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Influence of Personality Characteristics on Psychological Distress

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Abstract: The research investigated the influence of Personality characteristics on Psychological Distress. Three hundred research participants were used in course of this study and two instruments were used which include Big five Personality Inventory which measures personality characteristics and Perceived Stress scale a measure of Psychological Distress. Two hypotheses were tested in the course of this study using Regression analysis and Independent t-test. Hypothesis one states that Personality characteristics will significantly influence Psychological Distress and it was reported from the result of the study that Personality characteristics do not influence Psychological Distress ($F(5, 294) = .975$ $p > .05$). Hypothesis two states that gender differences will influence Psychological Distress and it was reported from the table that there is no significant difference of gender on Psychological Distress ($t(298) = .75$ $p > .05$. The study was done to evaluate whether there sex differences and age could influence psychological distress among health workers. This study is to improve individual understanding on the role of personality characteristics and its detriment effect on psychological distress among health workers, it also unravel the danger in job insecurity, workload. Findings were discussed according to literatures. Relevant conclusions were drawn and it was recommended that government should encourage policy that will make life easier for her citizen.

Keywords: Personality Characteristics, Sex, Psychological Distress

1. Introduction

The demands and contents of person's job can be a job pressure in a positive (eustress) or negative (distress) manner to an individual. Furthermore, this can lead to work outcomes which include motivation / demotivation, satisfaction / dissatisfaction. [16] Stress the negative impact of cumulative burden of personality characteristics on occupational stress and health, e.g. cardio-vascular diseases, cerebral diseases and meningitis. It was observed that literatures on studies conducted in Nigeria relating job feedback, work autonomy and task importance on occupational stress are insufficient. Consequently, excessive amounts of stress can lead to lack of effectiveness, a loss of confidence, inability to perform routine tasks, increase mistakes and accidents at work; it can also encourage absenteeism, lower morale and expand conflict with others. Excessive amount of stress can also cause physical and emotional problems [13] Researchers have noted that the Nigerian socio – physical environment is destructed with occupational stress indicators [2]. Workers review to high occupational stress are health workers in Nigeria who must contend with a host of triggered factors, such as, excessive and unpredictable work schedule, low opinon latitude on the job; and increasing threats to physical safety, security and well-being. As observed [1], working in Nigeria hospitals carries an elevated risk for occupational stress. Apart from stress-inducing factors implied in health related jobs generally, health workers in the Nigeria must also contend with social and environmental factors such as COVID-19 concerns, decaying infrastructures (bad roads, for instance, making it difficult getting to work or getting back home on time, thereby constituting additional stress), relatively higher cost of living without a corresponding increase in take-home pay, among other factors. Studies have suggested that psychological distress should be studied

within the context of the individual's belief system, the organization in which he/she work, and the environment outside of the organization [7]. The present study attempts to enhance our understanding on implication of personality characteristics on psychological distress among health workers.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of personality characteristics on psychological distress. Other objectives are specifically to evaluate whether there sex differences and age could influence psychological distress among health workers.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study aims to improve individual understanding on the role of personality characteristics and its detriment effect on psychological distress among health workers. Also, this study will unravel the danger in job insecurity, workload, role conflict at work and occupational stress to the detriment of individual and society at large. Moreover, this study will add more to literature for future references. Also this study will recommend various psychological dimensions in ameliorating psychological stress among health workers.

2. Review

2.1. Hypotheses

Personality characteristics will significantly influence psychological distress.

Sex will significantly influence psychological distress among health workers.

2.2. Operational Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined as follows:

Psychological Distress: Psychological distress in this study was defined as the emotional condition that one feels when it is necessary to cope with upsetting, frustrating or harmful situations as a measure of General Health Questionnaire developed by Robinson and Price 1982.

Personality Characteristics: In this study, this refers to a distinctive pattern of behavior, mannerism, thoughts motive and emotions that characterizes an individual over time and across different situations as a measure of Big Five Personality Inventory developed by John, Donahue & Kentle [8].

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was survey research method using expo-facto studies where copies of questionnaires were distributed to research participants in such a way to measure their response.

3.2. Sampling Method and Techniques

The population of this study is Ekiti State University whereby 300 participants (undergraduate students) were involved in the study. Convenience sampling method techniques was adopted in selecting the research participants.

3.3. Research Instrument

3.3.1. Psychological Distress

Psychological Distress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein [3], a short (10-item) that tends to measure individual psychological distress. It was rated in a 5-point liker scale (0 = never, 1 = Almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often). It consists questions like; 'I do not feel sad'', 'my appetite is worse than before'', 'in the last month how often do I feel nervous and stressed. Cohen et al [3] provided the psychometric properties for the PSS is considered to be sound with a co-efficient alpha of 0.919 for the purpose of this research.

3.3.2. Big Five Inventory

The big five inventory is a 44 item inventory which assess personality from a five dimensional perspective. The essence of the view is that personality characteristics can be resolved into five broad dimensions which are distinct from one another. The five dimension or subscales are A extraversion B agreeableness C conscientiousness D neuroticism E openness to experience.

(i). Developer

John, Donahue & Kentle [8] provided the original psychometric properties for American samples while, Umeh [17] provided for Nigerian samples.

(ii). Norm

Table 1 shows the norms reported here are the mean scores of samples drawn from a population of university students.

Scale American (Male and Female) = 711;

Nigerian (male 60) and (female 60) = 120.

Table 1. *Sample.*

Extraversion	25.60	28.45	27.10
Agreeableness	34.20	29.75	28.73
Conscientiousness	32.40	29.10	29.60
Neuroticism	24.00	23.43	24.48
Openness to experience	35.00	38.07	35.18

(iii). Reliability

The co-efficient of reliability provided by john et al [8] are:

Type: Co-efficient;

Cronbach alpha: 80;

3 month test – re-test: 85.

(iv). Validity

The big five inventory has main convergent validity co-efficient of .75 and .85, with the big five instrument authored by Costa and Macrae [4]. The divergent validity co-efficient

obtained by Umeh [17] with the university maladjustment scale Kleinmuntz [11] are extraversion (.05), agreeableness (.13), conscienscious ness (.11), neuroticism (.39), openness to experience (.24).

(v). Interpretation

The Nigerian norms or mean scores are the basis for interpreting scores of the clients. Scores equal, to higher than the norms indicate that the clients manifest the precise personality type, while the scores lower indicate the client, does not manifest some specific personality type.

Procedure for Data collection: Copies of questionnaires were given to the research participants within the sample of the selected population and each measure are scored respectively following the direction of the measures of the scale used.

3.4. Statistical Analysis

Regression and Independent t-test were employed in the analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Neuroticism	300	38.5600	4.12429
Extraversion	300	20.3633	2.32580
Conscientiousness	300	18.3467	2.95561
Openness to Experience	300	30.5967	3.63566
Agreeableness	300	39.4367	3.42321
Psychological Distress	300	77.1900	7.13327
Valid N (list wise)	300		

Figure 1. *Descriptive statistics.*

4. Result

Table 2 Regression Summary Table showing the influence of Personality Characteristics on Psychological Distress.

Table 2. *Regression summary.*

	B	t	R^2	df	F
Neuroticism	-.009	$-.155^{ns}$	5		
Extraversion	-.010	$-.172^{ns}$			
Conscientiousness	.035	$.596^{ns}$	.016	294	$.975^{ns}$
Openness	.070	1.19*			
Agreeableness	.104	1.79*			

Note: ns=p> .05*=p< .05.

Table 2 indicated that Personality Characteristics does have a significant influence on Psychological Distress. (F (5, 294) = .975 p> .05). Neuroticism does not independently predict Psychological Distress (β= -.009 t= -.155 p> .05) and Extraversion does not independently predict Psychological Distress (β= -.010 t= -.172 p> .05). Also, Conscientiousness does not independently predict Psychological Distress (β= .035 t= .596 p> .05). Openness to experience significantly independently predict Psychological Distress (β= .070 t= 1.19 p< .05) and Agreeableness significantly predict Psychological Distress (β= .104 t= 1.79 p< .05).

Table 3 Independent t-test Summary Table showing the comparison between Male and Female Psychological Distress.

Table 3. *Independent t-test summary.*

DV	IV	N	Mean	df	T
Psycho Distress	Sex				
	Male	145	77.5	298	$.75^{ns}$
	Female	155	76.8		

Note: ns=p> .05.

Table 3 indicated that there is no significant difference between Male and Female Psychological Distress (t (298) = .75 p> .05) and the comparison of mean scores revealed that Male (N= 145 M=77.5) score higher on Psychological Distress than Female (N= 155 M = 76.8).

5. Discussion

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of Personality Characteristics on Psychological Distress. Two hypotheses were tested in this study using Regression analysis and Independent t-test. The result of the study revealed that Personality characteristics do not have a significant influence on Psychological Distress. Also, there is no significant difference in male and female score on Psychological Distress.

Hypothesis one states that Personality Characteristics will influence Psychological Distress and the result of the study revealed that Personality Characteristics does not influence Psychological Distress. Although, Agreeableness and Openness to experience influence Psychological Distress. This result is consistent with the work [6] who opined that individual who has higher level of experience at work often experienced distress. These sets of individual were given an enablement to respond to situation. The higher the responsibilities in the capacity of an individual, the more likely such person could be prone to psychological distress. For instance, there are some set of individual who find it so difficult to say No, this set tends of people tends to agree whatsoever that comes their way at the expense of their comfort. They tend to satisfy people and do not wish to offend anyone. These set of individuals are likely to be prone to psychological distress. Doing something out of comfort zone in an attempt to impress another person is distress.

Also, Khamisa, N. et al. (2015) [10] opined in his study

that individual with high level of openness to experience are likely to experience psychological distress. These set of individual tends to be innovative and open to new idea. These set of ideas needed time to materialize and processes to become a reality. In between the process of turning to reality, there are likely to be errors which may likely predispose such person to stress. This stress has a capacity of influencing the psychological well-being of such person. The moment an individual are prone to uncontrollable stress, there is high tendency of such person experiencing psychological distress.

Hypothesis two states that there will be a significant difference of Male and Female to Psychological Distress and it was observed from the result of the study that Male score higher on Psychological Distress than Female. This study supported the work [5] which revealed that men tend to experience more distress in life than women. This could be likely to the cultural labeled especially in Africa Context where men are expected to take certain responsibilities and also to meet societal demand. The looming consequences of inability to meet this demand could actually provoke psychological distress leading to mental instability. Also, men experienced psychological distress in all areas of life even the religious belief supported as it was argued by [12] that men will eat from the dust of his works, a man is expected to work in order to provide for the family needs. In our society today, there are lots of women who are not working and yet remain psychological stable but it's very rare in our society to see a man not working and yet look stable mentally and psychologically.

6. Conclusion

There is a need to provide psycho social intervention and guidance, counseling for reducing the psychological distress and to help improve healthy personality. The male experience more psychological distress than the female and it realizes that people that has openness to experience and agreeableness personality characteristics have more psychological distress than other personality characteristics. It is recommended that government should encourage policy that will make life easier for her citizen to ease psychological distress.

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