

Article

# Wellness attitudes of secondary school teachers in Cross River State, Nigeria

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**This paper examines the wellness attitudes of Secondary School Teachers in Cross River State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research was adopted. 480 secondary school teachers were selected from both Public and Private Schools in Cross River State using deliberate sampling technique. A researcher-constructed questionnaire ( $r = .86$ ) was the main instrument for data collection. Percentage frequency was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that the teachers were having negative wellness attitude. It was recommended among others that Federal and States Ministries of Education in conjunction with STAN should include teachers' health related theme in the conferences. Also, school administrators should create wellness programs for the teachers. The public health practitioners were encouraged to extend their areas of operation to include schools, colleges and tertiary institutions.**

**Key words:** Wellness, attitudes, secondary, school teachers, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

A teacher in professional usage is a person trained or recognized and employed to help learning in classroom situation, in order to achieve set educational goals. This refers to anybody that imparts knowledge or attempts to help someone acquire certain skills, attitude and creates, by influencing desirable changes in the behavior of his pupils (Unachukwu, 1990).

In line with the above, Afangideh (2001) was of the view that a teacher is someone who has gone through a level of professional training and is both certified and actually teaching in an institution. This includes professional teachers in nursery or pre-primary schools, primary schools, post-primary and tertiary institutions.

In order to achieve all the said roles of a teacher, certain competences are required of a teacher. Afangideh (2001) gave the following among others as needed competences of the teacher:

1. Professional preparation of the teacher.
2. Knowledge of the learner.
3. Leadership ability.
4. Health and physical fitness.
5. Good fitness behavior.

6. Emotional stability.

In the past, little or nothing was documented about the health and physical status of the teachers in Nigeria. Emphasis has always been on how teachers can improve on other needed competences (Ogunjimi and Yusuf, 2006).

In view of the fact that teachers are relatively few in number that is, compared with the high population of students under their care. The need thus, arise to take a look at what becomes of their personal health after discharging their voluminous assignments. Teachers spend so much time doing mental gymnastics without commensurate efforts to take care of their health status (Ogunjimi and Yusuf, 2006). So much time is given to this process to the extent that often, the body and their wellness status end up last on the priority list forgetting that nothing else matters without health.

Wellness attitudes are phase attitudes/practices that contribute to the development of health and increase the functional capacity of an individual. Though, many factors can be responsible for an imbalance in the state or complete well being of individuals. An individual's behavior has been considered the most important factor in relation to his health because it is through behavior that ones can change or adapt to his environment in a way that it will increase or reduce the opportunity for living a

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**Table 1.** Demographic analysis of respondents.

Sex		Qualifications		Marital status	
M	F	First degree	Others	Married	Single
247	233	346	134	329	151
51.5%	48.5%	72.1%	27.9%	68.5%	31.5%

**Table 2.** Frequency and percentage of responses to exercise wellness items.

Items	Positive	Negative	Not sure
1	213	252	15
2	107	372	01
3	241	237	02
4	197	275	08
5	201	263	16
Total	959	1399	42
Percentage	40%	58.3%	1.7%

safe and healthful life (Akinbile and Akorede, 2006).

In Nigeria, the number of qualified teachers seems to be few and hard to come by. This development explains why they are always saddled with the responsibility of taking care of very high number of students. These weights of their assignment hardly allow them to have sufficient free moment to take care of their health. But, studies has shown that a person who is committed to wellness is continually, striving within the framework of his limitations (Dunn, 1977; Fineberg and Wilson, 1996).

This paper therefore concerned itself with the wellness attitude of teachers using secondary school teachers in Cross River State as a case study. Efforts were made to identify the various component of wellness profiles (Exercise, Nutrition, Safety, Tobacco and Alcohols and Stress) and recommendations that could be useful in having appropriate wellness program for teachers were made.

## METHOD AND PROCEDURE

A descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. 480 secondary schools teachers were selected from both private and public secondary schools in Cross River State using deliberate sampling technique.

The main instrument for the data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire that was validated by the researchers and two other colleagues in the department. The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A sought information on the teachers personal data while section B sought information on the wellness attitudes considering some components of wellness (Exercise, Nutrition, Safety, Tobacco and Alcohols and Stress).

The researchers personally went on field to collect the data. On the spot collection was adopted to ensure that all the forms were collected. The data collected were converted into frequency counts in order to work out the percentage for positive, negative and not sure responses.

## RESULTS

In Table 1, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented. Of the 480 respondents, 247 (51.5%) were males while 233 (48.5%) were females. In terms of academic qualifications, 346 (72.1%) were having first degree. Teachers who were either having post graduate diploma, PhD or any other additional qualifications were grouped as others (27.9%). The teachers' marital status showed that 329 (68.5%) were married while 151 (31.5%) were single.

Table 2 showed that 40% of the respondents agreed that they have positive wellness attitude towards exercise, 58.3% respondents disagreed while 1.7% could not decide.

Table 3 showed that 36.5% of the respondents agreed having positive wellness attitude toward their dietary practice, 60.3% respondents disagreed while 3.2% were not sure.

The result in Table 4 showed that 30.3% of the respondents are having positive safety practices while 52.2% are not. The remaining 17.5% are not sure whether their safety practice is positive or not.

In Table 5, the result showed that 35.8% respondents were having positive wellness attitude toward tobacco and alcohols, 58% are having negative attitude while 6.2% could not ascertain their attitude toward tobacco.

Table 6 results revealed that 53.8% of the total respondents have a negative approach to stress management, 35.2% of the respondents have a positive approach while the remaining 11% could not ascertain their response to stress.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

From the fore goings, it is apparent that most of the

**Table 3.** Frequency and percentage of responses to nutritional wellness items.

Items	Positive	Negative	Not sure
1	360	120	-
2	217	259	04
3	16	413	51
4	165	302	13
5	118	353	09
Total	876	1447	77
Percentage	36.5%	60.3%	3.2%

**Table 4.** Frequency and percentage of responses to safety practices items.

Items	Positive	Negative	Not sure
1	215	259	06
2	230	241	09
3	39	134	307
4	243	232	05
5	-	387	93
Total	727	1253	420
Percentage	30.3%	52.2%	17.5%

**Table 5.** Frequency and percentage of responses to tobacco and alcohol related items.

Items	Positive	Negative	Not sure
1	243	222	15
2	261	206	13
3	231	247	02
4	46	393	41
5	77	325	78
Total	858	1393	149
Percentage	35.8%	58.0%	6.2%

**Table 6.** Frequency and percentage of response to stress items.

Items	Positive	Negative	Not sure
1	249	219	12
2	16	293	171
3	267	211	02
4	77	225	78
5	236	242	02
Total	845	1290	265
Percentage	35.2%	53.8%	11%

secondary school teachers (58.3%) have negative attitude towards exercise against 40% whose attitude are positive and 1.7% that are not sure. It can be concluded that secondary school teachers are not having good

exercise culture.

The dietary behavior of the teachers also showed that 60.3% of the teachers have poor dietary behavior compared with 36.5% who claim to be observing good

diet attitudes and 3.2% that could not decide. With this information, it can be said that secondary school teachers are not conscious of their diet.

On safety practices, 52.2% of the secondary school teachers observe positive safety measures while 30.3% does not and 12.5% undecided. Based on these data, it can be concluded that most of the secondary school teachers have poor safety attitudes.

Of the 480 secondary school teachers, 58% were exposed to either second-hand smoke or mainstream smoke. This same group also consumes relatively high quantity of alcohol. 35.8% portrayed positive attitude and 6.2% of the teachers' attitudes towards tobacco and alcohol could not be ascertained. With this data, it can be said that secondary school teachers' attitudes towards alcohol and smoke are negative.

53% of the secondary school teachers were not able to manage stress related issues properly while 32.2% were able to cope and manage some stress related matters. The remaining 11% were unable to answer. So, the secondary school teachers' attitude towards stress can be said to be negative.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:-

1. Federal and States Ministries of Education in conjunction with Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) should take urgent steps towards educating the teachers on the need to embrace positive wellness practices.
2. The Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) should also include themes that are related to the status of teachers in the conference.
3. Public Health practitioners should be encouraged to extend their areas of operation to include the schools, colleges and tertiary institutions. By this step, they would be able to help assist teachers in these various establishments take appropriate responsibilities for their health needs.
4. The school administrators should try as much as possible to create wellness programs for the teachers by creating days for health related lectures and general fitness.

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