



# Vocational identity of Nigerian army personnel: Roles of spirit at work and energy at work

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the roles of spirit at work and energy at work in vocational identity of Nigerian army personnel. Two hundred and forty-one male Nigerian soldiers in the Nigerian army, drawn from Nigerian Army Cantonment in Ikeja, Lagos State participated in this study. Participants' age ranged from 18-55 years with a mean age of 36.5 years ( $SD = 5.68$ ). Three instruments, namely, Spirit at Work Scale, Energy at Work Scale and Vocational Identity Scale, were used to elicit response from the participants. Data was analysed using hierarchical multiple regression. Results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that spirit at work and energy at work negatively predicted vocational identity. Workplace interventions that will help to increase spirit at work and energy at work in this challenging and conflict interlude to enhance Nigerian army vocational identity were suggested. The paper makes an original contribution to research in the area of spirit at work, energy at work and vocational identity, particularly in the Nigerian environment.

## Introduction

It is believed that the military has delved into politics in order to: One, identify with most of their retired veteran officers who have occupied sensitive place of duty (e.g., president, senator, house of representative member, ministers and ambassadorial positions), hence, the involvement in politics, nepotism and ethnocentrism may have hampered Nigerian army personnel's spirit and energy at work in vocational identity (Peterside, 2014). Two, retired personnel's that meddled into politics, nepotism and ethnocentrism have shown active Personnel's that being part of reigning political party is not an aberration, rather, something that is worth commendation (Dokubo, 2005). Thus, meddling in virtual party, nepotism and ethnocentric politics have the potential of disrupting serving officers vocational identity, reducing spirit and energy at work needed for resiliency in the military (Shin, & Kelly, 2013). Also, nepotism and ethnocentrism involved in the personnel selection method has however affected development of vocational identity (Omede, 2012) which is no longer an essential and effective way to increase spirit, faith and energy needed to execute their job description (Obioha, 2016).

The Nigerian political situation over the last 18 years have resulted in the increased use of military

power in conflict situations with implications for their roles, energy and faith at work, tasks, service patterns, organizational commitment and skill requirements (Peterside, 2014). These fundamental transformations may also have effects on the structure, development and maintenance of vocational identity (Obioha, 2016). Rhee, Lee, Kim, Ha and Lee (2015) defined vocational identity as the control with understandable and unwavering depiction of an employee's purpose, interests, qualities, plus aptitudes that dole out as the source for creating work-related preference. Vocational identity helps to facilitate a good fit with workers and soldiers own tangible ambition, comprehensible interests, unwavering personality traits, and information regarding their capacity and flourishing when creating vocation choice than individuals (Galles, & Lenz, 2013).

Strauser, Lustig and Ciftci (2008) stated that an individual's vocational identity has two dimensions: their team/social identity and their ego identity. Personnel's team/social identity is the summation of their association amid different groups, organizations, and institutions (Gupta, Chong, & Leong, 2015). While in dissimilarity, ego identity is an individual's sagacity from their exclusive responsibilities plus their insight of being a variant of the group per se (Hirschi, 2011). In equal cases, identity is chiefly reliant upon the personnel, teams,

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organization, with institutions which have important contact on personnel's life (Rhee, Lee, Kim, Ha, & Lee, 2015). But identity is also a function of how the individual perceives himself as being different from others (Galles & Lenz, 2013). Facets and dynamics of vocational identity are frequently useful to personnel's in the military, as well as the study of psychology of military life. A great deal of what Erikson said regarding the development of vocational identity can help personnel's to understand better diverse characteristics of Nigerian army service such as recruitment, politics, education and training, socialization into the military way of life, adjustment to duty in soldier's first unit, novel function and successive assignments, selection for authority and career ladder, and army headship (Obioha, 2016). Additionally, Erikson's thoughts are mostly edifying for those Nigerian army personnel who dole out as teachers, counsellors, and mentors to younger soldiers who are at their significant periods of their vocational identity development (Peterside, 2014). In the Nigerian army, there could be countless complications to vocational identity, chiefly in the dealings of soldier's superior officers and in the cult of army life itself. Erikson's theory provided a constructive gizmo for appreciative problems of vocational identity facing Nigerian army personnel today (Peterside, 2014).

Various organizations that include, armed forces and civilian paramilitary agencies (e.g., police and fire departments, immigrations, customs services, prisons services) call for soaring degree of compliance and restraint in their rank and file to complete their operation effectively (Dokubo, 2005). Nevertheless, when military and paramilitary personnel's experience low spirit and energy at work, their actions usually put the lives of their workforce, citizens/civilians and country at large in constant jeopardy (Omede, 2012). By so doing, danger and the advancement of the odds for physical, psychological and spiritual survival for personnel's, their families and country languishes. When these intangible variables (spirit and energy at work) are tampered with, submission to instructions, rules, last word, and safeguarding of physically powerful strength of will along organizational objectives which are necessary to capitalize on for enhanced performance is influenced negatively, and thus, vocational identity of the Nigerian military and paramilitary effected.

Spirit at work is the divine environment of the organisation, confirmation by divine organizational standards which assist employees' skill and good judgment of being associated to others in a manner

to offer mind-set of fullness and delight (Houghton, Neck, & Krishnakumar, 2016), through the acknowledgment of an internal being that foster and is nurtured by significant job or occupation (Van der Walt, & Swanepoel, 2015). Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) opined that spirit at work might as well be examined from either an organisational or an individual perspective. For these reasons, this study will consider spirit at work from an organisational perspective and individual perspective.

Quinn, Spreitzer and Lam (2012) defined energy at work as employees' point of energy experienced as a kind of optimistic emotional awakening, that involves spontaneous answer to mood, explicit events, conflicts and challenges with protracting enduring touching states that ought not be a comeback to definite dealings. Shirom (2010) stated that employees possess three salient domains of energy at work which include; emotional arousal (e.g., feeling of excitement), cognitive alertness (e.g., desire to focus attention) and physical-behavioural/purposeful behaviour (e.g., investment of physical resources). Some authors (Quinn, Spreitzer, & Lam, 2012; Shirom, 2010) uphold that energy is the stimulator that facilitates military organizations run; recounting it as a renewable store that profit both personnel's and the military. When military personnel demonstrate energy at work in and outside battlefield, it has triumphing insinuations for enemies and holds out Nigerian military aggressive advantage. Cole, Bruch and Vogel (2012) stated that positive affect and emotional awakening inborn in personnel feeling energized amplifies teammates with organizational inspiration and efficiency of thought. Also, Atwater and Carmeli (2009) avowed that energetic heart helps employees to imagine constructively regarding vocation associated troubles and brood over the responsibilities at hand.

There were few literatures but were not directly linked with spirit at work to vocational identity. The near related studies found positive relationship between spirituality and performance in organizations (Karakas, 2010); interconnectedness between personality, personal actions, organizations and the path to spirit at work (Kinjerski, 2004); embracing workplace spirituality and managing organizational politics: servant leadership and political skill for volatile times (Kolodinsky, Bowen, & Ferris, 2003); and journeys of personal meaning, fulfilment, well-being and transcendence through work as four paths of spirit at work (Kinjerski, & Skrypnek, 2008). Such findings reported a negative correlation between spirit at work and the various

positive indicators of organizational life. There is dearth of literatures on energy at work and vocational identity.

#### Hypotheses

1. Spirit at work will significantly predict vocational identity among Nigerian army personnel.
2. Energy at work will significantly predict vocational identity among Nigerian army personnel.

### Method

#### Participants and procedure

Participants in this study comprised 241 Nigerian army personnel from the army cantonment in Ikeja, Lagos State. They were drawn from seven departments (i.e., Nigeria Army Amour Corps, Nigeria Army Corps of Artillery, Nigeria Army Engineers, Nigeria Army Medical Corps, Nigeria Army Signals, Nigeria Army Supply and Transport, Nigeria Army Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) using purposeful sampling technique. Participants age range was categorized as 72(29.9%) below 30 years of age, 79(32.8%) between 30-40 years, 55(22.8%) between 41-50 years, 35(14.5%) above 50 years of age. By designation, 173(71.8%) were below officer's rank and 68(28.2%) were officers. With regards to type of employment, 6(2.5%) were contract personnel (private contractors) and 235(97.5%) were for permanent personnel. By monthly salary, 47(19.5%) earn between ₦20-50, 119(49.4%) earn between ₦50-100, 44(18.3%) earn between ₦100-200, 31(12.19%) earn between ₦200 and above. With regards to marital status 92(38.2%) were single and 145 (60.2%) are married. For number of dependants, 104(43.2%) had no dependants, 49(20.3%) had one dependant, 74(30.7%) had two dependants, 12(5.0%) had three dependants, and 2(.8%) had four dependants. With regard to educational qualification, 3(1.2%) had FSLC, 67(27.8%) had WASSCE, 14(5.8%) had OND, 14(5.8%) had NCE, 51(21.2%) had HND, 67(27.8%) had BSC, 27(8.7%) had Master's degree, and 4(1.7%) had PhD.

The researcher with the research assistants who were military officers visited the Nigerian Army Cantonment in Ikeja, Lagos State, and met with the intelligence and public relations officers of the division to obtain permission to carry out the study. The researchers were directed to the appropriate office in charge at the General Commanding Officer (GOC) office for approval for the study to be conducted and assigned an officer to assist in the distribution and collection of the completed questionnaires.

The instruments were self-report questionnaire and respondents completed them during their lecture time since all the participants were literate enough to understand the items in the questionnaires. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and all the participants available, volunteered to participate in the study. A total of 250 copies of the questionnaires were administered, and 241 copies were completed and returned, while 9 were not properly completed and they were not scored for the data analysis.

#### Instruments

Three instruments were used in the present study for data collection and they include: Vocational Identity Scale (VIS; Dreher, Holloway & Schoenfelder, 2007), Spirit at Work Scale (SAWS; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006; Kinjerski, 2013), and Energy at Work Scale (Cole, Bruch, & Vogel, 2012).

##### *Vocational Identity Scale (VIS)*

The Vocational Identity Scale is a self-report measure consisting of 9 items developed by Dreher, Holloway, and Schoenfelder (2007). According to the author, some of the advantages of VIS over previous measures include the phrasing and wording of the items to be understood by those with at least high school education; and construction of items were applicable to multilingual and multiethnic state like Nigeria. The response scale was on a five-point Likert scale, 1(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample questions include "I have a calling that enables me to develop my skills and talents and use them in a meaningful way," "Most of the time I genuinely enjoy the work I do." The scale was validated through a pilot study conducted by the researcher among a sample of seventy-five army personnel drawn from 6<sup>th</sup> Amphibious Division of the Nigerian Army in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State to determine the reliability for Nigerian sample. The reliability of the Vocational Identity Scale was .68. A factor analysis showed that all the items of the scale loaded on one dimension with factor loadings of .30 and above, which explained 33.78% of the variance in the entire scale.

##### *Spirit at Work Scale (SAWS)*

The Spirit at Work Scale is a four-component is a self-report measure of engaging work, sense of community, mystical experience, and spiritual connection, consisting of 18 items developed by (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006; Kinjerski, 2013). The response scale was a six-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never). Sample items includes: "I am able to find meaning

or purpose at work,” “I feel like I am a part of a community’ at work,” and “I feel grateful to be involved in work like mine.” The scale was validated through a pilot study conducted by the researcher among a sample of seventy-five army personnel drawn from 6<sup>th</sup> Amphibious Division of the Nigerian Army in Port-Harcourt, Rivers state, to determine the reliability in Nigerian sample. The reliability of the Sprit at Work Scale was .89. A factor analysis showed that all the items of the scale loaded on one dimension with factor loadings of .30 and above, which explained 36.08% of the variance in the entire scale.

*Energy at Work Scale (EAWS)*

The Energy at Work Scale was developed by Cole, Bruch and Vogel (2012) and consists of 14 items. The response scale is on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include: “People in my work group feel energetic in their job,” “People in my work group are mentally alert,” and “People in my work group are working at a very fast pace.” The Energy at Work Scale had a Cronbach’s alpha = .86, (Cole, Bruch, & Vogel 2012). The scale was validated through a pilot study conducted by the researcher among a sample of seventy-five army personnel drawn from 6<sup>th</sup> Amphibious Division of the Nigerian Army in Port-Harcourt, Rivers state, to determine its reliability in Nigerian sample. Reliability analysis performed using the data collected from respondents yielded a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .86.

**Design/Statistics**

The study adopted a cross-sectional design and hierarchical multiple regression was used in the study to predict vocational identity from the scores on spirit at work and energy at work.

**Results**

Correlations in Table 1 showed that age was positively correlated with monthly salary ( $r = .57, p<.001$ ), number of dependents ( $r = .44, p<.001$ ), educational status ( $r = .48, p<.001$ ) and years of service ( $r = .78, p<.001$ ). Those who were permanent staff earned more salary ( $r = .13, p<.05$ ) and had also been on the job for a longer time ( $r = .17, p<.01$ ). Monthly salary correlated positively with number of dependents ( $r = .35, p<.001$ ) educational qualification ( $r = .59, p<.001$ ) and years of service ( $r = .55, p<.001$ ). Number of dependents was positively associated with educational status ( $r = .19, p<.001$ ) and years of service ( $r = .46, p<.001$ ). Educational status was positively related to years of service ( $r = .42, p<.001$ ). Spirit at work did not correlate significantly with energy at work ( $r = -.02$ ).

Results of the hierarchical multiple regressions for the test of the hypotheses are shown in Table 1. Spirit at work was added in the Step 1 of the regression analysis and it negatively predicted vocational identity,  $\beta = -.58, t(238) = -10.82, p<.001$ . The B showed each one unit rise in spirit at work was associated with -.25 reduction in vocational identity ( $B = -.25$ ). The contribution of spirit at work in explaining the variance in vocational identity was 33% ( $R^2 = .33$ ), and the model was significant,  $F(1, 235) = 117.06, p<.001$ .

In step 2, energy at work was a significantly negative predictor of vocational identity,  $\beta = -.25, t(238) = -4.99, p<.001$ . The B showed each one unit rise in energy at work was associated with -.21 reduction in vocational identity ( $B = -.21$ ). The contribution of energy at work in explaining the variance in vocational identity was 7% ( $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ), and the model was significant, F change (1, 235) = 76.90,  $R = .40, p<.001$ .

**Table 1: Pearson’s correlations for demographic variables, spirit at work, energy at work and vocational identity among military personnel**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Age	-							
2 Employment type	.06	-						
3 Monthly Salary	.57***	.13*	-					
4 No. of dependents	.44***	.05	.35***	-				
5 Educational status	.48***	.02	.59***	.19***	-			
6 Years of service	.78***	.17**	.55***	.46***	.42***	-		
7 Spirit at work	-.01	.06	.06	.02	-.11	.06	-	
8 Energy at work	.03	.10	.03	-.10	.10	.12	-.02	-
9 Vocational identity	-.00	-.02	-.08	-.03	.040	-.09	-.56***	-.25***

Note \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female); Employment type (0 = Contract; 1 = Permanent); Monthly salary (0 = Less than #50,000, 1 = #50,000-#100,000; #100,000-#200,000; #200,000 and above); Education (0= FSLC; 1 = SSCE, 2 = OND; 3 = NCE, 4 = HND; 5 = Bachelor’s degree, 5 = Masters’ degree; 6 = PhD).

**Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting vocational identity by spirit at work and energy at work.**

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
Spirit at work	-.13	-.11**	3-2.89	-.06	-.09	1.26
Energy at work				-.16	-.20**	-2.82
R <sup>2</sup>	.33			.40		
$\Delta R^2$	.33			.06		
F	117.06(1, 236)***			76.90(2, 235)***		
$\Delta F$	117.06(1, 236)***			24.92(1, 235)***		

\*\* $p < .01$ ;  $\Delta R^2$  = Change in  $R^2$ ;  $\Delta F$  = Change in  $F$

### Discussion

This study investigated the roles of spirit at work and energy at work in vocational identity. Results indicated that spirit at work negatively predicted vocational identity. Thus, the first hypothesis which stated that spirit at work will be a significant predictor of vocational identity among Nigerian army personnel was confirmed. Increase in spirit at work was associated with reduction in vocational identity. The finding of this study is in harmony with the studies (e.g., Karakas, 2010; Kinjerski, 2004; Kinjerski and Skrypnik, 2008; Kolodinsky, Bowen, & Ferris, 2003). The military organization in other parts of the globe is believed to be an organization that promotes integrity in their personnel selection method, based on strong collectivism, patriotism, and altruistic values. Cognitive theory by Piaget explain the different styles of perceiving, thinking and acting in employees' which includes one's reflexes, motor abilities, mental representations and a concrete vocational identity based on feelings of wellbeing, purpose, belief, inspiration, motivation and an awareness of connection that enhances and increased fulfilment of productivity (Piaget, 1971). In situations of high spirit at work, the military men are most likely to take pride in their work and totally identify with all aspects of their job roles.

Energy at work was a negative significant predictor of vocational identity among Nigerian army personnel. The second hypothesis which stated that energy at work will significantly predict of vocational identity among Nigerian army personnel was confirmed. It is possible that some Nigerian army personnel may feel that they have lost their physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness as they engage less in their vocational/occupational choice. Hence, they will have low vocational identity. Energy at work among the Nigerian army personnel needs to be bolstered. Nigerian politics may have affected their identity development, plan, deterred their career focus, plus control over their daily lives, increased their dual speciality (politics and military), nepotism and ethnocentrism in promotion methods. There is need for more inspiration, motivation, belief, purpose and awareness of connection that enhances

and increase productivity which helps in identifying with a vocation.

Military personnel's in other parts of the globe are known for the high spirit at work which helps them in their vocational choice, identity and development. The Nigerian Army must commence a number of strategy changes to improve the growth of organizational and vocational identity amid officers and create superior constancy in their lives. During recruitment process, military management community can screen for self-determined individuals using self-determination theory as a focal point so as to employ army personnel who are inherently proactive with the tendency to act and master the job with growth and integrated functioning in order to actualize their potential and use trait variation as strategies for adapting to distress call, environmental opportunities and pressures (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004).

### Limitations of the study and suggestions for further study

Although the present study has made some contributions to the Nigerian army personnel, however, some limitations of the study need to be considered. One major limitation of this study is that it is cross-sectional in nature with relatively small participants used for data generation. In other words, more robust and larger participants would have added an extra pertinence to the findings. During the distribution of questionnaire to a military community, the participants refused to attempt the questionnaire owing to the fact that the country was in a state of uprising and agitations emanating from Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). This issue prevented the participant from taking the test as some of them were avoiding any form of interview. This clearly highlights the need for longitudinal studies in the field. The present findings call for more advanced studies on organizational intangibles that influence organizational performance and will attempt to map the highly complex interplay between spirit, energy at work and vocational identity. Collecting data from other sources such as library and online source as well as supervisors would also be helpful in overcoming the limitation of the present study. Such studies have the potentials of enriching understanding of vocational

identity. In order to enhance generalizability, there is need for future studies to be conducted across diverse work environment that would include army personnel other than just army personnel from only one state. Such studies should also make use of larger and more representative sample size.

### Conclusion

This study investigated whether spirit at work and energy at work will significantly predict vocational identity among a sample of army personnel. It was found that spirit at work and energy at work had a predictive negative correlation with vocational identity. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the direction of providing detailed information aimed at checkmating occupational choice among Nigerian army personnel. Researchers are encouraged to continue along this line of research. It is imperative to note that adequate enlightenment on spirit at work and energy at work which are intangibles that influence organizational performance and identity needs to be studied as there is dearth of literature in this area.

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