SUSTAINABILITY OF ELECTRICAL ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGISTS AND INSTRUCTORS THROUGH RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY FOR OPTIMAL PRODUCTIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine the effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Occupational Stress among Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors in Northern Universities in Nigeria for sustainability at the workplace. The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design. The study was conducted in five States in Northern Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study and eight hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The population for this study comprised 50 Electrical/Electronic Technologists and instructors (EETIs). Questionnaire was used for data collection and was faced validated by three expert validates in the Department of Technical Education, Benue State University. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha which yielded a coefficient value of .84. Both experimental groups and control groups were pretested without intervention. However, the experimental group received the experimental treatment (planned and formal Rational Emotive Behaviour Treatment). Mean scores were used to answer the research questions while ANCOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that there was a drop in the occupational stress among the EETIs exposed to the REBT as compared to the waitlist group. Occupational stress was noticeable among male EETIs than the female EETIs. Findings of this study indicated that REBT is an effective and time-efficient treatment modality for overcoming occupational stress experienced by EETIs in the Federal Universities in Nigeria. Thus, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy is highly recommended to be integrated with the present Electrical/Electronic Technology Education curriculum to foster the disputation of work- irrational beliefs among EETIs

Keywords: Sustainability; REBT; Occupational stress; Electrical/Electronic Technologists; optimal productivity

Any educational sector frequently needs to assess the sustainability of its employees which may entail using a set of institutional norms. According to Grant (2010) and Ozili (2022), sustainability is a philosophy, attitude, or practice that directs the efficient use of resources currently available to ensure that there are enough of them to meet both current demands and those of future generations. In order to accomplish specific intended social, economic, and environmental objectives, sustainability is also defined as the capacity to use and allocate resources responsibly to both economic and non-economic activities (Grant 2010). Many studies defined sustainability in relation to other contexts or disciplines such as business sustainability (Bansal and DesJardine 2014), career sustainability (Tordera, Peiro, Ayala, Villajos, & Truxillo, 2020), urban sustainability (James 2015), product sustainability (Dyllick and Rost 2017) and fiscal sustainability (Byrne, Fiess, and MacDonald 2011). This study anchored its definition of sustainability in the context of career sustainability for optimal productivity of electrical electronic technologists and instructors in the work place. Hence, sustainability means meeting the needs without compromising the ability of Electrical/Electrical (EETIs) to meet their own needs at the workplace while performing assembling parts and other practical activities.

Electrical/Electronic technologists are specialists in the development and design of electrical/electronic technology, including designing and assembling parts for printed circuit boards. According to Ogbuanya and Yekinni (2020b), an instructor's job is to teach practical courses. As such, sustainability of the EETIs in the workplace is inevitable by reducing the occupation stress. Occupational stress is the change in one's physical or mental state in response to a workplace that poses an appraised threat. It can lead to psychological and physical illness, low productivity, and absenteeism ((Murtaza, Illzam, Muniandy, Hashm, Sharifa, & Nang, 2015; Ahmad, Hussain, Saleem, Qureshi and Mufti 2015). The researchers argue that such attributes are indices of poor sustainability. Occupational stress therefore, refers to the painful occurrences and experiences which pose a threat to electrical/electronic technologists and instructors (EETIs) in performing their responsibilities/duties

satisfactorily and needs to be moderated. 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 (Ogbuanya, & Nungse, 2023). It is therefore pertinent to find out the stressors among EETIS in other to proffer solution to such stressors.

Occupational stress among EETIs is caused by negative workload, isolation, types of working hours, role conflict, and difficult relationships with co-workers (Murtaza, et al., 2015; (Zhou, Zeng, Hu, Xi & Tan, 2014). The advent of surface mount devices (SMD) which most EETIs are not familiar with the maintenance are also sources of stress to EETIs. REBT therapy can help moderate it. REBT is a therapeutic approach used to reduce undesirable behaviours by identifying and changing work-related irrational beliefs and feelings (Jalil, 2017). It encourages people to adopt attitudes of self-care and self-acceptance, as well as kindness and empathy. It is a sure approach to sustain the EETIs regardless of gender (Ellis, 2021).

Gender has been found to have a significant influence on Technologists and Instructors' occupational stress experience. Rivera-Torres, Araque-Padilla, and Montero-Simo (2013) found that significant differences exist between male and female Technologists and Instructors, with women being more stressed than men. Other studies find differences only with regards to perceived level of control in the workplace, not job demands. The researcher believes that the stress experienced by male and female Electrical Electronic Technologists is likely to vary, and REBT could be effective in sustaining EETIs at their workplace for optimal productivity.

Problem of the Study

The Sustainable Development of Electrical Electronic Technologists and Instructors (EETIs) is essential to avert the consequences of poor performance on the job due to psychological and emotional maladjustments. The EETIs are supposed to be stress free in their work place. Ideally, they need not be overloaded with daily activities leading to overtime. Role conflict, and difficult relationships among co-workers is supposed to be at the minimal level.

Unfortunately, Electrical Electronic Technologists and Instructors are often exposed to a significant amount of occupational stress in the workshops due to demands for high performance, constant changes in technology, excess workload and lack of on-the-job training. Presently, literature has proven that EETIs are preoccupied by role conflict and difficult relationships among co-workers. To increase their performance and limit occupational stress, it is important to dispute these sources of stressors among EETIs through implementation of REBT. This study therefore, explored the effects of rational emotive behavior therapy on occupational stress among electrical/electronic technologists and instructors in the Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy?
2. What is the interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors?

The following null hypotheses were postulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy;
2. There is no significant interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors

Methodology

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design that lasted for a period of 8 weeks and 16 sessions. Specifically, the nonequivalent control-group pre-test and posttest experimental design was employed in this study. The test was done variously at (times 1, 2, & 3). The time 1 (T1) measures represent the pre-test, while the measures at time 2 (T2) and time 3 (T3) represents the posttests for both control and experimental groups. The study was conducted in five States in Northern Nigeria

Study Participants

330 Electrical/Electronic Technology Education Technologists and Instructors from Nigerian Universities participated in this study. There were 140 technologists and 182 instructors from 7 Federal

Universities in Nigeria, The population was collected with the permission of the heads of the Technical departments of Federal universities.

Measures: The instrument for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire titled 'Work Irrational beliefs (WIB) Questionnaire'. The scales adapted for the study were sourced from the previous studies. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section 'A' measured the demographic variables of the Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors' gender. Section 'B' measured occupational stress with 21 items. Items of the questionnaire on section 'B' were items on Job stress, role expectation conflict & coworker support. It was rated on a five-point scale of absolutely false (1); almost false (2); partially true (3), almost true (4), and absolutely true (5). Items on work-life balance of section C were measured on another five-point scale of 1 = Never; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often and 5 = very often Reliability of the study was performed in 2 Federal University in South East to include University of Nigeria Nsukka and Nnamdi University, Awka, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87 cronbach alpha. Description of the scales are as follows:

Work irrational beliefs: work-Irrational beliefs were assessed using 24 items. Coworkers' approval, failure, and control each comprised five items, while the performance demand scale had nine items. These scales were modified from Ellis (1975) and Wijhe, Peeters, and Schaufeli (2013) for the purposes of this study. For instance, I must do well at work in order to feel good about myself (performance demand). To be able to execute my work well, I need my coworkers' acceptance (coworkers' approval). If I don't do my work well (fail), it is terrible. I am unable to handle unforeseen demands at work (Control).

REBT Intervention

An REBT treatment manual: This treatment manual was adapted from the REBT manual protocol for depression by Ellis (2002) and was used by the researchers to help participants to identify, challenge, and alters work irrational beliefs and occupational stress interfering with their rational beliefs, health and performance in the place of work. Details of the REBT manual is as in the experimental procedure. According to Ellis (2002), the best way to manage and control negative thoughts is through changing the thinking system of the individual, and this can be achieved through effective disputation.

Experimental Procedure

The manual is divided into 16 sessions and lasted for 45 minutes each. Every session in the treatment manual is divided into therapy objectives, content, therapy activities and techniques to be used. The A-B-C-D-E-F form was adapted for the treatment.

Data Analysis

The collected data from the administration of both pretest and posttest were analyzed and interpreted using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The statistical package used for running the analysis was Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS version 25. Specifically, mean and standard deviation were used to provide empirical evidence for research question while ANCOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Real limit of numbers was used for interpreting the analyzed data as follows: Absolutely True (ABT) 4.50-5.00, Almost True (AT) 3.50-4.49, Partially True (PT) 2.50-3.49, Almost False (AF) 1.50-2.49, and Absolutely False (ABF) 0-1.49. In taking the decision for the hypothesis, the significant level was based on p – value of .05 such that p - value less than or equal to .05, depicts rejection. However, any test with p – value greater than .05 implies acceptance of null hypothesis relative to the test.

Findings of the Study

Research Question 1: What are the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy?

Table 1: **Pretest and Post-test mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy**

Therapies	N	Pretest $\bar{x}$	SD	Posttest $\bar{x}$	SD	Mean Difference
With REBT (Experimental Group)	165	94.10	6.82	44.75	5.57	-49.35
Without REBT (Control Group)	165	93.99	5.62	95.00	5.21	1.01

Result in Table 1 indicates that Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors who were exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) had a mean occupational stress score of ($\bar{x}$ = 94.10, SD = 6.82) at pretest and a mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 44.75, SD = 5.57) at posttest, while those who were not exposed to the therapy had a mean occupational stress score of ($\bar{x}$ = 93.99, SD = 5.62) at pretest and a mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 95.00, SD = 5.21) at posttest. Mean difference of -49.35 and 1.01 obtained for respondents that were exposed to REBT (experimental group) and those not exposed to the therapy (control group) respectively imply that REBT potently reduced the occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors.

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the difference between the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Decision
Corrected Model	208965.312	4	52241.328	1902.272	.000	.959	
Intercept	11641.526	1	11641.526	423.905	.000	.566	
Pre-OSS	583.872	1	583.872	21.261	.000	.061	
Therapies	207185.612	1	207185.612	7544.284	.000	.959	S
Gender	8.089	1	8.089	.295	.588	.001	NS
Therapies * Gender	13.117	1	13.117	.478	.490	.001	NS
Error	8925.343	325	27.463				
Total	1829016.000	330					
Corrected Total	217890.655	329					

Note: WIBS =Work Irrational Beliefs Scores, S = Significant, NS = Not Significant

Result in Table 2 shows that the difference between the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy was statistically significant $F(1, 329) = 7544.284$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .959$). This is because the associated probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 set as the level of significance for testing the null hypothesis. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and inference drawn is that there is a significant difference between the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and those not exposed to the therapy. The effect size of ($\eta^2_p = .959$), indicates that 95.9 percent changes in the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors is accounted for by the exposure to REBT.

Research Question Two: What is the interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors?

Table 3: **Pretest and Post-test Mean interaction effect of interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors**

Therapies	Gender	N	Pretest		Posttest		Mean Difference
			$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
With REBT (Experimental Group)	Male	78	94.01	6.80	45.14	5.45	-48.87
	Female	87	94.18	6.88	44.39	5.68	-49.79
Without REBT (Control Group)	Male	77	94.44	5.81	94.86	5.60	0.42
	Female	88	93.59	5.44	95.12	4.88	1.53

Result in Table 3 shows that male Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors that were exposed to REBT had a mean occupational stress score of ($\bar{x}$ = 94.01, SD = 6.80) at pretest and a mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 45.14, SD = 5.45) at posttest. The difference between pretest and posttest means was -48.87. Their female counterparts also exposed to REBT had a mean occupational stress score of ($\bar{x}$ = 94.18, SD = 6.88) at pretest and a mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 44.39, SD = 5.68) at posttest. The difference between the pretest and posttest means was -49.79. Also, the result shows that the male Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors who were not exposed to REBT had a mean occupational stress score of ($\bar{x}$ = 94.44, SD = 5.81) at pretest and a mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 94.86, SD = 5.60) at posttest. The difference between pretest and posttest means was 0.42. Similarly, their female counterparts who were not exposed to REBT had a mean occupational stress of ($\bar{x}$ = 93.59, SD = 5.44) at pretest and a mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 95.12, SD = 4.88) at posttest. The difference between the pretest and posttest means was 1.53. Observably, the result shows that female Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors recorded a slightly higher reduction in occupational stress scores than their male counterparts when exposed to REBT. The females also recorded a slightly higher increase in their occupational stress scores than their male counterparts when not exposed to the therapy. To test for the interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors, see hypothesis two.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: There is no significant interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors.

Result in fig 1 also indicate that the interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors was not statistically significant ($F(1, 329) = 0.478$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2_p = 0.001$). This is because the associated probability value of 0.490 was greater than 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the null hypothesis. On this note, the null hypothesis was not rejected and the conclusion drawn was that there is no significant interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors. This is evident as the lines drawn against therapies and gender (male and female) do not intercept at any point as shown by the graph below.

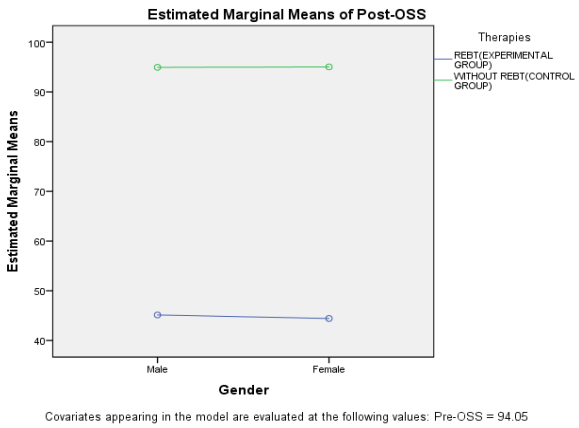

Fig. 3: Graph showing the interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors.

Figure 1 shows parallel lines on the graph, which illustrates that there is no interaction effect of the therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors. Also, the marginal means for those in the experimental group (REBT) was about 45 while that of their counterparts in the control group (without REBT) was about 94 irrespective of the respondents' gender. Visibly, these are indications that there was no significant interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors.

Discussion of the Findings

The mean difference of -49.35 and 1.01 obtained for respondents that were exposed to REBT (experimental group) and those not exposed to the therapy (control group) respectively as in Table 1 depicts that REBT potently reduced the occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors. The effect size of (η^2_p = .959) in Table 2 indicates that 95.9 percent changes in the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors is accounted for by the exposure to REBT. This result is in consonant with a study performed by Onuigbo, et al. (2018) whom results showed that the REBT group experienced a significant mean decline in stress levels and their beliefs shifted to rational ones both at post-treatment and follow-up. In contrast, the participants in the no-intervention control group showed no improvements at either post-treatment or follow-up sessions. The findings of Ogbuanya et.al (2019) and Ogbuanya et.al (2017b) further affirmed that rational-emotive behavior therapy and REBC had a significant effect on the symptoms of burnout syndrome and occupational stress among the electronics work students and electronics workshop instructor respectively in the treatment group compared to their counterparts in the non-intervention group.

The difference between the pretest and posttest means of female participants was 1.53 as in Table 3. Observably, the result shows that female Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors recorded a slightly higher reduction in occupational stress scores than their male counterparts when exposed to REBT. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Ogbuanya and Yekinni (2020a) who found that gender, age and experience did not statistically influence work stress, job satisfaction and job performances. This result was not in line with the findings of Ebifa (2019) were after the REBT treatment, the female respondents exposed to the treatment had reduction in in stress level.

There is no significant interaction effect of therapies and gender on the mean occupational stress scores of Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors as in the graph. This is evident as the lines drawn against therapies and gender (male and female) do not intercept at any point as shown by the graph if Fig 1. Further, Ogbuanya and Yekinni (2020b) confirmed that there were interaction effects of gender and job stress but not statistically significant among electrical/electronic trade teachers. The results show that the generation of job stress has a different pattern in men and women. In the case of men, the results show that only one dimension of the job demands stressor is significant (quantitative demands), whose effect on job stress is weakened slightly by the direct effects of control and support. Women are more stressed than men (Bowen, Edwards, Lingard, & Cattell, 2014).

Based on the findings of this study, the sustainability of EETIs through the application of REBT yielded a positive result since there was a significant decline in the occupational stress. Sustainability of EETIs from environmental context should include

practices that will warrant using green sources, promoting energy efficiency, and managing resources in and outside the workshop responsibly. Social sustainability of the EETIs should involve promoting equity, justice, and well-being within and between communities. It encompasses factors such as access to education, capacity building workshops, healthcare, and basic services, as well as promoting social cohesion, diversity, and human rights. Economically, EETIS are expected to promote sustainable business practices, responsible production patterns & consumption, and fair trade. All these measures would help in ameliorating the effects of occupational stress, there by promoting optimal productivity among EETIS.

Conclusion

Sustainability requires a holistic approach that considers the interconnections between environmental, social, and economic factors. It is a global challenge that requires collective action from governments, businesses, communities, and individuals to address issues that concerns human and material resources in the industries. It was a huge success that REBT proved to reduce the occupational stress among EETIs as part of sustainable development. It was however found that there was no significant effect of REBT on gender. These could be possible such that significantly with the activities carried by male in the workshop do not differ with that of the female EETIs. Recognizing and addressing occupational stress is crucial for maintaining a healthy and productive work environment among Electrical/Electronic Technologists and Instructors.

Recommendations

In other to ameliorate the effects of occupational stress on EETIs, the following recommendations were made:

1 Set clear boundaries between work and personal life to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
2 EETIS should engage in regular exercise, maintain a nutritious diet, get enough sleep, and practice relaxation techniques such as meditation or deep breathing.
3 Foster open and honest communication with supervisors and colleagues to address concerns or conflicts.
4 If stress becomes overwhelming or unmanageable, consider seeking assistance from a mental health professional or employee assistance programs.
5 Establish a positive work culture that promotes employee well-being, recognition, and work-life balance.
6 Encourage the use of REBT to provide mentorship for managing occupational stress among EETIs
7 Provide training on stress management techniques, resilience, and coping strategies.
Ensure clear job descriptions, manageable workloads, and opportunities for employee involvement and decision-making.
8 Encourage open communication and feedback channels to address employee concerns and grievances promptly. Implement policies and benefits that support employee well-being, such as flexible work arrangements or employee assistance programs.

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