COPING STRATEGY AND CORE SELF-EVALUATION AS FACTORS INFLUENCING RESPONSE TO PRE- RETIREMENT STRESS AMONG POLICE PERSONNEL IN UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE

BY

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ABSTRACT

Several factors have been identified as moderators and predictors of stress in the literature. Some of these factors are psychological while some are social in nature. Among them include: personality traits-neuroticism, locus of control, self- esteem; and social support (coping strategy). This research therefore investigated whether Coping Strategy and Core Self-Evaluation, are factors influencing responses to Pre-retirement Stress among Police Personnel in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The design of the study was a descriptive survey involving one hundred and ninety - eight (198) Police Personnel of rank and file, and officers' cadre selected from police formations in the State capital. The mean age of the participants was 61.5, (SD=7.54). The participants were 165 (83.3%) males and 33 (17%) females. Pre-retirement stress was measured using Pre-retirement Stress Questionnaire (RSQ), while a 2-Way ANOVA was employed to analyze the data generated. Results showed that coping strategy significantly influenced response to pre-retirement stress (F (1,194) = 15.09, P<.05). Core Self-Evaluation also was found to significantly influenced response to Pre-retirement Stress (F (1,194) = 6.57, P<.05). However, there was no joint interaction effect of Coping Strategy and Core Self-Evaluation on Pre-retirement Stress (F(1,194) = 1.90, P> .05). The study recommends that, since findings revealed that Coping Strategy and Core Self-Evaluation singly impacted on pre-retirement stress, thus there is need for employers of labour to create awareness and educate employees to prepare for retirement joyfully after a life of meritorious service.

KeyWords:

Coping Strategy, Core Self-evaluation, Pre-Retirement Stress, Police Personnel.

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1. Introduction

The transition into retirement presents a unique opportunity for a research study on coping and adaptation over a period that can bring a new stress in life. Stress on the one hand, is a psychological term that relates to adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging, frightening, and threatening to the person's wellbeing, while retirement on the other hand entails the withdrawal from position or occupation or from one's active working life (Sighting, 2015). Whereas retirement should be accompanied with a feeling of fulfillment and reward from years of hard work, it can also trigger a lot of negative/unpleasant reactions including stress, depression and anxiety. Hansson, Buratti, Johnson and Berg (2019) posited that stress that comes with retirement could be the result of some persons experiencing loss of self-esteem occasioned by lower status in which they imagine themselves on retirement, which may be at variance with the highly exalted position they have occupied as workers. Similarly, Tilburg, Cozijnsen and Stevens (2010) opined that retirement may increase stress because it shrinks social network. Furthermore, Ugwu , Enwereuzor, Nwankwo, Ugweze and Ogba (2021) emphasized the effect of perceived unpreparedness and lack of self-adequacy or perceived devastation and traumatic experience in the life of potential retirees that remain unknown, could constitute a source of stress during retirement.

Lahdenpera, Virlanen, Myllynatausta, Pentti and Stenholm (2022) opined that psychological distress increased during the retirement transition, but the magnitude of the change was dependent on the context of individuals. They emphasized that, psychological distress was higher among those from poorer psycho-social working conditions, including high job demands, poorer social living environment, small social network, etc.

A central variable relevant in pre-retirement stress is coping strategy. Coping strategy entails the approaches, techniques and methods individual/employee adopts in dealing with personal

stressful situations. Coping strategy embraces series of conscious effort aimed at solving allied personal and interpersonal challenges, seeking mastery of problems, a reduction and minimizing conflict or stress (Snyder, 1999; Weiten and Lloyd, 2008).

Amirkhan (1990) emphasized three dimensions of personal/ individual coping strategies available and dependent on the situational context. They include: (i) Problem Solving, (ii) Seeking Social Support, and (iii) Avoidance. Amirkhan (1990) stressed that Problem Solving involves an individual making active effort aimed at solving a problematic situation, in this sense, modifying a stressful situation or minimizing its effects. Seeking Social Support entails making efforts to obtain assistance, support, help and understanding of other people, especially the significant others. Avoidance involves adopting a behaviour of ignoring a given problematic conflicts/situations both at cognitive and behavioural domain. Coping strategy as a significant factor in retirement stress has been studied many times in the organizational behaviour research. Ro, Tuseen, Hoffart, Sexton, Aasland and Gude (2010) found a linear relationship between active problems solving (a component of coping strategy) with lower level of stress such as decreased distress and general mental health. Similarly, Lee and Lee (2010) and Wallace, Lee and Lee (2010) opined that active coping strategies (problem solving and seeking support) moderate negatively the relationship between stress and burnout.

Furthermore, studies have suggested that Emotion- Focused Coping Strategy could mitigate negative emotions associated with fear of unknown during retirement (Lazarus, 1996). This could effectively be applied to handle feelings of distress rather than the actual problem situation. Another salient variable implicated in retirement stress is Core Self-Evaluations (CSEs). Core Self-Evaluations are fundamental, bottom line assessment or appraisal that individuals make of themselves; especially, about their self worth and capabilities. It is in sum, an instinctive judgment that individuals make about themselves and their lives.

Hirschi (2011) explains Core Self-Evaluations as an individual personality trait that is responsible for his/her temperament, over all wellbeing, judgment and management of individual circumstances. Core Self-Evaluations involves four personality dimensions, viz: Locus of Control, Neuroticism (Emotional stability), Self-efficacy and Self-esteem, (Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen, 2002). Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2011) stressed that CSEs are particularly important because they represent a personality characteristics that remain consistent overtime, as well as dispositional predictors of stress absorption and assimilation.

The Locus of Control dimension of CSE denotes an individual's tendency to attribute life's events to their own doing (internalizing) or to outside forces beyond their control (externalizing causes). Relating to retirement stress, internally oriented retirees may want to believe they control their future and thus are satisfied with events in their lives, while the externals could be more deterministic, relying on fate and destiny. Also, Neuroticism; a personality construct defined as an enduring tendency to experience unpleasant emotion (e.g. stress-anxiety, depression, etc) easily. Zhang and Peterson (2011) posited that individuals high in neuroticism react more negatively to stress, are prone to anxiety and susceptible to feeling of helplessness. In the same vein, Robinson et al (2010) found that neuroticism was related to a negative view of circumstances leading to retirement, whereas conscientiousness was related to aspiration for retirement.

Generalized Self-efficacy as a component of CSE entails an individual's estimate of his or her own ability to handle a variety of situations. Individuals vary in levels of Self-efficacy across different domains; hence, Pignatelli (2014) surmised that general Self-efficacy is the global estimate of ability across a wide range of situations, including stress management in retirement. Self-esteem represents a person's overall appraisal of himself or herself. It could emphatically be said that Self-esteem is the most vital Core Self-evaluations domain since it is the total value

an individual places on oneself. Based on the resource-based dynamic model for retirement response, Core Self -evaluations significantly and positively affected response to pre-retirement stress (Zaniboni et al, 2021).

The researchers observe that many employees dread the thought of retirement especially among the personnel of the Nigerian Police Service organization. This so because working life of a police officer like other workers revolves around waking up, arriving at the place of work early, most times engaging in parade or morning drills each day, which becomes a routine way of life and is accompanied by pleasant feelings. Then at retirement, this routine cycle changes. Other factors likely to induce pre-retirement stress of police officers are perceived fear of social isolation, fear of functional discontinuation of regular source of income to cater for medical cost and other allied expenses. In addition is the anxiety about the erosion of the traditional benefits landscape, where the pension policy of a nation is ambiguous and unpredictable. Thus, the state of unpreparedness on the part of the police personnel, coupled with fear of unknown could lead to negative psychological response to retirement which involves a variety of affective and cognitive states.

Although many variables have contributed to response to pre-retirement stress, the interest of this study is to specifically explore the role of Coping Strategy and Core Self-Evaluation on pre-retirement stress. The focus on pre-retirement stress is appropriate due to death of proper research on it, especially among the Nigerian Police Personnel. The aim of this research therefore, is to investigate whether Coping Strategy and Core Self-Evaluation are moderators of pre-retirement stress.

Thus the study hypothesizes that:

Ho$_1$: Employees high in Coping Strategy will respond positively to pre-retirement stress than employees low in Coping Strategy.

Ho_2: Employees high in Core Self-Evaluation will respond positively to pre-retirement stress than employees low Core Self -Evaluation.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The research design used for this study is a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design.

2.2 Participants

Participants in this study comprised 198 Police Personnel selected from Police formations in Uyo metropolis of Akwa Ibom State. There are six (6) Police formations and stations under Uyo Metropolis include: Police Headquarters Ikot Akpanabia, A Division Police Station - Wellington Bassey Way; B Division Police Station - Ewet Housing Estate, C Division Police Station - Ikot Akpanabia; D Division Police Station- Itam; Police Station Shelter Afrique. Using simple random sampling technique, three (3) police formations were selected namely: Police Force Headquarters Ikot Akpanabia (88), A Division Police Station, Wellington Bassey Way, (61) and B Division Police Station, Ewet Housing Estate (49).   Inclusion criteria comprised participants who have 5 years or less to retirement, because retirement concerns may set in within this period. By gender, of the total sample, 165 (83%) were males and 33 (17%) were females. The mean age was 61.5 years (SD=7.54) ranging from 55 to 65 years. Majority of the participants were married 171 (86%) and 27 (14%) were either single, divorce or separated. The participants represented a range of educational attainment of high levels, (B.Sc., HND, M.Sc., Ph. D) 105 (53%) and low educational attainment (FSLC, SSCE, NCE, OND) 93 (47%). Similarly, the ranks and job positions of the respondents were taken into consideration. One hundred and twenty-five (63%) of the personnel were of Rank and file while 73 (37%) were of Senior cadre. All the participants were literate; able to communicate in English and not limited by ethnicity or religion.

2.3 Instruments

The data for the study was obtained using the following instruments. Coping Assessment Scale (CAS): Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) and Retirement Stress Questionnaire (RSO). The Coping Assessment Scale (CAS) is a 28- item scale developed by Moos and Billings (1984), the scale is constructed in a 4 - Point Likert Format. It is designed to assess individual's ability to cope with stressful situations. Respondents are required to respond to each statement of the scale by expressing the extent to which they adopt the strategy in coping with stressful situations. On the scale are the following coping strategies: Problem -Focused and Emotion- Focused coping. Problem -Focused coping comprised the following subscales: Appraisal - Focused coping (4 items); Information Seeking (7 items), and Problem- Solving (5 items), while, Emotion-Focused coping comprises Affective regulation (6 items), and Emotional discharge (6 items) as its subscales. Items on the scale include, "I talked with friends about the problem," "I tell myself things that make me feel better". Moos and Billings (1984) obtained the Cronbach's alphas for the subscales" 0.53, 0.66, 0.53, and 0.41 respectively.

However, to guarantee the validity and reliability of the instruments used in this study, the researchers conducted a pilot study comprising 60 employees (40 male and 20 females) from Police personnel in Oron; that is, Oron Divisional Headquarter and Okobo Divisional Headquarters The age ranged from 52 years to 67, with a mean age of 59.5% and standard deviation (SD) of 7.71. Seventy five (75) questionnaires were distributed, out of which 60 valid questionnaires were used for analyses.

The data gathered were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. Crombach's Alpha of 0.62 was obtained for Appraisal- Focused coping, 0.54 Problems-Focused coping, 0.58 for information seeking, emotion focused coping 0.58 and affective regulation was 0.60. For core self-evaluation, Crombach's Alpha 0.67 was obtained and Retirement Stress Questionnaire (RSQ), Crombach's

Alpha of 0.62 was obtained. The outcome of the pilot study seems quite encouraging with a relatively high internal consistency reliability estimate, pointing out that the instruments are creditable and capable of measuring what they are meant to measure.

2.4 Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES)

Core Self-Evaluation Scale is made up of 12 items (Judge, Erez and Thoreston, 2002). It is designed to measure and evaluate individual's personality trait that is consistent over time. Core Self-Evaluation Scale is constructed in a 5-point Likert response format ranging from: 1- Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree. Items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 carry reversed scoring, while all other items carry normal scoring. Higher scores indicate that the individual manifest high Self-Evaluation. Robust psychometric property has been reported for the scale (Judge, et al 2002). Average reliability of 0.84 on test – retest, item total correlation ranging from 0.48 to 0.55 as well as high and positively correlated inter-item matrix. In the pilot study the internal consistency reliability of the Core Self-Evaluation was Cronbach's Alpha 0.67.

2.5 Retirement Stress Questionnaire (RSQ)

Retirement Stress Questionnaire (RSQ) is a 24-item stress scale. The scale is designed to measure an individual's retirement. Stress response based on three indices: psychological, physiological and behavioural symptoms of stress. The scoring key ranges from "strongly agree" to strongly disagree in the Likert type format. Items on the scale include, "I experience poor appetite when I start to think about retirement". "I find it difficult to concentrate whenever I remember my approaching retirement." In the pilot study the internal consistency reliability of Retirement Stress Questionnaire (RSQ) was Cronbach's Alpha 0.62.

3. Data Analyses

A 2-way Analysis of Variance (AVOVA) of an unequal sample size was employed to test hypotheses.

3.1 Results

Table 1: Influence of Coping Strategy and Core Self-Evaluations on Pre-retirement Stress

Source	SOS	Df	Ms	f-ratio	P value`
Coping Strategy	502.557	1	502.557	15.09	<.05
Core Self-Evaluations	218.90	1	218.90	6.57	<.05
Coping Strategy/CSE	63.285	1	63.285	1.90	>.05
Error	6462.055	194	33.310		
Total		**198**			

Source: Output of correlation relation computation.

Table 1, shows that Coping Strategy significantly influences Pre-retirement stress among Police Personnel in Uyo (F (1,194) = 15.09; p<.05). Thus, the first hypothesis which states that employees high in Coping Strategy will respond positively to pre-retirement stress than employees in low Coping Strategy was accepted. Similarly, the second hypothesis which states that employees high in Core Self-Evaluation will respond positively to pre-retirement stress than employees low in Core Self-Evaluation was also affirmed (F (1,194) = 6.57; p <.05). The results however revealed that there was no joint interaction effect of coping strategy and core self-evaluations on response to pre retirement stress (F (1,194) = 1.90; p.>0.05).

Table 2: Effect of Coping Strategy on Response to Pre-retirement Stress among Police Personnel

Pre-retirement Stress	Coping Strategy	N	Mean	Std. Error
	High	49	29.184	.719
	Low	24	22.708	.999

Source: Output of correlation between Coping strategy and pre-retirement stress.

Data in Table 2 indicates that there was a significant effect of Coping Strategy on response to Pre-retirement Stress among Police Personnel in Uyo. The Table further revealed that

participants low in coping strategy responded negatively to pre-retirement stress than their counterparts in high coping strategy group. Therefore, the first hypothesis was confirmed.

Table 3: Effect of Core Self-Evaluations on response to Pre-retirement stress among Police personnel

Pre-retirement Stress	CSE	N	Mean	Std. Error
	High	9	24.333	1.05
	Low	116	21.250	64.70

Source: Output of Correlation between Core Self- Evaluations and Pre-retirement Stress.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant effect of Core Self-Evaluation on response to Pre-retirement stress among Police Personnel in Uyo. The Table further showed that participants in low Core Self-Evaluation group responded negatively to Pre-retirement Stress, compared to their counterpart in high Core Self-evaluation group. Thus, the second hypothesis was also confirmed.

4. Discussion of Findings

Two hypotheses were postulated and tested in this study. The results of the first hypothesis revealed that employees with high Coping Strategy reported a significantly low response to Pre-retirement Stress compared to employees in low Coping Strategy group. The finding is in agreement with earlier findings made by Henrique, Fernandes, Costa, and Amorin (2014), which showed that Coping Strategy was significantly related to retirement stress. High levels of retirement stress were associated to escape Avoidance Coping, and were more common in the female samples. Low levels of retirement stress were found to be related to Planned Resolution Strategies, positive re-appraisal and seeking for social support. Also, Opeyeme, Abolaji, and Obiyomis (2015) research finding is in line with this study's outcomes that nervousness, high hopes and expectations were among the variables that predispose the employees to Pre-retirement Stress. This study's finding also agrees with Oladele and Mabe (2010) on Coping

Strategies and retirement stress which showed that the most prominent Coping Strategies were: Maintaining an active personal life at retirement; Maintaining healthy relationship with co-workers at work; Developing structural and personal support system and Maintaining healthy relationship with significant others. Anike and Haesner (2018) results on pre- retirement stress among the older population in Malaysia agrees with the result of the current study. Anike's study revealed that coping strategy improves stress management, particularly, shared burden by social group and family instead of being borne by individual alone. Programmes which are collective in nature also provide greater opportunity for friendship and social interactions, mutual teaching and learning. Voluntary work and moral support were seen to contribute towards a more wholesome lifestyle for retirees.

The second hypothesis which predicted that Core Self-Evaluations will influence response to Pre-retirement Stress was also confirmed. This result is in support of the findings of Lourdes and Natalio (2015) which in their study reported a significant relationship between Core self-Evaluations and certain dimensions of Pre- retirement Stress. Their study further stressed that people high in Core Self-Evaluation are generally better at coping with stress. They are better at learning and conscientious at inspiring themselves and their teams. Similarly, Lourdes and Natalio study further revealed that those high in Core Self-Evaluation seek-out appropriate support, multiple life roles, responsibilities and challenges in and out of work.

In corroborating the results of this study, Judge and Kammeyer- Mueller's (2011) meta-analytic review demonstrated that individuals high in Core Self-Evaluation perceived fewer stressors, experience less strain after controlling for stressors; and engaged in less avoidance of stressors induced environments/factors. However, study by Hong Kong, Liu and Martin (2022) noted that psychological planning, including coping adjustment were found to have positive impacts on physical health and life satisfaction through increased retirement coping confidence levels.

4.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate if Coping Strategy is a predictor of Pre-retirement Stress among Police Personnel in Uyo. Equally, the study wanted to establish whether Core-Self-Evaluation has any moderating effect on pre-retirement stress. Findings revealed a significant association between the variables. These findings have serious implications. It suggests that employees approaching retirement should start planning and preparing ahead for the D-day while still at work; at most five years before the actual retirement date. It is also suggestive of the fact that employees should have high positive expectations, positive attitude, intentions, and plans about themselves as these will boost their self-esteem and self-efficacy even in stressful situations such as retirement.

4.2 Recommendations

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

(i)   The older workers approaching retirement should establish close contacts with family members, relatives, significant persons even professional colleagues ; this will to help cushion the effect of social isolation and boredom in retirement.

(ii) Also having social network, which involves getting supports from social circles such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organizations, or engaging with Charity activities have been found to decrease retirement stress. Therefore prospective retired employees should endeavour to expand their social network circles in view of its benefits.

(iii) Good coping strategy is needed to embrace retirement stress, also requires a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. This will enable a potential retiree to modify the stressful situation and cope with pre retirement stress. Pre-retirement planning will effectively

enhance retirement preparedness and confidence and contribute to better post-retirement outcomes.

(iv) Government, Policy Makers, Service Providers, Employers of Labour should a developed and thought-out programme and scheme targeted towards retired employees such as: Pre-retirement workshop and seminars; capacity building /skills enhancement in areas of farming, trading and manufacturing; Business Orientation Services and Counseling as well as credit scheme. However, pre-retired employees can avail themselves of these services where available if not provided by their employers in view of the significance they have in coping with retirement stress.

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