

# TEACHER RESILIENCE, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

Teacher education in Nigeria has undergone considerable transformation over decades, shaped by policy shifts, curriculum reforms, and growing demands for the teaching profession. Central to this transformation is the recognition that teachers are not merely academic practitioners but emotionally engaged professionals whose psychological wellbeing significantly influences educational outcomes. This paper examines teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management as backbone of teacher education transformation in Nigeria. Drawing on Transactional Model of Stress and Coping of Lazarus and Folkman, the paper explores how these constructs interact and contribute to the evolving landscape of teacher preparation and professional development in Nigeria. The paper reviews empirical literature on each construct, highlighting how resilience enables teachers to adapt and thrive in the face of professional adversity, how emotional intelligence shapes classroom relationships and instructional quality, and how effective stress management strategies support teacher retention and performance. In the face of Nigeria's historical and contemporary teacher education challenges, which includes poor funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities and social amenities this paper argues that reforms in teacher education must go beyond curriculum content to embrace the psychological and emotional dimensions of teacher preparation. Much work had not been done as regards integrating the three constructs within a single review. Recommendations are offered for future research and policy, including the embedding of psychological resilience and emotional competency modules in Nigerian teacher education programs. It is concluded that sustainable teacher education transformation in Nigeria requires a deliberate investment in the psychological empowerment of teachers at all levels of the education system.

**Keywords:** Teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, stress management, teacher education, teacher transformation

## Introduction

Teaching is widely regarded as one of the most demanding professions in the world. Beyond the delivery of subject matter content, teachers are expected to manage diverse classrooms, respond to individual learner needs, navigate administrative pressures, and sustain their emotional energy across long working hours. In Nigeria, these demands are further compounded by systemic challenges including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instructional materials, low remuneration, and a rapidly changing educational policy environment (Onyekachi, 2020). The cumulative weight of these pressures has raised critical concerns about teacher wellbeing, effectiveness, and retention.

Teacher education, the process by which individuals are prepared and continually developed as professional teachers has been a focal point of educational reform efforts in Nigeria since independence. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) has consistently emphasized the need for qualitatively trained teachers as a prerequisite for achieving broader educational goals. Yet, despite numerous reforms, questions remain about the extent to which teacher education programs in Nigeria adequately prepare teachers for the psychological and emotional realities of the classroom.

Among the psychological variables receiving growing scholarly attention are teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management. Teacher resilience refers to the capacity of educators to sustain commitment and effectiveness in the face of professional adversity (Day & Gu, 2014). Emotional intelligence describes the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions constructively in professional relationships (Goleman, 1995). Stress management, on the other hand, encompasses the strategies and coping mechanisms through which teachers regulate occupational stress to maintain their wellbeing and productivity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

These three constructs are increasingly understood as critical competencies that influence not only individual teacher performance but also the broader transformation of teacher education systems. When teacher preparation programs incorporate resilience-building, emotional competency training, and stress management strategies, they are better positioned to produce teachers who can sustain high performance despite challenging conditions (Mansfield et al., 2016). This is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where teacher attrition, burnout, and declining teacher quality have become persistent concerns.

This review therefore seeks to examine the relationships between teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, stress management, and teacher education transformation in Nigeria.

## Conceptual Framework

Resilience, broadly defined, is the dynamic process by which individuals adapt positively to adversity, trauma, or significant sources of stress (Luthar et al., 2000). In the context of teaching, resilience takes on a professional dimension that goes beyond simple psychological stress. Teacher resilience is understood as the capacity of educators to maintain their commitment, motivation, and effectiveness even when confronted with the multiple and sometimes overwhelming challenges that characterize the profession (Gu & Day, 2013).

Resilience is seen as a dynamic and contextually influenced capacity that can be developed and strengthened through professional support, social relationships, and institutional structures (Mansfield et al., 2016). This shift in perspective has important implications for teacher education, as it suggests that resilience-building can and should be an intentional goal of teacher preparation programs.

Teacher resilience manifests in several ways. It may be observed in a teacher's ability to maintain positive relationships with students despite personal difficulties, to remain engaged with professional learning when faced with institutional barriers, or to recover professionally after experiencing classroom failure or administrative conflict. Resilience in teaching is not the

absence of stress or difficulty but rather the capacity to navigate such challenges without losing one's professional identity and sense of purpose (Day & Gu, 2014).

In Nigerian context, teacher resilience is particularly significant given the environmental stressors that pervade the education system. Teachers in Nigeria often work in under-resourced schools with limited administrative support and face inadequate salaries that frequently arrive late (Onyekachi, 2020). For many Nigerian teachers, resilience is not a theoretical concept but a lived daily reality. Understanding the factors that sustain or erode this resilience is therefore essential to any meaningful transformation of teacher education in the country.

### **Emotional Intelligence and the Teaching Profession**

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and in relating to others '(Mayer et al, 2016)'. The concept gained widespread recognition through the work of Daniel Goleman '(1995)', who argued that emotional intelligence is as important as cognitive intelligence, if not more in determining professional success and interpersonal effectiveness. Goleman identified five core components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. 'Nelis et al. (2020)' conceptualize EI as a collection of competencies that enhance accurate assessment and expression of emotions, effective emotional regulation, and the utilization of feelings to inspire, strategize, and attain objectives in life. They delineated four fundamental dimensions of EI: Firstly, Perceiving Emotions: The capacity to identify and interpret emotions conveyed through facial expressions, imagery, vocal tones, and cultural artifacts. Secondly, Using Emotions: The ability to employ emotions to enhance cognitive functions such as reasoning and problem-solving. Thirdly, Understanding Emotions: The capability to grasp emotional language and to recognize intricate relationships among various emotions. Fourthly, Managing Emotions: The proficiency in regulating emotions both within oneself and in others.

The relevance of emotional intelligence to the teaching profession has been well established in educational research. Teaching is, at its core, a relational enterprise. The quality of the relationship between a teacher and their students significantly determines the effectiveness of the learning process (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers with high emotional intelligence tend to create more supportive and responsive classroom environments, manage student behavioral challenges more effectively, and build stronger professional relationships with colleagues and parents.

Self-awareness, the ability to recognize one's own emotional states enables teachers to monitor how their emotional reactions affect their instructional decisions and classroom interactions. Self-regulation allows teachers to manage negative emotions such as frustration and anxiety in ways that do not compromise their professional conduct. Empathy, perhaps the most pedagogically significant component of emotional intelligence, enables teachers to understand and respond appropriately to the emotional experiences of their students, thereby supporting both academic and socio-emotional development.

In Nigerian schools, where teachers often navigate emotionally charged environments characterized by poverty, family instability among students, and professional isolation, emotional intelligence serves as a critical resource. Research has shown that teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence experience lower levels of burnout and greater job satisfaction, both of which are outcomes closely linked to teacher retention and effectiveness (Brackett et al., 2010). Embedding emotional intelligence training in Nigerian teacher education programs could therefore significantly enhance the quality and sustainability of the teaching workforce.

## **Stress Management among Teachers**

Occupational stress is a recognized global challenge, but it takes on particular intensity in the teaching profession. Teacher stress can be defined as the experience of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, frustration, or depression, that result from the demands of the teaching role when those demands are perceived as threatening to the teacher's self-esteem or wellbeing (Kyriacou, 2001). Stress management is an essential component of teacher leadership and students' learning (Ogwo-agu & Modebelu, 2025). Stress management is the set of strategies and techniques that individuals can use to cope with stress and promote their physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila et al., 2020). It involves the process of identifying and understanding sources of stress, and employing a variety of techniques to reduce or eliminate their negative effects. These techniques may include relaxation methods, cognitive strategies, lifestyle changes, or organizational methods. (Kaviani et al., 2022). Stress can negatively impact teachers' health and well-being, as well as their ability to engage effectively with students and colleagues. MacDonald and Boudreau (2022) emphasized the importance of stress management, particularly mindfulness-based interventions, in helping teachers develop more positive behaviours and attitudes towards themselves and their students. Stress management is a key component of teacher resilience, which is an important characteristic of effective instructional leaders. Luthans and Eddy (2022) argued that teacher resilience is an important component of effective instructional leadership and that stress management is a key factor in developing resilience in teachers. Teachers who are better able to manage their stress levels are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours and attitudes, such as being more patient, empathetic, and flexible. It is important to note that stress management is not a one-size-fits-all process, and different strategies may be more effective for different individuals and situations. Sources of teacher stress include student misbehavior, workload overload, inadequate administrative support, poor working conditions, and lack of professional recognition.

In Nigeria, these stressors are significantly amplified. Teachers in Nigerian public schools frequently cope with large class sizes of sixty or more students, dilapidated school infrastructure, irregular payment of salaries, and the absence of meaningful professional development opportunities (Adeyemo & Torubeli, 2019). These conditions create a chronic stress environment that, when unmanaged, leads to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and eventual teacher attrition.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping provides a useful framework for understanding how teachers appraise and respond to stressors. According to this model, stress occurs when a person evaluates a situation as exceeding their coping resources. Effective stress management, therefore, involves both cognitive reappraisal, changing how one interprets a stressful situation and behavioral coping strategies such as social support, time management, physical activity, and mindfulness practices.

For teacher education in Nigeria, attention to stress management is not optional but essential. Teachers who lack effective coping strategies are more likely to abandon the profession or to remain in it while delivering substandard instruction. Incorporating stress management skills into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs equips teachers with practical tools to sustain their professional effectiveness even under difficult working conditions (Richards, 2012).

## **Teacher Education Transformation in Nigeria**

The history of teacher education in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when missionary schools established the earliest forms of teacher training, primarily aimed at producing catechist-teachers who could support the spread of Christianity alongside basic literacy (Fafunwa, 1974). The first formal teacher training institution, 'the Wesleyan Training

Institute, was established in Abeokuta in 1896'. From this modest beginning, teacher education in Nigeria expanded gradually, shaped by successive colonial education ordinances.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the federal government took a more systematic approach to teacher education. The National Curriculum Conference of 1969 and the subsequent National Policy on Education of 1977 were landmark events that formalized the structure of teacher preparation in Nigeria (Aghenta, 2001). The policy established a distinction between Grade II Teacher Certificate holders, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) holders, and degree-level teachers, with the NCE becoming the minimum qualification for entry-level teaching in primary schools.

The establishment of Colleges of Education across the country and the creation of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in 1989 were significant institutional milestones. These developments signaled a more deliberate effort to professionalize teacher education and standardize the competencies expected of practicing teachers. Subsequent reforms in the 2000s and 2010s continued to revise curriculum content, strengthen quality assurance mechanisms, and expand access to teacher education programs across the country.

### **Challenges in Teacher Education**

Despite the progress recorded in the historical development of teacher education in Nigeria, significant challenges persist. One of the most pressing is the issue of funding. Many Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education in Nigerian universities are chronically underfunded, resulting in poorly equipped lecture halls, outdated curriculum materials, and an inability to attract and retain qualified teacher educators (Aluede et al., 2016). This resource deficit directly affects the quality of teacher preparation programs.

A second major challenge is the poor social status of teaching in Nigeria. Teaching is frequently regarded as a profession of last resort rather than a calling or a vocation of choice. This perception affects the quality of candidates who enter teacher education programs, many of whom may be seeking any available educational credential rather than pursuing a genuine commitment to the teaching profession (Eze, 2018). The consequence is a teaching force that is inadequately motivated and professionally underprepared.

Curriculum relevance is another critical concern. Critics have argued that teacher education curricula in Nigeria are often excessively theoretical and inadequately responsive to the practical realities of Nigerian classrooms (Nwagwu, 2015). Student teachers frequently report that their pre-service training did not adequately prepare them for the emotional, psychological, and relational demands of teaching. This mismatch between training content and professional reality is a significant structural weakness in the current teacher education system.

Additionally, issues of assessment quality, supervision of teaching practice, and limited integration of technology in teacher education programs continue to undermine the effectiveness of teacher preparation in Nigeria. Addressing these challenges requires not only structural and financial reforms but also a reconceptualization of what teacher education is for a reconceptualization that places greater emphasis on the psychological and emotional dimensions of professional preparation.

### **Role of Psychological and Emotional Competencies in Teacher Education Reform**

Growing scholarship in teacher education has drawn attention to the importance of psychological and emotional competencies as central rather than peripheral elements of teacher preparation. The argument is straightforward: effective teaching requires not only mastering the subject matter and pedagogical skills but also the emotional strength to engage meaningfully with students, manage professional stress, and sustain commitment over time (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management emerge as foundational competencies that teacher education reform in Nigeria must explicitly address. Programs that build these capacities are more likely to produce teachers who can adapt to challenging work environments, maintain high-quality instruction despite systemic constraints, and sustain their professional engagement over the long term. Internationally, there is growing evidence that teacher education programs incorporating social-emotional learning components produce more effective and more resilient teachers (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

For Nigeria, the integration of psychological and emotional competencies into teacher education represents both a professional and a developmental imperative. A teaching workforce that is psychologically equipped and emotionally intelligent is not only more effective in the classroom but also likely to remain in the profession, thereby contributing to the stability cum continuity of the education system. Teacher education transformation in Nigeria, therefore, must be understood as encompassing psychological transformation alongside academic and pedagogical reform.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

#### **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding how individuals perceive and respond to stressful situations. Unlike earlier stimulus-response models of stress, the transactional model emphasizes the role of cognitive appraisal the process by which individuals evaluate whether a situation poses a threat, a challenge, or an opportunity as the critical mediating variable between environmental demands and stress outcomes.

The model identifies two main forms of coping and that is, problem-focused coping, which involves taking active steps to address the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, that involves managing the emotional response to the stressor rather than the stressor itself. Neither form of coping is inherently superior; the appropriateness of each depends on the nature of the stressor and the individual's perception of their ability to control it.

In Nigerian teacher education, the Transactional Model is particularly valuable for understanding why the same working conditions may produce burnout in some teachers while others remain engaged and effective. The model suggests that teacher education programs should focus on developing teachers' capacity for adaptive cognitive appraisal, helping them to reframe professional challenges as developmental opportunities rather than threats alongside practical coping strategies such as social support seeking, reflective practice, and mindfulness. This dual focus on cognition and behavior aligns closely with the broader goals of teacher education transformation.

#### **Review of Empirical Literature**

Empirical research on teacher resilience has grown considerably in recent years, with studies examining the factors that predict resilient professional functioning among teachers in diverse national contexts. Day and Gu (2014), in their longitudinal study of teachers in England, found that resilience was closely linked to teachers' sense of professional identity and their relationships with students. Teachers who maintained a strong sense of purpose and who experienced meaningful connections with students were significantly more likely to sustain their professional commitment over time, even in the face of institutional adversity.

Mansfield et al. (2016) explored teacher resilience in Australia, examining the role of pre-service teacher education in building resilience capacity. Their findings indicated that resilience-building workshops embedded within teacher preparation programs led to significantly higher levels of professional confidence and adaptive coping in beginning teachers. The study concluded that resilience should be treated as a learnable professional

competency rather than an innate personal attribute, and that teacher education programs have a critical role in its development.

In the African context, Khumalo and Mji (2017) conducted a study in South Africa examining the resilience strategies employed by teachers working in high-poverty schools. The study found that teachers drew on a combination of internal resources—including faith, positive self-perception, and a strong vocational identity, and external resources such as collegial support and community belonging to sustain their professional functioning. The findings highlighted the socio-cultural embeddedness of resilience, suggesting that interventions aimed at building teacher resilience in African contexts must be sensitive to local social and cultural norms.

In Nigeria, Ibe (2024) conducted a study on the management of teachers' emotional intelligence for effective service delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The study involved 534 teachers across the state and the finding revealed that it is of utmost importance to address teachers' emotional intelligence for optimal service provision in public secondary schools throughout Rivers State. The adoption of specific methods and the enhancement of cooperation among different groups can greatly boost emotional intelligence in educators, yielding superior educational achievements and a more welcoming school culture. The findings corroborate that of other researchers that emotional intelligence of the teacher speaks volume in the delivery of his professional service and in line with the focus of this paper.

Research on emotional intelligence and teaching has similarly produced a robust empirical base. Brackett et al. (2010) examined the relationship between teacher emotional intelligence and classroom quality in a study involving several hundred elementary school teachers in the United States. The study found that teachers with higher emotional intelligence scores particularly in the areas of emotional perception and management presided over classrooms characterized by greater emotional support, more effective classroom organization, and higher levels of student engagement. These findings underscore the practical pedagogical significance of emotional intelligence.

Hen and Sharabi-Nov (2014) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and teaching self-efficacy among student teachers in Israel. Their findings revealed significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, suggesting that emotionally intelligent student teachers felt more competent and confident in their teaching abilities. The study recommended that teacher education programs incorporate emotional intelligence training as a systematic component of professional preparation rather than as an optional add-on.

In Nigeria, Adeyemo (2007) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among student teachers, finding that emotional intelligence significantly predicted academic performance even after controlling for cognitive variables. While the study focused on academic outcomes rather than professional practice, it provided important early evidence for the relevance of emotional intelligence in the Nigerian teacher education context. More recently, Ige and Halele (2014) reviewed emotional intelligence and teacher effectiveness in South African schools, concluding that emotionally competent teachers were significantly more effective in managing the complex social dynamics of culturally diverse classrooms.

The empirical literature on teacher stress and stress management is extensive and consistently confirms that occupational stress is a major challenge for the teaching profession globally. Kyriacou (2001) reviewed several decades of research on teacher stress and identified workload, student behavior, poor working conditions, and limited career advancement as the most consistently reported sources of teacher stress. Significantly, the review also found that teachers who employed active, problem-focused coping strategies tended to experience lower

levels of chronic stress and greater job satisfaction than those who relied primarily on avoidance or passive coping.

Richards (2012) examined the stress management practices of experienced teachers, finding that regular reflective practice, peer support networks, and physical exercise were among the most effective strategies for managing occupational stress. The study recommended that teacher education programs incorporate structured opportunities for reflective practice as a core component of professional preparation. This recommendation is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where the culture of critical reflective practice remains underdeveloped in many teacher preparation institutions.

Adeyemo and Torubeli (2019) examined the relationship between teacher stress, job satisfaction, and performance. Their findings confirmed that high levels of occupational stress were negatively associated with job satisfaction and professional performance. Importantly, the study found that teachers who reported higher levels of social support from colleagues, administrators, and family experienced significantly lower stress levels, suggesting that the quality of the professional support environment is a critical moderating variable in the stress-performance relationship.

The relationship between teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, stress management, and teacher education transformation has also attracted scholarly attention at a more integrative level. Freedman and Jensen (2020) argued that teacher education reform efforts that fail to address the psychological and emotional dimensions of teacher preparation are incomplete and ultimately unsustainable. Drawing on multiple theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the authors made a strong case for the embedding of resilience-building and emotional competency training in teacher preparation curricula at all levels.

In Nigeria specifically, Nwagwu (2015) argued that the transformation of teacher education requires a paradigm shift from a purely academic and subject-focused model to one that explicitly values and develops teachers' psychological and emotional competencies. This argument finds strong empirical support in international literature and is increasingly being echoed by Nigerian education researchers and policymakers. The challenge lies in translating this consensus into concrete curriculum reforms and institutional practices within the Nigerian teacher education system.

### **Gaps identified for Future Research**

Despite the growing body of literature on teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management, several significant gaps remain, particularly as they relate to the Nigerian context. First, there is a notable scarcity of Nigerian-specific empirical studies that examine all three constructs: resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management within a single integrated framework. Most existing Nigerian studies address these variables in isolation or in combination with only one other variable, making it difficult to understand the full picture of how they interact to influence teacher education transformation.

The existing literature tends to focus disproportionately on secondary school teachers, with relatively little attention paid to primary school teachers and teacher educators themselves. Given that primary school teaching in Nigeria is often associated with particularly challenging working conditions and lower professional status, research that specifically addresses the resilience and emotional intelligence needs of primary school teachers is urgently needed.

There is a lack of longitudinal research on teacher resilience and emotional intelligence in Nigeria. Most existing studies employ cross-sectional designs that capture a single moment in time and are therefore unable to track how these psychological capacities develop or erode over the course of a teacher's career. Longitudinal studies would provide more robust evidence about the causal relationships between psychological competencies and professional outcomes, as well as identifying the critical career phases where targeted support is most needed.

There is insufficient research on the effectiveness of specific interventions aimed at building resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management skills in Nigerian pre-service and in-service teachers. While international evidence supports the value of such interventions, their adaptation and effectiveness in the Nigerian cultural and institutional context remains largely unexplored. Sensitive intervention research is essential for informing evidence-based teacher education reform in Nigeria.

The role of gender in shaping the experience of stress, resilience, and emotional intelligence among Nigerian teachers deserves more systematic investigation. Evidence from other contexts suggests that female teachers may experience stress differently from their male counterparts and may also employ different coping strategies, but Nigerian-specific evidence on this question is limited.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to adopt mixed-methods designs that combine quantitative measurement of psychological constructs with qualitative exploration of teachers' lived experiences. Such designs are better positioned to capture the complexity of the relationships between teacher psychology and professional practice. Additionally, future research should engage with the policy environment, examining how institutional and systemic factors within the Nigerian education system facilitate or hinder the development of teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and effective stress management.

There is also a strong case for collaborative research involving Nigerian universities, Colleges of Education, the NCCE, and international partner institutions to develop and test culturally appropriate interventions for building psychological competencies in Nigerian teachers. Such collaborations would not only generate locally relevant evidence but also help build the research capacity of Nigerian teacher education institutions.

### **Conclusion**

This paper reviewed teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management as key psychological correlates of teacher education transformation in Nigeria. Drawing on conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature, it established that these constructs extend beyond individual coping abilities to represent essential professional competencies that influence teacher effectiveness, commitment, and sustainability. The review highlighted that, despite successive reforms, teacher education in Nigeria continues to face challenges such as inadequate funding, limited curricular responsiveness, and insufficient attention to the psychological demands of teaching. Addressing these concerns requires a broader conception of teacher education transformation that integrates emotional and psychological preparedness alongside pedagogical and content knowledge. Theoretical insights from the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping provide a useful framework for understanding how teachers can be better prepared for the complexities of contemporary educational practice. However, the empirical literature reveals a noticeable scarcity of context-specific studies within Nigeria, indicating the need for further research that can inform locally grounded reforms.

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