



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRESS AS PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG EMPLOYEES IN ENUGU METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence and stress as contributors of psychological wellbeing among employees in Enugu metropolis. One hundred and fifty-nine bank staff was purposively selected, having an average of 33.90 years and SD of 6.40 was enrolled in a cross-sectional survey. Also, three scales were employed in measuring study variables: The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10), Index of Psychological Well-being at Work (IPWBW) and Job Stress Scale. The data were analysed with multiple regressions statistics. In testing the two hypotheses, the first hypothesis which stated that emotional intelligence will significantly predict wellbeing such that employees with high emotional intelligence will report higher wellbeing than those with low emotional intelligence was accepted. However, the second hypothesis which stated that work stress will predict wellbeing was not confirmed. Findings informed study's conclusions, implications, and recommendations for policy implementations.

Keywords: Psychological wellbeing, employee stress, emotional intelligence, stability.

INTRODUCTION

Industries and organizations have become the deciding point for the growth and evolvement of any establishment as well the wellbeing of such workers in any of the organisations. The workplace has metamorphosised into where employees end up spending a greater percentage of their lives, build friendships, get and create value and meaningfully contribute to the society (Kundi et al., 2021).

However, the early and latter career stages of an individual's life may constitute challenging experiences which may endanger their psychological wellbeing (Price, 2015).

There is no one standard definition of psychological well-being; this is because, several scholars have attempted to define it based on their various orientations.

Notwithstanding, a critical assessment of available literature presented three main categories of psychological wellbeing: (a) that which examines employees' satisfaction level with the workplace, (b) that which assesses employee's physical wellbeing related to stress and accidents and (c) that which examines social wellbeing of employees (Grant et al., 2007). In addition, researchers have been able to empirically establish that happier employees perform better and in so doing are more productive than those who are not happy (See Chen & Cooper, 2014; Warr, 2012). Based on this, practical applications in organizations whose objectives are to improve the performance and output in the work context should be more concerned of workers' well-being.

One of the important variables of interest in the present study, emotional intelligence has garnered attention from different disciplines. Employees with good interpersonal skills should be seen as a valuable asset. However, most times, reverse is the case. Emotional intelligence has been defined by scholars in different ways but one is apt, which has to do with an individual's capacity to perceive emotions, regulate and manage those emotions credibly in a more constructive way (Mayer et al., 2000). Workers who have such trait do not only perform better at their workplace, but they also help to create an enabling environment for their colleagues in order to guarantee a positive workplace environment. Hence, the need in contemporary times to develop a

workforce that is emotionally intelligent and guarantee workplace success is now synonymous with psychological wellbeing. This probably has prompted Chhabra and Mohanty (2013) to assert that organizational success is closely linked to employees' with high emotional competencies as compared to people with lower emotional competencies.

Furthermore, another variable of interest in the current study is work stress. Stress as experienced at the work is defined as the physical and emotional responses which occur when workers abilities, resources, or needs do not align with work demands (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 1999). Every organization has as a matter of fact, stress as an impediment to job performance, depending on an individual's perception of the whole experience (Chhabra & Mohanty, 2013). When an individual's ability and skills are not commiserate with handling demands of a certain job, then that can be classified as work stress (Reed, 2013). Causes of stress at the workplace ranges from tight deadlines to lack of time, emotional pressures and anxieties amongst others. The advent of the 21st century brought with it, various challenging life situations that sometimes degenerate to negative physical and psychological symptoms among workers (Kazi et al., 2013). In a situation like this, the manner in which an employee can manage and direct their emotions has a great tendency of determining the progress or downturn trend of the particular organization. Based on the



foregoing, the present study attempts to explore emotional intelligence and stress as predictors of psychological well-being among employees in Enugu metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

In an organizational settings or environment, a lot of factors lead to the success or failure of the organization. The way and manner people respond to stressors at work and emotionally respond to their designated jobs is of great importance. Employee well-being has to do with the employer's responsibility of creating a workplace environment which promotes well-being of workers, through appropriate emotional intelligence and reduced stress, but most often this is not the case. The ability to be physiologically sound is highly connected to mental wellbeing; hence if a hypothetical worker is not mentally sound, he or she may not be fit to carry out their duties credibly. Coupled with the poor working conditions of Nigerian workers and poor minimum wage salary structure, little is left to be imagined with regards to the wellbeing of the average Nigerian worker. Again, increase in stress may bring about reduction and errors in performance that may negatively affect the growth of the organizations. Sometimes, workplace stress impinges on worker's family life because they do not in some cases have enough time to spend with their loved ones as a result of tough work schedule, thereby leaving the worker to be physically and psychologically exhausted. Again most of the related studies are foreign-based and as such

policies and generalizations may not apply to employees in Enugu State and by extension Nigeria. Hence, the need to explore wellbeing alongside emotional intelligence and work stress as predictors of psychological wellbeing among bank staff in the metropolitan city of Enugu.

Objectives of the Study

The umbrella objective of this research is to understand the role of emotional intelligence and stress on psychological well-being of employees. Specifically, this study sought to investigate the following:

1. To investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on employees' wellbeing in Enugu metropolis.
2. To explore the role of work stress on employee's psychological wellbeing in Enugu metropolis.

Literature Review

The Self Determination model (Ryan & Deci, 2000) offers a promising psychological theory of human wellbeing. The theory holds that going after aspirations with possibility of handling the three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness are not guarantees for psychological wellbeing (Ryan *et al.*, 2008). Autonomy represents of "a feeling of choice and genuineness relating to our thoughts and actions. Competence - meaning a sense of self-esteem and meaningful impact within one's immediate environment; while relatedness relates to proximity and caring about others. Also, evidence

indicates that positive employment relationships are related to psychological well-being. For instance, in a research conducted by Donald *et al.* (2005) in which 16,000 employees were studied, they found that 'higher employee productivity was associated with better psychological wellbeing'. Similarly, Robertson and Cooper (2011) opined and laid foundation on researches that establishes the connection between psychological wellbeing and job performance/productivity. Burrus *et al.* (2021) investigated emotional intelligence by recruiting 131 college students and showed that responses to the emotion management were strongly related to wellbeing. Going further, wellbeing has been found to intervene between work climate and workplace stress (Akbbolat *et al.*, 2022). And as cited by Shuang-Shuang and Hassan (2020) in Akanni *et al.* (2022), a systematic review involving twelve papers have confirmed the adverse association between nurses' stress levels and wellbeing (Fallahchai, 2021).

Pimple (2023) recruiting 120 female students in a non-probabilistic purposive sampling and a quasi-experimental design resulted to significant direct relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. Akanni *et al.* (2022) after recruiting 270 nurses indicated no interaction between work stress and wellbeing, but reported emotional intelligence as a significant predictor of psychological wellbeing. Research findings by Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) revealed that

worker's well-being affected their performance and productivity. Ifeagwazi *et al.* (2013) in examining stress reactivity recruited 221 students and found significant main effect of stress reactivity on neuroticism. Lastly, Bell *et al.* (2012) found that perceived work stress strongly and inversely correlated with work life balance.

Hypotheses

1. Workers with high emotional intelligence will report more and better psychological wellbeing than workers with low emotional intelligence.
2. Workers with lower work stress will report higher employee's wellbeing than workers with higher work stress.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized a cross-sectional design for this study. This is because the researchers wanted to understand how independent variables (emotional intelligence and work stress) can predict psychological wellbeing among employees in Enugu metropolis.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Enugu metropolis which is situated in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the study areas were different financial institutions in Enugu state.



Study Population

The target population for this study was employees in both private and public paid job in Enugu, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in one phase and purposive sampling technique was adopted in recruiting the participants. Purposive sampling as it is been called because was utilized and the main purpose was to sample bank staff and examine their responses regarding psychological wellbeing. Descriptive statistics revealed that males were 80 (50.3%), while females were 79 (49.7%). Marital status indicated that 80 (50.3%) were single, those married were 77 (48.7%), separated were 1 (0.6%) and those divorced were 1 (0.6%). Age of the participants were between 15-56 years. Religious status indicated that majority 156 (98.1%) were Christians, 2 (1.3%) were Muslims and 1 (0.6%) were traditionalist.

Instruments for Data Collection

Questionnaires were utilized for data collection and were part of the demographic features of participants such as gender, age and marital status. The main study scales include the Job Stress Scale, the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) and Inventory of Psychological Well-being Scale.

Work Stress:

For the current research to evaluate work stress, the job stress scale was utilized as developed by Jamal and Baba (1992) and

revalidated by Shukla and Srivastava (2016). The current version of job stress scale is a 9-item questionnaire. However, for the main study, Cronbach's alpha $r = 0.80$ was obtained indicating a high internal consistency. The norm of the scale was 23.58 which means that scores up to 23.58 and above can be categorized as high work stress and those with scores below the norm can be categorized as those with low work stress.

Emotional Intelligence:

Assessing emotional intelligence lead the researcher to employ the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) as developed by Davies *et al.* (2017). The BEIS-10 was used in this study to measure the capacity of workers to perceive, control and evaluate emotions. The items of BEIS-10 were rated on a 5-point format from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Also, Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.85 was obtained also indicating a very high internal consistency. This pilot study results also indicated that scores from 39.03 and above are believed to mean higher emotional intelligence and those with lower emotional intelligence.

Employee Wellbeing:

In other to measure employee's wellbeing, the Index of Psychological Well-being at Work (IPWBW) developed by Sandilya and Shahnawaz (2018) was employed. Summarily, the questionnaire was made up of 17 items with a five factor solution. Hence, the 5 factors are largely eudaimonic in nature, showing that people tend to see things

more from the work angle rather than just their personal well-being. A Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.93 was obtained in the main study indicating a very high internal consistency. The norm of this scale was 85.14.

Method of Data Analysis

Gathered data were statistically analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistical Package version 23. Further, descriptive statistics

was executed; while multiple regressions were utilized in testing the study's hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations: Institutional consent and ethical approval was obtained from the Enugu State College of Education's Research and Ethics Committee, and then informed consent of the participants was obtained from the participants before conducting the study.

Results

Table 1: Summary table of multiple regression analysis showing relative contributions of emotional intelligence and work stress on employee wellbeing among bank staff

Independent Variables	Beta β	T	Sig	R	R²	F	P
Emotional intelligence	.54	8.10	<0.05	0.514	0.296	32.83	<0.05
Work stress	-.02	-.28	>0.05				

Note - Dependent variable: Employee wellbeing; AR² = 0.287; N = 159

Hypothesis One: Workers with high emotional intelligence will report more and better psychological wellbeing than workers with low emotional intelligence.

The results presented in Table 1 indicates that emotional intelligence and work stress had a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.514 and correlation square (R²) of 0.296; which implies that 29.6% of the variance in employee wellbeing was explained by the predictor variables. Table 1 also revealed that emotional intelligence was an independent positive predictor of employee wellbeing (β = .54; t = 8.10; p<0.05). This means that higher emotional intelligence precipitated higher employee wellbeing and vice

versa. Therefore, the first hypothesis which states that workers with high emotional intelligence will report more and better psychological wellbeing than workers with low emotional intelligence was confirmed.

Hypothesis Two: Workers with lower work stress will report higher employee's wellbeing than workers with higher work stress.

From the regression analysis in the same Table 1 above, work stress did not predict of employee wellbeing (β = -.02; t = -.28; p>0.05). This implies that work stress do not have an independent influence or predict employee wellbeing. Therefore, the second hypothesis which stated



workers with lower work stress will report higher employee's wellbeing than workers with higher work stress was not accepted. More so, Table 3 showed significant joint prediction of emotional intelligence and work stress on psychological wellbeing $F(2, 156) = 32.83, p < 0.05$. This means that work stress can only influence employee wellbeing if it is able to interact with other variables such as emotional intelligence to predict employee wellbeing.

Discussion

The focus of the present study was to investigate employee wellbeing while exploring the influence of emotional intelligence and work stress among bank staff in Enugu. The first hypothesis which stated that workers with high emotional intelligence will report more and better psychological wellbeing than workers with low emotional intelligence was confirmed. This finding was in line with the study of Burrus *et al.* (2021) and Akbbolat *et al.* (2022) who showed that responses to the emotion management were strongly related to wellbeing. The finding is also consistent with Pimple (2023) whose research showed significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. This finding is also in line with Akanni *et al.* (2022) and Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) who at various times proved that emotional intelligence predicted wellbeing. An explanation could be that when an individual is able to know what to do and when to do it in an intelligent way, he or she may be able to avoid some

workplace stress and pitfalls that will promote their wellbeing eventually.

The second hypothesis which stated that workers with lower work stress will report higher employee's wellbeing than workers with higher work stress was not confirmed. This finding is in consonance with the work of Shuang-Shuang and Hassan (2020) as cited in Akanni *et al.* (2022) which confirmed negative empirical association existing between stress and wellbeing of nurses; and on the other hand, the finding is in line with the work of Fallahchai (2021) who found negative links of workplace stress on the adjustment and nurses' quality of life of nurses. An explanation of this finding is that the nature of work bankers are subjected to in some cases may cause anxiety and depressive states in them which in turn may make them to report less wellbeing.

Policy Implications

Based on the present finding, implication of this study is that emotional intelligence and work stress are keys to unlocking the psychological wellbeing among bank staff. An emotionally intelligent staff would generally exhibit positive attitude and experience wellbeing in the course of their career. Therefore, efforts geared toward developing psychological wellbeing among workers should be geared towards providing more information about ways in which employees can be able to be emotionally intelligent in all they do and find appropriate and healthy ways of reducing workplace stress that may counteract

their wellbeing and negatively influence the career path.

Limitations of the Study

In the process of carrying out this study, the following issues were observed, thereby serving as limitations of the study:

1. Recruiting only bank staff does not represent the population of financial institutions, and 159 sample size may not be sufficient to guarantee study's generalization.
2. The study was also limited by its cross-sectional design because causality cannot be ascertained whether workers were in the right frame of mind emotionally, medically and psychologically.
3. Another key limitation of this study is that the results may be susceptible to bias due to the type of questionnaires used which are largely self-report scales.
4. There were no qualitative or structured interviews that can help the researchers probe deeper into the dynamics of psychological wellbeing among bank staff in Nigeria.

Suggestions for Further Study

In view of the limitations, the following suggestions were made:

1. Further researchers should enroll workers from other financial institutions such as Insurance companies, Cooperative societies and other related institutions as well as recruiting more participants.

2. Also, future studies should consider employing longitudinal studies or other form of designs that can look at the research problem in another dimension.
3. Additionally, future studies should consider some form of incentives to motivate participants to participate fully in responding to the questionnaires so as to avoid research attrition.
4. Lastly, efforts should be made to try interviews or experimental studies that will better unravel the underlying factors responsible for inadequate wellbeing among workers in organizations.

Recommendations

In view of study findings and policy conclusion, the following recommendations were proffered:

- i. Implementing incentive programs for staff so as to motivate them to positively utilize their emotional intelligence.
- ii. Program interventions tailored towards reducing workplace stress and enhancing emotional intelligence among workers should be the priority or primary goal of managements of corporate organizations.
- iii. Staff inclusion in decision making and allowing them to say their mind when the need arises could be another way of improving psychological wellbeing among workers in this twenty first century.

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