THE INFLUENCE OF WORK LOCUS OF CONTROL ON PERCEIVED STRESS OF LIBRARIANS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH WESTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of work locus of control on perceived stress of librarians in public universities in South Western Nigeria. The research design was the ex-post facto. The study used both primary and secondary data sources. A simple random sampling method was used to select seven public universities which yielded 92 respondents. Total enumeration technique was used in the administration of questionnaires. Sixty-three respondents completed and returned their questionnaires which were used for analysis. Work locus of control and perceived stress inventories were used to obtain data. Data were analysed using percentages, mean, standard deviation and t-test for independent samples. Results indicated a significant difference between perceived stress of librarians who have external locus of control and librarians who have internal work locus of control. It was shown that librarians who have external work locus of control (externals) perceived a higher level of stress than librarians who have internal work locus of control (internals). It was concluded from the study that work locus of control of librarians had influence on their perceived stress.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, stress has become a popular issue among people of diverse professions including librarians to the extent that it is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid talking about it. This is because it has either consciously or unconsciously become part of the daily living of individuals. Riggio (2000) defined stress as physiological and/or psychological reaction to an event that is perceived to be threatening or taxing. He argued that though stress is often viewed as an unpleasant state, it could have negative and...
positive aspects. Similarly, Luthans (2002) described stress as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and or behavioral deviations for organization participants. He explained further what stress is not as follows; (i) Stress is not simply anxiety; (ii) Stress is not simply nervous tension and (iii) Stress is not necessarily something bad or to be avoided. He argued that since stress is inevitable, the key issue is how a person handles it.

Mckenna (2006) categorised factors causing stress or stressors into two namely; (i) Factors within the organization which include role overload, role underload, role ambiguity, role conflict, redundancy and early retirement, responsibility for people, machine-paced and repetitive work, decision latitude and job control, shift work and new technology. (ii) Factors from within the individual and outside influences which include personality of individual workers, work relationships, career development and family considerations.

As regards the personality factors, Mckenna (2006) identified locus of control as one of the factor that can cause stress. Locus of control is a personality concept that evolved from Rotter’s (1954) social learning theory. Locus of control simply refers to individuals’ perception of the main causes of events in life. The locus of control of an individual can either be internal or external. Individuals with internal locus of control are called internals. They believe that they have control over their destinies. They tend to be convinced that their own skills, abilities and efforts determine the bulk of their life experiences. While individuals with external locus of control are called externals. They believe that their destinies are being controlled by external forces such as luck, chance, fate or powerful others (Rotter, 1966). The study of locus of control in organizational studies have been dominated by the use of Rotter’s (1966) Internal/External (I-E) Scale. However, this practice has been criticized by different scholars because of the inability of the instrument to measure work related variables adequately. For instance, Spector (1988) described the relationship between the Internal/External scale and work related variables as being rather modest. Similarly, Phares (1976) stated that the Internal-External Scale was a rough measure and advocated that researchers should develop domain – specific measures. Consequently, Spector (1988) developed the Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS) that would be specifically concerned with the work domain. The scale was developed to measure generalized control beliefs in work settings. Blau (1993) reported that work locus of control scale was a stronger predictor of work related behaviour than Rotter’s (1966) Internal-External locus of control scale because of its specificity to work domain.

Spector (1988) described work locus of control as a personality variable. He defined the construct “as a generalized expectancy that rewards, reinforcements or outcomes in life are controlled either by one’s own action (internality) or other forces (externality)”. He stated further that people who hold expectancies that they control the reinforcements they get, are considered to be internals, while people who hold expectancies that outside forces or luck control the reinforcements they get are considered to be externals. He explained that in organizational settings, rewards or outcomes include promotion, favourable circumstances, salary increase and general career advancement. He viewed work locus of control as a personality variable that could be used to describe the behaviour of employees in an organization.

As regards the relationship between work locus of control and perceived stress, literature has revealed that a significant relationship has been found to exist between the
two variables. For instance, Paranjpe (2014) reported that locus of control was significantly related to perceived stress of lecturers working in junior and senior college in India. Similarly, Sahraian, Omdivar, Ghanizadeh and Bazrafshan (2014) found that locus of control had significant positive association with occupational stress of female nurses in public hospitals in Shiraz, Iran.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Librarians are generally saddled with the responsibility of acquiring, organizing and providing information to their clientele. In carrying out these duties, they would likely be faced with conditions leading to high levels of stress which in turn might result in negative consequences such as inability to concentrate, fatigue, absenteeism, high turn-over rate and a host of others. Previous studies on stress were carried out among other professionals like teachers, nurses, doctors, lecturers to mention a few. However, there is a dearth of literature on studies about stress among librarians. A study of the influence of work locus of control on perceived stress of librarians will help in promoting positive work attitudes and behaviors in libraries, information and documentation centers. This study intends to fill this gap.

1.2 Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to:

1. Determine the influence of work locus of control on the perceived stress of librarians in public universities in South western, Nigeria

1.3 Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis for this study is:

- There is no significant difference between the perceived stress of librarians with internal work locus of control and librarians with external work locus of control

1.4 Review of Related Literature

Jain and Singh (2015) examined the relationship of locus of control with mental health and overall adjustment among fifty adolescent females. The findings of the study revealed that adolescent females who possess internal locus of control showed better mental health and overall adjustment pattern which includes home, social, emotional educational domains and health adjustment domain than those who possess external locus of control.

Nurdiana Gaus, (2014) examined the relationship between internal locus of control and job satisfaction, job stress and sexes among eighty-five female head-teacher of primary school in Makassar, Indonesia. The results of this revealed that there was a significant correlation between Internal locus of control and job satisfaction and job stress of female head teachers at elementary schools in Makassar. However, there was no relationship between sexes with internal locus of control of female head teachers in primary schools in Makassar, Indonesia.

Sahraian, Omdivar, Ghanizedeh, Bazrafshan (2014) examined the association of job stress and perceived locus of control considering covariates variables among nurses. A total of 270 nurses were selected according to stratified sampling with proportional allocation.
The results showed that the locus of control has significant positive association with the occupational stress of Nurses.

Sadowski and Blacwell (1985) investigated the relationship between locus of control and perceived stress among student teachers. Twenty-seven student teachers participated in the survey. The results of the study indicated that student—teachers who felt that they could influence the teaching environment rated the events as less stressful than those who felt that they had less control.

Arsian, Dilmac and Hamarta (2009) conducted a study to determine whether trait and coping with stress vary significantly according to locus of control. The respondents were 514 Turkish university students. The results of the study indicated that average trait anxiety scores of the students with internal locus of control were significantly higher than those of the students with external locus of control. There was no significant difference in incidence of avoidance and seeking social support between the students with internal locus of control and those students with external locus of control.

Khan, Saleem and Shahid (2012) investigated the role of locus of control in mediating or coping on various degree / levels of stress among the college / university teachers in Bahawalpur. The sample population was 200 college / university teachers selected by convenient sampling. The results showed that the teachers identified with internal locus of control revealed low level of stress as contrast to the teacher with external locus of control. The study confirmed that high internal locus of control determines high coping and mediating ability of stress among the teachers. The study also pointed out that the teachers with external locus of control were more prone to stress. In addition, the results showed that locus of control and stress were highly correlated among the college / university teachers of Bahawalpur.

Lu, Wu and Cooper (1999) examined perceived work stressors of internals and externals, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as relationships between locus of control and a wide array of job strain indicators. A sample of 1054 industrial workers in Taiwan was surveyed. Results showed that compared with the internals, the externals tended to perceive more sources of stress; moreover, they reported more stressors, which seemed to be outside their direct control. On the other hand, internals were more satisfied with their jobs, suffered fewer physical and psychological symptoms and exerted more coping efforts.

Paranjpe (2014) investigated the correlation between locus of control and perceived stress. The sample population consisted of 100 lecturers working in junior and senior colleges in India. Results indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between locus of control and stress among the lecturers.

Jha and Bano (2012) analysed the impact of locus of control on job stress. One hundred employees participated in the study. The results revealed that Indian employees were facing high job stress. It was found that employees who had internal locus of control were less stressed by their jobs and were more satisfied with their organisations, while the external locus of control employees were high on stress and more dissatisfied with their jobs.

Brouskeli and Markos (2013) examined the relationship between locus of control, perceived stress, maintenance of health behaviours such as smoking, drinking and exercising and the optimism about finding a new job. Respondents were 201 unemployed
Greeks ranging from 20 to 64 years old. Results indicated that unemployed with an external locus of control tend to experience more stress. Among all of the examined health behaviours, only physical activity seems to be related to locus of control orientation as well as perceived stress. Finally, the external locus of control orientation of the unemployed as well as their higher levels of perceived stress were related to a tendency to feel less optimistic about finding a new job.

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design
The study adopted ex-post facto design and as such the researcher did not manipulate the independent variable because it has already occurred. The independent variable in this study is work locus of control while the dependent variable is perceived stress.

2.2 The Study Population
The study population of this study comprises the librarians in public universities in South-Western Nigeria.

2.3 Sampling Technique and Sampling Size
A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting seven public universities which yielded a total sample size of 92 respondents. The data is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Universities</th>
<th>Population of Librarians</th>
<th>Copies of questionnaire Administered</th>
<th>Copies of questionnaire Returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 University of Lagos, Lagos</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Federal University of Technology, Akure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Delta State University, Abraka</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Lagos State university, Ojo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Research Instrument
The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire with three sections:
- Section A: Demographic information
- Section B: Work locus of control Scale
- Section C: Perceived Stress Scale
2.4.1 Description of the Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

Respondents were required to provide information on their gender, age, marital status, qualification, years of service, job status and so on.

Section B: Work Locus of Control Scale

The study adopted the work locus of control scale developed by Spector (1988) to measure the locus of control of employees in employment situation. In other words, work locus of control concerns beliefs about control specifically in work domain, as opposed to life in general. Researchers have observed that it is more preferable to the general locus of control scale when investigating behaviours of workers in organizations (Blau, 1993 Orpen, 1992 & Spector, 1988). Spector work locus of control scale is a 16 – items scale. Typical examples of the items in the sub-scale are: “A job is what you make of it”, “On most jobs, people can pretty much accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish”, “If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you”, “If employees are unhappy with a decision made by their boss, they should do something about it” and so on.

Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agree with each item using a six point likert type scale labeled: 1 = disagree very much, 2 = disagree moderately, 3 = disagree slightly, 4 = agree slightly, 5 = agree moderately, 6 = agree very much.

In consistent with the Rotter’s (1966) generalised Internal and External locus of control scale, the work locus of control scale also distinguishes the two dimension of the locus of control – externality and internality. High scores on the work locus of control scale indicate externality, whereas low scores indicate internality. Spector (1988) reported that the work locus of control scale has internal consistency (co-efficient alpha) of 0.75 to 0.85.

Section C: Perceived Stress Scale

The perceived stress scale developed by Cohen, Kamarck and Mermeistein (1983) was adopted to measure the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful. It consisted of 14 items. It is intended to measure one’s level of perceived stress in terms of overload, lack of control and unpredictability. It is 5 Likert – type scale (0 = never to very often = 4). Examples of questions in the questionnaire include “In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?” and “In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?” The questions are divided into seven positive and seven negative items. The total score is derived by summing up each score after revising the positive items. High scores on this scale represent high levels of perceived stress, while low scores indicate low levels of perceived stress.

2.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The content validity of each scale in the questionnaire has been conducted by the original users. Spector (1988) for the work locus of control scale and Cohen et.al. (1983) for perceived stress scale. In addition, to determine the level of reliability of the questionnaire, it was pre-tested among 30 respondents drawn from other universities who were not part of the sample population. Using the Cronbach- alpha method, the reliability of each scale in the questionnaire was found to be 0.94 for perceived stress scale and 0.87 for work locus of control scale.
2.6 Method of Data Collection
A total of 92 copies of questionnaire were administered to the librarians in the selected universities. Sixty-three copies of the questionnaire were returned and analysed. This represents a response rate of 65%.

2.7 Method of Data Analysis
The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

FINDINGS
3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents
A total of 63 respondents participated in the study of which 33 (52.4%) were male while the remaining 30 (47.6%) were female. As regards the marital status of the respondents, 5 (7.9%) were single, 56 (88.9%) were married while 2 (3.2%) were widowed. The mean age of respondents was found to be 42.70 years with a standard deviation of 6.971 years. As regards their qualification, 2 (3.2%) of the respondents were holders of the Bachelor’s degree in Library and Information Studies, 57 (90.5%) holds the degree of Master in Library and Information Studies while 4 (6.3%) of the respondents were holders of the PhD in Library and Information studies.

With respect to job status, 14 (22.2%) were Assistant Librarians, 13 (20.6%) were Librarians II, 17 (27.0%) were Librarians I, 7 (11.1%) were Senior Librarians, 10 (15.9%) were Principal Librarians and 2 (3.2%) were Deputy Librarians. Their years of work experience ranged from 1 to 31 years. The mean length of service was found to be 11.49 years with a standard deviation of 7.793 years.

3.2 Testing of Hypothesis
H_0: There is no significant difference between the perceived stress of librarians with internal work locus of control and librarians with external work locus of control.

T-test for independent samples was used to test the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WLOC GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. D</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Calculated t- value</th>
<th>Table t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal work locus of Control</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41.42</td>
<td>10.040</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.943</td>
<td>1.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External work locus of Control</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47.73</td>
<td>5.682</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis in Table 2 indicate that librarians who have external work locus of control (externals) obtained a higher mean score in perceived stress (\(\bar{X} = 47.73, \text{SD} = 5.682\)) than librarians who have internal work locus of control (internals) (\(\bar{X} = 41.42, \text{SD} = \))
The calculated t-value of 2.943 is greater than the table t-value of 1.980 at 0.05 level of significance. The stated null hypothesis is rejected. The results suggest that there is a significant difference between the perceived stress of librarians with internal work locus of control (internals) and librarians with external work locus of control (externals). Librarians with external work locus of control (externals) perceived a higher level of stress than their counterparts with internal work locus of control (internals). Therefore, the work locus of control of librarians significantly influenced their perceived stress.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study revealed that work locus of control has significant influence on perceived stress of librarians. Librarians who have external work locus of control (externals) were found to perceive a higher level of stress than librarians with internal work locus of control (internals). This finding agrees with that of Khan, Saleem and Shahid (2012) who pointed out that teachers with external locus of control were more prone to stress. It also agrees with the results of Paranjpe (2014) who reported a positive correlation between locus of control and perceived stress of lecturers working in junior and senior colleges in India.

In this present study, the reasons for the high level of perceived stress among librarians who have external work locus of control is likely because they see themselves as having little or no control over stressful conditions and so could not use effective coping strategies to deal with stressful conditions facing them.

In contrast, librarians with internal locus of control experienced a low level of perceived stress probably because of their perception that they have the ability to control stressful conditions. Hence they were able to use effective coping strategies to deal with stressful situations.

**CONCLUSION**

The study has shown that work locus of control of librarians had significant influence on their levels of perceived stress.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Library administrators should organize stress management training programmes for librarians to enable them manage their stress.
2. Librarians should be encouraged to cultivate internal work locus of control to enhance their ability to manage and cope with stress. This can be done through the provision of counseling services by the management of the library.
3. In the process of recruiting librarians, the locus of control orientation of individual applicant should be taken into consideration. Preference should be given to those who have internal locus of control beliefs.
4. Library management should take locus of control into consideration while designing stress management programmes for librarians.
REFERENCES


Igbeneghu (2017)


