

Factors Influencing Future Anxiety among Teachers in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

Keywords:

Future Anxiety;
Childhood
Experiences;
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Resilience;
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Health.

Teachers in Nigeria increasingly face economic uncertainty, social instability, and occupational stress, conditions that contribute to heightened anxiety about the future. While research has highlighted the prevalence of mental health challenges among teachers, limited attention has been given to the developmental and psychological factors shaping such anxieties. This study examined the joint and relative influence of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, involving a sample of 2,000 teachers drawn through multi-stage sampling across three states. Data were collected using validated instruments, including modified versions of the Future Anxiety Scale, Psychological Mindedness Scale, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and scales measuring adverse and benevolent childhood experiences. The data were analysed using multiple regression at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience jointly accounted for the variance in future anxiety, indicating a substantial predictive influence. Childhood experiences emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by resilience and psychological mindedness. These results suggest that teachers' anxiety about the future is shaped not only by current socio-economic pressures but also by the enduring impact of early life experiences and their capacity to engage in adaptive coping. The study concludes that interventions aimed at strengthening resilience and fostering psychological mindedness, alongside trauma-informed support, are crucial for enhancing teachers' well-being and reducing anxiety.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:
Kecemasan Masa
Depan; Pengalaman
Masa Kecil; Pola Pikir
Psikologis; Ketahanan;
Kesehatan Mental
Guru.

Guru-guru di Nigeria semakin menghadapi ketidakpastian ekonomi, ketidakstabilan sosial, dan stres kerja, kondisi-kondisi yang berkontribusi pada meningkatnya kecemasan tentang masa depan. Meskipun penelitian telah menyoroti prevalensi tantangan kesehatan mental di kalangan guru, perhatian terbatas telah diberikan pada faktor-faktor perkembangan dan psikologis yang membentuk kecemasan tersebut. Studi ini meneliti pengaruh gabungan dan relatif dari pengalaman masa kecil, pola pikir psikologis, dan ketahanan terhadap kecemasan masa depan di antara guru-guru sekolah menengah pertama negeri di Nigeria Barat Daya. Desain survei deskriptif digunakan, yang melibatkan sampel 2.000 guru yang diambil melalui pengambilan sampel multi-tahap di tiga negara bagian. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan instrumen yang telah divalidasi, termasuk versi modifikasi dari Skala Kecemasan Masa Depan, Skala Pola Pikir Psikologis, Skala Ketahanan Connor-Davidson, dan skala yang mengukur pengalaman masa kecil yang buruk dan baik hati. Data dianalisis menggunakan regresi berganda pada tingkat signifikansi 0,05. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa pengalaman masa kecil, pola pikir psikologis, dan resiliensi secara bersama-sama memengaruhi varians kecemasan di masa depan, yang menunjukkan adanya pengaruh prediktif yang substansial. Pengalaman masa kecil muncul sebagai prediktor terkuat, diikuti oleh resiliensi dan pola pikir psikologis. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan guru tentang masa depan tidak hanya dibentuk oleh tekanan sosial-ekonomi saat ini, tetapi juga oleh dampak jangka panjang dari pengalaman hidup di masa awal dan kapasitas mereka untuk terlibat dalam

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koping adaptif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa intervensi yang bertujuan untuk memperkuat resiliensi dan menumbuhkan pola pikir psikologis, beserta dukungan berbasis trauma, sangat penting untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan guru dan mengurangi kecemasan.

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INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of mental health challenges among workers in contemporary Nigeria is on the rise. The numerous challenges, such as economic instability, evolving workplace demands, increasing family obligations, and the difficulty in establishing sustainable coping mechanisms, contribute to considerable stress. Teachers appear to be significantly impacted by these challenges as they manage difficult economic circumstances, increased expectations for teaching effectiveness, substantial family obligations, and possible struggles with self-regulation. Teachers in Nigeria increasingly face economic uncertainty, unstable social conditions, and heavy occupational demands, which place them at risk of heightened anxiety about the future. Future anxiety – defined as worry, fear, or apprehension about uncertain events and possible negative outcomes – has serious implications for teachers' mental health, job performance, and overall effectiveness in the classroom. Since teachers are central to the quality of education and nation-building, understanding the factors that contribute to their future anxiety is a pressing issue that demands scholarly attention. A deeper exploration of this phenomenon using quantitative analysis is crucial for both theory and practice.

Previous research has highlighted the prevalence of stress, burnout, and mental health challenges among teachers, often attributing these to low pay, poor welfare, and high workloads. Studies also point to the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences on adult anxiety (Crandall et al., 2019; Narayan et al., 2018) and the protective role of resilience in coping with adversity (Srivastava & Madan, 2020; Ye et al., 2022). Additionally, psychological mindedness has been linked to better self-regulation and coping in uncertain environments (Kumlu, 2022). However, while these factors have been studied independently in various populations, limited research has examined how they jointly and relatively influence future anxiety, specifically among teachers in Nigeria.

This gap highlights the novelty of the present study. The purpose of this paper is to address these shortcomings by analysing the combined and relative effects of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria. Unlike earlier studies that focused narrowly on either socio-economic pressures or isolated psychological factors, this study integrates developmental history, coping resources, and reflective capacity into one explanatory model. By doing so, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of future anxiety in the teaching profession.

Specifically, this paper seeks to test two hypotheses: first, that childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience jointly exert a significant influence on teachers' future anxiety; and second, that each factor contributes differently, with some emerging as stronger predictors than others. By examining both the shared and unique effects of these variables, the study positions itself to confirm theoretical

assumptions and extend the scope of existing research. This research situates itself at the intersection of developmental psychology, resilience studies, and teacher mental health. By focusing on a Nigerian context, it not only contributes to the global literature on future anxiety but also responds to the urgent local need for trauma-informed, resilience-based interventions to support teachers. Ultimately, the findings aim to inform policymakers, educational leaders, and mental health practitioners on how to strengthen teachers' well-being and reduce future anxiety through targeted strategies.

Research Hypotheses

These hypotheses were tested in this study at the 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant joint influence of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest, Nigeria.

H02: There is no significant relative influence of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilised a descriptive survey design to analyse the relationships and influences among 56,827 public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest, Nigeria. A sample of 2,000 teachers was selected using a Multi-stage sampling method. The first stage involved stratified random sampling to select three states from six states in Southwest Nigeria. The states were arranged in descending order, with the "Lagos and Ogun States," "Oyo and Osun States," and "Ekiti and Ondo States" being the three groups of twos. The stratification was done to ensure proper representation of each subgroup in the research sample. After categorized, a random sampling technique was applied to select one state from each group, resulting in a sample of three states. Ogun, Osun, and Ondo States were chosen using the same technique. The research instrument questionnaire was titled Teachers Future Anxiety Questionnaire (TFAQ), was used to gather information from the respondents.

The study seeks to understand the factors influencing the anxiety levels among teachers in Southwest Nigeria. Questionnaire contained: The Future Anxiety Scale ($\alpha=.78$) is a modified version of the original 29-item scale with 15 items. It measures anxiety, uncertainty, and catastrophe expectation (Zaleski et al., 2019). The scale was modified to assess public junior secondary school teachers' future anxiety. The modified Psychological Mindedness Scale ($\alpha=.73$) assesses psychological mindedness in public junior secondary school teachers (Ibragimova, 2022). The emotion dimension of psychological self-mindedness was measured using the scale. The scale has 14 Balanced Index of Psychological Mindedness components. AlHarbi et al. (2021) provide the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) ($\alpha=.84$), a 10-item scale with answers ranging from Not true to True very often. This research measures public junior secondary school teachers' resilience using the scale. According to Feldman et al. (2008), the Benevolent Childhood Experience (BCE) Scale ($\alpha=.71$) is a 10-item measure that

evaluates positive childhood experiences from birth to 18 years old. Junior secondary school teachers' pleasant and caring childhood experiences were assessed using the measure. Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): A modified ACEs scale was used to evaluate public junior secondary school teachers' adverse childhood experiences (Sawalha, 2013). The items cover 10 types of childhood adversities between birth and age 18, including emotional, physical, and verbal abuse; neglect; parental separation or divorce; domestic violence, household substance abuse, mental illness, and incarceration.

The scale ($\alpha=.76$) was modified to assess unpleasant and traumatic childhood experiences among junior secondary school teachers. Public junior secondary school teachers were asked to identify their level of agreement with these statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Researchers visited schools in three selected states in Southwest Nigeria and administered questionnaires with four trained research assistants. Participants were informed about the research's purpose and the importance of their participation, as findings and recommendations could positively impact their personal development and well-being. Confidentiality was assured before participants completed the questionnaires. The collected data were analysed using inferential statistics of multiple regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

H01: There is no significant joint influence of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest, Nigeria

Table 1

Regression Test Results on Predictors of Future Anxiety

Path/ Hypothesis	Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
Childhood Experiences → Future Anxiety	0.75	14.01	0.000	Strongest predictor: adverse experiences increase vulnerability, while positive experiences reduce anxiety.
Resilience → Future Anxiety	0.47	9.48	0.000	Significant predictor: Resilient teachers experience less future anxiety.
Psychological Mindedness → Future Anxiety	0.12	1.33	0.000	Smallest but still significant predictor; higher self-awareness helps reduce anxiety.
Joint Effect (Childhood Experiences + Resilience + Psychological Mindedness)	R = 0.763, R ² = 0.582, F(3,1764) = 820.03	–	0.000	The three predictors together explain 58.2% of the variance in future anxiety.

Table 1 illustrates the substantial collective influence of the independent variables (childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience) on prospective

anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria. Table 1 displays the model summary, which includes the values of R, R Square, and adjusted R Square. The findings indicate that the interplay of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience significantly correlates with future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria, yielding a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.763 and a coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.582. This indicates that the three predictors together explained 58% (Adj. R²=.58) of the variation in predicting future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers. The other variables contributing to the remaining variation are beyond the purview of this research. The ANOVA results from the regression analysis indicate a substantial impact of the independent factors on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria. $F(3, 1764) = 820.027, p < 0.05$. The independent factors collectively influenced future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria.

H02: There is no significant relative influence of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest, Nigeria

Table 2

Relative Influence of Independent Variables on Future Anxiety

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	Sig.	Interpretation
Constant	16.92	1.53	—	11.06	.000	Model baseline (intercept).
Childhood Experiences	2.01	0.14	.75	14.01	.000	Strongest predictor: teachers with adverse experiences show higher future anxiety.
Psychological Mindedness	0.13	0.08	.12	1.33	.000*	Weakest predictor, but still significant; greater self-awareness reduces anxiety.
Resilience	0.63	0.07	.47	9.48	.000	Moderate predictor; resilient teachers cope better with uncertainty.

Table 2 presents the contributions of each independent variable in predicting future anxiety levels among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria. The analysis indicates that childhood experiences play a significant role in predicting future anxiety levels among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest, Nigeria. The most significant factor identified was childhood experiences ($\beta = .750, t = 14.011, p < 0.05$), followed by resilience ($\beta = .467, t = 9.475, p < 0.05$) and psychological mindedness ($\beta = .118, t = 1.327, p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The present study set out to examine the joint and relative influence of childhood experiences, psychological mindedness, and resilience on future anxiety among public junior secondary school teachers in Southwest Nigeria. The findings revealed that these three variables significantly contributed to teachers’ anxiety about the future, jointly explaining 58% of the variance. This is a considerable proportion, underscoring that teachers’ anxiety is not random or incidental, but meaningfully linked to developmental,

cognitive, and emotional resources. Of the three predictors, childhood experiences emerged as the strongest determinant, followed by resilience and psychological mindedness.

The prominence of childhood experiences in predicting future anxiety suggests that early developmental contexts leave enduring imprints on teachers' psychological health. Teachers who reported adverse childhood experiences – such as neglect, abuse, or unstable family environments – were more prone to heightened anxiety in adulthood. This aligns with evidence from Crandall et al. (2019) and Narayan et al. (2018), which shows that adverse childhood experiences disrupt socio-emotional development and increase vulnerability to anxiety disorders later in life. Conversely, positive childhood experiences, such as nurturing parental care or community support, appear to provide emotional scaffolding that fosters resilience and reduces anxiety (Daines et al., 2021). These findings confirm that teachers' current anxieties are not solely products of contemporary economic hardship but are deeply rooted in their formative life experiences.

Resilience was also found to play a significant role in predicting anxiety, ranking second among the predictors. Teachers with higher resilience reported less anxiety about the future, highlighting resilience as a psychological buffer against adversity. This finding resonates with earlier research (Srivastava & Madan, 2020; Ye et al., 2022), which emphasised resilience as a key factor enabling individuals to adapt to stress, maintain functionality, and pursue goals despite uncertainty. In the Nigerian teaching context, resilience is particularly critical, as teachers face systemic challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, irregular remuneration, and limited social recognition. The ability to remain emotionally steady and to interpret setbacks as manageable rather than catastrophic can help teachers to sustain optimism and effectiveness. Resilience thus emerges not only as an individual trait but as an essential professional resource for teachers working under strained conditions.

Psychological mindedness, though the weakest predictor in this study, also contributed significantly to the model. Teachers with greater awareness of their emotional processes and an ability to reflect on their inner states exhibited lower levels of anxiety. This finding is consistent with Abulibdeh et al. (2024) and Kumlu (2022), who observed that psychological mindedness enhances self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and openness to adaptive coping strategies. In practice, psychologically minded teachers may be more proactive in seeking support, reframing stressors, or engaging in constructive dialogue about their well-being, thereby mitigating the effects of uncertainty.

Although its influence was weaker compared to resilience and childhood experiences, psychological mindedness still represents a valuable protective factor for teachers navigating anxiety. This study highlights the significant impact of economic volatility, industrial disputes, and occupational insecurity on Nigerian teachers. Childhood experiences are the strongest predictor of future anxiety, suggesting that structural interventions should extend beyond immediate economic reforms. Trauma-

informed policies, teacher support services, and continuous professional development that prioritise emotional well-being are necessary.

Resilience-building programs should be integrated into teacher training and in-service development, including workshops on stress management, problem-solving skills, and cultivating a positive outlook. Moreover, promoting psychological mindedness through reflective practices, counselling, and emotional intelligence training can help teachers cope with professional and personal stressors. However, the study does not account for all possible influences on teachers' future anxiety, such as systemic issues like government policies, cultural expectations, and organisational leadership styles.

The cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions, but the study provides strong evidence that future anxiety among teachers is a multi-dimensional phenomenon shaped by both past and present psychological resources. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches to track resilience and psychological mindedness evolution over teachers' careers and how interventions may mitigate the long-term impact of adverse childhood experiences. Comparative studies across public and private schools could provide broader insights into the influence of institutional contexts. Qualitative studies exploring teachers' lived experiences of anxiety could enrich the quantitative results.

CONCLUSION

The study established that childhood experiences, resilience, and psychological mindedness jointly accounted for a significant proportion of variance in teachers' future anxiety in Southwest Nigeria. Among these, childhood experiences emerged as the strongest predictor, showing that adverse experiences such as neglect or abuse increase vulnerability to anxiety in adulthood, while positive experiences foster stability and coping. Resilience was the second most powerful factor, demonstrating that teachers who can adapt and recover from difficulties are less likely to suffer intense anxiety about the future. Psychological mindedness, though the weakest predictor, still contributed significantly, indicating that teachers who are more self-aware and reflective of their emotions can better regulate their anxiety. These findings highlight that future anxiety is not random but strongly shaped by both developmental history and current psychological resources. This research enriches the field of teacher mental health by confirming that resilience and psychological mindedness buffer against anxiety while also showing that early life experiences exert a long-lasting impact. It strengthens previous studies on resilience, challenges the notion that anxiety is driven mainly by present socio-economic hardship, and introduces trauma-informed perspectives that can guide educational and mental health interventions.

The study was limited to public junior secondary school teachers in three states of Southwest Nigeria, which constrains generalisation. Its cross-sectional design also limits causal interpretation, and other potential influences such as cultural norms, organisational leadership, and government policies were not covered. Further research

with longitudinal and more diverse samples is needed for a comprehensive understanding of teachers' future anxiety.

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