

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY AS PREDICTORS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the levels of contributions and effects of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on the occupational stress of senior secondary school teachers. And also tried to find out if stress differs with gender, age and class size .Five hypotheses tested at alpha level of 0.05 guided the study. The instruments used for the study were Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Scale (TEIS), Teacher General Perceived Self-efficacy Scale (TGPSS), Teachers' Occupational Stress Scale (TOSS),and Questionnaire for class size. 100 teachers were drawn through disproportionate stratified random sampling technique, where 10 teachers (both male and female) were drawn from each school used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using multiple regression statistics, One-way ANOVA, and Independent t-test. Findings of the study revealed that TEI and SE predicted occupational stress of teachers. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

The major goals of school at any level are for the students to attain their academic excellence and quality education and many other secondary objectives. The extent to which these goals and objectives can be realized depends majorly on the teachers. The teachers are one among other factors that facilitate academic performance and educational enterprise as a whole. However, studies have identified among other things, occupational stress as one of the factors that is posing threat on the well being and effective performance of employees (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).

Pastorino and Doyle-Portillo (2006) defined stress as any event or environmental stimulus that we respond to because we perceive it as challenging or threatening. This explains the degree to which people have to change and readjust their lives in response to external events. The more change that is required, the more stress occurs. In this definition, stress is not limited to unhappy events alone; it applies to happy events in one's life as well, if the event causes a person to change his or her daily routines. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as cited by Aronson, Wilson and Akert (1998) viewed stress in a different perspective. To them stress is the negative feelings and beliefs that occur whenever people feel unable to cope with demands from their environment. This implies that event could only be regarded as being stressful if people or an individual views it as devastating. Hence, stress is a generalized non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it.

Occupational stress describes physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of the job and capabilities, resources and needs of the employees to cope with job demands (Akinboye, Akinboye & Adeyemo, 2002). The financial costs of occupational stress to organizations and industries were documented and estimated and at least half of the records of absenteeism from work are in some manner, stress related (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). Job stress can have a wide range and negative impact on the well being and daily functioning of individuals. The indices of stress as revealed psychologically is seen in depression, anxiety, low self esteem; cognitively, it is unveiled as in absentmindedness, failure of attention and memory; behaviourally, it is seen as in absenteeism, aggression and substance abuse.

Association of University Teachers,(AUT,1990) in United Kingdom reported that 49% of the University employees reported that their jobs were very stressful and 77% reported an increase in occupational stress over the years. Akinboye, Akinboye and Adeyemo (2002) reported in their work that over 70% of employees worldwide described their job as stressful with more than one at work on a daily basis. The high level of stress reported among the teaching staff was attributed to limited

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resources, shortage of time, inadequate salaries, poor faculty communication, professional disillusionment, conflicting job demands, frequent interruptions, publication efforts and majorly, the high rate of students' enrolments with non-corresponding teaching staff (Awopegba 2001,). Looking at the above enumerations, it is evident that there is a strong connection between academic work and stress. This is why it became important for this study to investigate the effects of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on occupational stress of the senior secondary school teachers in Rivers state, Nigeria.

According to Bandura (2000), perceived self efficacy is people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designed levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. A strong self-efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well being in several ways; people with high capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be measured rather than as threats to be avoided. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise over them. This kind of drive produces accomplishment, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression. While those who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult task, which they look at as threats. They have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue. They dwell on their personal deficiencies, on the obstacles they encounter, and on all kinds of adverse outcomes rather than concentrating on how to perform successfully when they are faced with difficult tasks. They give up quickly in the face of difficulties. They fall easily to stress and depression (Bandura, 2000). Self efficacy find implications in various fields such as educational setting, medicine, pharmacy, politics, religious bodies, business and the like.

Emotional intelligence also has been found to impact on psychological wealth particularly occupational stress (Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar, 2001). Ciarochi, Chan and Caputi, (2000) posited that emotional intelligence may protect people from stress and lead to better adaptation. They believe that an objective measure of emotional management skills is associated with a tendency to maintain an experimentally induced positive mood which has obvious implications for preventing stress.

Since teaching in itself entails a lot of strenuous academic and non academic demands and stressors, increased emotional intelligence might result in better stress coping mechanisms, which will result to good performance in workspace and better lifestyle. Pan and Croucher (2003) in a cross sectional survey design investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress among a cohort of dental undergraduate students. Emotional intelligence scores of the women were found to be significantly higher than those of the men ($p < 0.05$). The mean perceptive scores were higher in students over twenty one (21) years of age ($p < 0.01$), female students ($p < 0.05$) and those in higher years of school ($p < 0.01$). The correlation analysis showed that EI scale scores were inversely related to PSS-10 scores. They found that the dental students with greater degree of EI may be more apt at coping and dealing with academic and non academic stressful situations and that reducing perceived stress may improve academic performance as well as patient satisfaction. Teaching by its nature demands that teachers demonstrate or display emotion they may not actually feel. For instance, teachers are expected to demonstrate usually love and kindness to their students and their colleagues. They are also expected to serve as mentors and motivate students who are even unwilling to learn. All these are themselves stressful. Thus, research reports asserted that teachers generally have a high level of stress among other employees.

Indeed, research in teacher occupational stress in Nigeria has been quite scanty. There is need to find out how emotional intelligence and self efficacy predict teachers occupational stress in senior secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. This is the main thrust and the problem of this study. Thus, the purpose of this study was two-fold: to find out the contributions of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to occupational stress of secondary school teachers, and find out whether characteristics such as gender, age, and class size contribute to occupational stress of teachers. This study was therefore designed to test these research hypotheses:

- i. There is no significant contribution of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on Occupational stress of senior secondary school teachers in Rivers State;

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- ii. Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy do not predict occupational stress of the teachers;
- iii. There is no significant difference between the level of occupational stress of male and female teachers;
- iv. There is no significant relationship between class size and teachers' occupational stress level.

Methodology

This study made use of the ex-post-facto design. The reason for using this design was that the researcher was interested in knowing the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable without necessarily manipulating the independent variables. The target population consisted of all the senior secondary school teachers in Nigeria. The accessible population which the researcher believed typified and reasonably represented the target population consisted of all the senior secondary school teachers in Obio/Akpo and Ahoada –East Local Government Areas in Rivers State, one of the 36 States in Nigeria. These teachers numbered 3023(1,123 males and females 1900), found in 226 schools in the 23 local government areas in the year of study. The stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the teachers. Ten schools were randomly selected (5 schools from urban and 5 schools from rural areas) .10 teachers were drawn from each school which makes the total of 100 teachers initially selected. But only 50 teachers' responded adequately to the questionnaires used for the final analysis.

Four instruments were used for data collection. The Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Scale (TEIS), Teachers' General Perceived Self –Efficacy Scale (TGPSS), Teachers' Occupational Stress Scale (TOSS), and Rating Scale for class size. The TEIS consisted of 14 items; TGPSS had 10 items with Likert-type 5 point response pattern of strongly agree to strongly disagree, ranging from 5 points to 1 point. 51 items measured TOSS with a response key of very unlikely (Vu) to very likely (VL). The teachers were asked to rate their experience with regard to class size.

The instruments were validated by 4 experts in Measurement and Evaluation, and Psychology who affirmed with 90% agreement that the entire instrument was suitable for measuring what it purported to measure. Cronbach alpha estimate was used to establish the reliability of the instruments. The reliability coefficients were TEIS=0.87, TGPSS=0.65, and TOSS=0.94. The administration of the questionnaire was done by the researcher with the help of some teachers in these schools. The answered questionnaires were scored accordingly for final analysis.

Analysis of Data and Research Results

The presentation is done as per the hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant contribution of teacher's emotional intelligence and teacher's general perceived self-efficacy on teacher's occupational stress.

Table 1: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Between The Predictor Variables (EI and ES) and Occupational Stress.

Multiple R = 0.229		Multiple R ² (Adjusted)=0.012			
Multiple R ² = 0.052		Standard error estimate= 15.57			
Source of Variation	Df	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F-ratio	Sig
Regression	2	631.011	315.505	1.301	0.0287
Residual	97	11395.069	242.448		
Total	99	22790.138			

Data in the table above shows that two independent variables, EI and SE were combined to yield a coefficient of multiple regression, R = .229 and multiple regression square, R = .052. This reveals that 5.2% of the total variance in occupational stress of the teachers under study is accounted for by the contributions of the two variables (emotional intelligence and self-efficacy). The adjusted

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value of 0.012 in the study means that 1.2% of the variance in teachers' occupational stress can be accounted for by the variance in the independent variables. The standard error of the estimate (15.571) implies that the standard deviation of the actual value of the dependent variable is about the regression line of the estimated value of the dependent variable.

Data in table 1 also showed the analysis of variance of the multiple regression with an F-ratio ($p < 0.05$, $df 2, 47$) = 1.301, and significant value of .029. The null hypothesis of no contribution is rejected. Therefore, there was a significant contribution of EI and TGPSS on occupational stress of the teachers.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional Intelligence and Self efficacy does not predict occupational stress of senior secondary school teachers.

Table 2: Relative Contributions of the EI and GPSS to Prediction of Occupational Stress of Teachers.

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		Sig.
	B	Std Error	Beta	T	
1 Constant	156.858	22.636		6.930	0.00
TEIS	-0.396	0.252	-0.222	-1.57	0.0124
TGPSS	0.180	0.465	0.055	0.393	0.700

The data shown in table 2 revealed that each of the independent variables made significant contributions to predict occupational stress among the senior secondary school teachers. The β weight coefficient of TEIS = -0.222, $t = -1.565$, $sign. 0.0124$, TGPSS = 0.055, $t = 0.393$, $sign. 0.770$. From the results, the negative β -value indicates that as the predictor (TEI) increases, the criterion (TOS) decreases. The test of significance on the table shows that only TEIS made a significant difference with $sign. Value = 0.0124$ ($p > 0.05$) and TGPSS made no significant difference. That is to say when it comes to accounting for reduction in teachers' occupational stress, TEI is a dominant factor. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted for TGPSS and rejected for TEI. TEI was a more potent predictor of occupational stress of senior secondary school teachers.

Hypothesis 3: There is no Significant Difference in the Levels of Occupational Stress of the Male and Female Teachers.

Table 3: Independent t-test of male and female teachers' occupational stress.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig
Male	36	144.19	16.45	48	-0.377	0.708
Female	14	146.07	13.93			

From the results on the above, the null hypothesis is accepted since the significance value is greater than $p < .05$ alpha level. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the levels of occupational stress of male and female teachers of senior secondary schools.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between class size and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis Between Class Size And Teachers' Occupational Stress.

Variables	Class Size	TOSS
Class size	1	-0.097
	50	N
TOSS	-0.097	1
N	50	50

The data on table 4 depict the correlation coefficient between the two variables, class size and teachers' occupational stress to be negative relationship of $r = -0.097$. This implies that if class size is double by 1 unit, Teachers' occupational stress also double by 1. This means if the class size is reduced, the level of occupational stress will be -0.097 . In this case, reduction of stress can be achieved by planning a way of reducing the class size.

Summary of Findings

The results of the data analysis were summarized as follows:

- The teachers' emotional intelligence/ self –efficacy are found to have contributive effects on teachers' occupational stress.
- The teachers' emotional intelligence shows more potent prediction to occupational stress.
- Gender does not significantly influence teachers' occupational stress.
- Class size showed insignificant negative relationship with occupational stress of the teachers.

Discussion of Results: The findings of this study revealed that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of the teachers either jointly or separately contributed to the senior secondary school teachers' occupational stress; and TEIS was more potent predictor of teachers' occupational stress. This was indicated in the multiple regression analysis of $r = 0.229$ and $r^2 = 0.052$ and $r^2(\text{adjusted}) = 0.012$, as shown in table 1. This could explain that 5.2% of the total variance in occupational stress of the teachers understudied was accounted for by the combination of the two independent variables (EI and SE). The F-ratio value of 1.301 confirmed further that the predictive power of the independent variables could not be attributed to chance factors.

It could also be inferred from table 2 that emotional intelligence is a better predictor of occupational stress among the senior secondary school teachers. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Adeyemo and Ogunyemi (2005) whose findings reported that there was relative contribution of TEIS and TGPSS on teachers' occupational stress. In line with these findings Jolly (2001) affirmed that increased emotional intelligence was associated with reduced stress of employees and managers of all levels at a large U.S.-based manufacturer. The findings of present study confirmed the assertion of Ciarrochi, Chan, and Bajgar, (2001) which states that an objective measure of emotional management skills is associated with a tendency to maintain experimentally induce positive mood, which has obvious implications for preventing stress. The findings of Ciarrochi, Chan and Caputi (2001), and Bar-on (2003) lend additional support to the findings of the present study. Again the result on class size and teachers' occupational stress indicated that large class size Induces stress on senior secondary school teachers. Thus if class size is reduced, the level of occupational stress on teachers will be minimized.

The study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the level of occupational stress of male and female teachers. This is against the finding of Pau and Croucher (2003) which reported the mean scores of female students' perceived stress was significantly higher than the male. However, it could be explained that the variation in the findings of these studies might be as a result of the small sample size used by the present study, which may have introduced errors in the final result. Another reason for the insignificance could be that the male and the female teachers are subjected to the same conditions and engagement, the same environment, and the same kind of treatment.

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If teachers have higher level EI, it will enhance their ability to manage themselves and others, ability to relate well with others in an effective manner, and build skills in helping others to regulate their moods in positive direction. This will go a long way in helping to establish intimacy and cordial relationship with people, which will be beneficial to well-being and healthy living.

A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with low efficacy may have the tendency to look at situations as being tougher than they are; belief that induces stress, depression and avoidance of challenges. In fact teachers with high EI and perceived self-efficacy may be more adept to coping and dealing with academic and non-academic stressful situations.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:

- Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy relatively contribute to occupational stress of teachers.
- Emotional intelligence was a more potent predictor of occupational stress of the teachers.
- Large class size induces Teachers' occupational stress.
- Gender does not significantly influence Teachers' occupational stress.

Recommendations: The following recommendations were drawn from the findings:

- Teachers should be helped to acquire emotional intelligence competencies and self-efficacy coping strategies in their workplaces when stressful situations arise.
- Government should employ more teachers to equate with the number of students in order to reduce the large class size or large number of students handled by a teacher.

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