

Principal Leadership Styles and Emotional Intelligence as Predictors of Occupational Stress among Secondary School Teachers in Rivers State

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Abstract

This study investigated principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence as predictors of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. This study was guided by three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational research design while the population for the study was 11,258 secondary school teachers in Rivers state. A sample of 411 respondents was used for the study. The instruments used for the study were, Principal Leadership Styles Inventory (PLSI), Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Occupational Stress Scale (OSS). The instruments were validated by three experts in Educational Psychology and also Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Port Harcourt. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, Cronbach alpha (α) statistics was used for the three instruments. The coefficient indices of 0.78, 0.88 and 0.67 were obtained for the principal leadership styles, emotional intelligence and occupational stress respectively. Simple regression and multiple regression were used to analyze the data that were generated. Results revealed that principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence independently and collectively predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. Based on the finding, it was recommended that the school principals and government should provide all the necessary facilities that would help ease stress among teachers in order to enhance their productivity.

Keywords: **Principal Leadership Styles, Emotional Intelligence, Occupational Stress, Teachers.**

Introduction

The phenomenon of occupational stress is becoming increasingly globalized and affects all countries and all professions including the teaching profession. Teaching profession has traditionally been regarded as low stress occupation although in recent time teachers in the profession seem to face more challenges globally. With this, various researches have been carried out to ascertain whether stress is especially prevalent among teachers in the teaching profession (Cooper & Marshall, 2018). Further surveys conducted worldwide revealed widespread concern about the effects of stress on teachers' sense of well-being and their willingness to stay in the profession. Dunham as cited in Litt and Turk (2019) study noted

that teachers appear to perceive their jobs as more stressful than other comparable professionals. According to Saunders and Watkins (2020) study, job-related stress has diminished the satisfaction many teachers suppose to derive from their work, and also caused many teachers to choose alternative careers. This could be said to have lessened the energy and creativity that outstanding teachers bring into their classrooms. With this, the teaching job with its demanding nature, together with high expectations for learners' outcomes and administrative responsibilities, paves way to stress. As teaching is a human service profession, stress on teachers in the profession which is referred to as occupational stress is considerable and may have far-reaching consequences on the entire education system.

Occupational stress is the stress from a job irrespective of the type of employment. Ekechukwu and Isiguzo as cited in Isiguzo and Amaeze (2022) described stress as a psychological reaction due to the perception of aversive situation which can be hazardous to one's health. In line with this, Ediagbonya (2013) defined occupational stress is the condition that results when a person's and environmental transactions in his workplace lead the individual to perceive a discrepancy, whether real or imagined between the demand of a situation and the resource of the person's biological and social system. Under this condition, an individual experiences challenges in the physical or emotional well-being which is overwhelming to his coping capacity. Campbell (2015) also defined it as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them in their workplaces. This form of stress occurs when an employer is confronted by a situation that the individual perceives as overwhelming and cannot cope up with in his workplace. This made Cotton and Hart (2013) to report that occupational stress is a growing problem worldwide which has caused substantial loss both to employees and organizations. Furthermore, Prasad et al. (2020) identified several factors like employee communication, lack of supervision, employee emotions, organizational environment and job satisfaction that affect employee performance and occupational stress. In the secondary schools just like at other levels of education in Nigeria, and the area of study in particular, the health and productivity of teachers are often influenced by many of these factors which relate so much with the leadership styles in place. However, this study focused on only principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence as predictors of occupational stress.

Leadership styles refer to the behavioural approach employed by leaders to influence, motivate, and direct their followers. Romanowska et al. (2013) noted that leadership has an important role to play in any organization because it is associated with a duty to assume responsibility, but bad leadership may bring dis-tress for every member who is affected by it.

In order to ensure the organization runs smoothly and successfully, it requires the right leader and the right leadership style to face the unique challenges which lead to the organization's success. According to Okumber as cited in Sarwar et al. (2022) leadership style is described as a behaviour used by a leader to motivate subordinates to achieve the objectives of the organization. This then means that leadership is not only an act of influencing others to carry out the organizational goal to the desire of the leader, but it also provides the leader with the opportunity of controlling others in the organization. Therefore leadership style could be said to consist of the behavioural approaches which leaders employ to enable them to guide and manage their followers in a group. It determines how leaders implement plans and strategies to accomplish given objectives while accounting for stakeholder expectations and the wellbeing and soundness of their team. An effective teacher could be stressed out if the principal's leadership style is in conflict with the tasks or role of the teacher. If the principal's leadership style is appropriate, the way and manner the principal disciplines his staff, his human relation and feeling, his consideration to his members of staff, his inspiration to staff, his way of handling staff welfare and staff development together with other principal's effective activity are likely to affect the teachers negatively. With this, the school principal nurtures the work environment through the application of the styles of leadership. Some of these leadership styles commonly employed by principals in secondary schools which so much influence teachers' job delivery and their stress levels include the autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership and laissez-faire leadership. They are discussed as follows;

Autocratic style of leadership is an old leadership style whereby a leader takes independent decision and at the same time expects the subordinates to comply. According to Kagwiria as cited in Adegboyega and Awolusi (2021), in this style of leadership power largely revolves in the hands of the leader who makes all decisions, provides direction and assigns tasks to the subordinates. Ajayi (2019) referred to the leader as autocratic self-defense leader who insists things be done his own way without recourse to the organization laid down pattern. Although this style of leadership makes a leader to give clear decisions, its autocratic nature enhances autonomy and initiative (Tanko et al., 2024). Some other advantages of this leadership style are that activities are usually performed quickly and less time is spent on discussion; stress is reduced due to increased control and there can be a more productive group, while the leader is watching as a supreme figure (Adegboyega & Awolusi, 2021). However, an autocratic leadership style is disadvantageous as group members do not take part in decision making, cannot develop their skills and knowledge, and so dependent on the leader. Although

this leadership style could be said to be successful in providing strong motivation for the leader, it can pave way to one feeling dissatisfied and probably cause work stress for employees. This is in line with Erskine and Georgion (2023) study which indicated that autocratic among some other styles is detrimental to health of employees

Democratic leadership style is another style that influences principal leadership in secondary schools. It can motivate “humanness,” accommodate “teamwork” and encourage “participation” of workers. The democratic leadership is a participative type leadership used by leaders to involve employees in the managerial task freely, giving guidance and support. Dauda et al. (2023) noted that this type of leadership style strives to gain consensus through collaboration. Begley and Zaretsky as cited in Dauda et al. (2023) stated that this type of leadership is appreciated by many education stakeholders due to the fact that they are given freedom to decision making. The style also adheres to ethical standards of the leadership as all stakeholders feel more important and their output appreciated. This makes it most convenient for employees to present their ideas or opinions freely in their organisation and with this feel motivated and creative. It enhances collaboration, engagement and creativity (Cherry, 2019). The advantages of this style are that every group member has a say, and there is a transfer of power from the leader to subordinates, which can allow group members to develop their knowledge and skills. The style also enables leaders to create a suitable working environment and facilitate a free flow of ideas in the organisation. However, this can reduce rates of employee turnover. It should be noted that so much time is spent on discussions and no major decisions are made by the leader alone. Sometimes, the slow process of taking decisions can lead to opportunities being missed or risks being avoided when it may be too late.

Laissez-fair style is another style of leadership. Laissez-faire is a French word associated with ‘anything goes’. Adegboyega and Awolisi (2021) referred it as a delegative leadership whereby the leader has no clear goal and gives no professional leadership to his group. The style gives complete freedom to followers to make decisions regarding any issue in the organisation and to solve problems on their own (Chowdhury, 2014). Obi (2013) argued that such style predispose to unproductive activities very often and could be detrimental to school welfare. Indeed, it should be known that working on different activities and making various decisions on different issues without a leader in-charge may lead to low effectiveness. Researchers have found that persons under this type of leadership are less productive than those under autocratic or democratic leadership. This type of leadership can be successful where members of the group are highly trained in their own areas of proficiency, yet it has

numerous disadvantages. This style provides group members with an opportunity to be effective if they work jointly in terms of the ownership and accountability it bestows on members. A major disadvantage of a laissez-faire style is that this style could leave group members doing the wrong thing without realising it. This can encourage less personal growth. In addition to the basic leadership styles introduced above, the four path-goal leadership styles are discussed next.

Transactional leadership style according to Thomas (2017) deals with rewards and punishments. It involves the knowledge, attitude and behaviour regarding the objectives of an organization. It is a common leadership style used in different levels of education. A transactional principal's primary goals are order and structure in the workplace. Under a transactional principal, self-motivated teacher tend to be most successful because the principal would have created a structured, rigid environment where they use clear rewards and punishments to drive teachers' performance. This leadership style also consists of roles, expectations and performance objectives. Setiawan as cited in Tanko et al. (2024) noted that leaders who use this transactional style exchange with employees by rewarding them for achieving goals and consequences for under-performance. The rigid nature of this type of leadership can lead to employee's feeling of stress, disengagement and stunted personal growth of employees.

Transformational leadership style is the best among all the recognized leadership styles in administration. Transformational leadership is perhaps the most focused on the principal's personality because the principal explores all his potential to provide quality leadership to the teachers. With this type of principal, teachers are guided by a clearly defined vision for success, which may be the principal's personal vision or the school's mission statement. According to Northeastern University (2016), this kind of leadership inspires innovation and generally creates a positive workplace culture. Principals as leaders of the respective secondary schools shape the teaching and learning environment with a direct impact on teachers' job satisfaction and stress levels. Yusup and Maulani (2023) study on the influence of transformational leadership on employee motivation revealed among others that this leadership style encourages and support employee development, both in terms of upskilling and personal wellbeing. This increases employee motivation and performance, thereby warding off stress on job. This implies that the use of transformational leadership can help in reducing the amount of stress that teachers experience.

Looking at these leadership styles, the study of Arifin (2022) showed that leadership styles had a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work stress with an

indication of a significant indirect effect. This strengthens the research from Ahmed et al. as cited in George et al. (2017) but weakens the research of Abasi as cited in George et al., (2017). Erskine and Georgion (2023) in their review of effects of leadership styles on multiple employees revealed that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles are detrimental to health of employees while transformational is more relational leadership form that has consistent rewards. Abbas (2017) study in moderating impact of transformational and laissez-faire leadership on job stress and health relationship revealed that transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles significantly moderate the relationship between stressors and health. Yuki as cited in Hoque and Raya (2023) revealed that teachers who work under democratic leadership express better level of job satisfaction as well as lower levels of stress.

Emotional intelligence is another crucial factor which influences occupational stress. The concept refers to the ability of expressing feeling, expressing understanding, and sentiment regulation (Thomas, 2017). Bar – On cited in Miriogu and Ugwoji (2020) noted that emotional intelligence is an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills which influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures. This model of emotional intelligence deals with potential for performance and success rather than performance or success itself. It further considered process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented. Salovey and Mayer as cited in Hanior et al. (2023) defined emotional intelligence as that which encompasses the ability to monitor one's own as well as other's mood and emotions, to differentiate between thinking and actions. This refers to the ability to comprehend and control one's feelings in order to improve both one's own life and the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence is a predictor of leadership ability through increasing focus on studying the ability to understand and manage men and women and to act wisely in human relations. High emotional intelligence individuals can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings, and manage emotions better than others. Oginska-Bulik (2015) held that the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in the workplace assists employees in addressing occupational stress and retaining psychological health. An employee with high emotional intelligence can deal with work environment stress. However, recent studies have argued that such organizationally expected emotions are closely related to occupational stress. Slaski and Cartwright (2018) found that managers high in emotional intelligence revealed less subjective stress and had better physical and psychological well-being. Saddam (2018) also found that emotional intelligence competencies have the profound impact on stress as the psychological problems of employees who sought solutions in the light of emotional intelligence

competencies had positive and strong impact on stress. Onwubiko (2020) study which sought to ascertain whether emotional intelligence and self-esteem predict social adjustment indicates that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and positive social adjustment. Therefore, emotional intelligence could be an important determinant factor for teachers' health as teachers with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to confront stress and boast of positive relationship, adapting to problematic conditions. In the same vein, those principals with strong emotional intelligence can create a very supportive school climate, which tend to reduce stress among teachers. This is supported with Mohammad et al. (2019) study which revealed that the correlation of emotional intelligence and occupational stress is significant.

With the explanation above, principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence (EI) have come up as significant determinants of occupational stress among teachers. Leadership styles such as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire influence how principals manage their staff, resolve conflicts and motivate teachers. Effective leadership can foster a supportive work environment whereas ineffective leadership may exacerbate stress. In the same vein, emotional intelligence with its components of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, has been recognized as an essential factor in the management of work stress. Those principals who are better equipped to understand and take care of the emotional needs of themselves and other staff members create a more positive and resilient work culture. It is based on the above assertion that the researchers were motivated to investigate the principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence as determinants of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Statement of the problem

Occupational stress among teachers in the secondary schools today has attracted so much concern globally as it has left negative impacts on teachers' job performance, health and general well-being. Despite the government efforts in terms of provision of human and non-human resources to facilitate effective teaching and learning in the schools such as laboratory equipment, digital learning device, instructional materials, electricity, building, computers, comfortable offices and constant recruitment of manpower to reduce work load and others, there is still alarming rate of stress among secondary school teachers in Nigeria especially in Rivers State. Teachers in the secondary schools especially those in Rivers State Nigeria face increasing level of occupational stress. This could be attributed to the teachers' incessant involvement in teaching and learning activities to ensure quality manpower driven society. These teachers face the pressures from workload, students' behaviours, administrative

demands together with poor relationship in work place and their private life activities among others. While these factors contribute to high occupational stress levels among the teachers, leadership styles of the school principals has been identified as critical influences. Many of the secondary school principals may not have the knowledge of how their leadership approach affects teachers' emotional intelligence and psychological well being. In addition, the variations in the emotional intelligence levels among the principals may have an influence on the teachers coping with stress while in school. Therefore, there exists a gap in understanding these two variables- leadership styles and emotional intelligence and how they work together to determine occupational stress among these teachers in the secondary schools. This study therefore, aimed to bridge this gap by investigating the extent to which principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence predict occupational stress among teachers in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the extent to which principal leadership styles determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State
2. To discover the extent to which emotional intelligence determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State
3. To find out how principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence jointly determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Research questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do principal leadership styles determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does emotional intelligence determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?
3. To what extent do principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence jointly determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Principal leadership styles do not significantly determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.
2. Emotional intelligence does not significantly determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

3. Principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence do not significantly jointly determine occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Methodology

The design for this study is a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised all the 11,258 secondary school teachers in the 278 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State; 4,127 males and 7,131 females. A sample of 400 respondents was used for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample size. In the first stage, one local government was randomly selected from each of the three senatorial zones in the state, Eleme L.G.A from Rivers South East, Obio/Akpor from Rivers East and Ahoada East L.G.A from Rivers West. In the second stage, stratified random sampling technique was used to select five secondary schools from each Local Government Areas. This gave 15 senior secondary schools. At the third stage, simple random sampling technique was used for the purpose of selecting 26 teachers from each school. Three instruments used for the study were Principal Leadership Styles Inventory (PLSI), Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Occupational Stress Scale (OSS). For the instruments, face, content and construct validities were conducted by giving copies of the instrument three experts in the area of Psychology, Educational Measurement and Evaluation. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, Cronbach alpha technique was adopted and the coefficients indices obtained were 0.78, 0.88 and 0.67 for leadership styles, emotional intelligence and occupation stress respectively. The instruments were administered directly to the teachers in their respective schools by the researcher with the help of two research assistants. The analyses were done using simple and multiple regression were used to answer the research questions while hypotheses were as well tested with Beta Alpha coefficient associated with simple regression and ANOVA associated with multiple regression. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do principal leadership styles predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 1: Principal leadership styles do not significantly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

To answer research question 1, the standardized partial coefficient otherwise known as regression coefficient (beta) was employed. In testing the corresponding null hypothesis t-test associated with the multiple regression was employed. The results obtained are displayed together in table 1 below.

Table 1: Multiple Regression coefficient of the joint prediction of Principal Leadership Styles on Occupational Stress

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.084	3.308		5.466	.000
	Autocratic Leadership Style	.179	.088	.101	2.033	.043
	Democratic Leadership Style	.058	.100	.028	.577	.564
	Lazier-affair Leadership Style	.028	.095	.014	.289	.772
	Transactional Leadership Style	-.031	.095	-.016	-.325	.746
	Transformation Leadership Style	.308	.087	.173	3.528	.000

Table 1 reveals that the unstandardized partial regression coefficient denoted as B obtained are 18.084 for constant, .179 for autocratic leadership style, 0.058 for democratic leadership style, 0.028, for lazier-affair leadership style, -.031 for transactional leadership and 0.308 for transformational leadership style. Since the B coefficient, is the measure of the shape of the regression line that determines the amount of changes in the occupational stress dependent variable for every unit change in the independent variable so that moved equation to be used in relating to occupational stress using the dimensions of E.I is $Y = 18.084 - .179x_1 + 0.058x_2 + 0.028x_3 + -.031x_4 + 0.308x_5$ where Y_1 is the relationship value of occupational stress while X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4 and X_5 represent any given value, on autocratic, democratic, lazier-affair, transactional and transformational leadership styles respectively.

It is also shown in table 1 that relative relationship of each dimension of E.I (Beta) obtained are .101, .028, .014, -.016 and .173 respectively for autocratic, democratic, lazier-affair, transactional and transformational leadership styles, considering their values, It is obvious that transformational leadership style had the greater impact followed by the autocratic, democratic, lazier affair and then transactional leadership styles which had inverse impact. Considering their associated t-value and their corresponding p-values, it could be deduced that the t-values for autocratic and transformational leadership styles yielded significant prediction of occupational stress while democratic, lazier-affair and transactional leadership styles do not significantly predict occupational stress among teachers.

Research Question 2: To what extent does emotional intelligence predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence does not significantly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

To answer research question 2, the standardized partial coefficient otherwise known as regression coefficient (beta) was employed. In testing the corresponding null hypothesis t-test associated with the multiple regression was employed. The results obtained are displayed together in the same table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression coefficient of the joint prediction of E.I dimensions on occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State

Explainable	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized Coefficients			
Variables	B	Std error	Beta	T	P-value
Constant	3.233	2.318		1.395	.164
Self-awareness	.376	.078	.183	4.793	.000
Self-management	.012	.076	.006	.159	.874
Social awareness	-.035	.083	-.016	-.422	.673
R/Management	.619	.038	.621	16.311	.000

Table 2 reveals that the unstandardized partial regression coefficient denoted as B obtained are 3.233 for constant, .376 for self-awareness, 0.012 for self-management, -.035, for social awareness and , 0.617 for relationship management. It is also shown in table 4.5 that relative relationship of each dimension of E.I (Beta) obtained are 0.183, 0.006, -0.16 and 0.621 respectively for self-awareness self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, considering their values, It is obvious that relationship management had the greater impact followed by the social awareness, self-awareness and then self-management which had inverse impact.

Considering their associated t-value and their corresponding p-values, it could be deduced that the t-values for social-awareness and relationship management yielded significant prediction on occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. This is because their probability levels were all less than that of the chosen alpha level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) which is greater 0.05 ($P > 0.05$), while self-awareness and self-management made an insignificant inverse prediction on occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State in Delta State.

Research Question 3: To what extent do principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence jointly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

In providing the answer to research question three, multiple linear regression was used to analyze the scores obtained from respondents on principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence as it jointly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. Thereafter, the regression coefficient obtained was subjected to ANOVA associated with multiple regression. The obtained results to the research question and hypothesis are summarized in table below.

Table 3: Summary of multiple regression of the joint prediction of occupational stress by principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence

R	R²	Adj.R²	Std error of the estimate
.652a	.425	.407	5.72751

The answer to research question seven as shown in table 3 indicated that a multiple regression coefficient of 0.652 was obtained on principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence as it jointly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State, with the coefficient of determination, R^2 , of 0.425, and an adjusted R^2 of 0.407. From the R^2 value of 0.425, it therefore suggest that 42.5% of the variations in occupational stress among secondary school teachers can be attributed and explained by the principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence while the remaining 57.5% can be caused by other variables such home location, work load etc.

Hypothesis 3: Principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence do not significantly jointly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression coefficient of principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence as it jointly predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9637.928	10	803.161	24.483	.000 ^b
Residual	13056.160	400	32.804		
Total	22694.088	410			

Furthermore, in testing the corresponding null hypotheses, the result indicated that an F-value of 24.48 was obtained at 10 and 400 degrees of freedom with an associated p-value of 0.000. Since the obtained p-value was less than 0.05, it therefore indicates that principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence jointly do predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

Discussion

The result revealed in table one that transformational leadership style had the greater impact followed by the autocratic, democratic, laissez faire and then transactional leadership styles which had inverse impact. It means that as the score respondents on transformational leadership styles increases, there is corresponding decrease in occupational stress and vice versa. This result is not surprising to the researchers because transformational leadership is a leadership where a leader works with team or followers beyond their immediate self-interests to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through influence, inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group; This change in self-interests elevates the follower's levels of maturity and ideals, as well as their concerns for the achievement, and when subordinate receives this kind of leadership style it helps them to ease stress in their work place.

The result from this study is similar to that obtained by the study of Arifin (2022) which showed that leadership styles had a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work stress with an indication of a significant indirect effect. Erskine and Georgion (2023), Yusup and Maulani (2023) revealed in their respective studies that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles are detrimental to health of employees while transformational is more relational leadership form that has consistent rewards. In addition, Abbas (2017) study in moderating impact of transformational and laissez-faire leadership on job stress and health relationship revealed that transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles significantly moderate the relationship between stressors and health. Yuki as cited in Hoque and Raya (2023) revealed that teachers who work under democratic leadership express better level of job satisfaction as well as lower levels of stress. Therefore, a leader has to be careful in determining the leadership style to use in order not to stress employees.

From the result in table two, it was shown that social-awareness and relationship management yielded significant prediction on occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. This result means that teachers who scored high in the section of social-awareness also scored low in occupational stress while those who scored low in social awareness also scored high in occupational stress. This result is not surprising to the

researchers because social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is also the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

This result corroborates to that obtained by many researches which revealed the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. The outcome of the study of Bar-on et al. as cited in Singh and Chaturvedi (2023) indicates that emotional intelligence predicts and supports success in the workplace. It facilitates positive interpersonal relationships, through boosting problem –solving ability and finding effective intervention strategies to deal with work stress. The finding is also in agreement with that of Onwubiko (2022) which revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and stress. It should be noted that Chujor and Ezems-Amadi (2017) study revealed that relationship management is significant predictor of occupational stress while social awareness may not be as directly linked although it can still play a role in reducing stress by fostering other factors such as social support from colleagues and management, however it can act as a buffer against stress.

The results from hypothesis three revealed that principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence jointly do predict occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State. The finding could be related to Olukunle et al. (2024) study which revealed that a team leader's emotional intelligence strongly impacts the work team's well-being as the work climate becomes stressful. A look at the link of emotional competencies with leadership behaviours and organizational performance shows that due to the fact that some leaders directly influence their employees, it exposes how a team leader's emotional intelligence can influence the development of emotionally competent group norms in his or her team.

Conclusion

The results on the predictors of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State showed that principal leadership styles and emotional intelligence exhibited a substantial effect on occupational stress. These are relevant information that can be drawn from the results and prior studies in relation to the level of occupational stress experienced and its relationship to the performance of employee. However, stress has many effects on the performance and activities of those in the teaching profession. Teachers in the secondary schools under the influence of nervous stress develop certain mental states and perform actions that are directly reflected in the activities and performance of the organization. In

addition to these predictors of occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Rivers State, severe stress causes uncertainty in goals achievement.

Recommendations

1. Government through the Ministry of Education should train the principals in secondary schools on transformational leadership style, to ensure a conducive physical environment that is stress free for the teachers to enhance productivity in their jobs.
2. Short-term training courses should be scheduled and designed based on the concepts of emotional intelligence for teachers, particularly by clinicians.
3. There is need for family members to live together happily as this will help to reduce the level of stress that teachers face in their daily activities.

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