

The Role of Age and Marital Stress on Depression among Teachers

Ejike Mgbenkemdi¹, Jude Ekwo² and Boris Eze³

^{1&2}Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). ³Godfrey Okoye University, Thinkers Corner, Enugu.

Abstract

The researchers investigated the role of age and marital stress on depression among teachers. A total number of 200 teachers, comprising 87 males and 113 females between the ages of 29 to 51 years with a mean age of 35 and standard deviation of 8.35 were selected as participants with the aid of a multi-stage sampling technique from ten schools in Enugu-East Local Government Area in Enugu State. Centre for Epidemiological studies-depression Scale (CES-DS) and marital stress inventory (MSI) Used for the collection of data, the correctional survey design was adopted and hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. Results show first, age and marital stress jointly play a significant role in depression among teachers, second, age does not play a significant role in depression among teachers independently, whereas, marital stress does play a significant role in depression among teachers independently. The result shows that the age of a teacher combined with the level of marital stress he/she is facing in marriage can lead the teacher into depression. Then, the age of a teacher alone can't lead the teacher into depression, whereas, the level of a teacher's marital stress in marriage alone can lead the teacher into depression. Teachers are advised to learn how to handle both their marital stress and workloads in school to avoid falling into depression which is a great killer disease.

Keywords: Age, Marital Stress, Depression and Teachers.

Introduction

Teachers are those trained in the educational field to teach in schools. The teaching profession is a form of social service that is so challenging and stressful. Teachers and educators are needed to be sensitive to developments. Therefore, the implementation and range of various reforms in education would have made the role and responsibility of the teachers to be more challenging (Juraini, 2020). According to Jepson and Forrest (2019), a teaching career is a job that has a high level of stress than others. High-stress level of a teacher causes disappointment, aggressive behaviour, anxiety, avoidance of work, absence from work, and poor work performance (Rupp, 2019).

Teachers' stress is defined as uncomfortable feelings, and negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, pressure and disappointment sourced from their work aspects as a teacher (Mi-Jeung, Sun-Ju et al., 2020). For this matter, a stressed teacher is someone with uncontrollable emotion towards changes in education and culture which requires a teacher to give their knowledge, and at the same time, they have to educate students to be a good community member. Normally, a high level of stress will lead to unsatisfactory work, work absenteeism, and work abandonment. Stress-adapting reactions of a teacher include

psychological erections (anxiety and sadness), physiological (headache, high blood pressure) and attitude-related (alcohol and smoking addiction, lifestyle and insomnia). A bad working environment will lead to stress factors and cause unsatisfactory work too (Anyan, & Hjemdal. (2016). Ultimately a teacher will have the desire to leave their profession. High-stress level of a teacher causes disappointment, aggressive behaviour, anxiety, avoidance of work, absence from work, and poor work performance (Rupp, 2020). This stress is usually experienced by both male and female teachers when they are not happy. Therefore, when a married teacher is been faced with much stress from his/her place of work and cannot be able to handle it with duties/obligations in the family can easily lead to marital stress. Marital stress on the other hand is the spousal unresolved conflict, disaffection, misunderstanding, quarrel and fighting which may lead to separation or divorce in marriage (Walker, Pfingst, et al, 2017, Pines, Rauschhuber, & Norgan et al, 2012). However, marital stress has generated concern in this contemporary society and this is associated with separation, divorce, and widowhood (Sarah, 2018). The emergence of modern society through post-colonialism has brought changing roles and positions. According to Bolger, and Zuckerman (2020), marital stress has been implicated to increase the likelihood of arguments and divorce and to decrease the quality of relationships among couples. It is also known that individuals are influenced by the rate of their partner's coping strategies (Kraemer, 2018). For instance, a stressed teacher may bring his or her concerns home after a hard day job, which is likely to harm the other spouse or partner.

Some research findings attest to the fact that female teachers are more prone to stress than male teachers. Arroba and James (2018) reported that the relationship between age and marital stress is complex and varied and that young aged couples are mostly affected by marital stress than older couples. Most married teachers, both male and female have been under some family issues which constantly result in marital stress, marital stress also affects them during classes and can easily lead to depression because they can neither derive joy at home nor their place of work (Hjemdal, Vogel, & Solem, et al, 2011).

Thus, when a teacher is faced with both school stress and marital stress can make the teacher fall into depression which is a killer disease. Depression is not just a form of extreme sadness. It is a disorder that affects both the brain and body, including cognition, behaviour, the immune system and the peripheral nervous system. Unlike a passing sad mood, depression is considered a disorder because it interferes with ordinary functioning in work, school, or relationships, unlike normal grief, which comes in waves, it is constant and oppressive (Mark, 2018). Depression varies in intensity, from mild to extremely severe, and its symptoms can range from subtle to substantially disabling. Affective symptoms include loss of pleasure and interest in life or activities the individual previously enjoyed (anhedonia); feelings of worthlessness, guilt, inferiority, inadequacy, helplessness, and weakness; and an overwhelming sense of sadness, despair, loss of hope, and self-hatred. Cognitive symptoms include impaired concentration and memory, indecisiveness, rationalization of guilt, and sustained and intense self-criticism. Suicidal ideation of varying intensity is common in depressed individuals. Somatic symptoms are common among

people with depression and can include fatigue, lethargy, sleep disruption (hypersomnia or insomnia), restlessness and agitation, headache, muscular pain, back pain, weight loss or gain (and associated appetite changes), and loss of sexual desire. A greater number and severity of somatic symptoms have been associated with treatment-resistant depression (TRD) Papakostas, Petersen et al., 2021) and WHO, (2020). The age of a teacher affects the ways he/she handles both school stress, marital stress and most depressive symptoms, older teachers are more likely to handle most stressful situations and depressive symptoms than younger teachers because of the length of age and experiences (Anthony, 2022).

However, therefore, there is some evidence from several designs suggesting the possibility that cognitive distortions may be a proximal cause of depression, but there is other evidence such as that from the National Institute of Mental Health trial that is troubling. From the lack of convincing empirical data on the postulates of cognitive theory, some have expressed more global concerns about the theory; they propose that all diathesis-stress models of depression have formidable conceptual and methodological challenges that have not yet been met (Garcia- Leon, Perez-Marmol et al., 2019). These challenges compromise the potential usefulness of these theories in depression treatment. However, the presence of cognitive distortions in post-ACS patients, regardless of current depressive episode status, could be one of the markers of excess ACS and depression non-remittance risk, because in theory, it should mark previous and future vulnerability to depression.

Interpersonal psychotherapy explicitly focuses on the here and now of these interpersonal problems and thus appears applicable to a wide range of patient populations with interpersonal problems.

Finally, the behavioural theory of depression postulates that low rates of positive events and therefore the absence of positive reinforcement are central to the induction and maintenance of depressive symptoms. Depressed people compared with non-depressed when associated with age and marital stress people have fewer pleasant events, and behavioural treatment aimed at increasing pleasant events successfully decreases depression.

In short, according to the different theories, depression may be due to (1) Biological reasons; (2) insecure attachment; (3) lack of reinforcement of previously reinforced behaviours; (4) negative interpersonal relations and relations with one's environment and the resulting negative consequences; (5) attributions made by individuals about themselves, the world and their future; and (6) socio-cultural changes. Likely, no single theory can fully explain the genesis and persistence of depression, although currently, negative interpersonal relations and relations with one's environment and socio-cultural changes (economic, political, and demographic) may explain the observed increase in the prevalence of depression (Gilbert, 2017). Based on the above observations, it becomes pertinent to know the role of age and marital stress on depression among teachers.

Conceptual Framework

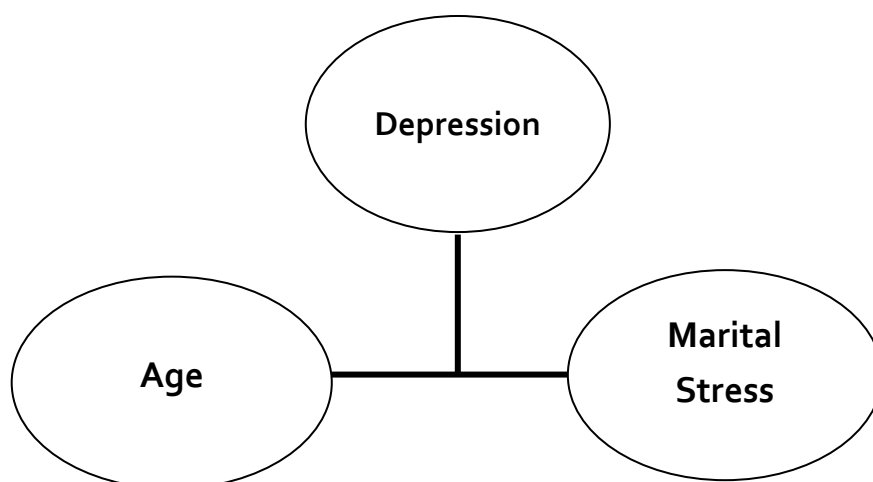


Figure 1: The above conceptual framework shows the role of age and marital stress on depression.

Theoretical Framework

The self-control model theory of depression (Philips & Segal, 2019) is adopted as the theoretical framework because it laid much emphasis on deficits of self-control which consist of three phases, namely: self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-administration of consequences. The theory shows that in the self-monitoring phase, individuals attend only to negative events and tend only to recognize immediate, short-term consequences. In the self-evaluation phase, depressed individuals establish unrealistic evaluation criteria and inaccurately attribute their successes and failures. If self-evaluation is negative, in the self-administration of consequences phase the individual tends to engage very little in self-reinforcement and very frequently in self-punishment. If a teacher does not have a deficit in these three phases, he/she will be able to handle school workloads and family stress without falling into depression.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching has been proven as a stressful job, it is expected that teachers not only spend time on instructional activities such as lesson planning, classroom teaching, and grading homework, but also on tasks such as running co-curricular activities, attending or facilitating professional development activities, and engaging parents and the community. Further, teachers are also expected to engage in administrative duties related to teaching and learning such as filling out student report cards and tracking student attendance in class, which can cause role-based stress that, might degenerate into depression. To this end, the present study has focused on the role of age and marital stress on depression among teachers.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is specifically to investigate whether age and marital stress jointly play a significant role in depression among teachers and also whether age and marital stress individually play a significant role in depression among teachers. It was hypothesized that:

1. Age and marital stress will jointly play a significant role in depression among teachers.
2. Age and marital stress will individually play a significant role in depression among teachers.

Method

Participants

A total number of 200 participants made up of 87 males and 113 females between the age of 29-51 years of age were selected. The mean age was 35 and the standard deviation of 8.35.

The participants were selected making use of a multi-stage sampling technique from a population of primary and secondary school teachers in Enugu-East Local Government Area of Enugu State. There are a total number of 62 registered Secondary schools and 103 registered primary schools in Enugu-East Local Government. The total number of registered schools in the LGA was later clustered into three different zones, We were able to select teachers from 3 primary schools (one school from each zone) and 7 secondary schools (two schools each from two zones and three schools from one zone) using a balloting sampling technique.

Instruments

Two instruments were used for this research. Namely:

1. The Center for Epidemiological studies-depression scale (CES-DS) Radloff (1977).
2. Marital Stress Inventory (MSI) Omoluabi (1994).

The Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-DS) Radloff (1977)

This comprised 20 items developed by the American Institute of Mental Health designed to measure symptoms of depression in the general population. The scale has 20 items designed to determine the presence or absence of depressive symptoms among parents of autistic children. However, the scale was scored on a four-point scale ranging from 1 to 4 for example rarely=1, sometimes=2, often=3, and always=4. But items 4, 8, 12 and 16 reflect positive outcomes and are scored in the reverse order, for example, rarely=4, sometimes=3, often=2 and always=1. The remaining 16 items reflect negative outcomes. The participants were instructed to report the frequency with which the 20 items were experienced within the previous 6 months. If any participants scored above 20, that indicated the participant had experienced depression. For reliability, the researchers carried out a pilot study with 30 participants selected with the aid of purposive sampling techniques from Government College, Agbani with Cronbach-alpha 0.70.

Marital Stress Inventory (MSI) Omoluabi (1994)

The marital stress inventory is made up of 50 items with a list of issues that causes disaffection in marriage. It was developed by Omoluabi (1994). It was designed to help clinical/counselling psychologists determine the specific causes of marital discord and distress among their clients. Then or m scores obtained by the general population are M (n=275) =77.83, F(n=282)=74.49 and M&F(n=557)=76.20. In scoring, the total values of the ticked numbers are added together, then scores higher than the norm show a high-stress level and scores lower than the norm indicate that the clients are coping adequately with existing stressors in the marriage. For reliability, the researchers carried out a pilot study with 30 participants selected with the aid of purposive sampling techniques from Government College, Agbani with Cronbach-alpha 0.94.

Procedure

The primary and secondary teachers were drawn from 10 different schools, namely: Monsignor Raphael Eze Nursery and primary school, Abakpa, Corner Stone Secondary School, Abakpa-Nike, Solid Foundation Secondary School, Abakpa, Divine Love Secondary School, Trans-Ekulu. Metro Star Nursery and primary school, Abakpa. Success Base Secondary School, Trans-Ekulu, Greater Glory Nursery and Primary School, Nike-Road, Divine Secondary School Abakpa, Success Base Secondary School, Abakpa and City Comprehensive Secondary School, Abakpa.

The researchers solicited their permission to use a sample of the teachers in their respective institutions as participants for the study as seen above. With this letter of introduction, the researchers obtained permission from the management of the selected schools with easy access to only teachers. The researchers thereafter recruited and trained school secretaries (i.e., the contact teacher as provided by the management of the institution that is the dean of studies) as research assistants to administer and collect copies of the questionnaire in all the selected schools. Some Deans and Headteachers did not allow us to share the questionnaires that particular day, rather they invited us to their teachers' meetings where we shared the questionnaires during their meetings. The questionnaires were administered within three weeks to the targeted population. A total of 230 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the teachers, and they were given instructions to fill in the items according to how they felt towards the statement. They were also advised to fill in their age, sex and date before attending to the questions on each questionnaire; also, they were advised to avoid writing their names in any of the questionnaires. We try to give each of the schools visited at least 3 days to have their time in filling out the questionnaires. In the end, we were able to collect back the total number of 210 questionnaires of which 20 copies weren't returned by some teachers. Out of the 210 copies collected, 7 were wrongly responded to, and 3 were incompletely filled, leaving only 200 copies rightly responded to which were used to carry out analysis; the wrongly responded ones were discarded.

Design/Statistics

The Correlational survey design was adopted and hierarchical multiple regression analysis was applied to analyze the data

Result

Table1: summary table of descriptive statistics and correlations of the study Variables (N=200)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Depression	13.78	3.89	1			
2. Gender	.44	.49	.08	1		
3. Age	34.25	5.12	.06	.29	1	
4. marital stress	128.4	15.13	.25**	.03	.04	1

3

Note: *=P<.05 (2-tailed), **=P<.01 (2-tailed), Gender was coded 1=Male, 0=Female (Mgbenkemdi, et al. 2023)

Results in table1, indicate that gender and age as a control variable and one of the predictor variables, age, did not significantly relate to increases or decreases in the criterion variable, depression. However, marital stress, the predictor variable, did relate significantly with depression ($r=.25$, $p<.001$)

Meaning that increases or decreases in this predictor variable do significantly relate to increases or decreases in the criterion variable, depression among teachers.

Table 2: The results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression on the role age and marital stress as Predictors of depression among teachers.

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
	β	β
Gender	.08	.06
Age		.04
Marital stress		.25**
Adjusted R^2	.001	.056**
ΔR^2	.006	.065**
ΔF	1.179	6.823**

*= $p<.05$, ** = $p<.001$ (Mgbenkemdi, et al. 2023)

From Table 2 above, in the first step of Hierarchical Multiple regression of which depression served as the criterion variable, one demographic variable (gender) was entered as the control variable. This model was statistically not significant $F(1,198)=1.179$, $p>.05$ and unable to explain any significant variance in depression among teachers neither in block nor as a single variable.

In step 2, When the predictor of the variables age and marital stress: were entered, as a block, they significantly added 6.5% of the variance in depression ($\Delta R^2=.065$, $p<.001$), hence, hypothesis 1 was confirmed. So, individually, only marital stress ($\beta=.25$, $p<.001$) contributed significantly in a positive direction in predicting depression among teachers, thereby confirming Hypotheses 2, which says that age and marital stress will individually play a significant role in depression among teachers.

Summary of the Results

Summarily, the result showed that;

- The demographic variable had no role in the outcome of the criterion variables: depression among teachers.
- Marital stress and age jointly predicted depression among teachers while it was only marital stress that independently played a role in relating with the criterion variable, depression among teachers.

Discussion

The first hypothesis which stated that age and marital stress will jointly play roles in depression among teachers was confirmed. This result is with the findings showing the joint significant role of age and marital stress among teachers. This is trying to let us understand that the age of a particular teacher affects the way he or she can easily cope with marital stress, which now plays a role in the individual's depressive symptoms. This is in tandem with Mgbenkemdi, and Ekwo, (2022) in their study which investigated Role-Based Stress as a Correlate of Marital Conflicts among Nurses and the results implies that role-based stress and marital conflict are strongly correlated among nurses. Couples/ teachers who are still new in marriage can't handle most marital stress issues in their families compared to couples that have stayed in the marriage for years due to lack of maturity and experience, this is also supported in line with the work of Kraemer (2018).

The second hypothesis which stated that age and marital stress will individually play roles in depression among teachers was also confirmed. The findings showed that age does not show a significant role in depression among teachers independently. This shows that a teacher's age alone does not play any significant role in the level of his/her depressive symptoms. This is in line with Mgbenkemdi, and Ekwo, (2022). Their study investigated the moderating role of resilience on role-based stress as predictors of depression among Teachers where all the control variables did not remarkably predict job depression among teachers. Also, resilience and role-based stress together did not predict depression among teachers, However, marital stress related significantly with depression, meaning that

increases or decreases in Marital stress do significantly relate to increases or decreases in depression among teachers. This shows that marital stress plays a significant role in depression among teachers independently, thus, marital stress alone could be seen as a rightful reinforcer of depression among teachers. This finding is in line with the work of Anthony (2022) and Anyan and Hjemdal, 2016)

Implications of the Findings

From the findings, it appears that age and marital stress jointly play roles in depression among teachers. Also, age can't play a significant role in depression among teachers, but marital stress can independently play a significant role in depression among teachers. From the study, it seems that years of experience from both marriage and the teaching profession have helped teachers in coping with depression.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that age and marital stress jointly play a significant role in depression among teachers. Also, age does not play a significant role in depression among teachers independently, whereas, marital stress does play a significant role in depression among teachers independently.

Recommendations

1. We recommended based on the outcome of the findings that the age of a particular teacher affects the way he or she can easily cope with marital stress and which now plays a role in the individual's depressive symptoms.
2. Couples/ teachers who are still new in marriage can't handle most marital stress issues in their families compared to couples that have stayed in the marriage for years due to a lack of maturity and experience.
3. That a teacher's age alone does not play any significant role in the level of his/her depressive symptoms.
4. That marital stress plays a significant role in depression among teachers independently, thus, marital stress alone could be seen as a rightful reinforcer of depression among teachers.

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