

INFLUENCE OF MORTALITY SALIENCE ON JOB COMMITMENT OF HEALTH WORKERS IN LAGOS STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is that it established the relationship between Mortality Salience and Job commitment among public health workers in Lagos state. The Hypotheses are that, Mortality salience will have a significant negative relationship with Job commitment among Public health workers in Lagos. A correlational research design was used for this study. One hundred and ninety two participants were selected using purposeful sampling technique and they included 118 male participants and 74 female participants whose age ranged between 18-55 years. The mean age was 25.51 years. The standardised instruments used for the work were two. The instruments are Mortality salience scale and Job commitment scale. Also, Independent T-test was used to statistically analyse the data. The result shows that Mortality salience has a significant positive relationship with the job commitment of Public health workers in Lagos. The result was adequately discussed and various recommendations are made.

Keywords: *Mortality salience, job commitment, Ebola virus.*

INTRODUCTION

Explaining and when necessary, controlling work related behaviours has always been the job of the industrial and organisational psychologists. Job commitment has always being one of the major concern of the Human resources department of organisations due to high level of employee turnover and job-hopping culture. It is also assumed by many researchers that, employee's job commitment will positively impact job satisfaction and by extension, productivity and minimise employee turnover (Nor, 2011). According to Lincoln, Wilhelm, & Nestroniuc (2007), committed workers are self-directed and motivated actors whose inducement to participation and compliance is their moral bond to the organisation. Most employers have realised that the best way towards productivity and profitability is the commitment of the workforce. For employers to increase productivity, it is important to make adequate use of employee skills (George & Jones, 2008).

According to Matthieu & Zajac (1990), employee's commitment is one of the most important things to increase job performance. Mowday, Porter, & Steers. (1982), established that job commitment is an important element that influence performance of employees. It is a Psychological attachment of an employee with the organisation that depends on the degree of employee's motivation, involvement, loyalty, and trust in the values and norms of the organisation. Lee, Carswell & Allen (2000), defined an occupation or job as 'an identifiable and specific line of work that an individual engages in to earn a living at a given point in time' Examples of specific occupations are doctors, professors or bankers. They conceptualize Occupational Commitment (OCC) as 'a psychological link between a person and his or her occupation that is based on an affective reaction to that occupation. A strong OCC leads to a stronger identification with, and more positive feelings to one's occupation, compared with a weak OCC (Lee, et al., 2000). It is assumed that Job commitment will be predicted by mortality salience.

Humans not only use cultural worldviews to buffer their fear of death, but to diminish feelings of anxiety and establish a feeling on self-worth. If culture acts as a device to provide meaning to one's life, then humans who were made to think of their own death would instinctively support advocates of their cultural worldviews, and defend against anything that would threaten them. Inducing individuals with salient thoughts of their own death is classified as mortality salience. Individuals induced with mortality salience act favourably to

their own worldviews because it reaffirms the importance of their life. These same individuals would defend against a threat to their worldviews (worldview defence), because otherwise it would reduce the significance of their life and increase anxiousness (Salzman & Halloran, 2004). Terror management theorists attempted to demonstrate mortality salience effects on worldview defense through a variety of studies. Researchers have conducted many studies examining the effects of mortality salience on worldview defense. For example, one study attempted to look at worldview reactions according to moral transgressions. In a series of studies by Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, and Lyon (1989), they induced mortality salience in American municipal court judges who were then asked to set bonds for alleged prostitutes. Researchers concluded that "Inducing subjects to think about their mortality presumably increased their need for faith in their values, and thus increased their desire to punish the moral transgressor," by setting higher bonds (Rosenblatt et al., 1989). Because of the role that mortality salience play on the general life of an individual, it is assumed that it will have an influence on the Job Commitment of an individual.

Statement of problem

Many previous researches have studied job commitment as independent variables in relation with other dependent variables, while some have studied it as a dependent variable in relation to other independent variables. However, from comprehensive literature search done, no research has considered how job commitment can be influenced by human death instinct, i.e., mortality salience. It is on this ground that this study will be out to establish the relationship of mortality salience with job commitment.

One of the major motivation in carrying out this study is to find out if mortality salience can influence the commitment level of health workers during an epidemic (Ebola in this case) as reported in Nigeria that health Workers refused to volunteer themselves to work in isolation centres created by the Government in Lagos to curb the spread of the disease (The Guardian, 2014). Human beings are known to have needs. These needs serves as drives or motivating factors that prompt us into actions. When these needs (intrinsic/extrinsic) are met, we tend to maintain commitment to the very activity or job that provided the means to meet those needs. But, this research intend is to find out if this commitment to the job will be influenced negatively or positively when our very existence is threatened in the cause of carrying out job that actually meet our needs by a disease that has no known cure yet.

Research Question

- Will mortality salience have any significant relationship with the job commitment of health workers?

The main objective of this present study is to establish the relationship between mortality salience, and job commitment among public health workers in Lagos state.

This research work will be of great relevance to human resources of health sector and health related organisations in making policies on selection as well as placement of health workers to towns, cities or villages whenever there is epidemic of life threatening diseases that are easily contagious. It will also be useful to future researchers in understanding the various variables or psychological constructs that are capable of influencing the Job commitment.

The scope of the study is to access the psychological consequences of the diseases outbreak on the health workers within the psychological constructs of mortality salience and job commitment. The study only access the feelings and emotions attached to these constructs as they carry out their duty during the outbreak of the Ebola disease.

Literature review

Human being is the only animal that dies according to Heidegger (1987). This is because it is only creature on earth that is capable of being conscious of its own personal death. Despite the fact that people can conceive their own death, they deny it often (Becker, 1973). Mikulincer and Florian (2002) are of the opinion that Mortality salience raises uncontrollable

attributions in order to protect self-esteem. In other words, people seek to reduce their responsibility for the negative consequences of their actions. Guillermo, Alejandro, and Rocío (2011) claimed that, when failure has relevant consequences to people's lives, mortality salience will increase their sense of control (i.e., attributions based on effort and personal dedication). In short, they posited that thinking about death will lead people to state that they have control about the most important events in their lives.

In studying the influence of mortality salience on situational controllability, a study was designed in which after a manipulation of mortality salience, participants responded with the possible causes of the failure. The failure was failing an exam. Moreover, the consequences of failing the exam were also manipulated. In one condition, participants were requested to imagine that failing implied important consequences in their lives, while in the other, the consequences of failing were not particularly important. Finally, participants were asked to estimate the probability that this failure was due to different causes. These possibilities differed in terms of controllability. Specifically, the causes implicated in the attribution process could either relate to ability, which is considered internal and uncontrollable, or to effort, which is considered an internal and controllable cause. Another implication of these results is that individuals who frequently have to cope with death tend to make greater control attributions. It was conducted in Mexico, a country where to the best of our understanding, the effects of mortality salience had not been previously explored. The research work definitively shows that death increases perceived controllability. Given that being conscious of our own mortality is just one of the major marks of being a human being, to understand its consequences is one of the most ambitious enterprises within the field of psychology. In a research by Ben-Ari (2000) on the influence of death reminders on risk taking when driving shows that mortality salience encourages more risky driving among individuals that see driving as important to their personal self-esteem. The author while discussing the findings suggested that "people who perceive driving as relevant to their self-esteem may overemphasize the self-relevant gains involved in driving (validating one's sense of mastery, improving social prestige), may pay little attention to potential dangers, and then may take more risks while driving" (Ben-Ari, 2000).

In another study carried out by Samantha and Khrystal, using Asian disease problem as a task completed by the participant of the study, they manipulated the participants to complete a task of making a choice of killing or saving other people's lives. It was found out that, participants demonstrated a significantly higher preference for a risky option in the negatively framed condition than the positively framed condition of mortality salience (Samantha, and Khrystal, 2013).

Research Hypothesis

1. Mortality salience will have a significant negative relationship with the job commitment of health workers.

METHODOLOGY

A survey method was used which featured a correlational research design. These choices of method and design were based on the researchers aim to assess the relationship and possible correlation between the variables.

Sampling technique

Non-Probability sampling technique was adopted. Specifically, purposeful sampling technique was used in selecting health workers within Lagos state because of the characteristics (such as high risk of contracting Ebola disease, due to the probability of being exposed directly or indirectly to infected patient(s)) that are peculiar to them in the course of carrying out their job during the Ebola disease outbreak.

A total of 200 participants were used for the research. The participants comprised of male and female health workers of selected private hospitals, public hospitals, and healthcare

centres across Lagos state Nigeria. Lagos is chosen because it is the place where the Ebola disease was first discovered in Nigeria (The Guardian, 2014). The total population of Nurses, Doctors and Laboratory attendants was found to be 347 among the selected hospitals. Using sample size calculator, it was found out that, a total of 183 participants are needed at confidence level of 95 percent and confidence interval of 5 percent. We added 5 percent of the required sampling size for some questionnaires that may not be useful due to being poorly filled. The total population is estimated to be 200. The participants included nurses, doctors, and laboratory attendants. It is assumed that only this set of people have more risk of contracting the disease within the health sector. Pharmacists, support staff, casual workers, cleaners, clerks and other administrative workers within the health sector were not included in the study. Out of the total number of questionnaire collected, 8 were unusable while a total of 192 were useable for the analysis. Among the 192 participants, 74 are males while 118 are females.

Instruments

The following instruments were used for the research; Mortality salience was designed out of our own manipulation to induce thoughts of mortality among participants. We developed our idea by first researching how others had induced mortality salience. For example, we found that Bassett (2006) induced mortality salience by asking participants to write about their own death. We thought that our participants would take the thoughts of death by putting a short passage about the death of the medical doctor who treated the index case of Ebola disease in Nigeria and really structured their thoughts about death. That is, we really made them think about their own death by giving them the scenario: "The medical doctor, who first treated Ebola Patient in Nigeria, contracted Ebola Virus Disease after treating the index case of the Liberian- America, who was the first victim of the disease in Nigeria. The doctor died nearly a month after her Ebola patient's death". Questions were then asked on a 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree to access mortality salience in the participants through a structured questionnaire which was standardised and its psychometric properties were established. Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .748.

Job Commitment: Affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment were assessed by the revised 18-item TCM Employee Commitment Survey (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). Participants responded to statements such as; I really feel as if this Organization's problems are my own. (Affective Commitment Scale), .It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to (Continuance Commitment Scale), and, I owe a great deal to my Organization. (Normative Commitment Scale) on a 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Following the advice of the survey authors, the questions were presented in random order. Scores within each scale were averaged, yielding three commitment scores for each participant. Extensive research supports the reliability and validity of the survey (see Allen & Meyer, 1996, 2000).

Procedure

A pilot test was carried out to revalidate and establish the psychometric properties of both the Job Commitment Scale and Mortality Salience Scale, and to test the workability of the procedures. The pilot test was carried out using the health workers of a private hospital in Lagos. The main study was then carried out by administering the questionnaire on health workers of selected private and public hospitals in Lagos.

RESULTS

Testing of hypothesis

Hypothesis: *mortality salience will have a significant negative relationship with the job commitment of health workers.*

Table 1: Shows inferential statistics: Correlation mortality salience and job commitment.

| Variables | \bar{x} | σ | 1 | 2 |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|------|------|
| 1. Job commitment | 58.15 | 5.52 | 1 | .204 |
| 2. Mortality salience | 42.58 | 7.35 | .204 | 1 |

Table 1 above shows the summary of Pearson Correlation analysis of the two variables measured in this study. Results above show that mortality salience has a significant positive relationship with job commitment ($r = .204$, at $p < 0.05$). The result did not indicate support for the hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

In order to determine the contribution of the predictor variable on the variance observed in job commitment, linear regression analysis was computed. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Table of Contribution of the Independent Variable to the Prediction of job commitment.

| Variables | B | Beta | T | Sig | R | R ² | F-cal | P |
|--------------------|------|------|-------|------|------|----------------|-------|------|
| Mortality salience | .153 | .204 | 2.866 | 0.05 | .204 | .041 | 8.216 | 0.05 |

*Dependent variable: job commitment; *p < 0.05*

The results in Table 2 show that mortality salience independently contributed significantly and positively to the observed variance in job commitment (Beta = .204, $t = 2.866$, at $p < 0.05$). This implies that mortality salience accounted for about 4.1% of the observed variance in job commitment.

DISCUSSION

It is discovered that Mortality Salience has a significant positive relationship with job commitment. We also discovered that Mortality Salience independently contributed significantly and positively to the observed variance in Job Commitment. These findings support the empirical works in Mortality Salience carried out by Ben-Ari (2000). He examined the effects of reminders of death on risk taking while driving. Findings show that inducing mortality salience led to more risky driving among individuals who perceived driving as relevant to their self-esteem. In interpreting these findings, the authors suggested that, when primed with thoughts of their own death, “people who perceive driving as relevant to their self-esteem may overemphasize the self-relevant gains involved in driving (validating one’s sense of mastery, improving social prestige), may pay little attention to potential dangers, and then may take more risks while driving” (Ben-Ari, 2000). This implies that those who perceive being a health worker or being a member of the team of health workers that worked hard to eradicate Ebola virus as a boost to self-esteem will likely be more committed to work during this outbreak.

Another study done by Hart, Schwabach, & Solomon. (2010) examined the effects of mortality salience on decision making during a gambling task. Mortality salience is said to increase anxiety feelings and therefore lead to the pursuit of positive emotions to suppress these feelings. Hart suggests participants, when primed with mortality salience, would pursue the more risky option if that heightens the chances for monetary reward or feelings of security. The results from their study show that this effect indeed happened and that the participants choose the risky option to possibly suppress their feelings of anxiety.

Past studies have examined the comparison of the framing effect between positive and negative emotions, where we were investigating a more negative state of emotion, mortality, versus a negative emotion. Studies have suggested that Mortality Salience being a negative emotional state, the framing effect should be present or even increase as it does in other negatively primed emotions (Cassotti, et al. 2012).

In a research carried out by samantha and Khrystal (2013), they used the Asian Disease Problem as the task completed by the participants, which has never, as far as we know, been used before. This task makes participants choose between saving and killing other people, which is not a task that only affects themselves but others as well. They found out that, participants exhibited a significantly higher preference for the risky option in the negative frame condition (70%) than in the positive frame condition of mortality salience. The implication of this on the research on Ebola outbreak is that the health workers were more committed as a form of taking a more risky decision as indicated in the past works when Ebola outbreak poses a mortality salience in their thoughts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this present research work has being able to establish the psychological influence of death related thoughts during the Ebola outbreak. The implication of the findings is that, health workers will likely be more committed to their job during an outbreak. A study revealed that participants who thought of death not in terms of self-determination exhibited greater implicit association between their self-concept and their motivation to control their environment, compared to those who did think of death in terms of self-determination Frietsche, Jonas &Fankhanel (2008). Hence, it can be said that the motivation to control environment in terms of controlling diseases that may infect humans or that are easily contagious through contact and environmental factors, makes health workers to be more committed to their job.

The recommendation is therefore that:

Though, the work condition of the health workers should be improved during the outbreak of any life threatening disease by providing protective gear and other relevant protective wares for safety measures, the outcome of this research however suggests that, Health workers who are self-determined and motivated to work in controlling the disease will be more committed to their jobs. Hence, selection to the special team for mission that aim at combating such diseases should be done on free choice of the health workers as a result of their personal belief that death or dangerous diseases that could lead to death if contacted during the process of attending to infected patient is influenced by perceiving death as being or not being self-determined. Also, commitment to serve in such special team can developed as a result of Self-esteem of an individual health worker who take pride in belonging to such a team of individuals who worked together to eradicate such a deadly disease.

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