EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANXIETY, STRESS AND FALSE CONFESSIONS AMONG SUSPECTS IN POLICE CUSTODY IN NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA ENUGU STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to explore the relationship between anxiety stress and false confessions among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area Enugu State, Nigeria**.** The study employed a survey design. A total population of 108 participants were selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula as a sampling technique to determine the sample size. The questionnaire was adopted and the Likert scale was used as an instrument for the collection of data and the collected data were analysed product moment Correlation. The results reveal that there is a significant relationship between Anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody. There is a significant relationship between Stress and false confession among suspects in police custody. The study concludes that anxiety and stress have significant relationships with false confessions among suspects in police custody and recommends that: Police officers should be sensitive to the fact suspects might give confessions as a result of anxiety and stress. It concluded that there is a significant correlation between Anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area Enugu State. Based on the outcome of this study, the researcher recommended that Police officers should be sensitive to the

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fact suspects might give confessions as a result of anxiety and stress levels. It is advantageous to know the vulnerabilities of suspects. This can be done through psychological assessments. There should be a post-interrogation review of confessions to help spot aspects that might be inconsistent and identify where the suspect may have attempted to mislead the police officer during interrogation or may have given inconsistent testimony. Having records such as video or audio of interrogation also helps in the post-interrogation review as this helps to examine the suspect's disposition throughout.

KEYWORDS*: Anxiety Stress False Confessions and Suspect*

INTRODUCTION

False confessions are a major problem for police investigations and the administration of justice (Adesiyan, 2015). The interviewing of victims, witnesses, and suspects form an integral part of the police investigation into criminal activities (Williamson, 2017). It is the quality and fairness of those interviews that often determines whether or not justice is seen to be served. Psychological vulnerabilities such as anxiety and stress of interviewees during police questioning form an important part of a complex and dynamic process (Gudjonsson, 2017) In Nigeria, few researchers have looked into the influence of factors such as anxiety (Gudjonsson, and Sigurdsson, 2012). This scarcity of research poses problems in understanding and preventing of false confessions during investigations.

Police officers themselves admit to using unscrupulous tactics to gain confessions, and that their primary objective once they have a "person of interest" in the interrogation room, is to "get a confession at all costs" (Chifford and Scott, 2018). The major goal of many police investigators is to get the suspect to confess. After all, a confession is the single most incriminating piece of evidence presented to a jury, Surpassing eyewitness testimony and even physical evidence. According to Adesiyan (2005), a suspect is an individual who has been alleged to have committed a crime or an offence and an individual has been the victim of the offence or crime the fellow brings the matter to

the notice of the police station closest to him/her. The statement of the individual is taken by the desk sergeant who asks him/her questions ranging from when, where and how the crime was committed and who the offender is. After answering these questions. The most senior officer in charge of the police station assigns or directs one or more officers to take up the task of apprehending the "offender" and bringing him/her to the station, in this study, the relationship between Anxiety Stress and false confession among suspects will be examined.

Psychological vulnerabilities such as anxiety are important in police interviews, because they may place witnesses, victims, and suspects at a disadvantage in terms of (a) coping with the demand characteristics and stress of the interview (and also for suspects coping with detention) Including making informed decisions, understanding questions and the implications of their answers and statement to police (e.g., becoming a material witness, possibly having to testify in court, being charged with a crime) and (b) providing the police with salient, detailed, accurate, and coherent answers to questions

A great deal has been learned about psychological vulnerabilities in police interrogation during the past decades, but there is a need to learn more about the causes of false confessions and how these can be overcome by improved police interviewing techniques, improved identification, and better protection and provisions for vulnerable witnesses, victims and suspects. This is a significant problem because it is often linked to perceptions of criminality and dishonesty, and the impact of their condition on the reliability of their accounts in police interviews. False confessions play a major role in the miscarriage of justice, in situations where innocent people have been wrongly convicted. It is based on this that the researcher intends to investigate the relationship between anxiety, stress and false confessions among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the relationship between anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.
ii. To examine the relationship between stress and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Hypotheses

i. There will be a significant relationship between Anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.
ii. There will be a significant relationship between Stress and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Anxiety

Anxiety is a mental health disorder or reaction to a source of stress to survive which is characterized by feelings of worry, anxiety or fear that are strong enough to interfere with one's daily activities. Examples of anxiety disorders include panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. According to Freud (1789), the root of anxiety lies in unconscious conflicts between the id and superego the is duty. It involves a state of apprehension unlike in fear where the cause is known, in the case of anxiety the cause is maybe unknown. Anxiety symptoms can be broadly classified into four groups. Cognitive symptoms: Indecisiveness, stress that's out of proportion to the impact of the event, inability to set aside a worry and restlessness, impaired attention and concentration memory impairment e.t.c: Affective/emotional symptoms: Nervousness, anger, sadness, e.t.c: Physical symptoms Muscle tightness, disturbed sleep, high blood pressure, dry mouth, etc and Behavioural symptoms; irritability, impulsivity e.t.c.

Stress

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand (Wrightsman, 2012). The pressures of police interviewing a suspect put a suspect at risk for blood pressure, insomnia, increased levels of destructive stress hormones, heart problems, and post-traumatic stress (PTSD) and led to false confessions, According to University of Buffalo researchers in the decade of studies of confessions among police-suspects interrogations.

False Confession

Since 1989, approximately 2,500 wrongful convictions have been exposed in Canada and the United States, either through DNA profiling or through the discovery of exculpatory evidence. To date, these wrongfully convicted individuals have served a cumulative total of 21,500 years in prison, with an average sentence of 14 years (Holm and Rale,2017). With the advent of DNA testing, we are now able to establish factual innocence, and, as a direct result, thousands of innocent individuals have been able to walk free from prison after years of unjust incarceration (Drizin & Leo, 2014). At the same time, DNA profiling has allowed researchers, legal scholars, and activists to expose the fact that wrongful convictions occur with troubling regularity in North America and worldwide

False Confession is an admission of guilt for a crime which the individual did not commit. Although such confessions seem counterintuitive, they can be made voluntarily, perhaps to protect a third party or induced through coercive interrogation techniques. When some degree of coercion is involved, studies have found that subjects with low intelligence or with mental disorders are more likely to make such confessions. Young people are particularly vulnerable to confessing, especially when stressed, tired, or traumatized, and have a significantly higher rate of false confessions than adults. Hundreds of innocent people have been convicted, imprisoned, and sometimes sentenced to death after confessing to crimes they did not commit but

years later, have been exonerated. It was not until several shocking false confession cases were publicized in the late 1980s, combined with the introduction of DNA evidence, that the extent of wrongful convictions began to emerge and how often false confessions played a role in these. Gudjonsson &Pearse, (2011). False confessions are distinguished from forced confessions where the use of torture or the threat of physical harm is used to induce the confession.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Kassin (2015) conducted a study on Anxiety and false confessions among suspected criminals. First, argue that stress and anxiety play a role in interrogation, he noted that anxiety and negative emotional states during interrogation are experienced by suspects when they are deceptive about their guilt. He further, argued that any anxiety a suspect experiences should be increased by interrogation tactics to increase the discomfort of being deceptive A suspect's decision to confess is then associated with a reduction in the experience of negative emotions, such as anxiety and fear.

Gudjonsson, (2014) researched Confessions and denials and their relationship with personality. The main aim of the study was to examine the reasons and personality factors associated with confessions and denials. It was hypothesized that antisocial personality traits and active involvement in criminal behaviour would distinguish true confessors and true deniers from false confessors and false deniers. The participants were 1,080 students in further education in Iceland. Each was asked about false admissions made to teachers and parents in the past, as well as about confessions or denials (true and false) made to the police during questioning, and the reasons for having responded in the way they did. The participants also completed questionnaires relating to offending, personality and self-esteem. Results. One-quarter (25%) of the participants stated that they had in the past been interrogated by the police about a suspected offence, of whom 59% said they had confessed. A small minority of those interrogated (3.7%; 1% of the total sample) claimed to have made false confessions to the police, whereas 10% claimed to have made false confessions to teachers or parents. Males

were ignorantly more likely to report false confessions than females. False confessions and false denials were significantly associated with antisocial personality traits, with Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Psychoticism being the single best predictor. Those participants who made true confessions and true denials were most normal in their personalities. Conclusions. Personality is a significant predictor of who makes false confessions and false denials

Redlich and Goodman, (2013) used the ALT-key paradigm to examine the effects of physical evidence on false confessions. After being accused of clicking the ALT key and crashing the computer, half of the participants were shown physical evidence in the form of a printout allegedly outlining the keys that the participants had clicked during the study, which included the ALT key. Results demonstrated that participants in the false physical evidence condition were more likely to falsely confess than those who were not shown false physical evidence. These results suggest that the presentation of physical evidence can be powerful in convincing an innocent individual to falsely confess.

In Kassin and Kiechel's (2016) original computer crash study, they had a confederate, who was posing as a peer of the participant, tell the experimenter that they witnessed the participant hit the ALT-key in half of the sessions. Results demonstrated that the presentation of false eyewitness testimony increased false confessions from 48% to 94%, compared to when no eyewitness testimony was included. These results suggest that eyewitness testimony can increase the risk of false confessions and that a suspect may turn to a witness as a credible source of information when they are uncertain about the occurrence of an event.

Torkildson and Kassin (2018) used the forbidden key paradigm and found that the presentation of false eyewitness testimony increased false confession rates from 27% to 79%. In the bluff condition, where participants were told that their keystrokes were being recorded and would be checked the following day, the false confession rate similarly increased to 87%. Importantly, participants explained that the bluff implied a future promise of

exoneration that made it easier to confess.

This result was replicated by Perillo and Kassin (2011), who also used the forbidden key paradigm to explore the impact of the bluff ploy on false confessions. In the false evidence condition, a confederate claimed to have seen the participant strikes the forbidden key. In the bluff condition, the researchers claimed that a device recorded the participant's keystrokes, but that this record was password-protected and would be checked at a later date. Results demonstrated that the false evidence ploy and the bluff ploy both increased false confession rates, in comparison to the control, but were not significantly related to high rates of internalization. Together, these results suggest that the bluff ploy is just as powerful as the false evidence ploy in eliciting false confessions. Moreover, these results suggest that the bluff ploy may put innocent suspects at risk for falsely confessing, as an act of behaviour compliance, rather than by altering beliefs in culpability.

Researchers have identified five major factors that are relevant to eliciting confessions from suspects, these include perceptions of affective or anxiety-based responses to interrogation the consequences associated with confessing (or not), the strength of the evidence our prost) against them, feelings of guilt, shame, responsibility, or accountability, and the external, social pressures being placed upon them to provide a confession Independently, data from these studies appear to support a pattern of findings similar to that of Sigurdsson and Gudjonsson, (2012) and Redlich (2013). for example, both Narchet, (2019) and Horgan, (2017) found evidence that true was associated with internal motivations to resolve feelings of guilt, shame, or accountability, while false confessions were motivated by external, social being placed upon the participants in the interrogative context. In other words, internal factors such as anxiety are capable of making suspects give false confessions during interrogation.

In addition to understanding how the interrogation and personal characteristics can affect the likelihood of obtaining false confessions, Kassin, (2019) suggest that stress, as it relates to suspect vulnerability, should be investigated. Although perceived stress could

be examined as either a situational or personal variable, Gudjonsson, (2019) recommends that stress should be investigated because compared to trait anxiety it has been linked to higher levels of suggestibility. We believe that a suspect's level of stress, above and beyond the immediate arrest situation, may be powerful enough to elicit a false confession. For example, a person who has witnessed a brutal crime or accident may experience stress unrelated to his/her role as a suspect. In turn, this stress could affect the suspect's response to interrogation by increasing his or her (a) willingness to comply with the interrogator and/or (b) susceptibility to remembering the event inaccurately. We already know that stress can affect the way eyewitnesses comply with police instructions and remember events Fortune, (2013). For example, when an eyewitness is shown a line-up by the police, he or she may work hard to identify someone in that line-up to please the officer (Wrightsman, 2013). When eyewitnesses do not see someone that matches their recollections specifically, they often rely on their "best guess," also called relative judgment. Thus, eyewitnesses choose the suspect that best responds to their memory of the suspect (Wrightsman, 2013). Stress can also cause people to encode information incorrectly by unintentionally narrowing their focus when witnessing an event (Wrightsman, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Gudjonsson and Clarke (1986) model of false confession

This has been the long-established theoretical framework explaining how vulnerable individuals come to be suggestible during an interview. According to the model, the interviewer enters the interview room with a general cognitive set (or mindset). This is dictated by how they respond to the novel interview situation, and the presence of the interviewer, and may determine their behavioural response to interview questions. That is, whether interviewees resistor yield to the suggestive questions. It is proposed that several factors are important in eliciting the suggestible response: (i) uncertainty surrounding the correct answer(s) to the question(s), (ii) expectations of

success interviewees may feel that the interviewer expects them to know the correct answer, (iii) the use of negative feedback during the interview, designed to unnerve the interviewee, and (iv) the establishment of interpersonal trust/rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. This seems to enhance the believability of the negative feedback, rendering it more penetrative. The Gudjonsson and Clarke model thus appears to provide a relatively comprehensive explanation of interrogative suggestibility during the GSS procedure; that is how leading questions integrate with the negative feedback aspect of the model to occasion high suggestibility scores.

Although there has been much research into the individual differences and correlates of interrogative suggestibility, the psychological mechanism governing a performance on the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale (which demonstrates how individuals come to be suggestible seems to an extent unresolved. When questioned on an event previously seen, sometimes experiencing uncertainty seems a natural consequence, given memory for events deteriorates with time and is influenced by expectations and schemas. This is especially the case when given distracter tasks to divert attention and thought from the event/narrative in question.

Compliant interviewees are aware that they are being influenced (Gudjonsson, 1989) Attachment anxiety and compliance are related: Interviewees reporting intense adverse life events, scoring high on "shift" could be complying with the negative feedback instruction given by the interviewer after the first round of questions (Vulnerable interviewees on the GSS may not always be internalizing the negative feedback they may not necessarily believe that their initial answers are wrong a prerequisite for uncertainty and suggestibility (Gudjonsson& Clarke, 1986).

State-Trait Anxiety Model (Spielberger, 1972)

The distinction between state and trait anxiety is coined by Spielberger, (2012), Simply state anxiety refers to emotional and somatic reactions towards a stimulus apprehended as a threat in a certain context while trait anxiety refers to individual differences in reactions towards a

perceived threat in the environment in general (Spielberger, 2012). In other words, a situation-specific response to anxiety is considered state anxiety and a general response to anxiety is accepted as trait anxiety. According to Spielberger, (2012), the emergence of state and trait anxiety may depend on the interaction between the appraisal and evaluation of threat and psychological defence mechanism, which emphasizes the importance of individual differences in information processing stages such as perception and encoding. With this in mind, we believe that levels of state and trait anxiety may be used as determinants of an individual's generalized non-clinical anxiety level as they can represent one's general and context-specific reactions.

According to Spielberger, (2012), the levels of state anxiety (S-Anxiety) are more intense in individuals who experience higher levels of trait anxiety (T-Anxiety). The stronger the anxiety trait, the more probable that the individual will experience more intense elevations in S-Anxiety in a threatening situation. However, the level of S-Anxiety experienced by individuals can vary according to perceptions of the situation as threatening and past experiences Overall Spielberger, (2012), states that individuals with high levels of T-Anxiety tend to exhibit more S-Anxiety elevations and have more intense S-Anxiety reactions as they tend to perceive a wider range of situations as threatening.

Life Event Model Theory of Stress (Holmen and Rahe, 1967)

Life events are significant experiences which can lead to an increase in stress. The subject of the life event is believed to be a less significant factor in causing stress than the amount of destructive change in a person's life that can cause stress. Therefore, both negative life events which necessitate a change in a person's life can lead to stress. Even an enjoyable event, such as the birth of a child, can be a positive experience, but at the same time stressful for the newborn child's parents. Other examples of life events which can bring change include moving home, the death of a loved one or their relationship to stress levels have been the subject of research most significantly in the late 1960s when psychiatrist Thomas Holmens and Richard Rahe developed

the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) The SRRS was to measure the amount of change that cause and to assess the amount change experienced by an individual according to the life events that they have needed to adjust to the Scale. In 1957, Dr Thomas Holmes, a psychologist working at the University of Washington, collaborated in the development of a Schedule of Recent Experience (SRE). A questionnaire was designed to record the subject's experience of significant life events, which Holmes and his colloquies believed could be linked to subsequent health problems (Hawkins, 1957).

METHOD

Design

This study will adopt a survey design method to sample the information on the Relationship between Anxiety, Stress and False Confession among Suspects in Police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques.

The population consisted of suspects in selected police stations under Nsukka Local Government Area Enugu State which comprises one hundred and fifty (150) suspects. Nsukka Local Government Area has seven (12) police stations and a police outpost, in respect to this research, seven police stations were used with the total population of suspects that covers the division. To simplify the process of determining the sample size for a finite population, Krejcie& Morgan, (1970) table was used. According to the table, in a population of 150, a sample size of 108 was appropriate. Simple random &stratified random sampling techniques were the sampling procedure used in selecting the sample.

Instrument of Method of Data Collections

This study administered three sets of research instruments for data collection. They are described below:

Gudjonsson Confession Questionnaire (GCQ)

This is 52 items questionnaire developed by Gudjonsson, (2021), to measure Confession by suspects, offenders, reported reasons for confessing to the police and their attitude towards the confession. The questionnaire has 7 Likert styles ranging from "not at all" to "very much so". Previous research indicates that the GCQ is a reasonably reliable instrument. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the six factors ranged between 0.63 to 0.85. The test-retest correlation coefficients ranged between 0.84 and 0.94.

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)

To measure anxiety, the A-Trait scale of anxiety inventory was used. The state-trait Anxiety Inventory, developed by Spielberger, Gorsuch & Lushene, (2012) Consists of two self-reporting scales that measure trait and state anxiety. A-Trait scale and A-State Scale each contain twenty (20) statements and require about four to five minutes to complete. The subjects rated themselves on a four-point basis for both of the scales. The minimum and maximum scores that can be obtained on either scale are 20 and 80 respectively. Both scales consist of items that are worded in such a way that a high rating indicates low anxiety and the scoring weights are reversed for these items.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The instrument to measure perceived stress is a 5-point Likert scale with 10 items adapted from the perceived stress scale by Cohen, (1994). The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. It is a measure of the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Items were designed to tap into how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. The scale also includes several direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. The items are easy to understand, and response alternatives are straightforward. The questions in the PSS ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, respondents are asked how often they felt a certain way. The Cronbach Alpha obtained in this study is .748

Procedure

To have access to the suspect in police custody, for approval to conduct the study in identified police stations approval was sought. After approval by the Area Commander, the researcher proceeds for administering the 108 questionnaires to the suspects at different police stations. The researcher had interactions with the suspects and establish a ripple on how the instrument will be administered to the respondent. The 108 questionnaires were given out to the suspects to fill by giving them time to complete the instruments, under the supervision of the researcher and research assistants. The suspects filled them out and returned them. The response rate for the questionnaires in both police stations was 100 per cent.

Method of Data Analysis

For effective data analysis to determine the relationship between anxiety, stress and false confessions among suspects in police custody, inferential statistics of Pearson product-moment correlation was used in testing hypotheses 1& 2 using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21 for data analysis.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between Anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. This hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the Pearson product-moment correlation, the results are presented in the table below:

Table 1: PPMC coefficient between Anxiety and False Confession.

Variable	N	Mean	Std.	r.cal	P.	Value Decision
Anxiety	108	56.5463	7.12556	.049	.05	significant
False confession	108	51.7222	6.35380			

r= .049, P>0.05

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between stress and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the Pearson moment correlation, the results were presented in the table below:

Table 2: PPMC coefficient between stress and false confession.

Variable	N	Mean	Std.	r.cal	P Value	Decision
Stress	10868	.7037	6.3580	.200	.05	significant
False confession	10851	.7222	5.14329			

r= .200, P>0.05

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant correlation coefficient between Anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka L.G.A Enugu State. The result of the Pearson product-moment correlation shows that there is a significant correlation coefficient between anxiety and false confession. This implies that anxiety significantly influences false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka L.G.A Enugu State. This finding is in line with the research finding of Meissner, (2012) who found that anxiety leads to false confessions by the suspects. The finding also agrees with the work of Narchet, (2011) and Horgan, (2012) that internal factors such as anxiety are capable of making suspects give false confessions during interrogation.

Also, the result of hypothesis two confirmed that there is a significant correlation coefficient between stress and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka L.G.A Enugu State, the result of Pearson product-moment correlation was confirmed in this study which reveals that there is a significant correlation coefficient between stress and false confession. This implies that stress significantly leads to false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka L.G.A Enugu State. This finding is in line with the work of Wrightsman,

(2012) who found that stress can also cause people to encode information incorrectly by unintentionally narrowing their focus when witnessing an event. Also, it is similar to the finding of Clifford and Scott, (2018) who demonstrate that participants who witness a violent act remember less information than those participants who witness a non-violent act.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the relationship between anxiety and stress on false confessions among suspects in police custody in Nsukka L.G.A Enugu State, it concluded that there is a significant correlation coefficient between Anxiety and false confession among suspects in police custody in Nsukka L.G.A Enugu State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

a. Police officers should be sensitive to the fact suspects might give confessions as a result of high levels of anxiety and stress. It is advantageous to know the vulnerabilities of suspects. This can be done through psychological assessments.
b. There should be a post-interrogation review of confessions to help spot aspects that might be inconsistent and identify where the suspect may have attempted to mislead the police officer during interrogation or may have given inconsistent testimony.
c. Having a record such as a video or audio of interrogation also helps in the post-interrogation review as this helps to examine the suspect's disposition throughout the interrogation

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