

JOB STRESS AND PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AS PREDICTORS OF JOB INVOLVEMENT AMONG POLICE PERSONNEL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Little research evidence has demonstrated, in a single model, the link among job stress, perceived organizational support, and job involvement using the person-environment fit and social exchange theories, especially among the Nigeria police personnel. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which job stress and perceived organizational support predicted job involvement among police personnel. Sample comprised 268 police personnel (154 males; 114 females) drawn from 15 Police Divisions. Their ages ranged between 18 and 57 years (mean age = 34.26 years; SD = 8.57). Results of the hierarchical multiple regression indicated that job stress significantly predicted job involvement such that police personnel who reported low job stress tended to be highly involved with their jobs. Similarly, police personnel who felt supported by the organization were more attached to or engrossed with their jobs. Lastly, perceived organizational support reduced the effects of job stress on job involvement among police personnel. The theoretical and practical implications of the results were discussed.

Key words: Stress, involvement, support, police, Nigeria

Introduction

The police remains the most discussed and criticized of all security agents in Nigeria in recent times (Aremu, 2005; Aremu & Tejumola, 2008). This negative attitude towards the Nigeria police may be connected with the perceived high unethical behaviours (Adebayo, 2005; Afolabi & Adesina, 2006; Afolabi & Omole, 2011) and inefficiency in its ability to investigate crime and secure lives and property (Chinwokwu, 2012; Eme & Onyishi, 2011). Studies on the challenges of police and policing in Nigeria focus on some organizational and individual factors.

For example, Brownson (2012), attributed the challenges of police and policing in Nigeria to ineffective legal provisions on the operations and functions of the police. Chinwokwu (2012), identified inadequate training and facilities as the major challenges to effective policing in Nigeria. But others attributed police inefficiency in Nigeria to low emotional intelligence (Aremu & Tejumola, 2008), high job stress (Iroegbu & Nwaogwugwu, 2012), and personality and personal factors (Afolabi & Adesina, 2006; Afolabi & Omole, 2011). Brownson (2012) advocated strong and effective legal framework for the Nigeria police. Others suggested attitudinal and personality change (Afolabi & Adesina, 2006; Afolabi & Omole, 2011), and emotional intelligence training programmes (Aremu & Tejumola, 2008; Okoiye, 2011). A common thrust of these studies is that for Nigeria to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on security; there is an urgent need to re-vamp the operations of her police personnel and get them more involved with their job.

Job involvement, which is the degree to which employees exhibit psychological identification and engrossment with the type work they are doing (Brown & Leigh, 1996), could serve as an important push to the operational efficiency of police personnel in Nigeria. This is because when employees are highly involved with their job they place the job above other interests in their lives. According to Uygur and Kilic (2009), job involvement implies that employees perceive work as central to life interest; value active participation in the job; view performance as central to self-esteem; and perceive that performance on the job is central to their sense of worth.

This could explain why job involvement has been associated with high job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lambert, 2008; Paoline & Lambert, 2011); but connected with reduced turnover intention (Lambert & Paoline, 2010) even among police personnel (McElroy, Morrow, & Wardlow, 1999). Therefore, it may not be out of place if police personnel, who are highly involved with their job, expend more efforts on the job, surmount obstacles, and exhibit better performance than those with low job involvement (Blau & Ryan, 1997; Brown & Leigh, 1996).

Aim of the study

Literature has indicated that job involvement may be an important factor in predicting some outcome variables that could enhance efficiency among police personnel. What has not been adequately investigated is how job stress and perceived organizational support could predict job involvement among police personnel in Nigeria. This was the lacuna this study aimed to fill.

Job stress and job involvement

Job stress refers to the condition in which employees perceive that the relationship between them and the job environment is taxing or exceeding their resources and threatening their well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which they are motivated to deal with or avoid (Tenibiaje, 2013). Like other human-service occupations, individuals in the police profession are vulnerable to stress (Hart & Cotton, 2002; Ogungbamila, 2013), which may adversely affect their performance (Shane, 2010).

Shane (2010) submitted that job stress among police may emanate from both the job context (organizational stressors) and the job content (operational stressors). Operational stressors refer to occupational demands and risks that are inherent in the police job such as operational overtime and job-related violence (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano & Mitchell, 2003), and low public image. Organizational stressors, which include characteristics of the organization and behaviours of the employees working in the organization, may be a greater source of stress for police personnel because they may perceive them as inescapable (Shane, 2010).

Some organizational characteristics which may induce stress on the police include bureaucracy (Manning, 1977), organizational capacity (Reiss, 1992), relationship with co-workers (Brown, 1981), training, and equipment (Shane, 2010). Castle and Martin (2006) reported that role-related demands and dissatisfaction had positive relationship with job stress. Other studies (e.g. Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Paoline, Lambert, & Hogan, 2006) found that good relations with co-workers and satisfaction with administrative policies, practice, and procedures were associated with low job stress.

The high level of bureaucracy in the Nigeria police, inadequate training, and equipment coupled with a gross imbalance in the ratio of the police and the Nigerian population, police personnel in Nigeria may experience high job context stress. For example, Human Rights Watch (2010) reported that, as at 2008, the population of the Nigeria police was estimated at 311, 675. In line with the United Nations' recommendation of 1 police to 400 persons, Osuji (2012) submitted that Nigeria police had a short-fall of about 70,600 going by the number of personnel available for securing the lives and property of the ordinary citizens. According to him, about 5,600 police personnel were attached to high profile political office holders and influential personalities who constituted a small percentage of Nigeria's over 150,000,000 people. This negative imbalance in the ratio of police to the Nigerian population could be an additional source of stress. Roberts and Levenson (2001) opined that labour shortages could be an important source of job stress in police personnel because the lacuna created by the shortage of manpower may result in work over-load for the remaining employees (Ogungbamila, 2013).

Drawing from the person-environment fit theory, Shane (2010) submitted that job stress results when employees perceive that the person-environment relationship is exceeding or taxing their personal resources and endangering their well-being. Police personnel often exercise little control and autonomy in their highly demanding job. This may be due to the authoritarian, quasi-military structure and bureaucratic nature of their job, which fails to recognize the autonomy and decision latitude of the individuals (Brown, 1996; Shane, 2010). In a study that applied the job control and resource conservation models of the person-environment fit theory, Neveu (2007) reported that job involvement provided a buffer against job stressors.

It is also possible that when police personnel perceive that the job environment constitutes stress, they may react with low job involvement in order to reduce the level of contact with the job; thereby reducing the stress that could emanate from the job. This may be because the exposure to job stress in the long run could have a negative feedback on and weaken the psychological bond between the employee and the job (Paoline & Lambert, 2011).

Perceived organizational support and job involvement

Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which employees form general impressions that their organization and its agents (superior officers) value their contributions, are supportive, and care about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Due to the co-dependence nature of police work, police personnel often attach great importance to the knowledge, wisdom, and support of superior officers and colleagues for safety and psychological support, especially in the face of negative situations from the content and context of the job (Shane, 2010).

According to the social exchange theory, employees may be motivated to reciprocate perceived organizational support with positive behaviours towards the organization that values and cares about them (Treadway, Hochwater, Ferris, Kacmar, Douglas, Ammeter & Buckley, 2004). Perceived organizational support may help ameliorate the effects of job stress; thereby enhancing the loyalty of police personnel to their organization and increase their involvement with their job. This may be because employees' perception of qualitative support from the organization may indirectly provide a positive feedback, which elicits positive emotions.

For example, in a meta-analysis, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) showed that employees, who perceived high level organizational support, were more likely to experience positive affect than those who perceived low organizational support.

The employees may extend the positive affects to the organization, other organization members, and the job generally. Cole, Bruch, and Vogel (2006) reported that perceived organizational support was associated with reduced job cynicism (psychological distance from the ones' job). This implies that perceived organizational support could enhance the psychological bond between police personnel and their job. Against this background, it was hypothesized as follows:

Hypothesis 1: *Job stress will negatively predict job involvement.*

Hypothesis 2: *Perceived organizational support will positively predict job involvement.*

Hypothesis 3: *Perceived organizational support will reduce the connection between job stress and job involvement.*

Method

Participants and procedure

Written permission was obtained from the Divisional Police Officer in charge of each of the 5 selected Divisions (the specific locations of the selected Divisions were not reported in order to conceal the identities of the participants). The participants were sampled from their place of work or duty post using accidental sampling technique. This was because the nature of their duty and security situation in the country did not favor a more rigorous sampling technique.

The participants were informed that participation in the study was purely voluntary, which implied that they were free to discontinue with the study whenever they felt so. Two hundred and ninety four questionnaires were distributed and 272 were retrieved. This yielded a response rate of 92.5%. Out of the retrieved questionnaires, 268 were duly completed and found usable. Data collection spanned seven weeks.

Sample comprised 268 police personnel (154 males; 114 females) from 15 Police Divisions in southwestern Nigeria. Their ages ranged between 18 and 57 years with a mean age of 34.26 years (SD = 8.57). They had spent an average of 8.09 years on the job (SD = 6.96). In the case of job level, 116 (43.3%) were at the junior level, 77 (28.7%) were at the intermediate level, and 75(28%) were at the senior level.

The participants also indicated their marital status. Responses indicated 107 (39.9%) of the respondents were single and 161 (60.1%) were married. They were asked to indicate their highest academic qualification. Their responses showed

that 69 (25.7%) had up to O'Level Certificate, 106 (39.7%) held National Certificate in Education or Ordinary National Diploma, 88 (32.8%) held first degree or Higher National Diploma, and 5 (1.9%) held postgraduate degree. In the case of religious affiliation, 183 (68.3%) reported that they were affiliated to Christianity, 78 (29.1%) were affiliated to Islam and 7 (2.6%) were affiliated to traditional religion.

Measures

Job stress was measured using De Bruin's (2006) General Work Stress Scale (GWSS). GWSS was a 9-item scale that assesses the emotional, cognitive, motivational and social consequences of the interaction between an employee and the perceived demands of the workplace. It was rated on a 5-point scale (1= Never; 5= Always). Sample item included: "Does work make you so stressed that you find it hard to concentrate on your tasks?" De Bruin (2006) reported Cronbach's alpha of .89 and .88 for the two groups tested. Previous studies (e.g. De Bruin & Taylor, 2006a) indicated strong relationships between scores on the GWSS and a variety of job stressors (such as excessive workload, role ambiguity and poor interpersonal relations). In the present study, a .89 Cronbach's alpha was obtained. According to De Bruin (2006), employees who obtained high scores on GWSS experienced high levels of work stress, whereas those who obtained low scores experienced low levels of work stress.

Perceived organizational support was measured using Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-Lamastro's (1990) Perceived Organizational Support Scale (SPOS). It was a 16-item instrument rated on a 7-point scale (0 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree). SPOS assessed the extent to which employees felt the organization contributed to the achievement of their goals and aspirations as well as how the organization values their contributions to its well-being. Sample items included: "My organization values my contribution to its well-being" and "Help is available from my organization when I have a problem". Eisenberger et al (1990) reported .95 Cronbach's alpha for the scale. In the present study, the scale had a .71 Cronbach's alpha. High score on the scale indicated that the employees felt the highly supported and valued their contribution.

Job involvement was measured using Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) Job Involvement Scale (JIS). It was a 20-item scale designed to measure the extent to which employees were attached to or engrossed in their jobs. JIS was rated on a 4-point scale (4 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). Sample items included: "I'll stay overtime to finish a job, even if I'm not paid for it" and "I usually show up for work a little early to get things ready". Lodahl and Kejner (1965) obtained 72-day test re-test reliability coefficient of .90 for the scale. In the present study, a .77 Cronbach's alpha was obtained. High score indicated that the employees were

highly engrossed in their jobs.

Analysis and Results

Demographic and inter-variable correlations

Gender and marital status were treated as dummy variables. Male was coded 0 while female was called 1. In the case of marital status, single was coded 0 and married was coded 1. Religious affiliation was coded as follows: Christianity = 1, Islam = 2 and Traditional affiliation = 3. Job tenure was coded junior level 1, intermediate level 2, and senior level 3. For academic qualification, Up to O'Level was coded 1, National Certificate in Education or Ordinary National Diploma was coded 2, first degree or Higher National Diploma was coded 3, and postgraduate degree was coded 4. Table 1 shows the results of the descriptive and inter-variable correlations.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Inter-variable Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	34.40	9.42	1									
2. Gender	-	-	-.13*	1								
3. Marital status	-	-	.49**	.01	1							
4. Academic qualification	-	-	.19**	-.13*	.18**	1						
5. Religious affiliation	-	-	.06	-.10	.04	.08	1					
6. Job level	-	-	.37**	-.18**	.27**	.27**	.01	1				
7. Job tenure	8.09	6.96	.71**	-.13*	.46**	.20**	.02	.40**	1			
8. Job stress	28.09	11.02	-.05	-.02	.04	-.01	.09	-.01	-.09	1		
9. Perceived organizational support	47.19	11.28	-.11	.08	-.12*	-.09	-.09	-.12*	-.01	-.20**	1	
10. Job involvement	47.71	6.36	.00	-.03	-.00	.01	-.14*	-.01	.11	-.24**	.28**	1

Note: ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. N = 268.

As indicated in Table 1, job stress had a significant relationship with job involvement, such that police personnel who reported job stress tended to exhibit low level of involvement [$r(266) = .24, p < .01$]. Perceived organizational support had a significant relationship with employees' level of job involvement [$r(266) = .28, p < .01$]. This implied that police personnel who felt supported by their organization were also involved with their jobs.

Test of hypotheses

A 3-step hierarchical regression was performed to test the independent and interaction effects of job stress and perceived organizational support on job involvement. In model 1, the demographic variables were entered. The two independent variables (job stress and perceived organizational support) were entered in model 2. In model 3, perceived organizational support was added to model connecting job stress and job involvement. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Job Involvement

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Demographic variables</i>	β	β	β
1. Age	-.12	-.09	-.10
2. Gender	-.03	-.05	-.10
3. Marital status	-.03	.02	.01
4. Academic qualification	.01	.02	.02
5. Religious affiliation	-.15*	-.11	-.11
6. Job level	-.05	-.03	-.03
7. Job tenure	.22**	.15	.17
<i>Predictors</i>			
Job stress		-.18**	-.49*
Perceived org. support		.23**	.15
Job stress x Perceived org. support			.07
<i>R</i>	.21	.37	.38
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.02	.11	.11
ΔR^2	.04	.09	.01
<i>F</i>	1.77 (<i>df</i> = 7,259)	4.53 (<i>df</i> = 9,257)	4.22 (<i>df</i> = 10, 256)
ΔF	1.72	13.77**	1.42

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. $N = 268$.

Results in Table 2 indicated that only two of the demographic variables (religious affiliation and job tenure) exerted some influence on employees' job involvement. Religious affiliation significantly predicted job involvement among police personnel such that employees who were affiliated to Christianity tended to be more involved with their job than employees who reported other forms of religious affiliation [$\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$]. Job tenure significantly predicted employees' level of involvement with their jobs in such a way that the more the number of years police personnel spent on their job the more the level of job involvement they reported [$\beta = .22$, $p < .01$].

As shown in Table 2, job stress significantly predicted job involvement such that employees who felt stressed were lowly involved with their jobs [$\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$]. This implied that when police personnel felt stressed by the activities of the organization and other organization members, the tendency of being attached to or engrossed in their jobs decreased.

The results in Table 2 indicated that perceived organizational support significantly predicted the level of employees' involvement with their job [$\beta = .23$, $p < .01$]. The implication was that police personnel who felt supported by the

organization showed more psychological attachment to or were engrossed in their job.

Lastly, perceived organizational support reduced the effects of job stress on employees' job involvement level [$\beta = .07, p > .05; \Delta R^2 = .01$]. This confirmed the proposition of hypothesis 3, which expected perceived organizational support to reduce the level at which job stress predicted job involvement.

Discussion, Limitation, and Conclusion

This study investigated the extent to which job stress and perceived organizational support predicted the level at which police personnel were psychologically attached to or engrossed in their job.

True to the prediction of hypothesis 1, job stress negatively predicted job involvement. This implied that police personnel would be involved with their job when the level of stress is low. Though some level of stress may be necessary for job involvement (Neveu, 2007), high level of stress might have adversely affected the psychological bond between the employees and their job. The results of the present study, therefore, negated the findings of Neveu (2007).

Paoline and Lambert's (2011) submission that exposure to high job stress in the long run could provide a negative feedback on and weaken the psychological bond between the employee and the job, has been supported by the results of the present study. According to the person-environment fit theory, in a bid to reduce the stress emanating from their job, the police personnel who perceived that the job environment constituted stress, might have react with low job involvement in order to reduce the level of contact with the job.

As the results of this study have indicated, job involvement of police personnel in Nigeria could be enhanced if organizational and operational stressors (Shane, 2010), which adversely affect their well-being and efficiency are reduced. Such stressors may include insufficient training and equipment, low organizational capacity, labour shortages, unfriendly administrative policies, practice, and procedures as well as the physical and psychological risks and demands of the job. When these stressors are reduced, the psychological bond between police personnel and their job could be heightened because they would not evaluate the job and its environment as threats to the their well-being.

The hypothesis on perceived organizational support and job involvement was also supported. As predicted, police personnel, who felt supported by their organization, tended to be more involved with their job. This finding confirmed results of previous studies on the connection between perceived organizational

support and job involvement. For example, Cole, et al (2006) found that perceived organizational support was associated with reduced psychological distance from ones job. In such case, police personnel might have felt obliged to reciprocate the support enjoyed from the organization with high job involvement.

Policing in Nigeria, may be particularly risky going by the acute shortage of police personnel, inadequate training and equipment, and low public image in relation to the huge population and the recent security challenges (Osuji, 2012). It is not surprising that police personnel in Nigeria attached high value to the support from the organization and colleagues, because (Shane, 2010) submitted that police personnel rely heavily on others for safety and psychological support, especially when faced with negative situations from the content and context of the job. As postulated in the social exchange theory, the police personnel might have interpreted support as an indication that job environment provided care for and guaranteed their well-being; and were therefore, motivated to reciprocate with high job involvement (Treadway et al., 2004).

Lastly, it was hypothesized that perceived organizational support would reduce the connection between job stress and job involvement. This hypothesis was confirmed. When perceived organizational support was added to the model connecting job stress and job involvement, job stress only accounted for 1% changes in the level of job involvement; compared with 3% changes before perceived organizational support was added. This implied that, in spite of their strenuous job, police personnel who enjoyed the support of the organization and other organization members, tended to be involved with their job.

The major contribution of the present study is the synergy it provided between the person-environment fit and social exchange theories in explaining the connections among job stress, perceived organizational support and job involvement. This has shown that the employees evaluate not only their relationships with their job environment but also the quality of social exchange between them and such environment. The qualitative social exchange could culminate in psychological bond with the job that facilitated such exchange, in spite of the stressful organizational and operational situations on the job.

This study was not without some short-comings. The study only investigated the global effects of job stress and organizational support on job involvement. There is a need to study the individual contributions of organizational and operational stress as well as organizational and co-worker support in order to have a fine-grain knowledge of their connections with job involvement.

Apart from that, data were collected from 15 out of the 1,129 police divisions in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Therefore, results should be generalized with caution. Future study should cover more police divisions.

Finally, the present study only focused on some antecedents of job involvement among police personnel in Nigeria. It may be more beneficial if future studies examined the consequences vis-à-vis the antecedents of job involvement among police personnel in Nigeria. This would enhance the application of the synergy between person-environment fit and social exchange theories to explaining job to involvement among the Nigeria police.

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