PERSONALITY TRAITS AS DETERMINANTS OF STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ANAMBRA STATE

Anene Mmaduakonam, PhD
Department Of Educational Psychology,
Nwafor Orizu College Of Education, Nsugbe
Obi Ifeoma E., PhD
Anambra State University, Uli

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out whether personality traits such as achievement drive, high competitive tendency, high level of anxiety and self concept are determinants of occupational stress. The study was guided by four hypotheses. The population of the study covered all the 6,036 teachers in 265 public secondary schools in the state. The sample consisted of 1,000 teachers made up of 450 males and 550 females; drawn through multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire tagged 'Personality Traits and Stress' (PTS) which was duly validated. Mean and t–test were used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that teachers with high achievement drive exhibited a significantly higher level of stress than those with low achievement drive; teachers with high competitive tendency exhibited a significantly higher level of stress than those with low competitive tendency; teachers with high level of anxiety exhibit a significantly higher level of stress than those with low level of anxiety; teachers with a low self–concept exhibit a significantly higher level of stress than teachers with high self–concept. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that teachers should be exposed to stress management techniques through seminars and workshops.

Keywords: Teachers occupational stress, achievement drive, competitive tendency, anxiety level, self–concept

Introduction

Stress refers to the process by which an individual perceives and responds to certain events in his environment (called stressors) that he appraises as threatening or challenging to him (Santrock, 2001). It refers to

inner and outer demands, which may be physiologically arousing and emotionally taxing and calls for cognitive or behavioural responses.

Auerbach and Gramling (2006) define stress as an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well being. Synoptically, stress is a function of an inexorable tendency to cope with a topsy–turvy environment.

An occupational stress is any force that pushes a psychological or physical factor behind its range of stability, producing a strain within the individuals. Stress in teaching is an ongoing issue of concern for those involved in education. Teacher stress is defined as experiences in teachers, of unpleasant, negative emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from some aspect of their work as teachers (Kyriacou, 2001). Teacher stress is specifically defined as a condition of negative effects, such as frustration and anxiety, which result from aspects of the job. According to Gelvin (2007), teacher stress is a response syndrome of negative effects resulting from aspects of a teacher's job and mediated by the perception that the demands constitute a threat to self–esteem and coping mechanisms activated to seduce the perceived threat. The stress of teaching as an occupation is wide spread and cross–cultural. The work of a teacher is a physically and mentally challenging. A teacher needs a lot of energy in his daily chores in the classroom coupled with his personal and family commitments. This trend which is a routine for a teacher forwards a lot of stress to the teacher (Surinder, 2011). Teachers not only have the stress of dealing with so many diverse children on a daily basis, they are also charged with educating and helping to mould these children into small productive members of society with rules, regulations, guidelines, and performance expectations all around teachers can have very high levels of stress. According to Evers, Tomic and Brouwers (2005) and Kokkinos, Panayiotou and Dazoglou (2005), negative aspects of the teaching job such as disciplinary problems, students' apathy, overcrowded classrooms, preparing lesson notes, involuntary transfer, inadequate salaries and lack of administrative support are among the stressors that confront teachers in both developed and developing nations of the world.

A lot of studies have been carried out on factors contributing to stress among teachers but not much work to the best of author's knowledge has been carried out in Nigeria on psychological variables that predispose people to stress. Akinboye and Adeyemo (2002), found that some people are generally less stress-prone depending on their personality traits. In the same vein, Riolli and Savicki (2003), Readeke and Smith (2004), and Van–Dierendonck (2005) reported that personality characteristics of employees have the tendency to moderate the effects of stressful situations on

employees such that certain traits may buffer or enhance more negative outcomes than others. Kokkinos (2007), also reported that personality characteristics were associated with stress or burnout dimensions. Generally, psychological variables have been viewed as instrumental to the onset of stress, and are associated with the appraisal of environmental stress (Kokkinos, 2007).

The most widely discussed personality characteristic contributing to stress at work, in recent years has been Type A versus Type B differentiation. According to Rosenman (1991) Type A people are found to be very competitive, always strive for achievement, very aggressive, impatience and restless. They have feelings of being under pressure of time and under challenge of responsibility. They seem to be 'workaholics' and would heap upon themselves, an increasing series of achievement – oriented demands. Contrary to Type A, individuals classified as Type B exhibit a different life style that are easy going, relaxed, non–competitive, sociable and can cope with stress easily. Research studies by Jekins (1990), Sirigatti and Michelacci (2003) Glazer, Stetz and Izso (2004), Reyhanch, Sandraddin and Mohammad (2012), and Nighal (2012) found that under conditions of equivalent external stress, Type A employees tend to report more physical and emotional strain than Type B employees.

Self concept is another determinant of stress. Stress arises when one perceives an imbalance between the challenges that face him and the resources he has to meet them. When one is in a demanding situation and is unsure of his ability to cope with it or when an opportunity arises that he is not sure he can take advantage of, a major stress results. The balance or imbalance is not between the actual demand and capability, but between one's evaluation of the challenge and his capacity to meet it. Self concept is associated with stress.

Self–concepts are images people have about themselves and this perception of self is an important factor in evaluation of a situation as stressful or otherwise. A fundamental premise of Rational Emotive Therapy (and many other forms of cognitive - behaviour therapy) states that stressful conditions do not exist in their own right but vary significantly in relation to the perceptions and cognitions of those who react to these conditions. Self-concept embraces self–esteem, self-image and self–confidence. Research studies such as Popoola and Ilugbo (2005), Kokkinos (2007), show that self–concept has a pervasive influence on the perceptions of stress and distress.

Anxiety is an emotion that has far reaching effects on human personality and behaviour. When the pressures and strains of life seemed almost too much for a person, anxiety sets in. The psychological experience of anxiety and the physiological states of stress are two powerful influences on human behaviour. People plagued by anxiety may be irritable and quickly

moved to anger. They tend to have wide swings of mood and their behaviour is often unpredictable and they are vulnerable to stress (Lipp 2004). One of the main stress prognostics may be anxiety, apprehension deflagrated by something the individual understands as a threat to his or her integrity (Terra, 2010). Anxiety is one of the affective components from the stress processes which ends up occurring when the individual's response capacity is exceeded. (Terra, 2010). Kurebayashi, Prado and Silva (2012) found that correlation between levels of stress and anxiety were positive. The four variables discussed above are high achievement drive, competitive tendency, anxiety and self-concept.

The Problem

A state of well–being is a necessary condition for human productivity and efficiency. Anyone who has worked in a helping profession such as teaching will appreciate how stressful such professions can be. Everyday interactions with students can trigger the experience of stress in teachers. The teaching profession is one of the helping professions in which practitioners are normally committed to giving their best for the welfare of those entrusted in their care. While this commitment is laudable, the consequences can be detrimental when the job demands overshadow the individual's coping resources, as well as the job rewards, thus leaving practitioner feeling unhappy and unable to perform well.

Teachers' occupational stress may lead to severe negative consequences such as job absenteeism, teacher turn-over, reduced output and health problem. Stress can have detrimental effects on both the individual and the organization. Exposure to chronic stress can cause teachers to experience symptoms of burnout. It has also been noted that prolonged unresolved stress is associated with psychosomatic illnesses. They include asthma, ulcers, hypertension, strokes, heart attack (Heath 2008).

In order to do something positive about occupational stress among teachers it is important to identify personality traits that predict stress among teachers. The researchers therefore want to ascertain whether psychological variables such as achievement drive, competitive tendency anxiety and self–concept are associated with stress.

Research Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses guided the study.
1. Teachers with a high achievement drive do not exhibit a significantly higher level of stress than those with a low achievement drive.

2. Teachers with a high competitive tendency do not exhibit a significantly higher level of stress than those with a low competitive tendency.
3. There is no significant difference between teachers with a high level of anxiety and those with a low level of anxiety in their level of stress exhibition.
4. Self–concept does not significantly influence the level of stress exhibited by teachers.

Methodology

The type of research design used in this study is the descriptive survey design. This type of research attempts to describe such things as possible behaviour, attitudes, values and characteristics. A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are (Mmaduakonam, 2004).

The population of the study covered the entire 6, 036 teachers in 265 public secondary schools in six education zones in Anambra state.

A sample of 1,000 teachers was drawn. This was made of 450 male and 550 female teachers. The sample was drawn from the six education zones in the state as follows: Awka zone 277 teachers, Nnewi zone 149 teachers, Aguata zone 131 teachers, Ogidi zone 133 teacher, Onitsha zone 260 teachers, Otuocha zone, 50 teachers. The sample was through multi-stage sampling technique.

The instrument used in the study was a structured questionnaire – Personality Traits and stress – PTS developed by the researchers after a careful and critical identification of the possible factors that could be associated with stress psychologically as highlighted by earlier researchers such as Akinboye and Adeyemo (2002), Riolli and Savicki (2003), Readeke and Smith (2004), and Van–Dierendoncis (2005). The PTS consisted of two sections, the first section dealt with demographic data of the respondents such as name of school and education zone. The second section was a 30 – item index of stress level and job – related stress with the items that are structured. The respondents were requested to indicate the degree to which they agree with the items along the levels of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with assigned values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 points respectively. The 30 – item instrument was divided into sub–scales. Items 1 – 10 were used to ask questions on the level of stress experienced by teachers. Items 11 – 15 elicited information on achievement drive; 16 – 20 on competitive tendency; 21 – 25 on the level of anxiety and 26 – 30 on self concept.

The instrument was validated by two experts in educational psychology and two in measurement and evaluation. Feedback was given regarding question clarity, comprehensiveness and acceptability. All their

corrections were effected in the final version of the instrument. The reliability of the same instrument was established by the use of split half method of reliability in which all the scores of the even–numbered items and those of odd–numbered items were correlated with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A reliability co-efficient of .80 was obtained for level of stress items 1-10. A reliability co-efficient of .75 was obtained for competitive tendency items 11-15; a reliability co-efficient of .80 was obtained for anxiety level items 16-20; a reliability co-efficient of .82 was obtained for anxiety level items 21-25 while a reliability co-efficient of .85 was obtained for self-concept items 26-30.

The items were scored as follows = Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, Strongly Disagree 1 point. This format was for positive statements while reverse was the case for negative statements (items) the maximum score for level of stress was 40. While achievement drive, competitive tendency, anxiety level and self-concept with 5 items each measured personality traits. The maximum score for each personality trait was 20. Those that scored above 10 were classified as high while those that scored below 10 were classified.

The data collected were analyzed using t–test to test the hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Out of the 1,100 copies of questionnaires distributed, 1, 050 were retrieved but only 1,000 were found adequate for analysis. The results of data analysis are presented in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Hypothesis 1: t-test comparison of stress scores of teachers with high and low achievement drive.

Achievement Drive	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	Critical
High	580	38.6	10.68		8.89	
				998	8.89	1.96
Low	420	33.3	9.14			
* P< 0.05						

Table I shows that the calculated t–value 8.89 was greater than the critical t–value at 0.05 level with 998 degree of freedom. Hence, the result was significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. The table indicates that teachers with a high achievement drive exhibit a significantly a higher level of stress ($\overline{X}$ 38.6) than those with a low achievement drive ($\overline{X}$ 33.3). This implies that the higher the achievement drive of teachers, the higher their exhibition of stress. Also the lower their achievement drive, the lower their level of stress.

Hypothesis 2: t-test comparison of stress scores of teachers with high and low competitive tendency.

Table 2 t-test comparison of stress scores of teachers with high and low competitive tendency.

Competitive Tendency	N	$\overline{\text{X}}$	SD	df	t-cal	Critical
High	356	38.5	9.97			
				998	5.74	1.96
Low	644	34.91	8.55			
* P < 0.05						

Table 2 shows that the calculated t–value 5.74 is higher than the critical t–value 1.96. Hence, the result was significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. The result therefore means that teachers with high competitive tendency exhibit a significantly higher level of stress ($\overline{\text{X}}$ 38.5) than those with a low competitive tendency ($\overline{\text{X}}$ 34.91). This implies that the higher the competitive tendency, the higher the level of stress.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between teachers with a high level of anxiety and those with a low level of anxiety in their level of stress exhibition.

Table 3: t-test comparison of stress scores of teachers with high and low level of anxiety.

Level of Anxiety	N	$\overline{\text{X}}$	SD	df	t-cal	Critical
High	335	36.92	10.11			
				998	5.8	1.96
Low	645	33.01	9.41			
* P > 0.05						

Table 3 shows that the calculated t–value 5.88 was greater than the critical t–value at 0.05 level with 998 degree of freedom. Hence, the result was significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore means that the teachers with a high level of anxiety show a significantly higher level of stress ($\overline{\text{X}}$ 36.92), than those with a low level of anxiety ($\overline{\text{X}}$ 33.01). This implies that high anxious teachers exhibit higher level of stress than low anxious teachers.

Hypothesis 4: Self–concept does not significantly influence the level of stress exhibited by teachers.

Table 4: t-test comparison of stress scores of teachers with low and high self-concept.

Self -Concept Exhibition	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	Critical
Low	410	34.08	9.67			
				998	15.26	1.96
High	590	28.45	9.15			
* P < 0.05						

Table 4 shows that the calculated t–value 15.26 was greater than the critical t–value 1.96. Hence, the result was significant and the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicates that teachers with low self–concept exhibit a higher level of stress ($\overline{X}$ 34.08) than those with a high self – concept ($\overline{X}$ 28.45). This implies that teachers with a low self–concept are more vulnerable to stress than teachers with a high self–concept.

Discussion of Results

The findings from the tested hypotheses one and two reveal that high achievement drive and high competitive tendency which characterize people with Type A Behaviour Pattern (TABP) make them vulnerable to stress. The study revealed that teachers with a high achievement drive exhibit a significantly higher level of stress than those with a low achievement drive. This finding disagrees with that of Popoola and Ilugbo (2010) who found that there is no significant relationship between stress and achievement motivation among female teachers in Osun State. This might be because their study consisted of only female teachers.

When a teacher is very ambitious and is always striving to achieve as much as possible, such a teacher is bound to live under great pressure which is stressful. A teacher who is engaged in a never–ending struggle to achieve as much as possible in the shortest period of time is never satisfied with past accomplishments. Such a teacher is in a whirlwind of activity. It follows readily, then, that this behaviour predisposition may be a potent conditioning variable, likely to render teaching environment stressors into obvious stressful experience.

Competitive tendency is another trait manifested by individuals with Type A Behaviour Pattern (TABP). The result of the study also revealed that teachers with a high competitive tendency exhibit a significantly higher level of stress than those with a low competitive tendency. Rosenman (1991) found Type A extremes of competitiveness, striving for achievement, aggressive, impatience and restless, explosive of speech, feelings of being under pressure of time and under challenge of responsibility. Research studies by Jekins (1990), Sirigatti and Michelacci (2003), Glazer, Stetz and Izso (2004), Reyhanch, Sandraddin and Mohammad (2012), and Nighal (2012), found that under conditions of equivalent external stress, Type A

employees tend to report more physical and emotional strain than Type B employees. Also Nighat (2012), found a significant relationship between Type A behaviour and work–family conflict.

Another finding is that teachers with a high level of anxiety show a significantly higher level of stress than those with a low level of anxiety. This finding agrees with that of Kurebayashi, Prado and Silva (2012) who found positive correlation between stress and anxiety levels in nursing students. It is noteworthy that most of the anxiety provoking events are also stressful. Anxiety sets in when the pressures and strains of life seem almost too much for a person. People plagued by anxiety may be irritable and quickly moved to anger. They tend to have wide swings of mood and their behaviour is often unpredictable. Infact, they are under stress.

Finally, the study revealed that teachers with low self–concept exhibit a higher level of stress than teachers with high self–concept. This finding agrees with Kokkinos (2007) who found that primary school teachers who have low self–concept are more vulnerable to stress than teachers with high self–concept. However, the finding disagrees with that of Popoola and Ilugbo (2005) who found that correlation between stress and self–concept is not significant among primary school female teachers in Osun state. As pointed out earlier Popoola and Ilugbo sampled only female teachers and that might be responsible for the disagreement. Self–concept represents a set of beliefs and feelings that people have about their capabilities. It is the individual's awareness of his/her potentialities and limitations and evaluation of them. Stress arises when a teacher perceives an imbalance between the challenges that face him and the resources he has to meet them. The balance or imbalance is not between actual demand and capability, but between our evaluation of the challenge and our capacity to meet it. This is a function of self–concept.

Conclusion

On the basis of these findings, it is concluded that psychological variables such as high achievement drive, competitive tendency, high level of anxiety and low self–concept make teachers vulnerable to stress.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made. Teachers should be exposed to stress management/coping techniques. This can be done through seminars or workshop. Though stress is inevitable, too much and prolonged stress can lead to psychological or mental disorder. Counselling sessions should be organized for teachers with a high compulsive striving to achieve much in less time and those with a high competitive tendency. Through the use of Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) they should be made to understand how their irrational thoughts and feelings provide both precipitating and predisposing factors to stressful life.

They should be led to understand the harm their self–inflicted stress might cause their health.

References:
Akinboye, J. O., & Adeyemo, D. A. (2002). *Stress at home and workplace.* Ibadan: Stirliorg Horden Publishers.
Auerbach, S. & Eramling S. E. (2006). *Stress.* Redmond, W.A. Microsoft Cooperation.
Evers, W; Tomic, W; & Brouwers, A. (2005). Dres equity sensitivity moderate the relationship between self–efficacy beliefs and teacher burnout? *Representative Research in Social Psychology, 25*, 35 – 46.
Gelvin, A. M. (2007). Identifying the types of student and teacher behaviours associated with teacher stress. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23* (5), 624 – 640.
Glazer, S. Stetz, I. & Izso, L. (2004). Effective personality on subjective stress: A cultural analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences,* 37, 645 – 658.
Heat, M. D. (2008. *What is stress?* University of Massachusetts Medical School Reduction Programme.
Jekins, C.D. (1991). Recent evidence supporting psychological social risk factors for coronary heart disease. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 294, 1033 – 1038.
Kokkinos, C. M. (2007). Job stressors, personality and burnout in primary school teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *77*(1), 229 – 243.
Kokkinos, C. M., Panayiotou, G. & Dazoglou A. M. (2005). Correlates of teacher appraisal of students' behaviour. *Psychology in the Schools,* 42, 79 – 89.
Kurebayashi, L. F. S; Prado M. J. & Silva M. J. (2012). Correlations between stress and anxiety levels in nursing students. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*. *2* (3) 128 – 134.
Kyriacov, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educ. Rev 53* 27 – 35.
Lipp M. E. N. (2004). *Stress on Brasil*: Pesquisns avancadas. Papirus.
Mmaduakonam, A. E. (2004). *Research in education.* Onitsha: West and Solomon.
Night, S. (2004). Type A behaviour pattern and work – family conflict in professional women. *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*: *9* (3) 70 – 74.
Popoola, B. I. & Ilugbo, E. A. (2010). Personality traits as predictors of stress among female teachers in Osun state teaching service. *Edo Journal of Counselling* 3(2). 173 – 188.

Raedeke, T. D., & Smith, A. L. (2004). Coping resources and athlete burnout: An examination of stress mediated moderation hypotheses. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology. 26*, 525 – 541.

Reghaneh, M., Sadraddin S. & Mohammad N. (2012). Determine the Type A personality (behaviour pattern) in educational managers of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research* 9125 – 9131.

Riolli, L., & Savicki, V. (2003). Optimism and coping as moderators of the relation between work resources and burnout in information service workers. *International Journal of Stress Management, 10*, 235 – 252.

Rosenman, R. M. (1991). Type A behaviour pattern and coronary heart disease: The hostility factor. *Stress Medicine 7* (4), 245 – 253.

Santrock, J. W. (2001). *Child development* 8th Edition. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Sirigatt S., & Michelacci R. (2003). The effect of personality factors upon job satisfaction and occupational stress. *European Health Psychology*. 146.

Surinder, K. (2011). Comparative study of occupational stress among teachers of private and government schools in relation to their age, gender and teaching experiences. *International Journal of Educational Planning and Administration 1* (2) 151 – 160.

Terra, F. S. (2010). *Avaliacao da ansiedade, depressao e autoestima em docents d Enfermagem d Uniesidades Publica e Privada*. (theses). Ribetra Preto: Egcola de Enfermagem de Rebein'ao Preto de Universidadede Sao Paulo.

Van Dieredonck, D. (2005). Burnout prevention through personal growth. *International Journal of Stress Management 12*, 62 – 77.