

## SYSTEMATIC DESENSITISATION AS REMEDIATION OF PRE-RETIREMENT ANXIETY AMONG OYO STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the efficacy of systematic desensitisation in alleviating pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State. A pre-test, post-test, control quasi-experimental design was utilised. The population consisted of 12,422 senior secondary school teachers in Oyo State. A multi-stage sampling procedure alongside simple random sampling was utilised to select eighty-two (82) participants. Two hypotheses were developed to direct the study at a significance level of 0.05. The data collection instruments included the pre-retirement anxiety scale developed by Oluseyi and Olufemi (2015), which demonstrated a reliability coefficient of  $r = .85$ , the Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) with a reliability coefficient of  $r = .88$ , and a systematic desensitisation treatment package. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to evaluate the hypotheses. The results indicated a significant main effect of treatment (Systematic Desensitisation) on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State;  $F(2,70) = 7.416, P < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.186$ . A significant main effect of self-efficacy on pre-retirement anxiety was observed among secondary school teachers in Oyo State;  $F(1,70) = 16.424, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.202$ . This suggests that pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State differs according to their self-efficacy levels. It is recommended that Systematic Desensitisation (SD) be regularly implemented in the training of secondary school teachers to manage pre-retirement anxiety. Teachers should receive guidance regarding retirement, encouraging them to perceive it as a new chapter in their lives rather than the conclusion of their professional careers.*

**Keywords:** *Anxiety, Intervention, Pre-retirement, Retirement, Self-efficacy and Systematic Desensitization.*

### INTRODUCTION

Individuals nearing the conclusion of their careers frequently experience a dual response to the prospect of retirement, characterised by both anticipation and apprehension. Secondary school teachers experience a variety of emotions when contemplating the shift from the established routine of teaching to the unpredictable phase of retirement. Pre-retirement anxiety can significantly affect teachers' well-being and performance, characterised by fears related to the loss of professional identity, social isolation, and financial insecurity.

Individuals may experience various internal transformations based on their interpretations of daily events, potentially resulting in alterations in their physical, mental, or emotional states. Any of these changes may lead to anxiety. Nigeria has undergone significant socioeconomic changes in recent decades, particularly concerning retirement and ageing issues. The inability of many retirees to support themselves and their families indicates a failure of the government to adequately meet their needs. Retirees occasionally organise protests to raise awareness and empathy regarding their situation, particularly in response to the government's failure to disburse retirement payments on time.

As individuals age, the likelihood of illnesses increases, leading to elevated healthcare costs during retirement (Orhungur, 2016). During periods of crisis, retirement is perceived by many as a favourable option. Chris Hoga (2016) defines this stage of life as the period when individuals retire and cease working for income. As individuals age or encounter health challenges that hinder substantial contributions, many opt to exit their employment. Upon attaining a specific age and becoming eligible for public benefits, certain individuals opt to retire. Unplanned retirement may

occur due to unexpected illnesses or accidents. Retirement is defined by Gbenda (2006) as the voluntary departure from a job or occupation to pursue a less demanding endeavour, influenced by social, economic, physical, or political factors.

Conversely, anxiety is a psychological disorder marked by sensations of discomfort, fear, and apprehension. Temitope (2015) characterises the reaction as a broad, unfocused response intensified by an event perceived as threatening or frightening by the individual. The study said that although concern may be warranted in specific circumstances, excessive and continuous worry might lead an individual to display anxiety-related actions. Fear and anxiety are distinct emotions. Anxiety is a broader sensation of discomfort or apprehension, whereas terror is a reaction to a particular and identifiable danger. Anxiety sometimes emerges in response to an unfamiliar or unusual danger, maybe stemming from internal conflicts, feelings of insecurity, or repressed impulses. Anxiety is a psychiatric illness characterised by unease, apprehension, or distress. Physical manifestations such as tremors, dizziness, and increased heart rate may also ensue from it. An intensified state of tension, worry, and anticipation of an imminent threat characterises anxiety, a pervasive and unpleasant feeling. Reacting to threats to one's ideas, values, and lifestyle is a common human reaction. Moderate anxiety is a natural physiological response that compels individuals to engage in deliberate behaviours. Elevated anxiety levels may lead to the development of certain cardiovascular illnesses (Elias & MacDonald, 2007). As workers approach retirement, they may encounter emotions of perplexity and fear.

Anxiety is a prevalent and distressing feeling marked by elevated tension, anxiety, and anticipation of an impending threat. A typical human response is to react to any threat to one's values, beliefs, and lifestyle. Moderate anxiety is a typical physiological response that pushes people to behave carefully. Increased anxiety levels may lead certain individuals to develop particular cardiovascular issues (Elias and MacDonald, 2007). The majority of workers typically feel confused and uncomfortable as they approach retirement. The application of systematic desensitization to secondary school teachers' pre-retirement anxiety is investigated in this study. Grounded on behavioural psychology, systematic desensitisation (SD) provides a structured approach to anxiety treatment by progressively exposing individuals to their phobias while utilising relaxation techniques. Since its establishment by Joseph Wolpe in the 1950s, systematic desensitisation has been extensively employed to address various anxiety disorders. However, nothing has been accomplished about the application of this concept to the pre-retirement worry of secondary school teachers. The objective of systematic desensitisation is to foster a more optimistic perspective on the transition process and modify negative connections with retirement. It does this by deliberately exposing individuals to retirement-related stresses in a secure environment while concurrently provoking relaxation responses. Systematic Desensitisation often starts with the application of relaxation strategies to combat anxiety, followed by visualising oneself in a series of progressively unpleasant scenarios. Once an individual can effectively manage their anxiety while envisioning distressing scenarios, they may use the approach in real-life circumstances. In psychology, systematic desensitization is a behavioral modification strategy used to alleviate anxiety and panic episodes, which are usually scary (Oparanozie, 2016).

The concept that learnt behaviours may be unlearned, along with classical conditioning, constitutes the essential principles of the SD method. Okereke (2014) asserts that systematic desensitisation significantly alleviates anxiety and panic episodes associated with neurological disorders.

SD is founded on several fundamental ideas. One fundamental premise is that perfect relaxation precludes concern. Consequently, the anxiety often associated with concern can be alleviated if one acquires the methods and knowledge required to attain a deep state of relaxation. Certain studies indicate that self-efficacy may affect pre-retirement anxiety. Zimmerman, Sprecher, Langer, and Holloway (2005) discovered that self-efficacy had a significant and positive effect on the pre-retirement anxiety of teaching staff, especially among women. Individuals who believed they would likely succeed in general tasks were more predisposed to envision success

related to pre-retirement anxiety. Furthermore, the study conducted by Elias and MacDonald (2007) corroborates the notion that self-efficacy aids secondary school educators in mitigating their anxiety prior to retirement. This indicates that self-efficacy diminishes pre-retirement anxiety. This study investigates the effectiveness of SD in alleviating pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The retirement process can induce significant stress and worry among secondary school educators. This arises from apprehensions over financial stability, erosion of personal identity, and alterations in daily routines. Despite the prevalence of pre-retirement anxiety, there exists a notable deficiency of studies regarding effective techniques to alleviate this fear within this particular demographic. Systematic desensitisation is a cognitive-behavioral technique that can successfully assist individuals with anxiety. It entails the incremental exposure of individuals to their fears, along with instruction on relaxation techniques. However, the efficacy of this therapy in alleviating pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school educators has not been thoroughly examined. The primary aim of this study is to assess the efficacy of systematic desensitisation in alleviating pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school educators in Oyo State, Nigeria. The results will assist in developing tailored interventions to support this at-risk population throughout their transition into retirement.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study investigated the Efficacy of Systematic Desensitization in Alleviating Pre-Retirement Anxiety among Secondary School Teachers. The specific Objective included:

1. examine the main effect of treatment (Systematic Desensitization) on Pre-Retirement Anxiety among Secondary School Teachers in Oyo State;
2. investigate the main effect of self-efficacy on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo state.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study at a 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of treatment (Systematic Desensitization) on Pre-Retirement Anxiety among Secondary School Teachers in Oyo State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of self-efficacy on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo state.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study focused on investigating the systematic desensitization in alleviating pre-retirement anxiety among Secondary School Teachers in Oyo State, Nigeria. Also, the study examined the main effect of the moderating variable (self-efficacy) on the dependent variable (pre-retirement anxiety). The participants in the study were secondary school teachers in Oyo State, Nigeria.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Disengagement Theory and Pre-retirement Anxiety**

Cumming and Henry (1961), advocates of disengagement theory, elucidated the ageing process from a functionalist perspective, employing the term "disengagement" to characterise a reciprocal phenomenon wherein individuals inevitably withdraw from societal roles and relationships. Concurrently, society alleviates them of numerous social responsibilities, rendering adherence to social norms less obligatory as they age, thus affording them enhanced freedom through mutual disengagement. As individuals mature, they tend to restrict their social connections and



relationships, becoming increasingly self-centred (Dryden, 2003). The retirement process benefits not just the elderly but also younger generations and society at large. For the elderly, it provides an opportunity to pursue aspirations they could not realise before to retirement by relinquishing their former positions, jobs, and obligations. The retirement of the elderly generates employment opportunities for new generations, who, equipped with their vigour, contemporary knowledge, and technical proficiency, supplant the older workforce. The general innovation, creativity, and productivity of society markedly enhance and induce transformation in every sector (Thompson, 2012).

## **Empirical Review**

### **Systematic Desensitisation and Pre-retirement Anxiety**

Paul (2006) performed an experiment to assess the efficacy of Systematic Desensitisation, Insight-Oriented Treatment, and an Attention Placebo Strategy on a cohort of 96 individuals suffering from Pre-retirement Anxiety. The college professors were randomly assigned to three treatment groups and one control group. Every group participated in five therapy sessions, each lasting one hour. Numerous assessment methods were employed before to and throughout therapy, including behavioural assessments, self-reports, therapist reports, physiological measures, and other test batteries. Upon concluding the therapy, both the post-test and retention test indicated that Systematic Desensitisation consistently outperformed the other two therapies. No substantial difference was noted between the other two regimens. A comprehensive analysis indicated that 85% of college instructors experienced Systematic Desensitisation, whereas 25% received Insight Orientated treatment. Furthermore, Attention Placebo therapy was administered to 25% of the instructors. Thus, the researchers determined that Systematic Desensitisation is highly effective.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This research utilised a quasi-experimental design featuring a pre-test, post-test, and control group. It enables researchers to evaluate particular hypotheses through varied control and result measurement. The design comprises psychological treatment utilising Systematic Desensitisation and a control group characterised by self-efficacy at two levels (high and low).

### **Population of the Study**

The study's population consisted of all senior secondary school educators in Oyo State. Currently, twelve thousand four hundred twenty-two (12,422) teachers comprise the nominal register of academic staff at senior secondary schools in Oyo State.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A multi-stage sample approach and simple random sampling were employed to choose eighty-two (82) individuals for the study. The initial phase utilised a simple random sampling method to choose three (3) Teaching Service Commission Zonal Offices from a total of seven (7) Zonal Offices in Oyo State. The Oyo Tescom Zonal Office (Oyo Central Senatorial District), Ibadan Zone 2 Tescom Zonal Office (Oyo South Senatorial District), and Saki Tescom Zonal Office (Oyo North Senatorial District) were identified.

## **Research Instruments**

### **Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale**

The Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale, originally developed by Olufemi and Oluseyi (2015), was adapted for this study. The scale comprised 23 items with a four-point Likert response format, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, to provide respondents with a range of options. The adapted version was trial-tested on a sample of 30 secondary school teachers from the



Teaching Service Commission in the Ogbomosho Zone of Oyo State. The instrument was administered twice, with a two-week interval between administrations. Data analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.85, indicating high reliability of the instrument.

### **General Self-Efficacy Scale**

The Self-Efficacy Scale, originally developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995), was adapted for this study. The scale consisted of 12 self-report items with a Likert response format ranging from Not at all true to Exactly true. The adapted version was trial-tested on a sample of 30 secondary school teachers from the Teaching Service Commission in the Ogbomosho Zone, Oyo State. The instrument was administered twice, with a two-week interval between administrations. Data analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.88, indicating strong reliability of the instrument.

### **TREATMENT PACKAGE FOR SYSTEMATIC DESENSITISATION**

**Approach:** Systematic Desensitisation Therapy.

**Theory employed:** Systematic Desensitisation by Joseph Wolpe.

**Techniques:** Behaviour modification techniques.

**Mode:** Group counselling.

**Recipient:** Secondary School Teachers with Pre-retirement anxiety.

**Duration:** 8weeks each lasted for 40 minutes.

**Purpose:** To reduce or eliminate pre-retirement anxiety disorders or some phobic reactions so that anxiety will no longer be elicited.

**Week 1** – General Orientation and Administration of the Instruments to obtain pre-test scores.

**Week 2** – Discussion of Pre-retirement anxiety

**Week 3** – Relaxation training techniques

**Week 4** – Understanding why all major body parts are relaxed

**Week 5** – Hierarchy of items as they create anxiety

**Week 6** –Review and success factors in pre-retirement anxiety

**Week 7** – Behavioural signs of pre-retirement anxiety in teachers

**Week 8** – Overall review, Post-experiment Test Administration and Conclusion.

### **Procedure for Data Collection**

Following the administration of the pre-retirement anxiety instrument to secondary school teachers in the experimental group, those exhibiting high levels of pre-retirement anxiety were identified. The researcher conducted 40-minute training sessions for the experimental group over a period of 8 weeks, while the control group did not receive any intervention. Both groups, however, were assessed using the same pre-test and post-test instruments. Additionally, after each training session, participants in the experimental group were provided with incentives as a form of engagement.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses on the main effect of treatment and the moderating variable at 0.05 level of significance.

**Testing the Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis One: There is no significant main effect of treatment (Systematic desensitization) on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo state.**

**Table 1: Summary of Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA) on the main effect of treatment on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State.**

	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	9262.495	11	842.045	12.214	.000	.674 <sup>a</sup>
Intercept	3744.453	1	3744.453	50.441	.000	.437
Pre-test	132.918	1	132.918	1.928	.170	.029
<u>Main Effect:</u>						
Treatment	1022.532	2	511.266	7.416	.001	.186

**R Squared = .674 (Adjusted R Squared = .594) \*Significance at P<0.05**

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 1 demonstrates a significant main effect of the treatment on participants' pre-retirement anxiety, with  $F(2,70) = 7.416$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $\eta^2 = 0.186$ . Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the treatment had a statistically significant impact on pre-retirement anxiety. The effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.186$ ) further revealed that the treatment accounted for 18.6% of the variation in participants' pre-retirement anxiety. To provide additional evidence regarding the differences between the treatment and control groups, pairwise comparisons were conducted using the Bonferroni method. The results are presented in the table below.

**Table 2: Bonferonni Pair-wise showing the significant differences between treatment and control groups**

(I) Treatment	(J) Treatment	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>d</sup>
SD group (mean= 52.978)	Systematic group	-5.660 <sup>a,b</sup>	4.732	.708
	Control group	7.852 <sup>a</sup>	5.640	.506
Control group (mean= 45.126)	SD group	-7.852 <sup>b</sup>	5.640	.506

Table 2 shows that after accounting for the effect of the pre-test on pre-retirement anxiety, the experimental group (Systematic Desensitisation) achieved a mean score of 52.978. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.674$ ) indicates that the group differences explain 67.4% of the total variation in participants' pre-retirement anxiety.

**Hypothesis Two: There is no significant main effect of self-efficacy on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo state.**

**Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA) on main effect of self-efficacy on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo state.**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	9262.495	11	842.045	12.214	.000	.674 <sup>a</sup>	
Intercept	3744.453	1	3744.453	50.441	.000	.437	
Pre-test	132.918	1	132.918	1.928	.170	.029	
Treatment	1022.532	2	511.266	7.416	.001	.186	
Self-Efficacy	1132.267	1	1132.267	16.424	.001	.202	

**R Squared = .674 (Adjusted R Squared = .594) \*Significance at P<0.05**

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The results in Table 3 indicate a significant main effect of self-efficacy on participants' pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State,  $F(1,70) = 16.424, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.202$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that self-efficacy had a statistically significant effect on participants' pre-retirement anxiety. Furthermore, Table 3 reveals that self-efficacy levels accounted for 20.2% of the variation in participants' pre-retirement anxiety. To identify the specific differences, a pairwise comparison was conducted using the Bonferroni method, and the results are presented in the table below.

**Table 4: Bonferonni Pair-wise Comparison showing the significant difference between levels of self- efficacy**

(I) Self-Efficacy	(J) Self-Efficacy	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>c</sup>
Low self-efficacy (mean=52.213)	High self-efficacy	-6.045 <sup>a,b</sup>	3.155	.179
High self-efficacy (mean=58.258)	Low self-efficacy	6.045 <sup>a,b</sup>	3.155	.179

Table 4 shows that, after accounting for the effect of the pre-test on pre-retirement anxiety, participants with high self-efficacy ( $M = 58.258$ ) exhibited greater self-efficacy compared to those with low self-efficacy ( $M = 52.213$ ). This suggests that participants with low self-efficacy experienced higher levels of pre-retirement anxiety than those with high self-efficacy.

**DISCUSSION**

The results for Hypothesis One revealed a significant main effect of treatment (Systematic Desensitisation) on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State. This indicates a notable difference in pre-retirement anxiety levels among teachers, with Systematic Desensitisation proving effective in reducing anxiety. These findings align with Okereke (2014), who identified systematic desensitisation as a form of behavior therapy effective in overcoming phobias. Similarly, McLeod (2016) asserted that systematic desensitisation replaces the fear response of a phobia with a relaxation response through gradual counter-conditioning.

Findings for Hypothesis Two showed a significant main effect of self-efficacy on pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State. This suggests that pre-retirement anxiety varies based on the teachers' self-efficacy levels. Post-hoc analysis revealed that self-efficacy mediates the influence of skills, previous experience, mental ability, and self-beliefs on pre-retirement anxiety. These findings support Zimmerman, Sprecher, Langer, and Holloway (2005),



who reported that self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on pre-retirement anxiety, particularly among female teaching staff. Teachers who believed in their general ability to succeed were more likely to envision success in managing pre-retirement anxiety. The results also align with Elias and MacDonald (2007), who emphasized the role of self-efficacy in helping secondary school teachers manage and reduce pre-retirement anxiety. The authors noted that self-efficacy enables teachers to recognize their challenges and address them effectively, as difficulties in teaching foster both internal and external motivation, ultimately aiding in anxiety reduction.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The sample for this study was restricted to Oyo State, which presents a significant limitation to the generalizability of the findings, as Oyo State is one of the most developed regions in Nigeria. Additionally, the study employed a quasi-experimental design with a partially randomized selection of teachers. While this approach is suitable for controlled intervention, it involves a relatively small sample size, further limiting the generalizability of the results to the broader Nigerian population, given the large number of secondary school teachers across the country.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the importance of addressing persistent pre-retirement anxiety experienced by secondary school teachers during the pre-retirement phase. The study investigated the effectiveness of systematic desensitisation in managing pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers in Oyo State. It also examined the moderating role of self-efficacy on the treatment outcomes after participants underwent intervention packages in a controlled setting. In conclusion, the study found that self-efficacy significantly influences pre-retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers. This suggests that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to experience reduced pre-retirement anxiety. Consequently, self-efficacy should be prioritized when preparing secondary school teachers for retirement to minimize anxiety levels effectively. These findings are not only applicable to Oyo State but can also be extended to other regions.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Systematic Desensitisation (SD) should be included in the school system for secondary school programme. The therapy help to reduce the likelihood of retirement anxiety among secondary school teachers.
2. School teachers should be counselled to see retirement as a new chapter in their lives rather than the end of their working life.
3. Secondary school teachers need to gradually expose themselves to actual situations that induce anxiety, commencing with the least distressing and progressing incrementally.
4. Teachers should engage in relaxation methods to alleviate retirement anxiety.

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