
**TEACHERS' STRESS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE
STYLE AS PREDICTORS OF PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS
IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Teachers in special needs schools are expected to engage in regular professional development, but this seldom happens. Of all the causative factors that has been studied, the interplay between teachers' stress, administrative style and professional development is yet to be fully explored in Osun State. This study therefore, investigated teachers' stress and administrative styles as predictors of professional development in special needs schools in Osun State, Nigeria. Using descriptive survey research design of correlational type, a sample of 70 teachers in special needs schools participated in the study. A researcher developed questionnaire namely "Teachers' Stress, Administrative Style and Professional Development (TSASPD)" with a reliability coefficient of 0.71 obtained through Cronbach Alpha reliability test was the instrument for data collection. The data was analysed using frequency, percentage, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical tools. The results showed that there were different types of prevalent stress among the teachers; that there were also multiple administrative styles. It also showed that significant relationship exists between teachers'

stress and professional development and that significant relationship is in existence between administrative style and professional development of teachers in special needs schools in the study area. The study further indicated that stress and school administrative styles predicted the professional development of teachers in special needs schools in Osun State, Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that for stress-management programmes, any administrative style(s) tailored towards empowering teachers of special needs schools as well as mandatory, sponsored professional development programmes should be introduced in special needs schools.

Keywords: *Teachers' stress, Administrative style, Professional development, Special needs education, Early intervention level/primary school*

Introduction

Teachers in special needs schools are especially expected to engage in regular professional development not only because of the frequent changes of policies but because professional development empowers teachers to strengthen their skills and knowledge as well as promoting their growth as educators (Federal Ministry of Education, FME, 2015; Diodemise, & Holydom, 2025). In this contemporary society, especially within the field of education, strategies and policies are frequently revised and updated. To keep up with the global practices, strategies, and policies in education, teachers engage in professional development (Mkpa & Ekoh-Nweke 2019; Dung, *et al*, 2024; Diodemise, & Holydom, 2025). Emphasis on teachers' professional development arises from societal changes, learners need, advance in technology, digital literacy, school administration, shifts in professional dynamics, and desire for growth in career paths (Sarmistha & Amitabha, 2023; Dung, *et al*, 2024; Edu, 2025).

Teaching special needs children requires more support than teaching regular pupils due to their physical, mental, and emotional impairments. In addition, the children may come from underprivileged backgrounds and some might possess unique talents, educating such children with special needs will involve customizing the curriculum to meet specific learning needs as such it becomes imperative for teachers handling this category of learners to continuously seek regular professional development (Cheng & Toran, 2022). Special needs education teachers are faced with significant stressors in educating learners with special needs such as burn out, authoritarian leadership style, inadequate resources, inadequate administrative support/impaired/faulty administrative style, inadequate professional development opportunities and relevant skills necessary to teach learners to fulfill their potential (Adegboyega, 2019; Nwosu, *et al*, 2020; Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Akinbode, *et al*, 2025; Alaro & Olatunji-Olawepo, 2025).

Stress in special needs schools comes from addressing these challenges as well as coping with the daily learning and behavioral needs of the learners. Therefore, teachers in special needs schools experience higher level of stress and have lower job satisfaction than their peers (Kyriacou, 2015; krause, 2020). Any teacher experiencing stress will rather look for relief rather than professional development. On one hand is stress from the daily activities, on the other hand is the administrative style adopted by the school leadership. Supportive administrative style promotes teachers' professional development by cultivating an environment where continuous learning is highly esteemed (Nwogbe & Haliso 2020). Administrators further bolster teacher engagement in professional development by providing essential resources such as dedicated time, funding for workshops and courses, and recognition of teachers' efforts (Eze, *et. al.*, 2022). Allocating specific time during the school day or academic year allows teachers to focus on enhancing their skills without the distraction of daily classroom responsibilities. Additionally, recognizing and celebrating the achievements of teachers who engage in these

activities reinforces their commitment to continuous improvement.

This administrative style is what is referred to as Transformational Leadership Theory developed by Burns in 1978, which states that leaders can stimulate and encourage followers to have extraordinary outcomes by transforming their beliefs, values, and attitudes (Bass, 1985 & 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1994). A transformational leader turns followers' individual interests into group ones by recognizing their motivations and concentrating on their needs. Transformational leaders provide a model that supports individuals in pursuing organizational goals, enhances collective goal acceptance, and is in line with the organization's future prospects.

The positive atmosphere of the transformational administrative style creates a balance between job expectation and job resources and this can serve impetus for teachers' professional development. This also collaborates with Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory propounded by Demerouti *et. al.* in 2001 that work demand (stressors) and work provisions (supportive administrative style, resources) have special and increasing effects on work pressure and enthusiasm (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This theory suggests that job resources such as organizational, social, psychological, and physical components that lessen job responsibilities and expenses as well as aid in achieving goals and promote personal growth result in favorable outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job demands such as stress from differentiated instructions for diverse special needs, individualized lesson planning, pedagogical adaptation tailored towards individual learners' needs, and managing potentially challenging behaviors result in bad outcomes.

Special needs schools are vital institutions tasked with providing tailored education and support to pupils with special and diverse learning requirements. Within these environments, teachers are crucial to ensuring that these special learning needs and requirements are met. In order for educators to successfully perform these duties of ensuring that every special child is catered for, they need to continuously work towards developing

themselves. Since no amount of pre-service training will be sufficient to handle the daily challenges faced in the classroom, constant professional development is required.

However, teachers' professional development, crucial for enhancing instructional quality and holistic development in pupils, can be affected by a number of factors, including teacher stress and school administrative styles. Limited research has examined the interplay between teachers' stress level and school administrative style and their predictive influence on the professional development within this specialized area. Promoting sustainable teacher growth and the holistic development of children with special needs requires an understanding of how these elements interact and predict teachers' professional development involvement. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of teachers' stress and school administrative style on professional development of teachers in special needs schools in Osun State.

The objectives of the study are therefore to:

- i. identify the prevalent stress types among teachers in special needs schools in Osun State;
- ii. examine the prominent school administrative style in special needs schools in the study area;
- iii. determine the relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in the study area; and
- iv. determine the relationship between school administrative style and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in the study area.

Research Questions

Two research questions were answered in this study.

1. What are the prevalent stress types among teachers in special needs schools in Osun State?
2. What are the prevalent school administrative styles in special needs schools in Osun State?

Hypotheses

H₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in Osun State;

H₂: There is no significant relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in the study area

Methods

The descriptive survey research design of correlational type was used in this study. The study's population included all early intervention (Primary School) level teachers in special needs schools across Osun State. Seventy teachers were purposively selected as the sample for the study. A total number of seven special needs schools (five public special needs schools were selected using purposive sampling technique because there were only five public special needs schools in the state and two private special needs schools were selected using simple random sampling technique) were used. Ten teachers were selected in each schools using simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire on "Teachers' Stress, Administrative Style and Professional Development" (TSASPD) with a reliability coefficient of 0.71 was the instrument used to collect data for the study. The instrument was administered after due permission from the school authority and verbal consent from the teachers. The data collection took six weeks with the help of research assistances. The data collected was analysed using frequency, percentage, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tools.

Results

Research Question One: What are the prevalent stress types among teachers in special needs schools in Osun State?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the prevalent stress types among teachers in special needs schools in Osun State

S/N	Variables	f(%)	\bar{x}	Rank
1.	Stress as a result of unexpected occurrences the in school	38(54.3)	2.21	6 th
2.	Feelings of inadequate control teaching-learning process in the class	21(30.0)	1.62	10 th
3.	Emotionally drained from dealing with pupils' behavioral issues	40(57.1)	2.32	4 th
4.	Stress from making a meaningful difference in pupils' lives	30(42.9)	1.79	8 th
5.	Frustration from progress of pupils	35(50.0)	2.03	7 th
6.	Unmanageable stress from daily workload	56(80.0)	2.81	1 st
7.	Feelings from unavailable resources necessary for teaching	55(78.6)	2.79	2 nd
8.	Feelings from been on top of situation in classroom	25(35.7)	1.67	9 th
9.	Feelings that one work is underestimated	38(54.3)	2.30	5 th
10.	Stress about maintaining compliance with special education laws and regulations	42(60.0)	2.37	3 rd

N = 70

Results in Table 1 show that unmanageable stress from daily workload ($\bar{x} = 2.81$), followed by Feelings from unavailable resources necessary for teaching ($\bar{x} = 2.79$), and Stress about maintaining compliance with special education laws and regulations ($\bar{x} = 2.37$) were the three most prevalent stress types among the teachers in special needs schools in Osun State.

Research Question Two: What are the prevalent school administrative styles in special needs schools in Osun State?

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the prevalent school administrative styles in special needs schools in Osun State

S/N	Variables	f(%)	\bar{x}	Rank
1.	<i>Democratic Administrative Style</i>	35(50.0)	2.03	
(I)	The administration fosters a collaborative and inclusive school culture			
(ii)	The administration is responsive to feedback and suggestions from teachers	35(50.0)	2.03	
(iii)	The administration involves teachers in decision-making processes that affect the school	21(30.0)	1.62	
	<i>Average result</i>	30(43.3)	1.79	5 th
2.	<i>Autocratic Administrative Style</i>			
(I)	The administration provides clear and consistent communication regarding school policies	40(57.1)	2.32	
(ii)	The administration effectively supports teachers in addressing the individual needs of pupils	32(45.7)	1.85	
(iii)	The administration is responsive to feedback and suggestions from teachers	35(50.0)	2.03	
	<i>Average result</i>	36(50.9)	2.09	3 rd
3.	<i>Transformational Administrative Style</i>			
(i)	The administration recognizes and rewards the efforts and achievements of staff members	30(42.9)	1.79	
(ii)	School policies for managing student challenges are equitable and applied consistently	40(57.1)	2.32	
(iii)	The administration of the school hinders my ability to seek professional development	31(44.3)	1.81	
	<i>Average result</i>	34(48.1)	1.89	4 th
4.	<i>Transactional Administrative Style</i>			
(i)	The administration provides sufficient time for teachers to plan and collaborate	35(50.0)	2.03	
(ii)	Administrators provide sufficient emotional and professional support	35(50.0)	2.03	

	for teachers			
(iii)	The administration fosters open communication between staff and management	40(57.1)	2.32	
	<i>Average result</i>	37(52.4)	2.17	2 nd
5.	<i>Laissez-Faire Administrative Style</i>			
(I)	The administration provides clear and consistent communication regarding school policies	40(57.1)	2.32	
(ii)	The administration promotes a positive school climate that enhances pupils' learning and teachers' well-being	35(50.0)	2.03	
(iii)	The administrative leadership prioritizes flexibility to address the varied needs of students	65(92.9)	2.95	
	<i>Average result</i>	47(66.7)	2.67	1 st

N = 70

Results in Table 2 show that laissez-faire administrative style ($\bar{x} = 2.67$), transactional administrative style ($\bar{x} = 2.17$) and autocratic administrative style ($\bar{x} = 2.09$), were the prevalent school administrative styles in special needs schools in Osun State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in Osun State.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in Osun State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remark
TS	70	38.43	3.65	0.728	.002	Significant
TPD			70	27.87		3.29

($r = 0.728$; $p < 0.05$)

Teachers' Stress (TS); Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)

Results in Table 3 show that there was significant relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in Osun State ($r = 0.728$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in Osun State is hereby rejected. The result implies that teachers' stress can predict professional development in special needs schools.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in Osun State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in Osun State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remark
SAS	70	38.23	3.65	0.819	.001	Significant
TPD	70	27.87		3.29		

($r = 0.819$; $p < 0.05$)

School Administrative Styles (SAS); Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)

Results in Table 4 show that there was significant relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in Osun State ($r = 0.819$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in Osun State is hereby rejected. The result implies that school administrative styles can also predict teachers' professional development in special needs schools.

Findings showed that teachers in special needs schools undergo different prevalent types of stress that affect teaching-

learning process and their professional development. The result corroborates with the findings of Adegboyega, 2019; Nwosu, *et al*, 2020; Angwaomaodoko, 2023; Akinbode, *et al*, 2025; Alaro & Olatunji-Olawepo, 2025) that special needs education teachers face significant stressors in their line of duty. Results of the study indicated a multiple prevalent administrative style in the study area unlike the suggestion made by Burns in 1978 (Bass, 1985 & 1998) Bass & Avolio, (1994); Nwogbe & Haliso (2020); Eze, *et. al.*, (2022) that transactional leadership style should be most frequently employed in the schools. The contradiction could be as a result of different cultural settings of the study areas. This implies that in a particular setting of a similar educational system, different or multiple administrative styles can be adopted.

The results also showed significant relationship between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools in Osun State. This collaborates with Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory propounded by Demerouti *et. al.* (2001); Bakker & Demerouti (2007) that work demand (stressors) and work provisions (professional development) have special and increasing effects on work pressure and enthusiasm. It is suggesting that the professional development of teachers in special needs schools could be hindered by various stresses they undergo towards ensuring effective teaching-learning process in schools. A teacher that is under a lot of stress due to workload, challenging learners and/ or lack of resources, might find it difficult to attend workshops, take extra courses, or learn new teaching methods. On the other hand, if those factors that contribute to teachers' stress are well managed, special needs education teachers might be more motivated and able to participate in professional development activities.

Results further indicated significant relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in Osun State. The result corroborates Nwogbe & Haliso (2020) and Eze, *et. al.*, (2022), that supportive administrative style promotes teachers' professional development, implying that, the administrative

approaches adopted by the leaders in the schools to guarantee the smooth running of the system could predict the professional development of teachers in special needs schools. Teachers are inspired to participate in training sessions, workshops, and other professional development activities when school administrators exhibit a supportive and motivating leadership style. On the contrary, unsupportive school administration practices might occasionally impede teachers' professional development from reaching this objective.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers in special needs schools in the study area experience different types of stress, that there are multiple administrative styles, that significant relationship exists between teachers' stress and professional development in special needs schools as well as significant relationship between school administrative styles and teachers' professional development in special needs schools in the study area.

Recommendations

The study therefore recommends that, stakeholders in education should provide and implement stress-management programmes tailored to the particular difficulties encountered by special needs education teachers. Provision of required resources at the disposal of special needs teachers should also be prioritized so as to focus on their work and professional development. School leaders should adopt any administrative styles that prioritize collaboration, empowerment, and recognition of teachers' contributions. However, intermittent seminar, conferences and workshop should be made mandatory for teachers in special needs schools and adequate sponsorship should be provided to encourage teachers' professional development.

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