

Influence of Workplace Bullying On Teachers' Depression in Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

Background: Workplace bullying a frequent problem that affects teachers' wellbeing. It occurs as a result of negative experiences teachers encounter while performing their duties. Usually it is concealed or ignored in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. Since little or no attention has been given to this aspect of school administration, the researchers have selected this, to determine the extent teachers in Enugu Education Zone feel depressed due to workplace bullying.

Materials and methods: Survey research design was adopted for the study. One research question and one null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. 208 respondents made up of 48 males and 160 female teachers were sampled from a population of 2074 in Enugu Education Zone. The study adapted the "Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES)" for data collection. The instrument was validated by three research experts. A test of the internal consistency of the instrument yielded overall coefficient of 0.78. Mean with standard deviation and z-test were used for data analysis.

Conclusion: Teacher feel depressed to a great extent as a result of workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that state government should develop a policy framework on workplace bullying.

Key Words: workplace bullying, teachers, depression, secondary school

Date of Submission: 25-07-2022

Date of Acceptance: 08-08-2022

I. Introduction

In Nigeria, as well as in many other countries, the call for improved educational systems is resulting in both a gradual but general shift in educational management. Education, as the foundation of life of every society, is the most efficient way through which a society can surmount its challenges and carve out progressive future. It is one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability¹. Thus, in the National Policy on Education, it is recognised as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development². It empowers the individual by enhancing inherent talents in him so as to contribute positively to the life of the society. It should be noted that well administered education would equip the individuals with the capacity to understand and adapt to the new problems and the changing situations, in the society. The Nigerian secondary education shares in the actualisation of this wonderful project.

Secondary education is a very crucial level of education. It is a bridge between primary and tertiary levels of education; the education children received after primary education and before tertiary stage². Some of the educational goals to be achieved at this level are: provision of primary school leavers with education of a higher level, provision of trained man power in the area of science and technology, development and promotion of Nigeria language and cultures, provision of technical knowledge, fostering of national unity, etc. Public secondary schools therefore, function as institutions that provide the general training necessary for individuals to acquire skills necessary for future career challenges. For secondary education to achieve these objectives, it requires teachers who are both physically and psychologically sound.

A teacher can be described as a person who helps students to learn. He has professional knowledge and skills gained through formal preparation and experience. Korth, Erickson and Hall defined a teacher as a person who displays his knowledge of a subject and helps guide students to learn, by taking a curriculum and presenting it in the most interesting and applicable way³. Also, Hamza, Sani and Abubakar defined teacher as all those persons in schools who are responsible for the education of students⁴. The educational interests of students

could be better served by teachers who practice under conditions that enable them to exercise professional judgement. Hence, teachers working conditions play an important role in a school's ability to deliver high quality education

However, one of the factors that can affect teachers' performance, even when requisite resources are provided for teachers to effectively operate is workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is a behavior that tends to intimidate, threaten, harass, embarrass, demoralize, and demean others through the abuse of authoritative powers and positions⁵. Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper defined workplace bullying as repeated harassing, offending, or socially excluding behaviors that negatively affect someone's work behavior⁶. It is difficult for teachers to protect themselves against unconstructive behaviors such as workplace bullying. This can cause the teachers to lose their self-confidence, leading to poor psychological health and emotional suffering, such as depression⁷.

Depression is a feeling of guiltiness, worthlessness, powerlessness, and affects one's appetite, competence, sleep, and mood⁸. It is an increasing global health epidemic with serious implications for education. It results in several shortfalls in the workplace⁹. Teachers with depression are more likely to experience problems with time management, meeting job productivity demands as much as they might meet with increased accidents, sickness, and a decline in work quality. Due to increased levels of suffering, depression could lead to mediocre performance at work, extended mental health problems. Bond, Jorm, Kitchener and Reavley, reported that displeasure due to job overload and a lack of resources could cause teachers to become depressed¹⁰. Teachers could be subjected to unrelenting workplace bullying that tends to generate severe emotional reactions, which changes their perceptions of their work environment.

Some studies concluded relatively equal victimization rates and experience of workplace bullying for men and women. A related study on workplace bullying among business professionals, reported that the overall literature on bullying and gender appears to be inconclusive and contradictory¹¹. Similarly, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Moreno-Jiménez, Vergel and Hernández, reported that men and women did not differ with regard to bullying levels, but women are more likely to report cases of workplace bullying¹². In another study, Hollis revealed that women were more likely to leave a job and men were more likely to take more sick days due to workplace bullying¹³. However, it is not known how workplace bullying affects male and female teachers in Enugu Education Zone.

In Enugu Education Zone, workplace bullying is an aspect of educational management that appears to have been neglected over the years. It results from escalating complications related to heavy workloads, conflict among co-workers, and conflicting job requirements¹⁴. Much is not known about the extent teachers of public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone experience depression due to workplace bullying. If teacher are exposed to high rate of workplace bullying, there is likelihood that their psychological wellbeing will be negatively affected and *viz-a-viz* if the rate of exposure is low. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate extent workplace bullying result to teachers' depression in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying in the workplace is a constant problem with harmful effects on the teacher's health. It is a critical problem and is often concealed and ignored in many secondary schools. Most often, this occurs as a result of negative experiences teachers encounter in the process of discharging their duties. The researchers observed secondary school teachers in Enugu Education Zone are working under difficult conditions. They have found themselves in poor school environment with minimal teaching and learning aids, poor welfare packages and motivation, poor/inadequate communication, as well as excess workload. All these factors could make a teacher to bully or be bullied by another teacher, resulting to depression. However, there is a significant break in the body of knowledge regarding workplace bullying in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. It was not known the extent to which workplace bullying result to depression among secondary school teachers in Enugu Education Zone. Hence, the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the extent teachers in Enugu Education Zone feel depressed due to workplace bullying.

Research Question.

The study was guided by the following research question.

1. To what extent do teachers feel depressed due to workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis guided the study.

Ho₁: there is no significance difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent they feel depressed due to workplace bullying in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

II. Materials and Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. It was conducted in Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State Nigeria. The population for the study was 2074 made up of 477 male teachers and 1597 female teachers in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone¹⁵. A sample of 208 respondents, made of 48 male teachers and 160 female teachers were selected through proportionate random sampling, for the study. This represents 10% of the study population^{16,17}. The study adapted the "Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES)" for data collection¹⁸. The instrument has 2 sections and 13 items. The instrument was face-validated by the three research experts (two experts in Educational Management and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation), all of whom are lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The Crombach's Alpha coefficient of reliability was employed using SPSS to estimate the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.78. Copies of the instrument were distributed and retrieved from the respondents using SurveyMonkey application. Data from responses to the research question were analyzed using Mean with standard deviation, while z-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The z-test was used to determine the difference in mean scores of male and female teachers.

III. Result

Table no 1: mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent they feel depressed due to workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

S/N	I always feel:	Males 48			Females 160		
		X	SD	Dec.	X	SD	Dec.
1	fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	3.18	1.01	GE	2.82	1.12	GE
2	burned out from my work	2.03	0.81	LE	2.46	0.94	LE
3	working with people all day is really a strain for me	2.37	1.11	LE	1.62	1.02	LE
4	like I'm at the end of my rope	3.05	0.96	GE	2.58	1.26	GE
5	students blame me for their problems	1.76	1.05	LE	2.33	0.98	LE
6	I have become more callous towards people since I took this job	3.27	0.99	GE	2.98	0.78	GE
7	worried that this job is hardening me emotionally	3.33	0.87	GE	2.81	1.06	GE
8	restless that I have been moving around a lot more than usual	3.03	0.94	GE	2.87	1.02	GE
9	that I would be better off dead	2.71	1.08	GE	2.63	1.07	GE
10	I don't really care what happens to some students	3.27	1.03	GE	2.29	0.99	LE
11	little pleasure in doing my job	2.78	0.91	GE	2.62	1.08	GE
12	trouble falling asleep after the days job	1.72	0.95	LE	2.85	0.92	GE
13	speaking so slowly while moving, such that other people could have noticed.	3.15	0.88	GE	2.99	1.03	GE
Grand mean		2.76	0.97	GE	2.60	1.04	GE

From table 1 above, the mean scores of male teachers range from 1.72 to 3.33 and a grand mean of 2.76 with a standard deviation of 0.97; while that of females teachers range from 1.62 to 2.99 and a grand mean of 2.60 with a standard deviation of 1.04. This shows that teachers feel depressed to a great extent as a result of workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. The closeness of the standard deviations of the respondents show a unanimity in their responses.

Table no 2: z-test of difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent they feel depressed due to workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Group	N	Mean	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-crit	Decision
Male teachers	48	2.76	0.97	206	0.99	±1.96	Do not reject H ₀₁
Female teachers	160	2.60	1.04				

Table 2 above shows that z-calculated value at 0.05 alpha significant level and 206 degree of freedom for the items is 0.99 which was less than the critical value of ±1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent they feel depressed due to workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

IV. Discussion of findings

The findings reveals that teachers feel depressed to a great extent as a result of workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. This is not surprising if one takes a critical look at the deplorable working condition of teachers in this education zone. This finding agrees with the position of Jani, who noted that workplace bullying results from escalating complications related to heavy workloads, conflict among co-workers, and conflicting job requirements¹⁴. It also agreed with Burns et al who Butterworth and Anstey (2016) observed that workplace bullying results in several shortfalls in the workplace⁹. Supporting this finding, Bond, et al, reported that displeasure due to job overload and a lack of resources could cause teachers to become depressed¹⁰.

The study further revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent they feel depressed due to workplace bullying in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. This agrees with the position of Rodríguez-Muñoz, et al., who reported that men and women did not differ with regard to bullying levels, but women are more likely to report cases of workplace bullying¹². This finding corroborates the finding of Hollis, that women were more likely to leave a job and men were more likely to take more sick days due to workplace bullying¹³. The implication is that teachers will continue to exhibit non-commitment to duties and be less productive.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that depression is a negative outcome of workplace bullying in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. The school administration and the government have not done enough in the management of workplace bullying in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

1. The state government should develop a policy framework on workplace bullying. This will be landmark achievement in management of workplace bullying as it will provide legal platform for addressing issues related to workplace bullying in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone.
2. The government should institute periodic mental health assessment of teacher. This will help to provide timely intervention to depressed teachers.
3. The Post Primary School Management Board should also help to improve working environment for teachers by providing adequate educational resources.

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Columbus Okey Ogbuabor Ph.D, et. al. "Influence of Workplace Bullying On Teachers' Depression in Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 27(08), 2022, pp. 56-60.