

Influence of Demographic Factors on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction among Custom Officials in Ghana

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Abstract

The occupation of customs and excise officers has received relatively limited attention. The present study investigated the influence of demographic factors on job stress and job satisfaction among Ghanaian custom officials. A total of 130 custom officials comprising of both males (n=64) and females (n=66) were sampled using quota sampling technique from all divisions and administered with questionnaires that measured their job stress and satisfaction. Officers in preventive services were found to have experienced greater job stress and lesser job satisfaction compared to officers in custom and excise services. In terms of gender, males and females did not differ on job stress and job satisfaction. Similarly, job rank had no impact on job stress and job satisfaction of custom officials from the Ghanaian setting. The implications of the findings and recommendations for future research are discussed

Keywords: Demographic Factors, Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, Custom Officials, Ghana.

Introduction

The paucity of literature on the activities of customs officials in general is particularly worrying. Few of such studies tend to focus on the have been on instances of criminal issues and core functional duties (Ha, 2008). The dearth of literature is nothing different from the Ghanaian situation. To the extent of the researchers search, it appears Chalfin (2004) makes the difference in the study entitled 'Border Scans: Sovereignty, Surveillance and the Customs Service of custom officials in Ghana'. The present study sets the pace to scrabble out the extent to which demographic factors influences job stress and job satisfaction. Job stress was considered as a dependent variable. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) viewed stress as a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the person and his or her environment. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stressors can range from catastrophic events to irritating incidents. However, these stressors do not elicit a stress response in the individual until the person appraises it as exceeding the available resources for coping with the changed situation. Negative outcomes of job stress among individuals include illness, decline in overall quality of work, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and staff turnover (Schwab, 1996). Job life is one of the important parts of our daily lives which cause a great deal of stress. Due to the competitive nature of the job environment most of the people in the world are spending their time for job related work purposes resulting into stressors that are influencing their work and life.

Job satisfaction plays a very important role in our everyday life, both for employees and organizations. Based on many studies, when employees are satisfied with their jobs they will be more committed to their employer and will be more productive. Job satisfaction impacts employee productivity, well-being and consequently impacts job quality. According to Diaz-Serrano and Cabral-Vieira (2005) job satisfaction is considered a strong predictor of overall individual well-being and job quality. Aluja, Blanch and Garcia (2005) argued that job satisfaction is a result of employees' perception of how well their job provides those things that are considered important from their side. They also provide three dimensions of job satisfaction that are emotional respond to the work situation, the fitness between yield and their expectation, and the individual attitude that reflects a relationship among employees. Job satisfaction has been identified as the most intensely studied variable in organizational research (Rainey, 1991). However, there is scant literature on regarding the study target for this study. The situational characteristics commonly proposed as key factors in job satisfaction are the work itself, pay, promotion, supervision and co-workers (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969), although other variables such as employee involvement and organizational commitment may also impact (Quarstein, McAfee & Glassman, 1992). Predominantly, studies have concentrated on the relationship between job stress and a post-stressor outcome or response (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992). On the other hand, organizational antecedents to stress have received little systematic attention (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992; Koslowsky, 1998) especially among customs officials. The result is that we still know little about organizational and extra organizational factors that cause and moderate organizational stressors and the ensuing stress (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992). The present study however considers how some demographic factors such as gender, rank and area of post operation affect the stress and job satisfaction levels of custom officials from the Ghanaian setting



Aims of the Study

The following were the objectives outlined for the study:

- To ferret out whether the nature of work has any influence on job stress and satisfaction of Ghanaian Custom officials.
- To determine any gender differences on job stress and satisfaction.
- To ascertain whether rank of officers has any influence on their job stress and satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Underpinning Theories

Two major theories lend support to the present study, namely; Person-Environment Fit theory, the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), and the Self-Efficacy Theory. The basic tenet underpinning the Person-Environment Fit theory is that stress arises from disparity- between an individual and his or her environment. This disparity can occur at different levels (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). Stress can occur if there is a difference between the demands placed on an individual and his or her abilities to meet those demands. In the context of an organisation, this theory is referred to as person-organisation (P-O) fit. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory proposes that if a person has high self-efficacy (i.e. belief to his/her ability in executing a course of action) this will not invoke his/her negative cognitive thoughts. Application of this theory in an occupational stress model shows that a person's gender, rank at work or division of operation and ones level of self efficacy (i.e. belief to his/her ability to manage emotions) will effectively decrease his/her job stressors, and increase his/her emotional health and lower level of psychological stress. This invariably may lead to contentment and This situation can potentially result in higher job satisfaction (Zhong, Yano, Lan, Wang, Wang & Wang, 2006) as such employees can manage challenging situations as they occur.

Related Studies

Job stress and job satisfaction are the two hot focuses in human resource management researches. Few studies have been conducted on these variables among the custom officials (Mansell, Brough, & Cole, 2006). Mansell, Brough, and Cole (2006) evaluated the steps undertaken by one proactive employer to reduce adverse outcomes in a three organization-wide surveys (n = 350, 316, and 405) over a 3-year period within the New Zealand Customs Service. Staff retention and employee satisfaction significantly improved over time and these increases were attributable to workplace improvements. Stable predictors of job satisfaction included minor daily stressors, positive work experiences, job control, and perceived supervisor support. Sheena (2005) established that some occupations that are reporting worse than average scores on each of the factors such as physical health, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. This study however treats the two variables as dependents of some demographic factors among Ghanaian custom officials.

In spite of the rarity of literature on studies among custom officials in the Ghanaian setting, Chalfin (2004) carried out a research on Border Scans: Sovereignty, Surveillance and the Customs Service in Ghana. The article explored the relationship between surveillance techniques and the production of sovereign statehood in an effort to track the day-to-day practices through which state authority is constituted in the context of globalization. This article explicitly probed the processes through which new forms of sovereignty come into being within the life of the state. It takes as its point of departure the operations of Ghana's Customs Service, a body charged with policing the nation's frontiers and collecting the bulk of state revenue.

Barhem (2002) conducted a study aimed at evaluating the levels and major sources of work stress that afflict two countries customs employees (Malaysian and Jordanian), and the possible strategies to cope with the stress using 216 and 248 employees respectively. The major findings of the study were that both the Malaysian and Jordanian customs suffered from high work stress. Brough (2007) on a similar note conducted a study on Managing Occupational Stress in a High-Risk Industry: Measuring the Job Demands of Correctional Officers. The researcher evaluated the ability of the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model to predict strain in 132 Australian correctional officers. A specific measure of job demands predicts the psychological outcome (job satisfaction) to a greater extent than the generic (JDCS) demands measure. This study was a good step, however, this study intend focusing on custom officials in the Ghanaian setting.

Quick and Quick (1984) proposed four categories of stressors: task demands, physical demands, interpersonal demands and organization structure. From documented evidence, it is clear that as far as work life is concerned extreme stress is so aversive to employees that they will try to avoid it by withdrawing either psychologically (through disinterest or lack of involvement in the job etc.) physically (frequent late coming, absenteeism, lethargy etc.) or by leaving the job entirely (Beehr & Newman, 1978). It predisposes the individual to develop several psychosomatic illnesses. In contrast, the absence of extreme stress would result in more satisfied, happy, healthy and effective employees.

Lee and Chang (2008) found significant correlations between two aspects of organizational culture and job satisfaction. The stress is seen as an undesirable phenomenon which is brought about by inadequate coping with



environmental sources of stressors associated with a particular job (e.g. work overload, role conflict/ambiguity, poor working conditions), and which results in negative mental and physical ill health consequences (Cooper & Payne, 1988). Beehr and Newman (1978) had defined stress as a situation which will force a person to deviate from normal functioning due to the change (i.e. disrupt or enhance) in his/her psychological and/or physiological condition, such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning. Some demographic factor may influence the way customs officials act in their workplace.

Management role of an organization is one of the aspects that affect work-related stress among workers (Alexandros-Stamatios, Matilyn & Cary, 2003). Role stress means anything about an organizational role that produces adverse consequences for the individual (Kahn & Quinn, 1970). Management will have their own role that stands as their related. Role related are concerned with how individuals perceive the expectations other have of them and includes role ambiguity and role conflict (Alexandros-Stamatios, Matilyn & Cary, 2003). It is likely these roles are attached to the ranks of employees. Within the customs service seniority comes with higher responsibility and accountability and may likely lead to adverse organizational outcomes. Amos and Weathington (2008) found perceived congruence of employee organizational values or culture by employees to be positively associated with satisfaction with the job and organisation as a whole and employee commitment to the organisation. It is surprising that there have been only a handful of studies examining the motivational basis of public sector professionals related to job satisfaction (McCue & Gianakis, 1997).

American Psychological Association (2012) women are more likely than men to report that their stress levels are on the rise. Women are more likely than men (28 percent vs. 20 percent) to report having a great deal of stress (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale). Almost half of all women (49 percent) surveyed said their stress has increased over the past five years, compared to four in 10 (39 percent) men. Women are more likely to report that money (79 percent compared with 73 percent of men) and the economy (68 percent compared with 61 percent of men) are sources of stress while men are far more likely to cite that work is a source of stress (76 percent compared with 65 percent of women). Married women report higher levels of stress than single women, Men and women report wide gaps between determining what is important and how successful they are at achieving those behaviors. Rapidly changing global scene is increasing the pressure of workforce to perform maximum output and enhance competitiveness. Indeed, to perform better on the job, there is a requirement for workers to perform multiple tasks in the workplace to keep abreast of changing technologies (Quick, 1999). Muchinsky (1997) studies found role ambiguity to lead to such negative outcomes as reduces confidence, a sense of hopelessness, anxiety, and depression.

In Africa, the initiation and perpetuation of cross border crimes have an inextricable link to the inherited colonial borders and its administration during the era. Also, the differences in currencies and administrative policies of rival colonial governments of neighboring countries in trade restrictions and tax administrations presented opportunities that gave the impetus to evade tax and engage in the illicit exchange termed smuggling (Sosuh, 2011). In the case of Africa, the borders separating people belonging to the same culture, coupled with the counter restrictions mounted along the borders of rival colonial governments resulted in an ultimate disregard to the regulatory provisions. The end result therefore was an increase in smuggling and other border crimes which poses a challenge to border security. Ghana is bordered by Côte d"Ivoire to the west at a distance of 668km, Togo to the east at 877km, Burkina Faso to the north at 549km and the southern shore washed by the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean (Sosuh, 2011). The challenge of diligently ensure carrying out customs duties becomes necessary. It is imperative that a study be done to unravel the stress and satisfaction levels of these custom officials.

Rationale for the Study

Work on customs officials seems to have very scant attention in Ghana compared to its compatriot police and fire services. This study attempt to bridge the gap by involving the Customs Division and the role they play in protecting the country. The above study was principally spurred by the paucity of literature on the activities of custom officials. The extent of the researchers' literature search yielded no results on issues relating to customs workers in Ghana. The present study aims at evaluating the stress patterns and job satisfaction among the various arms of the Customs Division (Custom and Excise as well as Preventive Services) in Ghana. The dearth of empirical evidence in this area makes this study one of the foremost in looking at the differences between Ghana Customs work stress sources and their job satisfaction levels. Ghana has entered a new economic era and has started to invite foreign investment after establishing the free trade zone with its Sub regional members, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This becomes an avenue for enlarged core functions as suggested by Ha (2008). With Ghana's more open borders, the Ghanaian Customs have had to work harder to prevent smuggling (of drugs and other dangerous materials) from neighbouring countries. The expedition to protecting all exit and entry points in the country in the best possible way may necessitate some level of stress and invariably bothers on job satisfaction among customs officials in Ghana. Due to the nature of their job, customs officers might be exposed to some unusual outcomes for which this study aims to explore.



Statement of Hypotheses

Based on the reviewed literature and in line with the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- 1. Officers performing preventive duties will experience higher stress compared to those in the custom and excise divisions in the Ghanaian setting
- 2. Officers performing preventive duties will experience lower job satisfaction compared to those in the custom and excise divisions
- 3. Female officers will encounter higher job stress than male custom officers in the Ghanaian Setting
- 4. Female officers will experience lower job satisfaction than male custom officers
- 5. Junior officers will experience higher job stress than senior officers
- 6. Junior officers will experience lower job satisfaction than senior officers.

Operational Definitions of Terms

- Senior officer: any rank from an Assistant Collector and above up to the Commissioner of Customs.
- **Junior officer:** any rank below the rank of an Assistant Collector.
- **Custom duties:** collection of duties from traders
- **Preventive duties:** the enforcement of tax laws especially against smugglers and other criminals.

METHOD

Sample/Sampling Technique

The study was conducted in selected areas in Ghana where customs officials in the various divisions are found. These areas were the Kotoka International Airport and Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Tema (for Custom duties), the Aflao Border (for Preventive service) and Ghana Breweries Ltd (for Excise duties). One hundred and thirty (130) permanent customs officials were selected as respondents for the study. The participants consisted of both males (n = 64) and females (n = 66) with their ages ranging from 20 years to 60 years. Participants were sampled for the study through a quota sampling technique. This technique enabled the researcher obtain participants for the various groups of the study in their limited relative proportions (Aron & Aron, 1994).

Instruments

The first section of the questionnaire inquired about the demographic characteristics of the respondents on variables such as gender, age, marital status, rank, education level and area posted (Division - Preventive or Custom and Excise). These variables were scored on the nominal scale and they were basically used as independent variables for the analyses. Items from Seyles's (1971) stress scale were adapted and used. The stress scale developed by Seyles's (1971) is a 10-item scale which is based on a five point Likert response scale. Scoring ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The scale has a reliability value of 0.89. Job satisfaction was measured with an adapted scale of Brayfield and Rothe (1951). The scale has an alpha value of .92 and is an 18-item scale. Responses to these items were based on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Items such as (3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, and 18) were reverse scored.

Research Design

In line with Hussey and Hussey (1997) the design for this study was a cross-sectional survey as information sought was to obtain information on variables in different contexts from different respondents at the same time.

Procedure for Data Collection

After an institutional approval to collect the data from the customs service, Management of the service were briefed on the ethical requirements for the conduct of psychological research and assured them of total confidentiality. After permission had been granted, the researcher proceeded to administer his questionnaires to individuals in the various groups of the study. The informed consents of the participants were obtained before the administration of the questionnaires to them. Participants were presented with a copy of the questionnaires containing the demographic factors, job stress and job satisfaction scales. The filled questionnaires were then collected and arranged for analysis.

RESULTS

All six hypotheses were tested with the independent samples t test. This test was appropriately used because each of the remaining six hypotheses compared two groups of participants on a single dependent variable whose measures were on the interval scale. The results of the study have been summarized and presented in the tables.



Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

Variables	Male	Female n=66		
	n=64			
Age				
20-30	18	5		
31-40	8	14		
41-61	38	47		
Marital Status				
Married	58	51		
Single	5	10		
Divorced	0	5		
Separated	1	0		
Nature of Work				
Customs	33	37		
Preventive/Excise	31	29		
Rank				
Junior Officers	30	32		
Senior Officers	34	34		
Workplace				
Airport	63	23		
Sea Port/Habour	15	24		
Border	18	18		
Checkpoint	0	1		

The above table shows the demographic distribution of male and female participants with respect to their age, marital status, and nature of work, job rank, and area of operation. Observably, the female participants (n = 66) were slightly more than the male participants (n = 64)

Table 2: Nature of Work on Job Stress and Satisfaction

Test Variable	Work Type	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	
Job Stress	Customs	69	22.33	6.657	128	-2.300	0.023	
	Preventive	61	24.82	5.426				
Job Satisfaction	Customs	69	65.00	9.550	128	2.408	0.017	
	Preventive	61	61.23	7.997				

The results in table 3 also confirms that the effect of nature of work on job stress was significant [$t_{(128)} = -2.300$, p < 0.05]. Officials who undertook preventive duties experienced greater stress (M=24.82, SD=5.426) than those who performed custom and excise duties (M=22.33, SD=6.657). This means that the second hypothesis that "there will be higher stress rate among officers performing preventive duties as compared to those in the custom and excise divisions" was supported.

There was also a significant influence of the nature of work on job satisfaction [$t_{(128)} = 2.408$, p < 0.05]. Officials in preventive department were found to have lower job satisfaction (M=61.23, SD=7.997) than officials in customs and excise unit (M=65.00, SD=9.550). This third hypothesis was supported.

Table 3: Gender differences in Job Stress and Job Satisfaction

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Test Variable	Gender	\overline{N}	Mean	SD	df	t	p	
Job Stress	Male	64	24.45	6.154	128	1.798	0.075	
	Female	66	22.52	6.135				
Job Satisfaction	Male	64	63.17	9.604	128	-0.140	0.889	
	Female	66	63.39	8.449				

Contrary to prediction, there was no significant gender differences in job stress [$t_{(128)} = 1.798$, p > 0.05] and job satisfaction [$t_{(128)} = -0.140$, p > 0.05]. The job stress of male custom officials (M=24.45, SD=6.154) was not significantly different from that of female custom officials (M=22.52, SD=6.135). This means that the fourth hypothesis which stated that "female officers will encounter higher job stress than male custom officer" was not confirmed. In the same way, the job satisfaction of male custom officials (M=63.17, SD=9.604) was not significantly different from their female counterparts (M=63.39, SD=8.449). Consequently, the fifth hypothesis that "female officers will experience lower job satisfaction than male custom officers" was rejected.



Table 4: Job Rank on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction

Test Variable	Rank	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Job Stress	Junior Officers	62	23.63	6.534	128	0.219	0.827
	Senior Officers	67	23.39	5.939			
Job Satisfaction	Junior Officers	62	62.65	9.302	128	-0.813	0.418
	Senior Officers	67	63.94	8.792			

Deducing from the above table (table 5), job rank had no effect on the job stress [$t_{(128)} = 0.219$, p > 0.05] and job satisfaction [$t_{(128)} = -0.813$, p > 0.05] of customs officials. Job stress among junior officers (M=23.63, SD=6.534) was not statistically different from the job stress of senior officers (M=23.39, SD=5.939). This led to the rejection of the sixth hypothesis which stated that "junior officers will suffer higher job stress than senior officers." Similarly, job satisfaction among junior officers (M=62.65, SD=9.302) was not statistically different from that of the senior officers (M=63.94, SD=8.792). As a result, the final hypothesis that "junior officers will experience lower job satisfaction than senior officers" was also rejected.

Summary of Main Findings

- Officers in preventive services experienced greater job stress and lesser job satisfaction than officers in custom and excise services.
- Male and female custom officials did not differ on job stress and job satisfaction.
- Junior custom officers did not differ from senior custom officers on job stress and job satisfaction.

Discussion

The first hypothesis that "Officers performing preventive duties will experience higher stress compared to those in the custom and excise divisions in the Ghanaian setting" and the second hypothesis that "Officers performing preventive duties will experience lower job satisfaction compared to those in the custom and excise divisions" were both confirmed, indicating that job nature has significant influence on job stress and job satisfaction. In other words, the study revealed a higher job stress and lower job satisfaction among officers in preventive services as compared to those in custom and excise services. These findings aligns well with Cooper and Payne (1988) and Sheena (2005), found that there are some occupations that are reporting worse than average scores on each of the factors investigated (i.e., job stress, job satisfaction, physical health, and psychological well-being). Some researchers (Quick & Quick, 1984) believe that job stress arises from stressors associated the nature of job to be performed.

Custom officers who performed preventive duties experienced more stress and lesser job satisfaction than those performing customs and excise services. Ghanaian custom officers performing preventive duties are mostly involved in day and night patrols along the boundaries of Ghana to ward-off smugglers. Border patrols is either mobile by foot depending on the terrain. They also engage in the rummaging of vehicles at road blocks on main roads linking the major cities. Whereas officers doing customs and excise duties, are mostly stationed in offices across the country doing the evaluation and collection of customs duties and taxes. The work demands on officers in preventive services appear to be excessively high and these predispose the said officials to high levels of job stress and are expected to have a ripple effect on their level of satisfaction. In the light of the explanation offered by the General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye, 1976), continued exposure to the same stressor or additional stressors drains the body of its resources and results into psychological ill health. This fact is supported by Wilkes et al. (1998) who found out that work overloads and time constraints were significant contributors to work stress among workers.

The third hypothesis predicted that "female officers were more likely to experience higher job stress than male custom officers" and the fourth one also predicted that "female officers will experience lower job satisfaction than male custom officers." However, the data in the study did not support any of these two hypotheses, thus indicating that male and female custom officials did not differ on job stress and job satisfaction.

The present findings on gender difference on job stress and job satisfaction contradicts the views expressed by the American Psychological Association (2012) on gender and stress where women were more likely than men to report higher stress levels. Sarantakos (1996) cites home-work interface as the factor accounting for greater work stress for the modern woman as compared to the man. According to Sarantakos (1996), family and work are inter-related and interdependent to the extent that experiences in one area affect the quality of life in the other. The current study has however revealed a contrary finding, suggesting that some other factors from the Ghanaian perspective may be active in bridging the gap. One of such factors may be the global awareness creation on gender equality which presupposes that men and women are equal in all respect and therefore ought to be treated equal. This argument has sought to even bring men closer into domestic home activities and women closer to formal organizations from Ghanaian outlook. The current finding of lack of gender difference in job stress and job satisfaction therefore may be a measure of the success of this global effort towards gender equality.



Finally, the fifth and sixth hypotheses examined the influence of job rank on job stress and job satisfaction respectively. The predictions were that "junior officers will suffer higher job stress than senior officers" and "junior officers will experience lower job satisfaction than senior officers". These two hypotheses were not confirmed, indicating that senior custom officers did not differ from junior custom officers on job stress and job satisfaction. This current observation from the Ghanaian setting is not consistent with Alexandros-Stamatios et al. (2003). Role related stress especially role ambiguity is another factor that influences job stress in the workplace and it is more common among lower ranked workers since they usually have to take and act on instructions and directives from their superiors (Alexandros-Stamatios et al. , 2003; Muchinsky, 1997). Despite these obvious facts from the literature, the current study has revealed that both junior and senior ranked customs officials experienced relatively equivalent levels of job stress and job satisfaction. The plausible explanation to this is that there is a clearly defined role for customs officials, irrespective of rank. This means that the phenonmenon of role ambiguity is absent among customs officials. In effect, the negative outcomes of role ambiguity outlined by Muchinsky (1997) will also be absent. This therefore accounts for the balanced level of job stress and job satisfaction among junior and senior customs officials.

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

Results of this study will form a benchmark for future studies. They could also help Ghana Customs improve their staff performance by testing the appropriate work environment in response to identified work stress sources and coping strategies as well as factors likely to boast the satisfaction levels of employees. Due to time constraint, the researchers could not make use of the stratified probability sampling technique which the researchers had earlier planned to use. As an alternative, the researcher made use of the quota sampling technique (which is the non-probability equivalent technique to the stratified probability technique). This form of compromise may limit implications on the researcher's ability to generalize findings beyond the scope of the sample. Despite this seeming limitation, the researcher believes that the larger sample size used in this research is a compensatory factor for achieving high external validity for the study. The researchers recommend that future researchers should endeavor to make use of the stratified sampling technique to allow them to systematically sample participants from the various groups in proportion to their numerical representation in the population of the study. A qualitative approach could be used in the future to unravel the differences in job stress and satisfaction among officials performing preventive duties and customs and excise duties. The revelation that male and female no more differ on job stress and job satisfaction appeared to be inconsistent with the existing literature. The researchers recommend that future research efforts be directed to this area of research in order to provide findings that clarify and/or add empirical support to the current position established in this research. These are important findings which need to be deliberated upon and where possible applied by all organizations (especially in the security industry) seeking to minimize job stress and maximize employee job satisfaction.

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Acknowledgment

Collins and Helen will like to express their appreciation to the management of the Customs Division of Ghana and the respondents who willingly provided the data for this study. We also thank the entire UPSA Management for encouraging research among senior members within the university community. We ultimately thank our families for their voracious support.

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