

## Effect of Gender and Status on Job Stress among Police Officers in Ekiti State of Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study was carried out to measure the effect of gender and status on job stress among Police Officers in Ekiti State of Nigeria. One hundred and fifty-three police officers randomly selected from Ekiti State Police Command participated in the study. The participants were made up of both senior and junior police officers between the age of 25 and 55 years. Using the t-test for independent groups to test the two hypotheses for this study, results shows that female police officers experience a higher significant stress level than their male counterparts. Results also revealed that senior police officers do not experience more stress level than junior police officers. Recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.*

### Introduction

Stress is a critical factor in determining individual's health and well-being. It is a phenomenon that has generated a lot of researches mostly as a result of its negative perception and its bio-medical effect on human behavioral manifestation. Stress has been described as a bio-chemical and behavior reaction associated with fight or flight response, characteristics of the primitive cavemen as evident in his life when confronted with life threatening events. Scientifically, it has been used as a psychological precursor of illness consequent of number of conditions or as a catchall for anxiety, discomfort, and the likes.

Stress is defined as the individual's response to circumstances and events called stressors which threatens them and tax their coping abilities (Locke & Taylor, 1990), the non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it (Sutton & Khan, 1984), lack of fit between the needs and abilities of individuals on one hand and the supplies or demands of the environment on the other (Watson & Penne baker, 1989), and an adaptive response in reaction to external events or situations that place extreme psychological and physical demands on the individual (Cooper & Marshall, 1976).

Personality has been identified as one of the numerous factors in response to job stressors, and it is the most overly anxious people who are susceptible to their effect (Locke & Taylor, 1990). It appears however, that the single factor most likely to lead to job stress is a poor fit between the person and the job environment (Horowitz, 1979). Stress level varies between jobs. Studies have shown that substantial stress is obtainable from teaching as compared with what is obtainable by construction workers (Sutton & Khan, 1984). Organizational factors such as job security, shift work, long work hours, role conflict, physical hazard, exposure and interpersonal conflicts with co-

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workers or supervisors contribute to increased stress levels. Reciprocally, elevated stress levels in an organization are associated with increased turnover, absenteeism, sickness, low productivity and low morale. Work stressors are related to depression, anxiety, general mental distress, heart disease, ulcer and chronic pain (Hayness & Fenilabib, 1980).

Psychological stressors produce altered measurements of various bodily chemical hormones, blood pressure as well as altered level of anxiety (Cooper & Marshall, 1976), and childhood stresses and experiences has a degree of relevant of stress in adult roles set (Lazarus, 1991). Personality moderates the relationship between role stressor and satisfaction to the extent that negative impact of role stressor is relatively less pronounced when ability is high (Horowitz, 1979). Abdul-Halim (1978) found that stressors tend to be more aversive for individuals in low-enriched jobs than in high-enriched jobs. In a review of studies in psychopathology, Levi (1989) reported that women had higher rates of nervousness while men had consistent high rate of personality disorder caused by stressors. In comparing men and women at similar occupational levels, Compos and Williams (1990) found that women reported more symptoms of stress than men (such as feeling of depression, nightmares, and feeling of overwhelm).

### **Hypotheses**

1. Female police officers will experience a higher significant level of job stress than their male counterparts.
2. Senior police officers will experience more stress on the job than junior police officers.

### **Research Methods**

#### *Research Design*

The research design used for this study is survey research design with the use of questionnaire. Gender and job status are the independent variables while job stress is the dependent variable.

#### *Research Participants*

One hundred and fifty-three randomly selected police officers participated in the study. They consist of fifty senior and one hundred and three junior officers, out of which fifty-six were female and ninety-seven were male. Their age ranges between 25 and 55 years. They were selected from the Ekiti State Police Command in Nigeria.

### *Research Instruments*

The instrument used to generate data from the participants is a 15-item questionnaire tagged Job Tension (JT) developed by Khan, Wolfe, Quinny, and Snoeck (1964). It has alpha reliability coefficients of .87 (Sheridon, et al, 1978) and .39 (Oseghare, 1988), and a concurrent validity coefficient of .01 (Sheridon, et al, 1978).

### *Procedure for Data Collection*

The consent of the selected participants was received before distributing the instruments to them. Equally, verbal permission was granted by the sectional heads of the organization before embarking on the instrument distribution. The participants returned the instrument safe for analysis.

### *Statistical analysis*

The individual participant's scores were analyzed using the t-test for independent groups, a commonly used statistical method in the behavioral sciences.

### **Results**

The results of the data analyzed are presented in Table form as follows:

**Table 1: Summary table of t-test showing the comparison of the scores of female and male police officers in Ekiti State**

Participants	N	X	SD	Df	t-critical	t-computed	p
Female police officers	56	42.48	7.804	151	1.645	3.205	>.05
Male police officers	97	38.02	8.824				

t(151) =3.205, p>.05

Source: Author's Survey

Result as shown in Table 1 revealed that female police officers experience significant high level of stress than their male counterparts. Hypothesis 1 is therefore accepted.

**Table 2: Summary table of t-test showing the comparison of the scores of senior and junior police officers in Ekiti State.**

Participants	N	X	SD	df	t-critical	t-computed	P
Senior police officers	50	40.26	9.558	151	1.645	0.607	>.05
Junior police officers	103	39.35	8.415				

t(151) = 0.607, p < .05

Source: Author's Survey

From Table 2, result shows that senior police officers do not experience more job stress than the junior ones. Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected.

### Discussion

This study set out to examine two hypotheses. The first was female police officers will experience a higher significant level of job stress than their male counterparts, and the second hypothesis was senior police officers will experience more stress on the job than junior police officers. Findings from this study show that female police officers experience high significant stress level than the male police officers. The plausible explanation of this finding could be attributed to the cultural values of the Nigerian society. The female population has a lot of responsibilities to carry out such as taking good care of the home and children, exchanging family visitation and engaging in series of social gatherings. The male population on the other hand is considered to be the breadwinner of the family whose responsibility is just to release fund for the attainment of physiological needs of the family. However, the responsibilities of the female population as a result of cultural values and societal expectations have negative effect on their physical well-being and coping mechanisms on the job. They usually have very little time to ease their pent-up tension that they have been keeping or harboring from their workplace. This finding is in consonance with the previous findings of Compos and Williams (1990) who found that women reported more symptoms of stress than men.

Furthermore, the result of this study revealed that senior police officers do not experience more stress on the job than the junior police officers. This suggests that status on the job has no

significant effect on the stress experienced by both the senior and junior police officers. The plausible explanation of this is that every job activities have its attached stressors, which the workers performing that work activities will have to experience. These job stressors are present in all work activities.

## Conclusion

Result of this study indicated that female police officers experienced a significant higher job stress than their male counterparts. It was also found in this study that senior police officers does not experience more stress on the job than the junior officers.

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