

Occupational Stress and Job Performance among Officers of the Nigeria Police in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined occupational stress and Nigeria Police Job performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. Descriptive Survey design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 400 was obtained from a population of 19,533 Nigeria Police officers using Taro Yamane Scientific Formula. A self-designed instrument titled, 'Occupational Stress and Nigeria Police Job Performance Questionnaire (OSaNPJPQ)' was used for data collection. Instrument was validated by experts and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained using the Cronbach's Alpha technique. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The research questions and hypotheses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation respectively. The findings of the study revealed that the existence of the obnoxious contributory Pension scheme (PENCOM), poor conditions of service, inadequate crime fighting equipment, nagging spouses etc., are the main stressors that have negatively affected the Nigeria Police Job performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the above, it is recommended that the federal government and the Nigeria Police leadership should improve the general welfare of officers, remove obnoxious laws (especially the PENCOM), provide crime-fighting equipment, encourage on-the-job training that will boost the Nigeria Police officers' self-esteem. Finally, the Nigeria Police officers must develop healthy coping skills including; hobbies, improve on their relationship with members of the public, acquire stress management skills, avoid corrupt practices, and dehumanization of the citizens they are constitutionally empowered to protect.

Keywords: Stress, Job performance, stressors, Work Environment, Employee Well-being.

1. Introduction

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, obeying work ethics, demands from society, failures and the desire to survive in spite of all these. These issues of life are faced by every human being irrespective of age, creed, education, religion, clan, status, colour, etc.,. For many people, stress is a common phenomenon that has become a way of life. The word stress has been variously defined by diverse scholars with different intellectual leanings [1]. But majority of them see stress as any circumstance(s) that threaten one's coping abilities.

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The threat may be immediate physical safety, long-range security, self-esteem, reputation, peace of mind, fear of the future, demands of one's job, etc [2]. Researchers believe that 50-70% of all physical, social, and psycho-mental challenges in human beings are caused by stress. Stress is experienced by all in varied forms including; loss of a loved one, over-bearing bosses, nagging spouses, insecure working environment, inability to meet up with one's life expectations, fear of the future, un-cooperating subordinates and contemporaries in the work environment, etc. Weiten has posited that stress tends to spark images of overwhelming traumatic crises [3]. People may think of tornados, hurricane, earthquakes and floods. Undeniably major disasters of this sort are extremely stressful events, but these are only a small part of what constitutes stress.

In everyday events, such as waiting in line, what to eat, having car trouble, shopping for Christmas, unmet expectations, job demands, nagging spouses, fear of the future, etc., can be very stressful. Major and minor stressors are not entirely independent [4]. Brende in Oparaka has posited that there are three main types of stress including, basic stress which is the response of the body to any demand, whether is caused or results in pleasant or unpleasant conditions. Cumulative stress comes often, last too long or is too severe, influencing one's well-being and thought processes. This will produce negative changes in one's mental and physical health, job performance, relationship, and personality. Lastly, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, awful and distressing event(s)-that occurs and concerns the individual. In extreme cases, the affected person will suffer from depression and the thoughts of committing suicide will overwhelm him or her. Myers has described stress as a slippery concept [5]. People use stress to describe responses while others use it to describe challenges. But stress is not just a stimulus or response. It is the process by which we appraise and cope with environmental threats and personal challenges. When stress is perceived as challenges, stressors can have positive effects by arousing and motivating us to conquer problems. But more often, stressors threaten our resources-our status and job security, our loved ones' health or well-being, our deeply held beliefs, or our self-image. When such stress is severe or prolonged, it may also harm and the person concern may contemplate suicide. This can happen to anybody [6]. Stephen in Vipene and Jackreece have viewed stress as a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity or demand related to what he or she desires for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress is a tendency that relates to a pathological human response to psycho-social, occupational and/or environmental pressure. Stress in a workplace may be seen as a non-specific response made by a person that exceeds his adaptive responses [7]. Stress and its management is a critical issue that has attracted the attention of scholars in the entire world because its effect is universal in nature.

The police job all over the world is regarded as one of the most stressful jobs because it is one of the few occupations where employees are asked continually to face physical dangers and to put their lives on the line in the course of their duty. Job demands increases police officers' stress response, and the conditions of service do not play a buffer role but enhances this negative impact. Policing is a stressful occupation, which impairs police officers' psychological, physical/mental health and elicits burnout, aggressive behaviour, disenchantment and thoughts of being unloved by both his employers and the people he is expected to serve. Sadly, they tend to vent their raging anger on the citizens [8].

Job demands can partially reduce the police stress response through the satisfaction of basic social, physical and psycho-mental needs. The police officers are initially at their entry point, passionate, dedicated and hopeful for a rewarding career, but however, as the years passed by, they become increasingly stressed up, hopeless, disillusioned and burnout. The police officers are engaged in long hours of duty and exposed to countless risks, without a work-life balance and adequate welfare; the average police officer is disenchanted and feels discontentsnted.

In Nigeria, section 4 of the Police Act and Regulations , states that the police will be employed for; the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, preservation of law and order and the protection of lives and property [9]. Their other duties include; due

enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and finally, they shall perform such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required by or under the authority of this Act or any other Act.

Despite being the first indigenous force in Nigeria and the largest compact police force in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Nigeria police working conditions are dehumanizing in comparison to the strenuous duties they perform. In Nigeria, policing has become a thankless job with myriad of challenges including lop-sided postings, poor housing, obnoxious pension scheme, poor quality and quantity of manpower, insufficient crime fighting equipment, corruption, poor training; uncooperative members of the public, etc., leading to defective service delivery. There is a consensus opinion among scholars and practitioners over the years stating that the police poor showing is a foundational problem laid during the colonial era that the police was seen by the people as a colonial appendage used in suppressing, oppressing and subjugating Nigerians to submission. The police after the Nigerian Independence in 1960 changed their allegiance to the present day political and economic leaders that Orluwene believes "*abuse their positions through corrupt practices.*" In the light of the above, Oparaka observes that majority of the officers and other ranks are disenchanted with the police work resulting in incivility to members of the public, accidental discharge, corruption in the high ways and police formations/divisions, oppressive conduct, poor service delivery, involvement in criminal acts, and general lack of commitment to their constitutional responsibilities [10]. It is against this backdrop that the following research questions were asked to aid the study:

1. In what ways do occupational stress negatively affect the job performance of the Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State?
2. What coping strategies have the Nigeria Police officers employed to reduce the negative effects of occupational stress while discharging their duties?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the ways in which occupational stress negatively affect the job performance of the Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State.
2. Investigate the coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers to reduce the negative effects of occupational stress while discharging their duties.

Research Hypotheses

1. The more the Nigeria Police officers are overburdened by stress, the more their job performance is compromised.
2. The coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers often reduces the negative effects of occupational stress while discharging their duties.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to investigating occupational Stress and Job Performance among the Nigeria Police Officers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study covers all officers (male and female) irrespective of rank, serving in the State Police Command Headquarters, Area commands, Divisions and tactical units including outstations in the State. The study covers the period between January, 2014 to the first quarter of 2024.

Theoretical Framework

The General Strain Theory (GST) will guide the study. The GST is a sociological and criminological theory developed in 1938 by Robert K. Merton. The theory states that society (and organizations) put pressure on citizens (employees inclusive) to achieve societal and organizational accepted goals, even when they lack the will and in most cases, are not provided with the means to do so [11]. The theorist further postulated that individuals in a bid to achieve these goals, often face stressful situations and tend to react negatively to resist the pressures of the stressful situation or seek to escape it through employing coping strategies. The above theory aptly explains the plight of Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State in the discharge of their duties. The society and the leadership of the force expect officers to be effective, proactive, efficient, people-friendly, well-behaved, incorruptible and conscientiously perform their duties to meet up with international standard, but in most cases, without the

basic crime fighting equipment, robust welfare, actionable intelligence, adequate training and re-training and above all, policies and programmes that will aid Nigeria Police officers to achieve the stated goals.

2. Research Method

Descriptive Survey design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 400 was obtained from a population of 19,533 Nigeria Police officers using Taro Yamene Scientific Formula. A self-designed instrument titled; 'Occupational stress and Nigeria Police job performance questionnaire (OSNPJPQ) was used for data collection. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, more knowledgeable research experts were consulted for content, face and construct validity thereby ensuring that the instrument measure what it ought to measure and all the corrections were effected before adoption. A reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha reliability formula. With the help of research assistants, the instrument was distributed, retrieved and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, which was considered appropriate for obtaining factual information from a large population and describing existing conditions without manipulating any variables. This design enabled the researcher to systematically collect data on occupational stress and job performance among police officers in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The population of the study consisted of 19,533 Nigeria Police officers currently serving in Rivers State Command. From this population, a sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamene scientific formula, which provides a simplified method of determining sample size from a finite population with a given level of precision. The sampling technique employed ensured adequate representation across ranks, departments, and gender to enhance the generalizability of findings.

The primary instrument for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Occupational Stress and Nigeria Police Job Performance Questionnaire (OSNPJPQ)." The instrument was structured into three main sections: Section A covered demographic variables of the respondents; Section B contained items measuring occupational stress (sources, levels, and effects); while Section C addressed indicators of job performance. The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, allowing for quantitative analysis of responses.

3. Results and Discussion

R. Qi: In what ways have occupational stress negatively affected the job performance of the Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State.

Table 1. Negative effects of occupational stress on job performance

S/N	Stressors in the Nigeria Police Force	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Decreased job satisfaction and effectiveness	2.67	0.76
2	Increased marital crises	2.78	0.85
3	Loss of interest for the job	2.56	0.69
4	Physical and mental health problems	2.89	0.87
5	Reduced motivation	2.94	1.04
6	Low morale	2.85	0.92
7	Inter-personal conflicts extending to civilians	3.01	1.13
8	Job dissatisfaction	2.98	1.08
9	Poor self esteem	2.73	0.87
10	Frustration-induced aggression	2.62	0.75
Grand Mean		2.80	0.89

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

The above **Table 1** shows a grand mean rating of 2.80 and 0.89 of mean and standard deviation respectively. Since, the grand mean is greater than the critical mean of 2.5, it can be deduced that decreased job satisfaction, increased marital crises, loss of interest for the job, physical and mental health problems, reduced motivation, low morale, inter-personal conflicts extending to civilians, job dissatisfaction, poor self-esteem and lastly, frustration-induced aggression are negative effects of occupational stress that are responsible for police poor job performance [12]. Among the effects, inter-personal conflicts extending to civilians has the highest rating of 3.01 and 1.13 of mean and standard deviation respectively.

Research Question 2: What coping strategies have the Nigeria Police officers employed to reduce the negative effects of occupational stress while discharging their duties?

Table 2. Coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers

S/N	Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation
11	Engaging in corrupt practices	2.69	0.73
12	Lobbying for juicy postings	2.97	0.98
13	Harassing law abiding citizens	3.03	1.07
14	Consuming alcohol and other substances	3.10	1.15
15	Womanizing	3.01	1.01
16	Indulgent in religious activities.	2.84	0.88
17	Involvement in criminal activities	2.51	0.68
Grand Mean		2.88	0.93

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

The above Table 2 shows that the grand mean rating is 2.88 and 0.83 of mean and standard deviation respectively [13]. Since, the grand mean is greater than the critical mean of 2.5, we conclude that engaging in corrupt practices, lobbying for juicy postings, harassing law abiding citizens, drinking alcohol and consuming other substances, womanizing, indulgence in religious activities and involvement in criminal activities are the various strategies employed by the Federal and State Governments including the individual officers to cope with occupational stress.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: The more stress the Nigeria Police officers are overburdened by stress, the more their job performance is compromised.

Table 3. Pearson Product Moment Correlation on Occupational Stress and Nigeria Police

Officers' job performance.		Stressors	Job performance
Stressors	Pearson Correlation	1	.678**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	420	420
Job performance	Pearson Correlation	.678**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table 3 shows that the Pearson correlation is 0.678 at 0.000 level of significant. Since the level of significance is less than 0.05, therefore, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between the coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers and police poor job performance in Rivers State, Nigeria [14].

H₀₂: The coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers reduce the negative effects of occupational stress while discharging their duties.

Table 4. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and coping strategies

		Strategies	Police job performance
Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.513
	N	420	420
Police job performance	Pearson Correlation	.024	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.513	
	N	400	400

The above table 4 shows that the Pearson correlation product moment is 0.024 at 0.513 level of significant [15]. Since the level of significance is greater than 0.05, therefore, we conclude that there is no significant relationship between the coping strategies and police job performance in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Negative effects of occupational stress and job performance

The findings of the study revealed that decreased job satisfaction and effectiveness, increased marital crises, loss of interest for the job, physical and mental health problems, reduced motivation, low morale, inter-personal conflicts extending to citizens, job dissatisfaction, poor self-esteem and frustration-induced aggression are the issues that have negatively affected the Nigeria Police officers job performance in Rivers State [16]. In Nigeria, police officers face numerous stressors in their daily work, ranging from exposure to violence and trauma to bureaucratic challenges and inadequate resources. This chronic stress can have detrimental effects on their psycho-mental and physical well-being, as well as their job performance [17]. The nature of police work inherently involves high levels of stress due to the unpredictable and often dangerous situations officers face daily. However, in Nigeria, factors such as inadequate resources, poor working conditions, corruption in high and low places, and political interference exacerbate stress levels among officers. According to a study by Ojedokun, Odebunmi, and Adeniyi [18], Nigeria Police officers reported high levels of stress due to factors such as long working hours, inadequate training, and lack of support from superiors [19]. This stress can lead to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and impaired decision-making, ultimately affecting the quality of services provided by the police to members of the public.

The present study concurs with the findings of the above studies that have shown a direct correlation between occupational stress and decreased/poor job performance among Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State [20]. The present study has further revealed that occupational stress can lead to physical and mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and burnout, all of which can impair an officer's ability to perform their duties effectively, professionally and conscientiously. It also revealed that the oppressive conduct of police officers to citizens including accidental discharge, manhandling of citizens, poor handling of cases, incivility to members of the public, etc. are as a result of their exposure to occupational stress [21]. These findings concur with other studies carried out by scholars like Okafor and Ofoegbu, Adebayo, Adeniyi, and Oyeleke, Ogunsemi &Adewale, Ayodele, Afolayan, and Obiweluozo, on the relationship between occupational stress and poor job performance [22].

Coping strategies to reduce the negative effects of occupational stress on job performance.

The result shows that engaging in corrupt practices, lobbying for juicy postings, harassing law abiding citizens, consuming alcohol and other substances, womanizing,

indulgence in religious activities and the involvement in criminal activities are the various coping strategies adopted by the Nigeria Police officers in ameliorating the effects of occupational stress [23]. This study has shown that the present coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State are inimical to their mental, physical and general well-being. Officers involvement in crime, drugs/drinking and womanizing have negative effects on their overall wellbeing. There is no empirical proof in this study and earlier studies that over indulgence in religious activities improve police job performance [24]. The efforts by officers are not professional, holistic, result-oriented and acceptable by society. By addressing occupational stress, the Nigeria Police Force would fulfill its mandate to serve and protect the community while ensuring the health and resilience of its officers. The results of this study concurs with the findings of Joung, Temple, I. O & Major, N. B., that insisted that most stressed workers employ coping strategies that often have negative consequences on their general well-being.

4. Conclusion

The study investigated occupational stress and job performance among the Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is observed that a significant correlation exists between occupational stress and poor job performance among Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State, Nigeria. This has led to decreased productivity, impaired decision-making and increased likelihood of errors and misconduct. It was also observed that stress level among Nigeria police officers in Rivers State is notably high resulting to several negative effects including; decreased job satisfaction and effectiveness, increased marital crises, inter-personal conflicts extending to citizens, brutality, poor handling of cases, etc. This explains the constant uncooperative nature of civilian populace towards the police while discharging their constitutional duties.

The coping strategies employed by the Nigeria Police officers in Rivers State in ameliorating the pangs of occupational stress have negatively affected their overall job performance especially in their relationship with members of the public, created bad blood among them, inflicted psycho-mental and physical health challenges among officers and these have compromised their ability to perform their duties effectively, efficiently and conscientiously.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are made. That the:

1. The federal government and the Nigeria Police leadership should improve the general welfare of officers, remove obnoxious laws (especially the PENCOM), provide crime-fighting equipment and encourage on-the-job training that will boost the Nigeria Police officers' self-esteem and to help them perform their duties professionally as provided in the constitution and other extant laws.
2. The Nigeria Police officers must develop healthy coping skills including; hobbies, improve on their relationship with members of the public, acquire stress management skills, avoid corrupt practices, and dehumanization of the citizens they are constitutionally empowered to protect. The above recommendations will help immensely in reducing occupational stress among the Nigeria police officers and further improve their ability to perform their constitutional assigned functions with less acrimony both to indigenes and residents of Rivers State, Nigeria.

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