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LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG POLICE OFFICERS: THE ROLES OF RELIGION, NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND ETHNICITY

This study examined the associations between religion, number of children, ethnicity, and life satisfaction among police officers in Osun State, Nigeria. Anchored on the subjective well-being framework, a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. A total of 384 serving police officers were selected from Area Commands in Osun State. Data were collected using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and analysed using independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA. Results indicated statistically significant differences in life satisfaction across demographic variables. Officers with one to three children reported higher life satisfaction than those with four to six children. Christian officers reported higher life satisfaction than Muslim officers. Ethnicity was also significantly associated with life satisfaction, with variation observed across groups. These findings highlight the role of demographic and socio-cultural factors in understanding life satisfaction among police personnel. However, findings are interpreted as bivariate associations due to the cross-sectional design. Implications for policy and officer welfare are discussed.

Keywords: life satisfaction, police officers, religion, number of children, ethnicity, well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

The well-being of police officers has continued to attract scholarly attention due to its implications for individual functioning, occupational effectiveness, public safety, and organisational performance. Police officers operate in highly demanding environments characterised by exposure to stress, danger, long working hours, and emotional strain. Given their critical role in safeguarding individuals and nations (Arisukwu et al., 2020), it is important that police personnel maintain adequate psychological well-being to effectively perform their duties. One important indicator of psychological well-being

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is life satisfaction, which reflects individuals' overall evaluation of the quality and meaningfulness of their lives.

Life satisfaction is a central component of subjective well-being, referring to individuals' cognitive and affective evaluations of their overall life circumstances (Diener et al., 1985). From a psychological perspective, life satisfaction represents a cognitive judgment about the extent to which one's life aligns with personal goals, expectations, and standards. However, this evaluation is not formed in isolation, as it is also influenced by sociocultural contexts, including cultural values, religious beliefs, social relationships, and institutional environments. Therefore, among police officers, life satisfaction may be understood as an outcome of the interaction between personal characteristics and broader social and occupational conditions.

Contemporary literature on police well-being conceptualises the determinants of life satisfaction within a multidimensional framework. These determinants can be broadly classified into personal factors (e.g., age, gender, personality characteristics, and demographic attributes), family-related factors (e.g., marital status, number of children, and family responsibilities), occupational factors (e.g., workload, job demands, and exposure to operational stressors), organisational factors (e.g., leadership style, organisational support, and working conditions), and socio-cultural factors (e.g., religion, ethnicity, and social support systems). Although demographic characteristics represent only one dimension of these influences, they remain important because they shape individuals' experiences, resources, and interpretations of their life circumstances.

Religion has been identified as an important socio-cultural factor associated with psychological well-being and work-related outcomes. Religious involvement may provide individuals with coping resources, emotional support, social connectedness, and meaning-making frameworks that influence how they evaluate their lives. Previous studies have shown that religious beliefs and practices may be associated with employee attitudes and behaviours. For instance, Odogwu and Nnonyelu (2021) reported a positive relationship between religious beliefs and practices and job performance among university employees in South-South Nigeria. Similarly, Haybatollahi (2012) found that employees' religious affiliations (Christianity, Islam, and Traditional African Religion) were associated with organisational experiences, with Christian participants reporting greater satisfaction with workplace safety structures compared to other religious groups. Furthermore, Ramadhan and Eryandra (2021) demonstrated a positive association between religiosity and employee performance. These findings suggest that religious affiliation may be related to how individuals perceive and evaluate their life experiences.

Family-related characteristics, particularly number of children, have also received attention in studies examining employee well-being. The number of children an individual has may influence life satisfaction through family responsibilities, financial obligations, caregiving demands, and emotional support. Findings from previous studies, however, remain inconsistent. For example, Amarasena et al. (2015) reported that university faculty members with fewer children experienced higher job satisfaction compared to those with larger families. Similarly, Hendrawijaya (2019) and Hanif et al. (2011) found that family responsibilities were associated with employee outcomes among workers and teachers, respectively. These findings suggest that managing larger families may present additional demands that could influence employees' well-being. Conversely, Rush (2021) reported that having more children was positively associated with life satisfaction, indicating that the relationship between family size and well-being may depend on contextual factors.

Ethnicity is another socio-cultural factor that may be associated with life satisfaction, particularly in culturally diverse societies. Ethnic identity can influence individuals' access to social support, sense of belonging, perceived inclusion, and experiences within social institutions such as the police force. However, empirical evidence regarding ethnicity and well-being remains mixed. Mobolaji-Olajide et al. (2020) reported a significant association between ethnicity and satisfaction outcomes, while Omosehin and Smith (2019), in a cross-cultural study involving White British, UK ethnic minorities, and Nigerian employees, found that cultural background did not significantly predict well-being. Similarly, Knies et al. (2016), in a study involving Black Africans, UK-born Indians, and Pakistanis, found differences in life satisfaction between majority and minority ethnic groups, suggesting that ethnic context may play a role in subjective well-being.

In Nigeria, police officers are recruited from diverse religious, ethnic, and family backgrounds, which may contribute to variations in how they evaluate their lives. However, limited research has simultaneously examined the associations between religion, number of children, ethnicity, and life satisfaction among Nigerian police officers. Most previous studies have been conducted outside Nigeria, with relatively limited emphasis on understanding how these demographic characteristics relate to the cognitive evaluation of life experiences among law enforcement personnel within the Nigerian context.

Therefore, this study examines the associations between religion, number of children, ethnicity, and life satisfaction among police officers in Osun State, Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional design, the study focuses on identifying differences in life satisfaction across demographic groups and interpreting findings as statistical associations rather than causal relationships

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine associations between demographic variables (religion, number of children, ethnicity) and life satisfaction among police officers.

Participants

Participants were 384 serving police officers in Osun State, Nigeria, comprising 195 males and 189 females. Officers were drawn from selected Area Commands using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Participants represented diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (Reference: IPH/OAU/12/2287). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were ensured.

Measures

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985). The scale consists of 5 items rated on a Likert scale. Higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction. The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$).

Demographic Variables

Demographic information included religion (Christianity, Islam), number of children (1-3, 4-6), and ethnicity (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Others).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Tukey–Kramer post hoc tests were used for multiple comparisons. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

3. RESULTS

The data were analysed using both independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA.

Table 1a. Summary of independent samples t-test showing the association between number of children and life satisfaction

Life Satisfaction			
Variable	**Mean (SD)**	**t**	**p**
Number of Children		2.49	.013*
1-3	14.43 (4.84)		
4-6	12.89 (5.59)		

*Note: Statistically significant **p<.01, *p<.05*

Source: own statistical analysis based on data from respondents.

As shown above, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in life satisfaction based on number of children (1-3 vs. 4-6 children). Results indicated a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction scores between the two groups, $t(383) = 2.49$, $p = .013$. Officers with 1–3 children reported higher life satisfaction (M = 14.43, SD = 4.84) compared to those with 4–6 children (M = 12.89, SD = 5.59). This suggests a statistically significant association between number of children and life satisfaction.

Table 1b. Summary of independent samples t-test showing the association between religion and life satisfaction

Life Satisfaction			
Variable	**Mean (SD)**	**t**	**p**
Religion		4.82	.001**
Christianity	14.92 (4.62)		
Islam	12.33 (5.48)		

*Note: Statistically significant **p<.01, *p<.05*

Source: own statistical analysis based on data from respondents.

As shown above, an independent samples t-test was also conducted to examine differences in life satisfaction based on religious affiliation (Christianity vs. Islam). The results showed a statistically significant difference, $t(383) = 4.82$, $p < .001$. Christian officers reported higher life satisfaction (M = 14.92, SD = 4.62) than Muslim officers

(M = 12.33, SD = 5.48), indicating a significant association between religion and life satisfaction.

Table 2a. Summary of One-Way ANOVA Showing the Association Between Ethnicity and Life Satisfaction

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	f	p
Between Groups	868.248	**3**	289.416	12.33	.01
Within Groups	8919.562	380	23.473		
Total	9787.810	383			

Source: own statistical analysis based on data from respondents.

As shown in the analysis above, ethnicity was found to be significant [F (3, 380) = = 12.33, p<.05] as officers from other ethnic groups (M = 15.07, SD = 4.53) reported higher life satisfaction compared to Hausa's (M = 9.72, SD = 3.69), Igbo's (M = 11.33, SD = 5.57), and Yoruba's (M = 14.56, SD = 4.92). The results suggested that there were significant differences in the mean scores of the ethnic groups on life satisfaction. Consequently, Turkey's –Kramer HSD (Honest Significant Difference) for unequal group post hoc test was conducted in order to know the particular group's mean differences in life satisfaction. The results of the analyses are presented below in Table 2b.

Table 2b. Tukey's – Kramer HSD for Unequal Groups Showing Multiple Comparison of Ethnicity on Life Satisfaction

Ethnic Groups	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Hausa	18	9.72	3.69	1			
Igbo	48	11.33	5.57	-1.61	1		
Yoruba	199	14.56	4.92	-4.84*	-3.22*	1	
Others	119	15.07	4.53	-5.35*	-3.74*	-.51	1

*Note: *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*

Source: own statistical analysis based on data from respondents.

The results on Table 2b revealed that police officers who are from other ethnic groups (M = 15.07, SD = 4.53) reported higher life satisfaction than police officers who are Hausa (M = 9.72, SD = 3.69), Igbo (M = 11.33, SD = 5.57) and Yoruba (M = 14.56, SD = 4.92). Furthermore, the results revealed a significant difference in the life satisfaction of respondents between Hausa and Yoruba (Tukey = -4.84; p<.05). There was also significant difference in the life satisfaction of respondents between Igbo and Yoruba (Tukey = -3.22; p<.05). The result also revealed a significant difference in the life satisfaction of respondents between Hausa and other (Tukey = -5.35; p<.05). There was also significant difference in the life satisfaction of respondents between Igbo and Hausa (Tukey = -3.74; p<.05).

4. DISCUSSION

This study examined the associations between religion, number of children, ethnicity, and life satisfaction among police officers in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings indicate

statistically significant differences in life satisfaction across the examined demographic variables.

First, the results showed that life satisfaction differed by religious affiliation, with Christian officers reporting higher mean scores than Muslim officers. This finding is consistent with prior research (Odogwu, Nnonyelu, 2021) suggesting that religious involvement may be associated with psychological well-being through mechanisms such as social support, coping strategies, and meaning-making processes. However, it is important to emphasise that the present study did not assess specific religious practices, levels of religiosity, or contextual factors that may explain these differences. Therefore, the observed variation should be interpreted strictly as an **a**ssociation, and not as evidence of religious influence on life satisfaction.

Second, the findings indicated that officers with fewer children reported higher life satisfaction compared to those with a larger number of children. This result may reflect the potential economic and caregiving demands associated with larger family sizes, particularly in contexts where financial resources may be limited (Amarasena et al., 2015). However, other unmeasured factors such as income level, marital status, and family support systems may also contribute to this relationship. Consequently, the observed association should be understood within the limitations of the data and not interpreted as a direct effect of family size on life satisfaction.

Third, ethnicity was significantly associated with life satisfaction, with differences observed across ethnic groups. Officers categorized as "others" reported higher mean life satisfaction compared to Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba officers. While previous studies (Tay et al., 2014; Mobolaji-Olajide et al., 2020) have suggested that ethnic identity and minority status may be linked to subjective well-being through social integration and perceived inclusion, the present study did not assess contextual factors such as workplace discrimination, cohesion, or social support. Therefore, explanations for these differences remain speculative and require further investigation.

Overall, the findings align with the broader theoretical position that life satisfaction is a multidimensional construct influenced by a combination of personal and socio-cultural factors. However, given the cross-sectional design and the absence of controls for potential confounding variables (such as age, rank, income, marital status, and years of service), the results should be interpreted as bivariate associations only.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has some limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Second, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias. Third, the study did not control for important occupational and demographic variables such as age, rank, income level, marital status, and years of service, which may influence life satisfaction. Fourth, the use of categorical group comparisons does not allow for assessment of the independent predictive strength of each variable.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should employ longitudinal or multivariate designs, such as multiple regression or structural equation modelling, to better examine the relative contribution of demographic, occupational, and organisational factors. Including broader control variables would also improve the robustness of findings. Additionally, qualitative approaches may

help to better understand the contextual mechanisms underlying life satisfaction among police officers.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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