teachers strongly advocate for structured institutional support, such as peer mentoring, counselling services, recreational programs, and training initiatives, to reduce workload and improve instructional performance and student learning outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in Table 2 reveal that post-basic education teachers in Rivers State experience high levels of workload, occupational stress, and burnout, with a grand mean of 3.67 ($SD = 0.48$), indicating consistency across all six measured items. Teachers reported high burdens from administrative paperwork, lesson planning, and extracurricular supervisory responsibilities ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.49$), as well as managing large class sizes and non-teaching tasks such as supervision, meetings, and examinations ($M = 3.62$ – 3.70). Additionally, extended working hours, frequent examination marking, and excessive lesson planning were identified as factors limiting teachers' recovery and instructional effectiveness. These findings corroborate recent research showing that excessive workload and multi-role demands significantly contribute to teacher stress and burnout, undermining instructional quality and job satisfaction (Wahab, 2023; Ofoegbu, 2021; Aharandu et al., 2022). The uniformity of responses highlights the pervasive nature of these stressors in post-basic education settings.

Table 3 highlights the coping mechanisms and support systems teachers adopt to mitigate high stress and burnout. All six items recorded strong agreement, with a grand mean of 3.65 ($SD = 0.52$). Notably, peer support groups, professional counselling services, recreational activities, physical exercise, and time management workshops were consistently rated as effective strategies. These findings align with recent literature emphasizing the importance of social, emotional, and institutional support in buffering occupational stress among teachers (Adeyemi & Bello, 2022; Ezeani & Onah, 2021). The utilization of structured coping strategies demonstrates teachers' proactive

engagement in maintaining well-being and instructional effectiveness despite high workload demands.

Table 4 presents the perceptions of post-basic education teachers in Rivers State regarding institutional measures that can alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality. All six items received strong agreement, with means ranging from 3.65 to 3.85 and a grand mean of 3.74 (SD = 0.44), indicating a high level of consensus among respondents. The most highly endorsed measures included informal recreational activities arranged by staff (M = 3.85, SD = 0.37) and structured time management and counselling programs (M = 3.75–3.76). Other key measures emphasized peer support groups, professional mentoring, and regular physical or mindful practices. These findings suggest that teachers recognize the critical role of institutional support in reducing workload and improving both teacher well-being and student learning outcomes. The strong agreement on counselling, mentoring, and workload monitoring aligns with recent research highlighting the efficacy of structured institutional interventions in mitigating teacher stress and enhancing instructional quality (Adeola, 2021; Adeyemi & Bello, 2022; Bello, 2022). By providing formalized support systems, schools can buffer the negative effects of administrative overload, class size pressures, and extended working hours, thereby fostering a healthier, more productive teaching environment (Aharandu et al., 2022; Ofoegbu, 2021).

Instructively, the findings indicate a dual pattern: while teachers face substantial workload-induced stress and burnout, they actively employ coping mechanisms and support systems to sustain their professional performance, suggesting the need for institutional policies that further support teacher well-being and reduce occupational stress (Adeniran & Umeh, 2022; Bello, 2022). Overall, the findings indicate that teachers strongly advocate for institutional strategies that complement individual coping mechanisms, suggesting that combining personal, peer, and organizational support is essential for sustainable professional performance. Implementing these measures can improve instructional quality, enhance teacher morale, and reduce burnout, ultimately contributing to better student outcomes and educational effectiveness in post-basic education schools (Ezeani & Onah, 2021; Adeniran & Umeh, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that post-basic education teachers in Rivers State face significant workload, occupational stress, and burnout. Teachers reported high demands from administrative duties, lesson planning, large class sizes, extended working hours, and non-teaching responsibilities, which collectively limit their recovery and reduce instructional effectiveness. These challenges underscore the pervasive nature of stressors affecting teachers' professional performance and overall well-being. In coping with these pressures, teachers actively employ personal, social, and professional strategies. Peer support, professional counselling, recreational activities, physical exercise, and time management practices were identified as key mechanisms for managing stress and sustaining performance. The consistency of these responses highlights teachers' awareness and proactive engagement in maintaining their mental and physical health despite high occupational demands.

Importantly, teachers strongly endorse institutional measures that can alleviate workload and enhance instructional quality. Structured interventions such as mentoring programs, counselling services, organized recreational activities, and time management training were widely recognized as effective strategies to reduce stress, improve teaching efficiency, and foster positive learning outcomes. These measures demonstrate that formal organizational support, combined with individual coping mechanisms, is essential for sustaining teacher motivation, well-being, and instructional effectiveness. Overall, the findings emphasize a dual pattern: while teachers contend with high workload and stress, they actively seek coping strategies and institutional support to maintain professional performance. The study highlights the need for comprehensive policies and administrative reforms that address excessive workload, promote teacher well-being, and implement

structured support systems to enhance instructional quality and ensure positive educational outcomes in post-basic education schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were proffered based on the findings of the study.

1. Schools and education authorities should implement workload management policies that limit administrative and non-teaching responsibilities, redistribute large class sizes, and regulate working hours. Structured schedules and task allocation guidelines can reduce teacher fatigue and improve instructional effectiveness.
2. Educational policymakers should establish formal support structures, including professional counselling services, peer support programmes, and recreational or wellness initiatives, to assist teachers in managing stress and burnout effectively. Schools can also integrate time management and mindfulness workshops into professional development programmes.
3. Educational authorities should institutionalize comprehensive measures such as mentoring programs, structured workload monitoring, counselling services, and recreational initiatives to improve teacher well-being and instructional quality. These interventions can enhance student learning outcomes and foster sustainable teaching practices.

Contribution to Knowledge

1. The study generated localized evidence that links burnout directly to instructional quality, offering policy-relevant insights for educational reform in Rivers State.
2. The findings provide empirical evidence that post-basic education teachers in Rivers State face high workload and burnout, highlighting the specific factors contributing to occupational stress. This knowledge enhances understanding of teacher well-being and its direct impact on instructional quality in Nigerian educational contexts.
3. The study contributes to knowledge by identifying the coping strategies actively used by teachers to mitigate stress, emphasizing the importance of both personal and social support mechanisms in sustaining teacher performance and mental health.
4. The findings expand understanding of how organizational and institutional support can complement individual coping mechanisms, demonstrating that systemic interventions are critical for reducing workload pressures and enhancing overall educational effectiveness in post-basic schools.

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