



# Occupational stress among female lecturers at the university of education, Winneba, (Winneba Campus), Ghana and management strategies

Hinne Kusi <sup>1\*</sup>, Abigail Codjoe <sup>2</sup>, Judith Bampo <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Administration and Management, Faculty of Educational Studies, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

<sup>2</sup> Ghana Education Service, Gomoa East District, Ghana

## Abstract

This study explored the effects of occupational stress on the female lecturers at the University of Education, Winneba (Winneba Campus) and strategies they use to manage the stress they experience. This was a mixed methods research underpinned by pragmatism and employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods model. Using a census sampling frame, 51 female lecturers at the University responded to a structured questionnaire at the quantitative phase of the study, while 10 of them (5 with administrative roles and 5 without administrative roles) were purposively selected and interviewed for the qualitative phase. The quantitative data gathered was analysed in means and standard deviations, while the qualitative data was used to elaborate on the quantitative results when necessary. The study revealed that the female lecturers sometimes experience health-related problems including headaches, back pains, and sleepless nights owing to stress. Among others, the study concluded that these health-related problems could lead to a deterioration of passion and drive on the part of the lecturers for work, which ultimately would affect productivity. Therefore, it was recommended that the lecturers should be encouraged by the management of the University to visit the health facility at the campus on regular basis for check-ups and support to manage the stress they experience.

**Keywords:** Stress; Occupational Stress; Female Lecturers; Counselling; Health-Related Problems

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## 1. Introduction

Higher education seems to have become more of a high stress environment for both male and female faculty members who are under a lot of performance and competitive pressure to meet the demands of 21st century university. The work lives of academic staff, especially the females in the Ghanaian public universities are not easy. This situation is arising from diverse factors, including the pressure for improved graduate output, the pressure to generate knowledge through research that will give the nation a competitive advantage in the global market, increased workload emanating from teaching and administrative responsibilities, not-so-suitable work environment, family expectations and the pressure to grow on the job.

A study conducted by Kusi, Mensah and Gyaki (2014) found that lecturers at the University of Education, Winneba (Ghana) experience excessive stress owing to excessive workload, large class-sizes, supervision of large number of undergraduate and graduate students, and the numerous administrative roles they play. Carson and Kuipers (1998) argued that:

*Modern-day academia is perceived as a world far removed from such idylls, with stressed academic and academic-related staff stuck in a never-ending loop of excessive workloads and long hours, beset by increasing demands on their time, intensely competitive performance-related scrutiny and expectation from both management and fee-paying students, financial cutbacks and an increasingly uncertain climate (p. 3)*

Working as an academic seems to be more challenging for new female lecturers, including recruits. Luke (2001), reporting on experiences of women in higher education in developed countries, argued that:

*'...too often, new female recruits end up ghettoized in a department's contract mill of tutors, course developers, ... finishing a PhD and beginning a first academic job often coincides with women's biological age where they are likely to start a family. A junior position coupled with the time and labour intensive tasks of rearing young children makes research productivity and the building of a sustained and uninterrupted research profile more difficult for women...' (p.6)*

Oludeyi and Olajide (2016) note that in traditional African society, people combine work activities with domestic activities at home. Female lecturers in Ghana, particularly at the University of Education, Winneba, carry out numerous family and home-related responsibilities as required by Ghanaian culture. A study conducted by Kusi et al. (2014) looked at the effects of work-related stress on lecturers, both males and females, and coping strategies, and indicated that the female lecturers were more concerned about stress because of the multiple marital roles at home. A significant proportion of university female staff experience maladaptive levels of stress and that these high levels of stress are affecting the physical and psychological health of staff, their interpersonal relationships at work, the quality of their work, and work-place morale (Costa and McCrae, 1992). However, little is known about the effects of occupational stress on the female lecturers, especially those at the University of Education, Winneba (Winneba campus) and how they manage the stress they experience. This paper attends to these issues.

As already noted, this study looks at the effects of stress on the female lecturers. By knowing these, the University authorities could put more appropriate measures in place to support them so that they could work more productively. The findings would help the lecturers manage themselves more meaningfully so as to reduce occupational stress. Also, the findings would help the University authorities in evaluating the existing support systems for the female lecturers in particular to determine whether they are helpful or otherwise. Lastly, the study contributes to literature on stress among academics, particularly females in Ghana.

## 2. Theoretical framework

This study is based on person-environment (PE) fit theory and the transactional model of stress. These are most widely accepted frameworks for conducting research on job-stress (Brewer and McMahan, 2004; Kokkinos, 2007).

Person-environment fit is the degree to which individual characteristics harmonises with those of his or her environment (Meyer and Dale, 2010). Person-environment fit theory and the transactional model of burnout indicates that the interaction between an individual and his or her environment determines whether or not the situation is stressful for that person. It assumes that human behaviour is a function of the person and the environment, and that a person's vocational satisfaction, stability and achievement depend on the congruence or fit between the person's personality and the environment in which the person works (Herr, Cramer and Niles, 2004; Kokkinos, 2007; Salami, 2009). In the work situations, higher degrees of fit predict positive work outcomes (Vogel and Feldman, 2009). According to Clark-Murphy (2010), the person-environment approach suggests that for optimal productivity, individuals should be compatible with their environments. Researchers, Streufert and Swezey (1986), concluded that decision-making performance reaches an optimal level when an individual's cognitive capability matches the complexity of their environment. Jacques (1989) also argued that for optimal productivity, organizations should be designed on the person-environment fit based on individual's cognitive capacity at every level of the organization.

In the context of the workplace, the individual's attributes are interests, transferrable skills, career motives and values, personality preferences, career orientations, self-concepts and sense of self- efficacy. The work environment includes individual's expectations and perceptions regarding workload, control over one's work, tangible and intrinsic rewards of work, the relationship and sense of community among co-workers, perceptions of fairness in the workplace and the role of personal and organizational values (Herr et al., 2004). If the fit between an individual and his environment is incompatible, stress results. Similarly, lack of fit between the demands placed on individuals and their abilities to meet those demands can result in stress.

## 3. Conceptual framework

Most of the female lecturers at the University of Education, Winneba campus, are undertaking various research programmes to upgrade themselves, teach large class-sizes, sometimes, ranging from 300 to 700 students each semester, supervise about 30 undergraduate and postgraduate research projects each academic year, perform

some administrative roles and responsibilities, and take care of their homes and families. There are some expectations associated with these roles and responsibilities, which could make the female lecturers experience high level of stress and, therefore, need to be supported.

#### **4. The concept of stress**

Literature suggests that there is no clear-cut description or definition for what stress actually is since different people experience it in different ways at various levels and forms. Stress is caused by varied factors or stressors which may include meeting family demands, work deadlines, taking very important and implicating decisions. Covey (1989) explained that stress is regarded to be a relative term in the sense that what is irritating and stressful to one person may make no difference to another. Stress is a highly personalised phenomenon and can vary widely even in identical situations for different reasons (The American Institute of Stress, 1979). Prentice (1996) defined stress as the responses that occur in the body as a result of what is called a stressor or stimulus. This suggests that there is an environmental factor that brings out the concept to light, causing an individual to behave in a particular way in response to such stimulus or stressor. Prentice (1996) further argues that stressors may be physical, psychological or social, negative or positive in nature.

There are basically two schools of thought of stress: stress as a challenge that helps an individual to achieve more than he or she would without any stressors; and stress as a negative state that necessarily leads to undesirable situations. To support this, Selye (1976) conceptualized two categories of stress: good or desirable stress (eustress) and bad or undesirable stress (distress). He further argued that eustress is pleasant, or at least challenging, and can produce positive effects such as the maximization of output and creativity. Individuals considered as hardy perceive stressful situations as challenging instead of threatening or overwhelming.

#### **5. Occupational stress**

Occupational stress one of the many types of stress that people encounter and more specifically, it deals with work. Occupational stress is a psychological concept with negative connotations, which refers to a response to, or results from the ability to cope with physical and or mental demands, real or perceived, made on people as a result of their profession. It is therefore the response people may have when presented with work demands that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities (which challenge their ability to cope (World Health Organization, 2014). Behaviourally, Berg (1994) posited that stress involves a subtle but progressive erosion of behaviour, attitude, health and spirit that eventually inhibits an individual's ability to function effectively at work. NIOSH (1999) defined work stress as being the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker.

## **6. Methodology**

The study examined the effects of stress on the female lecturers at the Winneba campus of the University of Education, Winneba, and management strategies. To achieve this purpose, mixed methods research approach, underpinned by pragmatism was used. The design concerns the thinking that choosing between one position and the other is somewhat unrealistic in practice. Supporters of this world-view argue that, even within the same study, quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined in creative ways to fully answer questions.

Specifically, sequential explanatory mixed method model was employed. With this design, we, the researchers, first used a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative (numeric) data, which was analysed. Then qualitative (text) data was collected and analysed to explain or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase of the study.

The population for the study was all female lecturers at all the four campuses of the University of Education (Winneba), namely Winneba, Ajumako, Kumasi and Mampong of the University of Education, Winneba. The accessible population was 51 female lecturers at the Winneba Campus.

A census sampling frame of 51 female lecturers working in the University of Education, Winneba, Winneba Campus in 2016 was used for the study. A census method refers to a complete enumeration of a universe. The census was employed because the population of the female lecturers was relatively small compared to the male lecturers and the use of census gives a higher degree of accuracy (Alumode, 2011). Also, with the use of a census, the results of the study are usually the true reflection and opinion of all the members in the population.

The census frame was employed at the quantitative phase of the study, where a questionnaire was administered to all the female lecturers at the Winneba Campus, while 10 (5 with administrative duties and 5 without administrative duties but experienced) were purposively sampled for the interview at the qualitative phase. These lecturers were selected because they were considered to be 'information rich'.

A structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedules were the instruments used for data collection in the study. The questionnaire was used to gather data at the quantitative phase of the study. The instrument was used because it allowed all the female lecturers to answer the same questions, making the data more reliable. The questionnaires were based on issues relating to effects of stress on females in the academia as well as how they cope with stress experienced. The key quantitative results formed the basis of the interviews conducted in the second phase of the study.

An instrument is valid when it measures what it is supposed to measure. Two forms of validity were established in this study and these were face and content validity. Face validity is a judgment made to tell if a test is well constructed and useful. This was established by giving the instruments to some lecturers at the University for them to assess and make inputs. Content validity focuses on how much a measure represents every single element of a construct and asks whether a specific element enhances or detracts from a test or the research question. In this study, content validity was checked by lecturers who are experts in occupational stress management. Based on their comments and suggestions, changes were affected in the instruments before administering them in the main study.

Reliability of the instrument is a check on consistency if the instrument administered repeatedly on the same individuals would yield similar results. To check the reliability of the questionnaire it was pre-tested with 15 female lecturers at the University of Cape Coast, who have similar characteristics as the sample for the main study. The data collected was inputted with the help of Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21.0, Cronbach's alpha co-efficient was used to determine the internal consistency of all the Likert-type sub-scales. The results from the Cronbach's alpha co-efficient of the main sub-scales was between 0.75 for effects of occupational stress and 0.83 for stress management strategies, suggesting that the instrument was reliable. This is because scales with Cronbach's alpha co-efficient of 0.70 or more are considered to be reliable (Pallant, 2005).

Data was collected after permission had been sought from the 'gate-keepers' of the University of Education, Winneba, in April, 2016, and after seeking the informed consent of the female lecturers. The questionnaires were self-administered to the lecturers and the interviews, each of which lasted for about 25 minutes, were conducted face-to-face with them in their offices.

As already indicated, both quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (text) data was collected for the study. The SPSS software version 21.0 was used to accomplish the aim of generating frequency tables, means and standard deviations to describe the quantitative data. The relevant qualitative data was used to elaborate on the quantitative findings when necessary. In order to attribute comments or quotes to the interviewees, they were grouped into two - Female Lecturers with Administrative Duties (FLAD) and Experienced Female Lecturers (EFL). Then the 5 FLAD were given the serial number FLAD-1 to FLAD-5, while the 5 EFL were given the serial number EFL-1 to EFL-5.

## 7. Data presentation, analysis and discussion

The data collected was classified under two main themes relating to the effects of occupational stress on the lecturers and management strategies.

### 7.1. Effects of occupational stress on the female lecturers at the university of education, Winneba campus

As already noted, an aspect of the questionnaire gathered data on the effects of stress on the female. The items covered of effects occupational stress on their health, work performance and general wellbeing. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Effects of Occupational Stress on the Female Lecturers

| Statement   | Mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| I experience nagging headaches lately                                       | 3.93 | 1.05 |
| When I feel stressed at work, I am unable to concentrate on the job at hand | 3.91 | 1.26 |

|   |      |      |
|---|------|------|
| In general, I would rate my health as excellent   | 3.82 | 1.30 |
| I have been experiencing fatigue for the past month at the end of each day's work         | 3.76 | 1.35 |
| I experience back pains every day for a week or more lately                               | 3.36 | 1.08 |
| I have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep   | 3.11 | 1.27 |
| I experience pain in the hands, wrists, arms and shoulders every day for a week or more   | 2.98 | 1.23 |
| I have been ill severally within a year   | 2.73 | 1.34 |
| I would recommend this kind of job for other prospective females                          | 2.71 | 0.86 |
| I have been feeling depressed lately  | 2.60 | 0.96 |
| I sometimes regret taking up this job and hence intend quitting in the foreseeable future | 2.47 | 0.87 |
| When I feel much stressed up at work, I seek for leave of absence                         | 2.38 | 0.86 |
| I have been diagnosed of high blood pressure lately                                       | 2.22 | 0.67 |
| Composite mean  | 3.17 | 0.37 |

*Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly n = 45. Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.*

The data in Table 1 shows that the strongest effect of occupational stress on the female lecturers is the pain they experience, where "I experience nagging headaches lately" had (Mean = 3.93, SD. = 1.05), 'I have been experiencing fatigue for the past month at the end of each day's work', (Mean = 3.76, SD. = 1.35), 'I experience back pains every day for a week or more lately' (Mean = 3.36, SD. = 1.08) and 'I experience pain in the hands, wrists, arms and shoulders every day for a week or more (Mean = 2.98, SD. = 1.23). The interview data also confirmed that the female lecturers experience headaches, which affected their performance at work. One of them, FLAD-:5 commented:

*At certain times I feel this job is the most difficult work on earth because of the pains associated with it. For example, as a result of sitting long before the computer for research purposes, I experience back pains, feel tired, have headaches here and there, and even eye-sight problems. For now the pains are unbearable for me but I am looking at how to manage it [the stress] [Interview data, 2016].*

This view was also shared by EFL-1 who commented that:

*I have been experiencing this excruciating pain at my back lately, and I believe it is all because of stress. This makes me very uncomfortable during lecture. My concern is that the situation keeps getting worse each passing day and I fear this might finally render me redundant. I am considering some options of dealing with the situation but I hope things get better soon [Interview data, 2016].*

These findings confirm the HSE (2012) reports in the United Kingdom, which suggested that most workers experienced back pain, complained of feeling fatigued, and headaches as a result of stress. The comments above suggest that the headaches and pain experienced by the staff affect their work performance. When one's stress or arousal level increases, the level of performance in terms of quality and quantity also increases, but only to a point 'optimal performance' beyond which performance diminishes (Spark, 2009). He added that continuous stress on the job further reduces the performance of persons involved because of negative things such as fatigue, exhaustion, and ill health.

The respondents agreed that they had problems sleeping well ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $S.D. = 1.27$ ). The condition experienced by female lecturers as a result of stress was that they mostly had less time of sleep, a condition which has the possibility of affecting their performance (Gross, 2005). This is because when the human mind has received less rest, he or she has low capacity of working effectively (Adeoye, 2002). This was confirmed in the comment by FLAD-4:

*Of late my sleeps are very short because something has to be done that is related to my work. There is always the need to wake up early to do them. Especially, when I have a deadline to meet, definitely I cannot have long sleep. Being disturbed in sleep has become normal to me because I have to plan well for good delivery and with ageing one's sleep naturally lessens and it affects performance negatively [Interview data, 2016]*

Another lecturer EFL-3 added that:

*My sleeping time is, in fact, very short. There are a lot of things to be done for the next day so I don't often enjoy a comfortable sleep at all. I have to wake up for an early morning lecture or invigilation aside my house chores and prepare my children for school [Interview data, 2016].*

Adell (2009) indicated that stress leaves adverse effects on biological and psychological process in humans which in turn may disrupt the sleep of victims over a period of time if proper remedial methods are not applied. He further noted that during the period in which one is experiencing stress, the victim may be anxious, distressed, have somatic complaints, among others, which culminate to affect sleep.

The stress experienced by the lecturers affected their concentration on task. Stress at work made female lecturers unable to concentrate on their job ( $Mean = 3.91$ ,  $S.D. = 1.26$ ). This situation affected their productivity. This was said by FLAD-1 commented:

*Sometimes, before I begin to lecture, I already feel very tired. In about an hour into my first lecture, I realize my level of concentration on the lecture goes down drastically and I have to make some*

*adjustments to get the class going. When this situation sets in I forget some common definitions or facts which does not help my job performance. This is as a result of long hours of preparation and sitting behind the computer to also do my personal research concurrently [Interview data, 2016].*

EFL-5 also remarked:

*The regular pains I experience affect me in many facets of my life. Because I like working to meet deadlines, I always make sure I make advance preparation for the next day. Usually, it is because I get tired the previous day and the less time to do any serious preparations. I may be tired but still have to lecture in that state, making me loose concentration occasionally [Interview data, 2016].*

The results show that occupational stress among female lecturers affects their concentration and job performance. Hygge, Evans and Bullinger (2005) argued that unmanaged work stress can lead to reduction in ones' ability to concentrate, think clearly, and remember accurately. Similarly, Chitty (2005) observed that cognitively or intellectually, prolonged stress of university lecturers ends with decreased mental activeness, perpetual and reduced problem-solving skills.

The results in Table 1 show that stress did not have much influence on the health of female lecturers "In general, I would rate my health as excellent" (Mean = 3.82, SD. =1.30) and I have been ill severally within a year (Mean = 2.73, SD. = 1.34). The result implies that the state of health of some female lecturers is not very bad although there were certain health conditions such as headache and backache they experienced. This is understood as, occupational stress does not have much influence on the health condition of female lecturers. This was said by FLAD-2:

*Apart from the headache and general bodily pains I experience, I do not have any serious health problem which I will associate with stress. My situation is entirely different as stress has been found to produce health problems like heart problems and others. Although I am a victim of stress, the impact hasn't produced major health problems [Interview data,2016].*

In the response of another respondent, stress was said to produce less influence of the quality of health. This was said by FLAD-5 supported this view, commenting that:

*In spite of the fact that I experience stress, I do not get sick often as my doctor says he anticipates. Anytime he performs medical tests on my state of health the results aren't that bad although he recommends I adopt stress coping strategies.*

These comments contradict the findings of Odwala (2009) that there is strong impact of stress on health conditions of its victims. Odwala (2009) found health effects of stress to include heart diseases, headaches, backaches, cancer, diabetes, cirrhosis, lung and skin diseases, disorders of the digestive system, increase in blood pressure, musculo-skeletal disorders (such as low back pain and upper limb disorders).

## 7.2. Occupational stress management strategies of the female lecturers

The last section of the questionnaire collected data from the female lecturers on how they manage the occupational stress they experience. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Stress Management Strategies for the Female Lecturers

| Statement   | Mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| I use various strategies to manage work stress I experience | 4.18 | 0.96 |
| Going for counselling                                       | 3.76 | 1.09 |
| Taking time off work/going on compulsory leave              | 3.33 | 1.10 |
| Delegating responsibilities to subordinates                 | 3.29 | 1.08 |
| Watching TV and Listening to music                          | 3.27 | 0.81 |
| Composite mean  | 3.56 | 0.84 |

*Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.*

Table 2 suggests that, generally, the respondents agreed (Composite mean = 3.56, S.D = 0.84) to the stress management strategies. Most of the female lecturers agreed that they employ various strategies to manage work-related stress they experience (Mean = 4.18, S.D = 0.96). The table suggests that the female lecturers manage stress they experience by 'going for counselling' (Mean = 3.76, S.D = 1.09). The qualitative data suggested that the female lecturers visit the Counselling Centre at the University occasionally for support to manage the stress they experience, as commented by EF1-5:

*The Counselling Centre has been helpful to me. I go there sometimes to see some of the experts for support when I am too stressed up. In fact, they help me anytime I visit the place.*

The interview data, however, suggested that the Centre should be manned by experienced staff and the condition of the building should be improved. EF1-4, for example, suggested:

*The Centre could be like at least an eight-roomed clinic away from the lecture halls, quiet, isolated and beautiful under the care of seasoned counsellors who have time to attend to clients. The centre*

*should have a conference room, well-furnished library with tapes and other modern gadgets for recording and playbacks [Interview data, 2016].*

These findings that some of the lecturers patronise the services of the Counselling Centre contradict the findings of Kusi et al. (2014) which suggested that although the lecturers at the University experience stress, they were reluctant to visit the counselling centre for relevant support. Contrary to the views of most of the female lecturers, the data also suggested that a few of them were unaware of the location of the Counselling Centre and whether the lecturers could access the services provided. FLAD-1, for example, said emphatically:

*I don't know of any Counselling Centre on campus so I cannot suggest or comment about it. If there is one, the centre can send out circulars during such programs when they organize them. The staff should let us know that we can also access the place [Interview data, 2016].*

FLAD-4 also added:

*Where is the Counselling Centre? I never knew the centre was also for staff patronage. I thought it was exclusively for students. Counselling is not taken seriously among lecturers here. I think this may arise from the fact the Counselling Centre doesn't appear quite attractive, doesn't look like a Counselling Centre and is a relatively a small place to contain both students and lecturers [Interview data, 2016].*

The data in Table 2 also suggested that the lecturers manage the stress they experience by 'taking time off work or going on compulsory leave (Mean = 3.33, S.D = 1.10). Taking time of work could offer the lecturers the opportunity to move away from the environment that causes them stress and get refreshed so that they could carry out their roles and responsibilities more meaningfully. The interview data suggested that the lecturers travel to key tourist centres for relaxation as a way of managing the stress they experience. The data, however, indicated that they lecturers needed sponsorship from the University during such holidays.

The quantitative data in Table 2 also suggested that the female lecturers also 'delegate responsibilities to their subordinates' (Mean = 3.29, S.D=1.08) as a way of managing or coping with high level of stress they experience. Kusi (2017) argued that delegating task to subordinates helps people in key positions to relieve themselves of stress and offer them the opportunity to concentrate on high-level tasks such as planning, monitoring, controlling and coordinating. The interviewees also indicated that they sometimes delegate responsibilities to subordinates but suggested that they could be supported to manage the stress they experience more meaningfully if the newly-recruited lecturers are assigned to them to offer support.

*Newly-recruited lecturers could be officially assigned to under-study and be mentored by a lecturer to acquaint herself with the work before taking up the full autonomy of working. This can reduce the stress encountered as a result of entering a new environment of work [FLAD-3 [Interview data, 2016].*

Kusi et al. (2014) support this suggestion, adding that apart from the support from the newly-recruited staff, the University should employ graduate assistants to support the lecturers with less sensitive tasks. They added that employing graduate assistants would go a long way to enable the lecturers have adequate time to carry out more important roles and responsibilities.

An open-ended item on the questionnaire also asked the lecturers to indicate any additional stress management strategies they employ. It emerged clearly from the data that the lecturers resort to 'effective time management (indicated 25 times); healthy eating (indicated 18 times); and exercising (indicated 15 times). Time is an all-important but limited resource that needs to be managed effectively or else can become a major source of stress especially to those who have so much to do within a particular point in time. Cartwright and Cooper (1996) report that constantly working under time pressures to complete tasks over which there is limited control can be particularly stressful. There is therefore, the need for individual female lecturers in the universities to learn manage their time effectively and this can be enhanced by undergoing training in time management.

## **8. Conclusions and recommendations**

The study found out that the female lecturers experience health-related problems such as headaches, back pains, and sleepless nights owing to the stress they experience. There is a direct relationship between the physiological, emotional and psychological state of employees in an organization and the productivity and growth of the organization. Therefore, if the health-related issues are left unaddressed over a long time, there is likely to be a deterioration of passion and drive for work which ultimately affects productivity. The study recommends that the management of the University, especially those in charge of human resource management should encourage the lecturers to visit the health facility at the campus on regular basis for check-ups and for support to manage stress they experience.

The study also found that whereas most of the lecturers often visit the Counselling Centre for relevant support to manage the stress they experience, others were unaware of the existence and location of the centre and the services it provides. To ensure continued staff patronization of the place, the management of the University should improve the prevailing conditions at the centre and ensure that the place is manned by experts, who could apply the ethics of the counselling profession when dealing with staff. Also, since some of the lecturers reported that they were not aware of the counselling centre and the stress-related services it provides, the management of the Centre should be proactive enough in advertising and sensitising the entire staff of the University on the services they render to and for the institution. As a follow-up on their sensitisation, the Centre should encourage the female lecturers to report any stress-related symptoms for candid assistance.

The study concluded that the female lecturers carry out multiple roles and responsibilities, both at work and home, which could affect their performance negatively if adequate support is not provided. The management of the University, especially those in the human resource division could introduce policies that

would help the lecturers balance their work and family commitments. Policies on child-care assistance, job-sharing and flexible working hours could be helpful in this regard.

Last, but not the least, the study revealed that the lecturers employ diverse strategies, including taking time off work/going on compulsory leave and delegating responsibilities to subordinates to manage stress they experience. In addition to these useful strategies, the female lecturers could employ individual-centred approaches like humour to manage stress, which has therapeutic value (Scott, 2012), conscious relaxation and physical exercise. Routine physical activity or exercise such as walking, climbing the stairs rather than using the lift are good for the body in general. Corbin, Welk and Lindsey (2003) hold the view that regular exercise decreases the likelihood of stress disorders and reduces the intensity of the stress response and also shortens the time of recovery from an emotional trauma.

### 9. Limitation of the study and suggestion for further study

The sample for the study comprised 51 female lecturers at the one of the four campuses (Winneba campus) of the University of Education, Winneba, which is a public institution. There are female lecturers at the remaining three campuses of the institution and other public universities in Ghana. The sample is, therefore, unrepresentative of the female lecturer population in the public universities in the country, making any generalization of the findings inappropriate. To get a better picture of causes of stress among the female lecturers and how they manage the stress they experience, any future study could sample lecturers at all the four campuses of the University and other public tertiary educational institutions in the country.

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