



Trigger Stimuli of Anxiety among Higher Education Lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria

Ajiboye, Samuel Kolawole
Department of Counsellor Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin,
PMB 1515, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Anxiety is one of the major factors hindering job performance of teachers and the overall achievement of education goals. Higher education lecturers are particularly exposed to anxiety owing to the peculiarity of their responsibilities. This study investigated trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey was adopted for the study while 300 respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire titled "Trigger Stimuli of Anxiety" was used to collect information. It possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Data were analysed with descriptive (mean) and inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA). The major trigger stimuli of anxiety among respondents are research-related ($X=2.78$) and teaching-related ($X=2.52$). Females scored higher on trigger stimuli of anxiety while university lecturers also expressed highest ($X=61.04$) compared to polytechnic (57.31) and college of education (55.17). Thus, conducive environment should be provided for research activities and teaching.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History
Received: October, 2019
Received in revised form: Dec., 2019
Accepted: January, 2019
Published online: March, 2020

KEYWORDS

Anxiety, Trigger, Stimuli, Education,

INTRODUCTION

Lecturers in higher educational institutions are saddled with many responsibilities which include teaching, research, community services and administration. Apart from these cardinal responsibilities, individual lecturer would have to content with social, health and economic challenges in order to survive the feat of life since they are also members of the larger society. It is therefore not uncommon for lecturers to experience anxiety at one point in time or the other. However, factors inducing anxiety vary from one situation to another and from an individual to another. Nevertheless, anxiety is a debilitating experience that is difficult to overcome without a deliberate effort geared towards combating it. Deliberate effort is

required in identifying trigger stimuli of anxiety in order to prepare pragmatic and laudable measures to manage and prevent it (particularly) among higher education lecturers.

Anxiety is a generalised feeling of fear and apprehension that might be related to a particular event, situation or object; it is often accompanied by increased psychological arousal which becomes threatening to individuals wellbeing. Thus, it could be described as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or agitation about something with an uncertain outcome. According to Browne (2018), anxiety is a normal but when a person regularly feels it in disproportionate levels, it might become devastating to individuals wellbeing. Anxiety potentially alters how a person processes

Corresponding author: Ajiboye, S. K. ✉ ajiboye.sk@unilorin.edu.ng ✉ Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin. © 2020, Faculty of Technology Education, ATBU Bauchi. All rights reserved



emotions which invariably translates to behaviour. Thus, a lecturer of higher education who experiences anxiety is likely to exhibit some strange behaviour as a result of feelings of worry and discomfort.

There are different levels of anxiety: mild or severe. Mild anxiety might be vague and unsettling (Brownce, 2018). Generally, mild anxiety is the type that occurs in most individuals on a day-to-day basis particularly while encountering certain situations. The symptoms include uneasy feeling in the stomach and a slight increase in the pulse. On the other hand, severe anxiety usually affects day-to-day activities of the individual. Some of the common symptoms of anxiety are feeling nervous/tense, having a sense of impending danger, increased heart rate, and hyperventilation, sweating, feeling weak and having gastrointestinal problems (Mayo Clinic, 2018). Other common symptoms as may reflect among lecturers include increased irritability, concentration difficulties, sleep difficulties, uncontrollable feeling of worry and feeling of anger to mention a few. According to Oyebanji (2013), anxiety and stress are closely related and often used interchangeably to describe feelings of tension and discomfort which may result from fear or threat. Thus, there are various factors responsible for anxiety among different individuals in the society, particularly the higher education lecturers. These factors could relate to the job requirements of the lecturers.

Anxiety occurs when normal daily functioning is disrupted among lecturers, such as teaching, research exercise, personal obligations and many more. One could infer that anxiety is usually triggered by one's perception of physical or emotional danger. Bhandari (2018) highlighted some common causes of anxiety which are stress at work, stress from school, stress in a personal relationship, financial stress, stress from an emotional trauma, stress from a serious

medical illness, side effect of medication and fear of death. The Mayo Clinic (2019) also mentioned that life experiences such as traumatic events and other environmental conditions can significantly trigger anxiety in the individual.

The peculiarity of the services required of higher education lecturers in Nigeria exposes them to certain feeling of anxiety. Since higher education is the third tier and highest level of education system in Nigeria, the lecturers are expected to be highly skilled in teaching and research. Thus, the cardinal responsibilities of lecturers at such level of education are teaching, research, administration and community services (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). It implies that, in order to remain on job and equally receive promotion/elevation on job, lecturers are expected to adequately satisfy the requirements. However, the cardinal responsibilities could as well trigger anxiety among the lecturers because of the feeling of apprehension on how to meet up with the expectations. Teaching-related stimuli of anxiety may include fear on how to stand before students, preparing a good lecture note, and scoring students' performances. Research-related stimuli of anxiety could emanate from fear on how to develop and write acceptable research title and reports, sourcing for acceptable publication outlets and wasting for a long period of time for publishers' response. On community service, lecturers may develop anxiety on how to develop proposals on community service, enlisting the interest of the community members and having to coordinate programmes. The administrative-related stimuli of anxiety may be triggered by fear associated with errors in computation of result, attending various meetings and students' advisement.

Aslarasouli and Pourvalid (2014), in an investigation of teaching anxiety among novice and experienced Iranian EFL Teacher across gender, found that anxiety bothering



on interpersonal relations had the highest impact whereas employment structure seemed to have the lowest effect. In addition, there was a weak relationship between years of experience and the level of anxiety of teachers. According to Better Health Channel (2012), work – related anxiety can be caused by various events which include desire to meet up with job demands, such as having to work for extra hours, worry over conflicting job responsibility and worry on how to possibly satisfy conditions for career elevation. In the Nigerian higher education, such factors could as well be responsible for anxiety among the lecturers because there may be conflicting roles and deadline for the completion of assignments, worry over need to attend meetings etc.

Some other trigger stimuli of anxiety that may be peculiar and popular among lecturers of higher education in Nigeria, particularly Kwara State, are worry over working for long hours in order to maintain the space of academic session, how to work under heavy workload because of insufficient personnel, worry over incessant change in policy on promotion and how to maintain good health under job pressure. It is seemingly a tradition that the public higher educational institutions in Kwara State seldom permit interruption of academic calendar no matter the need for it. In addition, the stability in academic activities/calendar of higher educational institutions in Kwara State has attracted the interest of parents and students to patronize the schools which in turn has resulted to population explosion. Thus, lecturers would have to content with the various trigger stimuli for anxiety all year through.

Anxiety among teachers is a global phenomenon which is moderated by some variables. Gardner and Leak (2009) found that several trigger stimuli for teaching anxiety were identified by the respondents in a study among College Psychology

Teachers. Some of the major anxiety-inducing stimuli were related to speaking before groups, speech anxiety and maintaining moderate relationship with students. The study revealed that, such variables as gender, academic rank and teaching experience emerged as correlates of anxiety among the respondents. Furthermore, other frequent triggers of anxiety among teachers are standing in front of the class, before speaking (50%), preparing for class (49%), hostile comments from students (39%), providing inadequate answers to students (33%) and large class size (20%). In a study on student teacher anxieties related to class management and pedagogy, Morton, Vesco, Williams and Awender (2011) found that females showed higher anxiety scores than males and there was variation in anxiety levels based on period of stay on job; teachers who had stayed longer scored low on anxiety unlike new entrants (0 – 10years) with high scores on anxiety. Astrasouli and Pourvalid (2014) found that 57.65% of teachers had feelings of anxiety in one way or another, however there was a weak and negative relationship between years of experience and amount of tension experienced by teachers. In addition, no meaningful correlation was found between gender and occupational anxiety among higher grade teachers. Considering the reports of findings on trigger stimuli of anxiety among teachers across the globe, lecturers of higher education in Nigeria would not be an exemption. Thus, the need to investigate the trigger stimuli of anxiety among them (lecturers).

Research Question: What are the trigger stimuli of anxiety among lecturers of higher education in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety between



- male and female higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H0₂:** There is no significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety among lecturers of higher education in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type.
- H0₃:** There is no significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria based on work experience.

Study Aims

This study was purposely conducted to investigate trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria. It thus aimed at identifying the categories of anxiety-inducing stimuli in relation to the four cardinal roles of higher education lecturers in Nigeria (that is, research, teaching, community service and administration). In addition, the study aimed at applying quantitative method in the course of the investigation and make useful recommendations on the findings.

METHOD

The descriptive survey of quantitative approach was adopted for the study. The population comprised all lecturers of higher education in Kwara State. However the target population was lecturers from each institution selected across the three main categories of higher educational agencies: University; Polytechnic and

College of Education. There are six universities, one polytechnic and seven colleges of Education in Kwara State (Gambari, 2019). The purposive sampling was used to select each of the institution since they represent the scope of the studies. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents from each of the institutions. Thus, a total of 300 respondents participated in the study. An instrument titled "Trigger Stimuli of Anxiety Questionnaire (TSAQ)" was used to collect data. It has four sub-sections with five items each. The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.79 having been subjected to the test retest method. It is patterned in the four point Likert-rating scale of "Very True of Me", "True of Me," "Sometime True of Me" and "Never True of Me" on a continuum of 4 – 1 scoring. Since the highest score is 4 and lowest is 1 the average is 2.50 ($4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10/4$). The cumulative mean score was calculated and the average was used to determine the significance of the sources of anxiety among respondents. Hence any category of anxiety-related factor that has an average mean value of 2.50 and above was considered significant and anyone below 2.50 was considered otherwise. The researcher sought the informed consent of the respondents before they participated. The research question was answered with the use of mean and ranking of items while all hypotheses were tested with t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT

Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Gender, Institution Type and Years of Work Experience

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	181	60.3
Female	119	39.7
Total	300	100.0

Corresponding author: Ajiboye, S. K. ✉ ajiboye.sk@unilorin.edu.ng ✉ Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin. © 2020, Faculty of Technology Education, ATBU Bauchi. All rights reserved



Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Institution Type		
University	125	41.7
Polytechnic	48	16.0
College of Education	127	42.3
Total	300	100.0
Years of Work Experience		
0 – 10 years	141	47.0
11 – 20 years	126	42.0
21 and above	33	11.0
Total	300	100.0

The result in Table 2 shows that 60.3%, and 39.7% of the respondents are male and female respectively while 41.7%, 16.0% and 42.3% respondents are lectures from University, Polytechnic and College of Education respectively. Respondents with 0 – 10, 11 – 20 and 21 and above years of work

experience constituted 47.0%, 42.0% and 11.0% respectively.

Research Question: What are the trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Scores and Ranking of Trigger Stimuli of Anxiety among higher education lecturers

I excessively worried about	X
Research-Related Stimuli	
how to develop good research topics	2.51
how to generate research data	2.64
sourcing for acceptable publication outlet	3.11
sourcing for fund to wait a long time for the publication of research reports.	2.61
	<u>3.03</u>
	Cumulative Mean = <u>13.90</u>
	Average Mean = 13.90/5 = <u>2.78</u>
Teaching-Related Stimuli	
how to prepare good lecturer materials	2.52
standing before students to teach	2.30
how to make accurate expression before students	2.46
teaching a large class size	<u>2.71</u>
receiving hostile comments from students	Cumulative Mean = <u>2.60</u>
	Average Mean = 12.59/ 5 = <u>2.52</u>
Community Service-Related Stimuli	
how to develop a useful community service	2.13
financing the execution of community service	2.04
attracting the interest of the communities	1.81
sourcing for supportive personnel	2.17
how to bridge together the academic and community view points	<u>2.41</u>
	Cumulative Mean = <u>10.56</u>
	Average Mean = 10.56/5 = <u>2.11</u>
Administrative-Related Stimuli	
attending departmental meetings	2.51



computing students results	2.64
engaging in students' advisement/counselling	2.56
participating in committees	1.93
involving students certificate screening	2.02
Cumulative Mean =	11.66
Average Mean = 11.66/5 =	2.33

The result on Table 2 shows that the most prominent trigger stimuli of anxiety among respondents are research-related (X=2.78) followed by teaching-related (2.52). Others (community service-related and administrative-related stimuli) are below the benchmark of 2.50, hence not considered as being of significance.

HYPOTHESES

H0₁: There is no significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety between male and female higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 2: The t-test results based on Gender

Gender	N	X	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t	p.	Decision
Male	181	69.21	7.61	298	2.11	1.96	*0.000	Rejected
Female	119	73.83	5.82					

*Sig = p<0.05

The null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.5) with a corresponding t-calculated value (2.11) greater than t-critical value (1.96). Female respondents (X = 73.83) have more sources of anxiety than male (X = 69.21).

H0₂: There is no significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance results of responses based on institution type

Source	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Crit. F	p.	Decision
Between Groups	31266.88	2	15633.44	41.16	3.00	0.000	Rejected
Within Groups	54555.93	297	183.69				
Total	8522.81	299					

*Sig. = p<0.05

The result of the ANOVA shows that the null hypothesis is rejected because the p.value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05) with corresponding F-cal (41.16) greater than F-crit (3.00). Hence, there was significant difference in trigger stimuli of

anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type. The Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was applied to identify the direction of the difference.



Table 4: DMRT Result

Institution	Types	Group	X	Duncan's Grouping
University	125	1	61.04	A
Polytechnic	48	2	57.31	B
College of Education	127	3	55.17	C

The result shows that all the groups differed from each other. However, respondents (lecturers) from University have more trigger stimuli of anxiety ($X=61.04$) followed by Polytechnic ($X=57.31$) and College of Education ($X=55.17$).

H0₃: There is no significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers in Kwara State, Nigeria based on work experience.

Table 5: ANOVA Result1 based on Work Experience

Source	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Crit. F	p. Val.
Between Groups	922.54	2	461.27	1.37	3.00	0.20
Within Groups	12398859	297	417.47			
Total	124911.13	299				

The result in Table 5 shows that the null hypothesis was accepted because the p-value (0.20) is greater than the significance level (0.05) with corresponding F-val (1.37) less than F-crit. (3.00).

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that research-related factors are the major trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers with an average means of 2.78 (out of 4.00). Such factors include: excessive worry about sourcing for acceptable publication outlets, having to wait a long time for the acceptance of publication of research outcome and how to generate research data. The reason for research-related factors being the most trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers might not be unconnected with the policy on the job of lecturers. Career elevation and maintenance among lecturers in higher education are prominently tied to ability to conduct researches and get such published. This finding supports Bhandari (2018) who identified job-demand stress as a major

cause of anxiety among teachers. Similarly, teaching-related factors were reported to be the 2nd prominent trigger stimuli of anxiety with an average mean of 2.52 (out of 4.00). Some of the pertinent teaching-related factors are: worry about teaching a large class, receiving hostile comments from students, and how to prepare a good lecture material. Lecturers are likely to express worry on teaching particularly most of the public schools in Nigeria because of large population of students. In some cases, Public Address System (PAS) gadgets may not be available or could be in bad condition thereby counselling the lecturers to work under tension. In such condition, students are likely frustrated and thereby resort to making hostile comments. Gardner and Leak (2009) equally found a similar result among college psychology teachers where it was reported that anxiety-induced stimuli were related to speaking before groups as well as speech anxiety. The finding further established large class size, hostile comments from students and providing



inadequate answers to students as major trigger stimuli of teaching anxiety.

The findings revealed other trigger stimuli of anxiety, which are administrative-related and community service-related factors with average mean scores of 2.33 and 2.11(out of 4.00). The scores are below 2.50 (the benchmark for making decision), which suggests that they are not of significance. The reason could be that, lecturers do not find it difficult to embark on community services and their involvement in administrative service might be less since there are designated staffs members (non-academic) employed and saddled with such responsibility.

The results of the hypotheses revealed that male and female lecturers were not similar in the trigger stimuli of anxiety. Female respondents expressed more trigger stimuli ($X=73.21$) than male ($X=69.83$). This corroborates the findings of Morton, Vesco, Williams and Awender (2011) which reported higher anxiety scores among female than male. Thus, male are likely to be using masculine tendency as coping strategy to tackle anxiety-inducing stimuli while female may be helpless in such condition because of their feminine nature.

There was significant difference in trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers based on institution type. Thus, lecturers in Universities expressed the highest trigger stimuli of anxiety ($X=61.04$) followed by Polytechnic ($X=57.31$) and College of Education (55.17). The reason could be that, there is more intense responsibility on University lecturers in terms of research and teaching since that is the highest institution of learning. In addition, University is considered a research based institution and thus, the lecturers are expected, irrespective of the prevailing unfavourable condition, to conduct worthwhile researches and teaching.

The finding also revealed that, there is no significant difference in the

trigger stimuli sources of anxiety among higher education lecturers based on work experience. This is in agreement with Aslvasouli and Pourvalid (2014) who reported a weak relationship between years of experience and level of anxiety. Thus, work experience does not contribute significantly to anxiety. Since lecturers in higher education face same condition of service, it is therefore likely that they experience similar trigger stimuli of anxiety.

CONCLUSION

Considering the results that emanated from the study, it could be concluded that the major trigger stimuli of anxiety among higher education lecturers are research-related and teaching – related factors. This is as a result of high premium placed on these factor as major determinants of lecturers' retention on job and prerequisite for promotion. Female lecturers will always express more trigger stimuli of anxiety than male and lecturers from University are prone to more sources of anxiety than their counterparts in other higher educational institutions.

Based on the conclusion, the following are recommended:

1. In order to reduce trigger stimuli of anxiety relating to research, higher education institutions should always provide conducive environment for conducting researches;
2. Higher education authorities should always help lecturers to source for publication outlets of acceptable credibility;
3. Efforts should be made by stakeholders in higher education on ensuring manageable class size per lecturer;
4. Professional counsellors should assist in training lecturers on how to cope with anxiety particular in relation to research and teaching;



5. Efforts should be made to assist female lecturers in overcoming trigger stimuli of anxiety through training on how to source for publication outlets and facing large class size; and
6. Adequate attention should be given to lecturers in universities when making efforts to reduce anxiety among higher education lecturers.

REFERENCES

- Aslrasonli, M. & Pourvahid, M.S. (2014). An investigation of teaching anxiety among novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers across gender. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 98 pp304-313.
- Better Health Channel (2012). *Work-related anxiety*. Victoria: Department of Health & Human Services.
- Bhandari, S. (2018). *Causes of anxiety*. Retrieved May 16, 2019 from www.webmd.com/anxietypanic/guide
- Browne, D. (2018). *What to know about anxiety*. Retrieved May 9, 2019 from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/3234>.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *The national policy on education (6th edition)*. Lagos; NERDC
- Gambari, A.M. (2019). *Factors responsible for job-related stress as expressed by female academic staff of universities of Ilorin, Nigeria*. An unpublished M.Ed thesis, University of Ilorin, Nigeria
- Gardner, L.E. & Leak, G.K. (2009). Characteristics and correlates of teaching anxiety among college psychology teachers. *Teaching of psychology* 21(1): 28-32.
- Mayo Clinic (2018). *Anxiety disorders*. Retrieved May 8, 2019 from www.mayoclinic.org/disease
- Mayo Clinic (2019). *Anxiety disorders*. Retrieved May 16, 2019 from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases>.
- Morton, L.L, Vesco, R., Williams, N.H. & Awender, M.A (2011). Students teacher anxieties related to class management, pedagogy, evaluation and staff relations. *British Journal of Education*, 67, 1: 69-89.
- Oyebanji, T.O. (2013). *Sources, patterns and coping strategies for anxiety among youth corps members in Nigeria*. An unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.