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Prevalence of Work Irrational Beliefs and Occupational Stress among Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors in North Central Universities of Nigeria

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Abstract
The study examined the prevalence of work irrational beliefs and occupational stress among electrical/electronic technologists and instructors in North Central Universities of Nigeria. A 24-item work relate irrational beliefs and 27-item occupational stress (WIBOS) questionnaire was developed in effect. The participants were 36 electrical/electronic technologists and instructors which comprised 11 technologists and 25 instructors from three Universities in North central of Nigeria. Findings of the study depict that prevalence of work irrational beliefs and occupational stress was high among the electrical/electronic technologists and instructors. Performance demand, coworkers' approval, failure, control and occupational stress were associated with work irrational beliefs. This result triggered an urge to administer an intervention mechanism to the respondents in the subsequent study. Precisely, the findings suggest that Rational Emotive Behaveiour Therapy (REBT) be applied on the work irrational beliefs and occupational stress of the electrical/electronic technologist and instructors to curb it menace. Reason being that REBT has being proven to be an effect intervention mechanism for treating of work irrational beliefs and occupational stress in other sphere of life of workers.
Keywords: Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT); work irrational beliefs; occupational stress; performance demand
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Most organizations have emphasized the need for employees to perform an excellent job while those who err are been served with query letters and punishment of different degrees. Jalil, (2017) stated that in this high technology and modern era where high performance is expected to be a norm, many Universities demand a high level of quality service, accuracy and overall business success from workers (Swee, Anza, & Hassim, 2007). In the quest to meeting this organizations' standard, workers who in our study are referred to as electrical/ electronic technologists and instructors turned to become workaholics (Wijhe, Peeters, & Schaufeli, 2013) which is detrimental to their health. The inability of the educational institutions in providing a healthy working environment or even a working environment with minimal level of unhealthy occupational stress would lead to many problems especially in employees' work performance in teaching students the practical aspects of Electrical/Electronic Technology in the Universities.

Work life in its totality is one of the vital parts of our daily lives that cause a great deal of stress to electrical/electronic technologists and instructors including other staff. According to (Ogbuanya, et al. 2017b; Ogbuanya, et al. 2018 & Onuigbo, 2018), the primary causes for occupational stress in workers are irrational beliefs and self-defeating thoughts. Irrational beliefs has earlier being defined as thoughts that blocks a person from achieving his goals, create extreme emotions that persist and which distress and immobilize, and leads to behaviour that harm oneself, others, and one's life in general (Froggatt, 2005). According to Ugwoke (2018), irrational beliefs are the foundation of the prolonged arousal and the emotional anguish that is shown to be the main causes of most illnesses associated with stress. Chen, (2006) has earlier affirmed that such irrational beliefs are the root cause of the Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors' preoccupation with work. According to Turner (2016), irrational beliefs lead to unhealthy negative emotions, a range of pathological conditions, and a host of maladaptive behaviors that undermine mental health.

It was clear from above that irrational beliefs and occupational stress constitute a major source of health challenges in electrical/electronic technologists and instructors which requires proper treatment. Work related irrational beliefs that are not in the individual's best i[illegible]st need to be eliminated or changed into productive, positive and rational behaviours by initially changing the source the individuals have control over which is their own thoughts and beliefs. Wijhe, Peeters, and Schaufeli, (2013) suggest that at least four work-related irrational beliefs are important for workers which we want to found out its prevalence among electrical/electronic technologists. Among the work related irrational beliefs is performance demand.

Performance demand is associated with the irrational beliefs of workers where they only like themselves if they perform well. Wijhe, Peeters., and Schaufeli, 2013; Mahfar, & Senin, 2015) found that setting of unrealistic high performance standards is core of the performance demands of workers who holds rigidly to irrational beliefs at work. It is a belief where workers base their sense of self-worth on their performance. For instance, 'I must do my work perfectly'. The rational form of the beliefs is 'I need to do my work perfectly'. The technologists and instructors are advice not to set high standards that if not meet at the end will lead to stress and demoralization of an employee. Apart from the performance demand beliefs, technologists and instructors also falls victim of coworkers' approval.

Coworkers' approval is viewed as a core belief in which a person ultimately will emphasize a situation as "must" or "must not" (Dryden & Neenan, 2014). For instances, 'to be happy, I must be liked by colleagues' (DiGiuseppe et al., 2012). On the contrary, belief of preference has flexible option in which individual's belief toward any desire without insistent (Dryden & Neenan, 2004). Instead of using absolute phrase such as 'must' and 'should', employees were taught in therapy about how to express their rational beliefs in a more flexible context employing flexible phrases 'want to', 'want' or 'choose' (DiLorenzo *et al.*, 2007). For example, 'I want my boss to respect me, but not necessarily I get it'. Sometimes the beliefs are awfulizing in nature.

Failure as a component of irrational beliefs refers to an employee's belief that an event is so awful, that is, more than 100 percent bad (Ellis & Dryden, 2003). This kind of irrational beliefs has been categorized as Awfulizing. Typically, the characteristics of failure are expressed through an example such as, 'It's awful if things turn out badly at work'. On the contrary, non-awfulizing or non-failure belief is a non-extreme belief of individual when his/her demand was not fulfilled (Dryden and Neenan, 2014). Individual who have non-awfulizing beliefs believed that there are advantages and benefits from the event occurred. For example, 'It is not good if things turn out badly at work but the situation happened to me is not awful actually'. This belief is also related with low frustration in technologists and instructors at the work place.

A form of low frustration in technologists and instructors tends to make them feel not able to cope and lacked confidence and control over circumstance. For instance 'I can't stand this' or 'I can't cope with that' statements that indicate lack of control (Wijhe, Peeters, and Schaufeli, 2013). Control is associated with obsessive compulsiveness which reflects a preoccupation with matters of control. According to Froggatt (2005), a statement such as 'I can only cope with work situations when they are predictable' is base on the idea that such a worker cannot bear some circumstances or events. The rational form of the statement should sound like 'I can do my best on the job even the situation are not predictable'. Much literatures including literature in Nigeria have proving that holding such beliefs affects the work performance of electronic technologists.

Literature showed that Electrical/electronic technologists and instructors complained much of toxic work environment, negative work load, and isolation, role conflict & role ambiguity, lack of autonomy, difficult relationship with coworkers, managerial bullying, harassment and organizational climate. Chen, (2006) found that long working hours, feelings of being treated unfairly, insufficient acknowledgement or reward for a job well done, lack of job security, office politics, and most importantly, increased demands to accomplish assignments without sufficient authority and/or resources exacerbate the stress in electrical/electronic technologists and instructors. The researchers therefore saw the need to determine the prevalence of work irrational beliefs and occupational stress among electrical/electronic technologists and instructors in the study area. It is discovered that holding unto irrational beliefs and thoughts about the events in the workplace will cause unhealthy distressful feelings and self-defeating behaviours among workers. These behaviours prevent them from being happy and are harmful to them.

Method

Participants

The participants were 36 electrical/electronic technologists and instructors which comprised 11 technologists and 25 instructors from three Universities in North central of Nigeria. The entire population was used since the size was relatively manageable. Those who are less than a year into the system were excluded in the study. Among the participants were three female instructors and a female technologist.

Procedure

Research design: The researchers employed a cross-sectional survey. The choice of this design was because it suits the purpose of the study which is primarily a survey on prevalence of negative energy conservation behaviour among households. Gall, Gall and Borg, (2007) has earlier affirmed that this kind of survey is meant to describe survey that involves a single snapshot of data collection from a sample to represent the population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalized.

Measures

The researchers made use of a set of standardized items to measure the main constructs of this study. All the items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree.

Work irrational beliefs: Work irrational beliefs were measured with 24 items. Performance demand had 9 items, Coworkers' approval, failure and control had 5 items each which were also adapted to suit the purpose of this study from Ellis 1975 and Wijhe, Peeters., and Schaufeli, 2013; e.g., at work, I have to achieve in order to be satisfied with myself (performance demand). I need the approval of my colleagues to be able to do my work well (Co-workers' approval). It is awful if I don't do my work well (Failure). I can't cope with unexpected demands in my work place (Control). The face validity of the adapted instrument was ascertained by including the suggestions and corrections of five experts (three experts from industrial technical education department and two counseling psychologists from Guidance and counseling department of the University of Nigeria Nsukka) to the final draft.
Occupational stress index: The original English version of the occupational stress index was developed by Srivastava and Singh (1984) and adapted in this study which assesses the extent of stress which electrical/electronic technologists and instructors experience in the context of their work-life with 27 items. The internal consistency measures for the scales were .90, .83, and .81, .89 and .87 respectively after adaption.

Statistical analysis

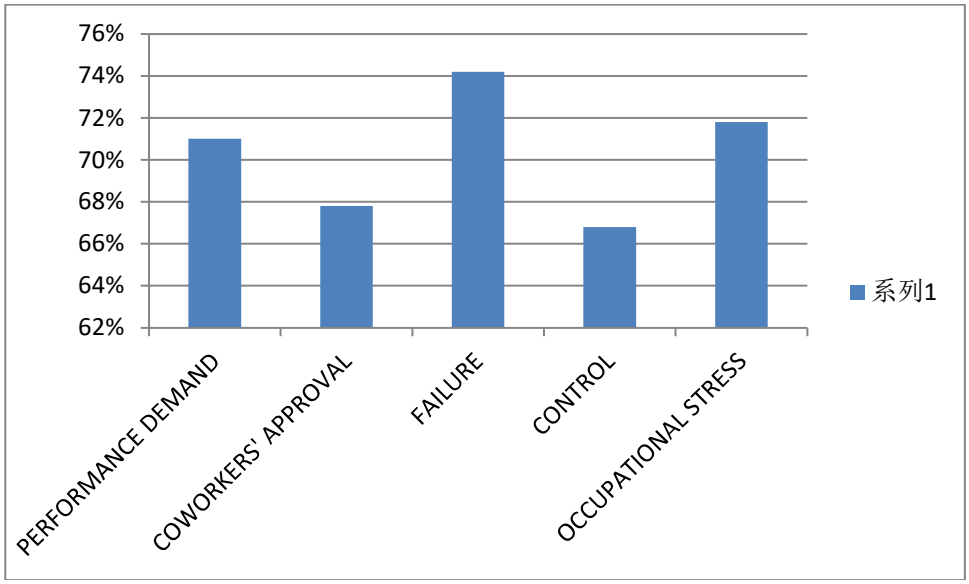
The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 23.0 (SPSS IBM). The descriptive statistics were expressed as, mean ± standard deviation (SD) and percentage (%).

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of response on prevalence of work irrational beliefs among electrical/electronic technologists in north central universities in Nigeria

Irrational beliefs	$\bar{x}$	SD
Performance demand	3.56	.47
Coworkers' approval	3.33	.51
Failure	3.67	.58
Control	3.35	.60
Occupational stress	3.60	.33

SD= standard deviation

Table 2: Percentage of Work Irrational Beliefs and Occupational Stress, among electrical/electronic technologists and instructors



Tabulated mean of work irrational beliefs is as shown in the table 1 above. The mean for each irrational belief were all above the cut of point of 3.50 which depicts that work irrational beliefs exits among the technologists and instructors. Figure 1 shows the percentage of work irrational beliefs. Performance demand has 71%, coworkers' approval 67.9%, failure 74%, control had 66.5% work irrational beliefs while occupational stress has 71.9%.

Discussion

The findings of this study shows that electrical/electronic technologists and instructors in the North Central Universities in Nigeria are pre-occupied with work related irrational beliefs and occupational stress. It was a good result since the data obtained was rich enough to be relied upon for future research. Similar research conducted by Wijhe, Peeters., and Schaufeli, (2013) affirmed that work related irrational beliefs is prevalent among workers particularly the workaholic group. Most workers have turned to be workaholics because of high standard performance demand from their bosses and colleques. This, according to Ogbuanya, et al. 2019 and Onuigbo,

(2018) constitute a major source of occupational stress and job burnout among electrical/electronic technologists and instructors. Performance demand had 71% of work irrational belief. By implication, technologists and instructors are holding unto beliefs for instance 'I must do my work perfectly'. Such Performance demand is associated with the irrational beliefs of workers where they only like themselves if they perform well. Mahfar, and Senin, (2015) found that setting of unrealistic high performance standards would lead to stress and frustration if the target is not attained.

Coworkers' approval was 67.9% meaning that electrical/electronic technologists and instructors' work irrational beliefs concerning this aspect was high. Wijhe, Peeters, and Schaufeli, (2013) found that statement such as 'I must be liked by colleagues' is an irrational beliefs that can cause stress and poor work performance of technologists and instructors. Ellis (1975) and Dryden & Neenan, (2004) has earlier referred to it as demandingness. Employees were taught in therapy about how to express their rational beliefs in a more flexible context employing flexible phrases "want to", "want" or "choose" (DiLorenzo *et al.*, 2007). For example *"I want my boss to respect me, but not necessarily I get it"*

Findings of the result also showed that failure had the highest percent of work irrational beliefs of 74.1%. Similar study conducted by Wijhe, Peeters. and Schaufeli, (2013) on irrational beliefs at work and their implications for workaholics shows that workaholics tend to overestimate the consequences of failure. (Ellis & Dryden, 2003) has categorized this kind of irrational beliefs in workers as Awfulizing. Typically, the characteristics of failure are expressed through an example such as, 'It's awful if things turn out badly at work'. These beliefs according to Froggatt (2005), create 'ego anxiety' – emotional tension resulting from the perception that one's 'self' or personal worth is threatened–and lead to other problems such as avoidance of situations where failure, disapproval, etc. might occur; looking to other people for acceptance and unassertive behaviour through fear of what others may think. Control had 66.8% of the work irrational beliefs. By implication, electrical/electronic technologists and instructors in the Universities in North Central Nigeria have control form of irrational beliefs. The study also found that electrical electronic technologists and instructors are pre occupied by occupational stress. This agrees with findings of Ogbuanya (2017a) that Occupational stress can lead to maladjustment in the workplace. In extension, Electronic engineers employed in the Nigerian work environment are faced with complex challenges which may be due in part to high occupational risks and poor organizational climate in their workplaces. Occupational stress can also affect work ability of workers as proven in the study conducted by Fukuda (2013).

Conclusion

Based on findings of our study, it was evident that electrical/electronic technologists and instructors in the Universities in North Central Nigeria have work irrational beliefs. Control form of irrational beliefs. Failure constitutes the highest percent while control had the least with 74.1% and 66.8% each of the work irrational beliefs. This finding depicts that electrical electronic technologists and instructors are not likely to perform as expected in their place of primary assignments. The primary causes for occupational stress in workers are irrational beliefs and self-defeating thoughts as has being further proven in our study with occupational stress having 71.9%. This finding has opened a gap that would require the researchers to further administer Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) in treating the irrational beliefs and occupational stress. The primary causes for occupational stress in workers are irrational beliefs and self-defeating thoughts as has being further proven in our study with occupational stress.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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