

Psychosocial Determinants of Job Stress among Female Public Sector Employees in Nigeria

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Abstract: This investigation aimed to uncover how female employees attribute workplace stress to psychosocial factors. Five hundred and twenty-two female employees were randomly selected from various Ministries of the Ogun State government, Nigeria. A questionnaire divided into four sections was used to obtain information for this study. Using a three-way factorial statistical analysis, it was concluded that people who have Type B personalities are less disposed to work stressors than Type A personalities. Additionally, happily married people tend to be less affected by work stress than those who are unhappily married or single. Furthermore, internally oriented women appear to have greater control over their job-related worries than externally oriented women. These findings imply that psychosocial variables are important and relevant in understanding the processes and outcomes of job tension; hence, there is a need for organisations and human resource managers to include an assessment of personal variables in the design and specification of work to reduce job tension so that organisational effectiveness and efficiency would be enhanced.

Keywords: workplace stress, psychosocial factors, Type A/B personality, locus of control, and marital status.

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that women's importance in the development of any society cannot be understated, as their contributions to the socioeconomic growth of any society are substantial. They participate in all facets of work, including marketing, manufacturing, technology, education, and medicine, while the onus for household activities also rests with them. Implicitly, women face the heartening task of combining parenthood with their careers. It can then be argued that female employees would experience more workplace stress than men, since while they experience stressors that are common to both genders, women also face some peculiar stressors, such as matrimonial-work crossing, stereotyping, discrimination, and so on.

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The International Labour Office (2010) notes that, although more females are entering paid employment in most societies, they are largely responsible for unpaid household chores, such as meal preparation, cleaning, and childcare. They perform domestic and nursing duties, while many of them also undertake men's conventional roles in salaried engagements (Burton, 2010). Also, they are mostly responsible for unpaid work, such as providing healthcare to elderly, disabled, and ill relatives, just as they constitute a large ratio of voluntary workers in family-owned businesses. (ILO, 2010). Since women perform most of the domestic chores and tend to every member of the household, especially in emerging economies, they are more likely to experience long workdays as a result of combining paid and free work (Burda, Hamermesh & Weil, 2007) leading to pressure, glumness, and exhaustion (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001) and to a reduced involvement in workplace healthiness and welfare programmes (Cullen & Hammer, 2007).

This study was conducted to examine how perceived occupational pressure affects the performance of female employees in Ogun State, Nigeria, based on the recommendation of Hotboll, Geller and Dunahoo (2003) that it is necessary to analyse the conditions that are peculiar to female employees, as such can unravel the specific needs of working women.

Workplace Stress

Irene (2005) defines workplace stress as a form of response that occurs when people face job demands that are in tandem with their education, expertise, or abilities, and that exceed their coping skills. Desa, Yussoff, Ibrahim, Abd Kadir, and Ab Rahman (2014) describe it as disadvantageous physical and emotional reactions that arise when occupational requirements do not align with workers' competence, resources, or needs.

According to Beehr and Glazer (2001), job tension exists when pressures like work demands, constrictions, events, or requirements cause strains (abhorrence, psychological, physiological, or behavioural responses) that can cause breakdown or injury. Such stressors may also include unclear conditions, role overload, high-anxiety periods with no downtime, severe consequences for minor failures, a lack of personal control, deficient recognition, and administrative ineffectiveness (Scott, 2006).

Ilevbare and Ogunjimi (2014) noted that institutional pressure continues to draw significant interest and attention from psychologists in job arrangements because the changing demands of the work environment increase stress levels, with adverse effects for individual employees. For instance, Anderson and Puluch (2001) found that employment-related tension has been linked to high output inefficiency, increased absenteeism, and dysfunctional patterns in the workplace. Similarly, Colligan and Higgins (2005) discovered that job strain is linked to the aetiology of psychosomatic illnesses such as heart disease, adrenal malfunction, and persistent discomfort, while its emotional impacts include depression, persistent anxiety, and resentment. It is a significant contributor to low motivation or morale, decreased performance, increased employee turnover, diminished career fulfilment, compromised products, sub-standard services, communication inefficiencies and conflict (Schabacq & Cooper, 2000).

Javaid, Isha, Sabir, Ghazali, and Nubling (2018) argue that organisational anxiety can contribute to sleep-related difficulties, cognitive impairment, diabetes, weight gain, peptic ulcers, gastrointestinal diseases, high blood pressure, bone or muscle conditions that may cause cardiovascular ailments and

cancer. In the opinion of Pereira and Elfering (2013), occupational stress is a risk factor for psychological and somatic medical difficulties, including high blood pressure, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, poor work performance, low social interaction and support, and recognition, among others. Consequences of workplace stress can include health issues like weakened immunity, cardiovascular difficulties, and musculoskeletal system impairments; emotional infirmities like resentment, dejection, worry and confidence deficits; or behavioural disorders such as high turnover, injuries, and reduced job satisfaction (Addae, 2006).

Islam, Mohajan and Datta (2012) concluded that:

Occupational stress may cause medical conditions such as disordered eating, prickliness, headaches, hair loss, reduced sexual desire, life-threatening ailments, palpitations, high blood pressure, chest discomfort, respiratory difficulty, hyperventilation, muscle aches, sleep problems, dry mouth and throat, sweaty palms, urinary frequency, diarrhoea, indigestion, stomach ulcers, etc. It may also signify impulsive conduct such as low attentional control, speech problems, changes in personality, irritability or aggression, teeth grinding, intensified smoking addiction, substance use associated with breakdown, compulsive fidgeting, error escalation, truancy, deficient focus, etc. It also implies cognitive signs like physical trauma, gloominess, anxiety, fright and apprehension, forgetfulness, despair, dissatisfaction, pessimism, restless reactions, reduced decision-making capacity, persistent concerns, and threat-amplifying thoughts, feeling disconnected, overestimating danger, etc. (p.8)

Some studies have found that the costs of job strain affect people, organisations and the public. Individually, work-related tension has adverse effects on staff members' health (Spector, 2002; European Commission, 2007; Cox, Griffiths & Rial-Gonzalez, 2000); reduces performance; decreases chances of career advancement; and often leads to job termination (Cox & Griffiths, 2010). At an organisational level, it reduces output and product quality; increases costs due to wage and overtime payments; and creates organisational sabotage (Brown & Uehara, 2008).

Effects of Psychosocial Factors

Cox and Griffiths (2005) describe psychosocial factors as potential harm to an employee's emotional or biological welfare arising from interactions between the planning and supervision of duties within the administrative and relational spheres. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA, 2009) claims that vulnerability to psychosocial hazards can cause emotional strain among workers, resulting in underperformance and, when prolonged, serious health problems.

Short exposure to socio-emotional dangers and hassle is connected to reactions such as insomnia, mood swings, fatigue, headaches and moodiness (Bexwick, Gore & Palferman, 2006) while prolonged exposure is linked to an array of perceptual and somatic outcomes, including anxiety, depression, suicide attempts, back pain, chronic exhaustion, gastrointestinal malady, poor immune function, cardiovascular syndrome, hypertension, and peptic ulcers (Stansfield & Candy, 2006; Cohen, 2012). Psychosocial factors at workplaces may also include affective tension and diminished well-being among individuals (Hoel, Sparks & Cooper, 2001) and are associated with a decline in relationship equality with spouses, children, and other relatives (Dembe, 2001; Amick & Mustard, 2005).

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The European Commission (2002) found that socio-psychological threat factors and their attendant impacts on health will inflict a substantial economic hardship on individuals, organisations, and societies. At the individual level, risks may include higher healthcare and insurance expenditures, diminished income, and the need to take time off work or leave employment due to stress-related illness or injury (Eurofound, 2010). At the organisational level, the fiscal consequences of occupational anxiety and psychosocial factors are linked to reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher staff attrition (Health & Safety Executives, 2012). At the societal level, infirmities, accompanied by chronic job pressure and prolonged exposure to socioemotional conditions at work, can strain the national health care system and reduce economic outputs, thereby harming a country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Bejean & Sultan-Taieb, 2005).

Similarly, Ahmad, Hussain, Saleem, Qureshi, and Mufti (2015) found that the costs of office pressure are borne not only by employees and organisations but also by society. For individual employees, stress has adverse effects on the workers' well-being (Vic Health, 2012); organisations are unlikely to thrive in a competitive market, and as a result, the national economy would suffer a staggering amount in compensated medical absence, lost productivity, health care, and litigation expenses (Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2004).

Kompier (2005) notes that a workplace never exists in isolation, thereby creating a psychosocial work environment that affects employees' psychological and social conditions. Such a condition has become a persistent focus of research on occupational health and stress. It encompasses concerns about factors arising from individuals' psychological perceptions of the risks posed by the social environment (Leka, Wassenhore & Javen, 2015). Ilevbare and Ogunjimi (2014) provided examples of psychosocial factors that may contribute to workplace stress, including self-esteem, self-monitoring, locus of control, and marital status. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2016), over the past few decades, researchers, relevant agencies, and governments have acknowledged the effects of socioemotional factors on the health, performance, behaviours, effectiveness, and productivity of workers and organisations.

Gender and Workplace Stress

Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) argue that gender is an important demographic characteristic to consider in the experiences of stress. This is because there are disparities in both the nature and the degree of stressors and tensions between the sexes. For instance, McDonald and Korabik (1991) noted that although men and women are exposed to similar employment standards, the latter often face unique experiences, such as multiple roles, limited career progression, discrimination, and stereotyping (Schneider, Fitzgerald & Swan, 1991). The European Union for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA, 2014) reports that:

Women and men are diverse, and the jobs they do, their working conditions, and their treatment by society differ. Both sexes are concentrated in particular duties (horizontal segregation) and therefore face job-specific hazards. Furthermore, despite legislation, participation and handling across genders remain unequal across hierarchical levels. Thus, female workers are more likely to hold non-standard employment (i.e., short-term contracts and part-time work), whereas male employees have inflexible working hours, making it more difficult to balance family

demands. This vertical segregation is reflected in the underrepresentation of women in management positions. (p.65).

In addition to their paid work, women are domestic caregivers (Swathi & Reddy, 2016), and these dual roles impose time and energy constraints (Kenney & Bhattacharjee, 2000). According to Swathi and Reddy (2016), female employees' involvement in multiple responsibilities had detrimental impacts on their socio-cognitive fitness, thereby placing them under constant tension at home and at work. Iwasaki, Mackay and Ristock (2004) found that women experience higher organisational pressure due to societal expectations and, accordingly, bear greater job-family stress than men.

In a study of the work-life balance of female workers, Balaji (2014) finds that the primary source of unease among women is "stress owing to hard-to-set limits", followed by "increased job demands". In a related study, Stephen and Kristina (2005) found that dual-role tasks, restricted professional growth, discrimination and stereotyping are the factors that create apprehension among women, as higher levels of burden were reported among them compared to men. Dhanabakyam and Malarvizhi (2014) found a positive relationship between stress and family difficulties in female workers. According to them, a rise in work-family conflict is associated with high occupational strain, and vice versa, among married working women. They further observed that women in high-demand occupations were more likely to experience work-family tension.

Balaji (2014) notes that married women employees experience inter-role contradictions due to the number of hours they work outside the home, the flexibility or inflexibility of their task schedules, family size, and the number of dependents. In his opinion, these factors have harsh outcomes for the psychological dysfunction and well-being of married working women. In the same way, Bhuvaneshwari (2013) maintains that stress in married female workers is caused by various domestic and formal obligations, harassment at the office, occupational overload, and improper work-life balance. According to her, these determinants bring about concerns such as prolonged headaches, hypertension and obesity in female workers.

Schrabracq, Winburst, and Cooper (2003) noted that there is an inadequate investigation of women and workplace stress, as most studies of occupational strain have included only male participants, which has impaired the accuracy of conceptual models and research findings. Following the observations of Schrabracq, Winburst, and Cooper, this study was conducted to determine whether certain individual features inherent in women employees affect the level of workplace tension they experience. In other words, this research work examines the influence of psychosocial factors on the perceived experience of workplace stress among working women in Ogun State. Specifically, this study:

- i. Investigated the impact of age differences on job stress of working women in Ogun State
- ii. Examined the influence of marital status on job stress of female employees
- iii. Consider how personality differences can influence the experience of workplace strain

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This survey was carried out at the Ogun State Government Secretariat. The Secretariat houses 19 ministries namely: Agriculture, Budget and Planning, Commerce and Industries, Community Development and Cooperatives, Culture and Tourism, Education, Science and Technology,

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Environment, Health, Housing, Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Special Duties, Work and Infrastructure, Finance, Forestry, Information and Strategy, Justice, Rural Development, Youth and Sports, and Women Affairs.

Using stratified random sampling, a total of 522 female employees were randomly selected from offices across the Secretariat. The sample was representative of the entire Secretariat departments. Of the 522 participants, 490 completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 94%. Their age ranged from 20 to 60 years, with a mean age of 32 (SD = 10.2). Regarding the educational qualification of the respondents, the analyses show that 52(10.6%) had Secondary School Certificate Education (SSCE); 108(22%) had National Diploma (ND) or National Certificate of Education (NCE); 238(48.6%) had Higher National Diploma (HND) or equivalent of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.); 64(13%) had postgraduate qualifications; while 28(5.8%) had educational qualification classified as other.

Procedure

The researcher visited the offices to secure approval for data collection from the respective managers. The rationale for the study was explained to employees prior to the administration of the survey instruments. Once an employee indicates her willingness to take part in the study, she is given a questionnaire. Nine departments participated in completing the questionnaire, and each session took around 55 minutes. The offices were visited during regular office hours.

Instrument

A questionnaire divided into four sections was used to collect data for this study. Section A consists of items that measure demographic variables, including age, sex, religion, ethnic background, and type of work. Section B contains the locus of control scale; Section C comprises the Type A/B Personality scale; and Section D consists of the job tension scale.

Locus of Control

The Locus of Control (LOC) scale developed by Craig, Franklin, and Andrews (1984) was used to assess participants' internal and external locus of control. It is a written measurement tool comprising 14 items, each using a 5-point Likert response format. The scale includes items assessing a range of reinforcement factors (both personal and motivational), such as attainment, dependency, and attachment. It is devised to appraise the intensity of each participant's externality. Akinleke and Adeaga (2014) used this scale in a study of the contributions of test anxiety, study habits, and locus of control to academic performance, yielding an alpha coefficient of .87. For this investigation, a reliability coefficient of .76 was obtained.

Type A/B Personality Scale

The Type A/B personality measure, developed by Friedman and Roseman (1974), was used to classify respondents' personality types. Type A personality is a combination of behaviours that include rashness and a strong drive to complete tasks, aggression, and conflict-prone attitudes, while type B personality is relaxed, easy-going, and less concerned with the pressures of success, although not lazy (Strube, Hanson & Newman, 2003). Scoring was based on "Yes," "No," and "I don't know" responses, assigned values of 2, 1, and 0, respectively. The scale has been validated among Nigerian respondents by Oyefeso (1990), with a reliability coefficient of .60. This study reported a reliability coefficient of .67.

Job Stress Scale

The job stress perceived by the participants was measured using a 15-item Job-Related Tension Index developed by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964). It was designed in Likert's 5-point response format (ranging from 1 – Never; 2 – Rarely; 3 – Sometimes; 4 – Rather often; 5 – Nearly all the time) to measure the perceived tension an employee has toward various aspects of the job situation (such as the scope and responsibilities of the job, and the chain of authority that the worker has).

It was scored by summing the response values and dividing the total by 15, the number of text items. Using the Guttman Split-half and Spearman-Brown coefficients, the analyses yielded a reliability coefficient of .70, indicating that the scale is very reliable.

Data Analysis and Results

Four hypotheses were tested in this study, and these were:

1. Women who are internally oriented will experience less job stress than women who are externally located.
2. Women with Type A personalities will experience job stress more than women with Type B personalities.
3. Married women who have stable marriages will experience less job tension than women with unstable marriages and single women.
4. There will be interaction effects of all three variables on workplace stress.

A 2x2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there were any significant relationships between all three variables, as shown in Table 1 below.

The table showed a significant effect for the locus of control and job stress, hence the first hypothesis which predicts that women with an internal locus of control will go through lower job tension than women with an external locus of control was accepted $F(1,234) = 4.28, p < .05$. The table also confirmed the second hypothesis which supposed that women who have type A personality will experience job tension than women with Type B personality $F(1,234) = 14.89, p < .0001$.

Further, hypothesis three suggests that married women who have stable marriages will experience lower work stress than those with unstable marriages or single women. The result (as shown in the table) confirmed a substantial effect for marital status and job tension, $F(1, 234) = 19.65, p < .0001$. Lastly, the table indicates that when combined, all variables, that is, locus of control, Type A/B personality and marital status, have a significant effect on the workplace stress experienced by the respondents, $F(1,234) = 10.17, p < .001$.

Although, another interaction at 2x2 levels of interaction was not mentioned in the hypotheses of the study, however, it is worthwhile to indicate that a 2x2 interaction was sustained for the locus of control and type A/B personality $F(1,234) = 7.51, p < .05$; and locus of control and marital status $F(1,234) = 25.35, p < .0001$.

As predicted in hypotheses 1 – 3, the means (as shown in Table 2) reveal that generally:

- i. Women with an external locus of control perceived more workplace stress than women who have an internal locus of control.

- ii. Workers with Type A personalities perceived more job stress than Type B personalities.
- iii. Female employees with unstable marriages, as well as single females, reported more job stress than women who have stable marriages.

As shown in the table above, a post hoc analysis was conducted using Scheffé's method to determine the direction of differences in means among pairs of concepts that interacted to explain work stress.

Concerning job stress, internally located employees were significantly different from:

- a) Externals
- b) Type A personality
- c) Type B personality

Table 4 shows that on job tension, female employees who are internally located were significantly different from those who are externally located and those with unstable marriages.

DISCUSSION

This research examined the effects of locus of control, personality type, and marital status (stable/unstable) on workplace stress among women employed by the Ogun State government. As a construct, workplace stress is an important factor in the investigation of job outcomes. This is because job stress is believed to adversely affect employees' job performance and satisfaction, as well as organisational efficiency.

To conduct the investigation, a three-way factorial design was employed, necessitating a three-way factorial statistical analysis to assess the significance of main effects and interaction effects across all variables. Four hypotheses were stated for the study. The first hypothesis, that women with an internal locus of control would feel lower job stress than those with an external locus of control, was supported. This finding is consistent with the conclusion of Salazar, Hubbard, and Salazar (2009). It also corroborates the work of Vijayashree and Jagdischchandra (2011), who found a positive correlation between internal locus of control and job tension.

The second hypothesis predicted that women with a Type A personality would experience more job stress than those with a Type B personality. This assertion is also upheld. It validates the findings of Bruk-Lee, Khoury, Nixon, Goh and Spector (2009) who found an association between Type A personality and job tension. The third hypothesis, which proposed that female workers in stable marriages would experience lower job stress than women in unstable marriages and single women, was also confirmed in the predicted direction. This result supports Ugwu's (2010) finding that working mothers who received support from their spouse or a helper experienced less stress than those with no support. Kushner and Harrison (2002) find that frequent demands, inflexible work schedules, and expectations from multiple directions result in high stress levels among working mothers. Similarly, Temitope (2015) discovered that working mothers experience high stress due to heavy workloads.

CONCLUSION

It can be stated that women with external locus of control perceived more workplace stress than those with internal locus of control; female employees with Type A personality experienced more job stress than those that have Type B personality; working women with unstable marriage as well as single

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women perceived more job stress than women with stable marriage; there is a combined effect of all of the variables on workplace stress. This means that people who have Type B personalities are less disposed to work stressors than Type A personalities. Also, happily married people tend to be less affected by work stress than those who are not happily married or single. Furthermore, internally oriented women seem to have greater control over their job-related worries than externally oriented women.

These findings imply that psychosocial variables are important and relevant in understanding the processes and outcomes of job tension; hence, there is a need for organisations and human resource managers to include an assessment of personal variables (such as discussed in this study) in the design and specification of work to reduce job stress so that organisational effectiveness and efficiency would be enhanced.

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Appendix

Table 1: 2x2x2 ANOVA for locus of control, Type A/B personality and Marital status on job tension

Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	F	P
LOC (A)	756.471	1	756.471	4.28	.05
Type A/B (B)	2429.067	1	2429.067	14.89	.0001
Marital status (C)	3755.324	1	3755.324	16.59	.0001
A x B	1325.004	1	1325.004	7.51	.05
A x C	4313.565	1	4313.565	25.35	.0001
B x C	1.753	1	1.753	.008	Ns
A x B x C	1836.758	1	1836.758	10.00	.001
Error	41389.202	223	183.527		
Total	1321567.00	231			

Table 2: Job tension mean score of employees' locus of control, Type A/B personality and marital status

Variable	Levels	Mean
Locus of Control	Internal	64.60
	External	74.71
	Type B	64.03
	Type A	74.17
	Unstable/Single	74.78
	Stable	62.19

Table 3: Scheffe's post hoc analysis showing group comparisons involving LOC (internal/external), personality type (A/B) and marital status (stable/unstable)

	Internal	External	Type A	Type B
Internal	-	71.05*	61.650	20.43**
External		-	76.21*	0.17 ^{ns}
Type A			-	78.43*
Type B				-

* p<.01 **p<.05 p = ns

Table 4: Scheffe's post hoc analysis showing the group comparison involving LOC (internal/external) and Marital status (stable/unstable)

	Internal	External	Type A	Type B
Internal	-	83.54*	ns	5.73**
External		-	14.7*	92.71*
Type A			-	80.71*
Type B				-

** p<.05 * p<.01