

## **GENDER AND JOB STRESS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN RIVERS STATE**

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**Abstract:** This study examined Gender and Job Stress on the Psychological Wellbeing of Civil Servant in Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research was adopted. The population comprised 7500 civil servants working in the various ministries in Rivers State. The sample size of 400 male civil servants and 350 female civil servants formed 10% of 7500 civil servants working in the various ministries in Rivers State. A simple random sampling was used to obtain the sample size which served as the respondents. Data was collected through a self-designed instrument titled: Gender and Job Stress on Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (GJSPWQ)' designed by the researcher after the modified Likert scale mode. Research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) while the hypotheses were tested by finding the significance of r. This was achieved by converting calculated value of r (r-cal) to t-test statistics. The calculated value of t. was compared with the critical value of t at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed the correlation coefficient between gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants indicated that all the items were sources of stress to civil servant, gender plays a major role in sources of stress. The study concluded that gender and factors that cause job-stress on psychological well-being, there is significant relationship. In terms of managing stress, there is a relationship exists between gender and ways to improve psychological well-being.

**Keyword:** Gender, Job stress, Psychology, civil servants, Rivers State.

### **Introduction**

Stress is one of the most fundamental problems spanning through human endeavour. Nweze (2005) stated that for two and half decades, stress phenomenon has become a topical issue in management development, seminars and workshops in Nigeria. He further stated that the popularity of stress stems from a number of obvious reasons. First, nobody is immuned to stress. We can be caught up in a situation that causes or induces stress in the individual. Thus as a part of human living the young, old, rich, poor, professionals and lay men alike are potential

victims of stress. Second, because stress is viewed as the disease of growth and development, there is the search for the stress virtue in modern life. Nweze (2005) further stated that our traditional mechanisms of handling the stresses and strains of living are fast breaking down. This is being precipitated by the factor of rapid urban development, increasing corporate regimentation of work life, breakdown of social supports, increasing personal and group conflicts, including security threats to life and property. Stress has become part and parcel of life in human societies. The frustrations, disappointments and pressures of daily life constitute the genesis of stress. Stress has been conceptualised in many ways.

Oboegbulem (1995) defined stress as a feeling which occurs when an individual's working or living conditions or circumstances make demands beyond his capacity to handle such a situation physically or emotionally. When a person is faced with disturbing situations, a change in his normal behaviour is usually noticeable. Such an individual may be faced with emotional, cognitive and physiological disruption or malfunctioning which can disorganise and adversely affect his powers of reasoning.

Halgin and Whitbourne (2003) conceptualized stress as an unpleasant emotional reaction a person has when he or she perceives an event to be threatening. They stated that this emotional reaction may include heightened physiological arousal due to increased reactivity of the sympathetic nervous system. The stressor is the event itself, which is also called a stressful life event. In the context of this work stress refers to a condition or situation in the body that makes people prone to anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, inadequacy and low frustration tolerance (Wai, 2003). Hornby (2004) described anxiety as a state of feeling nervous or worried; depression as a state of feeling very sad and without hope; anger as a strong feeling you have when something has happened that you think is bad and unfair; hostility is an unfriendly or aggressive feeling or behaviour; inadequacy as a state of not being able to deal with a situation; and frustration as arising when something is preventing somebody from succeeding. Every health problem that does not have a permanent cure can be managed like stress.

Gender plays a role in handling of stress. Sukhadeepak (2006) stated that women are more adept at handling stress because of coping mechanisms. Men seem to be more stress prone since they are more likely to get into other things that add to stress such as alcoholism, smoking and so on. He added that while women are better equipped to deal with emotional issues, men find it difficult to express anxiety and sorrow.

A growing body of research on occupational behavior and health has identified job stress to be one of the most common health issues in many organizations in globally and Stress has been defined as a condition or feeling experienced when an individual perceives that demands exceed his personal and social resources he can mobilize. Stress at any workplace appears to be inevitable, irrespective of the work nature. While a little stress could be performance-boosting (eustress), stress beyond control (distress) can bring adverse effect on work performance and to the individual itself. Conventionally stress is looked upon as excessive workload, but not all people with excess workload may have stress. Job stress is also a harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury whereas health is the level of functional or metabolic efficiency of a living being. In humans, it is the general condition of a person's mind, body and spirit, usually meaning to be free from illness, injury or pain. According to World Health Organization (1946), health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. As life goes on, humans experience difficulties in trying to keep up with good health conditions. Human problems arise when the physical, mental, emotional and social well-being are tampered with and which can lead the individual to live unfulfilled life.

However, one of the health problems that face human beings is depression. Depression has been observed to retard the psychological well-being of people.

The environmental perspective for the higher rates of depression in women than in men is based on the assumption that women experience more stressors in their lives than men (Morgan, 2001). Women are more oppressed across the world. If women in some societies were to share equal roles to men in their societies and still displayed twice rate of depression as men, it would be able to say comfortably that biology plays a major role in accounting for sex differences.

Job stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress matters to our health and our work. When we feel stressed, our bodies respond by raising the concentration of stress hormones in our blood. When our bodies continually respond to constant demands or threats, coping mechanisms stay in overdrive, which can be damaging to health over time. Stressful working conditions can also impact health indirectly by limiting our ability or motivation to participate in other health promoting behaviors such as eating well and exercising. Job stress is one of the most important consequences of health and work life in today's complex world and has been considered as one of the most devastating factors in comparison with human resources threats. A number of people have the ability to prevent and deal with it. Stress is a multidimensional factor (job stress, mental stress, and exhaustion) that can affect a variety of aspects of individual performance. Among the physical, chemical, ergonomic and biological threats, is the fifth major hazard in workplaces, some of whose organizational behavior is called job stress as the century's illness (Jandagi, 2011).

Psychological wellbeing of employees has continued to receive increased research attention among scholars. This may be because an employee who is not mentally or physically fit at work would contribute negatively to the workplace which in the long run affects the productivity of the organization. According to Diener (1997) psychological well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives in terms of cognition, emotion or feelings. It expresses the frequency with which people experience pleasant or unpleasant moods and emotions, which have a positive or negative effect. Thus, people experience level of subjective wellbeing even if they do not often consciously think about it, and the psychological system offers virtually a constant evaluation of what is happening to them. Psychological well-being can also be defined in terms of internal experience of the respondents and perception of their lives (Harter, Schmidt & Keyes, 2002).

Psychological well-being (PWB) is defined as one's level of psychological happiness/health, encompassing life satisfaction, and feelings of accomplishment. At the risk of being dualistic and separating physical well-being from PWB, it is helpful to note that physical well-being encompasses physical health, including disease states, fitness level, and ability to perform activities of daily living. PWB encompasses the person's perspective on life, including not only perceptions of physical health but also of self-esteem, self-efficacy, relationships with others, and satisfaction with life. Focht (2012) noted the connections of PWB to health-related quality of life. A "sound mind" can be examined from a number of perspectives within an exercise and sport psychology framework: assessment of physical capabilities, including fitness; social relationships; level of athletic or exercise identity the balance in life across a variety of domains, including social, work or academic, and spiritual; and feelings of accomplishment and progress toward attainment of an individual's potential.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Civil servants with job stress experience impaired physical and mental functioning, increased absenteeism, accidents, litigation, errors of judgement and action, conflict and interpersonal problems, violence and a high use of health care services. Often people in caring professions handle human problems at the expense of losing their own psychological balance. Women may more likely be vulnerable to health challenges arising from stress on the job. This may be so because they experience work conflicts in trying to create a balance between the home front and the work place, inclusive of child care issues.

Civil servants like every professional have a lot of responsibilities that are related to their profession, these include; advises and supports the government in delivering policies and public services. Civil servants also need to grow in their chosen profession so they need to attend conferences and workshops both locally and internationally. They are expected to do a lot of a methodical approach to work and a great attention to detail, comfortable handling confidential information responsibly, and the ability to follow procedure. Coupled with these, there are mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, grandfathers, grandmothers, aunties, and uncles, who are to carry out their family responsibilities. In a bid to handle all these responsibilities, there may be deficiencies while carrying out their jobs like not keeping appointments with their supervisees and being short tempered when relating with the public. Therefore, the researcher will examine if these could be connected to gender and job stress on the psychological well-being of civil service in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be formulated to guide the study:

1. What are relationships between gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants in Rivers State?
2. What are the relationships gender and job-stress management strategies on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State?
3. What are relationships between gender and ways of improving job-stress on psychological well-being among civil servants in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

The following null hypotheses will be formulated and tested for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no relationship between gender and general sources of job-stress on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State.
2. There is no relationship between gender and strategies adopted to manage job-stress by civil servants in Rivers State.
3. There is no relationship between gender and ways of improving psychological well-being among civil servant in Rivers State

### **Significance of the Study**

The study will be considered significant in many ways. For example, the study will provide information on the sources of stress to civil servant in Rivers State The information will be useful to the all Ministries who are employers of civil servants may use the information to address the areas where stress emanates as this will help improve civil servant productivity.

Employee psychological well-being is considered essential for employee affective commitment and employee job performance because an employee with greater well-being is more committed to his or her work and

organization and tend to be a better performer. This study will be useful to the Government, policy makers especially Labour Congress. The Psychologist will not be left out because the study will help give counsel to the depressed and frustrated civil servants to enable them stay afloat to deliver their given duties diligently. The study will also help directors and managers of civil servants establish programmes, trainings and policies will empower women towards increasing the self-sufficiency and boosting the self-esteem of workers to able to face the difficulties associated with job. The study will also generate information on the different preferred stress management strategies adopted by gender. This will reveal the attitudes that do not agree with stress management strategies employed by different sex. The health educator will use the result to counsel whichever sex that is affected by any undesirable stress management strategies.

The revelation may be useful to voluntary organizations in organizing programmes that will focus on different age group on stress management strategies.

**Methodology**

The study adopted a correlational design. The population for the study comprised 7500 civil servants working in the various ministries in Rivers State. The sample size of the study comprised 750 which was 10% of 7500 male and female civil servants in Rivers State. The sample size of 400 male civil servants and 350 female civil servants formed 10% of 7500 civil servants working in the various ministries in Rivers State. A simple random sampling was used to obtain the sample size which served as the respondents. Data was collected through a self-designed instrument titled: Gender and Job Stress on Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (GJSPWQ). The researcher presented the questionnaire to two experts in the Department of Psychology and one in the Department of Measurement and Evaluation to assess the face and content validity of the instrument. Observations, comments and corrections were used to improve the quality of the instrument to make it valid. The reliability of the instrument (questionnaire) was determined using Cronbach alpha correlation coefficients. Data collected were collated and subjected to statistical analysis. Research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The hypotheses were tested by finding the significance of r, at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results**

**Research Question 1.** What are relationships between gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants in Rivers State?

**Table 4.1: Relationships between gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants in Rivers State.**

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Gender (X)	750						
General sources of job-stress (Y)	750	251.83	249.33	788.19	770.30	742.65	-0.612

Source: Field data, 2022

The data presented in table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants in Rivers State is (r-cal = -0.612). This value shows that a negative and strong relationship exists between gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants in Rivers State. This implies that as the gender is so important when considering general sources of job-stress on psychological well-being.

**Research Question 2:** What are the relationships between gender and job-stress management strategies on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Relationship between gender and job-stress management strategies on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State**

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Gender (X)	750						
Job-stress management strategies (Y)	750	271.98	273.33	705.19	790.20	754.35	0.673

Source: Field data, 2022

The data presented in Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient between gender and job-stress management strategies on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State is (r-cal = 0.673). This value shows that a positive and strong relationship exists between gender and job-stress management strategies on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State. This implies that gender plays a very important role in job-stress management strategies on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State.

**Research Question 3:** What are relationships between gender and ways of improving job-stress on psychological well-being among civil servants in Rivers State?

**Table 3: Relationship between gender and ways of improving job-stress on psychological well-being among civil servants in Rivers State.**

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Gender (X)	750						
Ways of improving job-stress (Y)	750	241.00	249.33	725.56	770.30	736.69	0.543

Source: Field data, 2022

The data presented in table 4.5 shows that the correlation coefficient between gender and ways of improving job-stress on psychological well-being among civil servants in Rivers State is (r-cal = 0.543). This value shows that a positive and moderate relationship exists between gender and ways of improving job-stress on psychological well-being among civil servants in Rivers State. This implies that gender is taken into an account when considering ways of improving job-stress on psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State.

**Hypotheses of the Study**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no relationship between gender and general sources of job-stress on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between gender and general sources of job-stress on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State.**

Variables	N	df	r-cal	Sig. level	P-Value	Decision
Gender (X)	750					
General sources of job-stress (Y)	750	748	-0.612	0.05	0.000	Rejected

Source: Field data, 2022

The result in Table 4 shows that r-value of -0.612 at significant level of 0.05 yielded p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between gender and general sources of job-stress on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no relationship between gender and strategies adopted to manage job stress by civil servants in Rivers State.

**Table 5: Pearson Product Moment correlation between gender and strategies adopted to manage job-stress by civil servants in Rivers State.**

Variables	N	df	r-cal	Sig. level	P-Value	Decision
Gender (X)	750					
Strategies to Manage job-stress (Y)	750	748	0.673	0.05	0.000	Rejected

Source: Field data, 2021

The result in Table 5 shows that r-value of 0.673 at significant level of 0.05 yielded p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between gender and strategies adopted to manage job-stress by civil servants in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no relationship between gender and ways of improving psychological well-being among civil servant in Rivers State

**Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between gender and ways of improving psychological well-being among civil servant in Rivers State.**

Variables	N	df	r-cal	Sig. level	P-Value	Decision
Gender(X)	750					
Ways of Improving Psychological Well-being. (Y)	255	508	0.543	0.05	0.000	Rejected

Source: Field data, 2022

The result in Table 6 shows that r-value of 0.543 at significant level of 0.05 yielded p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a

significant relationship between gender and ways of improving psychological well-being among civil servant in Rivers State.

### Discussions

The findings revealed the correlation coefficient between gender and general sources of job-stress on psychological wellbeing of civil servants indicated that all the items were sources of stress to civil servant. The findings of the study whereby civil servant perceived the item “afraid of being fired at work is not surprising because no one wants to lose his or her job. This is one of the greatest things a civil servant fears and that is why they protect it so much. The findings further indicated that these items: “work more than 40 hours per a week”, “large span of control”, “too much work load requiring long hours of work”, “when a job is not well specified”, and “when a job is too difficult” were sources of stress to civil servants. This is not surprising because all these things are obtainable and could emanate from any type of job situation. This is in line with the findings of Ricciardi (2000) in which overwhelming job demands made civil servants’ job difficult. When this occurs, most civil servants might spend more time at work or bring work home. This in turn had a negative effect on their personal life and resulted in feelings of guilt for lack of time spent with family members and for their own health and wellbeing.

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