

PSYCHO-SOCIAL CHALLENGES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN OGUN STATE, SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Teaching profession is a complex and demanding occupation that requires a unique blend of cognitive, emotional, and social skills, and is often accompanied by various psychosocial challenges that can negatively impact teachers' well-being and instructional effectiveness. This study investigated the psychosocial challenges faced by senior secondary school teachers in Ogun State, South West Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, and a total of 120 teachers were selected through stratified random sampling. The results showed that rural and urban senior secondary school teachers did not significantly differ in psychosocial challenges, with both groups facing similar challenges. However, married teachers faced more psychosocial challenges than unmarried teachers. Additionally, science and arts background senior secondary school teachers did not significantly differ in psychosocial challenges. Based on the findings, the study recommended that there is need for teacher support programs, marital status-specific interventions, and subject-area neutral support to address the psychosocial challenges faced by teachers. Furthermore, school administrator training and policy reforms are necessary to address the root causes of psychosocial challenges faced by teachers.

Keywords: location, marital status, psychosocial challenges, secondary school teacher, stream background

Introduction

The teaching profession is a multifaceted and demanding occupation that necessitates a distinctive fusion of cognitive, affective, and social competencies (Hargreaves, 2000). Effective teaching requires a profound understanding of subject matter, as well as the ability to convey complex ideas in a clear and concise manner. Moreover, teachers must possess a high degree of emotional intelligence, enabling them to navigate the complexities of the classroom environment and foster positive relationships with their students (Veenman, 2020). The intricate interplay between these intellectual, emotional, and social demands renders teaching a uniquely challenging profession. Teaching is a highly demanding profession that requires a unique blend of intellectual, emotional, and social skills. Secondary school teachers, in particular, face a myriad of psychosocial challenges that can impact their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall instructional effectiveness (Kyriacou, 2001). Secondary school teachers, in particular, occupy a pivotal position in shaping the intellectual, social, and emotional development of adolescents, thereby preparing them for the complexities of adulthood (Veenman, 2020). However, the teaching profession is often accompanied by a myriad of psychosocial challenges, including stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression, which can have deleterious effects on teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall instructional efficacy (Kyriacou, 2001; Alkharusi, 2022). These challenges can arise from a variety of sources, including student misbehavior, heavy workload, lack of resources, and poor working conditions, underscoring the need for targeted support systems to mitigate the adverse consequences of these psychosocial stressors.

Ogun State, located in South West Nigeria, is one of the most populous states in the country (National Population Commission, 2006). The state has a large number of secondary schools, both public and private, which cater to the educational needs of its growing population (Ogun State Ministry of Education, 2020). Despite the importance of secondary education, teachers in Ogun State face numerous psychosocial challenges that can affect their ability to provide quality education (Adeyemi, 2015; Ogundele & Adeyinka, 2022). Research has shown that secondary

school teachers face a range of psychosocial challenges, including stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression (Oplatka, 2007; Kyriacou, 2001; Aqeel & Khan, 2022). These challenges can arise from various sources, including student misbehavior, heavy workload, lack of resources, and poor working conditions (Veenman, 2020; Bashir & Ali, 2022). Furthermore, teachers may also experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and lack of autonomy, which can exacerbate their psychosocial challenges (Hargreaves, 2000; Chen & Zhang, 2022).

The phenomenon of psychosocial challenges among secondary school teachers is subject to moderation by various contextual factors. This study investigated the moderating influence of geographical location (rural versus urban) and academic discipline (arts versus science) on the psychosocial challenges encountered by secondary school teachers in Ogun State, with a view to elucidating the complex interplay between these variables. The psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers are a pressing concern that warrants urgent attention. The moderating variables of local (rural and urban) and stream background (arts and science) play a significant role in exacerbating these challenges. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of considering these moderating variables in understanding the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers. Further research is needed to develop targeted interventions and policy reforms to address these challenges.

Teachers in rural and urban areas may face different types of psychosocial challenges. Rural teachers may experience isolation, lack of resources, and limited access to professional development opportunities, while urban teachers may face challenges related to student misbehavior, heavy workload, and poor working conditions (Adeyemi, 2015; Bashir & Ali, 2022). Research has shown that rural teachers are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and burnout due to the lack of resources and support (Kyriacou, 2001; Alkharusi, 2022). The academic disciplines of arts and science present unique psychosocial challenges for educators, with distinct differences in the nature and scope of these challenges. Arts teachers, for instance, often confront difficulties stemming from inadequate resources, limited opportunities for professional growth, and perceived low occupational status (Oplatka, 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2022). These challenges can have deleterious effects on arts teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Furthermore, the perceived low status of arts education can exacerbate these challenges, rendering it essential to address these issues through targeted support systems and policy interventions.

In contrast, science teachers face a distinct set of psychosocial challenges, primarily arising from the high stakes and performance expectations inherent in their role. Science teachers often experience excessive workload, elevated expectations, and intense pressure to cultivate high-achieving students (Oplatka, 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that these challenges can culminate in heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout among science teachers, ultimately compromising their instructional efficacy and overall well-being (Veenman, 2020; Aqeel & Khan, 2022). It is essential to acknowledge and address these challenges through evidence-based interventions and policy reforms, aimed at promoting the well-being and instructional effectiveness of science teachers. Research has shown that secondary school teachers experience a range of psychosocial challenges, including stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression (Bakker et al., 2010; Hakanen et al., 2018). These challenges can arise from various sources, including student misbehavior, heavy workload, lack of resources, and poor working conditions (Kyriacou, 2001). Furthermore, the moderating variables of local (rural and urban) and stream background (arts and science) can exacerbate these challenges, rendering it essential to examine their impact on the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers.

Research has shown that teachers in rural areas face unique challenges, including isolation, lack of resources, and limited access to professional development opportunities (Adeyemi, 2015). In contrast, teachers in urban areas face challenges related to student misbehavior, heavy workload, and poor working conditions (Ogundele & Adeyinka, 2022). Furthermore, research has shown that science teachers experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout compared to arts teachers, due to the high expectations and pressure to produce high-achieving students (Hakanen et al., 2018). A recent study by Ogundele and Adeyinka (2022) found that science teachers in urban areas experienced higher levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout compared to arts teachers in rural areas. Another study by Adeyemi (2015) found that teachers in rural areas experienced higher levels of isolation and lack of resources

compared to teachers in urban areas. A study by Hakanen et al. (2018) found that science teachers experienced higher levels of burnout and depression compared to arts teachers. Despite the importance of understanding the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers, there is a lack of research on this topic in Ogun State, South West Nigeria. This study aims to fill this research gap by examining the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Ogun State, with a focus on the moderating effects of local (rural and urban) and stream background (arts and science).

Statement of the Problem

The teaching profession, particularly at the secondary school level, is beset by a myriad of psychosocial challenges that can have far-reaching consequences on teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall instructional effectiveness. Despite the critical role that secondary school teachers play in shaping the minds of young people and preparing them for future challenges, the prevalence of psychosocial challenges among this demographic remains a pressing concern. These challenges include stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression, which can arise from various sources, including student misbehaviour, heavy workload, lack of resources, and poor working conditions. Indeed, the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Ogun State, South West Nigeria, are a pressing concern that warrants urgent attention. Despite the importance of this issue, there is a dearth of research on this topic, leaving a significant knowledge gap. Furthermore, geographical disparities and disciplinary differences exacerbate these challenges, with rural teachers facing isolation and limited resources, and arts teachers experiencing perceptions of low status. Ultimately, the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Ogun State can have far-reaching consequences on their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall instructional effectiveness. Furthermore, the psychosocial challenges faced by teachers can lead to teacher attrition, absenteeism, and decreased motivation, ultimately compromising the quality of education in Ogun State.

This study seeks to address several lacunae in the extant literature on psychosocial challenges among secondary school teachers in Ogun State. Notably, a significant research gap exists regarding the moderating effects of geographical location (rural versus urban), married status and academic discipline (arts versus science) on the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Ogun State. Furthermore, previous studies have primarily focused on documenting the prevalence of psychosocial challenges among teachers, without adequately exploring the underlying etiologies and consequences of these challenges. Additionally, there is a pressing need for evidence-based interventions and policy reforms to mitigate the psychosocial challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Ogun State. However, this study aims to provide nuanced insights into the specific psychosocial challenges encountered by teachers in Ogun State, and to inform the development of targeted interventions and policy reforms to address these challenges.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to assess psychosocial challenges of senior secondary teachers with respect to location (rural and urban), marital status and stream background (arts and science).

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in psychosocial challenges of rural and urban secondary school teachers in Ogun State
2. There is no significant difference in psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried secondary school teachers in Ogun State
3. There is no significant difference in psychosocial challenges of secondary school teachers with science and arts background in Ogun State

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed in this study to explore the psychosocial challenges of senior secondary teachers with respect to location (rural and urban), marital status and stream background (arts and science) in Ogun State, Nigeria. The population for this study consists of all senior secondary school teachers while the targeted population consists of one hundred and twenty teachers in six senior secondary schools in Ogun State. To facilitate the purpose of this study, a multistage sampling procedure was utilised. The preliminary phase included employing a purposive sampling method to select three secondary schools in the three senatorial districts, while two secondary schools were selected in each of the zone. The study utilised a simple random sampling technique to choose 20 teachers from each selected schools. A total of one hundred and twenty adolescents participated in this study. The instrument utilised for this study is adopted questionnaire. The instrument referred to as “Psychosocial Problems of Teachers Questionnaire (PPTQ)” which contains 10 items divided into two sections for psychological problem and social problem, respectively. The instrument was adapted from the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) developed by Derogatis & Melisaratos (1983). To compare the psychosocial challenges of secondary school teachers, the t-test was used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Location		
	Urban	60	50%
	Rural	60	50%
	Total	120	100%
2	Marital Status		
	Married	60	50%
	Unmarried	60	50%
	Total	120	100%
3	Background Stream		
	SS1	60	50%
	SS2	60	50%
	Total	120	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed a diverse age distribution among the teachers. Out of 120 teachers 60 teachers were from rural area 30 married teachers (15 science teachers and 15 arts teachers) and 30 un-married teachers (15 science teachers and 15 arts teachers) and 60 teachers from urban area [30 married teachers (15 science teachers and 15 arts teachers) and 30 un-married teachers (15 science teachers and 15 arts teachers)] through stratified random sampling. This distribution suggests that the sample encompasses a wide range of secondary school teachers, with a predominant focus on those in the senior secondary, which could be relevant for studying psychological and social challenges specific to this group.

Testing of Hypotheses

1. Results relating to differences in psychosocial problems of rural and urban senior secondary school teachers.

Table 2

Mean scores of psychosocial challenges of rural and urban senior secondary school teachers.

Variable	Locale	N	Mean	S. D	t	Remarks
Psychosocial challenges	Rural secondary school teachers	60	59.84	17.89	0.865	Not Significant
	Urban secondary school teachers	60	57	18.05		

The above table two shows the mean scores and SD of psychosocial challenges of rural and urban senior secondary school teachers of Ogun State, Nigeria. The t- value for psychosocial challenges of rural and urban senior secondary school teachers was found statistically insignificant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the similar psychosocial challenges faced by both rural and urban senior secondary school teachers. From the above discussion, the hypothesis one which says “there is no significant difference in psychosocial challenges of rural and urban senior secondary school teachers” is accepted. The finding of the study are similar to Hussain and Kumar (2017) that the psycho-social problems faced by both rural and urban women are similar. The finding also in consistent with recent research, such as the studies by Oyeade et al. (2020) and Akomolafe et al. (2022), which reported that the psycho-social problems faced by rural and urban teachers are similar, and that there is no significant difference in the psycho-social problems experienced by teachers in urban and rural schools.

2. Results relating to differences in psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried senior secondary school teachers.

Table 3: Mean scores of psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried senior secondary school teachers.

Variable	Marital Status	N	Mean	S.D	t	Remarks
Psychosocial Challenges	Married teachers	60	61.5	16.60	2.809	Significant
	Un-married teachers	60	52.34	19.10		

The above table 3 shows the mean scores and SD of psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried senior secondary school teachers of Ogun State, Nigeria. The t-value for psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried senior secondary school teachers was found to be significant at 0.01 level. Hence, the married senior secondary school teachers faced more psychosocial challenges than unmarried senior secondary school teachers. This is likewise in consistency with the reality as the married senior school teachers have more responsibilities towards their family members as compared to unmarried senior secondary school teachers. From the above discussion, the hypothesis no. 2 i.e. “there exists no significant difference in psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried senior secondary school teachers” is not accepted. This finding is consistent with recent studies, such as those by Singh et al. (2020) and Sharma and Sharma (2022), which reported significant differences in psychological stress and emotional well-being between married and unmarried teachers. Also similar with the finding the Gupta, Taneja, Kapoor and Kumar (2020) that there exists a significant difference between married and un-married working class in depression, phobic and anxiety.

3. Results relating to differences in psychosocial challenges of senior secondary school teachers with science and arts background.

Table 4: Mean scores of psychosocial challenges of senior secondary school teachers with science and arts background.

Variable	Stream background	N	Mean	S. D	t	Remarks
Psychosocial Challenges	Science Teachers	60	60.5	17.35	1.276	Not Significant
	Arts Teachers	60	56.34	18.46		

The above table 4 shows the mean scores and SD of psychosocial challenges of senior secondary school teachers with science and arts background of Ogun State, Nigeria. The t-value for psychosocial challenges of senior secondary school teachers with science and arts background was found statistically insignificant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the similar psychosocial challenges faced by both science and arts background senior secondary school teachers. From the above discussion, the hypothesis no. 3 i.e. “there is no significant difference in psychosocial challenges of senior secondary school teachers with science and arts background” is accepted. This finding is in support of a study of Adeyemi (2018) who found that teachers from different subject areas, including science and arts, experienced similar levels of stress and burnout. Also, with the study by Oyebade et al. (2020) reported that science and arts teachers in Nigerian secondary schools faced similar psychosocial challenges, including workload, student misbehaviour, and lack of resources.

Conclusion

- Rural and urban senior secondary school teachers did not significantly differ in psychosocial challenges. Psychosocial challenges faced by both rural and urban school teachers are similar.
- Psychosocial challenges of married and unmarried senior secondary school teachers differed significantly. Married school teachers face more psychosocial challenges than unmarried school teachers.
- Science and arts background senior secondary school teachers did not significantly differ in psychosocial challenges. Psychosocial challenges faced by both science and arts senior secondary school teachers are similar.

Recommendations

1. Develop Teacher Support Programs: Given that rural and urban senior secondary school teachers face similar psychosocial challenges, it is recommended that teacher support programs be developed to cater to the needs of teachers across different geographical locations. These programs could include counselling services, stress management workshops, and peer support groups.
2. Marital Status-Specific Interventions: The finding that married school teachers face more psychosocial challenges than unmarried teachers suggest that marital status-specific interventions may be necessary. For example, schools could provide counselling services specifically for married teachers to help them manage work-family conflicts and other marital-related stressors.
3. Subject-Area Neutral Support: Since science and arts background senior secondary school teachers face similar psychosocial challenges, it is recommended that support services be provided that are neutral to subject area specialization. Schools should provide general stress management workshops or counselling services that are open to all teachers, regardless of their subject area specialization.

Implications of the Findings to Counselling

The findings have significant implications for counselling practice, particularly in the context of teacher support and well-being. Counselling interventions can be designed to provide teachers with stress management techniques, emotional support, and coping strategies to deal with the demands of their profession. Additionally, marital counselling, family therapy, and stress management techniques can be tailored to address the unique challenges faced by married teachers.

The study also suggests that subject-area neutral support can be provided to teachers, as science and arts background teachers face similar psychosocial challenges. General stress management workshops, emotional support, and coping strategies can be offered to teachers across different subject areas. Furthermore, counselling interventions should be culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs of teachers in different geographical locations.

To effectively support teachers, counsellors should collaborate with educational institutions. This collaboration can facilitate the design and implementation of counselling interventions that promote teacher well-being and support. By collaborating with other stakeholders, counsellors, school administrators, teacher training programs, and educational policymakers can create a healthy and supportive educational environment that benefits both teachers and students.

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