



# PREDICTING WORK STRESS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ORIENTATION AND DECISION-MAKING COMPETENCE

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## ABSTRACT

This research explored how social orientation and decision-making competence influence work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The study had two research questions and tested two null hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. It used a correlational survey research design and involved 112 business educators from all public institutions in Anambra State. Three research instruments were employed: the Social Orientation Scale (SOS), the Decision Making Competence Questionnaire (DMCQ), and the Work Stress Scale (WSS-10). The reliability of these instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.73 for SOS, 0.76 for DMCQ, and 0.88 for WSS. Data were collected directly from respondents, and simple linear regression was used for analysis. The findings indicated that social orientation significantly predicts work stress among business educators, while decision-making competence does not. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that Institutions should focus on developing social orientation skills among business educators in order to reduce work stress. They should develop support networks for business educators to facilitate positive social orientation and reduce work stress. These networks could involve peer mentoring, informal discussion groups or virtual support systems.

**KEYWORDS:** Social orientation, decision-making competence, work stress, predictors, business educators, tertiary institutions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, teaching has become increasingly stressful, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where educators often feel overwhelmed and undervalued. This strain is especially pronounced in public institutions, where educators face numerous challenges including heavy workloads, inadequate resources, ineffective leadership, low pay, and demanding expectations such as the pressure to publish academic work (Akuezuilo & Azuji, 2019; Osamwonyi, 2016). These factors have collectively made the teaching profession more taxing, especially for those teaching in higher institutions.

Stress among teachers, as defined by Karner and Honing (2021), involves negative emotional responses accompanied by physiological changes, triggered by job-related pressures that threaten a teacher's sense of well-being. In this study, work stress for teachers refers to the adaptive reactions to external pressures or demands, influenced by individual characteristics and psychological processes. Business educators frequently encounter stressors outlined in these definitions, which are crucial for understanding stress comprehensively. These stressors prompt individuals to react and adapt, leading to various physical and psychological responses. Research by Clark, Jany, and Philippi (2020); Ile and Nnonye (2023) suggest workplace stress may affect teachers differently based on their perceptions of control over outcomes. Stress not only affects teachers negatively but also impacts student achievement and imposes costs on schools and society. For instance, teacher stress in Lagos, Nigeria, has been



linked to poor student performance, discipline issues, and increased dropout rates (Katharine, 2014). However, educators with positive work values, particularly in public institutions like business education, may be better equipped to handle job pressures and devote more time to innovative teaching practices.

Kyriacou (2017) and Schumann (2019), categorizes stressors at various levels of analysis, including personal, school, and systemic factors. While some stress responses can be beneficial, excessive stress can have debilitating effects on physical and mental health, as noted by Harvard Health (2020). Stress responses occur when individuals perceive that the demands of their environment surpass their ability to cope (Karasek, 2019). Stress can arise suddenly or build up gradually based on how individuals evaluate situations and their potential outcomes. This evaluation, which involves assessing the balance between available resources and demands, can lead to stress being perceived as challenging or threatening, affecting cognitive processes differently. Individual characteristics like decision-making competence and social orientation can influence how stress is perceived.

Decision-making competence, defined by Parker, Bruine de Bruin, Fischhoff, and Weller (2017), refers to an individual's tendency to make decisions based on rational principles. It is also associated with performance and fatigue in work settings (Ceschi, Demerouti, Sartori, & Weller, 2017). Studies, such as one by Santos-Ruiz et al. (2012), have shown that individuals with higher decision-making abilities exhibit lower levels of stress hormone cortisol before and after encountering stressful situations. Decision-making involves not only choosing but also the processes leading to a decision's conclusion. In this study, decision-making competence examines how teachers' decision-making processes influence outcomes. Environmental dynamics significantly influence decision-making competence as most dynamic situations are characterized by uncertainty (Alson, 2019). Decision-makers, such as business educators, must consider temporal changes and the feedback from their actions on the school environment. They must also balance the costs of action against the risks of inaction, as both can lead to stress.

Research conducted by Bruine de Bruin, Parker, and Fischhoff (2007) as well as Dewberry, Juanchich, and Narendran (2013) highlights the importance of cognitive abilities in successful decision-making processes, which significantly impact real-life outcomes. Shields, Lam, Trainor, and Yonelinas (2016) discovered that acute stress can impair decision-making competence and performance outcomes, although they did not investigate its specific correlation with work-related stress. In professional settings, individuals conform to social expectations, shaping their decision-making behaviours. Ceschi et al. (2017) propose that individuals who possess this adaptability tend to be more effective in their work and are less susceptible to anxiety and stress. These social tendencies, commonly examined within the framework of social orientation, hold significant relevance across various contexts.

Social orientation refers to individuals' preferences regarding outcomes for themselves and others (Cohen, 2014), encompassing aspects such as altruism, equality, cooperation, individualism, competition, and aggression. Tong, Wang, and Uchino's (2016) research categorizes social orientation into three main types: pro-social, individualistic, and competitive. Pro-social orientation emphasizes improving outcomes for oneself and others while ensuring fairness. Individualistic orientation prioritizes personal outcomes with minimal regard for others, whereas competitive orientation aims to enhance personal outcomes at the expense of others. This study delves into social orientation's role in understanding individuals' behaviors, relationships, and adaptations, particularly within their work environments.

In professional settings, individuals, including business educators, are influenced by the social environment, which shapes their decision-making processes. This adaptability is linked to heightened efficiency and productivity, consequently reducing the likelihood of experiencing stress. Geisler and Allwood (2018) investigated various psychological factors' relationship with work stress levels, discovering significant associations between social orientation, time approach, and work stress. However, they did not find a notable correlation between decision-making competence and work stress, suggesting that while social orientation and time approach are pivotal in understanding work stress, decision-making competence may hold less significance in this context. Similarly, Bavoľar and Orosova (2015) explored the interplay between decision-making styles, competencies, work stress, and mental health among high school and university students in Slovakia, providing valuable insights into the broader relationship between decision-making and stress, albeit not directly applicable to workplace settings.

However, a significant concern in the education industry, especially among teachers in public tertiary institutions like business educators, is declining productivity attributed to work-related stress. Business educators face unique challenges and stressors, including teaching complex theories, managing multiple classes, and staying updated with teaching techniques. Limited resources, large class sizes, and outdated teaching materials exacerbate these



challenges, leading to feelings of isolation and decreased job satisfaction (Chambers, 2019; Ile & Nnonyelu, 2023). As Ile and Nnonyelu further noted, business educators often lack support from their institutions, including mentorship and guidance needed for professional development and quality education delivery. This lack of support can contribute to burnout, ultimately affecting student learning. It is essential for tertiary institutions to address these unique stressors by providing professional development, mentorship opportunities, adequate teaching resources, and fair compensation to business educators.

However, despite government programs aimed at improving teacher productivity, not enough attention has been given to the stress experienced by business educators in public tertiary institutions, particularly in Anambra State. This study aims to investigate social orientation and decision-making competence as predictors of work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

### Statement of the Problem

In the context of public tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria, the prevalence of work stress among business educators is a significant concern. Despite the pivotal role these educators play in shaping the future workforce, their well-being and job satisfaction are increasingly compromised due to stress-related factors. To address this issue effectively, it is crucial to understand the underlying determinants of work stress among business educators. Therefore, the primary problem addressed in this study is to investigate the predictors of work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to examine the influence of two key factors: social orientation and decision-making competence.

Social orientation encompasses individuals' preferences regarding outcomes for themselves and others, as well as their adaptability to social expectations. Understanding how social orientation affects business educators' experiences of work stress can provide insights into interventions aimed at mitigating stress levels and enhancing job satisfaction. Additionally, decision-making competence plays a crucial role in navigating the complexities of professional responsibilities. However, its impact on work stress among business educators in Anambra State remains unclear. Investigating the relationship between decision-making competence and work stress can shed light on potential areas for professional development and support initiatives. By addressing these research questions, this study seeks to contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for promoting the well-being and effectiveness of business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which social orientation, and decision-making competence influences work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which:

1. Influence of social orientation on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State
2. Influence of decision-making competence on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the influence of social orientation on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. How does decision-making competence influence work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence of social orientation on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant influence of decision-making competence on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in Anambra State utilizing a correlational survey research design. This type of design aims to establish relationships between two or more variables and also reveals the direction and strength of these relationships (Nworgu, 2015). By using this design, the study aimed to explore the connections between social orientation, decision-making competence, and work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions



in Anambra State. Additionally, correlational research helps to identify the direction (positive, negative, or no correlation) and strength (magnitude) of these relationships, providing valuable insights into the dynamics between the variables under investigation.

#### 4. SAMPLING DESIGN

The study involved the entire population of 112 business educators from all public institutions in Anambra State, eliminating the need for sampling due to the manageable population size. Three research instruments were utilized to collect data for the study. The Social Orientation Scale (SOS) is a 14-item instrument designed to gauge individuals' beliefs regarding the importance of others' needs and feelings in social interactions, as well as their attitudes towards helping and caring for others' welfare. Respondents indicated their agreement with each item on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree).

The Decision Making Competence Questionnaire (DMCQ) consisted of 15 items assessing participants' decisional self-esteem (feeling respected and confident in decision-making) and decision-making styles (vigilant and intuitive). Responses were recorded on a 4-point rating scale ranging from Always to Never. The Work Stress Scale (WSS) was employed to evaluate stress levels among individuals aged 12 and above. This scale measures the extent to which individuals perceive life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelming over the past month. Respondents indicated the frequency of their feelings using a four-point scale ranging from 'never' to 'always'.

#### 5. STATISTICAL DESIGN

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents using a direct delivery approach. The direct delivery approach involves directly providing the questionnaire to the respondents, who then complete it themselves. This method allows for efficient data collection as respondents can fill out the questionnaire at their convenience, reducing the chances of misinterpretation or bias that might arise from intermediary administration. Data obtained from the questionnaire were subjected to analysis using simple linear regression analysis. This analytical method was employed to address the research questions and evaluate the null hypotheses.

#### 6. RESULTS

##### Research Question 1

What is the influence of social orientation on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Regression Analysis on the Extent Social Orientation Influences Work Stress among Business Educators in Public Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Beta	% added
0.343	0.117	0.109	0.117	0.343	34.3

The data presented in Table 1 reveal that social orientation has a beta coefficient of 0.343. This suggests that social orientation accounts for 34.3 percent of the variance in work stress experienced by business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

##### Research Question 2

How does decision-making competence influence work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Regression Analysis on the Extent Decision-making Competence Influences Work Stress among Business Educators in Public Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Beta	% added
0.012	0.000	-0.009	0.000	-0.012	1.2

The information depicted in Table 2 illustrates that decision-making competence exhibits a beta coefficient of -0.012. This implies that decision-making competence contributes approximately 1.2 percent to the variance in work stress experienced by business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

**Null Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant influence of social orientation on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis on Social Orientation as a Significant of Work Stress among Business Educators in Public Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Beta	%add	Cal. t.	df	Pvalue	Remark
0.343	0.117	0.109	0.117	0.343	34.3	3.737	105	0.000	S

**S = Significant**

The findings presented in Table 3 indicate that, with 105 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05, the calculated t-value is 3.737, yielding a p-value of 0.000. Given that the p-value is lower than the designated significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Consequently, social orientation emerges as a significant predictor of work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

**Null Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant influence of decision-making competence on work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis on Decision-Making Competence as a Significant Predictor of Work Stress among Business Educators in Public Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Beta	%add	Cal. t.	df	Pvalue	Remark
0.012	0.000	-0.009	-0.009	-0.012	-1.2	-0.126	105	0.900	NS

**NS = Not Significant**

The findings presented in Table 4 show that, with 105 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05, the calculated t-value is -0.126, resulting in a p-value of 0.900. Given that the p-value exceeds the designated significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, it is shown that decision-making competence does not serve as a significant predictor of work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

**7. DISCUSSION**

Findings obtained from the field of study are hereby discussed:

The study found that social orientation accounted for 34.3 percent of work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Additionally, it was found that social orientation significantly predicted work stress in this group. This could be explained in several ways. Firstly, the study focused on business educators in public tertiary institutions, where educators may face considerable pressure from students, colleagues, and administrators. This pressure could increase stress levels, especially when combined with the social orientation of the environment.

Social orientation influences how educators interact with others, such as colleagues, peers, and students. Socially oriented educators may engage in conversations and build relationships, which can be either positive or negative. Positive interactions may alleviate stress, while negative ones can heighten it. Moreover, social orientation can affect workload management, with socially oriented educators more likely to take on additional tasks and responsibilities, leading to increased stress. Additionally, coping with difficult situations may vary based on social orientation, as seeking support from peers can reduce stress, but negative interactions may exacerbate it. Geisler and Allwood's (2018) study supported these findings, linking social orientation to work stress. Ultimately, social orientation significantly predicts work stress among business educators, as it influences workplace dynamics and stress levels.

On the other hand, the study found that decision-making competence contributed only 1.2 percent to work stress among business educators and was not a significant predictor of it. Although seemingly small, even minor stress can impact well-being. Decision-making can be stressful, but making sound decisions may alleviate stress. However, other factors such as workload, job satisfaction, and work-life balance may play more significant roles





in determining stress levels among educators. Bavol'ar and Orosova's (2015) and Ile and Nnonyelu (2023) study also suggested a weak relationship between decision-making styles and decision-making competence and work stress, indicating decision-making competence may not be as influential as other factors. Additionally, the context and types of decisions made may vary in their impact on stress levels, emphasizing the importance of considering specific circumstances in evaluating decision-making's effect on work stress.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the factors influencing work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed that social orientation plays a significant role in determining work stress levels, as evidenced by its substantial beta coefficient of 0.343. This suggests that social orientation accounts for approximately 34.3 percent of the variance in work stress experienced by business educators in the region.

Conversely, the study found that decision-making competence exhibited a negligible beta coefficient of -0.012, indicating that it contributes only around 1.2 percent to the variance in work stress among business educators. Moreover, the analysis demonstrated that decision-making competence does not serve as a significant predictor of work stress in this group.

These findings highlight the importance of considering social orientation when addressing work stress among business educators. The study suggests that interventions aimed at improving social dynamics and interactions within the workplace could potentially reduce stress levels among educators. However, it also indicates that efforts to enhance decision-making competence may not yield significant reductions in work stress among this population.

## 9. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The implications of this study are multifaceted and offer valuable insights for various stakeholders involved in the well-being and productivity of business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Firstly, the significant role of social orientation in predicting work stress among business educators underscores the importance of fostering a positive and supportive social environment within educational institutions. Administrators and policymakers should prioritize initiatives aimed at promoting healthy social interactions and relationships among educators, students, and colleagues. Encouraging collaboration, open communication, and mutual support can help mitigate work stress and enhance overall well-being among educators.

Furthermore, the finding that decision-making competence does not significantly predict work stress suggests that efforts to alleviate stress among educators may need to focus on factors beyond individual decision-making skills. While enhancing decision-making abilities remains important for overall professional development, interventions targeted solely at improving decision-making may not yield substantial reductions in work stress among business educators. Instead, resources and support should be directed towards addressing other factors contributing to stress, such as workload management, job satisfaction, and workplace relationships.

Additionally, the study's findings emphasize the need for tailored interventions and support mechanisms that recognize the unique challenges and stressors faced by business educators in public tertiary institutions. Institutions should consider implementing comprehensive stress management programs that address the specific needs of educators, providing resources for coping with stress, building resilience, and fostering a supportive work environment.

## 10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to address work stress among business educators in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State:

1. Educational institutions should prioritize initiatives aimed at fostering a positive and supportive social environment among educators, students, and colleagues. Encouraging collaboration, open communication, and mutual support can help mitigate work stress. Administrators should create opportunities for networking, team-building activities, and mentorship programs to enhance social interactions and relationships within the workplace.
2. Institutions should develop and implement comprehensive stress management programs tailored to the specific needs of business educators. These programs should provide resources and support for coping with stress, building resilience, and enhancing well-being. Workshops, seminars, and counseling services can be offered to equip educators with effective stress management strategies and techniques.



3. While decision-making competence may not significantly predict work stress among business educators, it remains an essential skill for professional development. Institutions should provide training and support to enhance educators' decision-making skills. Workshops, seminars, and professional development programs focused on decision-making strategies and techniques can help educators make informed and effective decisions, thereby reducing stress associated with decision-making processes.
4. Promote Work-Life Balance: Institutions should promote work-life balance initiatives to support the well-being of business educators. Flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting options or flexible scheduling, can help educators better manage their work and personal responsibilities. Encouraging self-care practices and promoting a culture of work-life balance can contribute to overall job satisfaction and reduce work stress among educators.

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