

Predictive Role of Boredom Proneness and Self-Efficacy on Perceived Stress among Civil Servants Working from Home during COVID-19 Lockdown

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the predictive role of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants working from home during COVID-19 lockdown in Ibadan metropolis. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey using an anonymous online questionnaire to collect data from respondents. A snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit 206 participants (136 males and 70 females) with a mean age of 42.11 (SD of 4.12) recruited from Ibadan metropolis. Data were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis and t-test for independent sample. Result showed that boredom proneness and self-efficacy jointly predicted perceived stress ($R^2=0.21$, $F(2, 203) = 30.54$, $p < .01$). Finally, there was no gender difference in perceived stress among civil servants [$t(204) = -1.37$, $p > .05$]. Based on these findings, the study concluded that boredom proneness and self-efficacy are determinants of perceived stress among civil servants during COVID-19 lockdown. We therefore recommended that behavioural scientists should design intervention programme tailored toward reducing boredom proneness and boosting self-efficacy of all civil servants such that it will help reduce stress during and after COVID-19 lockdown.

Keywords: *Perceived stress, boredom proneness, self-efficacy, COVID-19*

The rampaging COVID-19 pandemic affected all spheres of life including workplace activities globally and in Nigeria. In a bid to curtail the spread of the virus, precautionary measures such as lockdown of public places were ordered by government at all levels. This means that civil servants especially the lower cadre were directed to work from home. The change in work environment predisposes many staff to perceived stress. Stress is the reaction of a person to events, and depending on how the individual reacts, it may be positive or negative. Stress also indicates the general wear and tear of body machinery, either physically or psychologically, as a result of the additional demands placed on it. A minimal level of stress is required for human being but when it is much it tends to affect individual overall functioning and wellness. Essentially, Willemen,

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Koot, Ferdinand and Goossens (2008) define perceived stress as an individual expression of difficulty in meeting demands within important life domains. During the COVID-19 lockdown many of the workers were faced with different form of stressor as a result of working from home. These stressors include but not limited to pressure meeting up work deadlines, communication gap, poor internet network, anxiety regarding COVID-19 new update as well as family responsibilities etc. cursory observation showed that these challenges contributed negatively to work commitment and job performance of civil servants during the pandemic. Studies such as (Colligan & Higgins 2005; Anderson & Puluch, 2001; Gosselin, Bourgault, & Lavoie 2016; Wang et al., 2015; Ashton, 2017) reported that work related stress have negative consequences in civil servants population, which includes lower productivity, increase absenteeism, poor employee wellbeing and cardiovascular disorders. Studies on perceived stress and its associated factors in developed world and in Nigeria have being documented in the literature (Nwimo & Onwunaka, 2015; Mansour & Mohanna, 2017; Jamal, Zahra, Yaseen, & Nasreen 2017; Bawo et.al 2017; Akinsulore, et.al 2020). However, this study is the first according to the researchers' knowledge to investigate the predictive role of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants working from home during COVID-19 lockdown.

Boredom proneness refer to unpleasant affective state in which individual feels a pervasive lack of interest in and difficulty concentrating on the current activity. The loss of interest and difficulty concentrating on work role at home could have predisposes many civil servants to have experience negative behaviour such as stress. Research has demonstrated that boredom relates to a variety of negative outcomes such as low effort and performance, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intentions, counterproductive work behaviour, stress and work injuries (Frone, 1998; Kass, Vodanovich, Stanny, & Taylor, 2001; Bruursema, Kessler, & Spector, 2011; Reijseger et al., 2013). Adeyemo and Agokei (2010) described self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to perform successfully. Fakeye (2010) also sees self-efficacy as the assumptions of individual in their own ability to perform a task. Self-efficacy can be classified as either high or low, according to Bandura (1997). Individual with high self-efficacy have the tendency to meets up challenges in life while low self-efficiency are individual who are unable to cope with the life challenges. They give up quickly in the face of difficulties as well as fall easily to stress and depression (Bandura, 2000). It is therefore can be said that when civil servants have high self-efficacy it could help reduce the experience of stress. Also, existing studies also indicate that self-efficacy have influence on work related stress (Vaezi, & Fallah 2011; Gladys 2012). Also, understanding gender difference in perceived stress of civil servants may offer gender-based recommendations. To support this preposition, Nwimo, and Onwunaka (2015), Philips, Sen and McNamee (2007), Hanif, Tariq and Nadeem (2011) and Aderibigbe, Mjoli and Adebisi (2018) all found in their study significant gender differences in the level of perceived stress. Thus, we aim to fill some gaps identified in the literature by examining the role of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants in Ibadan, Nigeria. Also, the study sets to test the difference in perceived stress of male and female civil servants.

Hypotheses

- There will be significant joint and independent prediction of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants
- There will be significant gender difference on perceived stress among civil servants

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design, setting and participants

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey using an anonymous online questionnaire to collect data from respondents. Prospective respondents were purposively sent the link via Social media (WhatsApp and Facebook posts) and asked to participate in an online survey. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants revealed that 206 participants (136 males and 70 females) with a mean age of 42.11 (SD of 4.12). In terms of religion affiliation, 75% of the respondents claimed to be Christian, 22% were Muslim and the remaining 3% claimed other religion. In terms of ethnicity, 66% were Yoruba, 14% were Igbo 8% were Hausas and 12% belong to other ethnic groups. In terms of marital status majority 66% of the participants were married, 33% were never married while only 1% was divorced as at the time of the study. Lastly, in term of civil servant type, majority 67% claimed they work for federal government of Nigeria while 23 claimed they work for state government.

Measures

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data which consist of demographic characteristics of the respondents and reliable scales for measuring variables of interest in the study.

Boredom Proneness was measured using the 8 item Boredom Proneness Scale (BPS) developed by Struk, Jonathan, Carriere, Cheyne and Danckert (2015). Sample on the scale reads "In most situations, it is hard for me to find something to do or see to keep me interested". The scale was scored on 7-point Likert-type ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The author reports a reliability of 0.85. In this study a Cronbach alpha of 0.79 was reported.

Perceived stress was measured using the 14 item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein (1983) The scoring is done on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 =never, to 4 = very often). Sample of the item on the scale reads "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpected". High scores describe higher levels of perceived stress while low score indicates low perceived stress. The author reports a reliability of 0.82. The scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.87 in the study.

Self-efficacy was also assessed using the 10 item self-efficacy scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). The item sample reads " I am confident that I can deal with unexpected events effectively." The answer format varies from 1 = not true at all to 4 = true precisely. A higher score indicates higher self-efficacy while a lower score shows low self-efficacy. The authors reported a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.75 in the study.

Procedure

Due to the curfew imposed by the Oyo state government as well as ability to maintain the precautionary measures of physical/social distance of COVID-19, physical distribution of questionnaires was not possible, hence the study used the online survey in which link to the survey questions on Google form was sent to all consenting participants. A detailed informed consent form was attached at the beginning of the online questionnaire and consent was a prerequisite to continue in the survey. The data collection was initiated on May 5,

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2020 and closed on June 3, 2020. A snowball sampling technique was employed in which Two hundred and six (206) were recovered through Google form which was processed for statistical analysis.

Data analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyse socio demographic factors of the respondents while inferential statistic (hierarchical multiple regression and t-test for independent measure) was used to test the hypotheses all through the IBM SPSS version 24.

RESULTS

Test of Relationships among the Study Variables

The correlation coefficients between the investigated variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Zero order Correlation, mean, and standard deviations of all variables

Variables	Mean	SD	N	1	2	3
1 Boredom Proneness	46.75	14.97	206	-		
2 Self-efficacy	19.04	3.58	206	.29**	-	
3 Perceived stress	17.50	5.55	206	.26**	-.35**	

** $p < .05$

The result above shows that there was significant positive relationship between boredom proneness and perceived stress [$r(204) = .29, p = .05$]. This finding implies that increase in boredom proneness tends to increase in perceived stress. Also, there was significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and perceived stress [$r(204) = -.35, p < .05$]. The finding also implies that increase in self-efficacy tends to increase in perceived stress.

Hypotheses 1

There will be significant joint and independent prediction of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression analysis showing the joint and independent predictive role of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress

Predictors	Model I		Model II	
	β	t	β	t
Boredom proneness	.38	7.82**	.38	7.79**
Self-efficacy			.45	12.20**
R	0.38		0.47	
R²	0.15		0.21	
Adj R²	0.15		0.21	
R2 change (%)	0.15		0.23	
Df	1,204		2,203	
F	61.21**		30.54**	
F change	61.21**		14.04**	

** $p < .01$

Results of a two-model hierarchical multiple regression in Table 1 showed that at first model, boredom proneness significantly predicted perceived stress ($R^2=0.15, F(1,204) = 61.21, p < .01$) and accounted for 15% of the variation in perceived stress. Addition of self-

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efficacy in second model led to a significant increase to 21% of variation in perceived stress with joint contribution to the regression model ($R^2=0.21$, $F(2, 203) = 30.54$, $p < .01$). Similarly, at the second model, boredom proneness ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .45$, $p < .01$) independently predicted perceived stress among civil servants.

Hypothesis 2

Table 3: Summary of Independent Sample t-test of male and female on perceived stress

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std	df	t	p
Perceived stress	Male	136	12.72	2.46	204	-1.37	>.05
	Female	70	8.40	1.50			

The Table above revealed that there no difference in the likeness between male and female civil servants on perceived stress [$t(204) = -1.37$, $p>.05$].

DISCUSSION

This study examined the predictive role of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants. Based on the hypotheses postulated, the study found that there was joint and independent prediction of boredom proneness and self-efficacy on perceived stress among civil servants. This finding was supported by (Stanny, & Taylor, 2001; Bruursema, Kessler, & Spector, 2011; Reijseger et al., 2013) where they all found that boredom proneness predictive negative behaviours including stress. The study finding was also in accordance with Vaezi, and Fallah (2011) as well as Gladys (2012) where they all found that self-efficacy have influence on work related stress. The justification why this finding was so is because the anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic and lockdown caused many workers working from home to loss interest in many thing including work roles which predisposes them to stress. Therefore, the way workers were able to handle work roles at home may explain why some workers perceive low or high stress during that time. The study also found that there was no gender difference in perceived stress. The finding was not in line with studies (Nwimo, & Onwunaka 2015; Philips, Sen &McNamee 2007; Hanif, Tariq & Nadeem 2011; Aderibigbe, Mjoli & Adebisi 2018) who all found in their study significant gender differences in the level of perceived stress. The rationale for this finding was because both gender while working at home have no partner or colleagues to call for assistance, hence the level of stress was the same for the gender. Also, the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could have equally trigger a lot of stress among both gender.

CONCLUSION AND STUDY IMPLICATIONS

In view of our findings in this study, we concluded that boredom proneness and self-efficacy predicted perceived stress of civil servants working from home during COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the study also concluded that there is no gender difference in perceived stress among civil servants working from home during COVID-19 pandemic. The study therefore implies that in order to address the problem of stress of civil servants working from home, there should be an interventional programmes targeted toward reducing boredom proneness as a risk factor and boasting self-efficacy as a protective factor among this set of important workers especially as experts predict another second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic which could lead to another lockdown thereby making civil servants to work from home. We therefore recommended that behavioural scientists should design intervention programme tailored toward reducing boredom proneness and boosting self-efficacy of all civil servants such that it will help reduce perceived stress during and after the COVID-19

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lockdown. Finally, government at all levels should also provide adequate support for male and female civil servants while they are working from home. This could also make them perceive stress at a minimal level.

Limitation and suggestion for further studies

The study has contributed immensely to the stress literature; despite that there are some limitations. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small hence generalising the result to other civil servants in Nigeria and in the world could be challenging. Secondly, the method of data collection involves only online survey which could have tends some form of bias as well as restrict responses of respondents in the study. The study therefore suggests that sample size should be improved upon by future researchers. Also method of data collection can be improved upon by future study by including qualitative data i.e interview and FGD in order to have a robust result finding.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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