

Environmental-Based Stress Management Approaches ... (Awo & Abdulrahman, (2021)

Environmental-Based Stress Management Approaches for Enhancing Spousal Relationship within Families in Katsina State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated environmental-based stress management approach for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State, Nigeria. Two research questions were answered while two null hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study was 986,453 spouses in Katsina State. Purposive, multistage and random sampling techniques were used to select 432 literate spouses from all the three senatorial zones in the state. The instrument for data collection was structured 40-item questionnaire titled: "Environmental-related Stress Management Approach Questionnaire (ERSMAQ). Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument in which a co-efficient of 0.83 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using mean and t-test statistics. The results of the study identified 16 environment-induced stressors among spouses and 17 environmental-based stress management approaches that can be adopted by spouses in Katsina State. The environmental-induced stressors include far distance of home to place of work of spouses, outright lack or unstable power supply to residential houses and lack of good or motorable access road to residential home can constitute stress. Among the environmental-based stress management includes being efficient in responsibilities and equip functional areas of the house appropriately. The study among others recommended that spouses should ensure careful selection of work and home environment to avert environment-induced stressors among spouses (husbands and wives) in Katsina State and that, spouses should make specific efforts to create safe home and working environment to avoid all environmental related stress in the state.

Keyword: Stressors, Stress Management Approaches, Spousal Relationship, Families in Katsina State



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Introduction

Family is made up of a group of people that reside together and are related by blood or adoption. According to Kaigama and Avenya (2015), family is a divinely instituted community of persons made of husband, wife, children and relatives open to life in love. Anyakoha and Eluwa (2010) viewed family as a group of persons united by ties of marriage or blood (ancestry) and having one or more children of their own or adopted and often times characterized by common residence and economic cooperation. Kaigama and Avenya (2015) further stated that the family, as vital cell of the society, is where such leaders are born and nurtured. Hence, both the effectiveness of institutions and the emergence of good leaders in the nation largely depend on the family. In the context of this study, a family is a group of people related by blood or adopted in nuclear or polygamous form and headed by spouse that is husband and wife.

Spouses are breadwinners and homemakers who constitute the heads of families to care and provide the basic needs of the members. According to Ikulayo (1999), spouses are two adults male and female that are legally married and maintain a socially approved sexual relationship. In the opinion of Stange, Oyster and Sloan (2011), a spouse is a life partner in a marriage, civil union, or common-law marriage. Spouse is gender neutral, whereas a male spouse is a husband and a female spouse is a wife. Stinnett, Stinnett, Defrain and Defrain (2000) stated that spouses (husband and wife) normally work and function together as a unit to continuously meet the needs of the members. In their efforts to meet the needs of the family, spouses are often confronted with various forms of challenges that make enormous demands on them and result to stress.

Stress is a situation whereby environmental occurrences referred to as stressors stimulate pressure of tension in human body system. Anyanwu, Ezenwaji, Okenjom and Enyi (2015) described stress as a feeling which occurs when an individual's working or living conditions or circumstances make demands beyond the individual's capacity to handle such situation physically or emotionally. Afiong, Eme, Oboko and Bassey (2015) described stress as the body's nonspecific response to demands made upon it, or to disturbing events in the environment, thus it is not just a stimulus or a response, but rather a process by which we perceive and cope with environmental threats and challenges. According to Sharma, Jauhari and Singh (2015), the term stress means an imbalance between the mental and emotional levels of an individual. Bolarinwa, Ayinde and Adeogun (2016) noted that stress can be experienced from four basic sources: the environment, that is, the environment can bombard someone with intense and competing demands to adjust. Examples of environmental stressors include weather, noise, crowding, pollution, traffic, unsafe and substandard housing and crime. Enekwe, Agu and Eziedo (2014) reported that long-term stressful situations can produce a lasting effect on people.

The effect of stress is a deviation from the existing physical and psychological condition of human life. In their own view, Olaitan, Talabi, Olumorin and Braimoh (2014) opined that effects of unmanaged stress situation may be temporary or chronic, leading to negative health consequence or outcome changing a person's life. Schaufeli, et al., (2001) observed that stressors may lead to negative psychological (e.g., depression, irritability, burnout), physical (e.g., headaches, heart palpitations, hyperventilation) and behavioral (e.g., absenteeism, turnover, violence) symptoms or 'strains'. Similarly, Alegbeleye, Ojeifo and Idris (2014) stated that when stress in whatever guise is not properly managed by the individual, it becomes a recipe for hypertension or psychological trauma. The cause of stress of



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interest in this study is environmental induced stress. Environmental causes of stress are related to factors and conditions in the environment such as societal or technological changes, political and economic uncertainties, financial condition, community conditions, noise, weather, heavy traffic, among others. In affirmation, Obi and Obi (2007) stated that a high level background noise can severely impair spouses' ability to concentrate, cause irritability, tension and headaches and consequently result to environmental-induced stress. Afiong, Eme, Oboko and Bassey (2015) noted that excessive noise, movement and work interruptions, inadequate lighting both day and night on the ward to promote work, inadequate provision of privacy for procedures on the ward, pest and rodent such as flies, mosquitoes and rats are environmental related causes of stress. Munzel and Daiber (2018) demonstrated that environmental stressors are associated with health problems, namely cardiovascular diseases. Munzel and Daiber (2018) stated further that environmental risk factors account for an appreciable part of global deaths and life years spent with disability. There have been concerns of cardiac arrests and mental retardation, stroke, heart attack and death among stressed people and most of these cases have been medically proven to be caused by distress and poor health management caused by stress. Hence, stress management is core to continuous healthy living.

Stress management, according to Anyanwu, Ezenwaji, Okenjom and Enyi (2015) is a skill that is used to deal with situations that are stressful and may eventually lead to burnout. Stress management is the amelioration of stress, especially those that are chronic and capable of affecting one's physical, psychological and environmental state. Measures taken to manage harsh conditions in order to maintain a state of psychological or physiological equilibrium are termed stress management strategies (Uko, 2012). Stress management strategies, according to Oboegbulem (2004), are coping actions, behaviours or attitudes which an individual exhibits when faced with certain psychological and social demands that tax the individual's adaptive resources. In cases of environmental induced stress, environmental related approach could also be used for its management. Hence, Awo (2013) viewed environmental stress management strategies involve avoidance of noisy surroundings, living in non-overcrowded, clean and neat environment and giving enough time to partners.

Environmental-related spousal stress is a common phenomenon in Nigeria, Katsina State inclusive. The situation has led to the observed high cases of insomnia, depression, frustration, exhibition of maladaptive behaviours, drunkenness, illness and untimely death among spouses in the state which are signals of unmanaged environment-induced stress condition. Hence, this instigated the researcher to investigate environmental-based stress management approach for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1. Determine the environment-induced stressors among spouses as perceived by literate husbands and wives in Katsina State.
- 2. Determine environmental-based stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families as perceived by husbands and wives in Katsina State.



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Research Questions

Based on the specific purposes, the study answered the following research questions:

- 1. What are environment-induced stressors among spouses as perceived by literate husbands and wives in Katsina State?
- 2. What are environmental-based stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families as perceived by literate husbands and wives in Katsina State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of literate spouses (husbands and wives) on the environment-induced stressors among spouses in Katsina State.
- 2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of literate spouses (husbands and wives) on environmental-based stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State.

Methodology

Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the probability level of 0.05. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Descriptive survey research design according to Ponto (2015) can use quantitative research strategies using questionnaires with numerically rated items, qualitative research strategies using open-ended questions, or both strategies for data collection. Therefore, descriptive survey design was found suitable for this study because questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents to answer the research questions.

The population of this study was the entire 986,453 spouses in Katsina State as reported by National Population Commission (2006). Purposive, multistage and random sampling techniques were used to select 450 literate spouses. Stage I: All the three senatorial zones in the state were selected based on the prevalence of cases of spouses stress across the State. Stage II: Random selection of six (6) Local Government Areas (LGAs) from each of the three senatorial zones making eighteen (18) LGAs for the study. Stage III: Random selection of one rural and one urban community from each of the eighteen (18) LGAs making 36 communities for the study comprising 18 rural and 18 urban communities. Stage IV: Literate spouses were purposively sampled by selecting fifteen (15) literate spouses that are married for above five years from each of the 18 selected urban communities and ten (10) literate spouses that are married for above five years from each of the 18 selected rural communities. This gave a total of 450 literate spouses which comprises of 270 urban-based and 180 rural-based literate spouses giving a total of 900 respondents that represented the sample for the study. In case of polygamous families, the first wives who are likely to have stayed more in the marriage were selected. The instrument for data collection was structured 40-item questionnaire titled: "Environmental-related Stress Management Approach Questionnaire (ERSMAQ). The questionnaire was made up of three parts. Part one focused on personal data of the respondents, Part two was made to collect data on environmentinduced stressors among spouses while Part three focused on data collection non environmentalbased stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families. Sections two and three were structured into five response options of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree



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(A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. The instrument was face-validated by five experts. The instrument was face-validated by five experts; one from Home Economics section of the Department of Vocational Teacher Education, one from the Department of Educational Foundations, one from the Department of Science Education and one from Medical Centre, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and one health expert from Federal University Dutsima, Katsina State.

In order to determine the reliability of the research instrument, Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used in which a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained for the entire instrument. Based on the geographical spread of the population across the State, six research assistants who were also key informants in compiling the list of literate spouses were hired for data collection while the researcher coordinated the activities of the six research assistants and collated the retrieved questionnaire after two weeks of administration for data analysis. Out of the 900 copies of the questionnaire administered, 846 copies were completely filled and returned representing 94% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using mean for answering the research questions while t-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of probability.

In taking decision on the research questions, real limit of number was used. Hence, items with mean values that range within 4.50-5.00 are interpreted as "Strongly Agreed", those with mean values within 3.50-4.49 are interpreted ad "Agreed", those with mean values within 2.50-3.49 were interpreted as Undecided while those mean values if any within the ranges of 1.50-2.49 and 1.00-1.49 are interpreted as "Disagreed" and "Strongly Disagreed" respectively. On the hypotheses tested, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted for items whose p-values were greater than 0.05 level of significance while hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected for items whose p-values were less than 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Ouestion 1:

What are environment-induced stressors among spouses as perceived by literate husbands and wives in Katsina State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the Responses on Environment-induced Stress among Spouses in Katsina State (n = 846)

SN	Environment-induced stress among spouses include:	$\mathbf{X}_{\mathbf{G}}$	SD	Remark
1	Noisy home environment	4.32	0.67	A
2	Over-crowded home with lots of materials	3.44	0.99	UD
3	Air pollution or poor air quality	4.38	1.01	A
4	Poor colour combination in home environment	2.54	0.87	UD
5	Natural disasters such as flood, storm, winds	4.43	0.97	A
6	Political or religious crises & other manmade disasters	4.45	1.01	A
7	Poor lightening of rooms and other functional areas of home can constitute stress.	2.24	1.12	D
8	Insects, pest and flies contributing nuisance to people	4.42	1.03	A
9	Very small home or family accommodation can cause stress to family members	4.22	1.13	A
10	Far distance of home to place of work of spouses	4.41	0.90	A
11	Cases of stealing, armed robbery and insecurity in home environment	4.46	0.93	A



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12	Outright lack or unstable power supply to residential houses.	4.60	0.93	SA
13	Lack of good water source to family homes	4.22	0.96	A
14	Inadequacy of basic work supplication appliances in homes.	4.40	0.74	A
15	Far distance of home to children's schools	3.25	0.85	UD
16	Far distance of home to place of worship like church and mosque.	4.62	0.49	SA
17	Dirty home environment or poor hygiene	4.41	0.49	A
18	Distanced home environment from major town or city centre.	4.48	0.50	A
19	Lack of good or motorable access road to residential home can constitute stress	4.60	0.49	SA
20	Excessive heat or cold weather of home environment	4.39	0.72	A
	Cluster mean	4.32	0.64	A

Key: \overline{X}_G = Overall mean; SD = Standard Deviation

The data presented in Table 1 showed that the grand mean ratings of the responses of the respondents (spouses) on far distance of home to place of work of spouses is 4.62, outright lack or unstable power supply to residential houses is 4.60 and lack of good or motorable access road to residential home can constitute stress is 4.60 which were strongly agreed by the respondents. Among the items agreed upon by the respondents include distanced home environment from major town or city centre with mean of 4.48, cases of stealing, armed robbery and insecurity in home environment with mean of 4.46, political or religious crisis and other manmade disasters with mean of 4.45, natural disasters such as flood, storm and wind with mean of 4.43, insects, pests and flies constituting nuisance to the people with mean of 4.42, far distance of home to place of work of spouses and dirty home environment or poor hygiene which both share the mean of 4.41 as well as inadequacy of basic work supplication appliances in home with the mean of 4.40. Other items agreed upon are excessive heat or cold weather of home environment with mean of 4.39, air pollution or poor quality of air with mean of 4.38, noisy home environment with mean of 4.32, very small home or family accommodation can cause stress to family members and lack of good water source to family which both share the mean of 4.22. However, items that were undecided on include overcrowded home with lots of materials with mean 3.44, far distance of home to children's school with mean of 3.25, and poor colour combination in home environment with mean of 2.54. The respondents disagree with poor lightening of rooms and other functional areas of home can constitute stress with the mean of 2.24.

Research Ouestion 2

What are environmental-based stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families as perceived by husbands and wives in Katsina State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of the Responses on Environmental-based Stress Management approaches among Spouses in Katsina State (n = 846)

SN	Environmental-based stress management approaches	$\overline{\mathbf{X}}_{\mathbf{G}}$	SD	Remark
1	Avoid noisy environment in both official and residential houses.	4.33	0.48	A
2	Ensure clean and safe environment for residence and business activities.	4.15	0.64	A
3	Consider environmental factors such as areas prone to flood, water- logged and	4.33	0.91	A
	erosion before choosing house location.			
4	Choose residential area close to children's school.	4.16	0.80	A
5	Keep photo album of friends and family around one's living apartment	2.39	0.97	D
6	Create safe home and working environment.	4.42	0.83	A
7	Create a comfortable home environment	4.50	0.82	SA



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8	Beautify your residence and environment by landscaping, planting of trees and flowers.	2.24	1.02	D
9	Get along with human beings within your environment and live at peace with	4.10	0.70	A
10	them. Secure residential house close to place of work to reduce transportation tension and stress on spouse.	4.06	0.99	A
11	Equip functional areas of the house appropriately	4.54	0.85	SA
12	Provide comfortable and well equipped working environment	4.49	0.81	A
13	Acquire necessary skills for job	2.50	0.65	UD
14	Be efficient in responsibilities	4.58	0.95	SA
15	Maintain good working relationships with colleagues and superiors	4.18	0.98	A
16	Ensure good communication in work place	3.75	0.81	A
17	Provide adequate lighting within and around the residential building.	3.89	0.91	A
18	Manage household solid wastes properly	4.50	0.68	SA
19	Clean drains to prevent pollution and offensive odours.	4.32	0.67	A
20	Make appropriate provisions for different seasons of the year (hot and cold	4.35	0.68	A
	weather)			
	Cluster Summary	4.17	0.69	A

The data presented in Table 2 revealed that the grand mean ratings of the responses of the respondents (spouses) showed that the respondents strongly agreed on be efficient in responsibilities with mean of 4.58, equip functional areas of the house appropriately with mean of 4.54, create a comfortable home environment and manage household solid wastes properly which both have a mean of 4.50 each. The respondents agreed on the following: provide comfortable and well equipped working environment with mean of 4.49, create safe home and working environment with mean of 4.42, make appropriate provisions for different seasons of the year with mean of 4.35, avoid noisy environment in both official and residential houses and consider environmental factors such as areas prone to flood, water- logged and erosion before choosing house location which both have mean of 4.33, clean drains to prevent pollution and offensive odours with mean of 4.32, maintain good working relationships with colleagues and superiors with mean of 4.18, choose residential area close to children's school with mean of 4.16, Ensure clean and safe environment for residence and business activities with mean of 4.15, get along with human beings within your environment and live at peace with them with 4.10 as mean, secure residential house close to place of work to reduce transportation tension and stress on spouse with mean of 4.06, provide adequate lighting within and around the residential building with mean of 3.89, and to ensure good communication in work place with mean of 3.75. However, the respondents are undecided on acquire necessary skills for job with the mean of 2.50, they also disagreed with the fact to keep photo album of friends and family around one's living apartment with mean of 2.39 and beautify your residence and environment by landscaping, planting of trees and flowers with mean of 2.24.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of literate spouses (husbands and wife) on the environment-induced stressors among spouses in Katsina State.



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Table 3: t-test results on Difference between husbands and wives on environmental-induced stressors

Groups	N	Mean	Std Dev.	t-cal	Df	p-value	alpha	Decision
Husbands	423	4.114	0.701	0.049	844	0.961	0.05	Agant HO.
Wives	423	4.104	0.651	0.049	044	0.901	0.05	Accept H0 ₁

From table 3, the results showed that the mean of husbands is 4.114 and that of the wives is 4.104, the t-calculated is 0.049 at the degree of freedom of 844 and alpha of 0.05, the p-value obtained is 0.961. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha, the null hypothesis 1 is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of literate spouses (husbands and wife) on the environment-induced stressors among spouses in Katsina State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of literate spouses (husbands and wives) on environmental-based stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State.

Table 4: t-test results on Difference between husbands and wives on environmental-based stress management approaches

Groups	N	Mean	Std Dev.	t-cal	Df	p-value	alpha	Decision
Husbands	423	3.979	0.795	0.000	011	0.027	0.05	A agamt IIO.
Wives	423	3.959	0.707	0.080	844	0.937	0.05	Accept H ₀₂

The results in table 4 showed that the mean response of husbands is 3.979 while that of wives is 3.959. The t-calculated is 0.080 at the degree of freedom of 844 and alpha of 0.05, the p-value obtained is 0.937. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value, the null hypothesis 2 is hereby accepted. Therefore, there is significant difference in the mean ratings of literate spouses (husbands and wives) on environmental-based stress management approaches for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State.

Discussion of Findings

This study on research question one identified environment-induced stressors among spouses in Katsina State to include: noisy home environment, overcrowded home with lots of materials, air pollution or poor air quality, natural disasters such as flood, storm and winds. In affirmation with this finding, Ngoka (2000) classified the causes of stress into those related to home and environment where one works such as poor environmental condition such as noise pollution, flood and air pollution. Obi and Obi (2007) also identified environmental related caused of stress among spouses to include excessive distance from home to work place, heat in homes and offices, inadequate lighting and power failure, inadequate furniture and overcrowding environment. Other identified causes of stress in this study include: political or religious crises and other manmade disasters, insects, pest and flies contributing nuisance to people, cases of stealing, armed robbery and insecurity in home environment, outright lack or unstable power supply to residential houses, lack of good water source to family homes, inadequacy of basic work supplication appliances in homes, far distance of home to place of worship like church and mosque and dirty home environment or poor hygiene among others. The findings of this study



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agreed with the report of Obi and Obi (2007) who stated that a high level background noise can severely impair spouses' ability to concentrate, cause irritability, tension and headaches and consequently result to environmental-induced stress. The findings of this study also corroborated that of Afiong, Eme, Oboko and Bassey (2015) who reported that excessive noise, movement and work interruptions, inadequate lighting both day and night on the ward to promote work, inadequate provision of privacy for procedures on the ward, pest and rodent such as flies, mosquitoes and rats are environmental related causes of stress.

The findings of this study as regards to environment-based stress management approaches showed that the respondents (spouses) agreed that avoiding noisy environment in both official and residential houses, ensuring clean and safe environment for residence and business activities, considering environmental factors such as areas prone to flood, water-logged and erosion before choosing house location, choosing residential area close to children's school, creating safe home and working environment, creating a comfortable home environment, getting along with human beings within one's environment and live at peace with them, securing residential house close to place of work to reduce transportation tension and stress on spouse, equipping functional areas of the house appropriately, providing comfortable and well equipped working environment, acquiring necessary skills for job, being efficient in responsibilities and maintaining good working relationships with colleagues and superiors among others could be adopted for stress management. The findings of this study on environmental related stress management strategies is in conformity with the findings of the study in Ogbuji (2006) on stress management techniques among under graduates students of university of Nigeria where the author found out that provision of a conducive environment and sharing emotional feelings with others constitute stress coping strategies among the students. The findings of this study on environmental stress management strategies corroborated that of Melgosa (2005) who in a study found out that environmental-related stress management strategies include: avoidance of noisy surroundings and environment, living in a space that is relatively large, living in a clean environment, saving of free time for one's spouse and creating a good working environment.

Conclusion

The study examined environmental-based stress management approach for enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State, Nigeria. From the data collected and analysed, the identified 18 environment-induced stressors among spouses and 17 environmental-based stress management approaches that can be adopted by spouses in Katsina State. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the identified 18 environment-induced stressors are causes of stress among spouses in Katsina State and that adoption of the identified 17 environmental-based stress management approaches will help a great deal in curtailing spousal stress and enhancing spousal relationship within families in Katsina State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study therefore recommended that:

- 1. There should be careful selection of work and home environment to avert environment-induced stressors among spouses (husbands and wives) in Katsina State.
- 2. Spouses should make specific efforts to create safe home and working environment to avoid all environmental related stress in the state.



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