

Occupational Stress as Predictor of Burnout Tendency of Secondary School Teachers in Rivers State

Constance Onyinyechi AHARANDU and Christopher A. NWANKWO

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA

Abstract

This study sought to examine whether occupational stress predicts burnout tendency of secondary school teachers in Rivers State. The study was guided by three research questions while one null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A correlational survey research design was used for the study. A multi-stage sampling approach was adopted in selecting a sample size of 1,470 public secondary school teachers, from a population of 7,707 public secondary school teachers in Rivers State. Two standardized instruments: Occupational Stress Inventory for Teachers (OSIT) and Teachers Burnout Tendency Inventory (TBTI) were used for data collection. The questionnaires were administered through a direct delivery approach. Research questions 1-2 were answered using aggregate scores, while research question 3 was answered using linear regression analysis. The null hypothesis was also tested using linear regression analysis. Findings from the study revealed, among others, that secondary school teachers' occupational stress is a significant predictor of their burnout tendency in secondary schools in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that the school guidance counsellors should organise seminars and counselling sessions to enhance teachers' understanding of the degree to which occupational stress brings about burnout tendency among school teachers and to assist them to identify and overcome their occupational stress levels.

Keywords: Burnout tendency, Occupational stress, Predictor, Secondary school, Teachers

Introduction

Workplace circumstances may be formed, empowered, or depleted depending on the expectations, pressures, and duties placed on employees by various occupations. Teachers appear to be at their breaking point as a result of these professional demands and educational advancements as they work to maximise their contributions, foster a sustainable learning environment, and address a widening array of issues and challenges pertaining to students' academic achievement. As teachers strive to be as productive as possible at their employment, these difficulties tend to frequently cause burnout in them.

Burnout as Marek, Schaufeli and Maslach (2017) opined is a syndrome of emotional fatigue, cynicism, depersonalization in relationships with co-workers, and decreased personal achievement that can occur in any individual as a result of excessive work under stressful conditions. Based on the views of Wu, Qi, Yu, and Zang (2016), burnout refers to

the emotional and behavioural exhaustion caused by the long hours and high-intensity nature of the daily teaching process. Thus, consistent with the above perspectives, burnout is described in the context of this study as a gradual but steady process of development of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by an individual's long term involvement in emotionally demanding job situations. The inclination or the likelihood of one becoming burnout is known as burnout tendency.

Britanica dictionary (n.d) describes tendency as a quality that makes something likely to happen or that makes someone likely to think or behave in a particular way. Therefore, burnout tendency is defined in the context of this study as the likelihood of teachers to feel emotionally weary as a result of stressful situations that have the potential to impair their own performance while working in schools.

Burnout has been identified in researches as a serious concern, especially for workers who work with people, such as teachers. Studies Luk, Chan, Cheong and Ko (2010); Reddy and Poornima (2012), for instance have shown that many teachers are prone to burnout throughout their careers. The reason is based on the idea that teachers, in addition to teaching in the classrooms, also serve or play several other roles. For example, teachers serve as administrators, coaches, or team managers in addition to teaching as the director of students' learning. These additional responsibilities can result in additional stress thereby increasing the risk and tendency to burnout. Mazerolle, Monsma, Dixon and Mensch (2012) discovered in their research that a significant number of teachers experience burnout within the first five years of their career due to exposure to job stressors.

Stress is a concept that has been linked to both positive and negative effects on people's health. Hayes, Douglas and Bonner (2015) defined stress as three interconnected concepts: anxiety, conflicts and anger. With the levels of work burnout and lower levels of job satisfaction (Meyer, Li, Klaristenfeld & Gold, 2015), this has been an increased source of concern in recent years. Furthermore, according to Badaghi (2010), stress is a term used to describe the pressures that people experience in their daily lives. As a result of these stresses, they experience a variety of stress symptoms that can have an impact on how they perform at work. As a consequence, in the context of this study, workplace stress refers to teachers' encounters with negative emotions such as rage, irritation, anxiety, depression, and nervousness as a result of some aspect of their job as teachers.

Today, workplace stress is regarded as one of the most serious health issues, especially as it concerns occupations like teaching. Researchers such as Pas, Bradshaw, and Hershfeldt (2012) pointed out that the health and working conditions of school teachers have become a growing issue in the last decade, with rising levels of workplace burnout, high levels of staff turnover and lower levels of job satisfaction. While stress appears to exist in all areas of employment, school-related stress appears to be more stressful, requiring staff to be environmentally concerned with students as well as mentally and physically challenged. Based on the demanding nature of stress, Adeniyi, Aremum and Adeyinka (2010) described four factors contributing to stress in schools as follows: stress factors due to student characteristics, stress factors due to the school atmosphere, stress factors due to administrative procedures, and stress factors due to service situation. According to Adeniyi, et al., these stressors can stem from some students' attitudes toward the teachers, their studies, and/or other students in the class. The state of the school setting,

such as filth and bushiness, was also identified as one of the factors that lead to making the teaching and learning environment unconducive and strenuous. The authors also noted that the leadership style of those in administrative positions in the school, as well as the conditions of service, which often place demands on the teacher that are beyond their capabilities, can contribute to stress in schools. These factors may result to a likely burnout situation and emotional fatigue, as well as high absenteeism, sickness, sleeping issues, and cardiovascular diseases/symptoms as major illnesses.

Today, many organisations seem to be paying close attention to occupational stress possibly based on the notion that many scholars have long suspected that these characteristics can be used in employee selection, matching people with work, and influencing career development decisions. However, most research works on burnout in education and counselling have concentrated on emotional issues, hardiness, and locus of control, as well as gender, age, and other occupational factors such as student misbehaviour, school management, crowded classrooms, low pay, and school environment. However, little is known to the researchers about studies on the relationship that exists between occupational stress and development of job burnout, especially among teachers in secondary schools in Rivers State. As a result, the current research examined the occupational stress as predictor of burnout tendency among secondary school teachers in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study The main purpose of this study is to examine occupational stress as predictor of burnout tendency among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. Specifically, the study determined: (a) Occupational stress scores of secondary school teachers in Rivers State. (b) Burnout tendency scores of secondary school teachers in Rivers State. (c) The extent to which occupational stress predict burnout tendency of secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Research Questions The following research questions guided the study: (a) What are the occupational stress scores of secondary school teachers in Rivers State? (b) What are the burnout tendency scores of secondary school teachers in Rivers State? (c) To what extent does occupational stress predict burnout tendency of secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Hypotheses The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance: Occupational stress is not a significant predictor of burnout tendency among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Method

Research Design The study was conducted using a correlational survey research design. The design was used because it sought to establish the relationship that exists between the study variables or how much the independent variable contribute to the occurrence of the dependent variable.

Area of the Study This study was conducted in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Rivers State is a state in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Rivers State borders Imo, Abia and Rivers States to the north, Akwa Ibom State to the east, and Bayelsa and Delta States to the west. The state has high students' enrolment which has the tendency to

pose great challenge to teachers and perhaps likely to contribute to their experience of occupational stress.

Population of the Study There are a total of 7,707 secondary school teachers in 245 public secondary schools in Rivers State by 2021 academic year.

Sample and Sampling Technique A sample size of 1,470 representing 19% of the population was selected for the study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. At first, six teachers were selected from each of the 245 secondary schools in the state through disproportionate random sampling technique. Secondly accidental sampling was employed to select the actual teachers to represent the schools in their zonal meetings.

Instrument for Data Collection The instruments that were used for this study include Occupational Stress Inventory for Teachers (OSIT) and Teachers Burnout Tendency Inventory (TBTI). Occupational stress of secondary school teachers was assessed using a 25 items standardized instrument named "Occupational Stress Inventory for Teachers (OSIT)". The instrument was adopted from Stress Inventory for Teachers originally developed by Sheeja (1999). It has 25 items structured in 4 point rating scale. For each statement a score of 4, 3, 2 and 1 were given for responses: Always, Sometimes, Rarely and Never respectively. The scores obtained for each of the statements were added together to get the component score as well as the total score for stress.

Also, the burnout tendency scores of secondary school teachers was assessed using the Teachers Tendency to Burnout Inventory (TTBI) adopted from Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI is a 24 items standardised inventory designed to assess three aspects of burnout syndrome. It was structured a 4 point scale of 4, 3, 2 and 1 for responses as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

The reliability of the instruments was established using internal consistency estimate. Coefficient alpha of 0.88 and 0.83 were obtained for Occupational Stress Inventory for Teachers (OSIT) and Teachers Burnout Tendency Inventory (TBTI) respectively.

Method of Data Collection A direct distribution approach was used for data collection. Ten research assistants helped the researchers in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. They visited the teachers in their zonal meetings for the data collection.

Method of Data Analysis The data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) IBM version 21. The research questions 1 and 2 were answered using aggregate scores while research questions 3 along with the null hypothesis were analysed using linear regression analysis.

Results

Research Question 1 What are the occupational stress scores of secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Table 1: RANGE OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS SCORES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RIVERS

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
28 – 69	713	49.70	No occupational stress
70 – 112	721	50.30	Occupational stress

In table 1, it was observed that 721 (50.30%) of the secondary school teachers who scored between 70 and 112 have occupational stress, while 713(49.70%) others who scored between 28 and 69 do not have occupational stress in Rivers state.

Research Question 2 What are the burnout tendency scores of secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Table 2: RANGE OF SCORES ON BURNOUT TENDENCY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RIVERS STATE

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
24 – 59	782	54.5	No burnout tendency
60 – 96	652	45.5	Burnout tendency

In table 2, it was observed that with scores ranging from 24 to 59, 782(54.5%) of secondary school teachers have no burnout tendency in Rivers state, while 652(45.5%) secondary school teachers who scored between 60 and 96 have burnout tendency in Rivers state.

Research Question 3: To what extent does secondary school teachers’ occupational stress predict their burnout tendency in Rivers State?

Table 3: REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AS A PREDICTOR OF THEIR BURNOUT TENDENCY IN RIVERS STATE

R	R ²	R ² Adjusted	Beta
0.631	0.398	0.398	0.631

Table 3 shows that secondary school teachers’ occupational stress had Beta of 0.631. This indicates that secondary school teachers’ occupational stress contributed only 63.1 percent of their burnout tendency in Rivers state.

Null Hypothesis Secondary school teachers’ occupational stress is not a significant predictor of their burnout tendency in Rivers State.

Table 4: REGRESSION ANALYSIS TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AS A PREDICTOR OF THEIR BURNOUT TENDENCY IN RIVERS STATE

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	df	Cal. t	P<0.05	Remark
0.631	0.398	0.398	0.631	1432	30.78	0.000	S

Table 4 shows that at 1df numerator, 1432df denominator and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t30.78 with P.value 0.000 which is less than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore, secondary school teachers’ occupational stress is a significant predictor of their burnout tendency in Rivers state.

Discussion

The findings of the study are discussed as follows:

Occupational Stress Scores of Secondary School Teachers in Rivers State The findings of this study revealed that over half of the secondary school teachers in Rivers State experience occupational stress. This means that over half of the teachers in Rivers State may not be happy and satisfied with their job. This could also mean that they are not able to carry out actions needed to achieve their work objectives successfully. This finding is consistent with the finding of Sturgeon, Zautra and Okun (2014) which revealed that occupational stress is considered to be the major factor contributing towards job dissatisfaction, job-related illness and early retirement in England. The findings also implies that teachers in Rivers State could be exposed to one or more of the following: stress factors due to student characteristics, stress factors due to the school atmosphere, stress factors due to administrative procedures, and stress factors due to service situation. Lack of participatory management and lack of sensitivity to teacher-related problems appear to be part of the reasons why over half of the secondary school teachers in Rivers State experience occupational stress.

The findings of this study also support the result of a research conducted by Adeniyi, Aremum and Adeyinka (2010) which revealed moderate and extreme stress pattern among special educators. Similarly, Olaitan, Oyerinde, Obiyemi and Kayode (2010) indicated that majority of teachers in primary schools in the Southwest experience stress. On the contrary, Hadi, Naing, Daud, Nordin, and Sulong (2009) reported that majority of teachers in Malaysia do not experience stress and that job-related factors do not contribute much to stress among secondary school teachers this might be due to Nigeria factor. The reason for this finding could also be explained by the notion that work stressors can only be fully comprehended if the importance of work to the employee is understood; be it for meeting the basic needs for employees, including maintenance, activity, social needs, self-esteem and self- actualisation. The study noted that the perceived threat or failure to satisfy these basic needs represents a source of stress in the work place.

BurnoutTendency Scores of Secondary School Teachers in Rivers State The findings showed that more than half of secondary school teachers in Rivers State have no burnout tendency. This implies according to Marek, Schaufeli and Maslach (2017) that more of secondary school teachers in the state are not likely to experience emotional fatigue, cynicism, depersonalization in relationships with co-workers, and decreased personal achievement in the workplace. Going by the description of Pines and Aronson in Galan, Sanmartín, Polo and Giner (2011), the result of data analysed revealed that more than half of secondary school teachers in Rivers State experience physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations.

Occupational Stress as a Predictor of Teachers' Burnout Tendency in Rivers State The finding of this study indicates that secondary school teachers' occupational stress is a 63.1 predictor of their burnout tendency. It further revealed that secondary school teachers' occupational stress is a significant predictor of their burnout tendency in Rivers state. This means that there is a great chance that teachers who experience occupational stress would also experience burnout. This is consistent with the findings of Hao, et al. (2020) whose study revealed that occupational stress was associated with job burnout among migrant

workers in Dongguan, China, indicating that a high level of emotional exhaustion was associated with high role overload, high role insufficiency, high role boundary, high physical environment, high psychological strain, and high physical strain. Also Reddy and Poornima (2012) conducted a study that revealed that majority of university teachers experienced moderate and high levels of occupational stress and most of teachers had professional burnout. The analysis showed a strong support for the hypothesis that there was a positive relationship between the occupational stress and professional burnout of university teachers. Gold and Roth (2013) findings also concurred with the findings of this study when they observed that job stress had a positive predictive effect on job burnout. This revelation affirms that teachers' occupational stress is a significant predictor of their burnout tendency.

The reason for this finding could be explained by the work of Maslach and Leiter (1997) where it was asserted that burnout thrives in the workplace and is most likely to occur when there has been a mismatch between the nature of the job and the nature of the person doing the job. The key aspects of burnout as outlined include, increased feelings of emotional exhaustion, where the individual's emotional resources are depleted and s/he feels no longer able to give of them at a psychological level, and emotional exhaustion which is characterised by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are used up.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that secondary school teachers' occupational stress is moderate and positive significant predictor of their burnout tendency in Rivers state.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and implications of the study. (a) The school guidance counsellor should organise seminars and counselling sessions to enhance teachers' understanding of the degree to which occupational stress brings about burnout tendency among school teachers and to assist them to identify and overcome the factors that could lead to burnout (b) The school administrators should take required steps to reduce the workload of teachers and to provide good leadership and conducive environment to close all channels of stress and burnout among secondary school teachers.

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Biographical Note

Constance Onyinyechi AHARANDU is of the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, NIGERIA
Email: constanceaharandu@gmail.com

Christopher A. NWANKWO, *PhD.*, is a Counselling Psychologist, Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, NIGERIA. Email: ca.nwankwo@unizik.edu.ng