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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DELAYED PROMOTION AND JOB STRESS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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## **ABSTRACT**

Several disparate studies have highlighted the correlation between job promotion and workers' performance, commitment, and motivation. However, little is known about delayed promotion and employee stress. The study examined the correlation between delayed promotion and job stress. Two hundred and thirty-three civil servants were drawn from the Enugu state civil service and completed the self-report instrument used for data collection. The association between delayed promotion and job stress was analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. Preliminary studies revealed that the association was linear, with both variables normally distributed (p > .05) and no outliers, as shown by the Shapiro test. Wilk's There was a modest positive connection between delayed promotion and job stress that was statistically significant, r(231) = .36, p < .001. Most importantly, it is observed that delayed promotion explained about 13.1% of the variation in employees' job stress.

**KEYWORDS:** Delayed promotion, job stress, civil servants



#### **BACKGROUND**

The civil service is an essential component in the development of every nation. Indeed, the institution is fundamental and strategic, particularly in Nigeria as a developing country (Okorie & Onwe, 2016). The Nigerian Civil Service is rooted in organizations established during the British colonial periods. It consisted of the federal and state civil services organized around government departments or ministries and different ministerial departments headed by ministers (national) and commissioners (state), who are appointed by the president and governors (Nwanolue & Iwuoha, 2012). Civil service as a government institution plays a vital role in ensuring that government policies result in a tangible benefit for the population (Ogunrotifa, 2012). They are the principal instrument through which the government implements and administers public policies and programs.

Most importantly, without the body of professional civil servants, the national government cannot operate effectively and efficiently. Thus, civil servants represent the essential drivers of the government's functioning and the development of any given society. Civil servants are career officers that are usually expected to remain in the service for a more extended period regardless of the changes in the government. The permanent nature of the civil servants ensures continuity in the functioning of the government. Indeed, they work behind the scenes and place their skills and energies at the disposal of their political leaders. Consequently, the performance of the civil servants has been constrained by various factors (Ayinde & Obawole, 2019; Eke, 2016; Kayode et al., 2021; Koko, 2020; Omiunu, 2014), including promotion issues and workplace stress.

Stress is a ubiquitous part of contemporary lives and a typical result of modern-day activities. Workplace stress is a multifaceted construct that may repeatedly be dynamic and evolve over time (Jetha et al., 2017). Job stress entails the general stress that occurs explicitly in the work setting (Wu et al., 2018). In the contemporary working environment, stress is becoming a significant issue of increasing concern to employees and organizations (Bewell et al., 2014). The phenomenon of workplace stress is increasingly experienced by many workforces worldwide (Osibanjo et al., 2016). The experience of workplace stress has been widely investigated and has continued to gain momentum in literature (Olomola, 2010). Job stress could be seen as the body's response to a change that involves a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or reaction to work responsibilities (Essiam et al., 2015). Work-related stress is a pattern of physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to extreme taxing work content, work organization, and work environment (Bewell et al., 2014). Stress is a common element in any job, and people have to face it in almost every walk of life (Chinyere et al., 2019). Stress may be acute, psychological, emotional, social, or job-related (Chikwendu, 2016). Work-related stress has been linked with several personal and organizational issues, including behavioral, mental, and physical outcomes, performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Beheshtifar et al., 2011)

One of the organizational outcomes affected by job stress is performance (Bjaalid et al., 2020; Daniel, 2019; Deng et al., 2019; Gharib et al., 2016; Jalagat, 2017; Jamal, 2011; Kalyar et al., 2019; Mittal & Bhakar, 2018; Vijayan, 2017; Yang et al., 2021). Indeed, work-related stress negatively impacts productivity in that stress is accompanied by cognitive, affective, and behavioral implications capable of disrupting work-related inputs. Accordingly, Ashton (2017) noted that occupational stress produces employee absenteeism, intention to quit, interpersonal difficulties, and poor performance in an organization. Numerous research has underscored the causes of workplace stress in the Nigeria work setting (Adeniyi et al., 2010; Babatope, 2013; Duru, 2021; Ibem et al., 2011; Ifeanyichukwu Ojeka et al., 2019; Iyabo, 2013; Ofili et al., 2009; Ogboghodo & Edema, 2020; Oghenetega et al., 2014; Yusuf et al., 2015). For instance, factors such as downsizing, sudden reorganization and unexpected changes in the work schedules and competition for promotional opportunities (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005), work-family role conflict (Abdullah et al., 2021; An et al., 2020), poor working relationship (Lai et al., 2015). However, a possible correlate of workplace stress that has not received much research attention is delayed promotion.

Several disparate findings have underscored the importance of job promotion in job performance (Febrina, 2017; Pahlevi & Nohong, 2020; Ratemo et al., 2021; Tasman et al., 2021; Yuliza et al., 2021), commitment (Mends-Brew & Asiamah, 2020; Nalla et al., 2020; Shah, 2011), and motivation (Dasilfa et al., 2022; Jayawardena & Jayawardena, 2020; Tu et al., 2020). For instance, Saefullah (2021) studied the impact of job promotion on the performance of government officials at Banten province's regional office of the Ministry of Religion. According to the findings of this study, job promotion has a direct impact on employee performance. Also, Haryono et al. (2020) examined the effects of job promotion on work motivation and its implications on employee job performance. Their finding revealed that job promotion had a more dominant direct impact on improving employee job performance. Similarly, Ogini (2020) investigated the relationship between job promotion and employee commitment using a sample of 162 employees of public hospitals in Rivers State. Their findings revealed a significant positive relationship between job promotion and workers' commitment. Accordingly, a study showed that perceived procedural injustice in promotion decisions negatively impacts employee commitment, job performance, and career satisfaction (Wan et al., 2012). While previous studies have explored the determinants of job stress, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of promotions. Promotion is an essential issue in the workplace (Razak et al., 2018). and there could be a possible association between workplace promotion and job stress.

## Delayed promotion and job stress

Promotion refers to the employee's shifting to a job of higher significance and higher compensation (Lazear, 2000). It relates to the development of an employee with an increased range of salary, higher employment, and a high level of job



responsibilities from one position to another position of the job (Zuhra et al., 2021). Promotion is supposed to be a normal progression in the workplace. It is commonly a significant concern for employees working either in the public or private sector, no matter at what levels they work. It has a direct relationship with job satisfaction. In Nigeria's civil service, issues relating to promotion procedures and criteria are stipulated in the civil service rules. Unfortunately, the timely promotion of civil servants has been a persistent challenge, especially in the state's civil service. The Enugu state civil servants have witnessed occasional delays in their rise over the years, despite government changes. The frustration accompanying the delay in expected promotion might trigger workplace stress and jeopardize mental and physical contributions to the work role. Indeed, rules, regulations, and policies of promotions in the ministries, departments, and agencies of the civil service are regulated for the motivation of workers and the improvement of their performance. The present paper examined the relationship between delayed workplace promotion and job stress.

Hypothesis: Delayed promotion will positively correlate with job stress

## Method

## **Participants**

The target population was employees in the Enugu state civil service commission. The participants included male and female employees of different ministries, departments, and agencies in state civil service. The participant comprised 109 males and 121 females. Their mean age was 53.38 (SD = 4.34), ranging from 35 to 65.

#### Measures

#### Job stress

Job stress was assessed using a developed Job Stress Scale designed to measure the stress relative to a workplace setting. The scale consists of 20 items assessing the workplace's cognitive and physiological stress. The response pattern was on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score indicated high job stress, while a lower score represented decreased job stress. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained in the study. Moreso, delayed promotion was assessed with an open-ended questionnaire. Participants are expected to indicate the past, present, and future state of their promotion and the extent to which they agree with the timely and delayed pattern of promotions. Higher scores indicate timely promotion, and lower scores indicate delayed promotion. A reliability coefficient of 0.72 was recorded for the scale.

#### **Procedure**

Five research assistants were recruited to distribute the study instrument in each department, agency, and ministry in the state secretariat. The research assistants were students trained in the field data collection procedures. They helped in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire at 2-month intervals. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that data would remain confidential. About 250 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. Each set of the questionnaire could be completed in approximately 10 min. After completion and collection, correctly filled copies of the questionnaire (233) were used for the analysis.

#### Result

A Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between delayed promotion and job stress. Two hundred and thirty-three participants were recruited. Preliminary analyses showed the relationship to be linear with both variables normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test (p > .05), and there were no outliers. There was a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation between delayed promotion and job stress, r(231) = .36, p < .001. Most importantly, it is observed that delayed promotion explained about 13.1% of the variation in employees' job stress.

**Table 1:** Table showing the means, standard deviations, and correlations for delayed promotion and job stress.

1. Delayed promotion 2.89 0.31 .11** 2. Job stress 4.76 0.4436 .36**  R <sup>2</sup> .131	Variables		М		SD	1	2		
	1.	Delayed promotion	2.8	9 0	.31	.11*	*		
$R^2$ .131	2.	Job stress	4.76	0.44	36		.36**		
	$R^2$								

*Note.* N = 233, \*\* = p < .01 (two-tailed).

## Discussion

The study examined the correlation between delayed promotion and job stress. Two hundred and thirty-three civil servants were drawn from the Enugu state civil service and completed the self-report instrument used for data collection. The analysis conducted on the data revealed a positive correlation between delayed promotion and job stress, r(231) = .36, p < .001. The finding indicated that delayed promotion contributed to about 13.1% of the variation in employees' job stress. The result corroborates a previous study, which showed that job promotion was correlated with decreased self-reported health status and elevated symptoms of depression among men and women (Nyberg et al., 2017). The findings revealed that delayed promotion in the workplace positively predicts job stress. As witnessed in the world of work, the result indicates that obstructed promotion is a factor in job stress. Perhaps, the frequency of promotion in the workplace contributes to job-related stress. The probable explanation for this finding could be attributed to the fact that promotion is



a right and statutory obligation in the civil service, which every employee deserves. However, the established job promotion pattern in most Nigerian establishments has been fraught with challenges, including delay and total denial. Thus, the knowledge that a due promotion might not be received could potentiate the experience of frustration and instigate stress.

#### Conclusion

The current study concludes that workers' observed non-promotion in work is not contributing to job stress among workers. It is noted that when workers are not promoted as when due, the tendency for stress may arise. The finding has implications for employees' well-being and workplace-related output. However, caution should be applied in generalizing the result due to the sample size and the fact that there was no established cause-effect relationship. Future research should use more comprehensive samples and adopt an experimental approach. The study offers counselors, research, and human resources experts valuable data. Moreso, regular promotions are highly recommended.

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