

African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

Volume 7 Numbers 1 & 2, April and September, 2004 Edition.

Editor in Chief: Professor Denis C.E. Ugwuegbu,
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

Editor: Dr. Shyngle K. Balogun,
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

Associate Editor: Dr. Benjamin, O. Ehigie,
Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan.

EDITORIAL BOARD

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Professor L.C. Simbayi, | University of Zambia . |
| Professor Jean Tano, | University D' Abidjan, Cote D' Ivoire |
| Professor I.E. Eyo, | University of Nigeria . |
| Professor J.Y. Opoku | University of Ghana, Legon. |
| Dr. Oke Anazonwu, | Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka. |
| Prof. Nwagbo Eze, | University of Lagos |

Journal of the African Society for THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOCIAL ISSUES % Dept of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

P. / 95

**AFRICAN JOURNAL FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOCIAL ISSUES VOL.7 (2)**

CONTENTS

1. COMMUNAL CONFLICT AND HIV/AIDS IN NIGERIA
Ayodele S. JEGEDE , Kabiru K. SALAMI, Olusegun
M. TEMILOLA and Prisca O. ADEJUMO 140--155
2. PERCEPTIONS AND USES OF CONTRACEPTIVES:
A CASE STUDY OF SOME HEARING IMPAIRED
INDIVIDUALS IN OYO STATE J. A.
Ademokoya and A. M. Oyewumi 156--167
3. MALE RESPONSIBILITY IN REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH IN NIGERIA: AN ECLECTIC METHODOLOGICAL
APPROACH Adeyefa I, Aderinto A.A, Olawoye J.E, Udegbe IB,
Omololu O, Olarinde E.S, Aderibigbe
T.O, Erinosh L, Osotimehin B 168--195
4. PERSONALITY AS CORRELATE OF PERCEIVED JOB
STRESS AMONG ELECTORAL OFFICERS DURING
ELECTIONS 196--205
John Oselenbalu Ekore &Henriet Omonike Aiyedun
5. EFFICACY OF PSYCHO-EDUCATION INTERVENTION
PROGRAMME AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN OYO STATE 206--220
G. A. Adejuwon, P.O. Olapegba and A. O. Taiwo
6. PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS PREDICTING SCHOOL VIOLENCE
IN TENDENCIES AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY
INSTITUTIONS IBADAN 221--237
Taiwo, Abigail Olubola
7. ON THE EQUIVALENCE OF TANK TRUCKS AND GENERAL
PURPOSE TRUCKS 238--251
Olabode O. Alokun,
8. PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT
AMONG NIGERIAN POLICE OFFICERS 252--264
Opayemi Aderemi Sunday
9. NEED AND REINTEGRATION OF INFANT ORPHANS INTO THEIR
BIOLOGICAL EXTENDED FAMILY 265--280
Ibeagha, P.N.

PERSONALITY AS CORRELATE OF PERCEIVED JOB STRESS AMONG ELECTORAL OFFICERS DURING ELECTIONS

John Oselenbalu Ekore &Henriet Omonike Aiyedun

*Department of Psychology,
Faculty of the Social Sciences,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
E-mail: jekore@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship of personality (conscientiousness dimension) with electoral officers perceived job stress during election. The survey utilised the ex post facto research design. A total of 346 participants responded to the questionnaires. In all, 254 (70.4%) were males and 101 (29.6%) were females. Their age ranged between 25 to 50 years with a mean age of 38.7 (S.D = 7.38). Structured questionnaires were employed for data collection and the hypothesis was tested using Pearson moment product correlation. Results showed that conscientiousness had significant positive relationship with job stress; which is an indication that personality quality play important role in electoral officers stress during elections ($r = 0.71, p < 0.01$).

Based on the findings, recommendation was made.

INTRODUCTION

Electoral body is one of the most sensitive and visible office in Nigeria arising mainly from the gargantuan expectations of all stakeholders in the electoral process. According to Schumpeter (1942), elections serve a symbolic exercise for the psychological upliftment of the populace.

Virtually, all aspect of electoral processes in Nigeria is subject to serious disagreement. This is because the degree of trust in electoral activities has sunk to the lowest ebb; especially the case of 1983. Electoral controversies accumulate faster than they can be resolved. Public distrust of electoral process has been blamed on the failure of electoral structure, which is not insulated against control and abuse. Historical antecedents "have made it an uphill task for electoral body to find out and recruit high calibre and honest people who cannot be coerced or succoured to subvert the electoral process to volunteer to serve as election officials". Judging from Nigeria's political history one would apparently agree that almost every election in the country has

experience conflict and violence, which has become a recurring problem in Nigeria's politics.

Aggressive tendencies by the electorates constitute pressure and threats to the electoral officers who met with hostility and insults based on the prejudices and stereotype orientation of the electorates. Hiring vehicles for election activities constitute some form of stress to the electoral officers. This is due to the quantity required and the resource to hire them to be able to move human and materials to all the polling units. This requires large number of vehicles for at least two per unit for two days. Security and distribution of sensitive materials being the bane of the whole exercise aggravates the anxiety of the electoral officers until the smooth take off of the activities on the Election Day. History had it that on some occasions; the ballot paper, boxes and or result forms were either diverted or burnt before or during an election to influence the outcome. The proneness of electoral officers to burnt-out stress level can better be explained by their involvement in an election tribunal cases, where they are always supine to defend lapses of both human and materials engaged for election activities.

Nearly everyone agree that job stress results from the interaction of the workers and the condition of work. Views differ however on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress (Niosh, 1999). These different viewpoints are important because they suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. The problem of perceived job stress by the electoral officers had been a source of concern to the electoral bodies since the attainment of independence in Nigeria. However, there is no documentation on any research done on the issue, hence, the researchers are interested in finding out the work related issues that constitute perceived job in relation to the personality traits of the electoral officers.

In a study conducted by Agius (2001) to determine the work demand of employees in relation to their role as potential stressors, it was revealed that there was a significant correlation between employees' work and burnout. Deary (1996) in his study of "personality and stress in consultant psychiatrist" observed that clinical responsibility being an intrinsic dimension of the work of consultant doctor like an electoral officers is an important indicator of stress among workers.

Karasek's (1974) Demand-control theory posits that jobs with high level of control and autonomy should be less stressful even when the job demand is high. A job with high demand and high control are seen as active and not stressful while those with high demand and low control are stressful. It is a common knowledge to commitment to work behaviour has increased over the years to address stress perception of worker. In the investigation focused on commitment as a predictor of related behaviour by Ford (1994), regression and path analysis on data collected from police officers suggested that commitment to strategy influences behaviour. Commitment mediated the relationship between managerial support and behaviour, and partially mediated the relationship between experience and behaviour. Therefore, one can infer that a conscientious electoral officer with experience and managerial support will experience significant low level of stress.

According to Rush (1990), conscientiousness, when aided by enlightened, intellect, is of the very highest importance as a regulatory of all the other facilities. Conscientiousness is an important element in constituting a practical judgment and an upright and consistent character.

Drawing from the tripartite (cognitive, affective and behaviours) categorisation of attitude Eagly & Chaiken, (1993), argues that conscientiousness may influence perceived job stress through, cognitive; how the individual interpret characteristics of their jobs as in the case when the individual with positive core self evaluation interpret intrinsic job characteristics more positively, even controlling for actual job complexity (Judge, Bono & Lock, 2000). Affective, these traits might influence job stress through their effect on mood at work (Brig, 1998). Finally behaviourally employees who are conscientious may be happier at work because they are more likely to achieve satisfying results at work. This effect may operate through job performance, such that conscientious electoral official perform better and are more satisfied with their job because of the intrinsic and extrinsic reward that performance provides. ♦ Given the link between conscientiousness and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), with job satisfaction and of this present study with perceived job stress, perhaps, the time has come for the recommendation of stress management packages for both the electoral officers and the electoral commission. Such package will address more proximal predictor such as integrity, which is carried for the

success of the commission's sensitive national assignment (Sacket & Wanek, 1996).

According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), stress is experienced when a situation that is valued and significant to an individual is perceived as exceeding individuals coping capacity. In his later research, Lazarus (1996) identified three views to stress: One that individual's reaction to stress varies. Two, that the stress is determined by one's appraisal of the stressful situation rather than the stress itself. Three, that the extent of the stress is a function of individual's adaptive ability. Lazarus concluded that a person's coping responses to stress is important than the environmental events. Hence, it can therefore be deduced that the necessary and sufficient condition for psychological stress is cognitive appraisal of a demand capability in balance (Jerkins, 1971).

However, Cox (1978) stated that the stress process has three basic psychological sub-states: frustration, conflict and pressure. There is frustration, because we are unable to fulfil or meet our daily challenges. We find ourselves in conflict situation because of competing demands that require us to make choices and decision. There is pressure because events in our lives may not allow us the opportunity to take out time.

Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory is another theory that best explains perception of stress. The theory that was developed by French (1974) and made popular by Harrison (1978) stated that when there is incompatibility of individual characteristics and organisational environment, then the perception of stress in that individual would rise significantly. As stated by McCurth (1970), an active stress researcher, stress is a perceived substantial imbalance between demands and response capabilities under conditions where there is failure to meet demands, it will result in high-level stress.

According to this theory, in the context of an electoral body, job stress and thereby affect the perception of their job demand. Based on the big five personality traits, some of the dimensions predispose individual more to experience either high or low level stress. Anxiety-prone individuals experience role conflict more acutely and react to it with greater tension than people who are less anxiety-prone and more flexible individual respond to high role conflict with lesser feeling of tension than their more rigid counterparts (Warr & Wall, 1975). Conscientiousness involve the tendencies to show self-discipline, dutiful with striving

for achievement and competence. It is also concerned with being organised rather than disorganised, careful rather than careless, discipline not impulsive, reliable, planful and goal-directed. It is related to an individual's degree of self-control as well as need for achievement, order and persistence (Costa, McCrae & Dye, 1991).

High scorers on conscientiousness are characterised by orderliness, responsible, dependability, perseverance and conventionality. Persons high on conscientiousness tend to regulate themselves during instances of frustration and pressure (Digman and Takemoto-Chock, 1981). This is in contrast to individuals who show an absence of self-control in such situation and who are prone to criminal behaviour (Gottfredson, & Hirschi, 1990). A major problem that readily comes to mind from previous findings is that highly conscientious individuals experience cognitive dissonance from assignment requiring them to exhibit unethical behaviours. This is similar to what happens during electoral assignments, where electoral officers are pressurised to satisfy political actors. Based on the past findings, it can be hypothesised that conscientiousness would significantly show a positive relationship with perceived stress on the job among electoral officers.

METHOD

Design

The study adopted a multivariate design. There was however no manipulation of any variable but respondents were asked to provide information as the situation apply to them. The independent variable is personality characteristic of conscientiousness and the dependent variable is perceived job stress.

Participants

The participants in the study were three hundred and forty-six (346) INEC designated electoral officers. In all, 101 (29.6%) were females and 245 (70.4%) were males. They were drawn across the six-geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Their age ranged between 25-59 years with a mean age of 28.66 (SD = 7.38). It was further revealed their 39 (11.5%) were holder of Diploma Certificate, 212 (62.5%) were holder Bachelor/HND Degree, 86(25.4%) had Masters Degree and 2(0.6%) were holders of Doctorate Degree.

In terms of marital status, 47(13.7%) were single, while 295(86.3%) were married. In respect of job tenure, 135 have less

than 10 years of experience while 197 have been involved in the conduct of election for 10 years and above.

Instrument

The questionnaire method was used for data collection. Each questionnaire comprised of three sections.

Section one was used to elicit socio-demographic information of participants information relating to age, sex, position, length of service, marital status and their educational qualification where tapped from this section.

Section two measured the degree to which the identified situation (electoral assignment) constitute source of stress to the individual participants. The researchers developed this scale. It contains items that measure stress, which is the independent variable in the study. To ascertain the participant's perception of stress and the stressors, a questionnaire was constructed. It contained twenty-nine job/environment related items designed making use of 5-point Likert summated rating scale formation. The degree of response ranged from very much a source (5), certainly a source (4), a source (3), rarely a source (2) and not a source (1). Participants were instructed to choose the numbers that correspond with the degree to which each of the situation constitute source of stress to them on the job.

Items under this section were drawn from the response of the pilot study that was initially carried out among selected members of staff of the electoral commission across the six geopolitical zones were asked to list what they considered to be their stressor on the job. A frequency analysis of the responses was done on the qualitative data to develop the perceived job stress index. This perceived job stress scale had twenty-nine (29) items. The reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained with a cronbach alpha of 0.74.

Section three-measured conscientiousness using a scale developed by Barrick & Mount (1993). It is a ten-item scale consisting of dependability, industriousness and efficiency. The scale measures the following four dimensions of conscientiousness:

1. Ability to plan,
2. Prioritise and organised,
3. Initiative and motivation,
4. Ability to adapt to changing situation.

The scale was scored on a Likert format, which ranged from strongly agree (5), to strongly disagree (1). The coefficient for the scale is 0.70.

Procedure

INEC being the national electoral body authorised by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to conduct general election was the targeted setting. The researchers were interested in the whole population of electoral officers who had been involved in the conduct of the general elections, across the seven hundred and seventy four local government area councils nationwide.

However, to enjoy the advantages of accuracy, efficiency and cost effectiveness, a purposive sampling method was adopted. For prompt response and total coverage of the 774 L.G.A.s, the pilot questionnaires were sent by courier service to twelve states nationwide. It was purposefully picked on the average of two states per geo-political zone. The administrative secretaries of those state administered the questionnaire on those in their state that have conducted elections as electoral officers.

Statistical Tools

The data obtained for the study were subjected to statistical test using the Pearson moment product correlation to test the hypothesis.

RESULT

The tested hypothesis which stated that conscientiousness among other variables would show significant positive relation with perceived job stress was tested using Pearson product correlation and the results obtained is presented in the table below:

A summary table showing relationship between personality characteristics and job stress of electoral officers

| Variable | Mean | Age | Job Tenure (JT) | Conscientiousness |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Age | 38.36 | | | |
| Job Tenure (JT) | 11.44 | 0.64** | | |
| Conscientiousness | 37.02 | 0.18* | 0.16* | |
| Stress | 85.19 | 0.06 | -0.02 | 0.71** |

* Correlation significant at 0.05

** Correlation significant at 0.01

The result presented above revealed that conscientiousness had a significant positive relationship with perceived job stress ($r=0.71$, $p<.01$). The result confirmed the stated hypothesis. It shows that the higher a worker is on conscientiousness, the higher the amount of stress experienced on the job. Other variables as presented in the table did not significantly correlate with job stress.

Discussion

The hypothesis of the study, which stated that conscientiousness among other variables would show significant positive relationship with perceived job stress, was tested and the result obtained that conscientiousness had a significant positive relationship with perceived job stress.

The findings showed that the higher a worker is on conscientiousness the higher the amount of stress experienced on electoral job. This finding is supported by Gall (1994) who observed that if conscientiousness is strong, an employee could not endure the sense of an accumulated inequity that would stain his/her life; hence she/he would make desperate move toward achievement, such individual will experience higher job stress than his counterpart with low score on conscientiousness.

Colatelli, Dean and Konstan (1987) also supported the findings of the study by their finding which showed that conscientiousness has significant interaction effect on perceived job stress. In addition to earlier findings, the present study also supports that of Hertz and Donovan (2000) who found that conscientiousness among other variables showed significant positive relationship with perceived job stress.

Similarly, Brayfield and Roth (1951) measure across personality traits posited that only conscientiousness have significant influence on personality job satisfaction correlation. However, Winefield & Jarrett (2001) also found that conscientiousness, marital status and job tenure jointly influence perceived job stress.

Electoral officers that are high on conscientiousness will report significant higher level of perceived job stress than those who are low on conscientiousness. Weinberger et al (1979) support the findings of this study in his psychological measures in stressful task. He posited that employees that are high in conscientiousness would show increased psychological response during the stressful task, like the conduct of elections.

It can be seen that the results obtained from this study is in agreement with previous research findings. Therefore, it can be inferred that the more conscientious an electoral officer is, the more stress he or she will perceive on the job during elections due to high positive relationship that exist between conscientious and job stress. The study further confirmed that a periodic heavily loaded and time conscious assignment like the conduct of election have inherent stressors for the operational captains of such organisation.

It was therefore recommended that special programme like training before elections which would incorporate techniques for withstanding pressures and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) be designed for electoral officers, especially those identified to be high on conscientiousness. However, further studies should be encouraged to cover other areas and variables not within the scope of the present one.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

REFERENCES

- Costa P. T., & McCrae R. R. (1992). Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-P) and NEO Five – Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) Professional Manual – Odessa: *Psychological Assessment Resources Inc.*
- Deary L. J. & Agius R. M., Sadler A. (1996) – Personality and stress in consultant Psychiatrists. *International Journal of Social Psychology*, 2, 20 – 32.
- Digman J. M. (1990), Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model. *Annual review Psychology*, 41, 417 – 440.
- Eagly A. H., Klonsky, B. G. & Makhijani, M. G. (1992). Gender and the evaluation of leaders: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 111(1), 3 – 22.
- Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude and mental strain: Implementation for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 285 – 308.
- NIOSH (1995) National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH Model of Job Stress.
- Schumpeter J. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York: Harper and Row, P. 270.
- Winefield, A. H. & Jarrett, R. J. (2001). Occupational Stress in University Staff. *International Journal of Stress Management*, (in press).