

ASSESSING HOPELESSNESS AND HELPLESSNESS AS PREDICTORS OF DEPRESSION AMONG TEACHERS IN GOVERNMENT OWNED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN JOS METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This study assessed hopelessness and helplessness as predictors of depression among teachers in government owned primary schools in Jos metropolis. A cross sectional research design was employed for the study and stratified sampling technique was used to select two hundred and fifty (250) respondents which comprised of 150 public primary school teachers and 100 private primary school teachers. Three instruments were used for data collection. There included the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Beck Hopelessness scale (BHS) and Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS). The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression and independent t-test to test the hypotheses. Results revealed that hopelessness independently and significantly predicted depression in a positive direction among primary school teachers ($B=.270$, $t=4.559$, $p<.01$). Helplessness also significantly and independently predicted depression among the primary school teachers within Jos metropolis in a positive direction ($B=.328$, $t=5.537$, $p<.01$). Further results revealed that hopelessness and helplessness also jointly predicted depression significantly [$R=.495$, $R=245$, $F(2,247)=40.168$, $p<.01$]. There was however no significant difference in symptoms of depression ($t(248)=.456$, $p>.05$, between public primary school teachers ($N=150$, $t=72.41$, $Std=9.58$) and private primary school teachers ($N=100$, $t=72.97$, $Std=9.28$) within Jos environ. Based on these findings, it was recommended that future research may attempt to control for confounding variables, including co-morbid medical, psychological and cognitive concerns and future studies might use a larger sample size and incorporate a wide area of the state and not just the metropolis so as to make this study more generalized to the general population of teachers at the primary school level.

Keywords: Helplessness; Hopelessness; Teachers & Depression

Introduction

Depression is a common but serious illness affecting one's thoughts, feelings, behaviour and physical health. It is also a life-long condition in which periods of wellness alternate with recurrences of illness (National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI, 2022). Everyone occasionally feels blue or sad and these feelings are usually short-lived and pass within a couple of days. But the sadness and negative feelings of those with depression last longer and more intense. When you have depression, it interferes with daily life and causes pain for both you and those who care about you. According to World Health Organization WHO (2019), "depression is a common mental disorder characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feeling of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or loss of appetite, feelings of tiredness and poor concentration". The essential feature of a Major Depressive Episode is a period of at least 2 weeks during which there is either depressed mood or the loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities (American Psychological Association, APA, 2013). The individual must also experience at least additional symptoms drawn from a list that includes changes in appetite, weight gain or loss, poor sleep and psychomotor activity. Others are decreased energy, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions and recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation, (Sue, Sue & Sue, 2006).

A toxic aspect of depression is hopelessness which is characterized by a negative cognitive style and feelings of futility regarding the future goals (Carson, Butcher,

Mineka & Hooley, 2007; Duran & Barlow, 2000). It is conceptualized as an individual's state of extreme pessimism regarding the negative consequences of life events (Whipple, Lewis, Sutton-Tyrrell, Matthews, Barinas-Mitchell, Powell, et al., 2009). Studies have found an association between hopelessness and depressive symptoms (Bagge, Lamis, Nadorff, & Osman, 2014). However, hopelessness may also occur independent of depression or as a precursor to depression (Dunn, 2005). Hopelessness as it is described may be one of the emotions experienced by persons in difficult situation like the government owned primary school teachers within Jos metropolis. Another variable that can contribute to depression apart from hopelessness is perceived helplessness. Perceived helplessness (a form of situational helplessness) is seen as a potential human response to a variety of psychological, physiological, and sociological experiences resulting from the perceived inability to influence the outcomes of events felt to be significant to an individual (Collins, 1967; Seligman, 1975). It is through this response-outcome independence, that an individual experiences perception of unpredictability, uncontrollability, and frustration. When an individual believes he or she is unable to predict or control events or their outcomes, he or she develops frustration within the situation, and is at risk for developing situational helplessness. Most government owned primary school teachers within Jos are helplessness as they believed that when and how their salaries will be paid is out of their control.

Teachers in government owned schools within Jos metropolis are being owned salary

for up to 4-5 months if not more. In addition, they are compelled to go to work every day with poor working conditions and lack of motivation. They have used all avenues like negotiations, persuasions and strikes to force government to pay their salary to no avail. This situation has created social and financial burden on teachers which could lead to psychological state of hopelessness, helplessness and depression among these teachers.

The inadequate or absolute lack of payment of salaries and other poor working conditions of government owned primary school teachers in Plateau State has grown from bad to worse since the last administration to the present one. The teachers are being owed salary up to six to five months or even more without any hope of when it will be paid. According to the Daily Trust of June 17th. (2023). Plateau State primary school teachers are seriously suffering with the inadequate payment of their salary and other remunerations. This has taken a negative multiplier effect on the teachers and their families as they can no longer meet their basic financial obligations like feeding and payment of school fees. Some of the teachers are on loan from their financial institutions whose interest rate is accumulating every month with little or no hope of when their salaries will be paid and are experiencing great difficulties in managing their homes. All these stressors arising from the non-payment of salary and other poor working conditions have degenerated into psychological state of hopelessness and helplessness among the government owned primary school teachers within Jos metropolis and environ. Many studies

(Puwac, 1995; Runcan, 2012) have found that hopelessness and helplessness predict depression in institutionalized adults but none of Such study has been conducted among primary school teachers in Jos. It is against this background that this present study seeks to investigate hopelessness and helplessness as Predictors of depression among government owned primary school teachers in Jos, Nigeria.

Objectives of Study

The study is aimed at investigating hopelessness and helplessness as predictors of depression among government owned primary school teachers in Jos, Nigeria. The aim is translated in to the following objectives:

- i. To determine if hopelessness will significantly predict depression among government owned primary school teachers in Jos, Nigeria.
- ii. To examine if helplessness will significantly predict depression among government owned primary school teachers in Jos, Nigeria.
- iii. To explore if hopelessness and helplessness will jointly and significantly predict depression among government owned primary school teachers in Jos, Nigeria.
- iv. To find out if there are differences in symptoms of depression between public and private primary school teachers in Jos, Nigeria.

Review of Relevant Literature

This presents will give evidence based scientific backings to this study in regard to what previous studies have assessed on hopelessness and helplessness as predictors

of depression. The review is presented under subheadings which include hopelessness, helplessness and depression as well as helplessness and depression

Hopelessness and Depression

In a study of correlation between hopelessness and different levels of depression among Adolescents, Bansal. (2016) did a study to find out the relationship between hopelessness and the different levels of depression (normal range, mild, moderate and severe depression). Samples of 200 adolescents were selected randomly, studying in eight educational institutions located in Bathinda, India. They were categorized as adolescents with normal, mild, moderate and severe depression. Using a correlational research design, Bansal used Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale and Beck Hopelessness Scale to collect data from adolescents studying in various educational institutes in Bathinda. It was found that hopelessness is positively correlated to depression. In other words, as the hopelessness increase, depression also increases, the study concluded that hopelessness is strongly correlated to Mild, moderate and severe depression. Hopelessness leads to depression and vice versa. Fehintola and Victor (2016) carried out a study on Teachers' Stress, Anxiety and Depression among Secondary Schools in Nigeria. The study was aimed at understanding the mental health of teachers. Evidences from the study indicated a high prevalence of psychological distress, and specifically depression among teachers. According to the study, the high prevalence of depression reported in the study, is five folds higher than a report among teachers,

who were victims of a major disaster in China (Chen, Li. Chen, Gong, Zhu, Tian & Zhang, 2015). This suggests the presence of culture specific contextual factors responsible for the high prevalence of depression and anxiety in the sample or the tendency of the Asians to be less expressive of their emotional problems (Lin & Cheung, 1999). The prevalence of depression reported in their work is almost tenfold higher than what obtains among adult Nigerians in the community (Gureje, Uwakwe, Oladeji, Makanjuola, & Esan, 2010). The univariate analyses in the study also show that older teachers and private school teachers were less likely to have depression; these categories of teachers and those who are married were also less likely to have generalized anxiety disorder. According to the study, the organizational system of private schools in the studied areas was superior to that of government owned schools.

Borrelli, Benevene, Fiorilli, D'Amelio, & Pozzi (2014) carried out a preliminary study on Working conditions and mental health of teachers in Nigeria. The study revealed that about half of the teachers scored above the threshold for depression attributable to high job demand and lack of support. Specifically, in Oyo State, South West of Nigeria, the study identified certain factors as determinants of poor academic performance among students. These include poor and non - conducive environment", poor school location, inconsistent government policies, high student- teacher ratio, lack of monitoring and evaluation machinery

Helplessness and Depression

In a study of depression among the primary

school teachers in Iran, Ahmadzadeh, Ghasemi and Karami, (2003) aimed to measure the magnitude of depression among them. A total number of 291 Teachers from 21 primary schools in Esfahan city were examined by means of Beck Depression Inventory. Results revealed that 89% of the teachers suffered from afferent degrees of depression. That is, 33% mild, 28.3% moderate and 27.2 %o severe the degree of depression decreased as the level of education increased and with age the degree of depression increased. They concluded that in view of their occupational roles, teachers are vulnerable and more attention must be paid to their needs. Similarly, Susic, (2015) studied learned helplessness and depression: Comparison of Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living Facilities. It was a cross-sectional quantitative study which examined the relationship between depression and learned helplessness by comparing residents over age 65 in less restrictive assisted living (n =42) versus those in more restrictive skilled nursing facilities (n -63). Data were collected using the Geriatric Depression Scale, the Helplessness subscale of the Cognitive Distortion Scales, and the Learned Helplessness and Instrumental Helplessness subscales of the Multi-Score Depression Inventory. Between group ANOVA results revealed a higher level of depression and state learned helplessness, but not trait learned helplessness, in restrictive skilled nursing residents when compared to those in less restrictive assisted living residents. There were positive correlations between learned helplessness, instrumental helplessness, and depression regardless of level of nursing care, and a positive correlation between perceived control and

depression regardless of level of facility care. The study concluded that identifying state learned helplessness and depression in long-term, restrictive care facilities can promote positive social change through increased awareness, intervention, and treatment to improve individual quality of life and maximize internalization of perceived control of the decision-making process for elders.

Theoretical Framework

Although, many theories have sought to explain depression, this study will be anchored on the Beck Cognitive theory of depression. The theory explained that people's emotion sand behaviours are influenced by their perceptions of events. It is not a situation in and of itself that determines what people feel but rather the way in which they construe a situation' (Beck, 1964). In other words, how people feel is determined by the way in which they interpret situations rather than by the situations itself. For example, depressed patients are considered to be excessively negative in their interpretations of events. Fundamental to the cognitive model is the way in which cognition (the way we think about things and the content of these thoughts) which Beck conceptualized as negative cognitive triad influences our behaviours. These are deeply held beliefs about self, others and the world. Core beliefs that form this cognitive triad are generally learned early in life and are influenced by childhood experiences and seen as absolute. The negative cognitive triad relate to:

- i. The self, example I'm useless'
- ii. The world/others, example 'the world is unfair

iii. The future, example things will never work out for me The study will adopt this theoretical framework to explore hopelessness, helplessness and depression of both public and private primary school teachers. Beck cognitive theory with emphasis on the negative cognitive triad is adopted for this study for the following reasons:

The theory believed that the cognitive symptoms of depression actually precede the affective and mood symptoms of depression, rather than vice versa. According to Beck what is Central to depression are the negative thoughts, instead of hormonal lower rates of reinforcement as postulated by other theorists.

The model assumes that a depressive episode begins when a significant life event (e.g. the death of a loved one; losing one's job. lack of payment of salary) makes contact with one or more dysfunctional beliefs. The confluence of these factors activates a negative self-schema, characterized by negative attention and interpretational biases. These biases, in turn, give rise to the negative cognitive triad and other symptoms of depression .

Method

Design

This study utilized cross sectional survey design with the use of structured questionnaires. The independent variables are hopelessness and helplessness, while the dependent variable is depression.

Participants

Participants for the study were teachers

drawn from public and private primary schools in Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State. Three hundred (300) participants, 180 males representing 60%, and 120 females representing 40% were sampled from different schools across twenty (20) council wards were administered the research questionnaire out of which 250 (83.33%) questionnaires were returned. Six primary schools(Four public and Two private school) were included in the study from each of the local government council wards, making it a total of 12 schools in all. Inclusion criteria was that the teachers must be those in public and private primary schools, must be 18years and above and would have worked for at least two-three years and above. The reason for limiting the study to public and private primary school teachers is that they were considered to be the ideal respondents to provide answers to the research questions.

Sampling

Stratified simple random technique was used to sample respondents for the study. Using this technique, the researcher identified the council wards in Jos metropolis as strata. Then, simple random technique was used to select one public and one private primary school from each of the strata (council ward). After that, simple random sampling method was used to select the final respondents for the study from the selected schools.

Instruments

Three instruments were used for the study,

i. The Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS):

It was developed by Beck and Steer, (1988).

It is designed to measure negative measure

about one's future and the perceived inability to avert negative attitudes about life occurrences. It has twenty items that measure three aspects of hopelessness: Negative feelings about the future, loss of motivation and pessimistic expectations. The Beck Hopelessness score ranges from 0 to 20 with higher Scores indicating greater hopelessness. Across seven clinical samples reported internal consistency of Beck Hopelessness scale range from $\alpha = .82$ to $\alpha = .93$. When comparing with clinical ratings and Beck hopelessness scale scores, reported correlation coefficient between Beck hopelessness scale responses and rating of hopelessness have been reported as $\alpha = .74$ ($p < .01$) in a general p practice sample and $r = .62$ ($p < .05$) in a self-harm sample. Test-retest reliability coefficient is modest $r = .66$ and six weeks thereafter, suggesting reliability in hopelessness over time

ii. Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS): Developed by Quinless and Nelson, (1988). It is a 20-item, 4-point Likert scale strongly indicative of learned helplessness. When evaluating the original LHS, correlations were determined with Beck's Hopelessness Scale ($r = 0.52$), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale ($r = -0.62$), and alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85. The pilot study revealed that the learned helplessness scale has Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .72

iii. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). The BDI (Beck & Steer, 1987) is a 21-item Inventory that assesses depression severity in adults. Participants are asked to respond based on their experience over the past week including the day of testing. Responses are coded on a 4-point scale on which symptoms increase in severity from 0

to 3. Clinical interpretation of total scores uses the following guidelines. 0 to 9 (Normal), 10 to 15 (Mild Depression), and 20 to 29 (Moderate-Severe Depression) and 30 to 63 (Severe Depression). The test can be administered in individual or group format and takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The BDI has generally demonstrated adequate reliability, with alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .73 to .95 and test-retest reliabilities ranging from .62 (4-month interval) to .90 (2-week interval) (Beck, Steer, & Garbin, 1988).

Procedures

In administering the instruments, the researchers visited the selected schools in Jos North and Jos South Local Government Area with two research assistants who were trained by the researcher on how to administer the questionnaire. Upon reaching the schools selected, the researcher obtained permission from the school heads to administer the questionnaire to their teachers based on their availability and willingness to respond to the items of the questionnaire. Before giving out the questionnaire, the researchers introduced themselves to the teachers and explained to them the nature of the study, the researchers briefly explained the purpose of the study to them and left a call back number should anyone wants to make further enquiry or clarifications about the study.

To ensure that the study was devoid of violation of ethical principles, the researcher did their best to observe necessary ethical principles. Before the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents, they were given letters seeking their consents to

participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and respondents were free to decline or withdraw from responding the questionnaire even if they have started.

Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their information provided through the response to the questionnaire. To hide the identity of the respondents, they were not required to write their names on the questionnaire. The data generated from the questionnaire was used strictly for the research purpose and the questionnaires were destroyed immediately they were coded into the computer.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the study revealed that the mean age of the respondents was 36.3 years with the minimum and maximum age of 25 and 51 years respectively. A total of 129 (51.6%)

respondents has university first degree, 107 (42.8%) respondents have NCE/Diploma and only 14 (5.6%) respondents have master degree. Further analysis showed that 95 (38%) respondents were remarried, 48 (19.2%) respondents were single, 28 (11.2%) respondents were separated/divorced and 79 (31.6%) respondents were widow/widower. 150 (60.0) of the total participants are from public primary schools and 100 (40.0%) respondents were from private primary school. In terms of years of teaching experience, the mean years of teaching experience is 6 years. The minimum and maximum years of teaching experience are 1 and 19 years respectively.

The results obtained are presented in tables according to the hypotheses tested. Data collected were analysed using multiple linear regression analysis and independent t-test.

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis showing hopelessness and helplessness as independent and joint predictors of depression among primary school teachers within Jos metropolis.

Variable	R	R ²	df	F	P	b	t	P
Hopelessness	.495	.245	2,247	40.168	.000	.270	4.559	.000
Helplessness						3.28	5.537	.000

Hypothesis one stated that hopelessness will independently and significantly predict depression among primary school teachers in Jos metropolis. The results in Table 1 indicate that hopelessness independently predicted depression significantly in the positive direction ($\beta=.270$, $t4.559$, $p<.01$). Hopelessness independently accounted for

27% of the total variance observed in depression among primary school teachers within Jos metropolis. Based on this result, hypothesis one was confirmed.

Hypothesis two stated that helplessness will significantly predict depression among primary school teachers in Jos metropolis.

The results in Table 1 showed that helplessness independently predicted depression significantly in the positive direction ($\beta=.328$, $t=-5.537$, $p<.01$). Helplessness independently accounted for 32.8% of the total variance in depression among the teachers. Based on this result, hypothesis two was confirmed.

Hypothesis three stated that hopelessness and helplessness will jointly predict depression significantly among primary schoolin Jos metropolis. The results in Table I revealed that hopelessness and helplessness jointly predicted depression significantly [$R=495$,

$R^2=.245$, $F(2,247)=40.168$, $p<.01$]. The results indicated that hopelessness and helplessness jointed accounted for 24.5% of the total variance observed in depression among primary school teachers in Makurdi. Based on this result, hypothesis three was confirmed.

Hypothesis four stated that there will be a significant difference in symptoms of depression between public and private primary school teachers in Jos metropolis. This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test and the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Independent t-test showing the difference in symptoms of depression between public and private primary school teachers in Jos, metropolis.

Dv	IV	N	Mean	Std.	df	t	P
Depression	Public Prim. Sch	150	72.41	9.58	248	456	,649
	Private Prim. Sch.	100	72.97	9.28			

The results in Table 2 revealed there is no significant difference in symptoms of depression $t(248)=456$, $p>.05$] between pubic primary school teachers ($N=150$, $t=72.41$, $Std=9.58$) and private primary school teachers ($N=100$, $t=72.97$, $Std=9.28$) in Jos, metropolis. Based on this result, hypothesis four was not confirmed.

Discussion

Findings from hypothesis one revealed that the hypothesis which stated that hopelessness will significantly and independently predict depression among primary school teachers in Jos metropolis was confirmed. This implies that the higher the level of hopelessness among the primary school teachers studied,

the higher the degree of their depression. This finding is consistent with the finding of Bansal, (2016) who found that hopelessness is positively correlated to depression. In other words, as the hopelessness increase. Depression also increases in the population studied.

The second hypothesis which stated that helplessness will independently and significantly study. Predict depression among primary school teachers in Jos, metropolis was also confirmed. This implies that the higher the level of helplessness among the primary school teachers, the higher the depression. The finding is consistent with Salami, Walker, and Beach

(2016) whose study revealed that learned helplessness was associated with increased symptoms of depression in Black participants and hopelessness was associated with depressive symptoms in the White Participants. The current finding is also consistent with Susic, (2015) study on Learned Helplessness and Depression: Comparison of Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living Facilities. Susic (2015) found a higher level of depression and state learned helplessness in the sample.

The third hypothesis which stated that hopelessness and helplessness will jointly predict depression significantly among primary school teachers in Jos metropolis was significant. This means that as the levels of hopelessness and helplessness increases in the teachers, their degree of depression also increases. The results indicated that hopelessness and helplessness accounted for 24.5% of the total variance observed in 1 depression among primary school teachers within Jos metropolis.

Hypothesis 4 which stated that there will be a significant difference in symptoms of depression Between public and private primary school teachers in Jos, metropolis was not confirmed or found to be significant. This implies that public and private school teachers in Makurdi do not differ in those symptoms of depression. In other words, there is no sufficient evidence to conclude from the data analyzed that public primary school teachers experience more depressive symptoms than the private primary school teachers. This is contrary to the proposed hypothesis that stated that public primary school teachers in Jos, metropolis will differ

significantly from the private schoolteachers in depressive symptoms. One of the reasons this hypothesis was not confirmed was the improvement in the condition of service and welfare of the teachers between the time the study was conceived and the time data was collected. When the study was conceived, the teachers were owed several months' salary arrears with no hope of when it was to be paid and dilapidated infrastructure as well as poor teaching conditions. However, before data was collected, the welfare of teachers has improved as the state government moved to pay their salaries and approved the promotion of those who have been stagnated for years. Though many considered it as an attempt to gain political popularity as it is an election year, the gesture towards the teachers may have lightened their mood prior to data collection.

Conclusion

The findings from the study revealed that hopelessness and helplessness positively predicted depression among primary schoolteachers in Jos metropolis. In other words, as hopelessness and helplessness increase in the teachers, their symptoms of depression also appear to increase. However, the study further shows no difference between public and private primary school teachers in the presentation of symptoms of depression among the teachers. The knowledge provided by the findings of this study could aid in improving the welfare and condition of service of the teachers to reduce depression and promote a better sense of psychological health and well-being and higher quality of life of primary school teachers in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendation are made:

- I. To reduce the hopelessness that leads to depression among government owned primary school teachers, regular payment of salaries and other emoluments should be given to the teachers as at when its due, these will mitigate there suffering which it has been confirm as the leading cause of depression among the teachers.
- ii. Incentives should be made available to all teachers within the state so as to reduce the helplessness being experience by teachers in government primary schools. Incentives such as promotion, yearly increment and good working environment.
- iii. The work environment should be conducive for the teachers working within such government primary schools should be made conducive in other to reduce the state of hopelessness and helplessness being experience by the teachers which is a factor that predisposed depression among government owned primary school teachers in Jos.
- iv. Consistent engagement of the workforce within the study population can reduced the symptoms of depression being experience by teaches in government school as against those working in private schools. As constant engagement of teachers in government schools who do embark on strikes all the time leads to them experiencing depression due to lack of engagement at all-time unlike their counter parts in the private

schools, as idealness is the one precipitating factor that leads to depression.

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