

# PREVALENCE AND CAUSES OF DEPRESSION AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN OSUN STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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## **Abstract**

*In recent times, the pressure of daily living, especially in an environment of insecurity and economic gloom is likely a precursor to depression among Nigerian workers. This is the motivation for the present study. The survey research type was employed. The Prevalence and Causes of Depression questionnaire (PCDQ) was developed by the researchers to obtain information from the participants. Research questions and hypothesis were formulated to guide the conduct of the study. Data collected were subjected to simple percentage, analysis of variance and t-test analysis. The results revealed that majority of civil servant are suffering from depression. The study showed that depression is prevalent among women than their male counterparts. The study also revealed that job demand and poor remunerations are the major causes of depression among civil servants. The study recommended the establishment of counselling unit in establishments and ministries; counsellors should be made available for employees; the counsellors should be organizing health education from time to time on management techniques.*

**Key Words:** Causes, Civil-Servant, Counselling, Depression, Prevalence.

## Introduction

Everyone feels "blue" or sad from time to time. It is a normal life experience. But when these emotions increase in intensity, persist for more than a few weeks, and start to interfere with a person's life especially in a workplace, it may be signal of depression. No amount of "cheering up" can make the depression go away, no amount of exercise, vitamins or vacation can make it disappear, that is because depression is a psychological problem, not a weakness.

Depression is a common illness. At some point in life around one (1) in every five (5) women and one (1) in every ten (10) men will suffer from depression. At any given time one (1) in every twenty (20) adults is experiencing a serious major depression. Naturally problems that are common in the general population are common in people at work. In any one year about three (3) in every ten (10) employees have mental health problem, and depression is one of the most common problems. It makes them less productive at work and is responsible for high rates of sick-leave, accidents and staff turnover (Mel Cal Man, 1999).

The majority of working women with depression believe that depression is the number one barrier to women's success in the workplace. Women surveyed in the United States reported having various depression related behaviours, which affect their work. These include not returning from lunch, avoiding contact with workers, and being unable to face the challenges of the job. (National Mental Health Association, 2003).

Work is generally good for our mental health, but there are times when certain experiences can make work un-enjoyable (Adeoye, 1999). Most times, the pressure of, and the stress at work coupled with other life's problems can make depression more likely to occur. Adeoye (1998) showed in his studies that certain jobs are more likely to make people unhappy in their workplace. Jobs in which an employee cannot use his or her skills, or which are repetitive and are the same everyday. Seem particularly likely to make people fed up with their work. Uncertainty about how well one is performing or about future changes in employment can result in feelings of tension and worry. Difficult bosses who bully and criticize will just make things worse. Also, poor working conditions such as cramped offices, hot and stuffy office rooms, poor remunerations may make workers tensed and stressed. Employees will feel frustrated if they have no say in the way their work is organized, or if decisions are imposed from above without any discussion (Mel Cal Man, 1999). Knippers (2006) also explained that depression often occurs in

people at times that might not be expected and life challenges sometimes overwhelm people who are already vulnerable for some pre-existing reason. Depression can affect the employee's productivity, morale and effectiveness. Unfortunately, in Nigeria workers conditions and environments have been described as poor (Nwokedi, 2004). This could be one of the factors that can make the workers become depressed. According to Cal Man (1999) depression can seriously affect someone's ability to work effectively and it may be so bad that he or she will have to stop work completely for a time.

Depression can have a substantial effect on employer's work environment because it can interfere with their abilities to do their Jobs. National Mental Health Association (2004) observed that depression interferes with the ability to work, sleep, eat study and enjoy activities. Depression could therefore, be number one barrier to the employee's success in his/her workplace, because they may not be able to put in their best. Depression can affect anyone irrespective of age (Umoh, Adeoye and Oyewo, 2008), but the focus of the present study is prevalence and causes of depression among civil servants in Osun State.

### **Statement of the problem**

The development of any society depends on its human and natural resources. Such human resources include the civil servants. They are the set of people involve in implementation of government policies. They shoulder important and sensitivity responsibilities, but many of them did not enjoy the work they are doing due to emotional problems such as depression. Naturally, problems of depression are common in the general population but it may be more pronounced among the civil servants due to their responsibility at work, and this (depression) can have negative effects on their effectiveness and productivity.

Various works have been done on civil servants in Nigeria (Anyamane. Anyadubule & Nwokolo, 2007; Dada & Dada, 2007; Obi, 2007). Anyamene, Anyachebelu and Nwokolo in 2007 appraised the level of work value and job adjustment and ascertained if the workers work values is related to their job adjustment. Obi, (2007) used Adlerian principles of social interest to counsel public servants to adopt active participation in politics on retirement. Knippers (2006) suggested seven steps to combat workplace depression that the management should be aware of in dealing with employees who have a sudden change in

personality, attitude, mood, productivity, efficiency, absenteeism, energy level; and personal appearance.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge there is a poverty of research work in Nigeria on prevalence and causes of depression among civil servants. This study also investigated the influence of variables like age, gender and marital status on prevalence and causes of depression among civil servants in Osun State. It is therefore considered as an exploratory study.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions have been generated to guide the conduct of this study

1. What are the causes of depression among civil servants in Osun State?
2. Is there any difference in the prevalence of depression as expressed by civil servants on the basis of gender?
3. Is there any difference in the prevalence of depression as expressed by civil servants on the basis of age range?
4. Is there any difference in the prevalence of depression as expressed by civil servants on the basis of marital status?

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the stated questions, the following null hypotheses were generated.

1. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of gender?
2. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of age range?
3. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of marital status?

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be of immense benefits to, administrators, and the governments. Specifically, it will help them set out plans on how to cater for emotional feelings of the civil servant.

### **Scope of the study**

The study was conducted among civil servants in Osun State. As it was mentioned before, the study was narrowed down to variables of gender, age and marital status as they influence prevalence of depression among

civil servants. The investigation was conducted in the three senatorial districts in Osun State. However, Osogbo, Ikire, Okuku, Ejigbo, Ifetedo and Ipetu-Ijesa were the random towns selected for the study.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

It is a descriptive survey method for eliciting information from the respondents.

### **Sampling Techniques**

All civil servants in Osun State form the target population of this study. However, since all the civil servants could not be reached, a simple random sampling technique was used in selecting (800) eight hundred civil servants from the three senatorial districts in Osun State. The choice of the sample was informed by the fact that this category of workers engaged in day to day activities of implementation of government policies, which may be taxing and demanding.

### **Instrument**

The instrument used to obtain relevant information for this study is titled "Prevalence and Causes of Depression Questionnaire (PCDQ). It was developed by the researchers after a careful review of relevant literature. The questionnaire contains 20 items designed to elicit information on the causes and prevalence and causes of depression as reported by the civil servants. It is divided into three (3) sections: section A elicits personal information such as gender, age and marital status; Section B contains those items that reveal the causes of depression among civil servants and section C contains items that reveal the prevalence of depression among civil servants, sections B and C have 10 questions each. Respondents were required to indicate the preferences on a 4 - point Likert type scale viz: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

The instrument was found to have both face and content validity by five lecturers in the field of Counselling Psychology of University of Ilorin, Ilorin. It had a reliability coefficient index of 0.80 using the Cronbach Alpha Statistics.

**Method of Data Analysis**

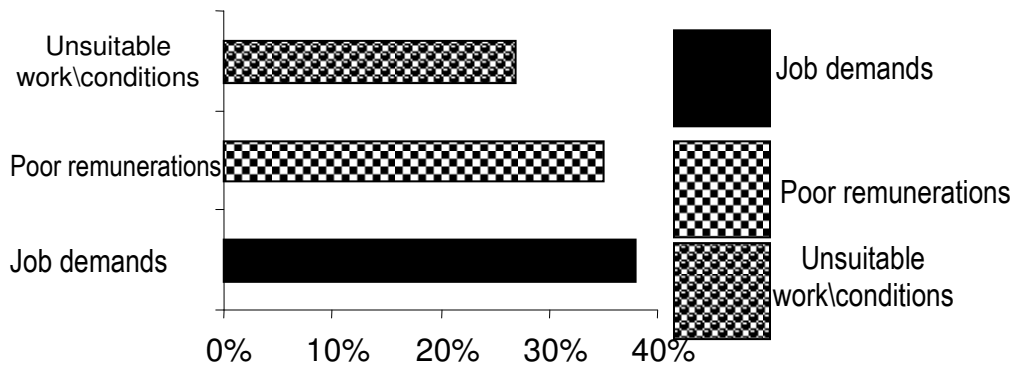
The data collected were analyzed using t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical methods to compare the mean scores of the variables in the demographic data.

**Result**

**Research Question 1**

What are the causes of depression among civil servants in Osun State?

A graphic presentation of the situation may enhance the clarity of the report



**Fig 1.** A graphical presentation of causes of depression among civil servants in Osun State.

The causes of depression among civil servants in Osun State are job demand, poor remunerations and unsuitable work conditions as reported by 38%, 35%, 27% of the subjects respectively.

**Hypotheses Testing**

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of gender

**Table 1:** The t-test analysis comparing the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of gender.

Gender	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical
Male	4.0	132.06	12.87	798	17.24*	1.96
Female	390	146.55	9.06			

Significant  $p < 0.05$

The result on Table 1 indicates that the calculated t-value of 17.24 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servant based on gender was rejected,  $t(798) = 17.24, p < 0.05$ . This signifies that a significant difference exists in the prevalence of depression among civil servants based on gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant different in the Prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of age.

**Table 2:** ANOVA summary table showing the results of difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of age

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Squares	Cal F-value	Critical F-value
Between groups	206.34	3	68.76	0.24	3.00
Within Groups	318209.75	797	286.16		
Total	318416.09	800			

This result shows that there was no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of age. The calculated f-value of 0.24 is less than the critical F-value of 3.00. Thus the hypothesis was accepted ( $df 3, 797) = 283.16 = p < 0.05$ . This signifies that a significant difference does not exist in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of age.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of marital status?

**Table 3:** ANOVA summary table showing the result of different in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of marital status.

Sources of variance	Sum of Square (SS)	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square (MS)	Cal f-value	Critical f - Value
Between groups	53330.12	2	2665.04	9.32	3.00
Within groups	318097.60	798	285.80		
Total	323427.72	800			

Significant  $P < 0.05$

The results on Table 3 show that there is significant difference in the prevalence of depression among Civil servants on the basis of marital status. The calculated F - value of 9.32 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.00. Thus the hypothesis was rejected ( $df\ 2,798$ ) = 9.32  $p < 0.05$  since there is a statistically significant difference among the civil servants using Analysis of variance (ANOVA) Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was used as a post hoc test to determine the marital status group (s) that was responsible for the significant difference.

**Table 4:** Duncan's Multiple Range Test (DMRT) showing differences in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of marital status.

Duncan's grouping	Mean	No	Group	Marital status
A	47.750	190	2	Single
B	40.667	520	1	Married
C	40.662	90	3	Others

Note: Means having the same letters are not significantly different.

In Table 4, the Duncan's Multiple Range Test (DMRT) result was used to determine which of the marital group mean led to the significant difference noted in ANOVA results. The DMRT results indicated that group 2 (with means of 47.750) is different from group 1 and 3 (with means of 40.667 and 40.662), they significantly differ from group 2 (i.e. 47.750) hence, the significant difference noted in the ANOVA result of Table 4 was due to the fact that group 2 differed significantly from other groups.

### Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that job demands, poor remunerations and unsuitable work conditions are the causes of depression among civil servants. The present study also confirms that among civil servants, gender does make a difference in the experience of depression, with female workers accounting for the difference. They have a mean of 146.55 compared to the mean of the male counterparts who have a mean of 132.06. These findings supported the earlier findings of Cal man (1999) that poor working conditions can directly cause depressive illness. It also lends credence to the findings of American Medical Women's Association (2003) that depression is the number one barrier to women's success in the workplace. James (2005) and Tout (1993) also reported that one of the



factors that increase the risk of depression in elderly persons is being a woman.

The findings of Umoh, Adeoye and Oyewo (2008) also revealed significant difference in the symptoms of depression expressed by elderly persons based on gender.

Other findings of this study found no significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants different age range. This finding is consistent with the work of Rosenhan and Seligman (1995) they reported in their study that no age group is exempted from depression.

The study further showed significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis marital status. In other words, findings from this study showed that being married could insulate people from depression.

The outcome of this study was supported by Green, Copeland and Dewey (1992) that although living alone itself does not predict a poor emotional outcome, but feeling of loneliness in those who live alone due to the loss of their spouse are strongly associated with future depressive illness. Ikeotunonye (1998) also asserted that death of spouse is the most stressful life event which is unavoidable for the widow. In fact, it is traumatic experience capable of plunging the widow into a host of problems. Knippers (2006) also corroborated this result that a case of divorce or separation among couples ca lead to deep depression at work.

### **Implications for Counselling**

This study revealed that there is need to improve working conditions of civil servants. This would help to reduce prevalence of depression among civil servants and at the same time this will enhance their effectiveness and productivity. There is also a need to create counselling units and employ full time counsellors in the civil service in order to help workers reduce indications of anxiety and depression, improve mental health, lower levels of sickness and increase job satisfaction and commitment. It will also provide an effective method of understanding the pressure caused by occupational stress and offers supportive remedy.

Counsellors should be providing to workers important means of resolving problem and difficulties in a confidential and supportive manner. Counsellors should be organizing health education for the employees from time to time. This will help employees to benefit from knowing about mental health and learning how to reduce stress. Counsellors should be teaching them from time to time management

technique, assertiveness training and the use of “team-building” these exercise can protect employees from depression and other conditions.

Counsellors should create awareness among the workers on the importance of recognizing and helping colleagues who have be suffering from depression. This should include every level of the workforce. Counsellors can do this by distributing posters, leaflet, or even giving information about depression in appraisal interview. This is necessary because employees and management need to understand that positive action can result in great benefits to individual and the establishment as a whole.

Counsellors should offer formal counselling session to stressed employees. This will help them feel valued, and will enable the individual to identity the cause of their problems and issues as depression usually result from acute stress, (Umoh, Adeoye and Oyewo, 2008). These will help employees and staff overcomes many everyday pressures.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Consequently upon the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Poor working conditions, poor remunerations and job demands are the major causes of depression among civil servants. Significant difference as revealed in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of gender. From the results of the study, there was no significant different in the Prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of age however, there was significant difference in the prevalence of depression among civil servants on the basis of marital status. It is therefore recommended from the findings of this study that the establishment of counselling units be included in the current civil service reforms being embarked upon. The minimum wage of 18,000 Naira should be paid to all workers irrespective of cadre and work conditions should be made more attractive.

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