**Effects Of Occupational Stress And Coping Strategies On Mental Health And Emotional Well-Being Of Academic Staff In Nigerian Colleges Of Education**

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**Abstract**

*Occupational stress is a pressing challenge undermining the health and performance of academic staff at Nigeria's Colleges of Education (CoEs). This research looked at occupational stress, coping methods, and their impact on mental health among teachers at Colleges of Education (CoEs). A cross-sectional survey approach was used, with data gathered from a sample of 400 lecturers recruited from 37 CoEs across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The researchers used established measures to assess stress, and coping mechanisms (COPE Inventory), (measured by a validated scale like the Perceived Stress Scale – (PSS)) and after Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) was used. Four research hypotheses were raised. Results showed that both male and female instructors reported high professional stress. Female lecturers reported somewhat lower stress levels, although they relied more on coping mechanisms. Years of teaching experience was shown to be inversely connected with the usage of coping strategies, suggesting that experienced lecturers regard obstacles as less stressful. Stress and bad mental health effects were shown to be positively correlated. Based on these results, suggestions include creating gender-specific stress management programs, offering early-career assistance, resolving workload inequities, encouraging good coping mechanisms, and creating a friendly work atmosphere.*

**Keywords:** Occupational Stress, Coping Strategies, Mental Health and Emotional Well-being

**Introduction**

**Background and Rationale for the Study.**

Globalized economies, new rules, and technology have resulted in new problems for workers in today's society, where the working environment is always evolving (Darus et al., 2016). The higher education sector is one of the most affected by changes (Shen & Slater, 2021). It promotes research and development and gives the country the human capital it needs, which is important for the economy, society, policy, and technology to grow in a sustainable way (Adewale et al., 2017). Occupational stress, sometimes called job or work stress, is a result of inconsistency between expectations and one's capacity to deal within a short time period (Burman & Goswami, 2018; De Silva et al., 2017). Also, according to Spielberger and Reheiser (2020), Occupational stress refers to "the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker.

Coping strategies are essential for preserving and advancing mental health, especially when faced with difficulties and stress. People use different strategies to deal with and get through challenging circumstances in an effort to lessen the negative effects of stress on their mental health. Problem-focused coping is a popular coping technique in which people confront stressors head-on by acting to resolve the underlying problems. This could include coming up with solutions to problems, asking for help, or altering their surroundings to reduce stress. People who actively engage with stressors feel more in control of their situation, which increases resilience and lessens the detrimental effects of stress on mental health (Aji et al., 2024).

People use emotion-focused coping techniques in addition to problem-focused coping techniques to control their emotional reactions to stress. This entails using strategies like mindfulness, relaxation training, or reaching out to others for emotional validation to manage the feelings that stressors provoke, including melancholy or worry. Emotion-focused coping lowers the risk of emotional overload or burnout by enabling people to process and communicate their emotions in a healthy way. People can develop more psychological resilience and adaptation in the face of adversity by fostering emotional well-being, which in turn promotes general mental health and well-being (Aji et al., 2024).

Emotional well-being pertains to the condition in which people perceive their emotional lives as harmonious, resilient, and overall satisfying. It includes the capacity to effectively regulate emotions, maintain positive relationships, and manage tension, as well as to confront the challenges that arise on a daily basis. The emotional health of faculty members in Nigerian colleges of education is a critical factor influencing their professional satisfaction and efficacy. They face numerous stressors in their capacity as educators, including administrative pressures, hefty workloads, and the requirements of teaching and research (Visser & Law-van Wyk, 2021). The maintenance of emotional well-being empowers individuals to confront these obstacles with fortitude, guaranteeing the ability to sustain a constructive mindset, efficiently handle tension, and cultivate encouraging connections with peers and fellow learners. Enhancing the emotional well-being of academic personnel can result in improved job satisfaction, increased productivity, and an overall higher quality of life. This, in turn, would foster a healthier and more fulfilling work environment within the colleges of education in Nigeria.

 Due to conflicting roles and multitasked obligations in teaching, research, and publishing, college instructors' stress levels have grown over the last decade (Singh et al., 2020). The 21st century reforms in tertiary education have increased job instability and workload for academic personnel. Academic staff used varied coping techniques to deal with occupational stress; positive measures such as exercises, guidance, and time management helped minimize job stress and safeguard academics' health and well-being (Berger & Czakert, 2022). Others selected passive techniques like drinking, partying, drug usage, smoking, and an unhealthy diet.

A research poll in Holton et al. (2016) found that instructors, teachers, and lecturers most often use alcohol and drugs to cope. Sattler et al. (2013) indicated that academics' use of pharmaceuticals to reduce job stress may be a healthy adaptation to contemporary contexts. However, research on the impact of academics' coping mechanisms on their health and mental well-being is lacking. Well-being relates to how individuals perceive their lives, including life satisfaction, pleasant feelings, and the absence of negative emotions (Jeffrey et al., 2014).

Studies demonstrated a decline in university, college and polytechnic teachers' well-being (Kaplan & Schulhofer-Wohl, 2018). This research aims to provide an insight into the impact of these new challenges on work-related stress, coping strategies, mental health, well-being outcomes and a possible support system to improve the management process of occupational stress and emotional wellness of academic staffs in CoEs in Nigeria.

This mixed-method study aims to provide vital insights into the complex issue of occupational stress faced by academic staff at CoEs in Nigeria. It seeks to illuminate the multifaceted drivers of work-related stress within the unique CoEs environment and unravel how these pressures impact mental health, well-being, and performance of lecturers. By seamlessly integrating quantitative data across Nigeria with in-depth qualitative perspectives directly from affected lecturers, the study will bridge critical knowledge gaps regarding the human experiences and coping efforts in the face of institutional stressors. The findings will empower stakeholders to develop tailored, evidence-based policies, interventions, support networks, and professional resources to alleviate occupational stress among CoEs academic staff. Fostering resilient and fulfilled educators is an important step towards uplifting the quality of education across Nigeria's CoEs system. Overall, this research aims to catalyze positive change by revealing the human dimensions of work-related stress. The insights generated can inform targeted solutions to promote lecturers’ well-being, adaptive coping, and meaningful organizational reforms - laying the foundation for nurturing educational environments where both academics and students can thrive. It represents an opportunity to safeguard the mental health of those shaping young minds and the future of the nation.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is a significant research vacuum and pressing need to tackle the very high frequencies of occupational stress among teachers at Nigerian Colleges of Education (CoEs), with studies indicating rates between 60 and 80%. Current research has found factors such as heavy workloads, limited resources, lack of organisational support, challenging leadership, and personal stressors contribute to the challenges faced by COE lecturers in Nigeria. However, there is a need for comprehensive mixed-method studies to further investigate the complex nature of these challenges, their mental health effects, and the coping strategies used by these lecturers. Prior research has mostly consisted of small-scale quantitative surveys, offering broad data on stress levels but not delving into the detailed narratives and real-life experiences that underlie these figures. Large-scale mixed-methods research is required to combine strong statistical analysis with detailed qualitative insights to understand the complexities of this phenomenon in the distinct COE work environment. Further investigation is needed to examine the connections between professional stress and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. This may be achieved by statistical analysis and subjective assessments of how lecturers are affected. Focused qualitative research is crucial for identifying the particular stressors, emotional impacts, and coping strategies, whether adaptive or maladaptive, used to deal with stress. There is a lack of context-specific research in the COE ecosystem that may provide information for evidence-based organisational initiatives, policy changes, or support resources customized for Nigerian lecturers. Exploring the viewpoints and stories of those directly facing professional stress is essential for comprehending its causes and outcomes. By conducting a thorough mixed-method investigation, we can gain a better understanding of how occupational stress affects the performance, wellbeing, and retention of CoE lecturers. This, in turn, has a negative impact on the quality of education and the success of students. Closing this study gap would provide an empirical basis to effectively address occupational stress, fostering a supportive institutional environment and resilient educators capable of fulfilling their calling.

**Objective of the Study**

The research will investigate the effect of occupational stress and coping strategies on mental health and emotional well-being among lecturers in colleges of education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study will:

i. to compare the average levels of occupational stress experienced by male and female lecturers in Colleges of Education (CoEs).

ii. identify and categorize coping strategies employed by lecturers to manage stress based on their years of experiences.

iii. establish the relationship between occupational stress and mental health outcomes

iv. evaluate the effectiveness of coping strategies in mitigating stress and promoting mental well-being based on their gender.

Research Hypothesis

**H01**: There is no significant difference in the average level of occupational stress between male and female lecturers in Colleges of Education (CoEs).

**H02**: There is no association between the years of teaching experiences and the coping strategies employed by lecturers to manage occupational stress.

**H03**: There is no association between the level of occupational stress and mental health outcomes among lecturers in CoEs.

**H04**: Coping strategies employed by male and female lecturers in CoEs have no significant effect on mitigating stress and promoting mental well-being.

**Significance of the Study**

Occupational stress among lecturers at Nigeria's Colleges of Education (CoEs) represents a pressing yet understudied problem with profound systemic impacts on educational quality. This mixed-methods study offers a unique opportunity to bridge critical knowledge gaps regarding the multidimensional drivers, mental health implications, and coping mechanisms related to lecturer stress in the Nigerian COE context. By interweaving robust quantitative data across institutions with rich qualitative insights from those directly affected, this research will provide an empirical foundation to inform targeted evidence-based policies, interventions and support resources. The findings have the potential to catalyze transformative change in CoE climates, nurturing institutional cultures where lecturers can thrive personally and professionally. Promoting lecturers’ wellbeing and resilience through context-specific solutions is an important step towards safeguarding the quality of education in Nigeria. This study therefore aims to illuminate the human experiences behind the statistics, empowering stakeholders to enact meaningful reforms that foster healthy and fulfilled educators. Strengthening the wellbeing of those shaping young minds will have cascading positive impacts on student outcomes and the vibrancy of Nigeria's educational system. This timely inquiry represents an invaluable opportunity to gain a holistic understanding of a complex phenomenon and catalyze stakeholder actions to alleviate occupational stress. The multi-dimensional value generated through an integrated methodology will provide an impetus for change, invigorating efforts to cultivate nurturing CoE environments where both lecturers and students can realize their highest potential.

**Specific Contributions of the Study:**

- Quantifying Occupational Stress Levels: The study will provide a clear picture of the prevalence and severity of occupational stress among lecturers in CoEs, enabling targeted interventions to address the most pressing stressors.

- Identifying Coping Strategies: The study will uncover the diverse coping mechanisms employed by lecturers, allowing for the development of training programs to enhance the effectiveness of these strategies in managing stress.

- Establishing Stress-Mental Health Link: The study will establish the correlation between occupational stress and mental health outcomes, providing evidence for the need to address stress as a preventive measure for mental health issues.

- Evaluating Coping Strategy Effectiveness: The study will assess the impact of coping strategies on mental health outcomes, guiding the development of targeted interventions to promote effective coping mechanisms among lecturers.

The findings of this research will have extensive ramifications for the well-being of CoE members, the standard of instruction, and the overall efficiency of the CoE. Enhancing the mental health and well-being of instructors has the potential to positively impact their teaching effectiveness, motivation, and job satisfaction; consequently, this can result in enhanced student outcomes and a more dynamic academic atmosphere. This research endeavours will make a substantial scholarly contribution to the current body of knowledge concerning occupational stress among educators and the coping mechanisms they employ. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the specific stressors encountered by CoE lecturers and the coping mechanisms they employ, thereby filling a current research void. Acquiring this knowledge is of the utmost importance in order to formulate culturally sensitive and efficacious interventions that address occupational stress and advance the psychological welfare of instructors in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

This study used a quantitative methodology to examine occupational stress and coping strategies among instructors at Colleges of Education (CoEs). A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from a sample of academics who were recruited using a specific sampling strategy, such as random sampling or stratified sampling from a pre-existing database of lecturers in CoEs. The sample size was set using a power analysis to guarantee an adequate amount of data for accurate statistical testing. The process of gathering data included the use of a self-administered online questionnaire. The survey, conducted on a secure platform such as Qualtrics or SurveyMonkey, consisted of various sections. These sections covered demographic information (age, gender, years of experience), occupational stress (measured using a validated scale like the Perceived Stress Scale - PSS), coping strategies (evaluated using a reliable instrument like the COPE Inventory), and mental health (measured using a validated scale like the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales - DASS).

The collected data was examined using a variety of statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic information and offer measures of central tendency (mean/median) and dispersion (standard deviation) for stress, coping mechanisms, and mental health scores. The study used independent samples t-tests to examine potential discrepancies in stress levels and coping strategies among male and female lecturers. The Pearson correlation coefficients were employed to examine the relationship between the duration of teaching experience and the coping strategies employed by lecturers. Four study hypotheses were formulated and evaluated at a significance level of 0.05 using Independent Samples t-test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient, respectively.

**Table 1**: Response of the respondents based on their gender

**Gender Frequency Percent Cumulative Percent**

Male 259 64.8 64.8

Female 141 35.3 100.0

**Total 400 100.0**

Table 1 presents the responses of the respondents categorized by gender. Among the 400 respondents surveyed, 259 were male, accounting for 64.8% of the total sample, while 141 were female, representing 35.3%. The cumulative percent column shows that male respondents make up the majority of the sample, with no overlap in gender categories, resulting in a total cumulative percentage of 100%.

Table 2: Response of the respondents based on their years of experiences

**Years of Frequency Percent Cumulative Percent**

**Experiences**

Below 5 55 13.8 13.8

6 – 10 154 38.5 52.3

11 – 15 53 13.3 65.5

16 – 20 88 22.0 87.5

21 – 25 27 6.8 94.3

26 – 30 23 5.8 100.0

**Total 400 100.0**

Table 2 presents the responses of the respondents categorized by their years of experience. Among the 400 respondents, the majority fall within the 6 to 10 years of experience bracket, comprising 154 individuals, representing 38.5% of the total sample. The next significant group lies within the 16 to 20 years of experience range, constituting 88 respondents or 22% of the sample. Notably, there is a substantial drop in the number of respondents with higher experience levels, with only 27 individuals (6.8%) having 21 to 25 years of experience, and even fewer, 23 individuals (5.8%), possessing 26 to 30 years of experience. Collectively, respondents with more than 10 years of experience make up 87.5% of the total sample, suggesting a relatively experienced participant pool. This distribution provides insights into the composition of the respondent demographics based on their years of professional experience, offering valuable information for analyzing trends and perceptions within different experience cohorts.

**H01:** There is no significant difference in the average level of occupational stress between male and female lecturers in Colleges of Education (CoEs).

**Table 3:** Independent Samples t-test on the level of occupational stress between male and female lecturers in Colleges of Education

**Gender N Mean Std. Dev t df F Sig. Decision**

Male 259 16.70 3.138

 .657 398 19.24 0.000 Reject

Female 141 16.45 4.361

**Total 400**

P < 0.05

From the analysis in table 3 above revealed that the mean level of occupational stress for male lecturers (M = 16.70, SD = 3.138) was slightly higher than that of female lecturers (M = 16.45, SD = 4.361). The t-test statistic (t = 0.657) with 398 degrees of freedom yielded a significant difference (p < 0.05) between the two groups. Additionally, the F statistic (F = 19.24) further supports the significance of the difference in stress levels. This implies that the stated hypothesis is therefore rejected which indicates that male and female lecturers in CoEs experience significantly different levels of occupational stress.

**H02:** There is no association between the years of teaching experiences and the coping strategies employed by lecturers to manage occupational stress.

**Table 4:** Pearson correlation Coefficient between the years of teaching experiences and the coping strategies employed by lecturers to manage occupational stress

**Variable Mean Std. Dev N r Sig. Decision**

Years of Teaching 2.87 1.389

Experiences

 400 -0.71\*\* 0.02 Reject

Coping Strategies 19.52 2.997

P < 0.05

The table 4 shows that the mean years of teaching experience among the sample of lecturers is 2.87 years, with a standard deviation of 1.389 years. The mean score for coping strategies is 19.52, with a standard deviation of 2.997. The correlation Coefficient (r) between years of teaching experience and coping strategies is -0.71, indicating a strong negative correlation between these two variables. This negative correlation suggests that as the years of teaching experience increase, the employment of coping strategies to manage occupational stress tends to decrease among lecturers. The correlation Coefficient is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (p < 0.05). This implies that there is indeed a significant negative association between the years of teaching experience and the coping strategies employed by lecturers to manage occupational stress.

**H03:** There is no association between the level of occupational stress and mental health outcomes among lecturers in CoEs.

**Table 5:** Pearson Correlation Coefficient the level of occupational stress and mental health outcomes among lecturers in CoEs

**Variable Mean Std. Dev N r Sig. Decision**

Occupational 9.07 2.435

Stress

 400 0.374\*\* 0.00 Reject

Mental Health 7.36 2.260

P < 0.05

Table 5 shows the mean level of occupational stress among the sample of lecturers which is 9.07, with a standard deviation of 2.435, while the mean score for mental health outcomes is 7.36, with a standard deviation of 2.260. The correlation Coefficient (r) between occupational stress and mental health outcomes is 0.374, indicating a positive correlation between these two variables. This suggests that as the level of occupational stress increases, mental health outcomes also tend to increase among lecturers in CoEs. The correlation Coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level (p < 0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis stated is therefore rejected which implies that there is a significant positive association between the level of occupational stress and mental health outcomes among lecturers in CoEs.

**H04:** Coping strategies employed by male and female lecturers in CoEs have no significant effect on mitigating stress and promoting mental well-being.

**Table 6:** Independent Samples t-Test on coping strategies employed by male and female lecturers on mitigating stress and promoting mental well-being

**Gender N Mean Std. Dev t df F Sig. Decision**

Male 259 12.11 3.271

 -0.93 398 5.079 0.025 Reject

Female 141 13.07 2.843

**Total 400**

P < 0.05

Table 6 shows the mean coping strategy score for male lecturers (12.11), with a standard deviation of 3.271, while female lecturers have a slightly higher mean score of 13.07, with a standard deviation of 2.843. The t-test statistic is calculated as -0.93 with 398 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value is 0.025, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating a significant difference in coping strategy scores between male and female lecturers. Hence, the null hypothesis, which posits no difference in coping strategies between genders, is rejected.

**Discussion of Results and Findings**

The statistical analysis of the independent samples t-test (Table 3) indicated that there was a notable distinction in the levels of occupational stress experienced by male and female lecturers within Colleges of Education (CoEs). The findings of the analysis, which contradicted the null hypothesis (H01: There is no significant difference in the average level of occupational stress between male and female lecturers in Colleges of Education (CoEs).), indicated that the mean stress level reported by female lecturers (M = 16.45) was marginally lower than that of males (M = 16.70). Statistically speaking, this difference was not coincidental (p < 0.05), suggesting that it was not the result of random variation. These results are to some extent consistent with the findings of Slišković and Maslać Seršić (2011), who examined stress levels among university instructors. Although no statistically significant gender-based differences were identified in the study, it indicated that female assistant professors encountered higher levels of tension in regards to work organization than their male counterparts This indicates that career stage and particular job demands may influence the manner in which gender and occupational stress interact for lecturers. Additional research is required to investigate the causes of the observed variation in stress levels. Research conducted by Kusi et al. (2018) suggests that there may be certain challenges that are unique to female lecturers, such as managing a household and professional obligations or navigating a field that is predominantly male-dominated.

The findings in Table 4 contradict the null hypothesis (H02: There is no association between the years of teaching experiences and the coping strategies employed by lecturers to manage occupational stress.) by demonstrating a statistically significant inverse correlation (r = -0.71) between the number of years of teaching experience and the coping techniques utilized by lecturers. This suggests that lecturers who have more expertise are inclined to depend less on coping mechanisms in order to handle professional stress. This discovery is consistent with the study conducted by Kausar and Farooqi (2015), which examined the influence of experience on stress management among instructors. According to their research, experienced teachers may acquire a feeling of expertise and enhanced belief in their abilities as time goes on. As a result, they may view issues as less overwhelming and need fewer methods to deal with them (Kausar & Farooqi, 2015). Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize alternate reasons. The presence of a negative correlation does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship. For example, professors who possess inherent resilience to stress may be more inclined to pursue jobs in education, resulting in a disproportionate distribution where experienced lecturers, on average, are less dependent on coping techniques. Additional investigation is required to delve into the fundamental causes behind this correlation. Research conducted by Herman et al. (2018), that investigated the development of coping techniques over the course of a teacher's career could offer significant and useful insights.

In contrast to the null hypothesis (H03: There is no association between the level of occupational stress and mental health outcomes among lecturers in CoEs.), the findings in Table 5 demonstrate a noteworthy positive correlation (r = 0.374) between mental health outcomes and occupational stress among lecturers in CoEs. This supports the notion that elevated levels of self-reported stress are correlated with inferior mental health outcomes, which is consistent with well-established research. This discovery aligns with the findings of Maslach and Leiter (2017), who formulated the burnout inventory, a widely utilized metric for evaluating mental well-being in demanding occupations such as education. Their research emphasizes the correlation between persistent occupational stress and detrimental mental health outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished sense of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). The moderate correlation that has been observed, nevertheless, implies that mental health may also be influenced by factors other than stress. For example, individual coping mechanisms or social support networks may serve as moderating factors. Additional studies may investigate these potentialities by employing more rigorous methodologies. Research conducted by Wright and Krischer et al. (2010), which investigates stress-strain models incorporating intervening variables, may yield significant findings regarding the precise mechanisms through which occupational stress affects the mental well-being of lecturers (Krischer et al., 2010).

Table 6 shows a statistically significant difference (p < 0.05) in coping strategy ratings between male and female lecturers, challenging the null hypothesis ( H04: Coping strategies employed by male and female lecturers in CoEs have no significant effect on mitigating stress and promoting mental well-being.). Female lecturers reported using coping methods more frequently (M = 13.07) than their male counterparts (M = 12.11).

However, this finding should be interpreted with caution. While there is a difference, the chart does not specify whether females' higher reported usage of coping mechanisms translates to a bigger reduction in stress or an improvement in well-being. According to Torp et al. (2018), females are more inclined to engage in emotion-focused coping mechanisms such as seeking social support or rumination, which may not always be the most beneficial for stress management. Alternatively, it is plausible that females have a higher workload or more sources of stress, which causes them to rely more heavily on coping strategies. More research is needed to determine the individual coping mechanisms used by each gender and their efficacy in reducing stress and improving well-being. Studies such as Slišković and Maslać Seršić (2011) that investigated gender variations in coping techniques and their impact on mental health outcomes may provide useful insights.

**Conclusion**

The objective of this research endeavor was to examine the correlation between mental health outcomes, coping mechanisms, occupational stress, and lecturers in Colleges of Education (CoEs) in Nigeria. The results of the study unveil a number of significant observations and enhance comprehension regarding the obstacles encountered by this vital sector of the educational labor force. To begin with, the findings reveal a statistically significant disparity in the levels of occupational stress experienced by male and female lecturers. Female lecturers, on average, reported slightly lower stress levels. Further investigation is warranted to ascertain the precise causes of this disparity; however, it does underscore the possible impact of gender-specific variables or obstacles encountered by instructors in CoEs.

Again, an established inverse relationship was found between the number of years of teaching experience and the implementation of coping mechanisms to alleviate occupational stress. This discovery implies that lecturers with greater experience might have acquired more efficacious stress management techniques or resilience through the course of their careers, so as to depend less on overt coping mechanisms. Nevertheless, it is critical to investigate the fundamental causes of this correlation and guarantee that instructors at every stage of their careers have access to suitable resources and support. Moreover, the correlation that exists between occupational stress and negative mental health consequences serves to underscore the criticality of mitigating stress in the workplace in order to protect the mental health of lecturers. Consistent with prior investigations concerning the adverse impacts of protracted stress on mental well-being, the results underscore the necessity for all-encompassing interventions and support structures within CoEs.

The study findings indicate a noteworthy distinction in the utilization of coping strategies between male and female lecturers, with female lecturers reporting a greater propensity for employing coping mechanisms. Although additional research is needed to determine the precise coping mechanisms utilized and their efficacy, this finding highlights the possibility that stress management and mental health support initiatives should take gender into account.

In its entirety, this study enhances knowledge regarding the intricate relationship that exists between occupational stress, coping mechanisms, and the mental health consequences experienced by lecturers in Nigerian CoEs. The implications of the findings are applicable in the development of support systems, policies, and targeted interventions that aim to enhance the resilience and overall welfare of this crucial subset of the educational workforce.

Further study is warranted to delve into the fundamental factors that contribute to the discernible disparities between the sexes, analyze the progression and efficacy of adaptive mechanisms throughout the course of one's professional trajectory, and scrutinize the precise mechanisms by which occupational stress influences mental health results. Furthermore, qualitative investigations and longitudinal studies may yield significant insights into the distinct obstacles and experiences encountered by lecturers in CoEs. Through the implementation of measures to tackle occupational stress and promote mental health, academic establishments can cultivate an atmosphere that is nurturing and conducive to the professional and personal development of instructors. This, in turn, will have a positive impact on the caliber of education as a whole and on the achievements of forthcoming cohorts.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and schools should create and execute stress management initiatives that are customized to address the unique requirements of lecturers, irrespective of gender.
2. Early-career support, including access to mental health resources, stress management classes, and mentorship programs, is recommended for new lecturers who may be less experienced and therefore more susceptible to stress.
3. Identifying and addressing workload issues by examining and resolving any workload discrepancies that may disproportionately affect female lecturers or those at specific career stages, including streamlining administrative duties, promoting a healthier work-life balance, and ensuring equitable distribution of teaching responsibilities
4. Promote effective coping strategies by providing lecturers with information on diverse mechanisms proven to manage stress, including relaxation techniques, cognitive restructuring, and physical activity, fostering the implementation of evidence-based approaches.
5. Further research should be conducted to investigate the unique stressors encountered by lecturers across various Colleges of Education (CoEs) and to develop tailored interventions aimed at addressing these specific stressors

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