



## The Impact of Stress on Job Performance Among Basic School Teachers in Rural Ghana: A Cross-Sectional Study in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District of the Central Region

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### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between occupational stress and job performance among basic school teachers in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District of Ghana's Central Region. Employing a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, the study collected data from 237 teachers using structured questionnaires, supported by in-depth interviews with six purposively selected participants. Quantitative findings revealed that stress significantly affected key areas of teacher performance, including lesson preparation, punctuality, assignment marking, and classroom engagement. A strong negative correlation ( $r = -0.64$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was observed between stress levels and job performance, indicating that increased stress led to reduced professional effectiveness. Qualitative insights further exposed emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and withdrawal from teaching responsibilities. The study concludes that occupational stress is a critical barrier to quality teaching in rural Ghana and recommends policy reforms aimed at improving working conditions,

strengthening administrative support, and implementing teacher well-being programmes to mitigate the effects of stress.

**Keywords:** teacher stress, job performance, rural education, Ghana, basic schools

### Introduction

Occupational stress has become a growing concern in educational systems worldwide, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where teachers often work in under-resourced environments. In Ghana, the situation is especially challenging in rural areas where teachers are burdened with large class sizes, limited teaching materials, and insufficient support from school authorities. These stressful working conditions not only affect the mental and physical well-being of teachers but also significantly undermine their job performance and overall productivity.

Teaching at the basic level forms the foundation of Ghana's educational system. When teachers in this sector are unable to perform effectively due to stress, it can have a ripple effect on student outcomes, school performance,



and broader educational goals. Teacher performance is reflected in lesson planning, punctuality, student engagement, classroom control, and assessment practices. However, high levels of stress can interfere with a teacher's ability to carry out these duties. As Kyriacou (2001) noted, stress in teaching arises when perceived demands exceed available coping resources, leading to emotional fatigue, demotivation, and poor job outcomes.

Although several studies in Ghana have explored teacher motivation and retention, there remains limited empirical research focusing on how stress directly affects job performance, particularly in rural settings. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining how stress influences the job performance of basic school teachers in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District of the Central Region. The district represents a typical rural context where infrastructural and administrative challenges are common.

Using a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, this study aims to provide evidence on how stress affects teaching output and to offer policy recommendations to help improve teacher well-being and performance. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing discussions about educational quality and teacher support in Ghana's basic school system.

## Methods

### Research Design

The study employed a **mixed-methods explanatory sequential design**, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore how stress affects the job performance of basic school teachers. This design allowed for the collection of broad quantitative data, followed by qualitative insights that offered deeper understanding of the patterns observed.

### Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District of the Central Region of Ghana. This rural district was selected due to its documented shortage of educational resources and its high teacher-to-pupil ratios. The study focused on public basic school teachers currently teaching in the district.

A total of 237 teachers participated in the quantitative phase of the study. For the qualitative phase, six teachers were purposively selected based on their stress levels (as indicated in their survey responses), their willingness to be interviewed, and their years of experience.

### Sampling Techniques

A **stratified random sampling technique** was used to select participants for the quantitative survey. Teachers were stratified based on characteristics such as gender and years of experience to ensure



representativeness. In the qualitative phase, **purposive sampling** was used to select participants who could provide rich insights into how stress has affected their performance.

## Instruments for Data Collection

Two primary instruments were used:

- **Structured Questionnaire:** The questionnaire collected data on teachers' stress levels and self-reported job performance across several domains, including lesson planning, classroom control, punctuality, marking of assignments, and student engagement. The items were designed on a Likert scale to measure the degree of perceived impact.
- **Semi-Structured Interview Guide:** Interviews were conducted with six teachers to explore their personal experiences of stress and how it has influenced their work. Questions focused on emotional responses, behavioural changes, professional commitment, and perceptions of support from the school system.

## Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert review by

professionals in educational psychology and teacher education. A pilot study was conducted with 20 teachers from outside the study district, and feedback was used to refine the instrument. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.78, indicating acceptable reliability.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis, particularly Pearson's correlation, to examine the relationship between stress levels and job performance. Frequencies and percentages were used to present patterns.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Transcripts were coded and emerging themes were identified to explore how stress affects different aspects of teachers' job performance.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba. All participants gave informed consent prior to participation. Anonymity, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation were maintained throughout the research process.



## Results

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 237)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>	Male	159	67.1
	Female	78	32.9
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	Diploma	108	45.6
	Bachelor's Degree	91	38.4
	Postgraduate	38	16.0
<b>Teaching Experience (Years)</b>	1–5	59	24.9
	6–10	102	43.0
	11–15	45	19.0
	16 and above	31	13.1

The demographic information of the 237 teachers who participated in the study is presented in Table 1. These characteristics help provide context for interpreting the results on stress and job performance. The data show a male-dominated teaching population, with the majority of respondents holding diploma or bachelor's degrees. A significant portion (43%) had between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience, indicating that most participants were relatively experienced. These demographic characteristics may influence how teachers experience and respond to stress in their professional roles.

**Table 2: Self-Reported Effects of Stress on Job Performance (N = 237)**

Performance Indicator	Affected (Yes)	Not Affected (No)	Percentage Affected (%)
Timely preparation of lesson notes	186	51	78.5
Marking of assignments and exercises	173	64	73.0
Punctuality to school	159	78	67.1

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Classroom control and discipline	144	93	60.8
Giving regular homework	138	99	58.2
Student engagement during lessons	132	105	55.7

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which stress affected key aspects of their performance. The results are summarized in Table 2. The area most impacted by stress was lesson preparation, with nearly 79% of teachers affected. This was followed by marking of assignments and punctuality. These are fundamental responsibilities of the teaching profession, and the high impact underscores the extent to which stress disrupts essential duties.

**Table 3: Correlation Between Stress and Job Performance**

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value
Stress and Job Performance	−0.64	0.000 **

**Significant at  $p < 0.01$**

To examine the strength and direction of the relationship between stress and job performance, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between stress and job performance. This means that as stress increases, job performance decreases. The strength of the relationship is moderately strong, suggesting that stress is a key predictor of reduced productivity among teachers.

### **Qualitative Findings: Teachers' Experiences of Stress and Job Performance**

Interview data supported and added depth to the quantitative findings. Teachers described how stress made them feel detached from their work, physically tired, and emotionally drained.

One participant shared:

“Sometimes I go to class but I don’t feel mentally present. I just want to finish and go home. That affects how I teach and even how I mark the books.” (*Male Teacher, 10 years’ experience*)

Another noted:





“I used to come to school very early and prepare before class, but now, because I hardly sleep, I get here late and unprepared. It’s becoming too much.” (*Female Teacher, 8 years’ experience*)

These narratives reveal that stress affects not just energy levels but also motivation, commitment, and professional identity. Teachers spoke about withdrawing from extracurricular activities, skipping lesson planning, and avoiding additional responsibilities that they previously enjoyed.

## Integration of Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings both show that stress negatively affects job performance. Teachers are not only aware of this impact but experience it in tangible ways. Their testimonies confirm that rising stress levels reduce their capacity to meet professional expectations, weakening both instructional quality and student outcomes.

## Discussion

This study set out to examine the impact of stress on job performance among basic school teachers in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District. The findings show that teacher stress is a significant issue in this rural district, and it has direct consequences on the professional output of teachers. Both the quantitative and qualitative results point to the fact that stress negatively affects key aspects of teachers’ responsibilities, including punctuality, lesson planning, student engagement, and classroom management.

The data show that the most affected area was the timely preparation of lesson notes, which over 78% of teachers admitted was disrupted by stress. This suggests that when teachers are overwhelmed, one of the first things to suffer is instructional preparation. This aligns with earlier studies such as Kyriacou (2001), who described how teacher stress often results in reduced capacity to plan and deliver lessons

effectively. The correlation analysis confirmed a strong negative relationship between stress and performance, meaning that the more stressed a teacher feels, the less likely they are to perform well in their duties.

Teachers also reported challenges in marking assignments and being punctual to school. These are important indicators of teacher professionalism, and when they are affected, it means that learners may not be getting timely feedback and support. This finding supports the work of Agyemang (2013), who observed that teachers under stress often disengage from core tasks, which eventually affects learner outcomes and school performance.

From the qualitative interviews, the emotional and psychological effects of stress were clearly illustrated. Teachers spoke of fatigue, sleeplessness, and loss of motivation. Some said they only come to school to “fulfill the requirement” without genuine enthusiasm for teaching. These personal accounts



support the transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains how stress occurs when individuals perceive that they do not have the resources to cope with the demands placed upon them.

The findings also highlight that stress is not just a personal experience but a systemic issue influenced by external conditions. Many of the stressors reported—such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and poor student behavior—are beyond the control of the individual teacher. This suggests that improving job performance cannot be achieved simply by telling teachers to “manage their stress better.” Rather, it calls for broader institutional support and intervention.

In the Ghanaian context, particularly in rural areas, these findings have serious implications. When teachers are stressed and demotivated, the quality of education is compromised. This can contribute to poor academic performance among students and high teacher turnover. As noted by Yeboah and Agyenim-Boateng (2017), stress and burnout are major contributors to teacher attrition in Ghana, especially in deprived districts.

The study therefore calls for targeted interventions to reduce teacher stress and improve job satisfaction. School administrators should be trained to recognize signs of stress and provide support systems. The Ghana Education Service could also introduce well-being programmes, stress management

workshops, and incentives for teachers working in difficult environments. If teachers feel valued and supported, their performance is likely to improve.

However, this study is not without limitations. It was conducted in one district, which means the findings may not fully represent the experiences of all teachers in Ghana. Also, the qualitative sample was small, though it provided rich insights. Future research could explore similar issues in urban settings or compare stress levels across different regions for broader generalisation.

Despite these limitations, the study has provided useful evidence that stress is a serious threat to teacher performance in rural Ghana. It confirms that stress affects both the emotional health and professional effectiveness of teachers, and this in turn affects students, schools, and educational goals.

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that occupational stress is a major factor affecting the job performance of basic school teachers in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District. The findings revealed that stress negatively impacts essential areas of teacher performance, including lesson preparation, punctuality, marking of assignments, and classroom engagement. The results also showed a strong negative correlation between stress levels and job performance, confirming that as stress increases, teachers’ effectiveness decreases.



Through both statistical data and personal narratives, it became clear that the challenges teachers face are not only personal but also structural. Inadequate teaching materials, large class sizes, and lack of administrative support were among the key stressors reported. Teachers shared how these pressures made them emotionally and physically exhausted, leading to reduced motivation and detachment from their professional roles.

These findings point to an urgent need for educational authorities, particularly the Ghana Education Service, to prioritise teacher well-being. Interventions must go beyond individual coping strategies and focus on improving working conditions, providing adequate resources, and training school leaders to offer the right support. Policies that promote teacher motivation and reduce stress are not only good for teachers but also essential for improving learning outcomes and retaining qualified teachers in rural schools.

In conclusion, stress must be recognised as a serious barrier to effective teaching. Addressing it requires a joint effort from government, school leadership, and the wider community. When teachers are supported and valued, they are more likely to perform at their best, and the entire education system stands to benefit.

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