# Business Educators' Employed Strategies for Coping with Occupational Stress in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State

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#### Abstract

his study determined the employed strategies for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and four null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The entire population of 99 business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State was used as the sample for the study. Data were collected using a 24-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by 3 experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the items of the alpha values of 0.93 and 0.89 were obtained for the two clusters of the questionnaire, while the overall coefficient of the instrument was 0.91. Data were analyzed with mean, standard deviation and t-test. Findings from the study revealed that basic self-care and emotional strategies were employed to reduce occupational stress encountered by business educators in tertiary institutions. It was therefore recommended that management of business education should engage business educators in stress management programmes often as stress is inevitable in the day-to-day work activities of an academia.

**Keywords:** Business Educators, Employed Strategies, Occupational Stress, Tertiary Institutions

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# Background to the Study

Education is the most important agent of change and the bedrock of a progressive society as it contributes immensely to the overall development of any nation. Business education is an aspect of this general education. Business education is a major component of vocational and technical education that enables students to acquire office and business skills for effective performance in the world of work. In this regards, Jubril (2010) defined business education as a specialized area of vocational education that provides educational training, skills, development, attitudes and adjustments towards business orientation and academic challenges.

Business education is a programme of study that prepares students for the world of work by exposing them to theoretical and practical knowledge in business practice and pedagogy. The programme has a slogan "education for and about business", which indicates that it covers the practical aspects of business knowledge and exposure of ways of teaching business subjects. Oladunjoye (2016) viewed business education as the combination of subject areas that are needed to carry out commerce effectively. Also, business education programme seeks to raise teachers of business, who are competent and skillful in subject areas in commercial sciences. Business education programme is aimed at equipping students with the right information, skills, attitudes and competencies, leading to employability and advancement in office occupations as well as becoming qualified business educators upon graduation (Abimbola, 2014). In order to achieve the lofty objectives of business education, effective teaching, administration and supervision among others is required.

Business educator is a person who has undergone training in business education programmes, and certified to teach business subjects at both secondary school and post-secondary school levels. One is referred to as a business educator, only when one has a basic knowledge of the three options of the programme areas (accounting option, office technology and management option ad co-operative and commerce option) of the business education programme. Business educators are professionally trained teachers of business subjects who are competent in teaching all business-related subjects in the faculty of education in the universities and colleges of education (Azu, 2018).

Teaching is one of the most stressful professions worldwide. It is evident that Nigerian tertiary institutions seems not to provide the low stress working environment due to poor working conditions, outrageous growing population of students enrolling, introduction of new courses among others. This factor has resulted to a lot of occupational stress.

Stress is an unavoidable experience resulting from the complex interactions between an individual and his or her environment. Ayo, Tolulope and Oluwadare (2019), Stress occurs when an individual's resources are insufficient to cope with situational demands and pressures. Stress is a subjective experience that is more likely to arise in some situations than others. In addition, some individuals can be more prone to stress than others. Overall, stress can undermine the achievement of goals, both for individuals and organisations. Depression, anxiety, and stress have been seen to lead to outcomes such as impaired functioning, burnout,

and other health problems that can adversely affect individuals and society at large. Huffman as in Uzoeshi (2012) also defined stress as the arousal of both physical and mental situations or events that are perceive as threatening or challenging. According to Uzoeshi, different writers or scholars perceive stress from different perspectives: - psychological, physiological, behavioural, occupational, social and environmental.

In today's workplace, occupational stress is a major issue and a matter of concern for the employees and the organization; it is a common mental state that is rapidly growing among employees in any field. Sohail, Waqar, Kazim and Rizvi (2012) posited that stress affects employees' mental abilities and physical behaviour resulting in increased or decreased performance efficiency. Understanding how to manage, minimize, and deal with stress can help people feel more relaxed and react when stressful situations arise. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on one's perception of an event or situation.

In the view of Mainardes, Ferreira and Raposo (2014), strategy means anything from a precisely formulated course of action, a positioning in a particular environment, through to the entire personality, the soul and existential rationale behind a organisations existence. In this study, strategies are seen as various detailed plans for achieving success in a situation, Strategies for coping with stress is an extremely important part of stress appraisal or management (Malik, 2011). Coping strategies are the ways for dealing with stress when the individuals experience it. Coping strategies refer to a person's active effort to resolve stress and create new methods of handling new situations at each life stage (Grace, 2014). The goals of coping include the desire to maintain a sense of personal integrity and to achieve greater personal control over the environment. Thus, coping is the behavior that occurs after the person has had a chance to analyze the situation, take a reading of emotions and to move to a closer or more distant position from the challenge Zakaria, et al. (2015). In the context of this study, strategies for coping with stress are mechanisms which business educators employ to cope with stress that barely affects their work. This strategy includes Basic self-care, emotional, cognitive and interpersonal strategies.

Basic self-care strategy has to do with dealing with stress in a healthy manner, unfortunately, many people deal with stress in unhealthy ways such as overeating, drinking or using drugs, excessive caffeine consumption, becoming a workacholic or developing chronic anxiety or depression. To Esa-Donkah and Kobina (2011), Basic self-care strategy entails a worker engaging in physical activities, promoting daily self-care practices, developing relaxation techniques as well as establishing priorities as regards to work and personal life.

Emotional strategy for coping with stress addresses the feeling that is associated with the stressor. This strategy modifies people's emotions by releasing, distracting and managing their mental state. Carver, Scheiver and Weintraub in Esa-Donkah and Kobina (2011) stated that emotional strategies aim at reducing or managing the emotional distress associated with the situation.

Gender could be a factor within the context of how business educators cope with occupational stress in tertiary institutions. Gender here simply refers to the sex of an individual either male or female. However, business educators are male and female graduates of business educations of tertiary institutions. According to Onyebu (2014), gender has remained a burning issue and relevant in education because it has been linked to achievements and participations in certain professions. Gender affects stress process by determining whether a situation will be employed as stressful, coping strategies and the health implications of stress to a particular gender. A review of literature shows that stress and gender are related (Safaria, Othman and Wahab, 2012). Matud (2013), stated women suffer more stress than men and their coping strategy is more emotion-focused than that of men. Also, Study by Mondal, Shrestha and Bhaila (2011) revealed that male academics experience more psychological and physical stress than their female counterparts. Therefore, considering gender in this study could yield useful practical information to the study.

Years of experience could be another factor that could influence how business education lecturers cope with stress at work. Years of experience in this study refers to the field of knowledge acquired over months or years of actual practice and which, presumably, has resulted in superior understanding or mastery in their various fields. Ben-Bakr, et al (2013) revealed that staff that have less than 15 years' work experience, experience the highest levels of stress than those above 15 years. Experience is one of the best predictors for coping with stress, be it work or business related, thus, the need to examine the strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

However, this research aims to examine the efficacy of coping strategies commonly employed by business educators to reduce work induced stress. It seeks to determine which of the strategies can claim success in job stress reduction and which cannot. The findings will serve to augment the body of literature pertaining to stress related coping strategies and to assist business educators achieve the goals of the business education programme.

## Statement of the Problem

The complexity and the time pressures inherent in the process of research, making publications, teaching, leadership, administrative functions and the presence of high personal human factors among others tasks makes teaching a demanding occupation which triggers occupational stress. Occupational stress has brought about unproductivity at workplace which might inhabit the achievement of goals set out by tertiary institutions in Anambra State. During the past decade, various tertiary institutions in Nigeria have undergone rapid changes due to changes of government policies, globalization, science and technology advancements relating to education. Business education by virtue of its nature has attracted the interest of a lot of people; this led to an increase in the number of students that enroll for various programmes which includes regular, part time, PG, sandwich for the universities, while Colleges of education has moved from the regular NCE programmes to offering degree of affiliated universities. These changes have caused lecturers in various tertiary institutions to experience high levels of occupational stress as they try to compete with high workloads, long

hours of working and so on. If this is not properly managed, it can result in negative and dysfunctional behaviour at work. And also, it might lead to premature death and terminal diseases on business educators. Recently, from researcher's observation, there has been an increase in death rate among lecturers especially in active service. As this situation increases, it is necessary to seek the opinion of the lecturers on the appropriate measures being employed to avert or reduce these concerns. Hence, this study to examine business educators' employed strategies for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore is to:

- 1. Examine basic self-care strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
- 2. Examine emotional strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

# **Research Question**

- 1. What basic care strategies are employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
- 2. What emotional strategies are employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

## Hypothesis

- 1. Male and female business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic self-care strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress.
- 2. Business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic self-care strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress as a result of years of experience.
- 3. Male and female business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic emotional strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress.
- 4. Business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses regarding emotional strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress as a result of years of experience.

### Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A descriptive survey research is a type of design in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group using questionnaire or interview (Nworgu, 2015). Based on this, the design is appropriate for the study since it sought to explore the opinions of business educators in Anambra State on the strategies employed for coping with occupational stress with the use of questionnaire. The study was carried out in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The population of the study consists of all 99 business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State in 2021.

The entire population was studied due to the fact that the population size is manageable. Consequently, there was no sampling.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Business Educators' Employed Strategies for Coping with Occupational Stress It is divided into two Sections: Part A and B. Part A contained demographic information of the respondents, on gender and years of experience. Part 2 contained two clusters of 24 items. The first cluster sought to ascertain basic care strategies for coping with occupational stress while the second cluster sought to ascertain the emotional strategies for coping with occupational stress. The instrument is structured on a 4-point rating scale of Frequently Employed (FE) –4 points, Moderately Employed (ME) – 3 points, Rarely Employed (RE) - 2 points, and Never Employed (NE) – 1 point.

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. The topic of the study, purpose of study, research questions and the instrument for data collection were given to three experts, one from measurement and evaluation and two experts from business education all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. They were requested to scrutinize the items for clarity, suitability of language and coverage on the content area. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha statistical analysis using SPSS to determine the reliability of each of the clusters of the instrument. The reliability values obtained were 0.93 and 0.89 for the two cluster. Meanwhile, an overall of a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. These values were considered by the researcher as acceptable levels of reliability. This is in conformity with the assertion of Uzoagulu (2011) that any coefficient value of 0.70 and above is considered reliable.

The researcher administered the instrument with the help of three research assistants. These research assistants were briefed on how to distribute and retrieve the instrument. A period of three weeks was used for distribution and collection of the questionnaire. The copies of the questionnaire successfully retrieved were used for data analysis. However, out of 99 copies of questionnaire distributed, 88 were retrieved from the respondents which represented about 87 percent retrieval. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyze data with respect to the research questions. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. If the probability (P-value) for the groups obtained after data analysis is less than or equal to 0.05 alpha value, it means that there is a significance difference where as if the P-value is greater than 0.05, it implies that there is no significant difference.

## **Research Question 1**

What basic self-care strategies are employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

**Table 1:** Mean of response of respondents on basic self-care strategies are employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State

SN	Basic self-care strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Exercising regularly - cardiovascular, strength training,	3.47	0.77	Moderately
	stretching	3.47	0.77	Employed
2	Avoiding excessive alcohol consumption	3.65	0.72	Frequently
		3.03	0.72	Employed
3	Eating well balanced meals with adequate nutrition,	3.33	0.56	Moderately
	vitamins, and minerals	3.33	0.50	Employed
Į.	Taking mini-breaks during the day	3.10	0.72	Moderately
		3.10	0.72	Employed
5	Maintaining appropriate weight	3.30	0.70	Moderately
		3.30	0.79	Employed
5	Engaging in recreational activities	3.33	0.81	Moderately
		3.33	0.81	Employed
7	practicing good sleep regime	2.20	0.76	Moderately
		3.30	0.70	Employed
;	Seek medical help regularly	2.94	0.99	Moderately
		2.94	0.99	Employed
)	Engaging in progressive muscle relaxation routine	2.92	0.94	Moderately
		2.92		Employed
0 Practice ef	Practice effective time management	3.50	0.74	Frequently
				Employed
1	Reducing the intake of caffeine and sugar	3.57	0.71	Frequently
		3.37	0.71	Employed
2	Avoid extra hours at work	2.82	0.78	Moderately
		2.82	0.78	Employed
3	Minimizing job and role ambiguity	2.01	0.65	Moderately
		2.91	0.65	Employed
4	Providing a supportive, team-oriented work environment	3.47	0.66	Moderately
		3.47	0.66	Employed
		2.24	0.54	Moderately
	Grand Mean	3.26	0.76	Employed

The data presented in table 1 showed that all basic self-care strategies listed were employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions. Three strategies (2, 10, 11) were frequently employed while the rest were moderately employed. The grand mean of 3.26 indicates that, generally, the respondents perceive the listed items as basic care strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions. The standard deviation which ranges from 0.65 to 0.99 shows that the opinions of the respondents are homogeneous in their rating of basic care strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress.

# Research Question 2

What emotional strategies are employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

**Table 2:** Mean of response of respondents on emotional strategies are employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra State

SN	Emotional strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
15	Expressing and releasing one's feelings	3.47	0.69	Moderately
				Employed
16	Practicing relaxation techniques, such as deep	3.13	0.92	Moderately
	breathing, visualization exercises, meditation, yoga			Employed
17	Finding the humor in things and laughing more	3.57	0.67	Frequently
	often			Employed
18	Providing strong social ties and support	2.89	0.89	Moderately
				Employed
19	Freeing oneself from negative energy by forgiving	3.18	0.97	Moderately
	and moving on			Employed
20	Seeing challenges as opportunities for personal	3.22	1.01	Moderately
	growth.			Employed
21	Talking to a trusted friend	2.42	1.28	Rarely
				Employed
22	Accepting things the way they are	3.00	0.91	Moderately
				Employed
23	Spending time with positive people	3.50	0.69	Frequently
				Employed
24	Make time for leisure activities	3.10	0.91	Moderately
				Employed
	Grand Mean	3.14	0.89	Moderately
				Employed

The data presented in table 2 showed that all emotional strategies listed were employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions. Two strategies (17, 23) were frequently employed while eight strategies were moderately employed and one strategy (21) was rarely employed. The grand mean of 3.14 indicates that, generally, the respondents perceive the listed items as emotional strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions. The standard deviation which ranges from 0.69 to 1.28 shows that the opinions of the respondents are homogeneous in their rating of emotional strategies employed by business educators for coping with occupational stress.

## Hypothesis 1

Business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic self-care strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress as a result of gender.

**Table 3:** Summary of t-test analysis between male and female business educators on basic self-care strategies employed for coping with occupational stress

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	33	3.25	0.32	86	-0.07	0.94	Accept Ho
Female	55	3.26	0.40				

The data from the table indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean response of male and female business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State on basic self-care strategies employed for coping with occupational stress (t= -0.07, df= 86, p= 0.94> 0.05). The hypotheses were accepted indicating that the both genders do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic self-care strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra.

## Hypothesis 2

Business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic self-care strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress as a result of years of experience.

**Table 4:** Summary of t-test analysis on basic self-care strategies employed for coping with occupational stress based on years of experience of business educators

Years	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
0-15	41	3.26	0.36	85	0.22	0.83	Accept Ho
16-35	46	3.24	0.38				

The data from the table indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean response of business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State on basic self-care strategies employed for coping with occupational stress as a result of years of experience (t= 0.22, df= 85, p= 0.83> 0.05). The hypotheses were accepted indicating that business educators do not differ significantly in their mean responses on basic self-care strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra as a result of years of experience.

# Hypothesis 3

Business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on emotional strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress as a result of gender.

**Table 5:** Summary of t-test analysis between male and female business on emotional strategies employed for coping with occupational stress

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	33	3.23	0.40	86	1.42	0.16	Accept Ho
Female	55	3.09	0.51				

The data from the table indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean response of male and female business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State on emotional strategies employed for coping with occupational stress (t= 1.42, df= 86, p= 0.16> 0.05). The hypotheses were accepted indicating that the both genders do not differ significantly in their mean responses on emotional strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra.

# Hypothesis 4

Business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean responses on emotional strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress as a result of years of experience.

**Table 6:** Summary of t-test analysis on emotional strategies employed for coping with occupational stress based on years of experience of business educators

Years	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
0-15	41	3.16	0.43	85	0.27	0.79	Accept Ho
16-35	46	3.13	0.53				

The data from the table indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean response of business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State on emotional strategies employed for coping with occupational stress as a result of years of experience (t= 0.27, df= 85, p= 0.79> 0.05). The hypotheses were accepted indicating that business educators do not differ significantly in their mean responses on emotional strategies they employ for coping with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra as a result of years of experience.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings on research question 1 shows that that out of the fourteen items listed, the respondents frequently employed 3 items as basic care strategies for coping with occupational stress and 11 items were moderated employed. These basic care strategies include exercising regularly, seeking medical attention, engaging in recreational activities, practicing effective time management among others. The findings of this research question are in consonance with Lyndsay (2019) who suggested that healthy diet, exercise, breathing, meditating and so on are one of the best self-care practices that could help workers ease from stress. Also, Crim (2013) stated that Basic self-care strategies utilized by addiction counselors which included staying organized, taking short breaks, clinical supervision, professional therapy, thinking positively, relaxation and meditation techniques, humor, teamwork, effective leadership, maintaining cultural identity, establishing boundaries, and successful transition from work to home.

The study also revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean response of business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State on basic self-care strategies employed for coping with occupational stress as a result of gender and years of experience. The finding of the hypothesis is in agreement with the findings of Hassan (2009) who reported that gender has no effect on occupational stress of workers.

With regards to the second research question, the finding of the study reveals that the respondents frequently employed two out of the ten items emotional strategies for coping with occupational stress and eight items were moderated employed. These emotional strategies include finding the humor in things and laughing more often, freeing oneself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on, spending time with positive people, making time for

leisure activities among others. This finding is in line with the findings of Lent (2011) that expressing what you are going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation, accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes, let go of anger and resentments, free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

The study also revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean response of business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State on emotional strategies employed for coping with occupational stress as a result of gender and years of experience. The finding of the study is in consonance with the findings of Patric (2011), who noted that workers in an organization have to go through certain stress to get work done irrespective of workers years of experience or ways of handling job done.

#### Conclusion

The study identified basic self-care, emotional, strategies employed by business educators to cope with occupational stress in tertiary institutions in Anambra. Also, it can be concluded that business educators do no differ significantly in the strategies employed for coping with occupational stress with respect to gender and years of experience. It is expected that these strategies will be properly enhanced and used to reduce occupational stress encountered by business educators in tertiary institutions.

#### Recommendations

- 1. University management should provide business educators with a supportive work environment, detailed job descriptions, providing feedback about their performances, as well as increase the number of staff needed to perform the tasks, research funds and career development which can help them to perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently and cope with cognitive stress.
- 2. Government agencies should avoid formulating stress-induced policies, human factors should be considered because the emotional wellbeing of business educators is intricately linked with the wellbeing of the society where they work.
- 3. Management of business education should engage business educators in stress management programmes often as stress is inevitable in the day-to-day work activities of an academia.

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