

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Psychological well-being is a vital part of life as it indicates good mental health. Previous studies have shown that higher levels of psychological well-being are linked to a better quality of life. Therefore, this study explored the psychosocial factors (social support, loneliness, and quality of work life) that affect the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional design was used, with 298 civil servants randomly selected from five ministries in Lagos State participating. Data were gathered through a questionnaire that included demographic questions and four standardized scales. The data were analyzed with multiple regression analysis and t-test. Results showed that social support, loneliness, and quality of work life together predicted psychological well-being among civil servants in Lagos State ($F_{(3, 290)} = 13.071$, $R^2 = .119$, $p < .01$). Additionally, social support ($\beta = -.371$; $t = -6.209$; $p < .01$) and quality of work life ($\beta = .183$; $t = 3.067$; $p < .01$) had significant independent effects on psychological well-being. In contrast, loneliness did not have a significant independent effect, and no significant gender differences were found in participants' psychological well-being. The study concludes that psychosocial factors (social support, loneliness, and quality of work life) are key predictors of psychological well-being among civil servants in Lagos State. It is recommended that the Lagos State Civil Service Commission regularly assess employees' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and work environment to identify stressors and develop evidence-based policies.

Keywords: Social support, Loneliness, Quality of work life, Psychological well-being

Introduction

The psychological well-being of individuals in the workplace is an essential need today for workers' efficiency and effectiveness. Positive psychological well-being allows workers to handle the demands of their jobs without jeopardizing their mental health, promoting psychological happiness and a sense of achievement. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health and by extension, psychological wellbeing is a state in which individuals are aware of their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and effectively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities (WHO, 2020). Psychological well-being (PWB) includes subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, and a sense of personal growth and self-actualization (as in the eudaimonic tradition of well-being), dimensions reflected in contemporary scientific understandings of PWB (WHO, 2014; Wijngaards, et. al, 2022). Therefore, psychological well-being refers to a mental state that enables individuals to achieve their potential, be productive and innovative, maintain a sense of autonomy and competence, and manage everyday stressors, all of which are essential for fulfilling both personal and organizational goals in the workplace.

Psychological well-being refers involves an individual's ability to grow personally, maintain meaningful relationships, exercise autonomy and mastery, and experience a sense of purpose, self-esteem, and personal growth (Aycan, 2024; Aldbyani et al., 2025). High psychological well-being is not simply the absence of mental illness but also the presence of positive psychological functioning such as resilience, healthy social connections, and the ability to adapt and thrive (Aldbyani et al., 2025). Psychological well-being encompasses both emotional and cognitive aspects of mental health. It involves how individuals think, feel, and behave, and is often characterized by the absence of mental disorders (Friedman & Kern, 2014). Psychological well-being influences daily functioning, interpersonal relationships, and physical health. It also reflects a person's capacity to enjoy life, maintain balance among life's demands, and develop psychological resilience (Zeidner, et. al, 2012). In occupational research, psychological well-being encompasses mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, burnout, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and general subjective well-being. Employee well-being is, therefore, influenced by psychosocial work factors including stress, support, job quality, and social relationships. Psychosocial risks can have a significant impact on employees (including civil servants), with negative physical, psychological, and social consequences, including high levels of stress, overwork, or depression ([Douelfiqar et al. 2023](#)).

Civil servants, like all workers, require both physical health and psychological fitness in order to carry out their duties effectively. A well-supported and healthy workforce is essential for efficient organizational performance, particularly within the public sector where civil servants constitute the engine that drives national administrative and economic systems (International Labour Organization, 2022). Without their contributions, government functions and service delivery would be significantly disrupted or weakened. Consequently, there is a strong need for consistent attention, care, and institutional support for this critical workforce.

The welfare of employees is central to national productivity, as workers form the foundation upon which economic and social development depend (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2023). Civil servants, in particular, often navigate multiple and simultaneous pressures ranging from workplace responsibilities to domestic demands that can negatively influence their psychological well-being if left unaddressed (World Health Organization, WHO, 2020). Ensuring their mental health is therefore vital for sustaining public sector efficiency and overall national progress. Because psychological well-being is central to effective human functioning, it is vital to examine psychosocial factors such as social support, loneliness or workplace isolation, and the overall quality of the work environment, as these factors substantially influence employees' mental health. Empirical studies consistently underscore this relationship. For instance, workplace social support has been shown to significantly enhance workers' psychological well-being and buffer stress among public-sector employees (Kim & Beehr, 2021; Paukert et al., 2023). Similarly, research demonstrates that organizational justice and supportive supervisory relationships are strong predictors of improved mental well-being among civil servants (Rasool et al., 2022).

Conversely, findings indicate that workplace loneliness and insufficient social connections are linked to poorer well-being outcomes, including lower job satisfaction and heightened burnout (Fujimoto & Kotani, 2022; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2020). Evidence further shows that adverse psychosocial work conditions such as excessive job demands, lack of clarity, inadequate supervisor support, and low decision control substantially undermine employees' psychological health (Magnavita et al., 2021; Giorgi et al., 2020). These results collectively highlight the importance of cultivating positive psychosocial environments to safeguard the well-being of civil servants.

Civil servants, who frequently operate within bureaucratic, high-demand, and resource-limited environments, are particularly susceptible to adverse psychosocial pressures. As a result, examining how factors such as social support, work quality or conditions, and loneliness or workplace social isolation shape their psychological well-being is both relevant and imperative for sustaining an efficient and healthy public workforce. In line with this need, the present study explored the influence of key psychosocial factors namely social support, loneliness, and quality of work life on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the psychosocial factors (social support, loneliness and quality of work life) influencing psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the joint and independent influence of psychosocial factors (loneliness, social support and quality of work life) on psychological wellbeing among civil servant in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. Find out if male civil servant will report a better psychological wellbeing compared to their counterpart in Lagos state

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- 1) Psychosocial factors (social support, loneliness and quality of work life) will have a significant joint and independent influence on psychological well-being among civil servants in Lagos State, Nigeria.
- 2) Male civil servants will report a better psychological well-being compared to their female counterpart in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

The existing evidence across occupational groups including civil servants, healthcare workers, social workers, and general employed populations converges on the conclusion that social support, work-related conditions / job quality, and workplace loneliness or social isolation are central determinants of psychological well-being and mental health. Empirical studies among civil servants, healthcare professionals, social workers, and diverse employed populations consistently demonstrates that social support, loneliness or workplace isolation, and the quality of work life or job conditions are key determinants of psychological well-being and overall mental health. Within occupational research, psychological well-being is typically reflected in outcomes such as depression, anxiety, burnout, insomnia, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and general subjective well-being. Consequently, employee well-being is shaped by a range of psychosocial work factors, including social support, loneliness or workplace isolation, the quality of work life, workplace stress, supportive relationships and the presence or absence of social connectedness.

Social Support and Psychological Well-Being among Civil Servants and Workers

Social support refers to the emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal resources provided by one's social network (family, colleagues, supervisors, community) or the perception that such support is available. Long established as a protective or "stress-buffering" factor, social support can help individuals cope with stress, adapt to challenges, and maintain mental health (e.g., via the "stress-buffering model"). Social support can be defined as the *perception or experience that one is cared for, valued, respected, and belongs to a network of supportive social relationships that can provide emotional comfort, practical assistance, information, and belonging* (a resource people draw to cope

with stress, maintain mental health, and promote psychological well-being) (Drageset, 2021; Dour et al., 2022; Malecki & Demaray, 2002).

He et al, (2023) conducted a significant study examining occupational stress and mental health among civil servants in China during the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular focus on the mediating roles of social support and work–family conflict. Using a sample of 327 civil servants from Wenzhou City, the study found that social support played a significant mediating role in the relationship between occupational stress and mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and insomnia. These findings highlight the protective function of social support in mitigating the negative effects of work-related stress on the psychological well-being of civil servants.

Similarly, Marange, Mangwanya, Maramura, and Chinyamurindi (2024) examined the role of workplace social support and organizational justice in promoting mental well-being among public service employees. Using a survey of 289 public-sector employees, the study found that workplace social support had a direct and positive effect on employee mental health, whereas organizational justice showed no significant direct relationship. Importantly, workplace social support fully mediated the relationship between organizational justice and mental health, highlighting its central role in safeguarding employee well-being.

Godinho et al. (2020) conducted a cohort study examining social support at work among civil servants at a public university. The study involved 328 active employees who completed questionnaires on workplace social support as well as sociodemographic and occupational factors related to work and health. While the primary focus was on social support and its associated factors, the findings highlighted a high prevalence of workplace social support (85.7%), suggesting that supportive work environments are common among civil servants.

Gülaçtı (2010) examined the effect of perceived social support on subjective well-being among 87 students enrolled in a primary classroom teacher training programme. The study found that perceived social support accounted for 43% of the variance in subjective well-being. In particular, perceived family support emerged as a significant predictor, highlighting the important role of close personal relationships in promoting well-being.

Moreover, social support plays a key role in mitigating the negative consequences of loneliness. For example, Hutten et al. (2021) found that supportive relationships can partially buffer the mental health risks associated with loneliness, underscoring the importance of fostering social connections in interventions aimed at improving psychological well-being.

Loneliness and Psychological Well-Being Outcomes

Loneliness often understood as the subjective feeling of social isolation which have a profound effect on mental well-being. In the workplace context, loneliness reflects an employee's perception of social isolation, insufficient quality of interpersonal relationships, or lack of meaningful social connection at work (Basit & Nauman, 2023; Sweeney et al., 2024). This is distinct from objective isolation (for example, working alone); workplace loneliness captures an individual's subjective sense of deficiency in social connection (Basit & Nauman, 2023). Empirical research has linked workplace loneliness to reduced job satisfaction, increased burnout, diminished work engagement, and poorer mental-health outcomes (e.g., emotional exhaustion, psychological distress) (Bryan, 2023; Guo, 2020; Jung, 2022). In effect, workplace loneliness or social isolation emerges as a major risk factor for reduced job performance and overall psychological well-being among employees.

Loneliness represents an individual's perceived deficiency in meaningful and satisfying social relationships. The pathways through which loneliness affects mental well-being are complex and

multifaceted. It can intensify existing mental health conditions by amplifying feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness and may contribute to the onset of new disorders by disrupting sleep, impairing cognitive functioning, and heightening vulnerability to stress (Mann et al., 2022; Cacioppo et al., 2010). Moreover, loneliness can create a self-perpetuating cycle: individuals who feel lonely are often less inclined to engage in social interactions, which reinforces their isolation and further deteriorates their mental health. Chronic loneliness has been consistently linked with adverse psychological outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and elevated stress (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Mann et al., 2022). These effects are not transient; prolonged loneliness can cause enduring harm to mental health, highlighting the critical need to address loneliness in psychological and occupational well-being interventions (Cacioppo et al., 2002; Hawkley et al., 2010).

Psychologists have described loneliness as a form of “**social pain**” similar to physical pain because of its harmful effects on cognition, emotion, behaviour, and overall well-being (Kalil et al., 2010). Workplace loneliness has also been shown to negatively impact employee outcomes. For instance, **Peng et al. (2017)** reported that lonely employees demonstrated **reduced creativity**, while **Wang et al. (2018)** highlighted that loneliness and social support jointly influence mental-health outcomes.

More recent evidence comes from **D’Oliveira and Persico (2023)**, who studied workplace isolation, loneliness, and well-being among 137 employees. Their findings indicate that increased opportunities for interpersonal interactions at work through greater task interdependence are not enough to reverse the negative effects of workplace isolation on wellbeing. In contrast, an investment in a supportive environment may reverse the negative effects of workplace isolation on wellbeing, highlighting the importance of a supportive culture.

In a 2025 study, **Egaña-Marcos et al.** examined loneliness, social support, and income in relation to mental well-being in Spain. Results showed that **loneliness was a strong predictor of mental well-being**, while income and social support **partially mediated** the relationship between loneliness and mental well-being, confirming the buffering effect of support systems.

Quality of Work Life and Psychological Well-Being

Work is a central aspect of society and daily life, as most individuals spend a substantial portion of their waking hours engaged in paid employment. Beyond providing income, work plays a crucial role in shaping quality of life, influencing personal identity, and facilitating social interactions (Aleksynska et al., 2019). Throughout the lifespan, work affects health both directly and indirectly, as work activities and conditions mobilize an individual’s physical and psychological resources (Leroyer et al., 2022). Ideally, a workplace should promote employees’ physical and mental well-being. However, workplace pressures including inadequate safety measures (Gao & Samanpour, 2024), and insufficient health protection (Potter et al., 2024) can adversely affect the quality of employees’ work life and overall well-being.

Quality of work life (or job quality, work conditions) is a multidimensional construct that comprises factors such as job demands (e.g., workload, intensity), job control or autonomy, the work environment, job security, relationships with colleagues, work life balance, available resources, and rewards. Research shows that job quality affects not only job performance but also employee well-being, life satisfaction, and mental health. For example, a large-scale study found that job quality particularly meaningful work, manageable demands, and a supportive social environment was more strongly linked to employees’ mental health than the number of hours worked per week (Wang, et al., 2022). Similarly, among healthcare and other workers, higher job autonomy (control over one’s work) has been associated with better mental well-being and quality of life (Lu, et al., 2023). Moreover, evidence from cross-sectional and longitudinal research suggests that poor work conditions (e.g., high demands with

low control and inadequate support) tend to undermine subjective well-being, job satisfaction, and psychological health (Claes, 2023).

Ayalew et al. (2024) investigated the quality of work life and its associated factors among health professionals employed in both private and government health institutions in the Awi Zone, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. The study, conducted in 2022, used a comparative cross-sectional design, with participants selected through a lottery method. A total of 385 private health professionals and 395 government health professionals participated in the study. The findings indicated that health professionals working in private health institutions reported lower quality of work-life satisfaction compared to those in government health institutions, highlighting disparities in work-life experiences between different types of healthcare settings.

Millan et al. (2017) examined how affiliation with state-funded versus private universities influenced perceptions of work-related stressors, evaluations of working conditions, and psychological well-being among university employees. The study employed two models differentiated by the causal ordering of mediating variables, using the Inventory of Perceived Stressors for University Teachers and the Psychological Well-Being Scale Survey on Working Conditions. Path analysis revealed 42 significant causal relationships negatively affecting psychological well-being. Employees at state-funded universities reported higher perceived work stress, more negative evaluations of certain working conditions, and overall lower psychological well-being compared to their counterparts at private universities.

Tathcioğlu et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and psychological well-being among social workers in Turkey, focusing on the mediating role of meaning in life and the moderating role of spiritual orientation. Using an online quantitative cross-sectional design, the study surveyed 303 social workers and employed validated scales to measure job satisfaction, psychological well-being, meaning in life, and spiritual orientation. The findings indicated that job satisfaction was positively associated with both meaning in life and psychological well-being. Furthermore, meaning in life was found to mediate the relationship between job satisfaction and psychological well-being, highlighting its critical role in linking work experiences to employees' mental health outcomes.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional research design and utilized standardized self-report scales to collect data. The study was conducted in five randomly selected local government areas in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State, located in the southwestern part of the country, is the most populous state in Nigeria with a population of approximately five million people and a total of fifty-seven local government areas. Specifically, data were collected from civil servants working under the Lagos State Civil Service Commission, with a total of 298 participants randomly selected from five ministries.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising five sections (A–E). Section A assessed socio-demographic characteristics, Section B included the Psychological Well-Being Scale developed by Ryff (1989) and Ryff and Keyes (1995), an 18-item instrument measuring six dimensions of psychological well-being using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree). The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .71 to .80. Section C evaluated perceived social support using the 20-item Perceived Social Support scale, which includes subscales for family (PSS-FA) and friends (PSS-FR) (Procidano & Heller, 1983). For this study, responses were modified to a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to allow for parametric statistical analyses, with higher scores indicating greater perceived social support. Section D assessed loneliness using the 20-item scale developed by Russell et al. (1980),

designed to capture trait loneliness. Responses were measured on a 4-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of loneliness (scores ≥ 25 reflect high loneliness; scores ≥ 30 reflect very high loneliness). Section E measured quality of work life using Quality of Work Life (QWL) Scale developed by Sirgy (2008) with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). This scale is a measure that captures the extent to which an organization is perceived to meet the needs of its employees. The OWL Scale is significant as it provides a comprehensive assessment of employees satisfaction with various needs, which in turn contributes to job satisfaction and over all life satisfaction.

Hypothesis one was tested using multiple regression analysis while hypothesis two was analyzed using t-test.

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using multiple regression analysis and t-test. Results of the hypotheses testing are shown below:

Hypothesis One: Psychosocial factors (social support, loneliness & quality of work life) will have a significant joint and independent influence on psychological wellbeing among civil servants in Lagos State, Nigeria.

The stated hypothesis one was analyzed using multiple regression analysis and the outcomes are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Multiple regression summary table showing joint and independent influence of psychosocial factors (social support, loneliness & quality of work life) on psychological wellbeing among civil servants in Lagos.

Variable	B	T	Sig.	R ²	F-value	Sig.
Social support	-.371	-6.209	.000			
Loneliness	-.022	-.399	.690	.119	13.071	.000
Quality of work life	.183	3.067	.002			

DV: Psychological Wellbeing

The results in Table 1 indicate that social support, loneliness & quality of work life jointly predicted psychological well-being among civil servants in Lagos ($F(3, 290) = 13.071$; $R^2 = .119$; $p < .01$), accounting for 11.9% of the total variance in psychological well-being. In other words, approximately 11.9% of the variation in psychological well-being among civil servants can be explained by social support, loneliness and quality of work life, while other unmeasured factors may account for the remaining variance.

Further analysis revealed that social support ($\beta = -.371$; $t = -6.209$; $p < .01$) and quality of work life ($\beta = .183$; $t = 3.067$; $p < .01$) had significant independent influence on psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos. In contrast, loneliness ($\beta = -.022$; $t = -.399$; $p > .05$) did not significantly influence psychological well-being. These findings indicate that loneliness had no independent influence on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos. Therefore, the stated hypothesis one is therefore partially accepted.

Hypothesis Two: Male civil servants will report a better psychological wellbeing compared to their female counterpart in Lagos State, Nigeria.

The stated hypothesis two was analyzed using t-test statistical method and the outcomes are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary Table of t-test showing difference between gender of civil servants and their psychological wellbeing in Lagos.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t-value	Sig.
Male	183	61.5683	14.58301	296	1.151	.251
Female	115	59.6087	13.84798			

DV: Psychological Wellbeing

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that gender (male & female) did not have a statistically significant difference on the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos ($t = 1.151$; $df = 296$; $p > .01$). Although male civil servants reported a slightly higher mean psychological well-being score ($M = 61.57$) compared to females ($M = 59.61$), this difference was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that gender does not significantly influence the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos. Thus, the stated hypothesis two is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The results for hypothesis one indicate that social support, loneliness and quality of work life jointly influence the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos. Further analysis revealed that quality of work life ($\beta = .183$; $p < .01$) and social support ($\beta = -.371$; $p < .01$) had significant independent effects on psychological well-being, whereas loneliness ($\beta = -.022$; $p > .05$) did not exert a significant independent influence. This suggests that, while supportive working conditions and a high quality of work life are important determinants of civil servants' mental health, loneliness alone may not directly impact psychological well-being in this context. These findings align with evidence that social support in workplace settings reduces psychological distress and buffers against work stress among employees (Tsuno, 2022). In parallel, research shows that supportive work environments and job quality significantly relate to better mental health and reduced burnout among social-service and healthcare employees (Nikunlaakso et al., 2023).

Tsuno (2022) found that among civil servants experiencing workplace bullying, personal resilience and adaptive coping strategies (e.g., seeking help, reappraisal) reduced future psychological distress, whereas social support from coworkers or family did not significantly buffer distress, and baseline psychological distress remained the strongest predictor of later mental health outcomes.

The study followed 2,036 civil servants over one year to examine whether individual resources (personal resilience, coping styles) and organizational resources (worksite social support) could buffer the effect of workplace bullying on psychological distress.

The longitudinal design of this study suggests that while workplace bullying is related to distress, the persistence or recurrence of distress over time is heavily influenced by pre-existing psychological distress

In contrast, **worksite social support** (from supervisors or coworkers) and **family/friends support** did **not** significantly buffer the impact of workplace bullying on later psychological distress.

Nikunlaakso et al. (2023) found that the accumulation of multiple job stressors at the work-unit level significantly increased the risk of psychological distress among employees. However, high workplace social capital including trust, cooperation, and supportive relationships partially buffered this negative effect, highlighting the protective role of a cohesive work environment.

Regarding hypothesis two which posited that male civil servants would report higher psychological well-being than females the data did not support a significant gender difference. This aligns with recent findings that, in some professional populations, there are no overall gender differences in psychological well-being (Phiri & Priyanka, 2023).

Conclusion

The researchers conclude that the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos State can be enhanced by improving the quality of their work life, reducing experiences of loneliness, and providing greater social support. Given that psychosocial factors specifically quality of work life, loneliness and social support significantly influence psychological well-being among civil servants, targeted interventions in these areas are warranted. Strengthening work conditions, fostering supportive workplace relationships and addressing social isolation are likely to not only improve mental health outcomes but also enhance employee productivity and overall organizational effectiveness in the Lagos State civil service.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the psychological well-being of civil servants in Lagos State.

1. The Lagos State Civil Service Commission should regularly assess employees' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and workplace environment to identify stressors and guide evidence-based policy interventions.
2. Policies aimed at improving the quality of work life such as fair workload distribution, job autonomy, recognition of achievements, and enhanced workplace social support through mentoring and team-building programmes should be implemented.
3. Ministry heads and managers should promote collaborative and inclusive work environments to reduce workplace isolation and encourage social interaction among colleagues.
4. Human resource departments should provide confidential counseling, stress management workshops, and other mental health resources to support employees in managing work-related and personal challenges.
5. Organizational culture should prioritize employee well-being, open communication, collaboration, and recognition of contributions to mitigate stress and loneliness and enhance overall psychological health.

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