



OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND FAMILY-WORK CONFLICT AS PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the impact of Occupational Stress and Family-Work Conflict in predicting psychological wellbeing among primary school teachers in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State. A total of one hundred and twenty (122) teachers (49 males, and 73 females, mean age = 30.25yrs, SD = 1.98) participated in study. Three instruments were used for data collection namely: Perceived stress scale, family-work conflict scale and psychological wellbeing scale. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis with stepwise modeling was employed to test the hypotheses. The results revealed that occupational stress significantly and positively predicted psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, family-work conflict was found to be a significant negative predictor of psychological wellbeing. The study highlighted and discussed the implications of the findings for teachers, school administrators, and government interventions. Limitations of the study were also noted and future research directions recommended.

Keywords: Occupational stress, family-work conflict, psychological wellbeing

Introduction

Employees' state of mind at work is crucial to their effective performance and optimum productivity. However, employees are faced with plethora of challenges which can be linked to the pressures from the work environment and interferences from family and personal life of the employees. The ability of these employees to deliver maximally on their job and still feel satisfied even in the presence of distressing emotions that are inherent aspects of life entails psychological wellbeing. The importance of psychological well-being in the workplace has gained attention of scholars in recent decades, reflecting a shift from physical to psychological sources of work-related stress. In many respects, work-related stress is conducive to psychological health, offering individuals an opportunity to engage in a sense of challenge and achievement, essential for maintaining a high level of psychological well-being (Suleman, Hussain, Shehzad, Syed & Raja, 2018).

Psychological well-being is a broad and multifaceted construct that refers to an individual's personal experience of positive psychological states, such as joy, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose. It is a holistic concept that encompasses various facets of mental and emotional health, including positive relationships, personal growth, positive self-esteem, self-acceptance, and a sense of control over one's life (Dhanabhakym & Sarath, 2023). In simpler terms, psychological well-being involves feeling positive about oneself and one's life, fostering satisfying relationships, having a sense of purpose, and feeling competent in handling life's



challenges. It signifies a mental state where an individual enjoys positive emotions, exhibits positive psychological functioning, and perceives a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Psychological well-being is a vital element of an individual's overall health that transcends the mere absence of mental illness, encompassing one's general sense of happiness, contentment, and fulfillment in life (Dhanabhakyaam & Sarath, 2023).

Two aspects of psychological well-being are noted in the literature: Hedonic and Eudaimonic (Ryan & Deci, 2001). A hedonic view of psychological well-being is primarily concerned with the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. It encompasses aspects such as life satisfaction, happiness, and the presence of positive emotions (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In the workplace, hedonic well-being might manifest as job satisfaction, a positive work environment, and good interpersonal relationships. Eudaimonic well-being goes beyond mere happiness and pleasure, focusing on meaning and self-realization. It involves the fulfillment of one's potential and the pursuit of meaningful goals (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In the workplace, eudaimonic well-being might be seen in employees who find their work meaningful, feel a sense of purpose, and experience personal growth through their job.

Another widespread concept of psychological wellbeing is described by the six-dimensional model proposed by Ryff (1989). The six dimensions include: positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Accordingly, Ryff (1995) described psychological wellbeing as a person's ability to recognize and develop themselves in accordance with their potential.

A number of factors have been studied in relation to psychological wellbeing in the literature. Some of these factors include: occupational stress, employee motivation, work-family conflict etc. (Basumatary & Som, 2021; Suleman et al., 2018). However, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of occupational stress and family-work conflict as predictors of psychological wellbeing among primary school teachers in Awka South Local Government area of Anambra state.

Teaching according to Akindutire (2011) is regarded as the actions undertaken by a teacher and the learner that makes learning successful than it would have been without such teaching. Oyekan (1994) characterized teaching as a versatile profession dedicated to fostering human resource development for both individual and economic advancement. In recent times, teaching profession especially in primary and post-primary schools is becoming more stressful and this tends to affect teachers' ability to effectively impact the learners (Fiase et al., 2016). Evidence from extant studies has shown that occupational stress and family-work conflict negatively affect psychological wellbeing of teachers (Lester & Brower, 2001; Panatik et al., 2011).

Despite the abundance of research works in the literature, only limited studies have examined the effects of occupational stress and family-work conflict on psychological wellbeing of employees (Olowodunoye, 2021; Srivastav, 2021). Hence, utilizing data from a survey of primary school teachers in Awka, Anambra State; the study empirically examined the impacts of occupational stress and family-work conflict on psychological wellbeing of primary school teachers. Drawing on transactional theory of occupational stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and role theory of family-work conflict (Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn 1978), in particular, the study (1) investigated the impact of occupational stress on teachers' psychological wellbeing, (2) examined the effect of family-work conflict on psychological wellbeing of teachers.



Theory and Hypotheses

Occupational Stress and Psychological Wellbeing

Occupational stress refers to an employee's recognition that environmental demands (stressors) surpass their capabilities and resources to handle it, resulting in adverse outcomes (Shirom, 1982). The relationship between occupational stress and psychological well-being is complex and influenced by how individuals perceive and cope with stress in the workplace. The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), offers a framework for understanding this relationship. The theory posits that stress is not merely a function of external stressors but is also shaped by how individuals appraise these stressors and the coping strategies they employ. According to the theory, stress is a dynamic process that involves two key components: cognitive appraisal and coping. Cognitive appraisal involves how individuals evaluate a stressor. It involves assessing whether the stressor is a threat, challenge, or harm/loss, and determining what resources are available to manage it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), while coping strategies are the actions taken to manage stress. These strategies can be problem-focused (addressing the stressor directly) or emotion-focused (managing the emotional response to the stressor) (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Cognitive Appraisal and Psychological Well-Being: The way employees appraise stressors in the workplace has a direct impact on their psychological well-being. If an employee appraises a work-related challenge as an opportunity for growth (a positive challenge), it may enhance their psychological well-being through increased motivation and satisfaction (Lazarus, 1991). However, if the same challenge is appraised as a threat, it can lead to stress, anxiety, and a decline in psychological well-being (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). For example, a teacher facing a tight deadline might appraise it as a challenge that enhances their skills and resilience, leading to a sense of accomplishment and well-being once the task is completed. Conversely, if the deadline is appraised as a threat to their job security or work-life balance, the resulting stress can diminish their psychological well-being, leading to burnout or depression (Sonnentag & Frese, 2003).

Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-Being: The coping strategies employees adopt in response to stressors also play a crucial role in determining their psychological well-being. Effective problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking solutions or improving time management, can reduce the perceived threat of stressors and promote well-being (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). On the other hand, reliance on maladaptive emotion-focused coping strategies, such as avoidance or denial, can exacerbate stress and lead to negative outcomes like anxiety and depression (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). For instance, a teacher dealing with interpersonal conflict at work may engage in problem-focused coping by addressing the issue directly with the colleague involved, leading to a resolution and improved well-being. Alternatively, if the employee uses avoidance as a coping mechanism, the unresolved conflict may intensify stress and negatively affect their psychological well-being over time (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Specific occupational stressors, such as workload, role ambiguity, lack of control, and interpersonal conflicts, have been widely studied in relation to psychological well-being. Workload, for example, is a common stressor that, when perceived as excessive, can lead to burnout- a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Role ambiguity, where employees are unclear about their job responsibilities, can lead to confusion, stress, and lower psychological well-being (Beehr & Glazer, 2001). The Transactional Theory suggests that how these stressors are



appraised and the coping strategies employed will determine their impact on well-being. Employees who perceive high workloads as opportunities for personal growth and employ effective time management techniques may experience enhanced well-being. Conversely, those who perceive the workload as overwhelming and lack effective coping mechanisms are likely to experience negative outcomes such as stress and burnout (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that occupational stress will lead to reduced psychological wellbeing of workers. Thus, I propose that:

Hypothesis 1: Occupational stress significantly and negatively predicts psychological wellbeing of primary school teachers.

2.2 Family-Work Conflict and Psychological Wellbeing

The dynamics of modern work environments, coupled with the demands of family life, have led to a significant focus on the concept of family-work conflict (FWC). This concept has been widely studied due to its implications on employees' psychological well-being, particularly among primary school teachers. Family-work conflict (or family-work interference) is a type of inter-role conflict in which a person is unable to fulfill job related responsibilities because of common demands, time allocated to and stress/tension created by family domain" (Netemeyer et al., 1996).

Role theory, as advanced by Kahn et al. (1964) and further developed by Katz and Kahn (1978), provides a useful framework to understand the complexities of FWC and its impact on psychological well-being. According to role theory, individuals fulfill multiple roles simultaneously, such as being a teacher, a spouse, and a parent. Each of these roles comes with its own set of expectations, norms, and demands. Kahn et al. (1964) describe roles as sets of expectations associated with a particular position or status within a social structure. When the expectations of one role interfere with the ability to meet the demands of another role, role conflict occurs, which can lead to stress and strain. In the context of primary school teachers, FWC arises when the demands of their family life interfere with their work responsibilities or vice versa. Teachers, who are often seen as caregivers and role models, may find it challenging to balance the emotional and time demands of their work with those of their families. Katz and Kahn (1978) emphasize that such conflicts are more likely to occur when there is a lack of resources, such as time, energy, or social support, to meet the demands of multiple roles.

FWC has been found to be a significant predictor of various psychological outcomes, including stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression. Role theory suggests that when individuals experience conflict between their family and work roles, it can lead to role overload, where the demands exceed the individual's capacity to meet them effectively (Kahn et al., 1964). This overload can result in emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout, which is particularly prevalent among teachers who are already under considerable pressure to manage classroom dynamics, administrative tasks, and curriculum requirements.

Psychological well-being is adversely affected when primary school teachers are unable to fulfill the expectations of their roles in both family and work domains. The constant juggling of responsibilities without adequate support or coping mechanisms can lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration. According to Katz and Kahn (1978), the strain from unresolved role conflict can manifest in psychological distress, contributing to a decline in overall well-being. For instance, a teacher who is unable to attend to family needs due to work commitments may experience guilt and stress, which can spill over into their professional life, affecting job

performance and satisfaction. Hence, it is plausible to assert that FWC may lead to lowered psychological wellbeing among primary school teachers. Thus, I propose that:

Hypothesis 2: Family-Work Conflict significantly and negatively predicts psychological wellbeing of primary school teachers.

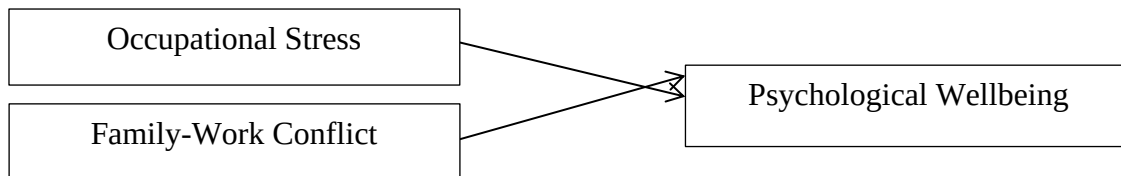


Figure 1: Research Model

Method

Sample and Procedure

A total of hundred and twenty-two (122) primary school teachers participated in the study. Convenient sampling technique was adopted in recruiting the teachers from five randomly selected primary schools all located in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. These participants were teachers who voluntarily gave their consent to participate in the study. The demographic composition of the sampled respondents revealed the following: Of the 122 respondents, 49 (40.2%) were males while 73 (57.0%) were females. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 55 years with a mean age of 30.25 and SD of 1.98. Thirty-nine (32.0%) of the respondents were single, 82 (67.2%) were married, while 1 (0.8%) was separated. Ninety-one (74.6%) of the respondents had 1-10 years of job tenure, 25 (20.5%) had 11-20 years of job tenure, 4 (3.3%) had 21-30 years of job tenure, while 2 (1.6%) had 31 and above years of job tenure. Twenty-seven (22.1%) of the respondents had NCE/OND as their highest level of education, 82 (67.2%) had degree/HND, 1 (0.8%) had PGD/PGDE, 10 (8.2%) had masters, and 2 (1.6%) had Ph.D. Participants were requested to complete the questionnaires during school hours and return same directly to the researcher. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were initially distributed, out of which 130 were returned, representing an 86.7% response rate. However, 8 returned questionnaires were discarded due to improper completion, leaving a total of 122 questionnaires used for data analysis.

Measures

Occupational stress was measured with a 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) developed by Cohen et al. (1983) to assess "the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful". Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (0 = Never; 1 = Almost Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Fairly Often; 4 = Very Often) and summed to create a total score. Sample items include: "In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?" The PSS-10 has strong internal consistency Alpha values ranging from .84 to .86 (Cohen et al., 1983). Four items are reverse scored. The scale has revalidation reliability Alpha value of .89.

Family-work conflict was assessed using Family-Work Conflict Scale (FWC) developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996). It is a 5-item scale that assesses the level of family interference with work. Responses on the scale was structured on a 7-point likert format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities". The cronbach's



Alpha value obtained for the scale by the developers ranged from .83 to .89 for three different samples. The revalidation reliability Alpha value obtained by researcher for the scale is .83.

Ryff, and Keyes (1995) psychological Wellbeing Scale was used to assess the psychological wellbeing of the teachers. It is an 18-item scale comprising of six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents were expected to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement about themselves using a 7-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Agree - 7= Strongly Disagree). Nine items are reverse scored. Sample items include: "The demands of everyday life often get me down". The revalidation reliability Alpha value obtained by researcher for the scale is .82.

Design/Statistics

The researcher adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This is because more samples (cross-section) were drawn from the population at one time. Hierarchical multiple regressions were employed to test the hypotheses. The data were collated and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

Table 1: Means, standard deviation and inter-correlations among the study variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	1.60	.49	-							
2 Age	30.25	1.98	.30**	-						
3 Marital Status	1.69	.48	.27**	.41**	-					
4 Job Tenure	1.32	.57	.02	.48**	.14	-				
5 Education	2.00	.84	.12	.45	.28**	.60**	-			
6 OS	20.30	7.38	-.03	-.19*	.10	-.11	-.06	-		
7 FWC	26.14	4.57	-.13	-.26**	.09	-.51**	-.35**	.41**	-	
8 PWB	51.67	12.49	.04	.19*	.15	.19*	.12	.22*	-.19*	-

Note: * $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), N = 122; OS: Occupational Stress, FWC: Family-Work Conflict, PWB: Psychological Well-Being.

Results in Table 1 indicate that age and job tenure among the demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, job tenure, and education) significantly and positively correlated with psychological wellbeing. However, no significant correlations were found between psychological wellbeing and the rest of the demographic variables. Occupational stress exhibited a significant positive correlation ($r = .22$, $p < .05$) with psychological wellbeing. Additionally, family-work conflict had a significant negative relationship ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$) with psychological wellbeing.



Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model for the predictions of Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) by Occupational Stress (OS) and Family-Work Conflict (FWC)

Variables	Beta (β)	t	R ²	R ² Δ	F Δ
Step 1					
Gender	-.013	-.139			
Age	.092	.792	.058	.058	1.416
Marital Status	.106	1.045			
Job Tenure	.158	1.318			
Education	-.043	-.368			
Step 2					
OS	.256	2.816**	.118**	.061**	7.929**
Step 3					
FWC	-.334	-.2.989**	.182**	.064**	8.937**

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; OS: Occupational Stress, FWC: Family-Work Conflict

Table 2 above shows the result of the hierarchical multiply regression for the predictions of psychological wellbeing by occupational stress and family-work conflict. The demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, job tenure and education) entered in first step of the regression model as covariates collectively accounted for 5.8% [$R^2\Delta = .058$; $F\Delta$ (5, 116) = 1.416, $p < .01$] variation in psychological wellbeing. However, none of the demographic variables significantly predicted psychological wellbeing.

Occupational stress entered in step 2 of the equation significantly and positively predicted psychological wellbeing ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$). The variance in psychological wellbeing explained on account of occupational stress was 6.1% [$R^2\Delta = .061$; $F\Delta$ (1, 115) = 7.929, $p < .01$].

The inclusion of family-work conflict in the third and final step of the equation significantly and negatively predicted psychological wellbeing ($\beta = -.334$, $p < .01$). The variance in psychological wellbeing explained on account of family-work conflict was 6.4% [$R^2\Delta = .064$; $F\Delta$ (1, 114) = 8.937, $p < .01$].

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the impact of occupational stress (OS) and family-work conflict (FWC) in predicting psychological well-being (PWB) among primary school teachers in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

The first finding revealed that OS significantly and positively predicted PWB. This suggests that an increase in OS will result in a corresponding increase in PWB. Thus, the findings did not support the first hypothesis, which states that OS would be a significant negative predictor of PWB among primary school teachers in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Consequently, the first hypothesis was not confirmed. This finding is consistent with studies linking OS to PWB in the literature (Adegoke, 2014; Elliason, 2022; Ikonne, 2015; Saka, Kamal, & Alabi, 2018) which reported significant positive relationship between OS and PWB.

The reason for the outcome may not be unconnected to the fact that not all experiences of stress are deleterious in nature or damaging to an individual's psychological wellbeing. Selye (1976) for instance, introduced the term eustress to explain experiences of work pressures



which can be positive, beneficial, and at the very least challenging which is capable of boosting a teacher's psychological wellbeing leading to enhanced creativity and productivity in the work place. Also, Khan et al. (2012) acknowledges that every day or routine stress is considered normal and acceptable for the efficient functioning of the human body and mind. Although it is widely acknowledged that the teaching profession can be extremely challenging and stressful (Jarvis, 2002), it is important to recognize that the same factors causing stress can, from a different perspective, serve as motivating forces that encourage teachers to become more dedicated, efficient, and productive in their work. For example, a teacher feeling overwhelmed by large class sizes might, with proper support, see it as an opportunity to develop better classroom management skills, leading to increased confidence, effectiveness and psychological wellbeing.

The second hypothesis which states that family-work conflict (FWC) will be a significant negative predictor of psychological wellbeing (PWB) was confirmed. This finding implies that as FWC increases, PWB decreases, and vice versa. This result aligns with previous research findings (Obrenovic et al., 2020; Lizano, 2020; Lin et al., 2019; Masood & Ahmad, 2018; Olowodunoye, 2021; Taufik & Sunaryo, 2021) that consistently reported a significant negative impact of FWC on the prediction of PWB. The reason for this outcome is not farfetched. Netemeyer et al. (1996) describes family-work conflict as a form of inter-role conflict wherein an individual faces challenges in meeting job-related duties due to overlapping demands, time constraints, and stress or tension arising from family obligations. Consequently, it presupposes that when family obligations clashes with work duties it leads to conflict which negatively affect the PWB of teachers. The study's sample indicates that a significant proportion of the participants are married, implying that they likely have numerous family responsibilities, such as managing household chores, caring for children, and participating in family events. These responsibilities may intersect with their teaching duties, causing role conflicts that have the potential to generate anxiety, tension, and distress for the teachers, ultimately contributing to a reduced psychological well-being.

Implications of the Study

Several implications and deductions can be made from the findings of this study which would be of tremendous benefits to future researchers, teachers, school managements and the government at large.

The first finding of this study revealed that occupational stress significantly and positively predicted psychological wellbeing among primary school teachers. Teachers are encouraged to view the stress linked to their profession as a motivating force that can inspire them to modify their attitudes toward work and become skilled, effective professionals. According to transactional theory, how teachers perceive work-related stress can activate coping strategies, allowing them to see stress as a positive factor, ultimately contributing to improved psychological well-being and emotional resilience.

The second finding of this study showed that family-work conflict was a significant negative predictor of psychological wellbeing among primary school teachers. Government agencies and school administrators are encouraged to prioritize teachers' welfare by offering better working conditions, including fair compensation, a supportive work environment, and effective training programs. These measures aim to improve teachers' comfort and increase their disposable income, helping them meet their family financial needs and reducing the likelihood of personal issues affecting their professional responsibilities. Similarly, teachers



can use insights from this study to better balance family and work through family-work enrichment, where positive experiences and resources in one area (family or work) enhance the other.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Certain limitations exist in the study. Firstly, the study adopted cross-sectional design and reliance on self-report data which raise concerns about consistency bias and method variance. To address these issues, alternative data collection methods, such as interviews (though potentially challenging to conduct), should be considered to mitigate biases associated with self-report measures.

Secondly, the study exclusively focused on teachers from a single state in South Eastern Nigeria, limiting the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the entire teacher population in the country. Conducting this research in diverse contexts with a larger sample size could enhance its broader applicability.

Lastly, there might be additional variables that act as mediators or moderators in the relationship between the predictor variables (occupational stress and family-work conflict) and the outcome variable (psychological well-being). Examining these variables could provide further insights into the connections between the predictors and outcomes.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that occupational stress significantly and positively predicted psychological well-being, while family-work conflict emerged as a significant negative predictor of psychological well-being among primary school teachers in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

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