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LEGON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY

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**DIPLOMACY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS: THE CASE OF THE GHANAIAN
DIPLOMAT.**

BY

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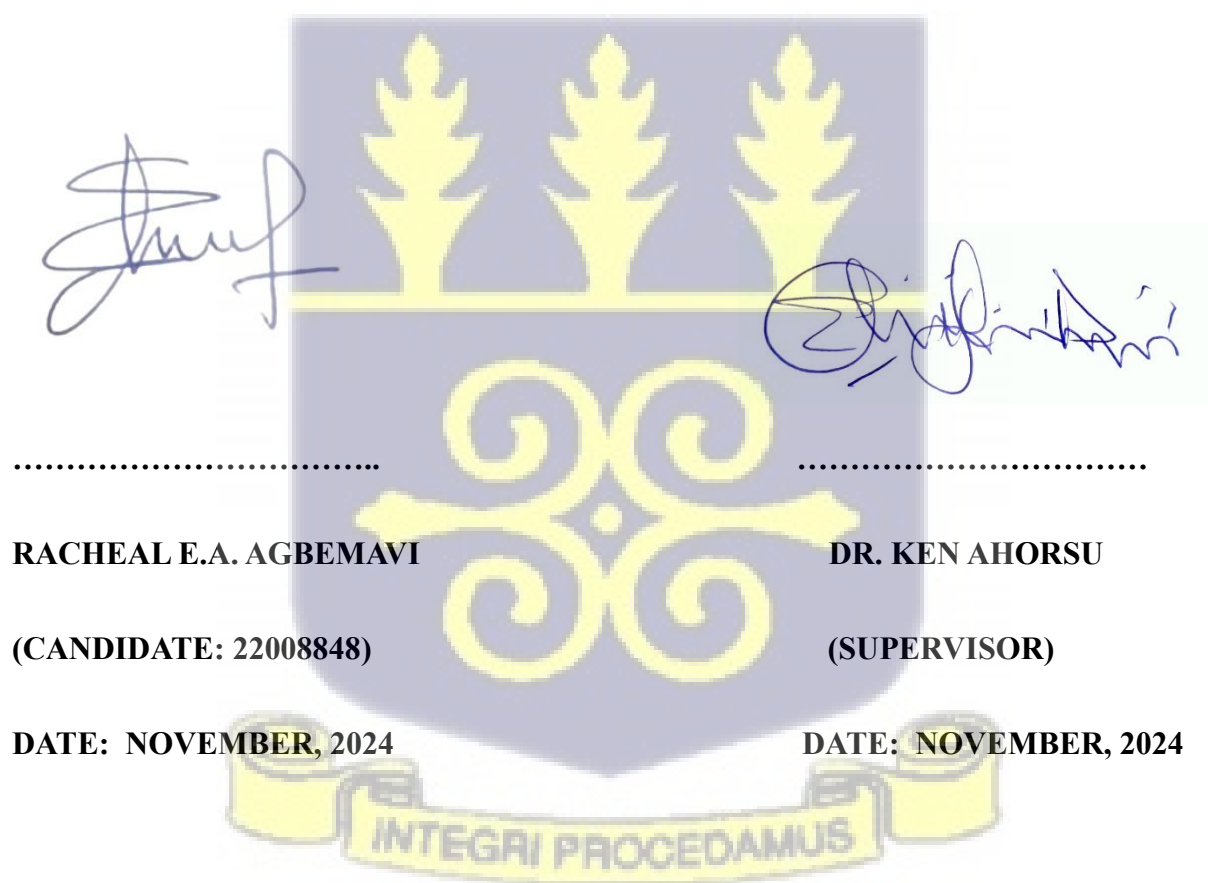
**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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LEGON

NOVEMBER, 20

DECLARATION

I, Racheal Edna Afeafa Agbemavi, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification at any other institution.



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to EL-ROI, the almighty God and the God that sees me, for abundant grace and mercies during this study, my entire family for their support and encouragement, and to the memory of my late mum.



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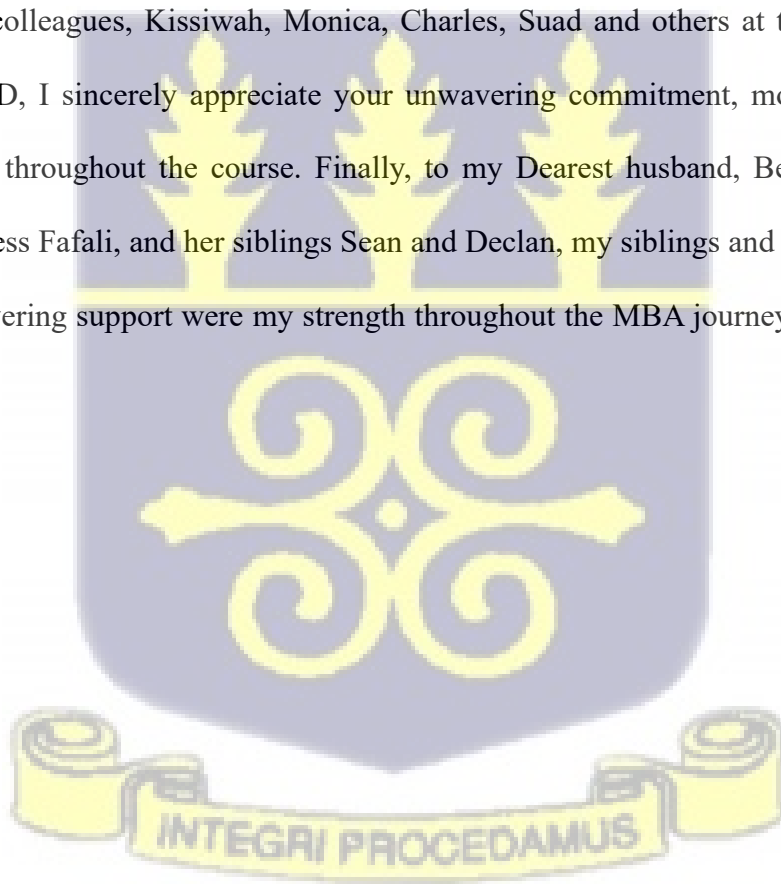


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AASU-	All African Students Union
AU-	African Union
BOS-	Burnout syndrome
ECOWAS-	Economic Community of West African States
FSO-	Foreign Service Officers
GFS-	German Foreign Service
GIMPA-	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
HRQOL-	Health-related quality of life
HTP-	High-Threat Postings
ILO-	International Labour Organization
JD-R Model -	job demands-resources model
LECIAD-	Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy
MFA & RI-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration
MG-	Mass gathering
NAPRM-GC-	National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council,
PAP-	Chinese People Armed Police
PSC-	Public Services Commission
PTSD-	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SDG-	Sustainable Development Goals

UN-	United Nations,
US-	United States
WHO-	World Health Organization
WTO-	World Trade Organization



ABSTRACT

The diplomatic profession has been perceived as inherently emotionally demanding and distressing. It is characterised by numerous stressors, including frequent interruptions, heavy workloads, and extensive responsibilities often unaccompanied by decision-making authority. This study investigated the psychological stress experienced by Ghanaian Foreign Service Officers and diplomats, with a particular focus on work-related, personal, organisational, and environmental stressors. Guided by Role Stress Theory (Kahn et al., 1964) and Transactional Stress Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the research explored how diplomats experience and cope with stress in a highly pressured environment.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys and semi-structured interviews to capture the multifaceted nature of stressors affecting Ghana's diplomatic corps. A total of 37 respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration participated in the study. The findings revealed gendered experiences of stress, with female diplomats encountering additional pressures due to societal expectations and workplace microaggressions, while male diplomats faced role ambiguity in the context of shifting gender dynamics (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001). Marital status further influenced stress experiences: married officers reported dual-role conflicts, whereas single and divorced counterparts experienced social isolation.

Other identified stressors included long working hours, family separation, and insufficient institutional support, such as limited access to mental health resources (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980). The study also uncovered systemic gaps, including poor enforcement of leave policies, underfunded psychological support services, and the absence of confidential peer support networks.

To address these issues, the study recommends the implementation of mandatory stress management training, enhanced institutional support, structured career progression frameworks, family-inclusive policies, and recreational initiatives.

In conclusion, the study highlights the urgent need for institutional reforms and tailored support systems within Ghana's foreign service to mitigate psychological stress and promote the overall mental well-being and effectiveness of its diplomats. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of psychological stress in high-stakes international professions and underscores the urgent need for targeted institutional reforms within Ghana's foreign service.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Diplomacy is fundamentally a political activity that, when adequately resourced and conducted by skilled practitioners, serves as a significant source of a state's influence and power. As Berridge (2005) and other scholars note, its primary objective is to enable governments to achieve their foreign policy goals without resorting to force, propaganda, or legal coercion (Asamoah, 2014). This is achieved through effective communication between professional diplomats and other authorities to reach mutually acceptable agreements (Addo, 2008; Aidoo, 2018). Core diplomatic functions include gathering information, clarifying national objectives, and fostering goodwill among states. Historically, these activities were commonly referred to as "negotiation" until the term diplomacy was popularized by British politician Edmund Burke in 1796 (Berridge, 2005).

Although definitions of diplomacy vary across individuals and contexts, recurring themes emphasize the preservation of peaceful relations, the maintenance of international order, and the reconciliation of national interests with global responsibilities (Siniver & Hart, 2020). Building on these foundational ideas, scholars have developed diverse theoretical lenses for understanding the nature and practice of diplomacy. Pouliot and Cornut (2015), drawing on Bourdieu's sociological theory, advance a practice-theoretical perspective that conceptualizes diplomacy as a socially embedded and historically contingent activity, shaped by routines, competencies, and tacit knowledge. This approach bridges the gap between abstract international relations theory and the lived realities of diplomatic work, highlighting key dimensions such as representation, communication, and negotiation, and recommending methodological tools such as ethnography and process tracing.

This reconceptualization aligns with Sharp's (2009) view of diplomacy as a profession grounded in the conduct of relationships but extends it by portraying diplomacy as dynamic and adaptable rather than static or purely ceremonial. Similarly, Neumann (2012) underscores the performative and interactional aspects of diplomacy, emphasizing that attention to everyday practices reveals how international order is continually negotiated through subtle and iterative processes. Together, these perspectives mark a shift in diplomatic studies from institution-focused definitions toward process-oriented and practice-sensitive understandings.

Literature has shown that finding a modern state without a diplomatic service or a ministry dedicated to its administration and direction is unusual. This is commonly referred to as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or, more simply, the Foreign Ministry (Berridge, 2005). These Ministries oversee diplomats working overseas and formally interact with foreign diplomats at home. There is no doubt, however, that the continuing importance of the tasks discharged by the Foreign Ministry has ensured its survival as a prominent central government department in most states (Ampofo-Boateng, 2019; Asamoah, 2014).

According to Berridge (2005), most nations now require the Foreign Ministry to explicitly share power over foreign policy formulation with other ministries and executive agencies and, to a greater extent, with its Missions overseas. He argued that the state retains significant influence due to its broad perspective, geographical expertise, control of the diplomatic service abroad, investment in public diplomacy, nurturing of domestic allies, and recognition by outsiders as a key player in coordinating the state's international relationships (Ampofo-Boateng, 2019; Asamoah, 2014).

Asserting these responsibilities also requires that someone implements them. The Foreign Ministry or State has handled these duties directly or indirectly through Diplomatic Personnel, Foreign Service officers, or diplomats (Leira, 2018; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023). The term "Foreign Service Officer" or diplomats in this paper is an inclusive term for all transferable

Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees, either diplomatic or consular careers, particularly in the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry, who are typically transferred every Four to five years between locations that are important to achieve the diplomatic goals, a practice of recurring overseas moves which is frequently maintained until retirement (Fliege et al., 2015). This is to say that those who engage in diplomacy must be accredited by their country's intergovernmental organisations (Asare, 2018).

Diplomatic service is essential to international relations, acting as a channel for inter-nation conversation, negotiation agreements, and collaboration, representing national interests and mediating problems on a global scale (Pouliot & Cornut, 2015). Diplomatic personnel or frontline representatives in the complicated web of international politics protect their nations' interests, establish alliances, and negotiate geopolitical intricacies (Berridge, 2005, Leira, 2017; Fliege et al., 2015). Literature have shown that Diplomacy can yield significant results in a state's international relations. However, behind the scenes of diplomatic victories, the demanding nature of diplomatic duties frequently results in severe psychological stress and emotional strains, which can influence diplomats' mental health and well-being (Leira, 2017; Fliege et al., 2015).

Dune et al. (2015) highlighted that those organisations, including military forces and diplomatic organisations, often send personnel to high risk, exposing them to violence, atrocities, injustices, inequalities, and sometimes working in dangerous environments. This traumatic exposure can be direct (e.g., witnessing bombings or other terrorist or insurgent occurrences) or indirect (e.g., interacting with the families of a deceased person or working in operational crisis response teams), leading to psychosocial issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and others. 'Psychosocial issues' refer to the psychological and social factors influencing a person's mental health or quality of life.

Research also suggests that conflict between work and personal needs can negatively impact employee health, reduce commitment and job satisfaction, and promote burnout (Burke, 1988; Thomas & Ganster, 1995, cited in Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001). Detrimental health outcomes can affect both physical health (e.g., somatic complaints, blood cholesterol) and mental wellness (e.g., stress, depression, vitality/energy, and life satisfaction), according to (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001). Psychological stress is the emotional and mental pressure felt when people believe the expectations placed on them surpass their ability to manage. It can result from various factors, including work stress, interpersonal problems, financial concerns, or traumatic occurrences (Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023). This stress can cause physical symptoms and influence the employees' general well-being if not appropriately managed.

Psychological stress may substantially influence diplomatic efforts by influencing decision-making processes and interpersonal dynamics among individuals participating in negotiations or dispute resolution. All psychological characteristics must be considered to resolve disputes. High-stress levels or burnout among diplomats or negotiators can impede effective communication, impair judgment, and raise tensions, making it more challenging to negotiate peaceful agreements. As a result, controlling psychological stress is critical for sustaining productive discussions and developing good diplomatic ties (Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Kertze & Tingley, 2018).

Among sub-Saharan African populaces at home and abroad, Psychosocial stresses and severe mental illnesses are regarded as a quiet pandemic in many parts of the world, owing to poverty, social isolation and structural inequities that create systemic barriers to prevention, identification, and treatment (Awuah et al., 2022).

Stress or burnout is a negative response to continuous job-related emotional stress. This often results in people devoting too much time, energy, and effort to their jobs over an extended

period, with little time for physical or mental recovery (Thorsen et al., 2011). Burnout syndrome (BOS) has become a prevalent phenomenon globally among high-stress vocations such as diplomats, military, police officers, teachers, and healthcare workers (Moss et al., 2016). Similarly, a non-congenial environment is a situation that does not promote an individual's well-being, contentment, or success. It can be a workplace setting with high interpersonal friction, insufficient resources, or a misalignment between an individual's talents and work needs. In a social or familial setting, it may involve strained relationships, unresolved problems, or a lack of psychological assistance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Several studies have found a clear link between diplomacy and psychological stress, both at the international level and in Ghana (Leira, 2018; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023).

As diplomacy is fraught with pressures caused by the inherent difficulties of international relationships, diplomats are under constant pressure to preserve their nations' interests while balancing opposing demands and navigating complex diplomatic landscapes. Diplomats' everyday lives are dominated by high-stakes discussions, lengthy confrontations, and the constant danger of diplomatic crises, all of which add stress and emotional strain to their professional obligations (McAuliffe, 2018). Several works of literature have revealed that high levels of burnout or stress are prominent among diplomats who spend much of their career outside their home countries, and these can affect their psychological well-being (Brooks et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022; Dune et al., 2015).

Besides, the nature of diplomatic posts sometimes includes extended periods of separation from family and support networks, geographic movement, and exposure to foreign cultures and settings (Brooks et al., 2023). These factors can worsen feelings of isolation, loneliness, and cultural adjustment difficulties, increasing diplomats' psychological stress, which resonates with McAuliffe's (2018) words that “moving house is a well-known stress inducer- no matter

If it is around the corner or the world.” This has been confirmed in Gudmundsdottir et al. (2023) work that one of the most stressful life events is connected to the transfer of families. Foreign Service Officers and their families may face culture shock, loss of social support, language challenges, political strife, increased security risks, poverty and inequality, poor health systems, and other stressors in their posting locations (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023). Diplomatic staff face health difficulties such as stress and exhaustion from overseas assignments, affecting their psychological well-being, which are often overlooked in empirical research (Zhang et al., 2022).

Thus, despite the critical importance of diplomats’ psychological health and well-being, which is needed for effective diplomatic engagement, studies on the psychological stress experienced by diplomats are limited (Zhang et al., 2022). While anecdotal evidence and individual perspectives show that diplomatic service involves significant pressures and challenges, there are few empirical studies examining the causes and specific stressors faced by diplomats and their effects on their mental health, as well as any coping strategies with support networks within diplomatic environments (Brooks et al., 2023), especially in Africa and particularly among Ghanaian diplomats (Kwaah, & Essilfie, 2017).

The case of Ghanaian diplomats provides an especially compelling context for exploring the link between diplomacy and psychological stress. As a country with a rich history of diplomatic engagements and a prominent role in regional and international affairs since gaining independence in 1957 (Asare, 2018), a history of political stability, democratic governance, and active participation in multilateral organisations, Ghana's diplomatic corps functions within a unique geopolitical landscape categorised by diverse challenges and opportunities. However, as will be shown in the Problem Statement, the experiences faced by Ghanaian diplomats in terms of psychological stress, coping mechanisms, and support systems remain understudied.

Understanding and addressing Ghanaian diplomats' psychological stress is critical for several reasons. Firstly, it illuminates the human aspect of diplomatic service, emphasising the personal toll that diplomatic obligations may impose. Secondly, it sheds light on the factors that may impact diplomats' effectiveness in carrying out their duties and family obligations. Finally, it emphasises the need to prioritise and improve diplomats' mental health and well-being inside diplomatic organisations and policymaking circles in Africa, particularly Ghana. Hence, there is a need for a study to be conducted in that area to ascertain the complex dynamics of diplomacy and psychological stress, coping mechanisms available, and support systems.

1.2 Research Problem

Berridge (2005) posited that diplomats play a critical role in advocating their nations' interests, establishing alliances, and negotiating complex geopolitical issues in today's changing international environment. While the diplomatic profession is frequently seen as a respected and intellectually engaging job and influential in global affairs, it is also uptight with enormous demands that require long hours, high-stakes discussions, burnout, and exposure to various stresses that can affect diplomats' mental health and psychological well-being (Gudmundsdottir, 2022).

According to Brooks et al. (2023), Diplomatic Personnel who manage international relations and help states achieve foreign policy goals are understudied due to their frequent relocation and exposure to diverse social, economic, political, and cultural environments. Many who have been assigned to high-risk positions can be exposed to a variety of potentially stressful scenarios, including becoming the target of violent attacks, which can cause them psychological stress.

Zhang et al. (2021) asserted that the diplomatic profession is stressful and emotionally demanding. The profession faces a variety of stressors, including demanding frequent relocation and exposure to diverse social, economic, political, and cultural environments. Many

who are assigned to high-risk positions can be exposed to a variety of potentially stressful scenarios, including becoming the target of violent attacks, which can cause them psychological stress (Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2023).

Furthermore, according to Nayeri et al., 2009 cited in Ansah, 2016, diplomats have been continually presented with the state's and its citizens' needs and difficulties. They are expected to be productive and efficient while delivering humanistic, compassionate, competent, culturally sensitive, and ethical care.

When confronted with such demanding responsibilities, diplomats get stressed and exhibit burnout symptoms to satisfy their occupational and family mandates. Diplomats end up having symptoms such as low self-esteem, anxiety, frustration, lack of confidence, anger, feelings of inadequacy, low self-confidence, helplessness, low job satisfaction, depression, and a poor sense of judgment (Gillespie & Melby, 2003; Nayeri et al., 2009). Studies have confirmed that extended episodes of burnout or psychological stress have detrimental personal consequences for individuals, including diplomats, contributing to organisational and family ineffectiveness (Zhang et al., 2021; Perez et al., 2023). Psychological stress among diplomats has been linked to a reduction in quality performance and outcomes, poor health, increased attrition rates, and behaviours that depart from the diplomatic profession (Akroyd et al., 2002; Thorsen et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2021).

In Ghana, the story is not different; diplomats are continuously confronted with workload and job demands. Studies have shown that diplomatic personnel encounter various stressors in the workplace and international engagements (Brooks et al., 2017; Gwa et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). With the increasing complexity in modern diplomacy and international relations, coupled with various stressors in the workplace, diplomats especially are faced with several challenges, and among all these challenges, are expected to put in extra effort to meet job

demands and varying concerns of states, protecting citizens abroad, and families. According to Leira (2017), diplomatic personnel are still at risk while caring for their compatriots and themselves. Diplomats are, therefore, prone to psychological stress and burnout tendencies.

Relating this to the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration suggests that comparable difficulties with psychological stress among Foreign Service Officers or diplomats at the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry were not unusual. The Ministry is located in the Greater Accra Region; observation and personal interactions show that Foreign Service offices complained about psychological stress and burnout for various reasons (Osei, 2020). Other pressures reported by diplomats or Foreign Service officers included family duties, traffic in town, the high expense of living, combining school and employment, and completing extra work. Others face work-related stress, such as increasing workload, a lack of resources at work, and disagreement with coworkers. Disputes with colleagues intensify these pressures, potentially harming teamwork and communication at the Ministry (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Osei, 2020). These can have profound implications for their decision-making, communication skills, and overall effectiveness in representing their countries on the global stage. Data revealed that some Foreign Service personnel openly express displeasure with their careers and consider leaving the diplomatic community (Osei, 2020). This turnover undermines the continuity of diplomatic endeavours and reveals fundamental difficulties within the Ministry that must be addressed to retain skilled persons and institutional expertise (Hibberd & Greenberg, 2011).

There is consequently a need to investigate this psychological stress among diplomatic personnel in the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry and how often it influences its activities. Though studies have covered other occupations experiencing psychological stresses or burnout, such as the military and health personnel (Dapaah, 2014; Abaa et al., 2013; Adzakpa et al., 2016; Fergusson & Bliese, 2019), there have been minimal studies or literature on the psychological

stress of diplomatic workers, and its implication on diplomatic engagements and family roles with a particular focus on psychological and emotional protection of the diplomat within the Foreign Ministry of Ghana. Against this background, the study seeks to examine the connection between diplomacy and psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats, with a specific emphasis on the root causes and manifestations of this stress and its effects on the well-being of the diplomat.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study's main objective is to understand and examine the causes of Psychological Stress experienced by diplomats at the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry and its effects on the well-being of the diplomat. The specific objectives underpinned the study were to.

- ❖ Assess the sources or causes of psychological stress in the diplomatic service among Ghanaian diplomats in the Foreign Ministry of Ghana.
- ❖ Examine the extent of psychological stress in the diplomatic service among Ghanaian diplomats in the Foreign Ministry of Ghana.
- ❖ Evaluate the coping techniques used by Ghanaian diplomats to manage stress, as well as the availability and effectiveness of existing support systems for their psychological and emotional wellness.
- ❖ Propose actionable strategies and highlight key implications for enhancing the mental health support framework within Ghana's diplomatic corps at the Foreign Ministry.

1.4 Research Questions

To this end, the following research questions guided the study:

- What are the primary causes of psychological stress experienced by Ghanaian diplomats?
- How do these stressors influence their well-being and the effectiveness of diplomatic service and other activities or roles?

- What coping mechanisms, institutional support systems, and resources do Ghanaian diplomats utilise to manage psychological stress in their diplomatic roles, and to what extent do they perceive these systems as beneficial?
- What more policies and strategies can be implemented in Ghana to reduce the risks connected with Psychological Stress?

1.5 Rational of the Study

This research is significant for many reasons. To begin with, despite diplomats' critical role in shaping global relations and the inherent stressors associated with diplomatic service, there is a significant lack of empirical research focusing specifically on the psychological stress experienced by diplomats, particularly in the context of Ghanaian diplomatic service. By addressing this vacuum in the research, this study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of the problems encountered by diplomats and the consequences for their mental well-being, thus addressing the critical gap in the literature.

Diplomatic service is distinguished by high-pressure conditions, complicated discussions, and extended durations away from family and support networks. The psychological pressures inherent in diplomatic employment can significantly impact diplomats' mental health, limiting their capacity to operate successfully and negotiate diplomatic issues. Diplomats' mental well-being is critical for their health and resilience and the efficiency of diplomatic engagements and international relations.

Ghana's diplomatic corps functions in a unique geopolitical framework defined by regional dynamics, international relationships, and domestic policy concerns. Understanding Ghanaian diplomats' experiences with psychological stress, coping strategies, and support systems is critical for developing solutions that meet their needs and concerns (Brooks et al., 2017; Gwa et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). This study, which focuses on Ghanaian diplomats, offered

unique insights into the interplay between diplomacy and mental health in a specific cultural and institutional setting.

The findings of this study have important implications for diplomatic organisations, governments, and mental health practitioners who work to improve diplomats' well-being. This study adds to the limited knowledge of Diplomats' mental health, particularly in Ghana. The results enlightened policymakers, diplomatic institutions, and mental health and helped design targeted treatments and policies to promote diplomats' mental health practitioners about the pressure Ghanaian diplomats experienced and their need for focused interventions. Finally, it improves diplomats' well-being, leads to more effective diplomatic involvement and promotes better results in international relations.

1.6 Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation for the study "Diplomacy and Psychological Stress: The Case of Ghanaian Diplomats" is based on two theoretical perspectives: role stress theory and transactional stress theory. These frameworks provide a lens through which to examine the origins of psychological stress experienced by diplomats, the coping methods used, and the efficacy of support structures in stress reduction. Furthermore, the framework contains the distinct contextual aspects pertinent to Ghanaian diplomats' experiences in international affairs.

1.6.1 Role Stress Theory

This study, underpinned by the Role Stress Theory advanced by Kahn et al. (1964), suggests that stress occurs when individuals face conflicts, inconsistencies, or ambiguities in their positions, a phenomenon called organisational role stress. A broader definition of organisational role stress is the tension that employees feel when their organisational and individual requirements do not match (Satyendra, 2022), a term used to describe all of the many forms of pressures that workers face in their job responsibilities (Wu et al., 2019). The author

argued that expectations for a specific function within an organisation are a natural cause of stress. Thus, increased organisational expectations influence how individuals see their organisational function (Satyendra, 2022; Wu et al., 2019; Kahn et al., 1964). All of the adverse experiences that employees have at work promote and enhance the chance of developing work-related stress disorders affecting the mental health of the employee (Gwa et al., 2023), of which Ghanaian diplomats or Foreign Service officers are no exception.

Individuals subjected to organisational role stress over extended periods are more prone to become burnout and psychologically stressed, which reduces overall performance and hurts coworker morale. Nygaard and Dahlstrom (2002) underscored that organisational role stress is prevalent in all establishments. Aside from significant disease, organisational role stress reduces employee productivity, affecting overall competitiveness. Longer exposures to organisational role stress result in a deterioration in the quality of services and goods, poor customer relations, a dysfunctional work environment, and significant staff turnover (Nygaard & Dahlstorm, 2002; Fogarty et al., 2000; Olokundun et al., 2016).

Diplomatic service can be stressful due to several job-related factors. High-stakes discussions, lengthy durations away from family, exposure to horrific events, and the need to maintain a delicate diplomatic balance all contribute to diplomats' stress levels (Murray, 2019). The prevalence of stress among diplomats emphasises the importance of understanding its sources and implications for diplomats' mental health (Smith & Leatherbarrow, 2018).

When it comes to managing organisational role stress, management often focuses mainly on three stressors: (i) role ambiguity, (ii) role conflict, and (iii) role overload (Wu et al., 2019; Satyendra, 2022). Until 1982, when UPareek contributed seven more aspects to the organisational role stress paradigm, there were just three role stressors. These seven characteristics have significantly increased the framework for measuring organisational role stress (Satyendra, 2022). These seven new dimensions are (i) inter-role distance, (ii) role

stagnation, (iii) role erosion, (iv) role isolation, (v) personal insufficiency, (vi) self-role distance, and (vii) resource inadequacy (Wu et al., 2019; Satyendra, 2022). The ten organisational role stressors affect employee satisfaction, performance, and commitment. These ten stressors stem from situations employees encounter while performing their organisational roles, such as the Foreign Ministry of Ghana.

As mentioned above, role conflict, role ambiguity, and other job-related characteristics significantly impact employees' performance (Satyendra, 2022). Work and job environment impact the performance of the concerned employee. Individuals who fit with job-related characteristics create stress for employees. People in the same employment setting are not required to experience the same pressure. However, not all stressed employees are affected equally by the same pressures. Job demands are the material, psychological, social, or organisational needs in a person's work that require continual physical or psychological effort or skill associated with specific physiological and psychological expenses, such as job stress (Wu et al., 2019)

Diplomats frequently confront role ambiguity, competing expectations, and role overload, which can lead to increased stress levels (Pallas & Newbold, 2020). This theory sheds light on the unique difficulties that Ghanaian diplomats encounter when carrying out their diplomatic tasks, such as negotiating complicated diplomatic relationships, advocating their country's interests, and juggling many jobs at once, signifying its relevance.

1.6.1a Relevance of the theories to the study

The candidate has selected Role Stress Theory and Transactional Stress Theory as the theoretical frameworks for the study. Given that the research focuses on psychological stress experienced by foreign service officials and diplomats, both theories are highly appropriate. They allow for an in-depth examination of the causes of stress, coping mechanisms, and the institutional support systems that influence diplomats' psychological well-being in the performance of their duties.

1.6.1b Role Stress Theory - Relevance to the Study

Role Stress Theory provides a foundational understanding of how diplomats may experience psychological stress due to conflicting or excessive demands associated with their professional roles. It is particularly relevant in the context of the diplomatic service, where role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload are common (Kahn et al., 1964). These stressors are often exacerbated by the demands of cross-cultural environments, frequent relocations, and high-stakes negotiations.

1.6.1c Limitations of the Role Stress Theory

While Role Stress Theory is useful in identifying and categorizing stressors arising from one's job role, it is limited in its ability to explain how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to these stressors. The theory largely assumes a static relationship between the individual and the work environment, with less emphasis on cognitive appraisal and personal coping strategies (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). This limitation necessitates the inclusion of an additional theory that addresses these dynamic elements.

1.6.1d Transactional Stress Theory- Relevance to the Study:

To complement the limitations of Role Stress Theory, the study incorporates the Transactional Stress Theory, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). This theory offers a dynamic and person-centered approach, emphasizing the continuous interaction between individuals and their environments. It explains stress as a process involving cognitive appraisals, how individuals assess whether a situation is threatening or manageable and the subsequent coping responses they adopt. This theory is especially relevant to diplomatic work, where stress is not only derived from structural or institutional factors but also from subjective interpretations of high-pressure and unpredictable situations (Lazarus, 1991).

By using both theories in cycle, the study achieves a comprehensive framework: Role Stress Theory identifies the external and structural sources of stress, while Transactional Stress Theory provides insight into how diplomats internally process and manage that stress. This dual-theoretical approach strengthens the conceptual foundation of the study and ensures a holistic analysis of psychological stress in the foreign service.

1.6.2 Transactional Stress Theory:

This concept of Transactional Stress Theory is adopted as a framework within which the psychological stress of the Ghanaian diplomat would be analysed. Transactional Stress Theory as earlier on indicated, explains the dynamic interplay between persons and their surroundings when assessing and managing stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which held that a person's ability to adapt and adjust to difficulties and issues results from transactions (or interactions) between a person and their environment. Stress is caused by an individual's perception of a situation as beyond their ability to cope correctly (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Thus, according to psychologists Lazarus and Folkman, stress occurs when the demands of a circumstance surpass our ability to cope with them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This aligns with the work of diplomats or foreign service officers, which is distinguished by high-pressure conditions, complicated discussions, and extended durations away from family and support networks.

The authors developed the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping in 1984, intending to help individuals cope with stressful situations via objective evaluation. The model may be divided into three main phases. The first stage includes Primary Appraisal: the stressor's influence on your well-being. The second stage is secondary appraisal, which is the resources you have at your service to assist you in dealing with the stressor. These might be personal resources (willpower, self-confidence, expertise, etc.) or external resources (peer support, financial backing, or access to raw materials). The third stage uses coping Strategies, including problem-based strategies (Ben-zur, 2019; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Diplomats' perceptions of diplomatic obstacles and coping mechanisms determine their stress levels and well-being. Transactional Stress Theory sheds light on the coping techniques used

by Ghanaian diplomats to manage stress, such as seeking social support, participating in recreational activities, and practising mindfulness.

1.6.3 Contextual Factors:

Cultural norms, institutional rules, and geopolitical dynamics are all contextual elements that Ghanaian diplomats must consider. Regional dynamics, international relationships, domestic policy agendas and non-congenial environments affect Ghana's diplomatic scene, influencing diplomats' stress levels and support system efficacy. By considering these contextual elements, the study offered a more nuanced understanding of the issues that Ghanaian diplomats experience and the repercussions for their psychological well-being (Harrison et al., 1999).

1.6.4 Research variables:

Based on the theoretical underpinnings of Role Stress Theory and Transactional Stress Theory, the research variables include:

- Independent variables included job ambiguity, conflict, overload, and stressor evaluation.
- Dependent variables included psychological stress levels, coping techniques, and the efficiency of support systems.

By combining these theoretical viewpoints with contextual factors, research variables, and hypotheses, the conceptual framework offers an extensive framework for understanding Ghanaian diplomats' psychological stress and informing interventions to support their mental well-being in the diplomatic context.



1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 Introduction

This section reviews the literature on Diplomacy and Psychological Stress or burnout among Diplomats. It compiles both local and foreign literature and studies evaluated by researchers to support or refute the conclusions of this work. It begins with a review of the various conceptualisations of Diplomacy and Psychological stress. A discussion on the antecedents of psychological stress and empirical evidence of Psychological Stress or burnout among diplomats follows.

Several Scholars have studied and published books and articles on Diplomacy, work balance, psychological stress, or burnout of organisational workers. According to Berridge (2015), diplomacy is the art and practice of negotiating and sustaining international relations, which entails individuals frequently participating in high-stakes, complicated political, economic, and social engagements. As such, Mirumbi (2017) referred to diplomacy as the skilled and sophisticated management of international relations that advance a country's foreign policy goals.

Some scholars asserted that Diplomacy is a Foreign Policy weapon (Mirumbi, 2017; Berridge, 2015). To them, Diplomacy promotes peace, collaboration, and economic integration among nations that engage. Diplomats, responsible for negotiating and representing a country globally, employ talks, concessions, and sometimes military pressure to establish improved relations. Diplomacy has evolved throughout the years, particularly with the development of technology and improved communication. Likewise, Africa's diplomatic ties have evolved since its independence. Countries such as Kenya have revealed their identity in diplomatic interactions on the continent and worldwide (Mirumbi, 2017).

Scholars have noted that while diplomacy is necessary for establishing collaboration and resolving problems, the nature of diplomatic employment can cause diplomats to experience

substantial psychological distress (Zhang et al., (2021; Leira, 2018; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2023).

This literature review investigates the psychological stress of diplomats, emphasising Ghanaian diplomats, and looks at various stressors, coping mechanisms, and potential solutions.

1.7.2 The Concept of Psychological Stress

Like the generic term stress, psychological stress defies a universally accepted definition. These challenges stem not from a lack of interest in the notion but rather from a pervasive concern with psychological phenomena associated with organism-environment interactions. The intrinsic complexity of this profession both attracts and frustrates investigators (Monroe, 2001). He noted that psychological stress was a common phrase for processes thought to contribute to several mental and physical problems. Despite increasing interest in the concept and its implications for health and well-being, there is no agreement on definitions of psychological stress (Monroe, 2001). The generic term burnout or stress results from an organism's inability to respond to mental, emotional, or physical demands, whether real or imagined (Al-Sowygh (2013), Kwah & Essifie (2017). In agreement with other scholars, Akhlaq, Amjad, and Mehmood (2010) define stress as a psycho-physiological process caused by an individual's interaction with their environment, resulting in disturbances.

Freudenberger (1974) is credited with devising the term "burnout" or "Stress, which characterises a state of emotional exhaustion and motivation loss after seeing volunteers in humanitarian groups in New York who had worked with great passion and devotion for several months. To Freudenberger (1974), burnout is "a state of mental or psychological and physical exhaustion caused by one's professional life," as well as "the loss of motivation or incentive, especially where one's devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results." According to him, people who suffer stress at work lose energy, devotion, and passion for their

jobs. Scholars have paid close attention to the topic ever since. As a result, burnout has been characterised in various ways, with no recognised definition, as stated earlier.

Burnout is "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with others" (Kotzabassaki and Parissopoulos, 2003). Emotional fatigue is the primary strain feature of stress or burnout, characterised by sensations of being emotionally exhausted due to engagement with others over a long period. Depersonalisation is an adverse or too-distant reaction to the individuals who receive one's service or care (Maslach et al., 1996; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023). Lower personal accomplishment is related to a decrease in one's sense of competence and success at work due to psychological stress or mental health issues.

Harrison (1999) described burnout as *a state of physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations*. It is also referred to as a negative response to continuous job-related emotional stress. When individuals devote excessive time, energy, and effort to their jobs over extended periods, with little opportunity for physical or mental recovery, burnout is more likely to occur (Thorsen et al., 2011).

1.7.3 Antecedents of Psychological Stress/Burnout

Some factors have been recognised as contributing to stress (Zhang et al., (2021; Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2023; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Bakker et al., 2014 cited in (Ansah, 2019). Many factors, including those that operate at the macro level (such as shifting values or global economic shifts), the organisational level (such as dysfunctional relationships, stressful environments, and poor person-organization fit), and the individual level (such as low self-esteem, low resilience, and poor communication skills), have all been linked to the development of psychological stress according to research (Zhang et al., 2021; Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-

Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2023). Thus, these causes and features, known as burnout antecedents, fall into three categories: work and role characteristics, organisational characteristics, and personal characteristics. These events that result in stress are called stressors, and a sudden change in these stressors may affect the person's physical or mental health. In other words, stressors cause pressure or stress and can hurt an individual's physical and psychological well-being.

1.7.4 Work and Role Characteristics

The nature of the work and job function have been highlighted as factors contributing to employee burnout and psychological stress. The development of burnout has been modelled in several ways. For instance, the job demands-resources model (JD-Model) postulates that burnout may occur when job demands exceed the organisational, psychological, or physical resources an individual receives from their job (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2019). Role conflict, ambiguity, job overload, and work pressure have all been linked to various levels of burnout (Angerer, 2003 in Ansah, 2019). Employee burnout is increased by tasks requiring more direct, frequent, and long-term client engagement. The majority of burnout research has focused on workers in service professions such as health, social services, and teaching, where burnout is frequently reported due to the "high level of arousal from direct, frequent, intense interactions with clients" (Angerer, 2003; Bakker et al., 2014; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023).

Maslach et al. (1996) indicated that professionals in helping jobs are more likely to experience emotional strain and stress due to their continual involvement with people and their issues. Their profession entails direct face-to-face contact with emotionally charged individuals who might be angry and defensive, and their feedback is typically unfavourable. Clients tend to rely excessively on workers in such professions as solely responsible for their future well-being, putting unnecessary strain and weight on the workers and contributing to a high level of burnout on the side of the professionals (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023).

1.7.5 Organisational Factors

Organisational factors have also been found to contribute to employee burnout syndrome. Organisational policies affecting work techniques, shifts, the working environment, and decisions on incentives and penalties, among other things, have been shown to contribute to worker stress (Gwa et al., 2023; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Bakker et al., 2014, cited in Ansah, 2019). For instance, organisational theory holds that burnout arises from organisational and work-related stressors when inadequate coping mechanisms are used as such the occurrence of occupational burnout might be connected to specific organisational contexts (Parasuraman & Alutto, 1981; Pretty et al., 1992 cited in Ansah 2019).

Contexts such as subsystems, work shifts, and non-congenial environmental settings contribute to worker exhaustion or burnout. Many businesses contain regulations that limit an individual's capacity to define goals, choose methods for their job, and decide how to allocate resources. This suggests that organisations that implement regulations that limit an individual's ability to solve problems unintentionally increase burnout. The worst thing that can happen to workers' productivity and health is tremendous demand and little flexibility in satisfying those needs (Karasek. 1992). Most workers cannot have complete control. In any organisation with two or more individuals, control must be shared. When a corporation is open and honest with its employees, they might feel self-directed, significantly when things change dramatically. However, if workers do not control crucial areas of their jobs, they are more likely to grow exhausted, cynical, and ineffectual (Angerer, 2003, Reinhold,1996), cited in Ansah (2019), mentioned that).

Another primary organisational trait that contributes to burnout is a lack of rewards. People strive for both extrinsic and intrinsic benefits. Job incentives might include money, status, and security. Extrinsic incentives are reduced in an increasingly competitive market when firms are focused on the bottom line to maximise profit margins. A more insidious problem in today's

workplace is the erosion of intrinsic job fulfilment (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). He emphasised that overwhelming workloads and central decision-making have resulted in divided workplaces. He contended that professionals and management are frequently viewed as competing against one another rather than collaborating toward a shared objective (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

In line with the above, Gwa et al. (2023) also opined that People's work environments can eventually cause stress. Possible reasons include untidy and unorganised workstations, workplace bullying or harassment, shortages of resources, excessive labour, and an uncomfortable atmosphere (caused by chilly temperatures, poor air quality, or noise).

1.7.6 Personal Characteristics

Finally, some social characteristics, expectations, and career development have been shown to explain why some company employees might feel stressed while others do not. Regarding demographics, men and women exhibit different levels of burnout (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023). Gwa et al. (2023) submitted that while both genders feel organisational stress, it is widely acknowledged that women across cultures are typically busier and more stressed than males. Working women suffer a higher level of stress than their male counterparts since women perform more roles at home, be it with husbands, children, or even elderly parents, while juggling it with professional success and continually moving forward to achieve goals.

Furthermore, employees whose organisational and accomplishment goals differ from the present reality of the job have greater degrees of stress. Achievement expectations are people's assumptions about what they can achieve with clients. Organisational expectations pertain to individuals' perceptions of what is expected of the professional system and the work. Employees' expectations of the profession, the company, and their competence all contribute considerably to burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), and they are a source of demands

imposed on oneself at work (Bakker et al., 2014), contributing to psychological stress (Monroe, 2001).

Furthermore, too high demands and disappointing expectations can lead to burnout. Individuals compare their expectations to reality when they begin a career or move to organisations. the ensuing discrepancy influences employees' attitudes toward their employment (Bakker et al., 2014). The more significant the disparity, the more severe the impact on the employee and the business. Finally, regarding job advancement, persons with more upward career movement may suffer less burnout, hence less psychological stress. Considering the symptoms of the three burnout components, there might be three plausible causes for this theorised association (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993).

1.7.7 Psychological Stress/burnout in Diplomatic Work

Relating the above discussion to diplomatic services, 'stress is a phenomenon of the 21st century and has affected all professions (Gwal et al., 2023). As such, akin to army officers, Nurses, and physicians, Diplomats are repeatedly and continuously exposed to high-stakes discussions, lengthy confrontations, and the constant danger of diplomatic crises, all of which add stress and emotional strain to their professional obligations (McAuliffe, 2018) hence having an impact on their mental health. As noted, Diplomats work long hours, and, in many cases, work overload has always existed in this field. Because of the problematic nature of the diplomatic profession, the issue of burnout and stress among diplomats has been well-acknowledged by those who are in it (Gwa et al., 2023; Leira, 2018; 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2023).

The incidence of burnout, hence psychological stress in diplomats, has been identified as a significant problem and a real threat to diplomatic services and engagements (Fliege et al., 2016; Brooks et al., 2023; Gwa et al., 2023). Some studies have been conducted across the world on different continents, demonstrating the high rates of psychological stress among

diplomats, particularly diplomatic staff who are frequently relocated, separated from their families, and serving in war or conflict zone countries (Hibberd & Greenberg, 2011). High levels of burnout among diplomats or expatriates have been documented in Europe, Asia, and America (Gwa et al., 2023; Fliege et al., 2016; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023. Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2023), however, there is a gap in Africa.

Psychological processes include a range of characteristics, including attitudes, values, and distinct aspects of personality. A study aims to integrate material on diplomatic personnel's mental health to enhance awareness of how to protect them by synthesising existing literature, has shown that Diplomats' psychological responses to traumatic events proved to be similar to those of other trauma-exposed professional groups, such as nurses and military officers, among others. These suggest they experienced high levels of stress (Hou et al., 2022; Dunn et al., 2015, Brooks et al. 2023).

A study on 2,433 German Foreign Service (GFS) employees' health-related quality of life (HRQOL) was compared to the German general population (Fliege et al., 2001). The study used an expanded Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to analyse how diplomats' HRQOL is affected by international relocation movement and personal risk factors. The findings showed that individual differences significantly influence diplomats' HRQOL perception of diplomatic career responsibilities and their personal, psychological, and social resources. The study found that perceived job demands related to family burdens, emotional costs due to distance, and difficulties establishing an occupational routine negatively impacted diplomats' HRQOL. Job demands may be situation-specific strains that do not change with exposure or seniority but have a detrimental impact on diplomats' quality of life when they become apparent. Imbalances between work-related obligations and private or family life can harm individual well-being, especially for expatriates (Fliege et al., 2001).

In 2001, a cross-national study was done in Europe. The study aimed to examine how two types of work and personal life conflict and organisational assistance affect the mental well-being of expatriate employees, such as diplomats (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001). The survey data were gathered from a culturally diversified sample of 118 European employees. Overall, employees reported more work interfering with their personal life than personal life interfering with work. The results revealed that work-personal life conflict was associated with Employees' melancholy and anxiety were associated with personal-work-life conflict. In contrast, personal-work-life conflict was associated with employees' health concerns. Organisational support had a robust primary influence on well-being and conflict; however, it did not mitigate the consequences of conflict on expatriate well-being. Organisations are frequently concerned with reducing personal life interference with work for expatriates, e.g., spouse employment and schooling for children (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001).

Similarly, a cross-sectional study of 960 Chinese People Armed Police (PAP) was conducted in 2021 in China to understand the stress exposure status of PAP during the mass gathering (MG) deployment and explore its influencing factors. The study revealed that the stress exposure level among PAP troops was linked with MG deployment and health service consumption (Hou et al., 2022), which can be related to the diplomatic service. Substantial changes have happened in the work and family life of people worldwide. The author noted that today's employees are more inclined to express a burning desire for a harmonious balance of work, family life, and leisure activities (ILO, 1992; Offermann & Gowing, 1990; Zedeck & Mosier, 1990) and that globalisation is one of the most crucial issues that will affect workers in the future century (Ivancevich, 1998; Mondy & Noe, 1996) in Grant-Vallone, & Ensher (2001).

Many employees, including diplomats, face balancing work and family while working overseas. Diplomacy involves negotiating complex relationships, handling crises, and expressing national interests in diverse cultural settings. Diplomats often experience stress due to long working hours, frequent relocations, family separations, security concerns, and pressure to meet diplomatic goals. The uncertainty and high expectations in diplomatic situations exacerbate stress levels. As a result, firms must prioritise treating work and family concerns as Core business priorities (Dundes, 2015; Brooks et al., 2017; Gwa et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021).

Although the response to work and family issues varies significantly across countries and organisations, many innovative US and European organisations recognise these concerns and have begun to implement work/family initiatives to assist employees in coping with role conflict (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992; Harker, 1996; Hogg & Harker, 1993; Lewis, 1997) cited by Grant-Vallone, & Ensher, 2001). Furthermore, international institutions such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union have begun to address work and family concerns internationally, indicating a greater need for national policy (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001). While work-life conflict is an issue for both domestic and overseas employees in developed countries, research on it is prevalence and impact has been mainly focused on the United States and Europe. In recent research, Googins and his colleague's recent research, Googins and (1994) cited Grant-Vallone & Ensher (2001) discovered that over half of the US employees in their sample reported feeling stressed and not having enough time for themselves "frequently" or "most of the time" and has affected their mental health (Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001).

In the same vein, Research suggested that conflict between work and personal needs can negatively impact employee health, reduce commitment and job satisfaction, and promote burnout, consequently, psychological stress (Burke, 1988; Thomas & Ganster, 1995) cited in

Grant-Vallone, & Ensher, (2001). Adverse health outcomes can affect physical health (e.g., somatic complaints, blood cholesterol) and mental wellness (e.g., stress, depression, vitality/energy, life satisfaction). This aligns with Gudmundsdottir et al.'s (2023) argument that several research studies demonstrated negative health consequences among expatriate workers, including burnout affecting psychological well-being and family relationships.

Linked to Gudmundsdottir et al. (2023) argument, Fliege et al. (2016) put it as Diplomats, like other expatriates, face particular health hazards on abroad deployments, notwithstanding the benefits of high social prominence and organisational assistance. Over time, expatriates may experience physical health concerns, such as harsh temperatures or tropical illnesses (Jones, 2000; Patel et al., 2006). Research has revealed that frequent movement and expatriation might negatively impact individuals' psychological well-being (Foyle et al., 1998, cited in Fliege et al., 2016).

Unlike corporate expatriates, Foreign Service workers are subjected to frequent foreign movement. Although frequent relocation is part of the occupational routine for Foreign Service Employees and takes place within a highly institutionalised setting with comprehensive selection and pre-travel procedures, it can cause severe psychological distress in individuals because it generates uncertainty, reduces control, and increases ambiguity (Brandt & Buck, 2005; Holland, 1984 cited in Fliege et al. (2016). This was confirmed by Zhang et al. (2001) when the authors noted that Diplomatic Staff face health difficulties such as stress or burnout from several overseas assignments, which are often overlooked in empirical research.

In the same vein, employees on overseas assignments frequently face excessive expectations in both their professional and personal lives. Because they live and work in a new location, they frequently face high job expectations while simultaneously experiencing high family needs. He noted that foreign employees are likely to face significant conflict due to the competing demands of their jobs and personal lives (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Hibberd

& Greenberg, 2011). Some of the symptoms experienced by moved workers may include increased drug and alcohol use, which leads to lower job performance and organisational effectiveness (Harvey, 1985; Black et al., 1992, cited in Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001). Previous studies have revealed that transferring overseas might induce stress and lead to divorce, particularly in couples that are already fragile, which can impact their psychological well-being.

It is worthy of note that frequent international travel poses unique job demands, such as language barriers, decision-making, disruption to support systems, cultural adaptation, and missing home, family, and friends. A recent review found that foreign employment can negatively impact psychological, physical, and physiological health (Brooks et al, 2023; Grant-Vallone and Ensher (2001).

Emotional weariness, cynicism, and depersonalisation are linked with burnout, which impacts patient safety and job performance, according to a study of 263 nurses in Taiwan. The study noted that emotional stability provides good problem-solving skills and handling stressful settings (Teng et al., 2009). These could be likened to the experiences of diplomats.

1.7.8 Ghanaian Diplomats: Unique Challenges and Stressors

Like other scholars, Awuah et al. (2022) referred to psychosocial stressors as external variables or occurrences in someone's social context that can cause psychological stress. These stresses can take many forms, including work-related demands, financial challenges, relationship issues, social isolation, prejudice, and traumatic occurrences, as mentioned earlier. They noted that Psychosocial stresses could negatively impact mood and well-being, perhaps leading to mental illnesses, physical health issues, or dysfunctional behaviour (Hobfoll, 2002; Schneiderman et al., 2005; World et al. [WHO], 2019 cited in (Awuah et al., 2022).

Psychosocial stressors and severe mental disorders are a silent epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, exacerbated by poverty, social exclusion, and structural inequalities that create barriers to prevention, detection, and treatment (Monteiro, 2015; Pannetier et al., 2017; Wainberg et al., 2017). Psychosocial pressures can negatively affect individuals' health, relationships, and productivity. (Gadalla, 2009 Fryers et al., 2005 Hamilton and Alloy, 2017 cited in Awuah et al., 2022)

Diplomats are not migrants. However, it is worthy of note that studies in Europe have found that migrants are more likely to experience psychosocial stressors and mental disorders than the host population or their counterparts at home (Abebe et al., 2014; Kerkenaar et al., 2013; Pannetier et al., 2017; Salinero-Fort et al., 2015 cited in Awuah et al., 2022). Migrant populations' experiences of psychosocial stressors and mental and physical health can vary depending on their local circumstances, including socioeconomic development and access to healthcare. To the authors, host populations' health status can influence migrant groups' health results since they are commonly used as reference groups. According to "the migrant pond effects, if the host population has low health outcomes, migrant groups are likely to have comparable results (Awuah et al., 2022 citing Agyemang et al., 2016; de-Graft Aikins et al., 2012). The following factors, unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, work stress, racial discrimination, and a lack of social support have been highlighted as contributing factors to poor mental health outcomes in African communities in Europe (Agyemang et al., 2009; Pannetier et al., 2017) even though diplomats enjoy privileges and immunities while on duty tours, they are likely to experience some of these Psychosocial stressors in the course of their international assignments and diplomatic engagements, especially in conflict zones.

Correspondingly, Ghanaian diplomats have unique problems that lead to psychological stress. Ghana's diplomatic corps functions in a dynamic global setting, interacting with various stakeholders while representing a developing country's interests. Limited resources,

bureaucratic restraints, and geopolitical developments can all exacerbate stress among Ghanaian diplomats (Agyeman-Duah, 2019, Osei, 2020). Furthermore, Ghanaian envoys may experience cultural differences and prejudice when working overseas, complicating their diplomatic tasks (Boafo-Arthur, 2017). This resonates with the experiences of other diplomats, as shown by (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001 Fliege et al., 2016; Hibberd & Greenberg, 2011; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023) that, in their posting locations, Foreign Service Officers (FSO) and their families may face culture shock, loss of social support, language barriers, political strife, increased security risks, poverty, poor health systems, and other stressors. These reasons could lead to significant levels of stress among FSOs during their diplomatic relocation and engagement, leading to burnout affecting their psychological well-being (Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2023).

1.7.9 Impact of Psychological Stress on Diplomatic Performance

In earlier paragraphs, it was noted that Diplomats and their families often face challenges such as high-stakes jobs, travel, and balancing work and family. Posting, which involves moving to foreign environments and learning new languages, geographies, housing, and schools, can be overwhelming and challenging, especially for the healthiest minds (Dunes, 2015; Brooks et al., 2017; Gwa et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021; Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023). There are continual deadlines to meet, perhaps limited resources (money and time), risky surroundings, and nearly constant change that can be psychologically stressful for the diplomat, leading to workplace psychological disorders (Xue et al., 2022). Stress at work can impact a person's life in many different ways. It may negatively impact their output and mental health within and outside the workplace. People will eventually become stressed out due to their work environment. As such, it is critical to manage stress (Brooks et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). "Working environment" refers to more than just the physical spaces employers supply their staff. A "positive" work atmosphere that fosters

Employees' productivity, growth, and well-being. This includes effective working procedures, relatable values, and a friendly environment.

The impacts of stress in the literature range from physical, psychological, and behavioural issues. Long-term stress can cause health issues such as hypertension, high cholesterol, ulcers, arthritis, and heart disease (Akhlaq et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2013; Ramos, 2011), cited in (Kwaah & Essilfie, 2015). Stress can cause psychological symptoms such as rage, anxiety, nervous tension, despair, or boredom. Direct behaviours associated with high levels of stress include under- or over-eating, increased smoking and alcohol use, and drug usage.

According to Xue et al. (2022), workplace psychological disorders (such as stress and depression) are significant predictors of high turnover. Many studies have found that most former employees quit their jobs because they could not handle work-related demands. As a result, this work-related stress impacts turnover intentions (Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Aiken et al., 2002; Xue et al. (2022). Turnover intention refers to an employee's capacity to leave their job (Haque et al., 2019). Progressing job stress is described as high psychological demands and a drain on worker vitality. Employees who are subjected to high levels of stress are more likely to experience psychological and emotional exhaustion, which leads to their resignation. An employee's psychological condition is a critical factor in determining his or her conduct and reactions. Attitudes and actions are essential determinants of employees' job satisfaction (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Psychological risk, workplace conflict, and high work pressures have severely damaged employees' psychological well-being, resulting in lower employee satisfaction. Xue et al. (2001) indicated stress is essential in controlling turnover rates. Scholars have opined that increased workplace strain causes significant psychological difficulties (e.g., emotional exhaustion and distress), disengaging individuals from their work. A study was conducted among 270 workers to determine whether high work pressures influenced their choice to leave

their jobs. It was revealed that job satisfaction moderated the link between work-related stress and turnover intentions (Xue et al., 2022). The mediation of work-related stress discovered that emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions, role conflict, and psychosocial hazards were strongly linked and influenced turnover intentions. The findings revealed direct and indirect correlations between factors and meditation of work-related stress (Xue et al., 2022). Thus, working life contributes to burnout, leading many to consider abandoning the profession (Leiter & Maslach, 2009).

Similarly, burnout among diplomats has influenced the increase in psychological problems. Cross-sectional research was conducted to comprehensively evaluate relevant published literature that has explored the psychological impacts of deployment on diplomatic staff and their families and to enlighten diplomatic organisations that deploy staff in high-threat postings (HTPs) (Dune et al., 2015). The result revealed that extended deployments were linked to worse mental health outcomes, including depression, alcoholism, and PTSD, and this was probably because of more exposure to potentially stressful situations (Dune et al., 2015). The researchers noted that, for military troops, going above a threshold of 6–12 months in 3 years seems to increase the likelihood of psychological issues. Moreover, diplomats who deployed for the first time and those whose tour duration changes after deployment may be particularly at risk (Dune et al., 2015).

Diplomats' psychological well-being has a considerable impact on their ability to represent the interests of their respective countries (Williams, 2018 cited in Ansah, 2019). Chronic stress can affect cognitive functioning, decision-making abilities, and interpersonal skills, impeding diplomatic attempts (Williams, 2018). Furthermore, unresolved stress can lead to stress, absenteeism, and turnover among diplomatic workers, compromising the continuity and success of diplomatic missions (Amoah, 2020) if not controlled.

1.7.10 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

This concept of coping is supported by what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described as problem-focused strategies for managing stress, which relate to attempts to interact with, act on, or modify the perceived stress. Social support and coping have gotten much attention in the literature; social support has been linked to problem-focused coping (Soliman, 2014). This argument is supported by Saklofske et al. (2012), quoted in Kwaah & Essilfie (2017), who indicated that relaxation, exercise, good health, and time management are all approaches to handling stress.

Coping methods to minimise stress are essential for avoiding the negative consequences of chronic stress (Fliege et al., 2016). Coping techniques are the actions people use to master, lessen, or minimise stressful events. Coping is multidimensional and comprises a variety of tactics, some of which are more effective than others (Gnilka et al., 2012, cited in Kwaah & Essilfie 2017). There are two fundamental approaches to managing stress: social support and dysfunctional coping techniques (Chao, 2012). Seeking assistance from family and friends is a natural way to manage stress (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984; Chao, 2012). This coping style is supported by focusing on and venting emotions and behavioural and mental disengagement.

Coping strategies are the particular behavioural and psychological techniques people use to control, lessen, tolerate, or minimise stressful situations (Sreeramareddy et al, 2001). He noted that 'active coping' refers to moving toward eliminating or avoiding the stressor; 'acceptance' is acknowledging that the stressful event happened and that it is genuine; and 'planning' is considering how to deal with the stressor and organising one's coping strategies. 'Denial' is an attempt to deny the reality of the stressful event, 'positive reframing' is making the most of the situation by learning from it or viewing it in a more positive light, and 'behavioural disengagement' is giving up or withdrawing efforts from the attempt to achieve the goal that the stressor is interfering with (Sreeramareddy et al., 2001).

Despite the inherent difficulties, diplomats use various coping strategies to maintain their resilience and control over stress. The negative impacts of stress can be lessened by using adaptive coping methods, including problem-solving, reaching out for social support, and maintaining a good work-life balance (Brewer & Lichbach, 2018). Furthermore, training courses emphasising stress reduction, cultural awareness, and communication abilities can improve the adaptability and efficiency of diplomats (Ghana Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

1.7.11 Interventions and Systems of Support

Diplomatic organisations, like Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Diplomatic Missions, must put support networks and stress-reduction initiatives in place because they understand how important it is for diplomats to be psychologically healthy. These programs might include wellness centres, peer support groups, and counselling services to raise awareness of mental health issues and offer psychological assistance to diplomatic staff (Aidoo, 2016). Furthermore, diplomats' general resilience and job happiness may be enhanced by creating a welcoming workplace culture that prioritises employee well-being and provides flexible work schedules (Sowah, 2019). Meanwhile, one study of diplomatic organisation policies found no standardised practices or policies in place across organisations to protect employees' mental health when deployed to high-risk postings, despite diplomatic organisations' duty of care to protect their staff's mental health (Brooks et al., 2023).



1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study includes numerous significant factors that determine the research's boundaries and emphasis. The study will examine Ghanaian diplomats working in foreign missions and embassies, as well as those here in Ghana. The geographic scope encompasses regional and international settings where Ghanaian diplomatic representatives are stationed. The study will use a cross-sectional methodology to capture Ghanaian diplomats' psychological stress levels over a certain period. While the research may look at historical trends and longitudinal changes in stress levels, its primary goal will be to understand diplomats' present experiences and perspectives and to examine the connection between diplomacy and psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats, with a particular emphasis on the root causes and manifestations of this stress and its effects on the well-being of the diplomat.

1.9 Sources of Data and Methodology

This outlines how the investigation was conducted. It is organized into the following sections: Research Design, Research Strategy, Study Area, study population, sample and sampling technique, research instrument, data sources, data collecting procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

1.9.1 Research Design

Research design serves as the overarching plan or blueprint that guides the execution of a research project. It outlines how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. According to Babbie (2008), a research design is “the logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of the study” (p. 96). In other words, it provides the strategic framework that connects empirical data with theoretical reasoning.

This study adopted a descriptive case study design, which is suitable for investigating contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear (Yin, 2014). A descriptive case study focuses on producing a detailed and accurate account of the case in question—in this case, the experiences of diplomatic staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration in Ghana with respect to psychological stress and burnout.

The choice of a case study design was informed by the need to explore the complex and multifaceted nature of psychological stress in the diplomatic service. Case studies are particularly effective when the researcher seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific issue, process, or group within a bounded system (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013). Given that diplomatic work is characterized by unique stressors such as international mobility, crisis response, cross-cultural challenges, and long working hours, a case study offers the most appropriate methodological tool to capture these dynamics holistically.

Yin (2014), a leading authority on case study research, identifies three types of case study designs: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. This study aligns with the descriptive case study category because it seeks to document and explain the nature and extent of psychological stress without manipulating the environment or variables. Yin also notes that case study research is ideal when answering "how" and "why" questions in real-world contexts, further justifying the choice for this study.

A major strength of the case study approach is its capacity to use multiple data sources, such as interviews, official documents, reports, and survey instruments. This data triangulation enhances the credibility and validity of the findings (Yin, 2014). For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected diplomatic staff to gain insight into their lived experiences and perceptions. In addition, survey questionnaires were administered to a broader sample of officials to collect quantifiable data on the prevalence and intensity of stress-related

experiences. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods allowed for both depth and breadth in the analysis.

Moreover, the design enabled participants to express themselves freely, allowing the researcher to capture subjective experiences and personal interpretations of stress that might be overlooked by purely statistical approaches. This aligns with Babbie's (2008) assertion that descriptive research allows for the exploration of participants' perspectives in their own words, without imposing pre-defined categories or expectations.

In conclusion, the descriptive case study design was highly appropriate for this study. It provided a structured yet flexible approach for examining burnout and psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats and offered rich insights into the coping mechanisms and institutional supports available. The combination of interviews and survey questionnaires not only enriched the data but also improved the validity of the study's conclusions (Babbie's 2008). Future studies may expand this inquiry by employing comparative case studies involving other ministries or diplomatic services in different national contexts to improve the generalizability of the findings.

1.9.2 Research Approach

This study employed an exploratory mixed-methods approach to examine psychological stress and burnout among diplomatic staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration in Ghana. A research approach refers to the overall orientation and logic guiding the choice of data collection, analysis, and interpretation techniques. The selection of a mixed-methods approach was informed by the need to capture both the breadth and depth of the phenomenon under investigation.

A mixed-methods approach involves integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods within a single study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This methodological approach allowed the researcher

to explore not only the prevalence and patterns of psychological stress (quantitative) but also the lived experiences, meanings, and coping mechanisms of diplomats (qualitative).

The quantitative component of the study involved the use of structured questionnaires to collect numerical data from a broad sample of diplomatic staff. This allowed for the identification of general patterns, levels of stress, and frequency of burnout symptoms. The data generated was analyzed statistically to determine trends and relationships across demographic variables.

On the other hand, the qualitative component employed semi-structured interviews, which enabled participants to share their personal perspectives, feelings, and coping strategies in their own words. This qualitative data helped to contextualize the quantitative findings and provide deeper insight into how individuals experience and manage psychological stress within the diplomatic profession (Babbie, 2008; Bryman, 2012).

The exploratory nature of the study made the mixed methods approach particularly appropriate. Psychological stress among diplomats is a complex issue influenced by professional, institutional, and personal factors. Therefore, a single methodological lens would not have captured the full scope of the issue. The mixed-methods approach enabled triangulation—cross-verifying findings from both qualitative and quantitative sources—which increased the validity and credibility of the results (Babbie, 2008; Bryman, 2012).

In summary, the use of an exploratory mixed-methods approach was well-suited for this descriptive case study. It allowed the researcher to investigate the issue holistically by integrating statistical trends with rich, descriptive narratives. This comprehensive approach contributed to a more nuanced and reliable understanding of psychological stress and burnout among Ghanaian diplomats.

1.9.3 Study Population

The target population under investigation is the entire number or universe of units from which a sample will be drawn (Babbie, 2008). The study was done at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFA & RI), Accra. Due to the stressful and complex nature of their employment, the target demographic for the study was all staff at the Foreign Ministry of Ghana (Osei, 2020; Asare, 2018).

1.9.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size refers to the number of respondents chosen from the targeted population for the research (Babbie, 2008). Case study designs have typically been critiqued for their inability to generalize findings due to their limited sample size. Research scholars opined that budgetary restrictions might have a significant impact on sample size selection, but efforts should be taken to ensure that population-specific factors are not missed (Bryman 2012, Babbie, 2008). The research sample size is thirty-seven (37) participants in MFA & RI.

The study used purposive and stratified sampling techniques to select the sample. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling methodology, was used to select participants based on their unique characteristics and attributes that are interesting and relevant to the study due to its specialised nature, which requires specialised professionals in the diplomatic services (Babbie, 2008). Thus, the sample size was selected using practicality, accessibility, and the need for diversity in the diplomatic corps. Stratified sampling approaches were also used to guarantee enough representation from various diplomatic missions and areas based on Conference, Multilateral and Bilateral posts.

1.9.5 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data sources were used to gather data for the study. Primary data are those that the researcher collects using data-gathering tools, such as interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. The primary data for this study were primarily collected through

questionnaires and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The secondary data sources were gathered through an extensive literature review, official documentation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, and the University of Ghana, Balme, and LECIAD Library resources. The primary qualitative data were obtained from participants' interview sessions and over the telephone. These data were mainly recorded views and expressions, then transcribed into text for content analysis. The primary qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured telephone and face-to-face interviews to determine the incidence of stress, identify significant stressors and their effects on the diplomats' well-being, and evaluate coping techniques and support systems. The qualitative interviews provided in-depth insights into diplomats lived experiences, views, and subjective interpretations of stress and its management; the primary quantitative data was acquired from respondents using semi-structured survey questionnaires. This data also included information from secondary sources that were evaluated, which is the foundation for evaluating the cause-and-effect connection. Given the chosen issue, gathering numerical data was a clear line of action because it gave the researcher an exhaustive, comprehensive grasp of the impacts of the phenomena, possibly employing descriptive statistics (Babbie, 2008; Bryman, 2012).

1.9.6 Data Collection Methods

The study employed a mixed-method data collection strategy, allowing the researcher to collect primary data using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative technique required conducting interviews, whereas the quantitative method involved gathering primary data using a questionnaire. This triangulated approach enhances the validity and depth of findings by allowing the integration of multiple perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

a. Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews provide rich, contextual, and in-depth data by allowing participants to express their thoughts in their own words (Creswell, 2013). This study adopted

semi-structured interviews, combining predefined questions with flexibility for probing and follow-up based on the flow of the conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This approach was appropriate for capturing the complexity of psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats.

Participants included officials from various departments and bureaux within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI), including selected heads of department. The interview guide was developed in alignment with the research objectives and key research questions. The guide included both open-ended and close-ended questions, enabling the researcher to explore the nuances of stress, exhaustion, coping mechanisms, and the institutional support systems available to diplomats.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The qualitative data were then organized and coded for analysis using NVivo Version 12, which is recognized qualitative data analysis software (QSR International, 2020).

b. Questionnaires

To complement the qualitative interviews, a structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. Questionnaires are a reliable and efficient tool for collecting large-scale data suitable for statistical analysis (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaire was self-administered and distributed in electronic format (via Google Forms).

The questionnaire predominantly comprised closed-ended questions, designed to capture demographic data, experiences of stress, burnout symptoms, coping mechanisms, and awareness or usage of institutional support systems. A few open-ended questions were also included to allow for additional comments or elaboration. The design was guided by existing instruments on occupational stress, adapted to the diplomatic context (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Cooper, Sloan, & Williams, 1988).

The quantitative data collected were exported from Google Forms into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21 for analysis.

c. Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was selected due to its flexibility and effectiveness in capturing the complexities of participants lived experiences and perceptions.

The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework:

- (a) Familiarization with the data
- (b) Generating initial codes
- (c) Searching for themes
- (d) Reviewing themes
- (e) Defining and naming themes
- (f) Producing the report

To facilitate the management and analysis of the qualitative data, the researcher used **NVivo Version 12**, a qualitative data analysis software that enables efficient organization, coding, and retrieval of themes and sub-themes. The software helped ensure transparency and rigour in the analysis process by enabling clear linkage between raw data and the derived interpretations (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

b. Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained through the survey were downloaded directly from the Google Forms platform and exported into **SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 21** for analysis. SPSS was chosen due to its user-friendly interface and robust statistical analysis capabilities.

Data were cleaned, coded, and entered into SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistical methods such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to summarize the data and describe the characteristics of the sample population. Additionally, inferential statistical techniques, including cross-tabulations and correlation analysis, were used to identify relationships and patterns among variables related to psychological stress, burnout levels, demographic profiles, and coping strategies.

The results of the analysis were presented using tables, graphs, pie charts, and bar charts to enhance clarity and interpretation (Field, 2013).

1.9.7 Limitations of the study:

While the study attempts to give significant insights into the experiences of Ghanaian diplomats with any connection with psychological stress, there were certain limitations to be considered. These included difficulties in reaching diplomatic communities, potential biases in self-reported statistics, and the limitations inherent in survey and interview methodology. Furthermore, the study's findings were context-specific to Ghanaian diplomats and not applicable to diplomats from other nations or cultural backgrounds; hence, it lacks generalisation. Also, the study was limited by the amount of time and financial resources available for the researcher to conduct the study. Although the researcher faced time constraints, combining the research with academic work, examination, and family roles, it is worth noting that the researcher still managed to conduct the study to arrive at a relevant and achievable conclusion and recommendations. The limitations, however, did not impact the viability of the findings, its conclusion, or recommendations.

1.10 Organisation of Work.

The study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter included an introduction, background of the study, statement of the research problem, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and organisation of chapters. This Chapter also reviews and evaluates related literature on Diplomacy and psychological stress within Ghanaian diplomatic services. It explains the conceptual framework that was used in the study as well as the study methodology. Chapter two presents an overview of Diplomatic Services, Diplomats, Psychological Stress, and coping strategies. Chapter three assesses the linkages between Diplomacy and psychological stress in the life of a diplomat. Finally, Chapter Four summarises the study's results, conclusions, and recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS IN FOREIGN OR DIPLOMATIC SERVICES

2.1 Introduction

Understanding the link between diplomacy and psychological stress is critical for boosting diplomatic efficacy and promoting diplomats' mental health. This chapter reviews the influence of psychological stress on diplomacy globally; specifically, how various cultures and regions handle stress in their diplomatic practices. The chapter is divided into two main sections; an overview of Diplomatic Services, Diplomats, Psychological Stress, and coping strategies, and Foreign Service employment, its influencing circumstances, and the impact of significant disruptions such as COVID-19 are examined in the second section, which also looks at the type of occupations and the factors leading to job-related repercussions.

2.2 Overview of Diplomacy

Negotiations, conversation, and peaceful dispute resolution are all part of diplomacy, a method for managing international relations. On the other hand, psychological stress is a human condition characterized by the emotional strain that various circumstances, including the demands of diplomatic relations, can cause. These two notions, diplomacy and psychological stress, frequently cross in the high-stakes international relations setting, as mentioned in chapter one (Radtchenko-Draillard, 2022; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2023).

Diplomacy is the art and practice of negotiating with representatives of governments or international organisations. Its fundamental purpose is preserving peaceful relations, settling disagreements, and fostering collaboration. There are two tracks of diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy, often known as "track one diplomacy," primarily includes government officials and diplomats. In contrast, more informal techniques (track two and track three diplomacy) engage

non-governmental players such as corporate leaders, civil society members, and other stakeholders. For the sake of this research work, our focus would be on track one diplomacy (Berridge, 2015).

The function of diplomacy has grown significantly in the globalised world, with new fields such as public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and digital diplomacy gaining prominence (Melissen, 2005). However, the work of a diplomat is not without difficulties, especially in terms of psychological pressure.

Diplomacy, an essential instrument in international relations, frequently requires diplomats to manage complex political settings, cultural divides, high-stakes negotiations, security dangers, time-sensitive negotiations, and balancing national objectives with international expectations (Berridge, 2015). Diplomats are responsible for advancing their country's interests while overseeing international relations, conflict resolution, and global collaboration, and this aligns with the responsibilities of a Ghanaian Diplomat; the strains inherent in these activities often cause psychological stress, impacting diplomats' mental health at both the international and regional levels.

2.3 Psychological Stress in Diplomacy

Due to the nature of their jobs, diplomats are frequently subjected to significant stress. While the necessity for physical security in the field is well known, the potential need for psychological care for diplomats before, during, and after posting to difficult locations has not received adequate attention in Africa, particularly among Ghanaian diplomats (Leira, 2017). What is more shocking is the relatively high level of attention devoted to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues that military members face. The dearth of systematic thought on such matters in diplomatic circles is even more striking.

As earlier noted, diplomatic stress and its psychological impacts come in many forms. Foreign Services officers (FSO) at base or diplomats at post encounter three challenges: personal,

professional, and situational. Personal difficulties for diplomats include isolation from family, frequent relocations, and exposure to diverse cultures. Diplomats are frequently faced with resolving complex issues under tight schedules, which might include navigating opposing interests, power dynamics, and high expectations from their governments and host nations (Constantinou, 2016). Situational stress can occur during high-stakes discussions, in which the conclusion may impact national security, economic stability, or foreign relationships.

Diplomatic crises, such as military clashes or commercial disagreements, can also cause stress, aligning with the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter One. In such cases, psychological resilience and emotional intelligence are essential for diplomats to negotiate challenging surroundings successfully.

Diplomacy is a global profession that crosses boundaries. As such, diplomatic stress is a global issue, although various locations experience distinct demands. Both personal and institutional factors impact the stress it causes. Thus, Diplomatic stress is a developing global phenomenon. Ambassadors and diplomatic officers from different nations face identical psychological obstacles, regardless of national origin. For example, a study of American diplomats found that a considerable number of those stationed in high-conflict locations reported anxiety, despair, and PTSD (Johnson, 2020). This aligns with the experiences of Ghanaian diplomats, particularly those stationed in conflict-affected or politically unstable countries. Another research suggested that Diplomats who received mental health services from the US Department of State had a lower incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide compared to both military and civilian populations (Brooks et al., 2023).

According to German research, diplomats have a much lower quality of life and experience more sleeplessness and exhaustion than the average population. In the UK, diplomats reported lower rates of mental illness and did better psychologically than other occupational groups with

frequent overseas travel but performed worse than their spouses (Fliege et al., 2016; Brook et al., 2023).

In another German research, individually reported stress and job expectations exhibited substantial adverse impacts on personal resources (including self-efficacy, mobility-specific coping, and social support). Significant advantages for health-related quality of life (HRQOL) (Brooks et al., 2023). Female employees reported lower HRQOL than those stationed overseas rather than residents in Germany. Several postings, occupational positions (higher versus Lower civil service ranks) and time spent on overseas rotation did not appear to have any influence. Additionally, having children had a detrimental impact on HRQOL for women but not males (Brooks et al., 2023).

Research of Iranian diplomats revealed that occupational stress was low overall, but considerably greater for staff with musculoskeletal illnesses. Additionally, the study indicated that burnout was higher among staff who smoked and staff who were under a lot of stress at work (Aghilinejad et al., 2016).

In Africa, the role of diplomats within organizations such as the African Union offers unique stressors due to complicated political settings, cultural divides, high-stakes negotiations, security dangers and balancing national objectives with international expectations. As such, a South African researcher identified culture shock as a crucial feature in any training program since trainees, like diplomats, must grasp the various stages of personal adjustment while deployed overseas (Dlamini, 2020). Ghanaian diplomats face specific pressures in West Africa, serving in organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Ghana has played an important role in peace talks, notably in Liberia and Sierra Leone, during their civil conflicts and recent attempts in Mali and Guinea. Ghanaian diplomats are frequently on the front lines of peacekeeping missions, under intense pressure to resolve crises with far-

reaching consequences for regional stability. Negotiating peace treaties in turbulent and dangerous situations can have a negative impact on mental health (Mensah, 2021).

Ghanaian diplomats played a significant role in Liberian peace talks in the early 2000s. Diplomatic officials participating in the process were said to have been under severe strain due to the unpredictable nature of the warring parties, the danger of bloodshed, and the high stakes for regional peace (Aning & Pokoo, 2014). Such circumstances promote chronic stress and mental health issues, which often lack adequate mental health support networks.

Several factors contribute to diplomats' stress, including the demands of high-stakes negotiations, navigating cultural differences, addressing security challenges, and enduring personal sacrifices. The subsequent discussion provides an in-depth analysis of these stressors.

2.4 Understanding the Sources of Psychological Stress in Diplomacy

Diplomats encounter many stressors, many of which stem from the unique nature of their work environments, political responsibilities, and personal challenges. These stressors can significantly impact their psychological well-being; as such, it is essential to understand the various sources contributing to this mental strain in order to address the challenges effectively.

2.4.1 Cultural and Political Pressures

Diplomats are frequently stationed in nations with distinct cultural, political, language, and social standards. This cultural mismatch can cause loneliness and disconnection from established social support networks, which are critical for mental health (Johnson, 2020). Managing these differences, adjusting to local norms, and building trust with foreign officials might result in mental exhaustion and stress (Aning & Attuquayefio, 2017). For example, Ghanaian diplomats stationed in politically unstable locations, such as the Middle East or North Africa, may face stress due to security concerns and the necessity to represent Ghana's perspective in sensitive political and social contexts. Gestures that are considered acceptable in one culture may be objectionable in another. Such mistakes can erode relationships and trust

(Kim, 2020), and the diplomat is expected to navigate through this without any error. The cognitive load necessary to continually alter conduct to meet cultural norms, particularly in delicate diplomatic contexts, can cause emotional tiredness and burnout. Finding common ground in culturally complicated environments can be difficult, causing irritation and worry.

2.4.2 High-Stakes Negotiations

Another means by which diplomats may suffer from psychological stress is through High-stakes Negotiations. Diplomats routinely participate in talks that have far-reaching consequences for their country's economic, political, and security interests. These discussions frequently include peace treaties, economic deals, or crisis management, requiring accuracy, resilience, and competence (Smith, 2020). For instance, diplomats engaging in disarmament or nuclear negotiations and Global climate change discussions, such as the Paris Agreement, have significant implications for all states. Diplomatic teams must balance environmental sustainability and economic and political considerations. Diplomats are frequently subjected to intense public scrutiny, which can raise pressure to succeed and make them more vulnerable to mental health concerns such as anxiety, sleeplessness, and exhaustion. The possible consequences of blunders that might disrupt international relations add to the weight of their obligations. Furthermore, making decisions under tight timelines, frequently with inadequate information, can increase stress and negatively affect their mental health, aligning with our theoretical framework of Role and Transactional stress theory as discussed in Chapter one.

2.4.3 Isolation and Loneliness

The nature of the stress is that diplomats are usually stationed overseas, often in faraway nations, for lengthy periods. This separation from family, friends, and familiar surroundings can contribute to loneliness and feelings of isolation. Furthermore, cultural and social differences may make it challenging for individuals to establish new social support networks in their new nation (Aning & Attuquayefio, 2017). Isolation might include long-term postings in remote or isolated places, where diplomats may struggle to retain communication with their

home nation or establish a feeling of community in the host country (Jones, 2019). The emotional toll of isolation and loneliness can lead to despair, anxiety, and stress. Diplomats may feel estranged from their home nation and culture, exacerbating their feelings of displacement. Furthermore, trouble adjusting to a new environment might make it tough to manage the demands of their work, leading to severe psychological stress (Kim, 2020).

2.4.4 Security Threats

Diplomatic personnel typically operate in areas where security threats are high. Political instability, terrorism, espionage, and civil upheaval in particular nations can pose serious safety risks. The requirement to be aware of and control dangers in such circumstances causes significant psychological stress (Aning & Attuquayefio, 2017). For example, Diplomats in High-risk Environments such as Conflict zones like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria face a continual threat to their safety (Jones, 2019). Also, Diplomats in nations with significant levels of monitoring or espionage (for example, Russia or China) may be apprehensive about being tracked, limiting their freedom of movement and increasing paranoia. The constant requirement to monitor and respond to security risks can lead to hypervigilance, resulting in chronic stress. Diplomats may experience anxiety and sleeplessness as a result of concerns for their own and their staff's safety. If they are exposed to risky or violent conditions for an extended period, this might lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

A high-stress work atmosphere can induce hypervigilance, anxiety, and feelings of insecurity. When paired with cultural or linguistic limitations, the working environment can make diplomatic responsibilities more difficult and emotionally taxing, resulting in psychological stress. This falls in line with our theoretical framework, which uses the lens of Role stress theory, which suggests that stress occurs when individuals face conflicts, inconsistencies, or ambiguities in their positions and work.

2.4.5 Workload and Work-Life Balance

Not all Diplomatic duties are demanding, requiring diplomats to work unusual hours, travel frequently, and attend numerous meetings and activities. The workload can be demanding, leaving little time for personal relaxation, family leisure, or entertainment (Smith, 2020). A lack of work-life balance can result in burnout, strained relationships, health issues such as high blood pressure or cardiovascular disease, chronic stress, and physical health problems such as sleeplessness and exhaustion. The inability to unplug from work and the unpredictable nature of diplomatic life leads to persistent stress. Likewise, diplomatic families, in particular, may face pressure due to the unpredictable nature of diplomatic life. Diplomats risk long-term mental and physical weariness if they do not make time for leisure and personal life (Jones, 2019).

2.4.6 Public Scrutiny and Political Pressure

Diplomats are frequently in the public glare, particularly during critical events such as international crises or extensive negotiations. Political pressure from their government, the media, and the international community can exacerbate stress. Their every word and move might be analyzed, leaving little space for error (Smith, 2020). Diplomatic reactions to international catastrophes, such as hostage situations or armed conflicts, frequently receive media coverage. Constant inspection and pressure might cause performance anxiety and fear of failure. The necessity to manage political, public, and diplomatic expectations can lead to a clash between personal principles and professional obligations, resulting in stress and dissatisfaction impacting their mental health (Kim, 2020).

2.4.7 Impact of Pandemics

In addition, pandemics like COVID-19 cause particular problems for diplomats. Travel restrictions, quarantine regulations, and increased public health concerns can all jeopardize diplomatic missions and personal lives. For example, during the COVID-19 epidemic, ambassadors' and diplomatic officers' movements were restricted, and in-person diplomacy

possibilities were curtailed. Health worries for themselves and their families, along with the difficulties of maintaining foreign contacts via virtual platforms, worsened stress levels. The uncertainty and dread associated with pandemics can exacerbate anxiety, loneliness, and feelings of helplessness. The inability to travel freely, along with concerns about contracting the virus and ensuring the safety of diplomatic personnel, can exacerbate stress.

2.4.8 Environmental Stressors

Harsh weather conditions or severe climates can negatively impact diplomats' psychological well-being in their host country. Whether stationed in hot, humid regions or frigid, remote locales, climatic conditions can impact physically and mentally. Diplomats stationed in disaster-prone areas (Japan), such as hurricanes, floods, or droughts, may confront additional obstacles to their physical safety and ability to conduct their responsibilities efficiently. Prolonged exposure to severe weather conditions can cause tiredness and stress. Harsh temperatures can also limit leisure activities and social connection, resulting in isolation, cabin fever and mental tiredness.

2.4.9 Technology and Cybersecurity Concerns

Technology can improve diplomatic job efficiency, but it can also cause stress due to continual connectivity, information overload, and cybersecurity worries. The pressure to manage diplomatic relations digitally has intensified as communication technology has advanced. Diplomats, for example, must manage sensitive communications while remaining vigilant against cybersecurity risks. The continual availability of digital platforms may result in an inability to separate from work. Excessive use of technology, such as emails, video conferences, and social media, can cause information fatigue and persistent stress from being "always on." Furthermore, cyber-attacks or data breaches create extra psychological stress for diplomats handling sensitive material. In Ghana, frequent power cuts and internet downtime amidst deadlines can be a source of frustration and stress for the Foreign Service Officer (FSO).

2.4.10 Leadership and Management Challenges

A diplomatic mission or embassy's leadership and management style can dramatically impact stress levels. Diplomatic workers may face additional strain from demanding managers or imbalanced workloads. For example, micromanagement or authoritarian leadership styles may result in a lack of autonomy and poor job satisfaction among diplomats, whereas too relaxed leadership may confuse unclear duties and inefficiency. Ineffective or excessively severe management can foster a culture of dread, dissatisfaction, and low morale. Diplomatic personnel may face significant levels of job stress, resulting in burnout, disengagement, and reduced job performance, which may lead to psychological stress.

Notwithstanding the above, Diplomats or FSOs frequently require a high degree of competence, linguistic skills, and political knowledge. Feeling unqualified or overwhelmed by the degree of skill necessary can lead to feelings of inadequacy and stress. Diplomatic staff, for example, may feel unprepared for high-level discussions or be assigned tasks outside of their competence areas, resulting in performance anxiety. Feelings of inadequacy or impostor syndrome may develop, causing increased stress. In such instances, diplomats may experience self-doubt, undermining their confidence in essential decision-making processes and leading to heightened psychological stress.

Furthermore, Diplomats frequently operate in areas where healthcare services are weak or unavailable. The stress of working in high-risk circumstances where one's health and well-being are jeopardized can trigger anxiety. Diplomats stationed in areas with high incidences of infectious illnesses, inadequate medical facilities, or unstable healthcare systems, for example, may confront ongoing health hazards aggravated by extended working hours. Concerns for one's health and the health of dependents can result in chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. Diplomats who do not have access to sufficient medical treatment may feel more vulnerable in their professional obligations, resulting in psychological stress.

Not all, Diplomatic postings sometimes provide financial incentives, such as allowances for living overseas. However, these incentives may not always cover the expense of living in expensive or unsafe areas, resulting in financial distress. Diplomatic personnel working in high-cost cities or regions with high living costs, for example, may find it difficult to manage personal expenses despite their remuneration, causing financial concern. Inadequate salary compared to living expenditures or job duties might cause discontent and financial stress. This financial pressure can also impact personal relationships and job satisfaction, adding to emotional stress.

It is, therefore, an undeniable fact that diplomatic employment or services confront a variety of psychological stressors, including external environmental elements such as pandemics, harsh weather, and hazardous working conditions, as well as internal issues such as management styles, gender relations, and personal qualities just to mention a few. These factors can impact diplomats' or FSOs' well-being, specifically the Ghanaian diplomats, as they must balance professional obligations and personal health.

2.5 Overview of Diplomatic Employment in Ghana's Service Industry

Ghana's labour market, which includes the service sectors, mirrors broader socio-economic transformations, including urbanization, globalization, and technological advancements. Initiatives to diversify the economy and promote industrialization have sought to create more formalized employment opportunities. The general labour market reflects Ghana's continuous economic development, with trends toward more structured sectors such as services and manufacturing. At the same time, agriculture and the informal economy play essential roles in job creation. However, structural impediments and other employment challenges continue to impact the psychological well-being of employees (Adjei & Boateng, 2019). Meanwhile, addressing these structural impediments to inclusive growth, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing skills development remains crucial to improving job prospects and ensuring sustainable livelihoods across the country. Within Ghana's service sector, diplomatic service

represents a highly specialised and organized form of employment, where diplomats and ambassadors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration work to advance the nation's interests abroad.

Unlike traditional employment sectors like agriculture or informal labour, Diplomatic professions are formed by unique institutions and need consistent with Ghana's larger socioeconomic landscape. These organized responsibilities introduce distinct stresses, such as high-stakes negotiations and the need to traverse political and cultural differences in foreign situations, which influence diplomatic staff's psychological well-being. The many sorts and natures of employment in Ghana, from the structured frameworks of official occupations to the unpredictability of informal work, likewise provide unique psychological concerns. Thus, understanding the interaction between employment structures, working circumstances, and psychological stress is critical in developing support systems to improve well-being, particularly within Ghana's Foreign Ministry.

2.5.1 Historical Context

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFA & RI) is the critical organization coordinating Ghana's foreign policy, developing its international participation, and administering its diplomatic posts overseas. Since its foundation in 1957, the Ministry has changed to reflect global developments, shifting political objectives, and the need to reconcile foreign policy with national development goals. The Ministry's structure reflects modern diplomacy's complexities, including political, economic, and cultural components. Understanding its structure is critical to understanding how Ghana deals with complicated international challenges, strengthens its soft power, and promotes national interests overseas, thereby explaining the psychological stress experienced by Ghana FSOs or diplomats. Thus, the overview examines the Ministry's organizational architecture, emphasising its principal departments, agencies, and the general hierarchical structure that allows it to carry out its mandate.

Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs originated in the post-independence period when the country strove to establish itself as an independent state with its foreign policy. Under Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, the Ministry was entrusted with fostering African unity and non-alignment, in line with Nkrumah's concept of Pan-Africanism. During this time, the Ministry was small and concentrated on high-level political engagement favouring decolonization and regional unity.

Ghana's foreign policy objectives grew over time, owing to economic imperatives, regional security concerns, and global trends such as globalization and multilateralism. To meet these changes, significant revisions were made to the Ministry's organization. By the 1990s, economic diplomacy, trade promotion, and regional integration had become critical components of Ghana's foreign policy, necessitating an extension of the Ministry's duties and organizational structures.

2.6 Mandate of the MFA & RI

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration was established to manage bilateral and multilateral ties and regional integration and to coordinate Ghana's diplomatic posts worldwide. Thus, it manages and coordinates the country's foreign relations and diplomacy.

In addition to diplomatic missions, honorary consulates are vital in promoting trade, investment, and tourism while providing essential consular services, particularly in regions with significant Ghanaian communities. The organisation is hierarchical, with numerous departments and groups focusing on elements of foreign policy and diplomatic relations Ministry of (MFA & RI, 2024). Ghana's 1992 Constitution lays forth the core ideas that guide the country's foreign policy. The following general ideas, as stated in Article 40 of the Constitution, serve as the foundation for Ghana's foreign policy:

- Promotion and protection of the interest of Ghana;
- Establishment of a just and equitable international, economic, political and social order;
- Promotion of respect for international law and treaty obligations;
- Promotion of the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means;
- Adherence to the principles enshrined in the Charter and aims or ideals of the United Nations, the African Union, the ECOWAS, the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement Ministry of (MFA & RI, 2024).

Ghana's foreign policy goals also include upholding its international commitments, which are crucial for preserving its place in the world and promoting positive relations in addition to these fundamental values. The following are the leading international commitments of the nation:

- honouring pledges made following international treaties and accords, making sure Ghana contributes to world development, security, and peace.
- Ghana actively participates in United Nations peacekeeping operations, demonstrating its contribution to international peacekeeping efforts.
- collaboration on international frameworks and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concerning global challenges including human rights, climate change, and sustainable development.
- These responsibilities support Ghana's dedication to advancing its domestic interests and maintaining an international order based on laws, therefore fostering peace and stability on a regional and global scale.

2.7 The Organisational Structure of Ghana's Foreign Affairs

Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFA & RI) is strategically organized to oversee and coordinate the nation's foreign relations and diplomatic activities. The Ghana Foreign Ministry, encompassing the Ministry and its global network of diplomatic

missions, is responsible for directing and managing these relations. In addition to formal diplomatic missions, honorary consulates are established to complement these efforts, particularly in promoting trade, investment, and tourism, while also providing consular services in regions with significant Ghanaian populations. The Ministry operates hierarchically, with various departments and divisions dedicated to foreign policy and diplomatic engagement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration, 2024).

It consists of the Headquarters and 61 diplomatic missions abroad. These include 55 embassies and High Commissions, six consulates general, and 59 honorary consulates spread across various regions worldwide, as well as three (3) Sub-vented Organizations: the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), the National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council (NAPRM-GC), and the All African Students Union (AASU) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2024).

The MFA&RI operates from its headquarters under the leadership of the Hon. Minister and the Hon. Deputy Ministers, supported by the Directorate and staff across several departments, referred to as Bureaux. For instance, the following departments are referred to as the Africa Bureau, the Europe Bureau, and the Middle East Bureau etc. At the apex of the Ministry's structure are the Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and the secretariats of her Deputies. The Ministry is politically headed by the Minister, who is nominated by the President and confirmed by Parliament. The Minister holds the primary responsibility for formulating and executing Ghana's foreign policy. Assisting the Minister is the Deputy Minister, similarly, appointed by the President and approved by Parliament, tasked with overseeing specific areas of the Ministry's mandate, such as political affairs, economic cooperation, and regional integration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2024).

Below the political leadership, the Chief Director functions as the Ministry's administrative head, overseeing policy implementation and the day-to-day operations of the Ministry. The Chief Director reports directly to the Hon. Minister and the Deputy Ministers and is supported by two former career ambassadors as supervising Coordinating Directors. Each department (or bureau) within the Ministry is organised and led by a divisional director and assisted by a team of deputy directors and assistant directors, all of whom report to the divisional or departmental head or director. The executive and secretarial classes further support the Bureaux.

It is worth noting that the Ministry's diplomatic personnel are divided into three classes: the Administrative Class (Foreign Service Officer Branch A), the Executive Class (Foreign Service Officer Branch B), and the Secretarial Class (Foreign Service Officer Branch C). The Administrative class is the highest, and the basic qualifications for selection to the entry point are a recognised university degree, success in the Public Services Commission (PSC) examination, and a successful interview conducted by both the Ministry and PSC. Selected branches B and C officers often graduate from the polytechnics, government secretarial schools, and other recognised schools (Ampofo-Boateng, 2019).

Currently, the Ministry is divided into line Bureaux based on geographical, institutional, or functional areas. As indicated earlier, these bureaux are headed by Directors who report to the Chief Director through the Supervising Directors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2024).

2.7.1 Directorates and Departments

The Ministry is divided into directorates and divisions focusing on the thematic and geographic aspects of foreign policy. These entities ensure that Ghana's interests are represented on various international topics. The most notable of these are:

2.7.2 Political and Economic Relations Directorate

The Political and Economic Relations Directorate is separated into divisions depending on geographical areas (Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Americas, and the Middle East). These departments oversee Ghana's bilateral relations, which include political talks, commercial collaborations, and security cooperation. The emphasis on regional specialization emphasizes the need to connect with diverse areas of the world in ways that acknowledge their particular political, economic, and cultural settings. Thus, the Political and Economic Affairs Directorate oversees bilateral and multilateral contacts, political collaboration, and economic diplomacy. They act as the primary channels between the Foreign Ministry and Ghana's Missions in the respective regions, residents' missions, and other Ministries within the country. This department is critical for developing and implementing foreign policy strategies.

2.7.3 Multilateral Relations Directorate (Bureau):

The Multilateral Relations Directorate is responsible for Ghana's interactions with international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and other global and regional bodies. This directorate has grown in importance as Ghana seeks to play a more active role in multilateral diplomacy, including peacekeeping, climate change negotiations, and global governance reforms.

2.7.4 Protocol Directorate (Bureau)

Thus, the general function of the protocol involves administering conventions relating to the mechanics of establishing diplomatic relations between Ghana and other countries. The Protocol Directorate ensures the smooth execution of diplomatic protocols, coordinates state visits, and manages the logistics of international summits hosted in Ghana. This unit also handles the accreditation of foreign diplomats and oversees ceremonies involving foreign dignitaries.

2.7.5 Legal and Consular Affairs Directorate

The Legal and Treaties Bureau provides legal advice on international treaties and agreements and deals with enquiries from foreign governments on law and legal processes. The Consular Bureau, on the other hand, maintains consular services for Ghanaians living abroad and oversees immigration concerns. It also handles concerns involving protecting Ghanaian residents and enterprises abroad, such as legal representation in international disputes. The Regional Integration Directorate focuses on Ghana's involvement in regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It supports regional cooperation and integration projects and many others.

2.7.6 Diaspora Affairs Bureau

The Diaspora Affairs Bureau is a new institution representing Ghana's diaspora's rising relevance in national development. It aims to strengthen relationships between the government and Ghanaians living abroad by promoting remittances, investments, and talent transfers from the diaspora to boost national progress.

2.7.6 Specialised Units

The Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit ensures that foreign policy objectives align with national development goals and oversees policy execution. The Information and Public Affairs Unit manages the Ministry's communication strategy, which includes public diplomacy and media interactions (Gyamfi, 2018).

The Administration Bureau is in charge of the personnel in the Ministry both at home and abroad. This includes general recruitment, training, and general welfare for service officers. The Administration Bureau also tackles issues relating to appointments, promotions, transfers, retirement, resignations, welfare, and the discipline of service officers. The Bureau also identifies training requirements of all categories of officers and ensures that officers are given

both basic, specific training and proficiency in some languages. This opportunity is given to officers to specialise in some vital regions within Ghana's foreign policy orientation framework. The bureau executes this policy using funds from its resources and linking with local and overseas institutions for training placements and meeting costs.

The Finance Bureau handles the Ministry's financial administration, budget control, and the disbursement of Ministry funds. The Estate and General Services Bureau acquires and maintains the ministry's property at home and abroad.

2.8 Diplomatic Missions Abroad

The Ministry maintains a global network of embassies, high commissions, and consulates.

These diplomatic missions are the primary entities representing Ghana's interests overseas. Each mission is led by an Ambassador or High Commissioner, whose status is determined by whether the host country is a Commonwealth member. He or she handles the implementation of government policies in the host country. The mission is assisted by several officers drawn from the various branches of the Ministry. These missions act as diplomatic representatives and facilitate economic, investment, and cultural exchanges.

Thus, Ghana's diplomatic posts are structured to match the Ministry's wider priorities which include:

2.8.1 Bilateral ties

Embassies and high commissioners are largely responsible for maintaining political and economic ties with host countries, establishing trade agreements, and furthering Ghana's foreign policy objectives.

2.8.2 Consular Services:

Consulates serve Ghanaian individuals overseas by protecting their rights and allowing access to vital legal and consular services. The consular section handles the issuing of passports, travelling documents to Ghanaians abroad and visas or entry permits to non- Ghanaians. It acts

as a notary in the civil registry, and the Consul exercises the right of supervision and inspection provided for in the laws of Ghana concerning Ghanaian aircraft, vessels, and their crew

2.8.3 Multilateral Engagement:

Ghana's Permanent Missions to the United Nations and other international organizations are essential in organizing the country's engagement in global diplomacy. These missions contribute significantly to Ghana's position on global problems such as sustainable development, international security, and human rights. The Ministry's framework enables a holistic approach to managing Ghana's international relations, with political, economic, legal, and consular functions successfully supporting the country's foreign policy objectives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2024).

In summary, Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration has developed dramatically since independence, responding to global trends and evolving foreign policy goals. From its early emphasis on Pan-Africanism and non-alignment to current problems such as economic diplomacy and regional integration, the Ministry's history shows Ghana's proactive and dynamic interaction with the world (Gyamfi, 2018). The Ministry's organisational structure is intended to facilitate this multidimensional approach, ensuring that Ghana's foreign policy is successfully developed and executed.

Consequently, like other professions, Ghanaian diplomats receive specific training and education to carry out their duties efficiently. However, unlike many other careers, diplomatic service demands technical competence, empathy for other cultures, language fluency, and a profound awareness of international relations. Using Ghana's national experiences and knowledge, Ghanaian envoys may successfully argue for policies promoting job creation, skills enhancement, and equitable growth in global settings. Thus, while unique in emphasis and context, employment in the Ghanaian Foreign Service connects with broader concerns about

employment and livelihoods, emphasising Ghana's local and international goals, which come with various psychological stresses due to its long hours of work, relocation etc, that negatively affect the well-being of the diplomat (FSO) (Zhang et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2023).

2.9 Overview of Conditions of Service for Ghanaian Foreign Service Officers

This section presents an overview of the working environment of Ghanaian Foreign Service personnel, focusing on the roles' specific qualities, compensation, and problems. It investigates the different elements that affect their job, such as diplomatic obligations, cultural adaption, legal frameworks, and living situations in host nations. The chapter also examines how significant disruptions, such as the COVID-19 epidemic, affect their work and personal lives. Understanding these conditions provides insight into the challenges of the foreign service job and the critical support structures necessary to maintain Ghanaian diplomats' well-being and effectiveness overseas and at the base.

2.9.1 Employment and Compensation of Foreign Service Officers (Diplomats)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration personnel have a competitive salary in line with the Civil Service pay range, with additional allowances to cover living overseas, hardship postings, and other job-related costs. Benefits frequently include housing allowances, child education allowances, and hardship payments for challenging postings (Foreign Service Regulations, 2018). While officers are given different allowances, they are often insufficient to pay the high cost of living in particular countries, resulting in financial difficulty. Bureaucratic delays can cause pay and allowances to be disbursed late, generating financial instability for officers and their families (Addo, 2008). Financial stress, combined with the demanding nature of diplomatic work, has been shown to have a significant impact on the mental health of officers (Hoge et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2020). Inadequate compensation can

exacerbate diplomats' unique stressors, such as long hours, frequent relocations, high-pressure situations and family issues.

2.9.2 Management and Career Development of Foreign Service Officers (Diplomats)

Foreign Service officers' career growth is organised with regular training and professional development opportunities. Officers might improve their abilities by attending the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), or other foreign diplomatic training organisations. Promotions are awarded based on merit, performance assessments, and years of service. Senior jobs need extensive experience and a proven track record in diplomatic service (Asamoah, 2014).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration experiences bureaucratic delays in decision-making and policy execution, which can negatively impact the performance and morale of Foreign Service personnel (Asamoah, 2014). While training is offered, there are sometimes limited chances for ongoing professional development, restricting officers' capacity to keep current on global diplomatic norms and innovations, resulting in Limited Professional Development (Addo, 2008). It is also worth noting that Diplomats may experience psychological distress as a result of management and career advancement. Diplomatic positions need a high level of responsibility and the ability to continually adapt to new cultural and political settings. Career development demands, such as the desire for ongoing professional growth and competition for promotions, can raise stress levels, as discussed in the Role stress and transactional theory under the theoretical framework in the previous chapter. The theories have provided a comprehensive understanding of how these job-related stresses, such as management and career development issues like the pressure to perform well and advance in their careers by employees, can lead to role overload and significant stress, majorly influencing their mental health (Herman, 2019; Miller & Moskos, 2020; Lazarus et al., 1984).

2.9.3 Family & the Health of Foreign Service Officers (Diplomats)

The Ministry prioritises the well-being of its officials and their families. While it provides access to medical treatment for officers and their families at the post, Officers and their families do not enjoy such relief at the base. Officers are also paid educational allowances to support some of their school-going children while at the post, allowing them to complete their education without interruption (Agyeman-Duah, 2005). However, these facilities are unavailable to officers at the base, putting extra financial burdens on them and affecting their psychological makeup. Also, the frequent relocations during diplomatic posts usually disrupt family life, impacting spouses' jobs and children's schooling (Caligiuri et al., 1998). Families and officers may feel alone, particularly in countries with a tiny expatriate population or considerable cultural and linguistic difficulties, leading to loneliness and stress (McCall & Haverkamp, 2010). Officers stationed in areas with limited healthcare services or high Health Risks increase prevalence and face higher health risks. This might cause anxiety and tension regarding personal and family health (Agyeman-Duah, 2005).

Also, access to Mental Health Services is frequently not available to Ghanaian diplomats, and the stigma associated with requesting psychological aid might hinder officers from receiving the care they require. Thus, Stress related to the family can result from the regular moves and extended absences that are part of the diplomatic profession; these disturbances can strain relationships and impact the diplomat's and their family members' well-being (McClenahan et al., 2018). Health-related stress can also arise from exposure to health risks in different postings, impacting physical and mental well-being (Suedfeld, 2010). For instance, significant disruptions such as the COVID-19 epidemic have significantly impacted foreign service employment, shown weaknesses and forced changes in the industry in the following ways;

a. Health and Safety Concerns

The pandemic posed significant health and safety problems. Foreign service members, who were frequently stationed far away from home, faced more significant health risks and restricted access to medical treatment. Embassies, consulates, and international offices were required to develop tight health standards, including remote work arrangements, to safeguard their employees. Some personnel were evacuated or transferred owing to health concerns that could affect their psychological well-being.

b. Operational disruptions

COVID-19 created major operational interruptions. Travel restrictions and lockdowns limited the movement of foreign service personnel, hampering their capacity to complete tasks that needed physical presence. Diplomatic negotiations, international conferences, and corporate meetings migrated online, forcing a quick transition to virtual platforms. While this transition provided continuity, it also presented issues in terms of cybersecurity, efficient communication, and sustaining personal connections, which could be a source of work stress or burnout.

c. Economic and Job Security Impacts

The pandemic-induced global economic slowdown also affected foreign service jobs. Budget cuts in government and international organisations resulted in job instability and reduced workforce numbers. Private sector expatriates were subjected to layoffs, wage reductions, and project halts. The financial instability of host nations has also influenced the cost of living and quality of life for foreign service workers, impacting their mental health.

d. Psychological and Social Effects

The pandemic's social distancing measures and travel limitations resulted in isolation and mental health difficulties for foreign service personnel. Being away from home and frequently in high-pressure situations caused stress and anxiety. Organisations must provide increased mental health assistance and services to help employees deal with these issues.

e. Long-Term Adaptations

Due to the pandemic, foreign service employment has changed in various ways. There has been a greater emphasis on digital diplomacy and virtual collaboration, which may continue beyond the epidemic. Health and safety measures have been strengthened, and emergency preparedness for future emergencies has improved. Furthermore, there is a rising acknowledgement of the need for mental health assistance and flexible work arrangements in foreign service positions (Bhattacharya, 2020).

2.9.4 Working Environment of the Foreign Service Officer (Diplomats)

The working environment for the Foreign Service personnel varies by place of deployment. Embassies and consulates are often outfitted with contemporary office space and the technology equipment required for diplomatic operations. The workplace is frequently professional and demanding, forcing officers to adjust to varied cultural situations while handling high-stakes diplomatic missions (Addo, 2008). However, some embassies and consulates may lack contemporary office facilities and technology resources, making it difficult for officials to fulfil their jobs effectively. This also aligns with the Ghana Foreign Ministry, whose diplomatic assignments can sometimes be overwhelming due to the long hours, resulting in burnout and poor job satisfaction (Asamoah, 2014).

Because of the rigorous nature of their jobs, diplomats may experience psychological stress at work. Managing complicated international interactions, which may entail high-stress discussions and dispute resolution, is a common need of a diplomatic job (Harari, 2020). The psychological load is further increased by the constant need to adjust to different situations and cultures (Suedfeld, 2010). Furthermore, the workplace environment can provide some mental health risks to workers. The following are some significant issues with mental health that working conditions can pose to employees. Burnout, emotional depletion, depersonalisation, and a diminished feeling of personal success can be brought on by extended exposure to high stress, excessive workloads, and a lack of support (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Also, anxiety

disorders can be exacerbated by demanding expectations, high-pressure work situations, and worry regarding job security. Excessive concern, restlessness, and trouble focusing are possible symptoms.

Furthermore, unsupportive colleagues, a work-life imbalance, and unfavourable work environments can all contribute to depression. Persistent melancholy, disinterest in activities, changes in appetite, and irregular sleep patterns can contribute to excessive stress and mental issues (WHO, 2020). Not all workers who experience violent, natural disaster-related, or hazardous situations at work may acquire Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This disorder is characterised by uncontrolled thoughts about the traumatic event, acute anxiety, and flashbacks (APA, 2013), aligning with the theoretical framework as discussed in chapter one.

In addition, stressful work conditions can occasionally cause people to abuse substances because they utilise drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism (Frone, 2016). According to Harvey et al. (2011), stress, irregular work schedules, and heavy workloads can cause sleep problems, including insomnia, which can worsen other mental health conditions. It is worth noting that with Prolonged stress without sufficient release, diplomats can suffer chronic stress, which can cause mental health problems as well as physical symptoms such as headaches, tense muscles, and cardiovascular difficulties (Cohen et al., 2012).

2.9.5 Ethnicity and Race in the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration promotes a diverse workforce that reflects Ghana's multicultural society by upholding a non-discrimination policy and inclusivity (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2024). The recruitment process prioritises merit and qualification. Despite non-discrimination regulations, certain officers may experience subtle prejudices and discrimination based on colour, class, or ethnicity, which might impact their professional development and working conditions (Agyeman-Duah, 2005).

Discrimination based on ethnicity, colour, or class can impact job advancement and workplace dynamics. Also, Officers from various backgrounds may struggle to assimilate into foreign diplomatic communities that are not as inclusive, reducing their performance and well-being (Addo, 2008) due to Integration Challenges.

For diplomats, race and ethnicity can cause psychological stress in some ways. Significant mental anguish and anxiety can result from encounters with racism or prejudice, whether domestically or overseas (Pieterse et al., 2012). Furthermore, when a diplomat's cultural values diverge from the host nation's, they may experience identity conflicts that impair feelings of alienation and loneliness (Sue et al., 2007). Dealing with and overcoming cultural prejudices and preconceptions can add to these pressures and impact their efficacy and professional relationships (Carter, 2007), impacting their mental health and overall well-being.

2.9.6 Use of Technology and Other Office Facilities

Foreign Service officers can access cutting-edge technology tools to help them carry out their diplomatic duties. This includes secure communication technologies, data management software, and other digital tools required for modern diplomacy. The Ministry provides continuous professional development opportunities, including training on using modern technologies (Asamoah, 2014).

However, due to financial challenges and the bureaucracy of public services, the Foreign Ministry sometimes uses outdated technology. The Ministry and its diplomatic Missions are sometimes forced to use antiquated technology due to budgetary constraints impeding effective communication and data management (McCall & Haverkamp, 2010). These might increase cybersecurity risks since cyber-attacks frequently target diplomatic communications, and insufficient cybersecurity safeguards might jeopardise sensitive information.

Thus, Stress levels can be decreased, and productivity and job satisfaction can be increased with technology and well-equipped office spaces (Tarafdar et al., 2019). On the other hand, shoddy design or outdated technology can cause irritation, lower output, and more stress in the workplace. For example, excessive and complicated digital communications can cause technology overload, resulting in technostress, characterised by mental exhaustion and worry (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Bad workplace functional design can also result in physical pain and strain, exacerbating psychological stress (Baker et al., 2018). There are several ways in which using technology for diplomatic purposes might cause psychological stress. Constant communication via text messages, video conferences, and emails can create pressure and stress by expecting quick replies (Mazmanian et al., 2013). Additionally, the constant barrage of information can lead to information overload, which impairs diplomats' ability to prioritise and process work efficiently and can result in stress and cognitive exhaustion (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). Moreover, diplomats may find it difficult to completely detach from their profession because of the blurring of work and personal life brought on by mobile technology, which might result in burnout and a decline in the psychological well-being of the diplomat (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007).

2.10 Conclusion

In Conclusion, this chapter has covered the structure and activities of Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, offering a detailed overview of its hierarchical organization, essential people, and specialized responsibilities within the Ghana Foreign Service. It has also reviewed the psychological stress that Ghanaian diplomats might face due to the pressures of representing national interests overseas, navigating complicated international interactions, and dealing with personal and professional obstacles. The demands of long-term absence from family, cultural adaptation, and the high-stakes nature of diplomacy all contribute considerably to these individuals' psychological well-being or mental health

issues. Understanding the organizational structure and burnout factors in diplomacy is critical for improving Ghanaian diplomats' well-being and the efficacy of Ghana's foreign policy apparatus.

In chapter (3), we delve into a comprehensive examination of the data gathered on psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats and the working dynamics within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. This research is of significant importance as it provides crucial insights into the relationship between the Ministry's structure, its associated psychological stress, and the mental health difficulties its diplomatic workers experience. The debate will focus on essential issues such as the prevalence or the causes of burnout or stressors such as workload, working environment, support systems, coping techniques, etc., offering a detailed assessment of how these aspects affect diplomats' personal and professional lives.



CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSING PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS IN GHANAIAN FOREIGN OR DIPLOMATIC SERVICES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the results and research findings, summarizing the survey results and interviews with the Ghanaian Foreign Service Officers/Diplomats. The chapter has been meticulously divided into Five (5) sections to answer the intended research questions and to achieve the research objectives. The first section examines the demographic characteristics of respondents. The second section examines the prevalence or causes of psychological stress among Ghanaian Foreign Service Officers (FSO) or Diplomats. The following section discusses the influences of stress and its impact on the psychological well-being and the effectiveness of the Diplomats or Foreign Service Officers. The following section examines and discusses the strategies or coping mechanisms and the availability of institutional support for addressing diplomatic burnout or psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats.

3.2 Results

Thirty-two (32) questionnaires were sent to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration participants through WhatsApp and emails. All the questionnaires were fully completed and retrieved, representing 100% retrieval. It includes officers at the base (headquarters) and post (Some Missions). Since the respondents answered similar questions, their views were analyzed together. In addition to the total number of Thirty-two (32) questionnaires retrieved, three (3) departmental and Two (2) unit heads were also interviewed. These five interviewees are also presented as HoD1 (Head of Policy Planning), HoD2 (Head of Administration), HoD3 (Head of Africa and Regional Integration), HoD4 (Officer in Charge

of the Secretariat at the Internal Audit Bureau) and HoD5 (Officer in Charge of Secret & Confidential Registry)

3.3 Summary of the Survey Results

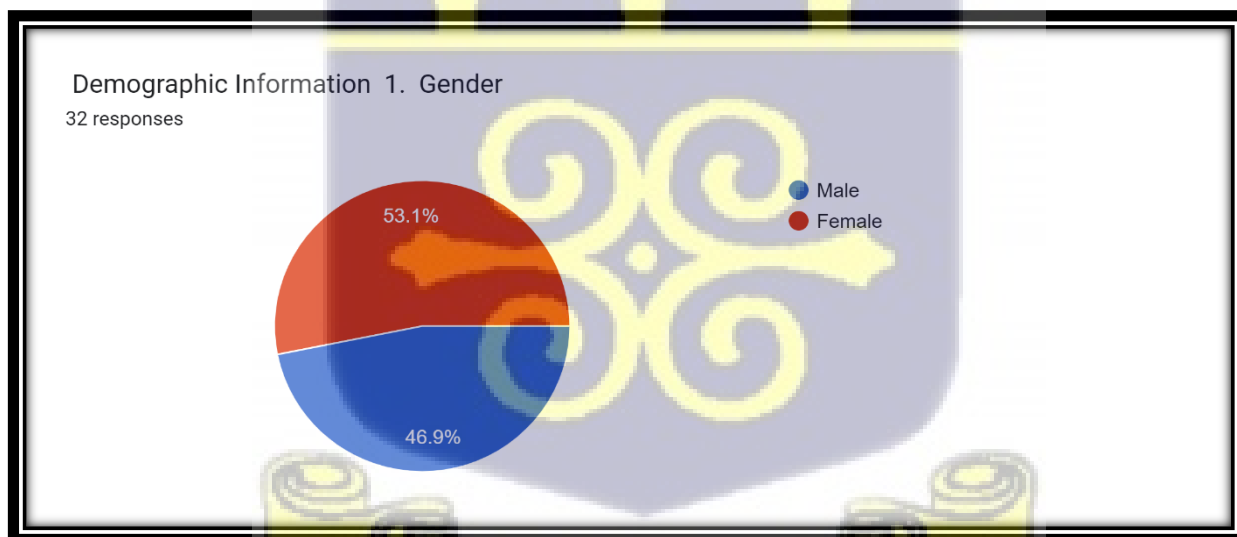
3.3.1 Demographics of Respondents

The first part of the questionnaire was based on the bio, family profile and demographic data of the respondents, the Foreign Service Officers and Diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. This was to ascertain the participants' marital status, gender, educational background, length of service and religious status, which are essential in answering the research questions.

3.3.2 Gender of the Respondents

Thirty-two (32) questionnaires were retrieved from respondents. Of the thirty-two retrieved questionnaires, 17 (53.1%) were female, and 15 (46.9%) were males, as depicted in the diagram below.

Figure 3.1: Demographic Information (Gender of Respondents)



(Source: Field data, October, 2024)

The result from Fig 3.1 above suggests that more female diplomats frequently navigate conventional, male-dominated environments, which can create friction between their leadership responsibilities and social expectations. This aligns with Hooper's (2021) argument

that dominance in such circumstances may elicit suspicion or resistance, resulting in psychological stress such as impostor syndrome or burnout (Hooper, 2021). Female dominance can be challenged by subtle prejudices or microaggressions from peers and subordinates, resulting in added psychological strain. This confirms Kanter's (1977) observation that women in leadership positions frequently encounter tokenism, which exacerbates sentiments of isolation, a source of psychological stress. On the other hand, adapting to new standards can be unpleasant for males, especially if they are not prepared to engage in equal gender dynamics. This stress may be caused by job ambiguity or an inability to adjust professional identities (Kanter, 1977). This aligns with Satyendra's point that role conflict, ambiguity, and other job-related characteristics significantly impact employees' performance (Satyendra, 2022), as discussed in Chapter One.

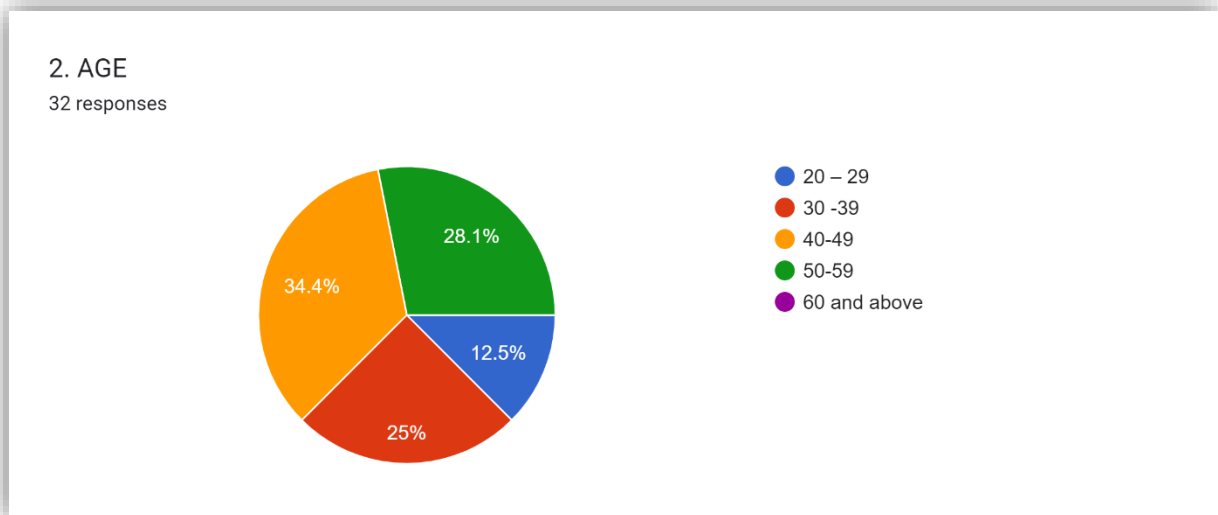
The researcher concurs with scholarly works that the dominance of women in diplomacy might provide difficulties for their male colleagues, such as psychological stress, resistance, and status issues. However, it also provides opportunities for professional development and enhanced teamwork. Institutions must encourage gender-equitable practices and offer training to help with these changes, promoting a culture of mutual respect and tolerance.

3.3.3 Age of Respondents

The study results showed that the majority of the respondents (34.4%) were between the ages of 40 and 49, with 28.1% falling between the ages of 50 and 59. Also, 25% of the FSO respondents were between 30 and 39, whilst the remaining 12.5% were between 20 and 29, as illustrated in Fig 3.2 below.



Figure 3.2: Age Distribution of Respondents



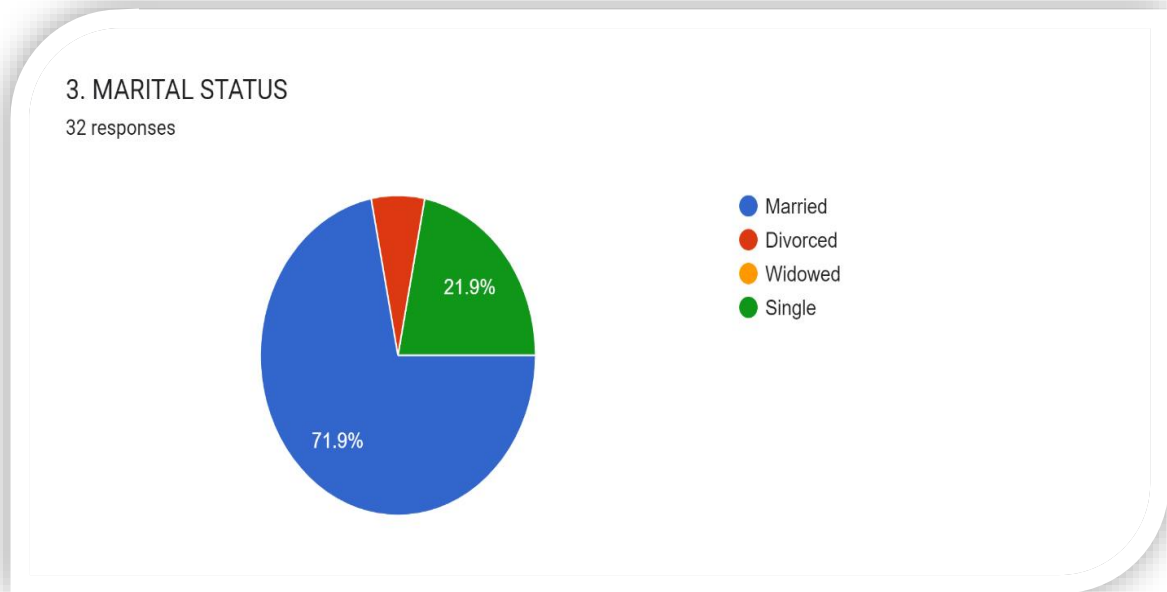
Source: Field data (2024) Survey respondents' Age distribution

The age distribution of the respondents reflects the mixed nature of FSO / diplomats in the Foreign Service. It also implies that most of the FSO / Diplomats in the Ministry, per their ages, might have family responsibilities, which might make them susceptible to burnout and psychological stress syndrome, having an impact on their mental health. Consistent with the notion, available studies show that diplomats are more vulnerable to burnout and psychological stress owing to the nature of their jobs and reconciling professional duties with family commitments. Hochschild (1997) opined that occupations that involve much emotional labour frequently result in burnout, particularly when people have to balance demanding jobs and family responsibilities. This also reflects Crawford et al. (2010) discovery that role conflict is a significant predictor of psychological stress, which is typical for diplomats juggling multiple roles.

3.3.4 Marital Status of Respondents

The study's results indicated that a higher percentage of the respondents, 23 (71.2%), were married, 7(21.9%) were single, and 2(6.2%) were divorced, as shown in fig. 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3: Marital Status Distribution of Respondents



Source: Field data (2024) Survey respondents' Marital Status

The marital distribution of the respondents is in line with the participants' age distribution, as mentioned earlier. This suggests that the majority of the respondents in the Ministry who are married may also experience stress due to dual-role conflicts, which occur when professional demands are balanced against personal and familial obligations. This strain can exacerbate their overall psychological stress, which may manifest as increased work-life balance issues and worry about their family's well-being. This corresponds with Jones's (2019) opinion that Diplomats risk long-term mental and physical weariness if they do not make time for leisure and personal life (Jones, 2019).

From the above, it can be deduced that 21.9% of single diplomats may have fewer family duties and may not have the same solid personal support systems as married diplomats. This absence can increase reliance on workplace networks for emotional support, which may or may not be enough depending on the posting location and company characteristics. Single diplomats may endure severe isolation, particularly in foreign postings where language and cultural challenges may restrict their ability to build intimate relationships outside work. This isolation can lead to

increased psychological stress and feelings of loneliness, having a substantial influence on their mental health. This also goes for the 6.2% of divorced diplomats (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The researcher agrees with the (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) argument that social isolation and workplace demands lead to emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout, prevalent among professionals working in foreign postings and affecting their psychological well-being. This also supports (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Hibberd & Greenberg, 2011) works that foreign employees are likely to face significant conflict due to the competing demands of their jobs and personal lives (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Hibberd & Greenberg, 2011).

This is to say that Diplomats' stress levels appear to be significantly influenced by their marital status. In agreement with other scholarly work, the author believes that while everyday diplomatic pressures impact everyone, married, single, and divorced diplomats may have unique vulnerabilities and coping needs that necessitate individualised assistance techniques.

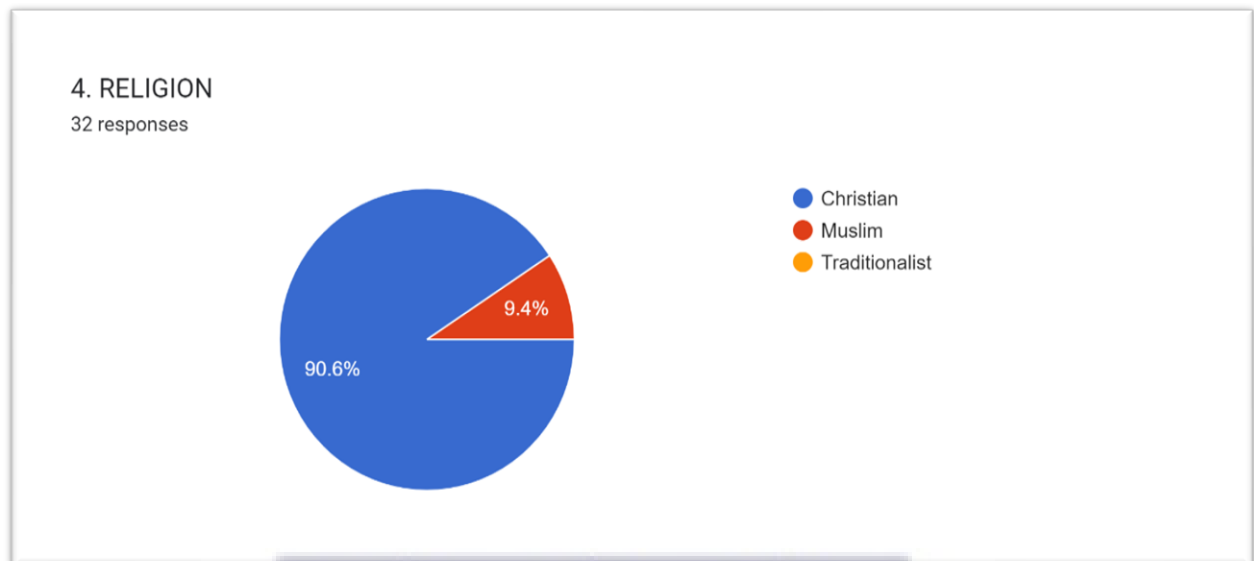
3.3.5 Religious Status of Respondents

Due to the study background, the researcher also considered the religious status of the respondents to ascertain its impact on the behavioural patterns of the respondents when experiencing work-related psychological stress. The author considered religion because it is an essential tool for stress management for many people since it provides social, emotional, and psychological support. People commonly employ religious coping mechanisms, like prayer, faith, and seeking spiritual assistance, to cope with stress, according to Pargament (1997). Diplomats may use their religious practices and beliefs to reduce psychological stress because they frequently work in high-pressure situations. In determining the above, the author requested the religious status of the respondents, ranging from Christian, Muslim, traditionalist and others.

The result revealed that 90.6% of the respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration were Christians, 9.4% were Muslims, and no or 0% were registered as

traditionalists. This suggests that the Foreign Ministry is predominantly Christian and followed by the Muslim religion, as depicted in Fig. 3.4 below.

Figure 3.4: Religious Status Distribution of Respondents



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Religious Status

Most respondents identify as Christians, reflecting Ghana's religious demographics, which are mostly Christian. This can impact Ghanaian diplomats' cultural awareness, values, and relationships when deployed to locations with diverse religious populations. Adapting to situations with various or conflicting religious traditions may cause stress. Also, the decreased Muslim percentage among responders emphasises the significance of interfaith understanding in effective diplomacy. Ghanaian diplomats working in Islamic-majority countries may suffer pressures due to unfamiliarity with Islamic cultural or religious standards, needing pre-deployment training to address these issues. This reflects Johnson's (2020) statement that cultural mismatch can cause loneliness and disconnection from established social support networks, which are critical for mental health (Johnson, 2020).

Religion has the potential to help people manage their psychological stress. This implies that Christian and Muslim individuals may use Faith-based coping mechanisms, such as prayer or community support, which may act as a stress reliever for Ghanaian diplomats who identify

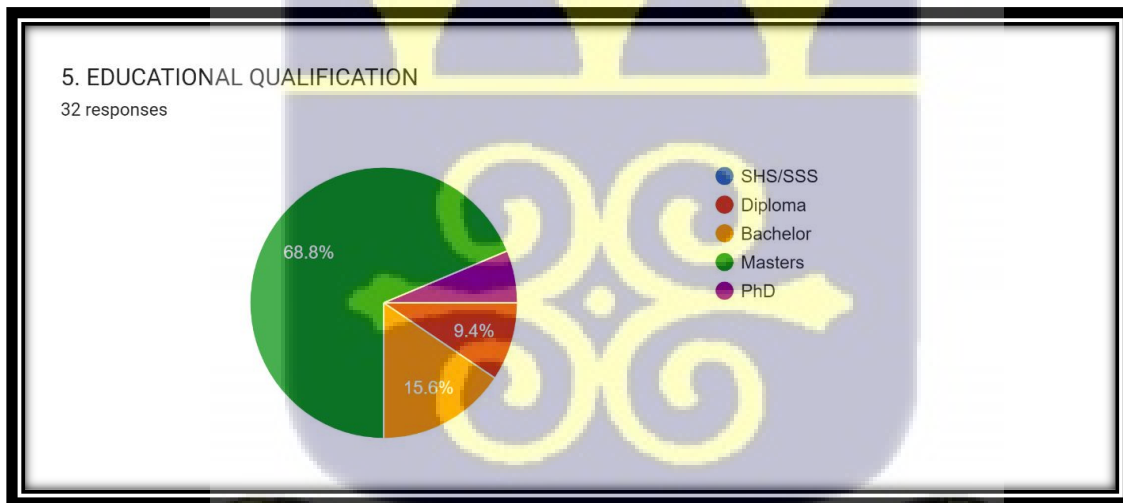
primarily as Christians. However, in non-Christian-majority nations, the lack of recognisable religious infrastructure may restrict these coping strategies.

3.3.6 Educational Level of Respondents

The author also examined the qualifications of the diplomatic officers. The author considered qualification because the measure by which one is judged as capable is contingent significantly on the skills, knowledge, and level of educational competence one possesses. In determining the above, the author requested an assertion on the highest educational certificate acquired by the respondents.

The study results revealed that the majority of respondents, 22 (68.8%), had attained the postgraduate level of education, 5 (15.6%) had achieved an undergraduate level of education, 9.4% had a Diploma, and 6.2% had attained a PhD in education. The results show that the respondents' lowest level of education was tertiary education, as portrayed in Fig 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5 Distribution of Educational Level of Respondents



Source: field data (2024). Qualification of survey respondents

Regarding the interviewees, 5(100%) of the interviewees (HoD1-HoD5) also had tertiary certification; precisely, three of the five interviewees hold postgraduate certificates, while the last two respondents hold bachelor's degrees and diplomas. This implies that respondents were educated enough to offer sound responses to the survey questionnaires and capable of

performing their duties diligently as diplomats. Also, the participants' responses show that one can only become a foreign services officer /diplomat within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through tertiary education. Respondents explained that a recognised qualification is essential for entry-level Foreign Service employment. Although the author is aware that educational level and professional certification cannot prevent burnout and work-related psychological stress from occurring in diplomatic service, it is believed that there is a strong connection between certification and job performance (Curry et al., 2013). This aligns with (Curry et al., 2013) assertion that promoting a competent workforce through certification can enhance the quality of care and promote positive outcomes, reducing stress in diplomatic services.

Most responders (68.8%) have a Master's degree, indicating that most Ghanaian diplomats are well-educated. While extensive education can provide diplomats with knowledge and abilities for problem-solving and communication, it can also raise performance expectations, contributing to stress when dealing with complicated difficulties overseas.

The low number of respondents with a Diploma or Bachelor's degree (9.4% and 15.6%, respectively) indicates that higher education is valued in Ghanaian diplomacy. Those with inferior credentials may encounter stress owing to a perceived lack of readiness or confidence in dealing with high-pressure circumstances. The domination of Master's degree holders may indicate Ghana's emphasis on postgraduate training for diplomats. While this benefits professional development, it raises concerns about the efficacy of non-academic training (such as cultural intelligence and emotional resilience) in reducing psychological stress.

Educational achievement frequently corresponds with job progression chances. Ghanaian diplomats with fewer credentials may have added stress due to limited career advancement opportunities, whilst those with advanced degrees may face stress due to the demands of leadership responsibilities or high-profile deployments (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993)

3.3.7 Rank or Job Status

32 responses

Table 3.1 below shows the job status of the respondents who participated in the study. Most respondents (47%) were administrative officers, 31% were Executive officers, and 22% were Secretaries. This shows that all categories of Foreign Service Officers / Diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were involved in the study. As a result, the study's findings will reflect the opinions of officers at all levels of the Ministry.

Table 3.1 Participants Service Class Distribution

Job Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Administrative class	15	46.87	47
Executive Class officers	10	31.25	31
Secretarial Class	7	21.88	22
Total	32	100	100

Source: Field data (2024) Survey respondents' rank/job status

Table 3.1 above shows the job status of the 32 respondents, with a distribution across three categories: The administrative class represents roughly half of all responders. These officials are often in charge of high-level diplomatic planning, decision-making, and administration, which frequently implies significant responsibility and pressure.

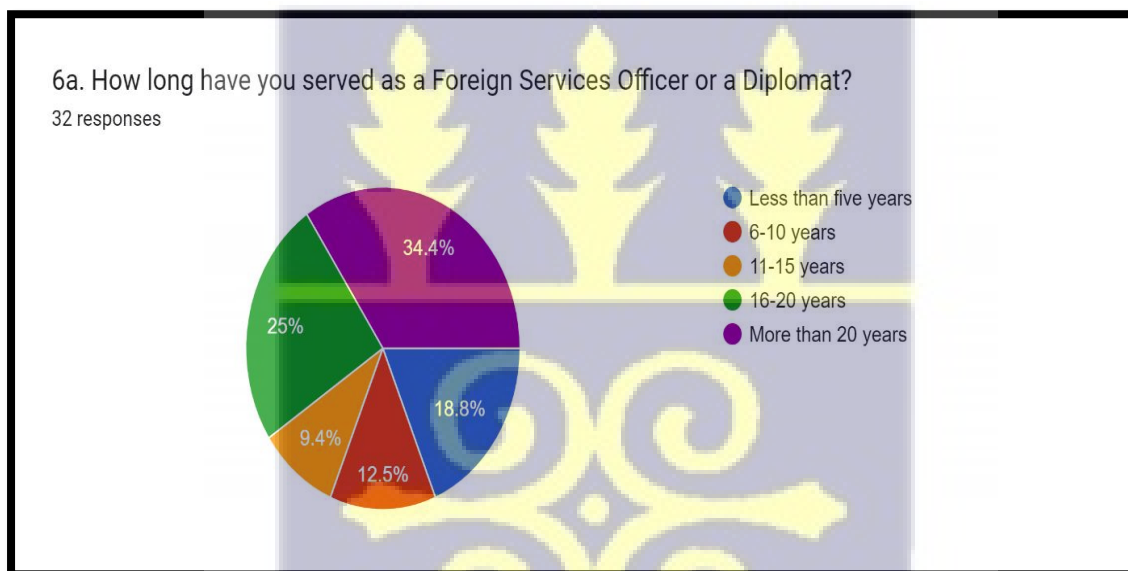
Executive Class officials may perform mid-level managerial duties and carry out directions. They frequently act as the liaison between administrative decisions and practical implementation. This intermediate function may put them under stress as they try to balance senior management's and subordinates' demands.

Secretarial personnel offer clerical and logistical support to ensure the smooth running of activities. While their jobs may appear less decision-intensive, they may face stress due to tight deadlines, heavy workloads, and the necessity for accuracy in communication and documentation.

3.3.8 Duration of Work

The pie chart below (Fig 3.6) illustrates the length of service of 32 respondents as Foreign Service Officers or Diplomats. Respondents were asked to specify how long they had worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents (34.4%) had worked at the establishment for more than 20 years, 25% worked in the Ministry for 16-20 years, 18% worked for less than 5 years, 12.5% for 6-10 years and lastly, 9.4% for 11-15 years as depicted in the diagram below. The results indicate that the respondents have worked at the Ministry for a sufficient number of years to provide trustworthy information on the topics under investigation.

Figure 3.6 Participants Work Experience Duration



Source: Field data (2024) Survey respondents' length of service

The distribution of years of service highlights the importance of addressing stress at various career stages. Further research can investigate whether stress factors evolve and how interventions can be tailored to specific service durations. Highly experienced diplomats may face stress due to leadership obligations, maintaining work-life balance, or approaching retirement while handling challenging postings. Long-term diplomats (16 years or more) may experience stress from lengthy separation from family or restricted possibilities for personal

growth due to numerous relocations. Diplomats who have served for less than 5 years may struggle to strike a work-life balance while adjusting to the responsibilities of a diplomatic career. Longer service durations can burden work-life balance, especially for diplomats who spend lengthy periods away from their families. This is a typical cause of stress, particularly for individuals with over 20 years of service (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Gwa et al., 2023)

Burke and Greenglass (1999) underline that prolonged tenure in demanding professions is frequently associated with "role strain," as people struggle to manage professional and personal duties.

3.4 Primary causes of psychological stress experienced by Ghanaian diplomats

As indicated in the earlier chapters, the study's primary objective was to examine the causes of psychological stress experienced by diplomats at the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry and its effects on the well-being of the diplomats. As such, section 2 of the questionnaires touched on the causes or prevalence of Psychological Stress among Ghanaian diplomats. The study identified some stressors as feelings of being emotionally drained due to the nature of work and engagements in the diplomatic service. This is the central strain dimension of burnout, hence psychological stress. As such, the variables articulating exhaustion were considered. To answer this question, respondents were asked to *rate the stress level of the various diplomatic posts/Missions from "Not Stressful" to "Extremely Stressful"*. Fig. 3.7 presents the respondents' ratings for each Diplomatic Mission/ Post Category.

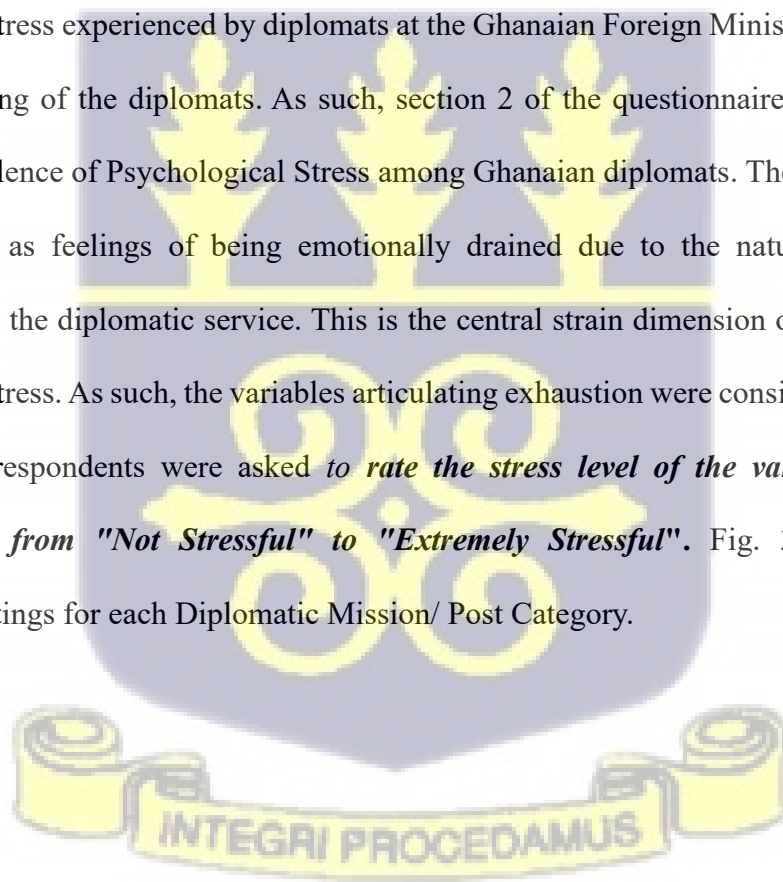
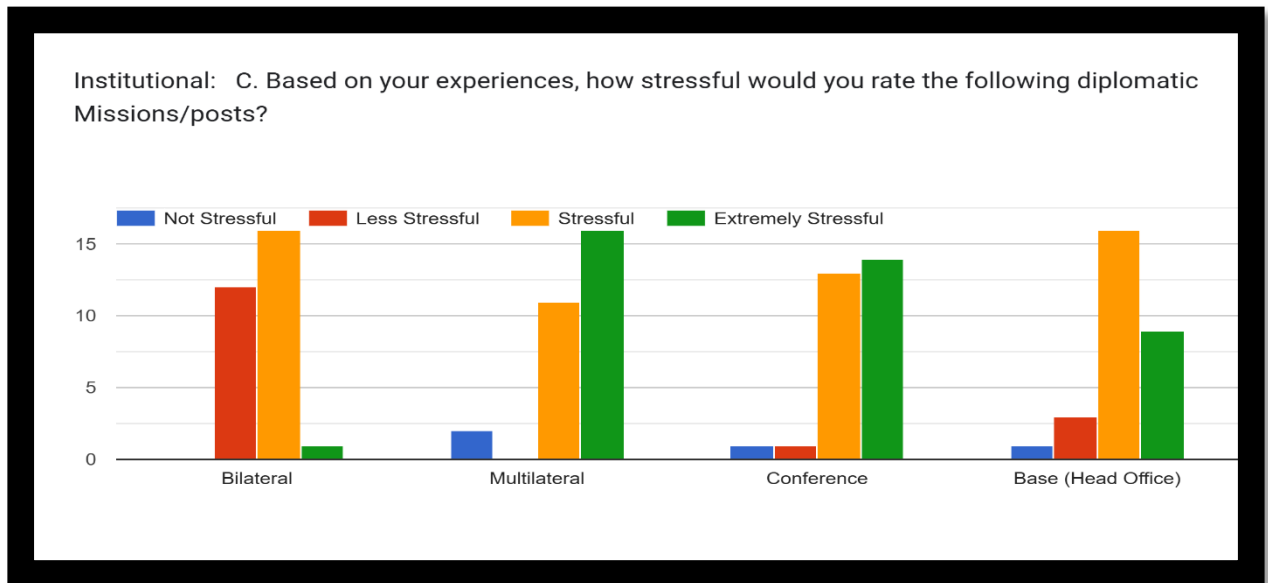


Figure 3.7 Diplomatic Missions / Posts



Source: Field data (2024), Survey respondents' stress level at Missions /post

The chart above illustrates the stress levels of diplomats in various positions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the distinctive pressures that diplomats encounter in diverse environments. The majority of respondents regard bilateral missions as "less stressful" (red bar), while a smaller number categorize them as "stressful" or "extremely stressful."

Bilateral postings involve interactions with a single host country, which enables more focused and predictable engagement. These positions frequently involve cultivating enduring relationships, resolving cultural disparities, and promoting particular bilateral interests. Bilateral diplomacy is frequently less ardent than multilateral settings because of its restricted scope. Constantinou et al. (2016) emphasize that bilateral diplomacy is more likely to provide more precise lines of communication and purpose, thereby reducing ambiguity and associated stress. Respondents' results also align with Melissen's (2005) observation that the collaborative nature of bilateral diplomacy, which includes trade negotiations and cultural exchanges, promotes a relatively structured work environment, thereby reducing stress.

A significant proportion rated multilateral missions as stressful (yellow bar), highlighting their demanding nature. Multilateral missions are likely viewed as more demanding due to their often complex and diverse diplomatic dynamics and are perceived as predominantly "stressful" as shown in Fig. 3.8 above. Multilateral diplomacy is characterized by coordinating numerous states, frequently with conflicting interests. Diplomats in these environments may experience tension as they negotiate intricate agreements and make critical decisions. Rana (2011) underscores the necessity of managing competing agendas in multilateral diplomacy, which can increase stress levels and strain time and resources. Cooper et al. (2013) have observed that the fast-paced character of multilateral organizations, such as the UN or AU, frequently necessitates a combination of quick decision-making and lengthy hours. These obstacles may account for the increased tension experienced by respondents during multilateral missions.

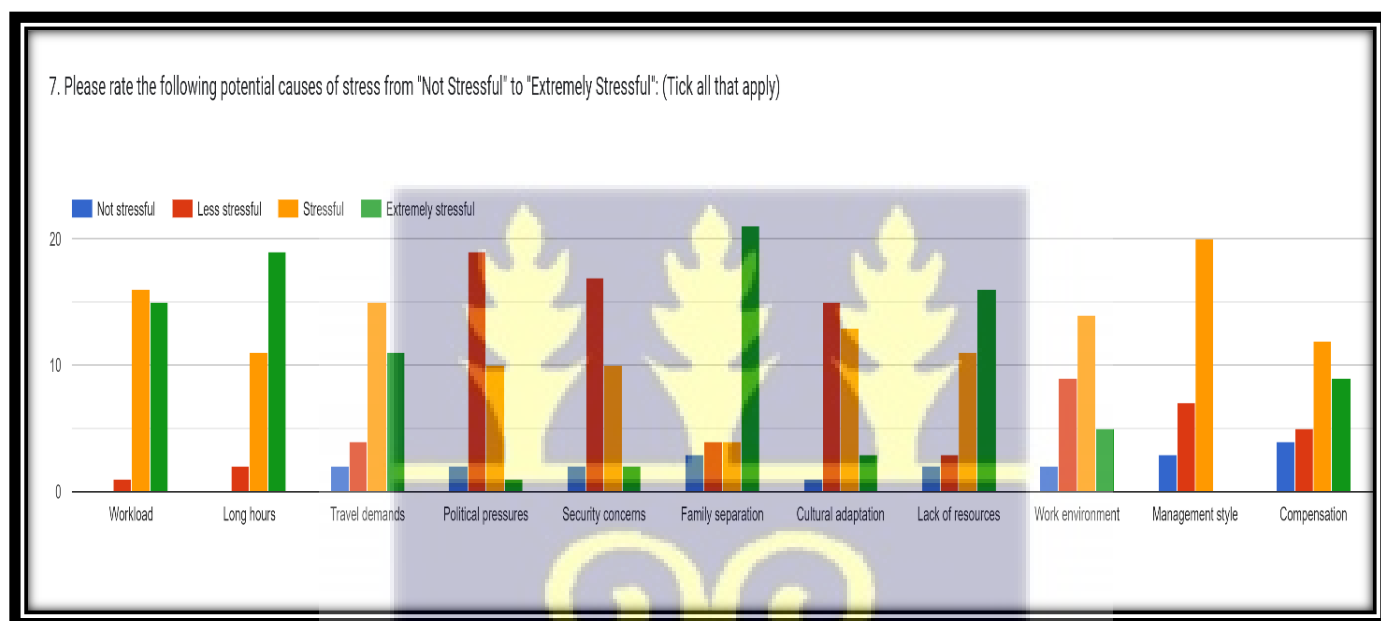
Conferences are a significant source of stress for diplomats due to their high-pressure environment, demanding intense preparation, adaptability, and public speaking skills. These settings, known as the "battlefield of diplomacy", require immediate results and high interpersonal skills. Conferences are rated as highly stressful, with few responses indicating lower stress levels. The intensity of conference diplomacy stems from short timelines and the need for immediate results. Psychological studies on stress have shown that high-pressure environments like conferences often increase cognitive and emotional strain (Kopp & Gillespie, 2011; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); (Nicolson, 1939).

Most respondents associate the base/head office with tension (yellow bar). Many individuals also rated it Extremely Stressful, suggesting that administrative and coordination responsibilities at the base can be pretty demanding. Intriguingly, a lesser but significant group rated this post as "less stressful" or "not stressful." The administrative aspects of diplomacy, such as policy formulation, crisis management, and coordination with foreign missions, are managed by those employed at the base. The bureaucratic and hierarchical character of these positions may induce stress. Wiseman (2011) emphasizes that central offices

in foreign ministries frequently serve as decision-making centres, necessitating that diplomats address various concerns concurrently. Rana (2002) has observed that base postings can increase the pressure on diplomats to perform, as they entail leadership roles and continuous oversight.

Respondents were also asked to *rate the potential causes of stress from the list of stressors identified from "Not Stressful" to "Extremely Stressful"*. Fig. 3.8 presents the respondents' ratings for each category of stressors identified to be associated with Diplomatic Services.

Figure 3.8 Causes of Psychological Stress



Source: Field data (2024) Survey respondents' causes of psychological stress

The results revealed that more respondents, 16 (50%), rated Workload as Stressful. In comparison, almost an equal number of the respondents, 15 (46.88%), considered the workload extremely stressful, and only 1(3.13%) rated the Workload as less Stressful. The findings that workload is a substantial cause of psychological stress are consistent with a large body of research on occupational stress (Gwa et al., 2023; Leira, 2017; 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2023). Respondents' assessments of workload as stressful or highly stressful reflect individual variations in stress resilience, coping methods, and personality attributes. This agrees with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress-coping theory, which emphasizes

individual appraisal of stressors in determining stress levels, as discussed in Chapter One. Notwithstanding, a study by Chan (2011) revealed that individuals with high emotional intelligence reported lower stress levels despite heavy workloads.

Concerning long hours, *19 (59.38%) of the respondents considered Long hours as Extremely Stressful, with 11 (34.34%) rating it as Stressful and 2 (6.25%) measuring it as less stressful*, as in Fig. 3.8 above. The findings on the stress generated by lengthy working hours are consistent with significant studies in occupational psychology and organizational behaviour. Long hours are linked to increased stress, mental exhaustion, and physical health problems. The pressure of lengthy working hours might impair an individual's capacity to recuperate, resulting in chronic stress. Virtanen et al. (2012) discovered a strong relationship between lengthy working hours and an elevated incidence of depressive symptoms. According to Bannai and Tamakoshi's (2014) meta-analysis, those who work more than 55 hours per week are more likely to develop anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular disease. The Individual variations in stress perception (extremely stressful, stressful, and less stressful) can be explained by factors such as resilience, coping techniques, and work-life balancing strategies. The researcher agrees with Sonnentag and Fritz (2015), who contended that those who actively participate in recovery activities, such as leisure or hobbies after work, are better able to deal with long hours and less perceived stress.

Regarding *Travel demands*, *15 (46.88%) respondents rated Travel demand as Stressful, 11 (34.4%) measured it as highly stressful. In comparison, 4(12.5%) and 2 (6.25%) considered it less stressful and not stressful, respectively*, as depicted in Fig. 3.8 above. The results show that travel demands cause various stress levels among respondents, consistent with research on the consequences of travel-related stress in professional settings. Diplomats suffer specific travel-related stresses, such as frequent relocation, separation from family, and adjusting to other cultures and languages, which add to the stress of their demanding responsibilities. According to Fisher et al. (2020), diplomats who travel often have significant levels of stress

owing to unpredictable schedules, cultural adaptations, and jet lag. In Ghana, travel stress is typically exacerbated by infrastructure obstacles, logistical concerns, and resource limits, raising stress levels among Foreign Service officers/diplomats who must travel frequently. Osei and Agyemang (2014) observed that Ghana's limited transportation infrastructure and organizational assistance exacerbate the stress associated with professional travel.

Additionally, more than half of 19 (59.38%) of respondents rated Political Pressure as less Stressful, and 17 (53.13%) considered Security Concerns as a source of psychological stress to be less stressful. Furthermore, most participants 21 (65%) considered family Separation as an extremely Stressful source of psychological stress; about half of the participants 15(46.88%) rated cultural adaption as less stressful, whereas 16 (50%) of participants saw a lack of resources as Stressful, most of the respondents 20 (62.5%) rated Management style as stressful. Lastly, 12 (37.5%) regarded Compensation as stressful sources of psychological stress.

More than half evaluated political pressure as less stressful, which may indicate participants' resilience or familiarity with negotiating political problems in their positions. Diplomats and public officials frequently receive training to manage such circumstances efficiently. Hocking et al. (2012) discussed how diplomats might improve adaptation to political dynamics, minimizing stress caused by political pressure. Cohen and Wills (1985) emphasize the buffering impact of social support systems in professional contexts, which may reduce stress caused by political pressures.

Also, the comparatively low-stress level caused by security worries might be attributed to organizational procedures that ensure personal and operational safety or respondents working in low-risk areas. Rozelle and Kim (2020) state that thorough security measures and training reduce security-related stress for diplomats. However, due to the study background, the research could not ascertain the existence of such training.

Results from half of the participants indicated that *Family Separation was highly stressful*, potentially reflecting the works of (Aning & Attuquayefio, 2017 and Jones, 2019 Espino et al. (2002) that extended family separation is substantially associated with more significant stress and lower work satisfaction. Family separation is commonly acknowledged as a critical stressor for professionals whose jobs require them to relocate or travel often. It can cause loneliness, anxiety, and strained relationships. This reflects the demographics of the respondents.

Unexpectedly, Cultural adaptation *was less stressful* for half of the participants, which might be attributed to previous overseas experience, cultural training, or existing support structures. Black and Mendenhall (1991) state that cross-cultural training can improve cultural adjustment and reduce stress. Ward and Kennedy (1996) contend that personality qualities such as openness and flexibility can facilitate cultural adaption. However, on the contrary, other academic scholars believe that cultural mismatch can cause feelings of loneliness and disconnection from established social support networks, which are critical for mental health (Johnson, 2020). Managing these differences, adjusting to local norms, and building trust with foreign officials might result in mental exhaustion and stress (Aning & Attuquayefio).

More than 50% of participants judged a lack of resources as stressful, reflecting Agyemang and Osei's (2014) work, which states that resource limitations are a key stressor in Ghana's public sector. He opined that a shortage of resources is a significant stressor in many public service professions, mainly when professionals must produce significant results with minimal assistance. Similarly, Siegrist's (1996) Effort-Reward Imbalance Model ascertained that insufficient resources can lead to increased workload and decreased job satisfaction, causing stress.

Respondent 20 (62.5%) rated Management style as stressful, which aligns with the researcher's earlier discussions in chapters one and two that micromanagement or authoritarian leadership styles may result in a lack of autonomy and poor job satisfaction among diplomats, whereas

too relaxed leadership may confuse, unclear duties, and inefficiency. The Management style has a significant impact on employee stress levels. Micromanagement, a lack of communication, and imprecise expectations are all common characteristics of stressful managing styles, consonance with Bass's (1990) statement that transformational leadership decreases stress, whereas authoritarian methods increase it. Judge and Piccolo (2004) discovered that participatory leadership styles are associated with lessened employee stress and greater work satisfaction.

Regarding Compensation, 12 (37.5%) observed Compensation as stressful (Table 3,9). Siegrist's Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (1996) links sustained high effort (e.g., workload) with inadequate rewards (e.g., recognition or rest), leading to psychological distress. Compensation-related stress occurs when employees believe their remuneration is inadequate, inequitable, or conflicting with job requirements. This mirrors the respondent's view that their dedication, sacrifices, and risks associated with their diplomatic engagements and duties are not rewarded enough to commensurate their sacrifices compared to their counterparts in other countries.

Adams' (1965) Equity Theory suggests that perceived disparities in remuneration might cause psychological discomfort. Towers Watson (2012) indicated that dissatisfaction with remuneration is a primary source of stress in high-pressure roles, confirming the respondents' results.

The views of the five department heads were also sought to obtain more insight into the sources or causes of psychological stress. The interview (guide) questionnaires were almost identical for the Five (5) HoDs. They had some common questions as the survey questionnaires. This drew insight and compared their views on the same primary psychological stress causes in the Ghana Foreign Services. The heads of departments (HoDs) were requested through an open-ended question to ***mention the top three sources of stress respondents were likely to encounter during their diplomatic duties.*** Their responses highlighted essential sources of psychological

stress encountered by Ghanaian diplomats, with repeated themes pointing to workplace challenges, personal and family separation stressors, and resource constraints. Responses from the HoDs were as follows:

HOD1 highlighted the significant demands placed on diplomats, who are often required to manage multiple responsibilities under tight deadlines. These include high-stakes negotiations, detailed report writing, and frequent event attendance, which are highly time-intensive. The interviewee noted that such prolonged heavy workloads and extended working hours often result in burnout, mental fatigue, and a decline in overall productivity.

HoD2 added that the pressure to meet tight deadlines, often with little preparation time, exerts a lot of anxiety and sleepiness at night, hence decreasing job satisfaction and thereby affecting their psychological well-being.

According to HOD3, diplomats often face significant stressors such as family separation, extensive travel demands, and frequent relocations, which can lead to feelings of loneliness, depression, and strained personal relationships. The participant emphasised that the frequent postings and travel associated with diplomatic work contribute to cultural fatigue, challenges in sustaining long-term relationships, and difficulties in achieving a healthy work-life balance. HOD3 further highlighted that prolonged periods of isolation from familiar social networks are a critical factor in the development of loneliness, which can serve as a precursor to mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

HoD4: As Head of the Department, I have observed that poor management practices, such as a lack of support or ineffective leadership, combined with a hostile work environment, significantly impact team morale and create workplace tension, ultimately leading to stress. I also recognized that inadequate remuneration or benefits, mainly when high workloads occur, further exacerbate this stress for our team members.

HoD5 mentioned that Instances of discrimination and workplace bullying were significant contributors to psychological stress, reflecting underlying workplace conflicts. The interviewee explained that such dynamics create an unhealthy work environment, exacerbating emotional strain among employees.

The summary in Table 3.2 below reflects a complete analysis of participants' responses categorised by common themes and their implications

Table 3.2: Categorization of Stressors

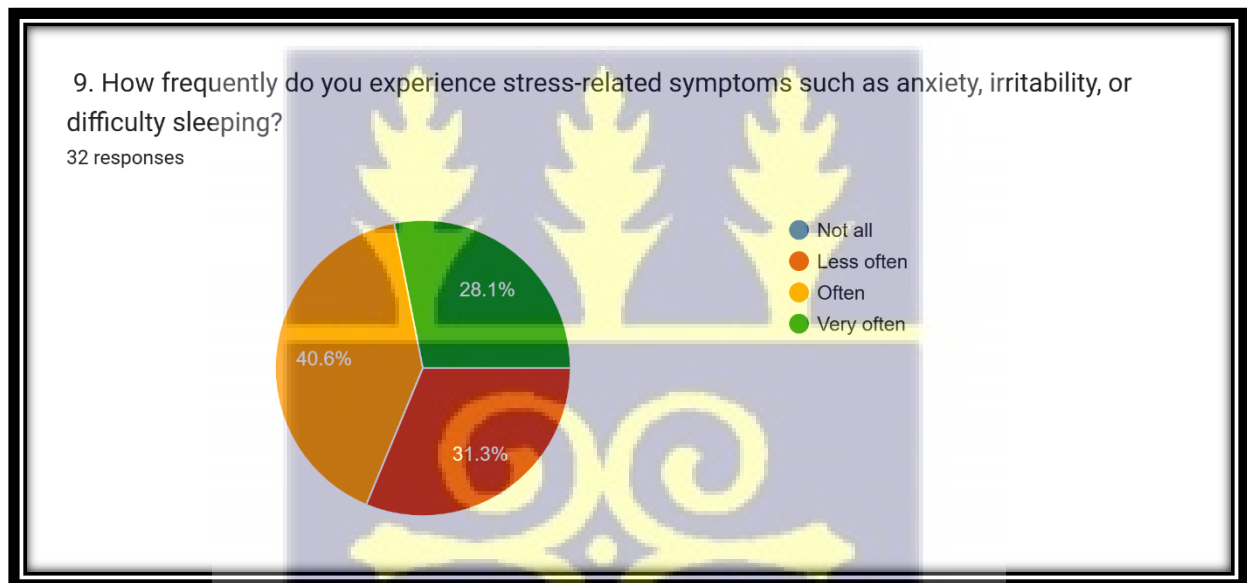
Category	Key Stressors	Frequency
Work-Related	Workload, long hours, inadequate resources, meeting tight deadlines, frequent travel.	Very High
Family and Personal	Family separation, loneliness, travel demands, relocations.	High
Organizational Issues	Management style, compensation, lack of continuity, workplace bullying, and discrimination.	Medium
External Environment	Cultural shocks, harsh weather conditions, poor health facilities, and economic challenges in Ghana impact work.	Moderate

From the study responses, the researcher recategorizes stressors experienced by the Ghanaian diplomats into four key areas: work-related, family and personal, organizational, and external environmental factors. Work-related stressors, characterized by high workloads, tight deadlines, and frequent travel, are the most prevalent, reflecting the demanding nature of diplomatic responsibilities. Family and personal stressors, such as separation from loved ones and relocations, are also significant, underscoring the personal sacrifices often associated with diplomatic service.

Organizational issues, including management style, inadequate compensation, and workplace dynamics, contribute moderately to stress levels, suggesting a need for institutional reforms to create supportive environments. External environmental stressors, such as cultural adaptation, harsh climates, and poor health infrastructure in host countries, compound challenges but are typically less frequent and more situational. These responses align with the research works of

(Zhang et al., (2021 (Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2023; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) who believed that factors, including those that operate at the macro level (such as shifting values or global economic shifts), the organisational level (such as dysfunctional relationships, stressful environments, and poor person-organization fit), and the individual level (such as low self-esteem, low resilience, and poor communication skills), have all been linked to the development of psychological stress according to research. This categorization highlights the multifaceted nature of stress in diplomacy and, more specifically, the importance of comprehensive support mechanisms.

Figure 3.9 Frequency of stress-related symptoms



Source: Field data (2024) Survey respondents' experience of stress-related symptoms

Regarding *how often stress-related symptoms occur*, the pie chart above (Fig. 3.8) depicts the prevalence of stress-related symptoms, including anxiety, irritability, and sleep disturbances, reported by 32 participants. *The highest percentage, 40.6%, reported feeling these symptoms "often," followed by 31.3% indicating "less often," and 28.1% stating "very often."* None of the respondents chose "not at all," indicating that all participants experience stress-related symptoms to some extent. This discovery corresponds with studies emphasizing the ubiquity

of stress in high-pressure occupations, where extended exposure to stressful environments results in psychological suffering. Lazarus and Folkman's transactional stress model posits that individuals in challenging circumstances frequently encounter emotional strain when their coping mechanisms are inadequate to address obstacles. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes stress as a significant determinant of sleep quality and mental health, especially in professions marked by extended hours, stringent deadlines, or critical decision-making. The findings align with other research, including that of Sonnentag and Frese (2003), highlighting the detrimental effects of persistent professional stress, such as burnout, diminished productivity, and compromised well-being. The significant stress-related symptoms identified herein indicate the necessity for focused interventions, including promoting work-life balance, providing stress management tools, and ensuring sufficient workplace support. This brings us to the third (3) Section, which touches on the influences of stressors and their impact on the psychological well-being and the effectiveness of Diplomats or Foreign Service Officers.

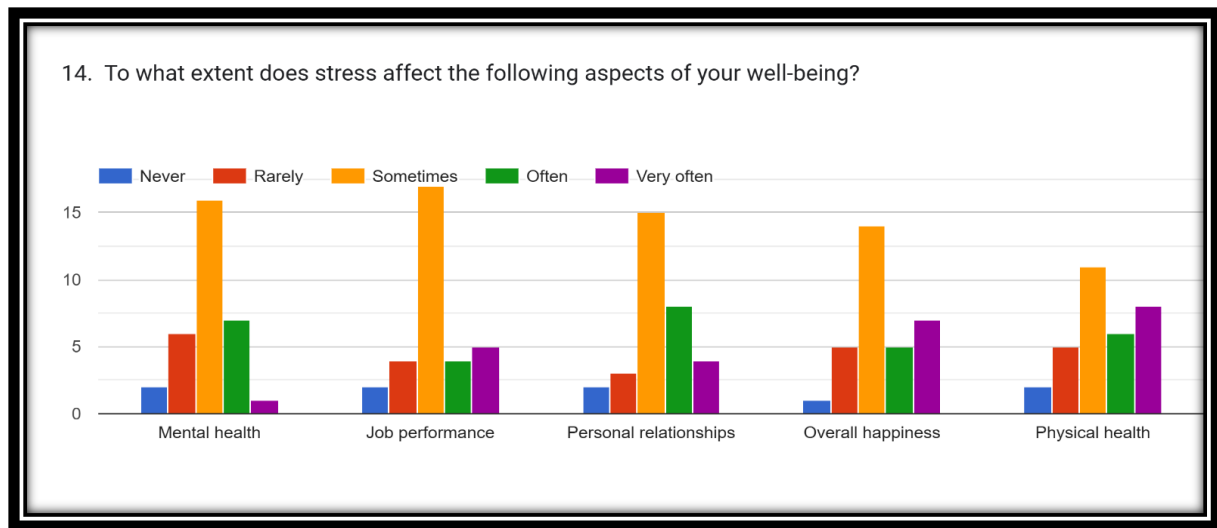
3.5 Influence of Stressors on Well-Being and Effectiveness of Diplomats

The study further examined the factors influencing stress syndrome among FSOs and diplomats. Based on the conceptual framework, these factors were identified as caused by job demands or resources. The extent to which job demands and job resources influence stress among diplomats is discussed below.

Job demands are workplace situations that cause stress reactions in FSOs/diplomats when they exceed their limitations and capabilities. According to Demerouti et al. (2000), various aspects of diplomatic work environments contribute to burnout. These include complex interactions with foreigners, dire working circumstances, relocation issues, workload, and time pressures. As such, section 3 of the questionnaires touched on the influence of stressors on the psychological well-being of the respondents.

Table 3.11 illustrates the influence of work-related stressors on some aspects of participant well-being.

Figure 3.10 Influence of Stress on Well-being



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Influence of Stress on Well-being

The bar chart above shares survey responses to the question: *"To what extent does stress affect the following aspects of your well-being?"* The aspects considered are mental health, job performance, personal relationships, overall happiness, and physical health, with responses categorized as Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Very Often. The results, illustrated through a bar chart in Fig. 3.10, demonstrate considerable diversity in the effects of stress on mental health, work performance, personal relationships, general happiness, and physical health.

Regarding *Mental Health*, half of the 16 (50%) respondents indicated that stress sometimes impacts their mental health. In contrast, a more minor 7 (21.86%) respondents report being affected often or very often, suggesting a notable minority with frequent mental health challenges due to stress. This underscores stress as a factor in mental health issues, potentially including anxiety, despair, and emotional dysregulation. Stress induces hormonal reactions that can disrupt emotions and mental health over time (Sapolsky, 2004).

The majority of respondent, 17 (53.13%), reported that stress affects their job performance sometimes, with smaller but significant portions in the often and very often categories. This suggests that stress impacts productivity and professional effectiveness for many, confirming (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) statement that Stress reduces cognitive function and productivity while increasing absenteeism (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Similarly, (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) opined that High-stress environments often lead to workplace burnout and reduced organizational efficiency. The data show an evident influence of stress on personal relationships, with most respondents selecting sometimes or often. This highlights stress as a barrier to maintaining healthy social connections. Stress profoundly affects relationships, with several respondents reporting adverse effects sometimes or frequently. This indicates that stress can impede communication, emotional closeness, and social relationships. Stress can erode communication and empathy, leading to relationship conflict (Repetti et al., 2009).

Concerning overall happiness, a significant proportion of respondents indicate that stress adversely impacts their overall satisfaction, particularly at moderate and frequent intensities. This highlights the extensive influence of stress on life satisfaction and emotional well-being. The chart underscores that stress broadly and variably impacts diplomats' psychological well-being.

The study also reveals that Stress impacts physical health, with several responders reporting occasional or regular consequences. This underscores stress as a risk factor for several bodily conditions, potentially including weariness, chronic diseases, and diminished immunological function. The research results indicate that stress is a widespread problem with multifaceted impacts on personal well-being. Mental health and overall happiness seem to be the most often impacted domains, succeeded by physical health and work performance. The effect on personal relationships highlights the social ramifications of stress, underscoring the necessity for specific solutions.

Again, to draw and compare the views of the interviewees on the same issues - The influence of Stressors on the Well-Being and Effectiveness of Diplomats, the Heads of Departments (HoDs) were asked ***What kind of effects stress has on their personal lives and the relationship outside of work environments?*** The interviewees had the following to say:

HoD1: Stress causes me to feel emotional exhaustion, which leads to anger and overwhelm. I am also increasing my distance from my family and friends because I do not have the energy to interact with them. This strains my connections at home, particularly with my spouse.

HoD2: I've seen that the stress I experience at work affects how I connect with my family. At the end of a hard day, all I want to do is rest, and I do not try to spend meaningful time with the people I care about. It is as if I am not emotionally present, contributing to the stress inside my home.

HoD3: When I'm under much pressure, it is difficult for me to maintain my relationships with my family and friends. What I end up doing is isolating myself because I am so exhausted. However, when I do receive support from my close connections, it significantly contributes to reducing stress. It is a relief when my family members can comprehend what I am going through.

HoD4: I do not believe that stress significantly influences my personal life. I get fatigued, but I can keep my job apart from my home life, so it does not get too far out of hand.

Given the responses from the interviewees, the researcher asked a follow-up question -***Based on your comments, it appears that stress has a variety of effects on relationships; nevertheless, some people find stress less disruptive than others. How does this compare to what you've experienced or what you've heard from other people?***

HoD1: I concur with the study's findings that I have read; stress does cause you to feel emotionally depleted. According to what I have read about the burnout hypothesis, it is evident that stress affects our emotional energy, making us less available to other people.

HoD2: I've read about how work-related stress may seep into other aspects of life, including the household. It seems logical to consider that stress might reduce our emotional availability and lead to a withdrawal from the people we care about. It is as if you are trying to preserve energy, and there are moments when engaging in social activities feels too much.

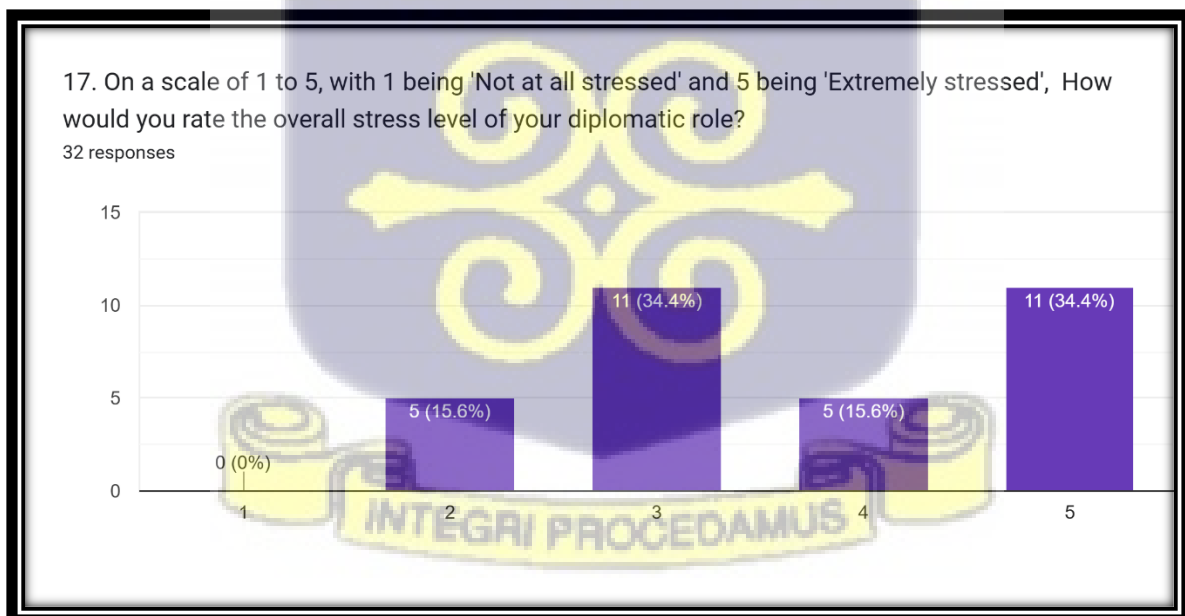
HoD3: I have read studies that suggest that having close relationships may assist buffer against stress, and I can attest that this is true for me. Being surrounded by supportive people, such as my family and friends, is a massive help in handling stress. Having that kind of emotional release is quite appealing.

HoD 4: I do not experience it to the same degree as others. However, I know from reading that stress may be much more disruptive for specific individuals, mainly when there is no solid

support network. I do not believe that I am immune to the effects of stress. However, I am still affected by it in specific ways.

The interview results above correspond with existing literature about stress and its effects on personal life and relationships. Participants exhibit emotional tiredness, irritation, and social retreat, reflecting Maslach's Burnout Theory (1981) and Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory (1989), emphasising how stress depletes emotional energy and results in social disengagement. The pressure on intimate relationships, particularly marriages, corresponds with the spillover and crossover effects (Bolger et al., 1989) when stress from one domain (e.g., employment) adversely impacts other areas, such as personal life. Some participants recognize the buffering effect of social support, aligning with Cohen and Wills' Social Support Theory (1985), which asserts that intimate connections can alleviate the adverse impacts of stress. In contrast, one participant's limited experience of stress in daily life may indicate individual variances in stress perception and coping strategies, a discrepancy not adequately addressed in the generic stress model.

Figure 3.11 Overall Stress Level



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Influence of Stress on Well-being

According to the findings, a large proportion of respondents (16 out of 32) suffer from high stress levels (4 or 5). This matches findings in current research that highlight the high-stress character of diplomatic posts due to cross-cultural discussions, frequent relocations, political instability, and long work hours. The moderate stress group (3) also contains a sizable proportion (11 responses), 34.4%, indicating that, while stress is prevalent, some people may have more vital coping skills or less challenging responsibilities. The low stress (level 2) is negligible, indicating that diplomatic professions rarely provide stress-free situations. This is consistent with the literature, which emphasises that even less prominent posts in diplomacy carry a baseline strain level due to continual responsibility and strategic obligations.

Figure 3.12 Professional Counselling

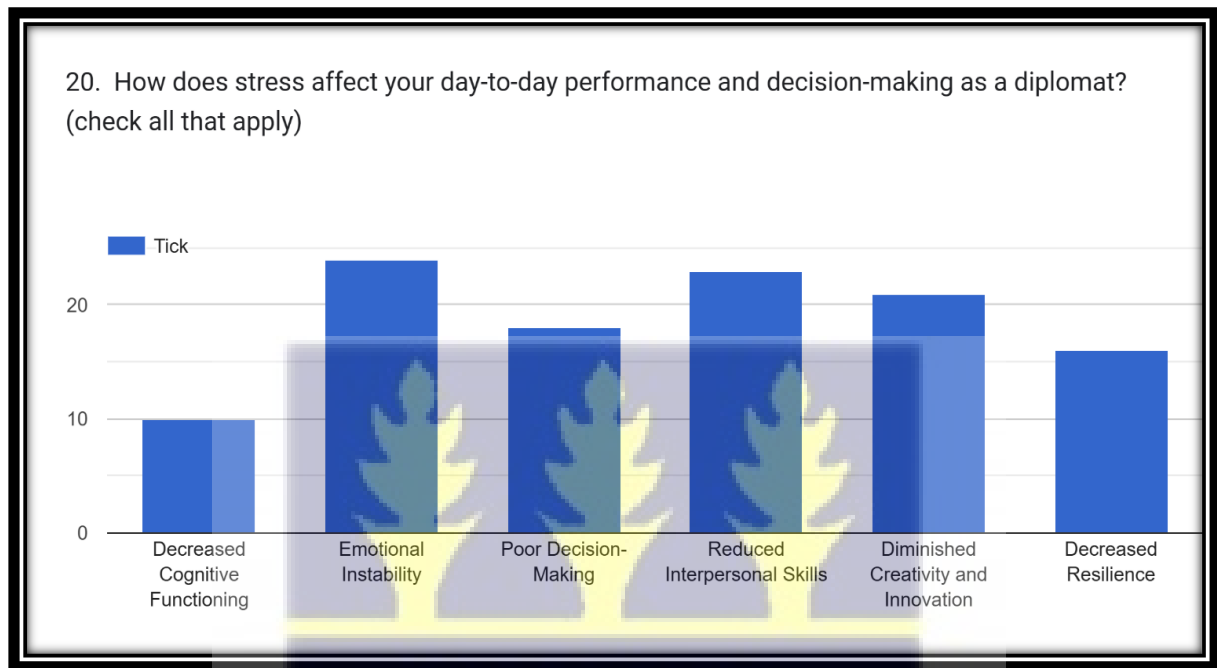


Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Influence of Stress on Well-being

The study also examined whether diplomats seek professional treatment or therapy for stress-related concerns. The data from Fig. 3.13 above revealed that just four persons (12.5%) sought professional treatment or therapy, whereas most of the 28 respondents (87.5%) did not. Diplomats' low utilization of counselling may be due to the stigma associated with mental health support in professional contexts, especially in high-profile jobs such as diplomacy.

This might also imply a lack of information about existing counselling options or an inability to access such services in diplomatic missions or host nations. Cultural and organizational factors: In many cultures, including those covered in this study, discussing mental health or seeking treatment is considered a private or taboo matter, which may discourage people from getting assistance.

Figure 3.13 Impact on performance



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Influence of Stress on Well-being

From Fig. 3.13 above, the study revealed that the responses from the survey align with existing literature on the effects of stress on professionals, particularly those in high-stakes decision-making roles like diplomats. The majority of respondents identified Emotional instability as the most common effect of stress. Studies indicate that chronic stress disrupts the prefrontal cortex and amygdala, leading to emotional dysregulation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) highlight that prolonged exposure to stress exacerbates emotional sensitivity and reactive behaviour, impairing diplomatic composure and professionalism. Furthermore, Reduced Interpersonal Skills significantly hamper interpersonal skills, as noted by many respondents as depicted in Fig. 3.13 above. Similarly, many respondents reported diminished creativity and

innovation due to stress. The study findings are consistent with previous literature, revealing that stress severely undermines diplomats' performance in the following ways:

Stress causes mood swings and increased reactivity, making it difficult for diplomats to remain calm and professional in key moments. Furthermore, stress impairs empathy and communication skills, compromising relationship-building and negotiating results. Stress inhibits problem-solving and flexibility, restricting diplomats' capacity to devise novel solutions to complicated problems. Not all Stress inhibits cognitive functions such as memory and judgment, resulting in ineffective tactics and rash conclusions. It impairs recovery from setbacks, increasing the risk of burnout and decreasing long-term effectiveness. Stress also impairs attention, analytical ability, and executive functioning, all required to manage complicated geopolitical events. Stress can impede diplomats' decision-making, trust-building, crisis adaptation, and long-term performance. The survey and the literature confirm that stress has a multidimensional impact on performance, particularly in high-stakes environments like diplomacy. This comparison indicates that stress significantly undermines diplomats' psychological well-being and professional efficacy, a finding that is consistent with global research on high-pressure professions (Gwa et al., 2023; Fliege et al., 2016; Gudmundsdottir et al., 2023. Leira, 2017; Radtchenko-Draillard, 2021; Awuah et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2023).

Again, the researcher sought the views of the five interviewees to ascertain the impact of psychological stress on productivity. The participants were asked ***"How have high-stress situations influenced your work outcomes?"*** Below is a response from the five HoDs

HOD 1 mentioned, "High-stress situations often lead me to use more resources than usual to produce less work. This inefficiency frustrates me because I know I could do better under normal circumstances."

HoD 2 "Stress, in my case, results in emotional exhaustion and demotivation, significantly reducing my work performance over time. I have realized that managing stress is essential for maintaining productivity and creativity."

HoD3: "Under stress, I feel less creative and more mechanical. Tasks lose their appeal, and I work out of obligation rather than passion."

HoD4: "When stressed, I often make avoidable mistakes and struggle to meet deadlines. These errors affect my confidence and overall delivery."

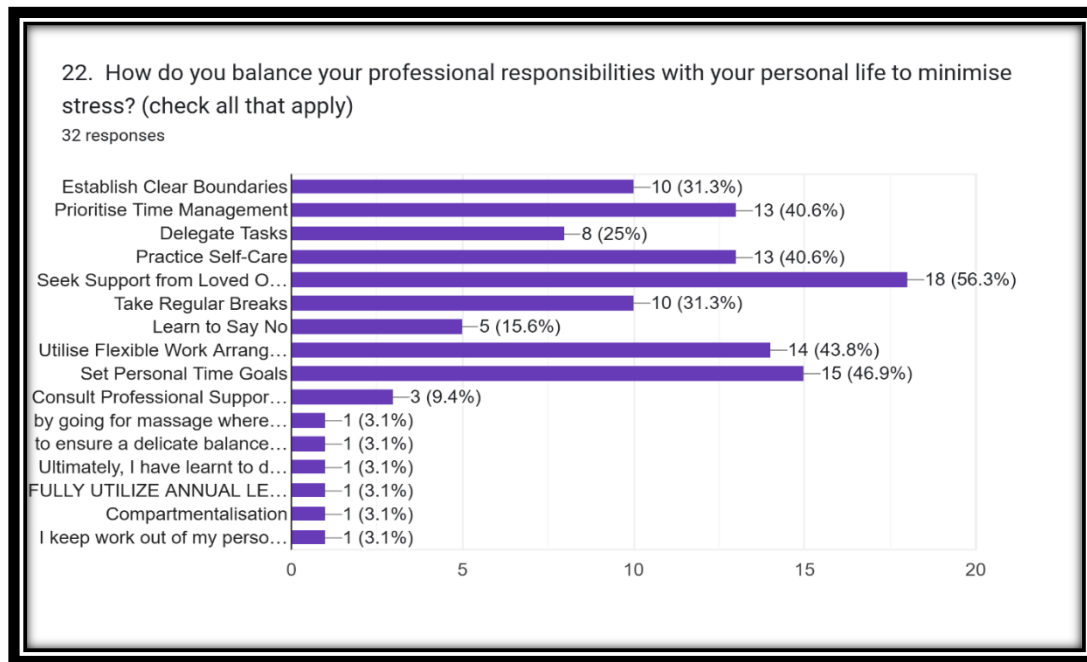
HoD5: "Stress rarely affects the outcome of my work, but it makes the process far more draining. I have learned to adapt by breaking tasks into manageable parts."

The above responses illustrate how high-stress situations impact individuals differently, from reduced productivity and creativity to emotional exhaustion and errors. These findings are consistent with research on workplace stress, which emphasizes the importance of managing stress to maintain cognitive function, emotional well-being, and task efficiency. Effective stress management strategies, such as mindfulness and adaptive coping, are critical in mitigating these adverse effects (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Maslach et al., 2001).

3.6 Coping mechanisms, institutional support systems, and resources

This section investigates the coping strategies, institutional support networks, and resources accessible to Ghanaian diplomats in addressing psychological stress. It also analyzes their views regarding the efficacy of these methods. This investigation assesses whether Ghanaian diplomats perceive sufficient support in their duties and the degree to which institutional procedures correspond with their psychological demands. As such, participants were asked to balance their careers and personal lives to reduce stress. Respondents can select various strategies from a list or share their own. The statistics represent 32 participants' preferences and priorities for stress management approaches in the context of work-life balance. The results are shared in the table 3:13 below.

Figure 3.14 Work-life Balance



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Coping Strategies

The Fig. 3.14 depicts respondents' ideas for balancing their career and personal life to reduce stress. The result revealed that the most popular strategy adopted by diplomats is to seek help from loved ones, with 56.3% choosing this option. Other typical strategies include creating personal time objectives and employing flexible working arrangements. Moderately utilized strategies include prioritizing time management and practising self-care, while 31.3% employ creating clear boundaries and taking frequent breaks. The least popular strategies are "Learn to Say No" and "Consult Professional Support." The statistics indicate a substantial preference for informal and self-managed stress alleviation approaches, with corporate regulations playing a supportive role. However, there is an opportunity for improvement in establishing boundaries and finding more formal support structures. The findings indicate a need for more informal and self-managed stress-relief techniques, defeating the findings from Giga et al. (2003) that counselling and professional interventions provide individuals with tools to manage stress effectively. Meanwhile, regarding the same question on combining professional and personal duties to decrease stress, three of the five HoDs had this to say:

HoD 1 underlined the necessity of obtaining assistance from loved ones and creating personal time goals, emphasizing the relevance of emotional support and effective time management in preserving balance.

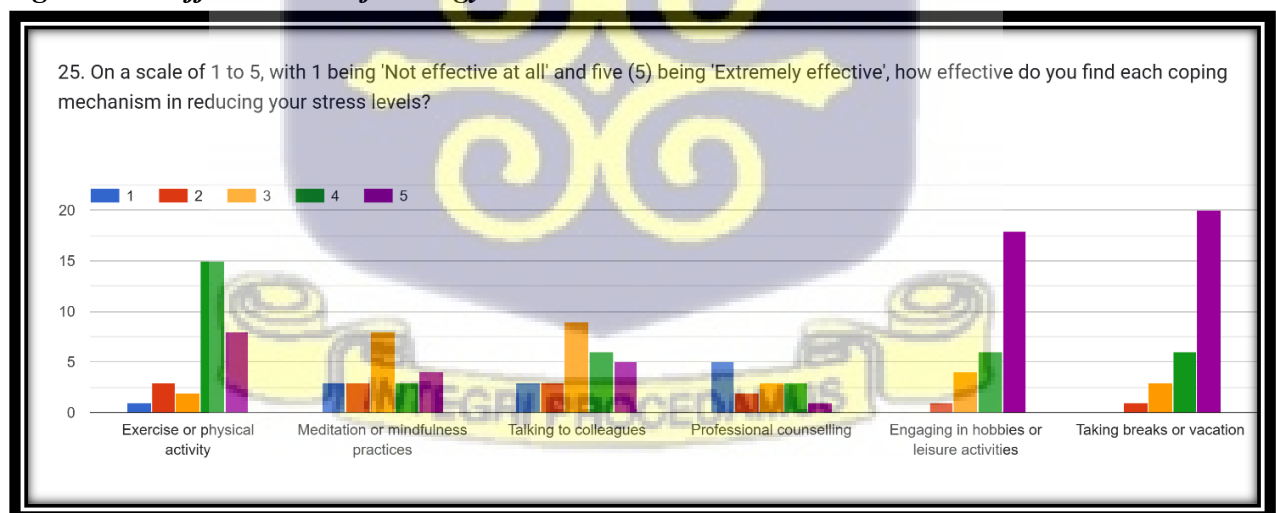
HoD3 emphasized flexible work arrangements and self-care, highlighting the importance of workplace flexibility and personal well-being behaviours such as exercise and relaxation.

HoD5 emphasized setting clear limits and taking frequent breaks, saying that these methods help avoid burnout and maintain attention throughout work hours.

The following response portrays the effectiveness of the strategies. Managing stress effectively is critical in the diplomatic profession, where individuals often face demanding workloads, high-stakes negotiations, and frequent relocations. Two questions were posed to diplomats to understand the institutional and personal strategies used to address stress.

The first question explored personal strategies that diplomats have found most effective in managing stress during their careers, providing insights into how professionals navigate challenges without or with institutional support. The second question sought to identify the types of support provided by their institutions, highlighting the availability and accessibility of programs aimed at alleviating stress.

Figure 3.15 Effectiveness of strategy



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Coping Strategies

The study examined the efficacy of various coping mechanisms Ghanaian diplomats employ on a scale of 1 to 5, as depicted in Fig. 3.15 above. The study revealed that exercise was highly influential, most classifying it as a stress-relieving mechanism. Meditation or mindfulness practices were less effective, which implies that personal preferences or cultural differences may influence their efficacy. The moderate effectiveness of conversing with colleagues suggests that it serves as a secondary support mechanism. It is possible that barriers such as stigma, lack of accessibility, or cultural attitudes contributed to the lower effectiveness of professional counselling. Mixed responses were received regarding the effectiveness of engaging in hobbies or leisure activities, with some respondents suggesting that their efficacy is contingent upon individual preferences and time constraints. Many individuals reported that vacations were highly effective, particularly in high-demand roles such as diplomacy, as they contributed to stress recuperation, enhanced job satisfaction, and a better work-life balance. The study results emphasize the significance of personalized coping mechanisms, consistent with the current body of research on stress management. Institutional support, workplace culture, and societal attitudes toward mental health are critical factors that influence the perceived efficacy of these strategies for Ghanaian diplomats. Additional research could offer more profound insights into optimising support for diplomats.

The subsequent question (as shown in the chart below) explores whether formal stress management or resilience-building training has been incorporated into their diplomatic training or career development. The responses to the query are depicted in Fig. 3.16 chart below.



Figure 3.16 Institutional Support



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Coping Strategies

More than half of the respondents did not receive any training. Most respondents (71.9%, 23 out of 32) did not receive formal resilience-building or stress-management training. This implies that many diplomats cannot cope with the psychological obstacles associated with their positions due to a lack of institutional support with training. This training was received by 31.3% of the participants (10 out of 32). This emphasizes that although specific organizations acknowledge the significance of providing diplomats with stress management tools, the practice has not yet become pervasive.

Diplomats frequently experience stress due to protracted separations from their families, cultural adjustments, high-stakes negotiations, and exposure to conflict zones (Wilton, 2017). A lack of stress management training further exacerbates their vulnerability to exhaustion and mental health issues. Research has demonstrated that resilience training improves personal well-being and job performance (e.g., Cooper & Cartwright, 1997). Diplomats who undergo this training are more adept at maintaining mental lucidity and managing crises.

The graph's disparity aligns with research indicating that numerous organisations underestimate mental health programs' importance (Jones et al., 2020). Institutions that prioritize operational outcomes frequently disregard the psychological well-being of their employees. Best Practices from Comparative Studies - Resilience-building has been

incorporated into the training programs of Scandinavian countries and certain UN bodies. Their diplomats report increased productivity and reduced stress levels (Smith & Taylor, 2015). Ghana and other nations can learn from these examples. Given Ghana's proactive role in international diplomacy, it is imperative to resolve this disparity. The efficiency and well-being of Ghanaian diplomats can be improved by investing in stress management training, which can promote long-term career sustainability

To ascertain whether Ghanaian FSOs / diplomats enjoy any institutional support for managing burnout or stress, the diplomats were asked if *they feel adequately supported by their institutions*.

Out of 32 participants, only 3.1% reported feeling adequately supported by their diplomatic institution regarding stress management and mental well-being, while 96.9% did not. This is illustrated in the bar chart (Fig. 3.17) below

Figure 3.17 Institutional Support



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Managing Stress

The study underscores a critical deficiency in the support structures that diplomats receive to address stress management and mental health. The demands of cross-cultural negotiations,

frequent relocations, separation from family, and exposure to political or security threats frequently classify diplomacy as a high-stress profession. Research has demonstrated that diplomats' mental health is substantially impacted by these stressors, resulting in anxiety, exhaustion, and depression. Organizational support, including access to counselling services, peer support groups, and stress management training, can mitigate the psychological effects of stress. Therefore, the report's minimal support indicates a systemic issue contrary to the works of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who pointed out that organizational support—like access to counselling services, peer support groups, and stress management training—can buffer the psychological impact of stress. Diplomats are susceptible to long-term psychological issues, decision-making impairments, and reduced performance in the absence of sufficient mental health support. This corresponds with studies such as Cavanaugh et al. (2000), which argue that chronic stress without support leads to adverse organizational outcomes, including reduced morale and higher turnover rates. According to comparative analysis, organizations implementing comprehensive mental health frameworks, including resilience training, regular psychological check-ins, and access to professional clinicians, report superior employee outcomes. Diplomatic institutions may develop customized support programs by incorporating best practices from corporate and military environments.

Responses from the five (5) HoDs regarding the support they receive from their institution to assist in stress management among diplomats revealed no support. This is the response of the HoDs:

HoD 5: "To be frank, I do not believe that a significant amount of institutional support is available." They occasionally conduct seminars on mental health or stress management; however, these events are exceedingly rare. I have been informed that a counsellor is available; however, I am unaware of how to contact them.

HoD 2: *"We are permitted to take annual vacations and periodic leave days, which is beneficial to a certain extent." The institution has recently invited mental health professionals to offer lectures and counselling services; however, these initiatives are inconsistent.*

HoD 3: *"The assistance is exceedingly inadequate." A few seminars and lectures on stress management have been conducted, but none have been comprehensive. I frequently seek informal counselling from my colleagues. I am not aware of any structured system for tension management.*

HoD 5: *"Initially, there was no assistance; however, they began conducting occasional seminars on stress management and mental health about a year ago." It is a commendable beginning; however, more consistent programs or access to a psychologist would be more beneficial.*

HoD4: *"I have not observed any substantial support." We have been informed that a doctor is available for counselling; however, I have never utilised the service due to my lack of understanding regarding the process. I primarily depend on my annual leave to rejuvenate and take a break.*

Participants were asked a follow-up question: Which strategies have you discovered most effective in managing stress throughout your diplomatic tenure?

HOD5: *"It is essential for me to take breaks." Whenever my workload becomes excessive, I take a break and concentrate on spending time with my family or colleagues. It is beneficial to me to cleanse my consciousness.*

HoD4: *"The most effective approach has been to balance work and personal life." I endeavour to balance my professional responsibilities with my personal life, whether through leisure activities or taking necessary breaks.*

HoD3: *"I have consistently relied on exercise as a stress-reducing strategy." It is a consistent activity I can engage in, regardless of location, and it maintains my physical and mental health.*

HoD 2: *"I have discovered that participating in hobbies or leisure activities outside of work is highly beneficial." It enables me to redirect my attention from work-related tension and reenergize.*

HoD5: *"The most beneficial aspect has been taking vacations." I can return to my responsibilities with a renewed perspective when I spend time away from work, particularly with my family.*

These responses demonstrate a combination of personal strategies and institutional support (when available), underscoring the necessity of consistent, structured stress management programs in the diplomatic sector.

3.7 Policies and strategies to be implemented in Ghana to reduce the risks connected with Psychological Stress?

From our discussions above, individual well-being and societal productivity in Ghana's diplomatic service are significantly impacted by psychological stress. To resolve this matter, it is necessary to implement policies and strategies designed explicitly for the Ghanaian context. Data analysis is essential for identifying current interventions' patterns, trends, and voids, thereby effectively mitigating the risks associated with psychological stress. To answer the research question in the study, this section seeks to assess available and potential policies and strategies that can alleviate psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats by examining existing policy and programme factors such as healthcare accessibility, workplace mental health programs, community support structures, and public awareness campaigns. This analysis will yield insights that will yield evidence-based recommendations to improve Ghana's ability to address psychological stress at the systemic level.

The interviewees were also asked, "*Can you suggest specific programs or resources that would be beneficial in reducing stress for Ghanaian diplomats?*" The participants' responses underscore the existence of a diverse array of strategies and programs that can be employed to mitigate psychological tension among Ghanaian diplomats. As indicated by the responses below, the investigation identifies practical strategies and recurring themes that can effectively mitigate the psychological tension experienced by Ghanaian diplomats. These insights are categorized into actionable recommendations, deficits, and strengths. The responses underscore a significant emphasis on promoting mental health awareness, stress management, and regular health discussions. These recommendations are consistent with international best

practices and can be used as a basis for enhancing mental health. The responses were also tailored towards Advocacy for Mandatory Leave and Family Support systems. Participants underscored the necessity for diplomats to utilise their annual leave, including family reunification provisions. Their responses acknowledge the integral function of work-life balance in mitigating stress. The incorporation of stress-relieving activities into the work culture is evidenced by suggestions such as fitness clubs, diplomatic games, and recreational excursions.

The study also observed that despite mandatory leave and stress-management programs, their full utilization is impeded by the absence of effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The study also revealed that diplomats were unable to candidly discuss mental health challenges due to the absence of established and confidential support networks. Another issue identified in their responses was that the current frameworks appear deficient in providing dedicated funding for stress-management initiatives. Diplomatic missions are also characterized by a lack of consistent and structured interactions between staff and management to address mental health concerns.

Responses from interviewees HoDs regarding *How the existing support systems can be improved to better address the psychological stress experienced by diplomats* receive the following responses:

HoD1: *"I think organising seminars and talk shows on mental well-being would be an exceptional method of addressing psychological stress." These sessions should foster a secure environment for discussion by encouraging staff to speak candidly about their experiences and challenges. It is imperative to cultivate an environment in which the act of seeking assistance is considered acceptable.*

HoD2: *"To more effectively mitigate the stress experienced by diplomats, it is imperative that we prioritise increased interactions between management and staff." This would assist leaders in comprehending the genuine requirements of their officers. Moreover, providing support could be significantly enhanced by implementing regular professional mental health check-ups and numerous seminars on mental health.*

HoD3: *"Emotional therapeutic sessions are necessary to assist diplomats in overcoming the obstacles they encounter, both prior to and following their postings." Guaranteeing that the welfare of officers and their families is prioritized would also yield substantial results. Staff must have confidence in the professionalism and discretion of the mental health services they receive. Confidentiality is paramount.*

HoD4: *"I believe that conducting opinion polls to comprehend the specific stressors diplomats encounter is a practical starting point." Furthermore, mental health professionals must be accessible in a discreet manner. The assurance of confidentiality would motivate additional officers to seek assistance without concern for stigma.*

The diverse viewpoints regarding the enhancement of support systems to effectively manage psychological duress are reflected in these excerpts. Research highlights that mental health seminars and open discussions reduce stigma and encourage employees to seek help (Corrigan et al., 2014). Creating safe spaces where staff feel supported in sharing their challenges aligns with best practices in workplace mental health programs. Several works of literature support the suggested responses as effective measures for addressing psychological stress among diplomats. Initiatives like seminars, discreet access to mental health professionals, family support, and leadership engagement are evidence-based strategies that align with global best practices in managing workplace stress (Corrigan et al., 2014; Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Caligiuri et al., 1998; Selmer, 1999; Shaffer et al., 2012).

The following question was: ***Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding managing psychological stress in diplomatic service?***

HoD 3: *"I think more awareness is needed on the dangers of stress and how it impacts mental health. Diplomats face unique challenges that are often overlooked."*

HoD4: *"Diplomatic service is demanding, and more attention needs to be given to staff's mental health and well-being. It does not feel like this is being prioritized enough currently."*

HoH 3: *"The ministry should focus on the health of staff, not just those stationed abroad but also those at the base. Everyone involved in diplomacy needs consistent support."*

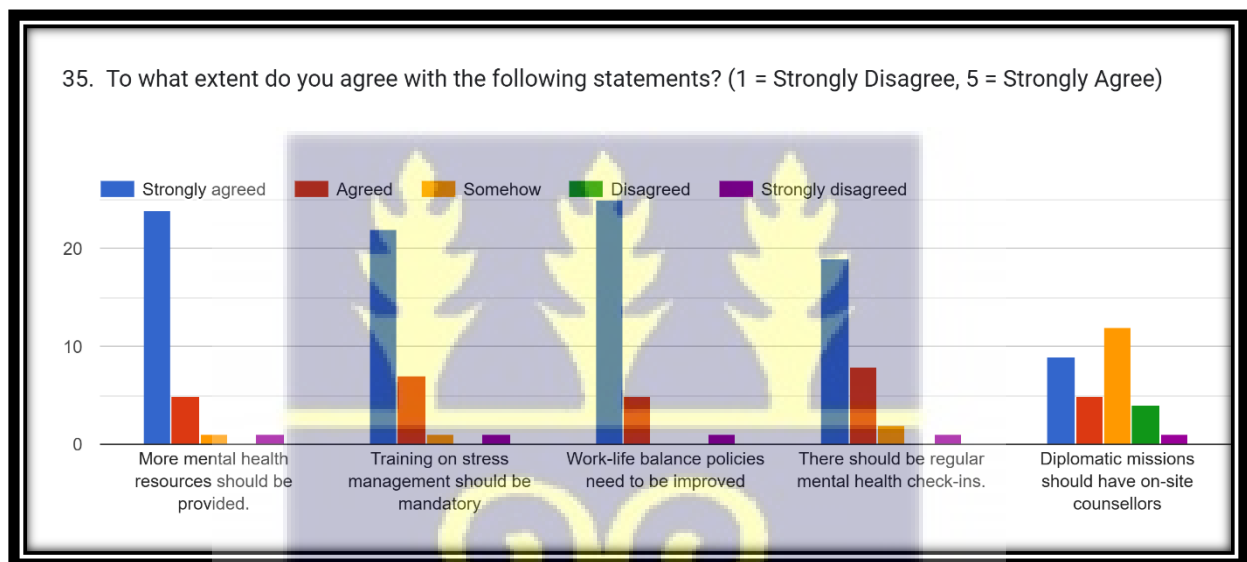
HoD5: *"Adaptability is essential in diplomacy. Being open to change helps manage*

unexpected stressors. Training programs on resilience and adaptability could make a big difference."

HoD4: *"We need more talks, programs, and activities focused on mental health awareness. These initiatives can highlight its importance and provide strategies to cope with stress."*

To further confirm the responses on systems and strategies needed to improve and better address the psychological stress experienced by diplomats, the participants were asked to rate how much they would agree or disagree with some already outlined strategies. The responses received are presented in Figure 3.18 below.

Figure 3.18 Summary of Responses



Source: Field data (2024) Survey Respondents' Managing Stress

The chart displays responses to five mental health-related statements, as shown in Fig. 3.18, with most respondents strongly concurring. The most strongly supported statement is enhancing work-life balance policies, providing additional mental health resources, and conducting stress management training. The "disagree" and "somehow" categories yield the most varied responses. The majority of respondents are in favour of consistent mental health check-ins, with minimal disagreement. The concept of on-site counsellors for diplomatic missions is endorsed; however, there is a greater degree of disagreement.

The data emphasizes the necessity of systemic support and stress management training, underscoring the significance of mental health as a critical issue. This data is pertinent to Ghanaian diplomacy and psychological health study, emphasising the importance of institutional support for mental well-being in high-stress professions. The data indicates a distinct acknowledgement of mental health as a critical issue, underscoring the necessity of systemic support and stress management training.

The majority of responses consistently indicate strong agreement with all statements, indicating that mental health and stress management are highly prioritized concerns. Compared to broader concepts, such as the presence of on-site counsellors, statements that emphasized tangible actions (e.g., mandatory training and the provision of resources) received marginally more support. Regular mental health check-ins and increased mental health resources and support are evidently in demand by the respondents. Policy Modifications: Mandatory stress management training and work-life balance are two areas that can impact staff's well-being substantially. Although this concept is generally accepted, additional investigation may be necessary to resolve logistical issues or reservations.

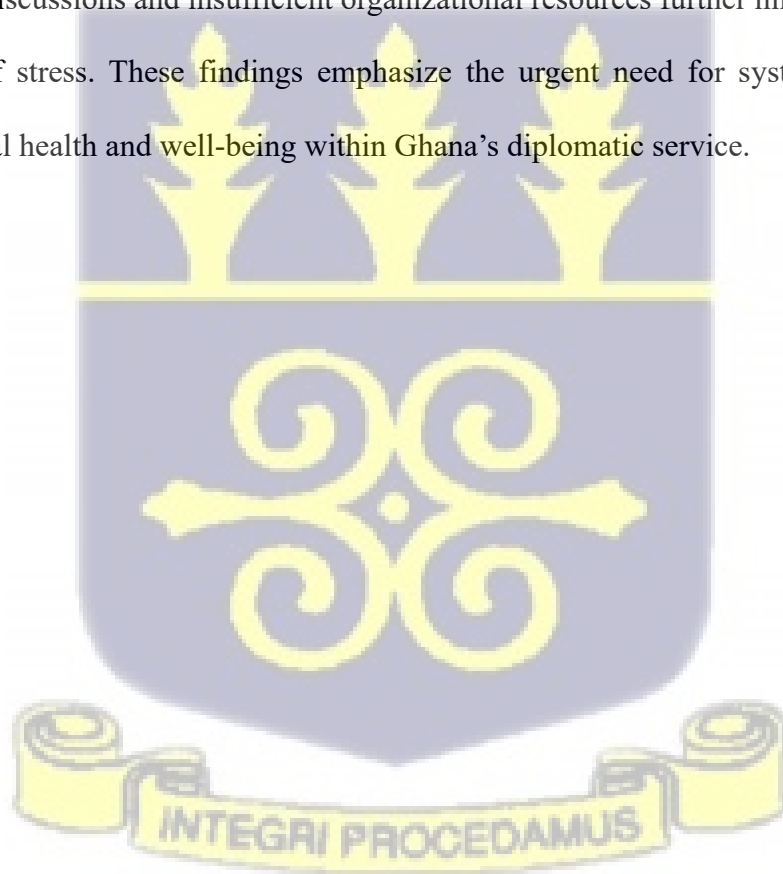
3.8 Challenges in Addressing Psychological Stress in the Foreign Service

The study explored the challenges of addressing burnout syndrome within the Foreign Ministry, revealing significant obstacles that hinder effective management. Key challenges identified from the interviews included lacking organizational programs to assist Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) / diplomats in managing psychological stress and burnout syndrome, inadequate financial resources, and insufficient human resources, such as specialized counsellors. Findings indicate that the Ministry lacks structured programs to counsel and support FSOs / diplomats in managing psychological stress and burnout. As depicted in Figure 3.14, most respondents (96.9%) disagreed, while 3.1.% agreed that the Ministry regularly organizes stress and burnout management programs for its personnel. An interview with the Policy, Planning Monitoring Evaluation (PPMED) Director confirmed the absence of a formal unit dedicated to providing

counselling services. However, the director noted that FSOs/diplomats could approach senior colleagues informally for guidance, though this option is neither well-known nor widely utilized.

3.9 Conclusion

Chapter 3 provided a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and coping mechanisms associated with psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats. The findings revealed that while individual strategies such as exercise, family support, and recreational activities are commonly employed, institutional support remains insufficient. The chapter underscored critical gaps in mental health services, including a lack of structured programs, inadequate funding, and limited access to professional counselling. Additionally, stigma surrounding mental health discussions and insufficient organizational resources further hinder the effective management of stress. These findings emphasize the urgent need for systemic reforms to prioritize mental health and well-being within Ghana's diplomatic service.



CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter summarizes the study's findings on psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats, suggests actionable recommendations to resolve identified gaps, and concludes with reflections on the research's implications. The objective is to establish a comprehensive framework that will improve the effectiveness and well-being of Ghanaian diplomats through targeted interventions.

4.2 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to examine the prevalence of burnout syndrome among Foreign Service Officers (FSOs)/diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its impact on the quality of service delivery. The study employed a mixed-method approach for data collection and analysis. A total sample size of Thirty-Seven (37) respondents participated in the study, comprising 32 FSOs / diplomats who were conveniently selected to respond to the questionnaire and five (5) senior officers (Heads of Departments HoDs including the HoD1 (Head of Policy Planning) HoD2 (Head of Administration), HoD3(Head, of Africa and Regional Integration) HoD4 (Officer in Charge of the Secretariat at the Internal Audit Bureau) and HoD5 (Officer in Charge of Secret & Confidential Registry) who were purposively selected for interviews. The key findings of the study are summarized below.

4.2.1 Demographics

The study explores psychological stress among Ghanaian foreign service officers (FSOs) and diplomats. Examination of the demographics reveals that female diplomats who dominate the Service face more stress due to societal expectations and workplace microaggressions, while male colleagues face role ambiguity. Many are married, but single and divorced diplomats face isolation and lack of support which can lead to psychological stress (Jones, 2019). Most of the

respondents have postgraduate degrees, but they are not immune from psychological stress. Higher expectations and leadership responsibilities lead to stress. Long-serving diplomats experience stress due to career stagnation, while newer diplomats struggle with work-life balance.

4.2.2 Primary causes of psychological stress experienced by Ghanaian diplomats

The study examined the primary causes of psychological stress experienced by Ghanaian diplomats and its impact on their well-being. The results emphasize the multifaceted nature of stressors affecting diplomats, drawing insights from quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews with Heads of Departments. The results indicated that burnout is prevalent, with most FSOs /diplomats reporting experiencing symptoms of psychological stress. It was observed that many FSOs/diplomats experienced significant psychological stress and that the most critical stressors were workload, lengthy hours, frequent travel, with family separation and resource constraints further compounding the challenges. Organizational factors also influence stress, including inadequate compensation and management style, albeit to a lesser extent.

The findings are consistent with the established stress theories, such as Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model, which emphasizes the interplay between personal appraisal and coping strategies in stress management. Additionally, resilience, emotional intelligence, and the availability of support systems influenced the individual differences in stress perception.

The research underscores the diverse sources of strain in diplomatic service by categorizing stressors into four main areas: work-related, personal and family, organizational, and external environment. The widespread impact of these stressors is further reflected in the frequency of stress-related symptoms, including anxiety and sleep disturbances, which requires institutional reforms and supportive measures.

4.2.3 Influence of stressors and their impact on the well-being and effectiveness of Ghanaian FSOs / diplomats

The study further sought to discover the influence of stressors and their impact on the psychological well-being of Ghanaian diplomats. The study findings indicate a considerable influence of stresses on the well-being and performance of diplomats, particularly in the context of their professional activities. Stress is a multifaceted phenomenon with extensive consequences, influencing mental health, job performance, interpersonal relationships, general well-being, and physical health. The Survey statistics indicate that many diplomats encounter stress, resulting in emotional tiredness, decreased interpersonal abilities, lower creativity, and compromised decision-making. The study found that majority of the respondents (59.38%) agreed that burnout affects their physical and mental health negatively. Respondents (43.75%) also agreed that burnout affects employees' overall happiness, 46.88% agreed that burnout leads to poor relationships and finally, 53% of the respondents agreed that burnout leads to low workers' performance. Subsequently, it can also be deduced from the study that people suffering from burnout find it difficult to concentrate on what they are doing.

The interviews with department Heads verify these findings, indicating individual variances in the experience and impact of stress. Some individuals display resilience and coping strategies, while others show evidence of emotional exhaustion and social disengagement. The research also revealed that psychological tension adversely affects diplomats' performance and overall well-being. Prolonged stress results in decreased productivity, impaired decision-making, and increased susceptibility to mental health challenges, including exhaustion, melancholy, and anxiety. Additionally, the strain is exacerbated by the absence of structured support mechanisms, which results in higher attrition rates and reduced effectiveness in diplomatic engagements.

The results highlight the necessity for specific treatments to alleviate the adverse impacts of stress, especially in high-pressure occupations such as diplomacy. The limited use of professional therapy among respondents underscores the stigma and obstacles associated with seeking mental health assistance.

4.2.4 Coping mechanisms, Institutional Support Systems, and Resources

This study further explored the coping strategies, institutional support frameworks, and resources accessible to Ghanaian diplomats in addressing psychological stress. The results indicate a significant dependence on informal, self-directed stress relief methods, including soliciting support from family and friends, flexible work schedules, and physical activity. Institutional assistance, however, acknowledged in certain instances, remains irregular and insufficient. Only 3.1% of respondents report feeling appropriately supported, indicating that Ghanaian diplomatic institutions are deficient in establishing effective frameworks for stress management. Personal solutions like vacations, hobbies, and exercise proved to be extremely helpful, underscoring the need for tailored approaches to stress management. The absence of formal training and restricted access to professional counselling emphasize a significant deficiency in institutional assistance, underscoring the necessity for a more extensive mental health support system to safeguard the well-being of diplomats. The study emphasizes the critical necessity for improvements in institutional support systems, encompassing the integration of resilience training, routine mental health evaluations, and readily available professional counselling services. Comparative analyses from other countries indicate best practices that Ghana may implement to improve the mental health and productivity of its diplomats.

The chapter offers essential insights into the interplay between job demands, stress, and performance, underscoring the need for both organizational and individual methods to improve diplomats' well-being and efficacy.

4.2.5 Challenges

The study further examined some of the challenges in dealing with psychological stress within the Ministry. Study findings revealed that key challenges included the lack of organizational programs to help diplomats from the Foreign Ministry of Ghana manage stress and burnout syndrome, the lack of adequate financial resources, and the lack of adequate human resources and counselling officers. The study found that the ministry officers have no intervention programme to help manage stress and burnout among officers.

The study's findings suggest that Ghana's diplomatic service should employ evidence-based tactics to treat psychological stress successfully, such as increasing awareness, offering easily available tools for mental health, enforcing regulations that promote work-life balance, and encouraging leisure activities. In addition, it is essential to address current deficiencies in monitoring, funding, and staff participation to guarantee the sustainable implementation of mental health care.

4.3 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.3.1 Conclusions

The study highlights the significant psychological stress experienced by Ghanaian diplomats and its impact on their well-being and productivity. Stress arises from personal, professional, environmental and organizational factors, with systemic gaps exacerbating its effects. The diplomatic profession has been deemed inherently stressful and emotionally demanding. The profession is confronted with a wide range of stressors such as time pressure, long hours of responsibility in the absence of decision-making power, frequent interruptions or relocation, cultural adaptations, frequent international travels, work overload and increasing job and role demands. It was evident in the study that burnout indeed hurt the performance of FSOs / diplomats, which invariably had dire consequences for psychological well-being. The study concludes that without the necessary intervention programmes to prevent and manage stress and burnout among diplomats, Addressing these challenges require a comprehensive and evidence-based approach that integrates institutional reforms, leadership engagement, and individual coping strategies.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this study—such as structured mental health programs, improved access to counselling, and family-inclusive policies—Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs can foster a more resilient and effective diplomatic corps. These efforts will enhance diplomats’ personal well-being and strengthen Ghana’s capacity to navigate complex global challenges effectively.

4.3.2 Recommendations

Considering the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Establish a Mental Health Unit: Form a specialized department inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to manage mental health initiatives, offer counselling services, and perform routine psychological assessments.
- The Ministry must also implement compulsory leave. It must supervise and enforce the application for yearly leave to guarantee diplomats sufficient recuperation time, including provisions for family reunification.
- The Ministry should introduce flexible work schedules, telecommuting options, and adequate recovery time between postings.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration should make stress management and resilience training mandatory for all diplomats, arming them with tools to handle work-related demands and adjust to cultural variations in postings.
- Provide managers with transformational and compassionate leadership training to cultivate a supportive workplace environment.
- Engage mental health specialists at Headquarters to deliver discreet, face-to-face counselling services. Establish confidential helplines for officers to obtain discreet support. Augment financial resources for mental health initiatives, encompassing leisure activities, wellness programs, and family-centred support networks.
- De-stigmatize Mental Health by organising seminars, workshops, and public awareness initiatives to mainstream conversations on mental health. Instruct diplomats on

identifying stress signs and pursuing assistance via workshops and resource materials. Subsequently, there should be a top-down approach by the Ministry to establish robust stress and burnout intervention programmes to ensure diplomatic workers are emotionally safe in their work, are valued and allowed to reach their full potential

- The management of the Ministry should formulate family-inclusive policies, including organizing family bonding events and providing resources for spouses and children during assignments. It should also provide cultural adaptation assistance for families accompanying diplomats on international assignments.
- The Ministry should introduce routine evaluations and implement systematic surveys and evaluations as a feedback mechanism to pinpoint stresses and assess the efficacy of mental health initiatives. It should also implement anonymous routes for diplomats to express their problems and propose enhancements.
- Advocate for exercise centres, diplomatic sports, and leisure excursions to alleviate stress. Implements mindfulness and meditation programs customized to diplomatic service requirements.
- The Ministry should acquire knowledge through exchange programmes and cooperation with nations with sophisticated diplomatic mental health systems. It should also employ worldwide best practices as standards to enhance Ghana's diplomatic mental health policy perpetually.

By adopting these ideas, Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration may cultivate a more conducive and efficient atmosphere for its diplomats, promoting individual welfare and improved national representation internationally.

4.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

This dissertation contributes to the existing scholarly works on psychological stress in Diplomacy. It also fills the gap in the literature on psychological stress experienced by diplomats, particularly in Ghanaian diplomatic service, thus addressing the critical gap in the literature. The study focused on a tiny sample of Ghanaian diplomats and Foreign Service

Officers, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings throughout the diplomatic service. The sample size was limited within the study

Drawing solid conclusions from such a minute-scale study can be beneficial but has clear limitations. First, the findings are constructed on the views and insights of applicants concerning their personal experiences and those of others, giving way to the risk of response bias, especially when most data was gathered through self-reported surveys and interviews, which may have introduced biases such as social desirability or faulty memory. Further, the study mainly focused on diplomats stationed in particular locations in terms of geographical scope. This may have excluded specific stresses encountered by individuals sent to less represented or remote posts. Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the research limited the ability to analyze stress patterns and coping mechanisms over time, which could provide deeper insights. Nonetheless, the study methodology can be adopted in similar research.

Since the sample is small, the study can be replicated on an immense scale involving a larger population or diplomats from different regions. Equally, an important area for future empirical study is to adopt a longitudinal approach to track changes in stress levels, coping mechanisms, and mental health outcomes over an extended period. A more diverse and more extensive sample of Ghanaian diplomats from various regions and missions will be included to ensure the findings are representative.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I - QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey Questionnaire

Institutional:

A. Name of Institution

B. Respondent's Identity Code:

Time of Interview: Start::

End::

Date of Questionnaire Distribution//.....

Date of Questionnaire Collection /..... /.....

As a partial fulfilment of my Master's Degree in International Affairs, I am writing my dissertation on **Diplomacy and Psychological Stress: The Case of the Ghanaian Diplomat**. Accordingly, these survey questions are designed to collect comprehensive statistics on Ghanaian diplomats' experiences with psychological stress, coping techniques, and support systems. The open-ended questions allow participants to share their personal experiences, perceptions, and suggestions in detail, providing deeper insights into the issues related to psychological stress among Ghanaian diplomats. Please be assured that your responses are confidential and will be used for qualitative analysis. Kindly spare a few minutes of your busy schedule to share your experiences for a good cause. I appreciate your support.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender (a) Male ☐ (b) Female ☐
2. Age (a) 20 – 29 ☐ (b) 30 -39 ☐ (c) 40 – 49 ☐ (d) 50 – 59 ☐ (e) 60 and above
3. Marital Status (a) Married ☐ (b) Divorced ☐ (c) Widowed ☐ (d) Single ☐
4. Religion (a) Christian ☐ (b) Muslim ☐ (c) Traditionalist ☐ (d) None ☐
5. Education Qualification (a) SHS/SSS ☐ (b) Tertiary {Diploma ☐ /Bachelor ☐ (a) Masters ☐ /PhD ☐
6. How long have you served as a Foreign Services Officer or a Diplomat? (a) Less than five years ☐ (b) 6-10 years ☐ (c) 11-15 years ☐ (d) 16-20 years ☐ More than 20 years ☐

Stress Assessment:

Primary Causes of Psychological Stress

7. Please rate the following potential causes of stress on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "Not Stressful" and 5 is "Extremely Stressful":

- a. Workload
 - b. Long hours
 - c. Travel demands
 - d. Political pressures
 - e. Security concerns
 - f. Family Separation
 - g. Cultural adaptation
 - h. Lack of resources
 - i. Other (please specify)
8. What are the top three sources of stress you encounter in your diplomatic duties
9. How frequently do you experience stress-related symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, or difficulty sleeping?
10. In your own words, please describe a recent situation or experience that caused you significant stress in your diplomatic role
11. What do you perceive as the primary causes of psychological stress in your role as a diplomat?
12. Can you share specific experiences or events significantly affecting your stress levels?

Influence of Stressors on Well-being and Effectiveness

13. How often do you experience stress as a diplomat?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Always
14. To what extent does stress affect the following aspects of your well-being? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much)
- a. Physical health
 - b. Mental health
 - c. Job performance

- d. Personal relationships
 - e. Overall happiness
15. How does stress impact your effectiveness of the following in your diplomatic service?
(1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much)
- a. Decision-making
 - b. Communication
 - c. Negotiation skills
 - d. Productivity
 - e. Professional relationships
16. How does stress influence your personal life and relationships outside of work?
17. How does the stress you experience as a diplomat affect your overall well-being?

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'Not at all stressed' and 10 being 'Extremely stressed',

18. How would you rate the overall stress level of your diplomatic role?
19. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with stress and mental well-being as a Ghanaian diplomat
20. Have you sought professional help or counselling for stress-related issues during your diplomatic career? (Yes / No)

Impact on Performance:

21. How does stress affect your day-to-day performance and decision-making as a diplomat?
22. Can you explain how high-stress situations have influenced your work outcomes?

Work-Life Balance:

23. How do you balance your professional responsibilities with your personal life to minimise stress?
24. What challenges do you face in maintaining this balance?

Coping Mechanisms:

25. Which coping strategies do you use to manage stress in your diplomatic role? (Check all that apply)
- ☐ Exercise or physical activity

- ☐ Meditation or mindfulness practices
- ☐ Talking to colleagues
- ☐ Professional counselling
- ☐ Time management techniques
- Engaging in hobbies or leisure activities
- Taking breaks or vacations
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

26. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'Not effective at all' and five (5) being 'Extremely effective', how effective do you find each coping mechanism in reducing your stress levels?

- Exercise or physical activity
- Meditation or mindfulness practices
- Talking to colleagues
- Professional counselling
- Time management techniques
- Engaging in hobbies or leisure activities
- Taking breaks or vacation
- Other (please specify)

27. What types of support do you receive from your institution to help manage stress?

28. What strategies have you found most helpful in managing stress during your diplomatic career

29. Have you received any formal training or support in stress management or resilience-building as part of your diplomatic training or career development? (Yes/No)

Institutional Support Systems and Resources:

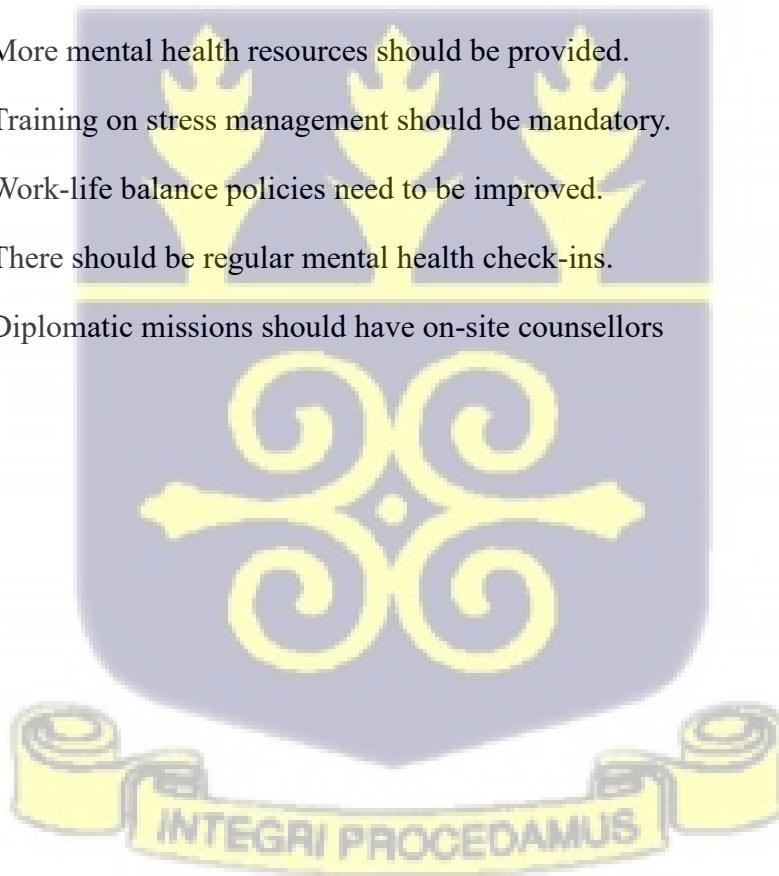
30. Are there regular reviews and check-ups on the staff and families regarding stress and mental health? (a) Yes [] (b) No []

31. What kind of support does the Ghanaian government, or your host country provide to help you manage stress?.....

32. Do you feel adequately supported by your diplomatic institution in managing stress and maintaining your mental well-being? (Yes / No)
33. Are there any additional resources you believe would be beneficial for diplomats in managing stress?.....

Policies and Strategies for Reducing Stress

34. What additional policies or strategies could be implemented in Ghana to reduce the risks associated with psychological stress for diplomats?
35. Can you suggest specific programs or resources that would be beneficial in reducing stress for Ghanaian diplomats?
36. How can the existing support systems be improved to better address the psychological stress experienced by diplomats?
37. Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the management of psychological stress in diplomatic service?
38. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
- More mental health resources should be provided.
 - Training on stress management should be mandatory.
 - Work-life balance policies need to be improved.
 - There should be regular mental health check-ins.
 - Diplomatic missions should have on-site counsellors



APPENDIX II- INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

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Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy

As a partial fulfilment of my master's degree in international relations, I am writing my dissertation on Diplomacy and Psychological Stress: The Case of the Ghanaian Diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. I humbly seek your honest responses to the questions below. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your interview responses will be strictly confidential in compliance with the ethical guidelines of the University of Ghana. The study will be used only for academic purposes. I am grateful for your support.

Section B: Primary Causes of Psychological Stress

1. How do your daily responsibilities and obligations impact your workload and stress levels as a Ghanaian diplomat?
2. What are the most prevalent sources of stress for Ghanaian diplomats, and how do these stressors change among diplomatic missions and regions?

Section C: Influence of Stressors on Well-being and Effectiveness or Productivity

3. In what ways does stress affect your physical, mental or psychological well-being?
4. How has stress influenced your performance in diplomatic activities or roles?
5. How do you balance your diplomatic duties with your personal life under stressful conditions?

Section D: Coping Mechanisms and Institutional Support

6. What personal strategies or coping mechanisms do you use to manage or generally deal with stress to maintain good mental health or psychological well-being amid difficult diplomatic responsibilities?
7. Have you ever sought outside assistance or therapy to alleviate the psychological stress associated with your diplomatic role? If so, how was your experience?
8. What support systems or services are available at the diplomatic institution or embassy to help you deal with psychological stress and enhance your mental health?

Section E: Policies and Strategies for Reducing Stress

9. Do you have measures to address or reduce the risks associated with psychological stress among diplomats in your institution? If yes, what are they?
10. Are these measures effective?
11. What are some of the challenges in tackling psychological stress?
12. Are there any specific programs or resources you believe would be beneficial in reducing stress for diplomats?

