

**LECTURERS' AWARENESS OF STRESS AND ATTITUDE TO STRESS MANAGEMENT – A  
CASE STUDY OF UNICAL AND CRUTECH, CALABAR**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The art of managing work stress is a vital aspect of addressing the increasing negative effect of work stress. Stress management can be demanding because its application is sometimes unique and routine. It is driven by awareness and effectively sustained by positive attitude. Against this backdrop, this study examined the influence of awareness of stress on lecturers' attitude to stress management. A descriptive survey design and stratified random sampling was used to select samples from all the faculties in the two Universities in Calabar Metropolis. The research questions set out to know the relationship between lecturers' awareness of the causes/effects of stress and their attitude to stress management. Two hypotheses were raised and tested to examine the significant relationship between lecturers' awareness of the causes of stress as it affects their attitude to stress management on one hand and their awareness of the effect of stress on the other as it also impacts their attitude to stress management. Theoretical and empirical literature were reviewed to gain some insights into previous findings made and available gaps to be explored. Theories of reasoned action was found to be a useful theoretical framework for this study. Using a descriptive research design with survey as the research method, a structured questionnaire was administered to 475 lecturers. These lecturers were selected through a stratified random sampling method. Data were collected on lecturers' demographic details, awareness of the causes/effect of stress and attitude to stress management. Quantitative method was adopted in analyzing the data. Inferential (deductive) statistics of Pearson Product Moment, was the statistical tool used for the analysis. Findings from this study show that there is a significant relationship between lecturer's awareness of stress and attitude to stress management. This study recommends a strengthened effort in raising awareness of the causes and effect of work stress among lecturers in the Universities. It is also recommended that stress management units should be set up in the Universities.*

**Keywords:** Attitude to Stress, Awareness of Stress, Stress Management

**Background to the study**

Stress response is a body's way of reacting to stressful experiences that manifest in individuals with different levels of intensity and symptoms. It affects the physical, mental and emotional health of every individual. It becomes dangerous when it is not promptly managed with effective stress coping strategies. This is because the hormones which is usually generated during stress response need to be properly harnessed and used for bracing up to the stressful challenge of the time. When this is not done, the stress response becomes prolonged leading to unpleasant health problems. A stressful situation is expected to be addressed promptly in order to avoid different health problems like depression, amnesia, mental disorder, breakdown of immune defense system, cancer and insomnia (Nwakwesi, 1999).

In recent years, stress related problems have been noted as one of the leading causes of deaths, (AIS 2016). Some of such deaths maybe as a result of stress symptoms which were misinterpreted to be symptoms and signs of common infections like malaria or typhoid fever. The individual is then given drugs to treat these ailments without adequate diagnosis. This scenario has led to drug overuse, self-medication and unpleasant experiences among workers (Nwakwesi, 2000).

Stress management are strategies learned and practiced over time to manage work stress. They are generated by awareness and nurtured by positive attitudes. This positive attitude is simply a commitment to stay safe by routinely employing different stress coping skills whenever an individual is faced with stressful experiences.

Understanding people's awareness and attitudes to work stress is an important step in establishing effective stress management strategies and skills. There is however, limited clarity in defining the nature or make-up of the relationship between them. It can be explained with the understanding that awareness motivates the purposive search for and acquisition of knowledge and such knowledge acquired defines the spectacles with which any individual views and interpret experiences. This understanding throws light on why some people view certain life events as disheartening barriers while others welcome the same events as interesting and surmountable challenges of everyday life.

General stress management strategies exist but its effectiveness is better achieved by its targeted application. This therefore means that an understanding of the dynamics of stressors and its impact on the body is an important tool in shaping stress management skills and strategies.

In our daily interactions within our external environment we are confronted with different stressors which impact our socio-psychological system in different ways. Such stressors, otherwise called the causes of stress, trigger the stress responses within the internal human body thereby producing hormones needed for prompt and effective attention to stressful experience. These stressful experiences fall within the normal range of human functioning and adverse life circumstances. They include activities like preparing for a difficult job interview, failing an important exam, getting fired or losing a loved one (Ejue, 2013; Bower & Segerstrom, 2004).

Causes of stress vary between individuals depending on social and environmental factors. Some of such social factors which may include interpersonal relationships, affect individuals differently and are sometimes also influenced by the available physical structures or natural conditions of the environment. It is therefore possible that workers' interpersonal relationships combining with unfavourable working conditions and uncomfortable office conditions are important indicators of the causes of stress in the work place. The impact of these factors on an individual manifest in the visible signs and symptoms of stress which also vary between people. This is because every individual reacts to stress in different ways depending on their physical makeup and personality type. Some people may sweat in the palm and feet during stress response while others may experience abnormal heart beat. However, one's ability to identify these signs and promptly address the situation is the most important aspect of living in today's dynamic world.

### **Statement of the problem**

Our modern fast-paced lifestyle with its attendant social problems of pressurizing demands from families, friends and workplaces has impacted in significant ways on every human in spite of gender, age, social or professional status. Workers are often in search of new jobs in a bid to find more financially rewarding jobs with minimal level of stress (Ejue, 2013; APA, 2012). This observed social problem has not been very pleasing because of the steadily increasing cases of sudden deaths among workers and other associated problems like frequent loss of working hours due to absenteeism and regular visits to hospitals which invariably may be for stress related problems (Nwachukwu, 2015; AIS, 2012; Nwakwesi, 2000). This scenario is fast becoming a modern day economic and occupational dilemma and it is an indicator of an inadequate stress management culture among workers (Ofoegbu, & Nwadiani, 2006). Increasing sensitization and mobilization programmes, aimed at empowering workers with health information and knowledge have not adequately enhanced positive attitudes to stress management among workers (Palmer, 2014; Simon, 2014; AIS, 2012; Nwakwesi, 2000). Many workers are more concerned meeting deadlines for contracts and other business that give them money (Karasek, 1990). They have little or no time for stress manage routine.

In the same vein, lecturers appear to be overloaded with work as they sometimes lament about tight schedules and crowded work demands (Ofoegbu, & Nwadiani, 2006). Some lecturers dismiss the talk about stress noting that they are really not bothered about what work stress is because it is simply a part of everyday life. They seem to be more concerned with meeting up with the daily academic demands without bothering to develop personal routine activities aimed at managing their work stresses.

In recent times, CRUTECH and UNICAL have experienced unprecedented sudden death of academic staffs (Ejue, 2013; Ofoegbu, & Nwadiani, 2006; CRUTECH & UNICAL General notice boards). This may be partly due to the stress of meeting up with choking school calendar and pressurizing work demands or it may be as a result of pathological infections which may have been aggravated by work stress (Ofoegbu, & Nwadiani, 2006). It is therefore imperative to carry out this study in order to ascertain the level of awareness of the causes of stress among lecturers and also examine how such awareness impacts their attitude to stress management.

Within the available studies conducted on workplace stress in different institutions and organizations there is no known studies carried out to examine how lecturers' level of awareness of workplace stress influences their attitude to stress management in Universities in Calabar Metropolis. It is in view of this yearning gap that this study seeks to examine the influence of lecturers' awareness of stress on their attitude to stress management in Universities in Calabar Metropolis.

### **Research questions**

This study was guided by the following questions:

- i) What is the relationship between lecturers' awareness of the causes of stress and their attitude to stress management?
- ii) What is the relationship between lecturers' awareness of the effect of stress and their attitude to stress management?

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine lecturers' awareness of stress and attitude to stress management in Universities in Calabar Metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specific objectives of this study are as follows;

- i) To establish the relationship between lecturers' awareness of the causes of stress and their attitude to stress management,
- ii) To establish the relationship between lecturers' awareness of the effect of stress and their attitude to stress management,

### **Statement of hypotheses**

In view of the above objectives, two research hypotheses were formulated as follows;

- i) There is no significant relationship between Lecturers' awareness of the causes of stress and their attitude to stress management.
- ii) There is no significant relationship between lecturers' awareness of the effect of stress and their attitude to stress management.

### **Significance of the study**

This study is a timely academic effort to provide useful data on the challenging problems of stress management among lecturers in the two Universities in Calabar Metropolis. Findings from this study will provide important reference materials that can be used to develop programmes aimed at addressing the dynamic issues of workplace stress in the Universities. The results of this study can be used to formulate theories that will provide useful research platforms for further studies on workplace stress while also explaining different aspects of attitude to stress management in the Universities. This study also provides significant empirical data which are relevant in updating the stock of information on the problems of work place stress among lecturers.

The methodology adopted in this study can be used or modified for further studies in other new areas of workplace stress or in duplicating this study in other Universities while using the findings of this research as important reference points. This will be with an aim to compare findings and to make theoretical deductions for a better understanding of the dynamic problems of attitude to stress management among lecturers.

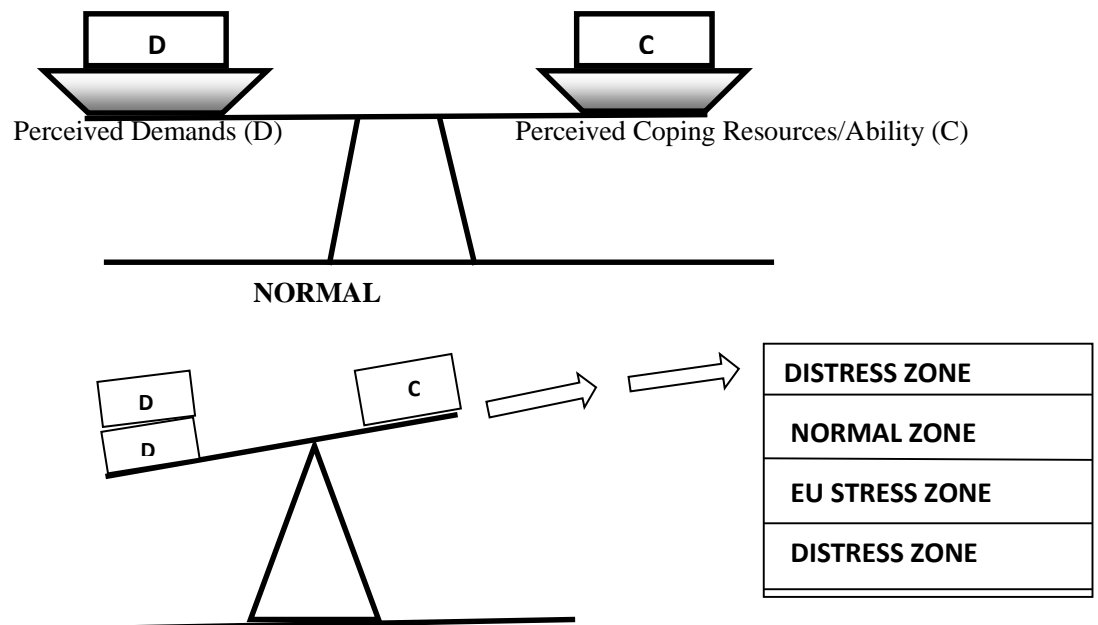
Practically, lecturers will be encouraged, through the findings of this study, to adopt attitudinal change by having a more proactive attitude in identifying symptoms of stress and promptly managing such for a healthier self. As a result, lecturers’ over dependence on drugs, self-medication and frequent visits to hospitals will be reduced. Creativity and efficiency will be enhanced for improved productivity at work. The overall effect of this will lead to improved lecturers’/Students’ relationship because lecturers will do more to improve their social relationships with colleagues and students as a stress management strategy. Learning atmosphere in the two Institutions will be improved and unnecessary friction between students and lecturers will also be reduced.

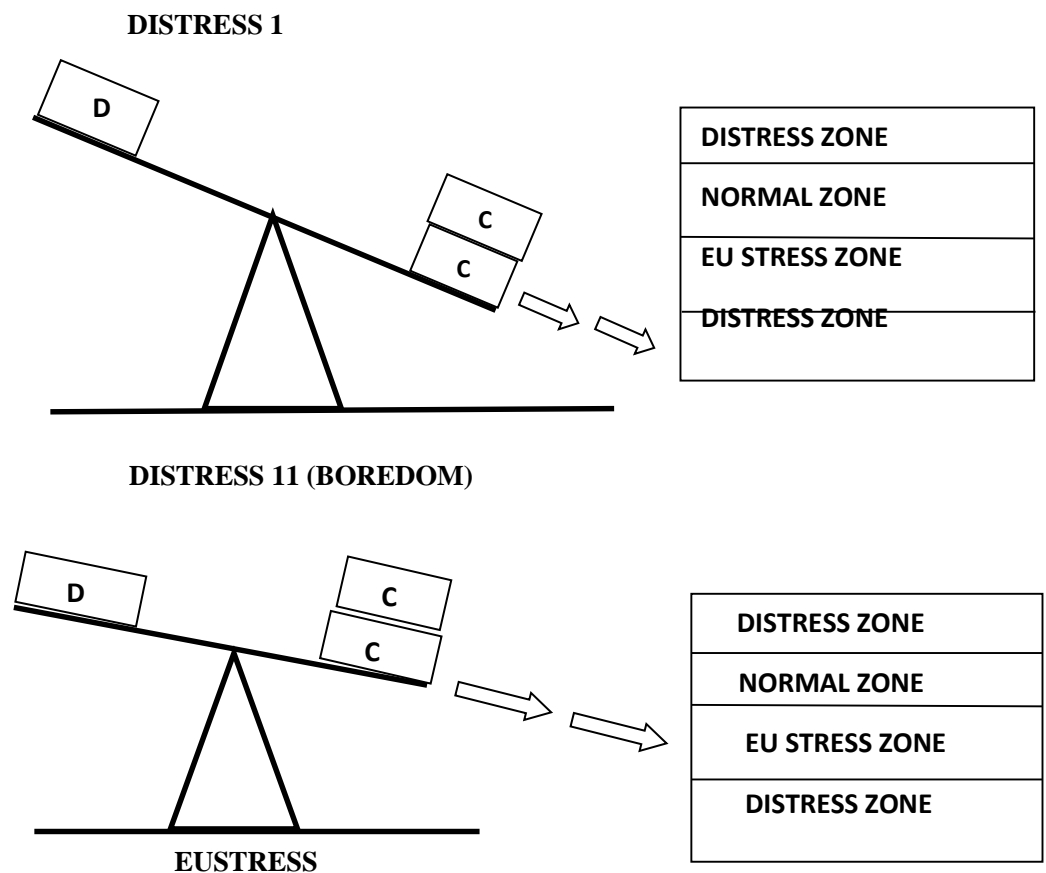
It should also be noted here that University authorities will find this study to be very useful in their attempt to address the problem of work stress among lecturers especially with regards to the causes of stress in the University environment and within different work schedules. This will aid policy formulation with regards to reducing the causes of work stress and improving lecturers’ attitude to stress management in the two Universities. Other supportive health promotion agencies will also find the highlights from the findings of this study to be quite helpful in their effort to develop intervention programmes aimed at enhancing positive attitudes to stress management among lecturers. Finally, this study adds to the continuity of academic knowledge because life is a continuous sphere of research and without research knowledge is void.

**The Phenomenon of Stress**

Stress is an inseparable part of everyday life. Every living being experiences some form of stress though in different ways. This is because human daily interactions within the external social and physical environments impact in one way or another on the internal body system. This explains why Rice (2000) notes that conceptualization of stress and the stress responses vary in form and context throughout the centuries. In the same vein, Nwakwesi (2000) notes with a strong tilt on the cognitive domain that different individuals have varying ideas about stress. Individuals’ different socio-psychological processes may therefore present to them a balance/imbalance resource between the daily demands made on them and their perceived ability to brace up to it. This simply means that the factor that determines what stress is to a person depends on how he/she cognitively weighs the personal ability he/she has to brace up to the challenges confronting him/her. This cognitive process represents the strength booster an individual needs to confront the stressor or flee from it. Nwakwesi (2000) illustrates this scenario with a diagram of the stress response as captured in figure 1 below. The diagram throws more light on the cognitive process during stress response.

*Mis-Match between Perceived Demand and Perceived Ability to Cope*





**FIGURE 1** Illustration of the stress response  
*Source: Nwakwesi I. (2000)*

When an individual cognitively perceives a balanced personal resource to match the workload, he or she will harness the available stress hormones and brace up to the stressor thereby making that stress experience a good stress. This good stress is in the normal zone and it is called the Eustress. On the other hand, the stress experience becomes bad stress which is called distress, if the individual cognitively perceives that he/she does not have the personal resource or ability to effectively confront or tackle the situation.

The illustration in figure 1 shows the different levels of stress starting from the onset to the cognitive level and to the subjective decisions taken in order to address the situation. This diagram gives an interesting illustration as it uses a weighing scale to present the influence of awareness on attitude to stress management. The idea is simply that when the weight of the demand is heavy on the individual and his perceived ability to cope is low the pointer moves to the distress zone which is bad stress. The eustress which is the good stress is experienced when an individual's ability to cope with the weight of the demand is equal to the weight of the demand. These processes and the direction taken is cognitively determined by the individual. This scenario strengthens the fact that positive attitude is a vital factor in stress management.

Attitude to stress response and management tend to be an inseparable duo. They are cognitively intertwined and may be conscious or unconscious. The dynamic process of three stages known as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) presented by Selye (1978) further describes this performance relationship between attitude and stress response. GAS notes that during the first stage, individuals react first by mobilizing their natural resources to deal with it or escape from it. This first level, is the stage of 'alarm'. The next stage is the

‘resistance’ stage which involves ways of coping with the alarm stage by trying to reverse it. The ‘exhaustion’ stage, which is the third stage, is noticed if an individual is continuously exposed to stressors and is unable to harness the stress hormones effectively. This illustration clearly summarizes the different steps in stress response up to the final stage with dangerous consequence. It is a simple picture of everyday life because no one is stress free.

### **Stress Management**

Stress management refers to learned strategies, thoughts and actions we use to address stressful situations (Palmer, 2014; Ikpeme, 2001; Nwakwesi, 2000). They are skills an individual can use to maintain a socio-psychological balance and enhance optimum concentration and efficiency at work. These skills involve complex processes that vary between individuals and places, depending on policies, social environment and available structures/resources (Wahab, 2010; Ikpeme, 2001; Nwakwesi 2000;). What this means is that strategies that work for some people may not work for others. Wahab (2010) supports this argument in his study to examine the different stress management strategies among Artisans in Construction Industry in Nigeria. He explains that 90.5 percent of the respondents surveyed organize their time to manage their stresses while 67.8 percent maintain 7 to 8 hours sleep to reduce stress. A significant 56 percent of the respondents cope with regular exercise while a few others indulge in Alcohol. This also show that there are variations in types of stress management strategies used by different individuals.

In light of this finding, we are able to gain some insight into Seyle (1978) analysis of stress coping strategies which he introduced in his later model describing coping as the process of adapting to stressful situation. He notes that by removing stressors from our lives and not allowing certain neutral events to become stressors, and by developing a proficiency in dealing with conditions we do not want to avoid, and seeking relaxation or diversion from the demand, we have equipped ourselves to work effectively with stress. This means that every individual has to make deliberate effort to manage his/her work stress effectively. Such efforts which represent attitudes can also be understood within ‘Social Support, Stress and the Buffering Hypothesis’ (Cohen & Mckay 1984) which echoes the importance of social support system as a stress management strategy. This hypothesis states that psychosocial stress can have harmful impact on the well-being of people who have little or no social support while the effects is a lot reduced for people with stronger support systems. What this means is that individuals especially lecturers who have strong support from family and friends will have good outlet for relieving stress. This is because as individuals discuss their fears and burdens with colleagues, friends or family members, they receive some relief that calms their nerves and reduce the adverse effect of stress. They are also sometimes encouraged by the social support to try some known stress management strategies which have worked well for other members within the support system. There could also be cases where the social support group occasionally invite health experts to educate the group or family members on variety of health issues which sometimes include stress management.

This type of psychological and non-psychological forms of social support highlights the important component of the Social support hypothesis. In explaining the distinction between psychological and non-psychological forms of social support, Cohen & Mckey (1984) note that Psychological assistance simply refers to the provision of ideas while non-psychological or tangible support looks at the provision of tangible materials or resources. Psychological support is further subdivided into appraisal support (which contributes to one’s knowledge or cognitive system) and emotional supports which contribute to meet one’s basic social-emotional needs (Cohen & Mckey 1984). This perspective shows the relevance of social media and love relationship in stress management. Placing this in context, lecturers who are active on social media or who enjoy social interactions may find such activity as a good stress management strategy. Those who are into a happy love relationship will also find that to be useful in relieving their stresses.

Basically, in buffering hypothesis, the following distinctions are made; tangible, appraisal and emotional support. The different stress coping strategies in use today can therefore be classified under one or two of these support systems. These support systems according to Cohen & Mckey (1984) work in one or two of the following ways;

- 1) Suggesting alternative coping strategies of stress based on their previous experiences.
- 2) Facilitating certain therapeutic behaviours like exercise, personal hygiene, or proper nutrition through social pressure or otherwise.
- 3) Encouraging individuals within their network to focus more on positive things in their lives in order to distract attention from stressors (Cohen & Mckey, 1984).

The above levels of social support can be captured at different spheres of human social interactions. A striking example is the period of grief and hurt. During such situations family and friends visit the individual giving him/her strong words of encouragement and comfort. Although this is an important aspect of Social support it goes beyond receiving words of encouragement from others, it also involves an interplay between self-acceptance and kind words from others. Cohen and Mckey (1984) in explaining this further note that emotional support mechanism emphasizes persons' evaluations and feelings about themselves. This simply means that the support system will encourage interpersonal relationships that bolster individual's self-esteem or feelings (Simon, (2014). Ikpeme, 2001; Nwakwesi, 2000).

### **Attitude to stress management**

Understanding peoples' knowledge and attitudes to stress management is important to the development of effective stress management strategies, (Simon, 2014; Pritchard, Wilson & Yamnitz 2007; NwaKwesi, 2000). Studies have however, been largely inconclusive in coming to a definitive relationship between the two. For example, while Martin (2012) notes that knowledge of stress is a key determinant in helping people to effectively manage work stress, Young (2001); Nwakwesi (2000) among others, suggest that knowledge of stress must be backed by conscious effort to develop effective stress management skills and good eating habit. Developing and maintaining routine stress management strategies is therefore a challenge which involves solving the puzzle of unravelling the network of relationship which seems to exist between awareness, knowledge and attitude (Martin, 2012; Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007; Pritchard, & McIntosh, 2003; Pritchard,).

The general assumption therefore is that providing information and knowledge (that is awareness) about stress and its negative impact should result in enlightened attitudes. Pritchard and McIntosh, (2003); Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, (2007) and Martin, (2012) have noted that awareness and attitude to stress management may not necessarily be positively correlated even though there is also the general assumption that attitudes are significant predictors of behavior. Fishbein & Ajzen (2006) have also touched on this discourse in their explanation that the centrality of 'attitude' remains unchanged with regards to behavioral studies, but there is "little agreement about what an attitude is, how it is formed or changed, or what role, if any, it plays in influencing or determining behavior".

In an attempt to analyze the influence of attitude on stress management Simon (2014) notes that surviving stress in the workplace takes a positive attitude and a certain degree of resilience which begins with managing your reaction to a stressful environment or stressful event. Such a process requires a conscious and deliberate effort by the individual. This throws more light on why Palmer (2014) observed that if one compares the people who often look relaxed with the people who look stressed, one will find some important differences. The people who are relaxed have much better self-control of their attention (Palmer, 2014). They look, listen to, and feel what they want when they want to. They have a positive attitude to stress management. They are able to concentrate on a particular thing at a time and they either finish the work they are doing or they schedule time to finish it before they go on to something else.

People who are often stressed usually have some difficulty in controlling their attentions because they are fixed on something that is weighing them down. This scenario strengthens the fact that an individual's attitude to stress management is reflected in the deliberate effort he/she makes to acquire and routinely use stress management skills (Simon, 2014; Ikpeme, 2001). The ability of people to concentrate attention on each activity at a time goes a long way to influence how much work they can handled within a specific period. (Palmer, 2014; Ikpeme, 2001; Nwakwesi, 2000). The activity they concentrate on affects their

attitude. Invariably, people who experience stress and maintain a positive attitude to managing their stress will have little or no difficulty controlling their attention and focusing on daily work demands.

#### **Awareness of the causes of stress and attitude to stress management**

Causes of stress refer to the different socio-economic, political or environmental factors that trigger the stress response in an individual. These factors vary between people and groups. Thoits (1991) in her analysis of 'The Merging Theory and Stress Research' on identity-relevant stressors notes an important factor in accounting prudently for social status disparity in psychological stress. This means that hierarchical identity ranking and differential resources exposes individuals to more identity-threatening stressors or identity-enhancing experiences (Thoits, 1991). An interplay of this nature largely explains differences in status with regards to psychological stress more fully than conventional measures of life events and chronic strains.

However, although stress response is a general phenomenon, there are variations in the causes of stress and types of responses which is partly determined by the social and physical environment of a person (Palmer, 2014; Oghenetega, Ejedafiru & Rabi, 2014; Smith 2007; Rice, 2000;). Such variations in causes/types of stress can also be observed among different groups of people and individuals even when they are exposed to the same environmental and social conditions. This explains why Ofoegbu and Nwadiani (2006) in a study to examine the level of work stress among academic staff in Nigerian Universities note the following;

*...The level of work stress among lecturers in Nigerian Universities will not be different with regards to the variables of ownership (either government or private), gender or marital status. Lecturers in Nigerian Universities are stressed significantly whether they work in a federal or State University. The level of work stress among lecturers differs significantly with regards to experience and age. The highest significant factor influencing stress is Strike and School interruption,*

Other variables identified by the study as significant stressors include; Lack of instructional materials, collation of exams results, invigilation of examination, Delay/irregular payment of salary, campus militancy, high cost of living, poor office accommodation, lack of research facilities, lack of annual leave and underfunding (Ofoegbu & Nwadiani 2006). These varying causes of stress may impact lectures' attitude to stress management differently depending on the nature and type of resources and facilities available to them.

In light of this debate some literatures (Oghenetega, Ejedafiru, & Rabi, 2014; Adedipe, 2013; Sulaiman & Akinsanya, 2011) have argued that State owned Universities tend to have more stressful working conditions than Private and Federal Owned Universities. Various opportunities enjoyed by staff of Private Universities are lacking in State-owned Universities. Oghenetega et al (2014) in supporting this fact note, in their study of 'Stress and Instructors' Efficiency in Ogun State Universities', that there is a noticeable disparity between the nature of work stress among academic staff of government owned Universities and private owned Universities in Nigeria. This, they added, may be as a result of differences in working conditions and infrastructural facilities. Causes of work stress identified include job insecurity, lack of payment of allowances, intimidation, fluctuating work schedule, demanding work schedule, unfavourable policies in school system and too many courses to handle per semester.

This therefore means that Lecturers in different Universities are faced with different work environments and work conditions all of which are important influence on their levels of stress and attitude to stress management (Ejue, 2013). Adedipe (2013) also noted this in his paper on 'Strains and Stressful conditions in the Nigerian University System: Sustainable Quality Assurance Prospects by Private Universities'. An insightful exposé is given in his paper on different problems faced by different Universities in Nigeria. It was observed that Federal and States Universities who in spite of using meager resources to make huge contributions to national development are victims of poor political will (Adedipe, 2013). This is because there is a lack of determined effort to carefully diagnose the problems of Nigerian Universities with an aim to adequately address them. Some problems faced by the Universities include incessant strike actions and federal developmental policies not being extended to the State Universities (Adedipe, 2013). This leaves the Universities in difficult



conditions with poor funding and inadequate infrastructures to grapple with. Without doubt therefore, causes of stress differ between people, places and profession.

The existence of varying causes of stress as noted in table 1 below strengthens the proposition that individuals' vulnerability to stress do also vary between people in some instances and similar in others (Hankin & Abela 2005). However, the central issue that can be observed in different literature reviewed in this study is the fact that factors that trigger stress exist in all workplaces, homes and communities but such factors impact every human in different ways.

**TABLE 2**  
Causes of stress

<i>Common external causes of stress</i>	
• Major life changes	• Financial problems
• Work or school	• Being too busy
• Relationship difficulties	• Children and family
<i>Common internal causes of stress</i>	
• Chronic worry	• Unrealistic expectations/Perfectionism
• Pessimism	• Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility
• Negative self-talk	• All-or-nothing attitude

Source: Melinda, Robert, and Jeanne, (2014)

### **Awareness of the effect of stress and attitude to stress management**

Effect of stress involves the changes one experiences within his/her physical, mental and emotional process which also impacts in one way or another on their social relationships. Physical, mental and emotional life is thereby affected as the productive life and progress of the individual is also destabilized. This is due largely to the fact that different factors contribute to the health of every individual as no human can exist in isolation from other humans and the environment. Every human is a social animal with strong fundamental desire and needs to maintain social ties. He shares ideas or knowledge with other humans as he explores his living environment. This enables him foster a feeling of social inclusion which is needed for improved social security and provision of life's needs (Ikpeme, 2001; Stokols, 1992; Cohen & McKay 1984).

The effect of stress often manifests first in different symptoms which also vary between individuals. Such symptoms are body's ways of responding to stressful experiences. They are processes which involve the effort of the body organs to address stress experience and the physical changes observed in the body during the process (Ikpeme, 2001; Young, 2001; Nwakwesi, 2000). Symptoms of stress vary in people depending on their environment, attitude, biological makeup and knowledge of stress management strategies (Nwakwesi 2000). Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (2000) notes this finding as they explain that stress symptoms can be physical, psychosocial, and behavioural in nature.

Some common Symptoms of stress are captured in a publication by Melinda, Robert, and Jeanne, (2014) as seen on table 2 below. This table shows an interesting list of commonly overlooked physiological changes in the body. The list presented on this table is not exhaustive and exclusive to stress but they indicate important warning signs of the onset of stress and prolonged stress.

TABLE 2  
Stress warning signs and symptoms

<p>Cognitive Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Inability to concentrate</li> <li>• Poor judgment</li> <li>• Seeing only the negative</li> <li>• Anxious or racing thoughts</li> <li>• Constant worrying</li> </ul>	<p>Emotional Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moodiness</li> <li>• Irritability or short temper</li> <li>• Agitation, inability to relax</li> <li>• Feeling overwhelmed</li> <li>• Sense of loneliness and isolation</li> <li>• Depression or general unhappiness</li> </ul>
<p>Physical Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aches and pains</li> <li>• Diarrhea or constipation</li> <li>• Nausea, dizziness</li> <li>• Chest pain, rapid heartbeat</li> <li>• Loss of sex drive</li> <li>• Frequent colds</li> </ul>	<p>Behavioral Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating more or less</li> <li>• Sleeping too much or too little</li> <li>• Isolating yourself from others</li> <li>• Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities</li> <li>• Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax</li> <li>• Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)</li> </ul>

*Sources: Melinda, Robert, and Jeanne, (2014)*

A glance at the above classification, show that some people can present multiple symptoms from the list of symptoms while others may present a few. We can imagine instances where lecturers may be experiencing some of the above symptoms but may not be aware that such symptoms are stress related (Ikpeme, 2001; Nwakwesi, 2001). Overlooking such warning signs may lead to stress symptoms being wrongly interpreted to be symptoms of diseases like malaria, typhoid or even witchcraft attack and therefore wrongly attacked with drugs. Having a good knowledge of the effect of stress with its observed symptoms is therefore an important factor in any effort to manage stress effectively.

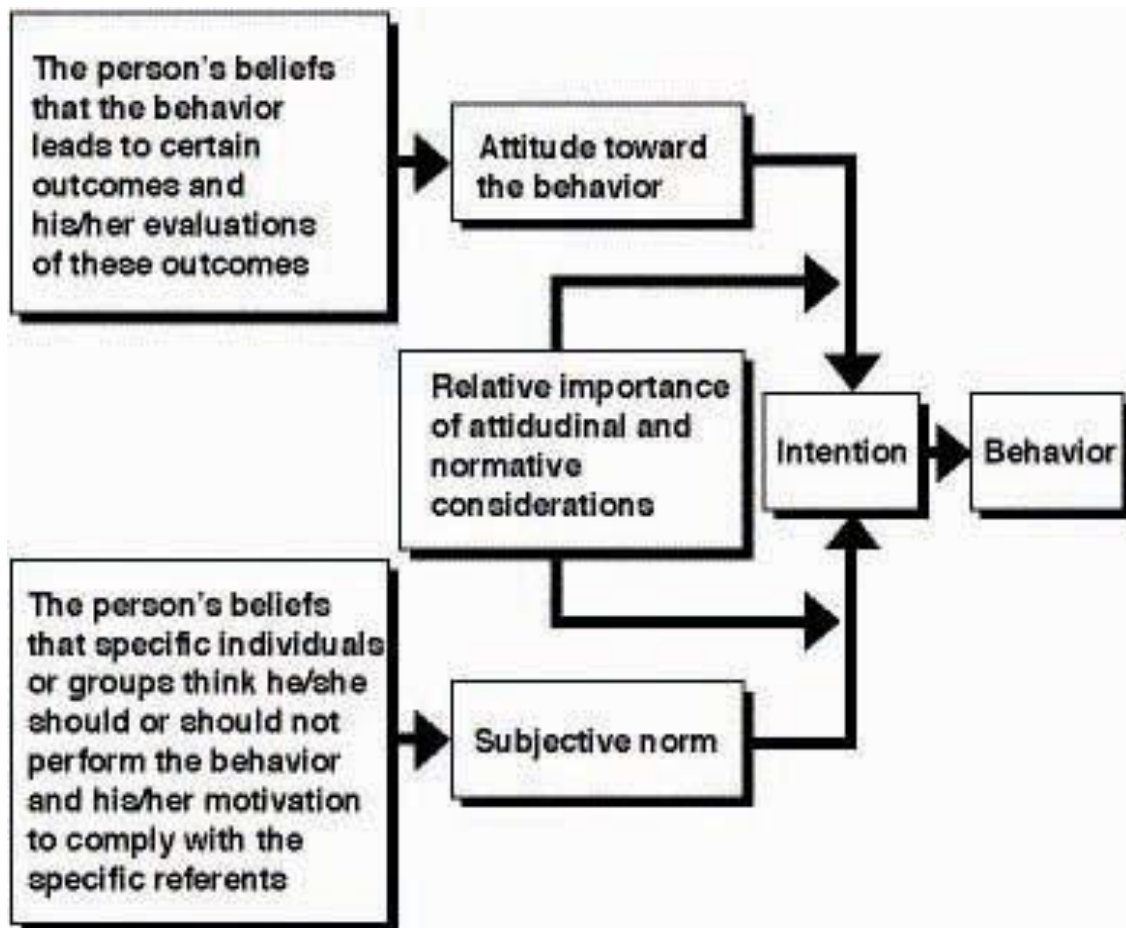
### **Theoretical framework**

#### *Theory of Reasoned Action*

Theory of Reasoned action was first proposed by Fishbain and Ajzen, in 1980. The Theory is an attempt to understand influencing factors on people’s intentions to engage in different activities. It deals with the antecedents of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control which come into play in determining intentions and actions (Fishbain & Ajzen, 2006). According to the proponents, human behaviour is guided by three kinds of considerations namely; beliefs about the likely consequences of the behaviour (this is behavioural beliefs); beliefs about the normative expectations of others (this is normative beliefs); and beliefs about the presence of factors that may enhance or hinder performance of the behaviour (this is control beliefs). Behavioural beliefs creates an accommodating or unaccommodating attitude towards the behaviour; Normative beliefs leads to perceived social pressure or subjective norm; and Control beliefs give rise to perceived behavioural control. Attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perception of behavioural control lead to the formation of a behavioural intention. This therefore means that the more favourable the attitude and subjective the norm in addition to a great perceived control, the stronger the person’s intention to perform the behaviour in question (Fishbain and Ajzen, 2006). Given a sufficient degree of actual control over the behaviour, people are expected to carry out their intentions when the opportunity arises. Figure 2 below, is a schematic presentation of the theory by the Proponents.

Figure 2 shows how a pre-acquired belief about the possible outcome or effect of actions largely influences intentions and behaviour. This Model is useful in explaining how Lecturers’ attitudes to stress management are possibly determined by the ideas, information and knowledge they have received about workplace stress.

This theory is also a helpful guide in identifying influencing factors on lecturers' use or nonuse of stress management skills/materials such as the use of stress less executive chairs, routine physical exercise and deep breathing exercise. Impact of available group or institutional policy (if any) aimed at promoting stress management activities in the institution can also be captured within this model.



**FIGURE 2 AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE THEORY OF REASONED ACTION**

Source: Fishbain and Ajzen, (2006)

### **Research design**

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. This design is chosen because it provides the advantage of ease of collecting information from a large number of respondents at their convenience with a minimal financial burden on the researcher. However, respondent's bias and distortion which are the common weakness of this design were minimized through maintaining respondent's anonymity. Interviewer's bias and distortion were also controlled by including open ended questions where the respondents expressed freely their views on the subject.

**Sampling technique**

In determining the sample size, a Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula for calculating research sample was used. This gave us 375 for UNICAL and 100 for CRUTECH at a 95.0 percent degree of confidence and 0.5 percent margin of error. Adding the two figures together the interval sample size stood at 475. Sequel to that, the percentage sample drawn from each faculty was calculated by dividing the sample size (475) by the total study population (1,853). This gave us 25.6 percent which represents the percentage sample drawn from each faculty in the two Universities. In UNICAL and CRUTECH, 25.6 percent of the total number of lecturers in each faculty was drawn for the study. UNICAL has a total of 12 faculties while CRUTECH has 9 faculties. See table 3 and table 4 below for distribution of sample in UNICAL and CRUTECH. In drawing the above calculated samples from each University, stratified random sampling method was used. The basis for stratification is the different faculties in each University. Convenience sampling was thereafter used to select from the lecturers available during the days of the field research in each University.

**Sample**

UNICAL has a total of 1,464 lecturers while CRUTECH has 389 lecturers. This gives a total sampling frame of 1,853 lecturers. Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula for calculating research sample size was then used to calculate the sample size for this study. This gave us 375 lecturers for UNICAL and 100 lecturers for CRUTECH. The grand total of these figures which is 475, represent the total number of sample drawn from the two Universities.

TABLE 3  
Sample distribution for UNICAL

S/N	Faculties	Total Population in Faculties	Sample Drawn		
			M	F	Total
1.	Agric and Forestry	111	17	11	28
2.	Allied Medical Sciences	114	7	22	29
3.	Arts	193	25	24	49
4.	Basic Medical Sciences	63	8	8	16
5.	Medicine and Dentistry	181	31	15	46
6.	Education	242	35	27	62
7.	Law	33	7	2	9
8.	Management Sciences	81	15	6	21
9.	Sciences	251	50	14	64
10.	Social Sciences	130	28	5	33
11.	Institutes	53	9	5	14
12.	Library	12	2	2	4
Grand Total		1,464	234	141	375

Source: Field survey (2016)

TABLE 4  
Sample distribution for CRUTECH

S/N	Faculties	Total Population in Faculties	Sample Drawn		
			M	F	Total
1.	Agric & Forestry	39	8	2	10
2.	Basic Med. Sciences	22	6	1	7
3.	Communication Technology & CGS	35	7	2	9
4.	Education	52	10	3	13
5.	Engineering	56	13	1	14
6.	Environmental Sciences	55	10	4	14
7.	Management Sciences	37	7	2	9
8.	Sciences	84	12	10	22
9.	Library	9	1	1	2
Grand total		389	74	26	100

*Source: Field survey (2016)*

#### **Sources of data collection**

This study made use of Primary and Secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the respondents through questionnaire and observation. Secondary data include text books, articles, Journal and Newspaper reports. All data received were cleaned up by checking for unclear, ambiguous or no responses. Cleaned data were thereafter coded using the coding sheet, before analysis and interpretation.

#### **Research instrument**

This study made use of questionnaire for collection of data. A three point and five point Likert scale questionnaire which comprised of six major areas was developed. These areas are Lecturers' demographic information, awareness/knowledge of stress; checking awareness of stress by knowledge of the symptoms of stress; attitude to stress management as influenced by awareness of stress; Assessing attitude to stress management by knowledge of and use of different stress management strategies. The questionnaire is made up of sections A, B, and C. Section A. captured the demographic data of the lecturers while section B looked at the independent variables; awareness of the causes of stress and awareness of the effect of stress. Section C, which is the last section, examined lecturers' attitude to stress management by looking at knowledge and use of different stress management strategies.

#### **Test of reliability of instrument**

To establish the reliability of the instrument used for data collection, a trial test was conducted on 40 lecturers in selected units from the two Universities. The researcher ensured that the lecturers used for the trial test were not used for the main study. Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate method was employed in analyzing data collected from the trial test. See Table 5 below for the results.

TABLE 5  
Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate for all continuous variables of the study (n=40)

S/N	Variable	No of Items	X	SD	Reliability Estimate
1	Awareness of the Causes of Stress	12	42.11	7.26	0.76
2	Awareness of the Effects of Stress	15	29.87	6.59	0.84
3	Lecturers' Attitude to Stress Management	15	41.05	6.36	0.70

Source: Field survey (2016)

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Data Presentation

The study determined the relationship between University Lecturers' awareness of stress and attitude to stress management. It was carried out in Cross River State of Nigeria and concentrated in Universities in Calabar metropolis. The two major variables considered in the study were Awareness of stress and attitude to stress management. Lecturers' awareness of stress was classified into two sub-variables, namely; awareness of the causes of stress and awareness of the effect of stress. Each of the variables was measured on a four point Likert type scale of "very aware", "aware", "somehow aware", and "not sure". Fifteen questionnaire items were used in measuring causes of stress while 12 items were used in measuring awareness of effect of stress. Table 7 presents the summary data for all those continuous variables

Data gathered from the field were subjected to analysis using version 18 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics are presented in Tables 8-9 below. Results of hypotheses tested are reported next and discussion of findings follows immediately.

TABLE 6  
Descriptive summaries for lecturers' demographic information

S/No	Variable	Category	N	%
1	Sex	Male	308	64.8
		Female	167	35.2
2	Age	Below 30 years	113	23.8
		30-45 years	187	39.4
		46-60 years	129	27.2
		Above 60 years	46	9.7
3	Work Experience	Below 10 years	229	48.2
		10-20 years	187	39.4
		Above 20 years	59	12.4
4	Rank	Assistant Lecturer	87	18.3
		Lecturer 11	107	22.3
		Lecturer 1	110	23.2
		Senior Lecturer	56	11.8
		Reader	44	9.3
5	Position Held	Professor	71	14.9
		Dean/Director	22	4.6
		Head of Department	63	13.3
		Coordinator	36	7.6
		Graduate Chairman	23	4.8
	Exams Officer	53	11.2	
	Undergraduate project coordinator	278	58.5	

Source: Field survey (2016)

The information on table 6 above gives an interesting breakdown of demographic statistics of the lecturers. More males were captured but quite a significant number of female lecturers were also examined. Lecturers within the different age brackets were almost equally shared between the three age brackets; below 30 years, 30 – 45years and 46 – 60 years. Lecturers within the age bracket of above 60 years who were interviewed made up the lowest percentage (9.7) of the sample population. This means that majority of the lecturers examined are within the vibrant age bracket of below 60 years. These active years of a lecturer’s life need to be adequately enhanced for improved efficiency at work.

Table 6 further shows that 48.2 percent of the total number of lecturers examined has less than 10 years work experience. This is followed by 39.4 percent of the total number of lecturers examined with work experience of between 10 -20 years. Surprisingly only 12.4 percent have work experience of more than 20 years. This shows that within the sample population there are many lecturers who still have many years to put into the teaching job. However, all age brackets need stress management programmes in order to enhance their health and promote their efficiency at work.

The demographic statistics on table 6 above also show that majority of the lecturers examined are between the rank of lecturer 1 and assistant lecturer. This is followed by the rank of Professor with 14.9 of the total number of lecturers captured. Senior lecturers were 11.8 percent followed by Readers with 9.3 percent. Except for the rank of Reader, the number of lecturers examined was almost equally shared between assistant lecturers and Professors. This is quite significant because it shows that the sample population was drawn from almost all available ranks and was also almost equally represented by the different ranks. Out of the total number of lecturers examined, more than half hold the position of undergraduate coordinator. This is followed by Head of department with 13.3 percent and exam officers with 11.2 percent. Apart from the rank of coordinator with 7.6, the remaining sample population is shared almost equally between Dean/Director and Graduate Chairman. This therefore means that about half of the opinion expressed in this study is captured from lecturers holding the position of undergraduate project coordinator.

**TABLE 7**  
Summary of data for all continuous variables in the study

S/No	Variable	N	X	SD
1	Awareness of the Causes of Stress	475	41.25	7.35
2	Awareness of the Effects of Stress	475	31.22	6.67
3	Lecturers’ Attitude to Stress Management	475	40.98	6.20

*Source: Field survey (2016)*

**Analysis**

**Hypothesis one**

**Ho:** *There is no significant relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the causes of stress and attitude to stress management.*

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *There is a significant relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the causes of stress and attitude to stress management.*

The two variables were measured on a continuous scale. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation test statistic. The result is presented in Table 8 below. The result of the analysis in Table 8 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.351 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.088 at 0.05 level of significance using 473 degrees of freedom. This means that there is a significant positive relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the causes of stress and attitude to stress management. That is, the more lecturers are aware of the causes of stress, the more positive their attitude to stress management. Conversely,

the less lecturers are aware of the causes of stress, the less positive their attitude to stress management. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

TABLE 8  
Summary of Pearson’s Correlation for the relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the causes of stress and attitude to stress management (n=475)

Variable	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum Y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum Y^2}$	$\sum XY$	$r_{xy}$	Sig
Lecturers’ Awareness of the Causes of Stress	19593	833779	809639	0.351*	.000
Attitude to Stress Management	19433	814885			

\*P<.05: df = 473; Critical r value = 0.088

Source: Field survey (2016)

**Hypothesis two**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** *There is no significant relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the effect of stress and attitude to stress management.*

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *There is a significant relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the effect of stress and attitude to stress management.*

The two variables were measured on a continuous scale so the hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation test statistic. The result is presented in Table 9. Result of the analysis in Table 9 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.183 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.088 at 0.05 level of significance using 473 degrees of freedom. This means that there is a significant positive relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the socio-psychological effect of stress and attitude to stress management. That is, the more lecturers are aware of the effect of stress, the more positive their attitude to stress management. Conversely, the less lecturers are aware of the socio-psychological effect of stress, the less positive their attitude to stress management. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

TABLE 9  
Summary of Pearson’s Correlation for the relationship between lecturers’ awareness of the effect of stress and attitude to stress management (n=475)

Variable	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum Y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum Y^2}$	$\sum XY$	$r_{xy}$	Sig
Lecturers’ Awareness of the effect of Stress	14831	484149	609810	0.183*	.000
Attitude to Stress Management	19433	814885			

\*P<.05: df = 473; Critical r value = 0.088

Source: Field survey (2016)



### **Discussion of findings**

#### **Discussion of Findings**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *There is a significant relationship between lecturers' awareness of the causes of stress and attitude to stress management.* The finding here strongly supports the theory of reasoned action (Fishbain & Ajzen, 2006) which notes that awareness of the causes of a problem influences an individual's choice of action or the strategy he/she adopts in order to reduce the effect of the problem. The awareness which is knowledge is acquired either through experience or information (Nwakwesi, 2000) and it helps an individual to take informed actions in a bid to address an observed problem. The finding of this hypothesis also strengthens the findings of AIS (2013) and APA (2001) which opines that more people are beginning to be sensitive to activities that cause stress for them in order to be able to manage their work stress effectively. This trend, according to AIS (2013) and APA (2001) is as a result of increasing information on the causes of workplace stress which has created awareness about some hitherto overlooked stressful activities that cause stress. Some workers are now more cautious of such activities.

The opinion of Young (2001) is also supported by this finding. Young (2001), in his analysis of health and attitude, notes that the awareness of the causes of ill health must be backed with concerted effort or positive attitude to address it in order to reduce the negative effect of such problems. This throws more light on Nwakwesi (2000) who argues that the negative impact of our social interactions with external factors should be addressed by maintaining a positive attitude and making our environment and social relationships as friendly as possible. Invariably, social relationships and other external factors that generate stress should be identified and addressed to protect the health of lecturers. Lecturers' awareness of the causes of stress which has been found out to influence their attitude to stress management will produce positive results in addressing the problem of workplace stress in the Universities if it is supported by regular information on the causes of stress which vary between individuals depending on environmental, social and professional factors. If lecturers participate in regular stress awareness workshops, they will be well equipped with knowledge and skills of how to cope with factors that cause stress for them. They will then be able to manage their stresses more effectively while influencing their physical and social environment in a way to reduce work stress.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *There is a significant relationship between lecturers' awareness of the effect of stress and attitude to stress management.* This finding gives some insights into the significant interplay between awareness of stress and the socio-psychological life of an individual (Shields, Toussaint, & Slavich, 2016; Friedman, 1996; Eysenck, 1990). With adequate knowledge of the effect of prolonged stress, lecturers will have attitudinal change in order to avoid depression, mental disorder and anxiety. Lecturers who are aware of the deadly consequences of prolonged stress will be awakened to get regular information on effective ways of managing work place stress. They will not only get the information but will do more to maintain an efficient stress management culture. Conversely therefore, the provision of adequate information on the effect of stress on the body systems will enhance attitudinal change to stress management among lecturers. This finding supports Nwakwesi (2000) and Young (2001) who note that there is a relationship between knowledge of the effect of prolonged stress and health maintenance culture. It also finds interpretation within the theory of reasoned action (Fishbain & Ajzen, 2006). This is with regards to the observation that the choice of action taken by lecturers is influenced largely by acquired or learned knowledge and social/external factors.

Effect of stress can sometimes be difficult to address especially if it is not supported with the right positive attitude. It tends to yield excellent results when handled with some level of social support system as noted in buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Mckey 1984). Equipping lecturers with adequate information on the importance of a strengthened social support system within the family and the office will enhance sustained positive attitudes to stress management.

The above findings on the interplay between awareness of stress and attitudes to stress management is very significant. This simply means that the successes recorded in the control of spread of malaria and HIV/AIDS can also be achieved in the control and reduction of the adverse effect of work stress through enhanced

sensitization and mobilization of lecturers for effective stress management programmes. The important tools used in the control of malaria and spread of HIV/AIDS are enhanced sensitization and mobilization programmes. These same tools are also necessary in addressing workplace stress among lecturers in the University. Such routine programmes will give lecturers updated information they need to be able to develop effective stress management strategies.

The significant interplay observed between awareness of stress and attitude to stress management is summarized in figure 3 below. This figure explains in simple terms the interesting relationship between awareness of the causes of stress (which is enhanced by the information received) and awareness of the effect of stress (nurtured in part by the information received and experiences obtained) and a final flow to the formation of attitudes and development of effective stress management strategies. The information stage is the input stage. The experiences stage captures the cognitive process while the action stage is the output stage representing the observed result of information received and experiences obtained.

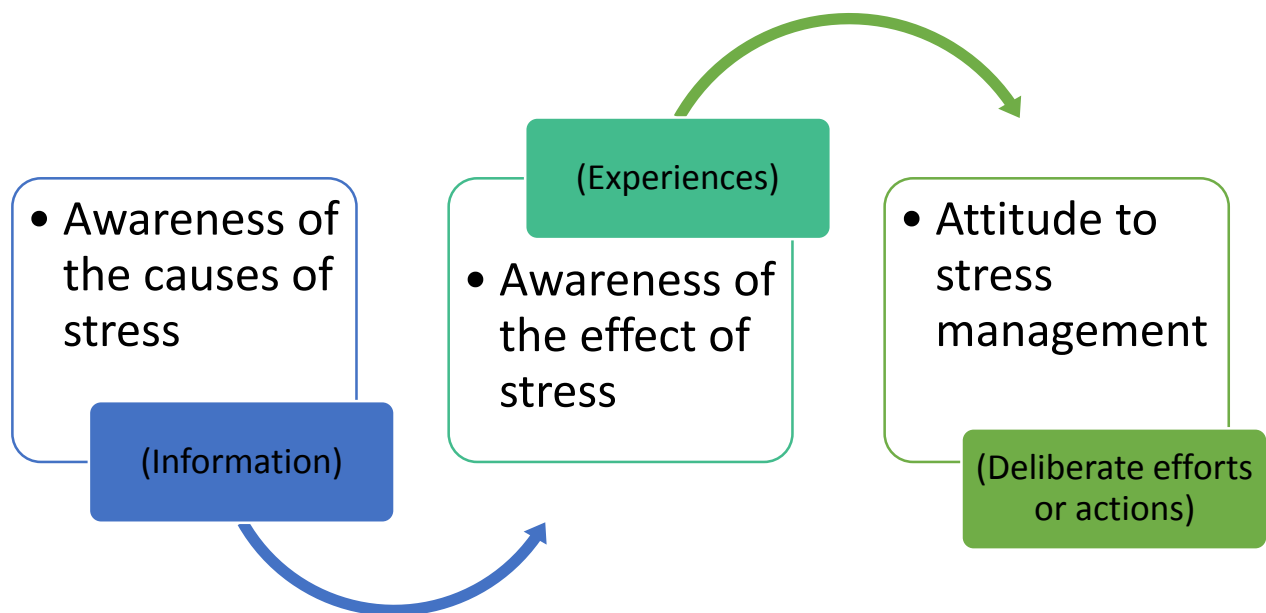


FIGURE 3: An illustration of the significant interplay between awareness of the causes/effect of stress and attitude to stress management

Source: Ikpeme (2016)

### Summary

The absence of an effective stress management routine among lecturers exposes them to the adverse effect of prolonged stress and makes them labour in serious discomfort while suffocating under the increasing demands of modern life. Without doubt, the effect of work stress is steadily becoming a modern day scourge and it does not start and end with its impact on organizations or institutions but it is also more damaging on individual's health with a carpet crossing effect to the family and the society. This is observed in some social problems like the increasing alienation of working parents from their children, emotional disorder, self-medication, drug abuse and psycho-neurotic problems (APA, 2012; Ikpeme, 2001; Nwakwesi, 2000).

Health enhancement programmes for lecturers should go beyond the conventional curative healthcare services and medication. It should include stress management programmes, routine assessment of emotional health and an evaluation of challenges faced on the job. It should therefore be noted here that ensuring a positive attitude to stress management among lecturers is therefore a challenge that must not be overlooked

especially in view of the obvious reason that our lecturers must stay physically, emotionally and psychologically healthy to be optimally efficient for national growth and development.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the above findings the following recommendation are made;

- i. Regular stress awareness workshops should be organized for Lecturers in the two Universities in order to keep them informed and updated on new and effective stress management strategies.
- ii. Stress management units should be established in every faculty in the Universities to provide routine stress management programmes. The availability of such units will represent important reference points and key reminders of the need for effective personal stress management strategies in the Universities.
- iii. This study should be duplicated in other Universities with an aim to make further findings and also compare observations from different Institutions. Findings made from further studies will also provide updated information on the challenging issues of work place stress among lecturers thereby enhancing formulation of theories.
- iv. Findings from this study should be used for policy formulation and design of intervention programmes aimed at encouraging positive attitudes to stress management among lecturers in Universities in Calabar Metropolis.

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