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Sources of Occupational Stress Expressed by Civil Servants in
Ilorin, Nigeria

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Abstract

The increasing demands and ever changing world of work is daily increasing the level of stress among workers. Occupational stress thus hampers the productivity capacity of the workers and output of the ministries. This study, therefore, investigated sources of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin metropolis. The population for the study comprised of all civil servants in both Federal and State Ministries and parastatals. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents from four ministries. The researchers developed an instrument titled Sources of Occupational Stress Questionnaire (SOSQ) which was used to gather the required information. A research question was raised and answered while four null hypotheses were tested. The major sources of occupational stress expressed by respondents are poor communication with the boss and difficulty in carrying out the prescribed tasks. It was recommended that counselors should sensitize high ranking officers on the need to improve their communication with other staff.

Introduction

Stress is an unavoidable experience. The term stress could mean a disturbed internal state of mind which could result from frustrating or unsatisfying conditions. The word could also mean different things to many people. Some people define stress as an event or situation that cause them to feel tension, pressure or negative emotions such as anxiety and anger. This is a stimulus based definition. Most times stress leads to psychological changes such as increased heart beat, muscle tension as well as emotional and behavioural changes. Allen (2002) defined stress as a kind of feeling people experience, when they lose confidence in their capability to cope with a situation. Telaprolu and George (2005) described stress as a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraints or demand related to what he does. They further stressed that any organizational, environmental individual or external demand which requires the individual to re-adjust to the usual behaviour pattern could be referred to as stress.

Akinboye, Akinboye and Adeyemo (2002) stated that occupational stress describes the physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirement of job capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands. Massey (2004) opined that occupational stress could arise from cumulative effects of occupational strain. People experience stress from pressure of work and any other task that mounts pressure on their minds and body. Intense psychological stress usually causes the release of adrenaline. Extended presences of this hormone in the body can cause depression, high blood pressure and other negative effects. According to Pisaniello (2010), occupational stress could arise from any critical life changes on the job, meeting up deadlines, unrealistic expectations from the boss, poor interpersonal relationship office politics that disrupt positive behaviours, tread mill syndrome (too much things to do at once), poor communication, undefined roles of each staff and career and

job ambiguity. All these have a negative cumulative effect on workers.

Hardy, Carson and Thomas (1998) observed that lack of control over work or job duties, insecurity about job performance, poor working conditions such as unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions and tension on the job are the major sources of stress that could lead to job burnout and health problems. Murray (2005) pointed out some warning indicators of work related stress which include staff attitude and behavior to work, increase in sick reports, frequent short periods of absence, tension and conflict between colleagues at work, deterioration in planning and control of work.

Statement of the Problem

The demand and ever changing world of work is daily increasing the level of stress among workers. It has been discovered that severe and prolonged stress has serious effects on an individual's physical and mental health. Stress-related exhaustion is believed to play a significant role in heart attacks, high blood pressure, cancer and some kinds of arthritis, migraine, headaches, peptic ulcers and asthma (Santiago, 2003).

In addition, stress can contribute to different types of accidents through human error, fatigue, worry and haste. Stress is a combination of unexpected pressure actors which accumulate overtime. According to Jungwee (2007), people experience stress in different ways. This largely depends on one's personality and how one has learnt to respond to pressure. Job stress however, poses more serious health problems and it is a factor in the development of terminal illness. Although, Luthan (1989) asserted that we all need some degree of stress to function normally, and that a mild level of stress may not be completely bad for employees as a means of enhancing their job performance, excessive stress can have deleterious consequences on the individual. Some previous studies on work, such as Adeoye and Durosaro (2008) and Oyebanji (2009) were not specifically concerned with civil servants. Ilorin Metropolis.

This study became necessary because there are federal and state ministries in Ilorin, Kwara State. A comparative study of how stress affects the workers in each of these ministries would certainly contribute to knowledge in job stress research.

It is therefore, the concern of these researchers to carry out a research on the sources of occupational stress as expressed by the civil servants in Ilorin, Kwara State.

Research Questions

- 1 What is the major source of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin

Research Hypotheses

- 1 There is no significant difference in the sources of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin on the basis of age.
- 2 There is no significant difference in the sources of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin on the basis of religion.
- 3 There is no significant difference in the sources of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin on the basis of marital status.
- 4 There is no significant difference in the sources of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin on the basis of educational attainment.

Methodology

The research design employed for the study was the descriptive survey. The survey aims at determining the incidence, distribution and interpretation among sociological and psychological variables. Hassan (1995) informed that it describes variables in given situations and establishes relationships between variables, using the samples as representatives of the population.

The target population for this study was all

civil servants in Ilorin. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 200 respondents from the four local government areas in Ilorin metropolis. This includes, Ilorin-South, Ilorin-West and Ilorin-East. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting four ministries within the locale of the study. Thus, 50 respondents were randomly selected from each of the purposively selected government ministries for the study.

The main instrument used for obtaining relevant information for this study was titled Sources of Occupational Stress Questionnaire (SOSQ). Section A of SOSQ for information on personal data of the respondents, while Section B contained items on the sources of job stress among the civil servants in Ilorin and it has 20 items. This was on a four point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was validated by carrying out a pilot test; using test re-test method of reliability. By using the Pearson Product Correlation, a reliability index of 0.71 was obtained. Administration and retrieval of the questionnaire were done by the researchers and the research assistant.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical methods. The t-test was used to test hypotheses on variables that have two groups while the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical method was used to test hypotheses on variables that have more than two groups. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question: What are the major sources of occupational stress expressed by civil servants in Ilorin?

Table 1: Mean and rank order of items on sources of occupational stress among civil servants.

Item No.	I experience stress at work whenever:	Mean	Rank
3	my boss refuses to communicate with me	3.37	1 st
2	I find a task difficult	3.34	2 nd
5	there is criticism from my boss	3.33	3 rd
7	other workers do better than I	3.31	4 th
8	I spend extra hour in the office	3.30	5 th
6	my salary is not paid as when due	3.27	6 th
17	I am working alone	3.26	7 th
10	there is break down of office equipment	3.25	8 th
11	I am assigned to attend to many people	3.22	9 th
20	I attend staff meeting	3.21	10 th
9	I am not given specific responsibility	3.20	11 th
1	my boss refuses to praise me	3.18	12 th
13	I could not apply my expertise skills	3.15	13 th
16	I could not go on break before closing	3.11	14 th
18	my boss turns down my request	3.10	15 th
14	I am not promoted as when due	3.07	16 th
12	there is compulsory transfer to other department	3.07	16 th
4	a junior staff is promoted above me	3.00	17 th
19	I am compelled to write promotion test	2.98	18 th
15	I have disagreement with other staff	2.97	19 th

The result of the item ranking on Table 1 reveals that respondent expressed their major occupational stress at work when there is communication breakdown with the boss, difficulty in carrying out task and criticism from the boss. However, all the items depict sources of occupational stress among the civil servants in Ilorin metropolis Nigeria,

because they have mean scores above 2.50 value.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the sources of job stress as expressed by civil servants in Ilorin on the basis of age*

Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on perception on the sources of job stress on the basis of age

Source	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between Groups	4	803.6957	200.9238	3.16*	2.37
Within Groups	195	12360.305	63.3862		
Total	199	13164.00			

*Significant. $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that the calculated F-value of 3.16 is greater than the critical F-value of 2.37. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there was no significant difference on the basis of age was rejected because a

significant difference was found. This means that there is a significant difference in the sources of job stress as expressed by civil servants in Ilorin on the basis of age.

Table 3: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) showing the difference in the respondents' perception on the sources of job stress on the basis of age

Duncan Groupings	Means	N	Group	Age
A	83.15	53	2	30-39 years
B	79.93	46	3	40-49 years
B	79.00	22	5	60 years
C	78.24	25	4	50-59 years
C	78.18	54	1	20-29 years

Table 3 shows data The Duncan Multiple range Test revealed that Group 1, 4, 5, and 3 are not significantly different. The significant difference was observed in Group 2.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the sources of job stress as expressed by civil servant workers in tertiary institutions Ilorin on the basis of religion*

Table 4: Mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on sources of job stress on the basis of religion

Religion	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Christianity	96	80.9063	7.822	198	1.52	1.96
Islam	104	79.1635	8.361			

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.52 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected because no significant difference was found on the basis of religion.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the sources of job stress as expressed by civil servant workers in tertiary institutions Ilorin on the basis of marital status*

Table 5: Variance ANOVA showing respondents' perception on the sources of job stress on the basis of marital status

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between Groups	4	2.4409	1.2204	0.083	2.37
Within Groups	197	2871.559	14.5764		
Total	199	2814.0000			

Table 5 shows that the calculated F-value of 0.083 is less than the critical F-value of 2.37. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there was no significant difference on the basis of age was not rejected because no significant difference was found.

Hypothesis Four: *There is no significant difference in the sources of job stress as expressed by civil servants in tertiary institutions Ilorin on the basis of educational attainment*

Table 6: Mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on sources of job stress on the basis of religion

Educational Attainment	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Secondary Educational Downwards	100	8.42	2.88			
Post Secondary School Upwards	100	13.14	3.60	198	2.714	1.96

Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value of 2.714 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the sources of occupational stress as expressed by civil servants in Ilorin was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the study, it is evident that respondents usually experience stress when there is communication breakdown with the boss. Massey (2004) opined that occupational stress could arise from cumulative effects of occupational strain especially when there is communication breakdown.

The age of the respondents significantly influenced their views on the sources of job stress. This might be because different age groups experience stress at different level of life attained. This corroborates the view of Jane (2009) that age is related to how people react to stress and that older age group experience stress due to increase in occupational demands.

With the disparity in their religious affiliations they all viewed the sources of occupational stress the same way. It is clear that irrespective of one's religious background, stress is an inevitable and unavoidable component of life. However, Pumillia (2009) asserted that belief in God might help religious people block anxiety when put under pressure.

The marital status of the respondents was seen to be irrelevant when it comes to the issues of stress, as such the hypothesis was accepted. It shows that relationship between marital status and stress may differ by sex. Musser and Lloyd (2005) revealed that

married people experience significantly higher occupational stress than the unmarried.

On the basis of educational attainment, respondents differ in their views. According to Durosaro (2005), job stress is a pattern of reaction that occurs when workers are presented with work demands that do not match with their knowledge, skills or abilities. Aminabhavi and Triveni (2000) stated that manager experience significantly higher occupational stress than clerks.

Conclusion and Counselling Implications.

The counsellor should be ready to help clients who are stressed by giving them a regular space to reflect on what is happening emotionally, mentally and physically through counselling. The counsellor who has been trained can teach the clients relaxation skills and time management techniques which in turn can help in reducing tension and manage pressure at work. Counsellors can also provide necessary information on variety of ways of managing pressure at work. This can be achieved through organizing group counseling, enlightenment programmes like workshop, seminar and symposium.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should ensure that employers make available, a well-deserved support system policy for their staff members which could be in form of welfare package, insurance policy and even professional support.
2. Employers of labour in conjunction with the government agencies should ensure a regular in-house training programmes on stress management

techniques.

3. There is the need to provide counselling services for staff in their working places. The government should therefore establish counseling centers in various ministries. This will help to provide counselling services and adequate information in a face to face interaction with the clients who are stressed.

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