

## **Gender, Self-Concept and Occupational Status Differentials in Occupational Stress among Bank Workers in Lagos State**

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the determinants of occupational stress using gender, self-concept and occupational status as factors. Survey research design was adopted. Sample comprised 100 Bank workers randomly selected from Lagos state, Nigeria. Job Situation Questionnaire (JSQ) was used. Three hypotheses were tested while the student t-test was used for data analysis. Results tested at 0.05 level of significance indicated no significant difference in occupational stress of male and female bank workers and in the research of workers of different occupational status. However, significant difference exists between workers with high self-concept and those with low self-concept. Conclusively, stress effects are greatest among service staff at the bottom of the hierarchy, with least participation in decision-making.

**Key words:** Gender, self-concept, occupational status, occupational stress

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stress, generally, can be defined as the reaction of individuals to demands (stressors) impose upon them (Erkutly and Chafra, 2006). It refers to situations where the well being of individuals is detrimentally affected by the failure to cope with the demands of their environment. Akinboye *et al.* (2002) were of the opinion that most people see stress as negative while others differentiate between negative and positive areas. According to them, distress is negative, while eutress is positive stress. Distress manifests as disappointment, failure threat, embarrassment and other negative experiences. Eutress (positive stress) manifested as positive exhilarating experiences of success followed by higher expectations.

Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job, because of poor fit between someone's abilities and his/her research requirements and condition which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Akinleye and Hassan, 2004). Workplace stress can have a wide-ranging and negative impact on the well being of the individual and his or her day-to-day functioning. This is observable at physical level (e.g., exhaustion, headaches, high blood pressure), at psychological level (e.g., depression, anxiety, low self-esteem), at cognitive level e.g. (absent model for females and males. Being a social construct, the roles and expectations as well as the opportunities

and privileges of the different genders do change from time to time and vary across space.

Self-concept generally reflects who a person is and what he thinks of himself in the three dimensions of self as seen by others, the 'ideal self as conceptualized in 'what he/she desires to be' and the feeling absent 'self'. This is in relation to the environment within the physical, moral and psychological structure as well as attitudes, ideas and values that propel one into action (Franken, 1994). Purkey (1998), defines self-concept as the cognitive or thinking aspect of 'self' related to one's self-image and generally refers to the totality of a complex, organized and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his existence.

Thus, an individual's concept of him/herself affects his/her behaviour and learning. Self concept acts as a stimulating agent underlying human behaviour. Individuals, who have behavioral problems such as drug abuse and work stress may have damaged self-concept and this goes along with goal setting or forgotten aspiration. The level of workers' wellbeing and performance therefore, depends on their self-concept.

Occupational status is one component of Socio-Economic Status (SES) summarizing of power income and educational requirements associated with various positions in the occupational structure. Occupational status has several advantages over the other major indicators of SES, which are most commonly educational attainment and personal or family income. First,

occupational status reflects the outcome of educational attainment, provides information about the skills and credentials required to obtain a job and associated monetary and other rewards. For example, professionals are differentiated from manual workers by selection on educational attainment that influences patterns of remuneration. Occupational status is also likely to be better indicator of income over the long term than is income information collected at any single point in time, because in the short term, income can be quite volatile (Williams and Collins, 1995).

Finally, occupational status is a promising measure of social position that can provide information about job characteristics, such as environment and working conditions, decision making, attitude and psychological demands of the job as well as work stress. Occupational positioning which individual attains in his or her job in relation to others may exert extra stress on the job. Thus, how it influences or affects the pressure which bank workers faces in their profession is of concern in this study.

This study is therefore, designed to investigate gender, self-concept and occupational status differentials in occupational stress among Bank workers using Lagos State, Nigeria as a case study.

**Hypotheses:** The following 3 hypotheses were tested.

- There is no significant difference in occupational stress of male and female bank workers
- There is no significant difference in the occupational stress of bank workers with high and low self-concept
- There is no significant difference in the occupational stress of workers of different occupational status

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Design:** The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This is the type of research that deals with the collection of information concerning a problem (occupational stress) from the representative sample of the group without the manipulation of the variable concerned.

**Sample:** The sample for this study consists of 100 bank workers randomly selected from junior and senior bank

workers in Mainland and Mushin Local Governments, which are urban Local Governments in Lagos State, Nigeria.

**Instrumentation:** A self-developed questionnaire tagged: Job Situation Questionnaire (JSQ) constituted the main research instrument. The questionnaire were divided into two parts, the first part with was designed to elicit demographic responses. The second part contains thirty (30 items), 15 of which measure self-concept and the remaining 15 items measure occupational stress. Each item ranges from 1-5 on a Likert format scale. The cumulative score is to be added together to give composite score indicating high and low self-concept and the level of stress in the individual. The validity of the research instrument was obtained through both face and content validity. A test-re-test method was put in place and used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument.

**Sample:** The subjects used were 100 in number, 49 male and 51 female all being bank workers in Mainland and Mushin Local Governments.

The researcher administered the instrument on the respondents in their various banks with three research assistants. The questionnaires were collected back immediately and later scored. The data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using student t-test statistical measure.

## RESULTS

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significance difference in occupational stress of male and female bank workers.

From the Table 1, the null hypothesis was accepted because the t- calculated value was not significant at 0.05 level ( $t = 1.726$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that occupational stress is not gender sensitive.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the occupational stress of bank workers with high and low self-concept.

From the Table 2, the null hypothesis was rejected because the t-calculated value was significant at 0.05 level ( $t = 2.790$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that there is significant difference in the occupational stress of bank workers with high and low self-concept. Self-concept is influential in occupational stress.

Table 1: Gender differential occupational stress

Sex	N	X	0	Mean difference	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value
Male	49	150.04	43.18	14.84	98	1.726	1.960	0.055
Female	51	134.19	42.83					

Table 2: Differential occupational stress of workers with high and low self-concept

Sex	N	X	0	Mean difference	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value
Low	48	130.27	36.86	23.45	98	2.790	1.960	>0.05
High	52	153.73	46.25					

Table 3: Occupational status differential occupational stress

Cadre of worker	N	X	0	Mean difference	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value
Male	49	142.85	43.18	0.53	98	0.055	1.96	<0.055
Female	51	142.31	42.19					

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the occupational stress of bank workers of different occupational status.

From the Table 3, the null hypothesis was accepted because the t-calculated of 0.055 was not significant at 0.05 level ( $t = 0.055$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that there is no significant difference in the occupational stress of bank workers of different occupational status. Occupational stress is not sensitive to status, it affects all categories of bank workers.

## DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in occupational stress of male and female bank workers. This hypothesis was upheld. This implies that gender has no effect on occupational stress of bank workers. Although, only a few studies have examined gender interaction effects, most report that when appropriate controls are utilized, the relationship between job conditions and physical or mental health outcomes is not affected by gender (Lowe and Northcott, 1988).

The findings in Table 2 revealed that there is significant difference in the occupational stress of bank workers with high and low self-concept. This finding is in agreement with Romeo (1990), who discovered that employees' control over job related decision affects their health, moral and their ability to handle workloads. Also in support of this findings. Control in terms of job-provided autonomy enhance motivation and growth in blue collar, white collar and professional positions. A well motivated worker is likely to have higher self concept while a non well motivated worker may develop low self-concept and this may impact on occupational stress.

Generally speaking, excessive pressure and problems can occur in an employee facing a relationship breakdown, financial problems and the demands of the job, it is possible that these problems may affect the employees ability to work effectively and while these personal problems begin to affect performance at work, then this will need to be raised and discussed with the employee so as for the managers to identify the help to be given to the employees so as to return to effective working condition.

The third hypothesis established that there is no significant difference in the occupational stress of workers of different occupational status. This is surprising considering that senior bank workers are confronted more with responsibilities on the job as a result of their work experience, educational attainment and so many other requirements that dictate their senior ship.

## CONCLUSION

All the evidence points to the fact that stress affects all categories of workers irrespective of their gender and occupational status but the effect is moderated by workers' self-concept.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that managers and supervisors can take some approaches to prevent occupational stress. This may include ensuring that workload is in line with the workers' capabilities and resources. Also workers' roles and responsibilities should always be clearly defined. Improving communication is another crucial step in preventing occupational stress if workers are given the opportunity to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs, uncertainly about career development and security may be reduced.

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