

# Perceived Influence of Mid-Life Crises on Emotional Adjustment of Civil Servants in Benue State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** There is a growing interest among psychotherapists to treat emotional problems among workers in midlife around the world. This study investigated the perceived influence of mid-life crises on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State, Nigeria. The study looked at the perceived influence of marital crises and declining health on emotional adjustment of Civil servants. Two specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated. The study adopted a survey research design and was carried out in Benue State, Nigeria. The population for the study comprises 19,109 civil servants in Benue State. The sample size for the study was 392 civil servants in Benue State determined using Taro Yamane Formular and was composed via accidental or convenience sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Mid-life Crisis and Emotional Adjustment Questionnaire” (MCEAQ). The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Means and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions and Chi-Square statistic to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that, marital crises and declining health have significant negative influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State. It was concluded from the study that mid-life crisis can be very overwhelming, leaving civil servants to handle negative emotional state of mind and a realm of feelings they might not have had to deal with. Based on the findings, it was recommended that, counselling should be given to middle aged couples by guidance counsellors to encourage them to develop patience, tolerance and understanding for each other which may in turn help to reduce marital crises; civil servants facing mid-life crises should be encouraged by guidance counsellors to establish a healthy work/life balance – putting aside time to relax and to do the things to enjoy.

**Keywords:** Mid-life Crises, Emotional Adjustment, Marital Crises, Declining Health and Civil Servants

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings constantly have to adjust to various roles, environmental demands and pressures. Throughout the course of life, human beings strive for well-being and happiness in various spheres of life - emotional, social, economic, marital and work. Striving for emotional wellbeing means reaction to the demands and pressures of the environment imposed upon an individual coping with maintenance of both internal and external equilibrium of individual personality. Achievement and success in this sphere may lead to satisfaction in life, whereas inadequacy to

do the same may lead to frustration. In the present era, professionals like bank employees, doctors and lecturers have to spend more time at their work places and are more indulged in activities related to their careers and professions. They have less time to fulfill their family responsibilities which may lead to crises especially at about the age of 45-64 and according to Stern, Fava, Wilens and Rosenbaum (2015), they may experience what is known as midlife crisis.

Mid-life crisis is a transition of identity and self-confidence that can occur in middle-aged individuals, typically 45–64 years old. The phenomenon is described as a psychological crisis brought about by events that highlight a person's growing age, inevitable mortality, and possibly shortcomings of accomplishments in life. This may produce feelings of depression, remorse, and anxiety, or the desire to achieve youthfulness or make drastic changes to current lifestyle. The term was coined by Elliott Jaques in 1965 (Chandra, 2011). Mid-life crisis is experienced by many people during the mid-life transition when they realize that life may be more than halfway over. Sometimes, a crisis can be triggered by transitions experienced in these years, such as andropause or menopause, the death of parents or other causes of grief, unemployment or underemployment, realizing that a job or career is hated but not knowing how else to earn an equivalent living, or children leaving home. People may reassess their achievements in terms of their dreams. The result may be a desire to make significant changes in core aspects of day-to-day life or situation, such as in career, work-life balance, marriage, romantic relationships, large expenditures, or physical appearance (Chandra, 2011).

One of the main characteristics of mid-life crisis perspective may be one assuming that their mid-life is about to be eventful, usually in a negative way and potentially stressful, a deep sense of remorse for goals not accomplished (Stern, Fava, Wilens, & Rosenbaum, 2015). The crisis may lead to fear of humiliation among people at mid-life longing to achieve a feeling of youthfulness; they may need to spend more time alone or with certain peers; a heightened sense of their sexuality, confusion, resentment or anger due to their discontent with marriage, work, health, economic, or social status (Newman & Newman, 2012). Furthermore, all stages in human development may be marked by different physical, intellectual, social and character development of the personality. There are certain periods in the process of development, where certain characteristic features of behaviour stand out more prominently than other periods of

life. Each stage of life has certain needs. The unfulfilment of needs give rise to problems. The individuals who deal with their problems positively are believed to be well adjusted emotionally whereas those who fail to deal with their problems may suffer from maladjustment. This study is therefore an effort to ascertain the perceived influence of mid-life crisis on emotional adjustment of civil servants in relation to marital crises, declining health, career challenges and financial crises.

At mid-life, people generally expect their marriage to be successful. However it is unrealistic to expect a marriage to be problem-free. After all, even well -matched marriage, partners are not perfectly compatible hence difficulties of some sort are inevitable (Nzenweaku, 2012). As people begin to assess their marriage and find that they probably made a wrong choice of their spouse, regret or nostalgia sets in and this may lead to stress. Some couples worry about money or the way it is spent. Often this produces stress that may lead to conflict in a marriage. Also, other challenges like financial problems may be experienced such as pressure of paying hospital and utility bills which often creates anxiety that can amplify disagreements and put additional strain on a relationship as couples advance in age. It can be more difficult to take differences of opinion in stride or to tolerate the idiosyncratic tendencies of the partners that are displeasing (Nzenweaku, 2012). Inevitably there may be expectations that one partner will have for the other that will not match what he has for himself. Trust issues can arise when one or both partners feel betrayed by the others due to expectation not realized as a result of staying together for a long time. Generally, the more one partner feels let down, the harder it will be to work through the conflict. It may even take years and small sequential steps to earn trust that has been lost. When signs of hostility appear, especially aggression, mental health can begin to plummet (Weber, 2011). This typically frustrating behaviour causes extreme emotional turmoil and builds discord in both people's psychological states. People begin losing confidence in themselves on many levels. As a state of mental health declines, spouses in turn show more weaknesses. They may resort to unhealthy ways of handling conflicts. In some cases, spouses can even become unfaithful, which may leads to a ruined marriage and attendant health issues including emotional problems resulting to crises at middle-age.

Mid-life crisis may come with its attendant health problems like hypertensions, dementia, and stroke. Chronic conditions are associated with worse physical function and commonly develop during midlife (Brittney, 2018). To the author, midlife is a critical period in the life course as it is when chronic conditions tend to increase and declines in physical function become apparent. Some of the neuropsychiatric disorders associated with stroke include post-stroke depression (PSD), mania, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, apathy without depression, psychotic disorder, pathological affect and catastrophic reaction (Chemerinski & Robinson 2010). Another condition that may be associated with stroke is

apathy. Apathy is regarded as a morbid negative state affecting free will, intellectual capacity and emotional responsiveness. Apathy has been associated with depression, older age, cognitive impairment, impairment in activity of daily living (ADL) (Starktein & Leentjens, 2011). Catastrophic reactions, pathological effect and post-stroke psychosis are other disorders that may occur during mid-life crises and probably influence the course of recovery and quality of life which invariably leads to emotional adjustment problems of civil servant during mid-life (Chemerinski & Robinson, 2010). These health issues may affect the dreams of a good life and all the plans made by civil servants.

Civil servants constitute the cream of the middle class workers in Nigeria. These are people who work in a variety of fields such as teaching, health care, sanitation, management, and administration for the Federal, State, or Local Governments. Over the years, it seems that civil servants, just like others, experience a myriad of mid-life crisis in the course of their service. Mid-life crises seem to manifest in form of anxiety, depression, stress, comparing self with others, measuring achievements, dressing differently, spending more than usual, feelings of regret, attempting to look younger than real age and considering to change career among others is linked with poor or declines in performance in various aspects of individuals' endeavour. These crises may affect workers emotional adjustment and hence they may need the support of a counselor. Counselling can help workers turn a midlife crisis into an opportunity for growth and generativity. Counselling can offer advice for how to deal with a midlife crisis, help workers facing a mid-life crisis understand the roots of the crisis, gain control over their emotions, and take meaningful steps towards the goals that make life feel meaningful. It is against this backdrop that, the researcher is interested in investigating the perceived influence of mid-life crisis on emotional adjustments of civil servants in Benue State

## II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Mid-life is generally considered as the result of recognition that future possibilities have diminished and all goals and dreams set earlier in life might not be met. Adults at mid-life seem to make seemingly dramatic changes, searching for new relationships, and/or new careers in an attempt to get to where they want to be in life. At midlife, Individuals often feel that they need to be more independent. They may also decide that their marriage is simply not fulfilling. It is not uncommon to have an affair or to engage in other behaviors that are hurtful to a marriage because of a midlife crisis.

In Benue, it is a known fact that civil servants' salaries are not paid constantly, some ministries stay for many months without salaries. In Benue state, the state Government is unable to pay workers in line with the national minimum wage law. The non-payment of salaries to civil servants is endemic (Bright, 2018). The National Union of Teachers (NUT) Benue State Chapter reported that at least 101 striking primary school teachers in the state have lost their lives within striking period following their inability to get proper medical

attention when they needed it (Bright, 2018). The researcher also observed that as a result, most civil servants are not happy with their jobs. Some civil servants leave home for work as a matter of necessity and not wanting to be seen as a liability. This could be frustrating based on the fact that most of these workers are between the ages of 45-65 (at the middle of their lives). This may lead to stress that may manifest in the form of marital crises and declining health which can make it near impossible to adjust emotionally. Given this scenario in mind, the researcher worried about the high rate of marital crises and declining health among civil servants particularly in Benue State and the need to provide help through counselling, sought to investigate the perceived influence of mid-life crises on emotional adjustment of the civil servants.

*Objectives of the Study*

Specifically, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Ascertain the perceived influence of marital crises in mid-life on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State
2. Determine the perceived influence of declining health in mid-life on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State

*Research Questions*

The following questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is the perceived influence of marital crises during mid-life on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State?
2. What is the perceived influence of declining health in mid-life on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State?

*Statement of Hypotheses*

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Marital Crises in mid –life has no significant influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State.
2. Declining health in mid-life has no significant influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State

**III. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a survey research design. The population for this study comprises 19,109 civil servants in Benue State (Benue State Civil Service, 2018). The sample size for the study is 392 civil servants in Benue State. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. In selecting the sample, convenience or accidental sampling technique was adopted to compose the civil servants for the study. This is a sampling technique that

involves choosing the nearest individuals as respondents and continuing the process until the required sample size is obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Mid-life Crisis and Emotional Adjustment Questionnaire” (MCEAQ). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, two from Guidance and Counseling, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, all from Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, copies of the instruments was trial tested on a sample of 45 civil servants in Nasarawa State who are not part of the study but considered to have similar characteristics to the subjects under study. The data were collected and analyzed using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. The data collected ere analyzed using descriptive statistics of Means and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions while Chi-Square statistics was used in testing of the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**IV. RESULTS**

The analysis for the research questions and hypotheses are presented in the following tables

Research Question 1: What is the perceived influence of marital crises during mid-life on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Perceived Influence of Marital Crisis in Mid-Life Crisis on Emotional Adjustment of Civil Servants in Benue State

S/N	Items Description	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	People find it difficult to concentrate when having marital crises in mid-life	392	2.99	1.11	Agree
2	People’s reasoning is heavily distorted in times of marital crises in mid-life	392	3.17	.99	Agree
3	Marital crises in mid-life gives people constant headache that they find it difficult to cope	392	3.16	.97	Agree
4	People feel disorganized in times of marital crises in mid-life that their behavior is heavily distorted	392	3.19	1.03	Agree
5	People feel in-secured in times of marital crises in mid-life that they behave abnormally	392	3.13	1.00	Agree
6	Marital crises in midlife makes people to have an avoidant personality	392	2.89	.99	Agree

7	Marital crises in mid-life makes people to think inferior among colleagues	392	2.77	.83	Agree
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation			3.04	.99	Agree

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that all the 5 items have mean values ranging from 2.77 to 3.19 indicating that their mean values are above the benchmark of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.04 shown on the Table indicates that marital crises in mid-life have negative influence emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State.

Hypothesis 1: Marital Crises in mid –life has no significant influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Perceived Influence of Marital Crises in Mid–life on Emotional Adjustment of Civil Servants in Benue State

Variables	N	Df	$\chi^2_{cal}$	Sig	Alpha Level	Remark
Marital crisis						
	392	18	962.453	.000	.05	Significant
Emotional Adjustment						

Df = Degree of Freedom;  $\chi^2_{cal}$  = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value

Table 2 shows the Chi-square value of 962.453, df =18 and a sig or P-value of .00 which is less than the alpha value ( $\alpha=.05$ ). Since P-value = .00 is less than  $\alpha$  value=0.05, the result is significant, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that marital crises in mid –life has significant perceived influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State

Research Question 2: What is the perceived influence of declining health in mid-life on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Perceived Influence of Declining Health in Mid –Life on Emotional Adjustment of Civil Servants in Benue State

S/N	Item Description	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
8	Health challenges makes people to be depressed during mid-life	392	3.10	1.05	Agree
9	Health challenges makes people to lose interest in things as a result of coping difficulty	392	3.25	.94	Agree
10	People often find it difficult to cope with the realities of life in times of health challenges during mid-life	392	3.08	1.05	Agree

11	Declining health in mid-life makes people feel sad always and unable to cope	392	3.05	1.08	Agree
12	Poor health in mid-life makes people to be discontented with life	392	3.20	.98	Agree
13	People sometimes feel life is worthless because of their health challenges in mid-life	392	2.83	1.01	Agree
14	People tend to have increased anxiety in times of declining health in mid-life	392	3.01	.98	Agree
15	People have increased fear in times of health challenges in mid-life	392	3.23	.87	Agree
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation			3.09	.99	Agree

Data presented in Table 3 revealed that all the 8 items on influence of declining health in mid –life on emotional adjustment of Civil Servants in Benue State had their Mean values ranging from 2.83 to 3.25, indicating that their mean values were above the benchmark of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.09 shown on the Table indicates that declining health in mid-life has negative influence emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State.

Research Hypothesis 2: Declining health in mid–life has no significant perceived influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Perceived Influence of Declining Health in Mid–life on Emotional Adjustment of Civil Servants in Benue State

Variables	N	Df	$\chi^2_{cal}$	Sig	Alpha Level	Remark
Health Challenges						
	392	21	1173.799	.000	.05	Significant
Emotional Adjustment						

Df = Degree of Freedom;  $\chi^2_{cal}$  = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value

Table 6 shows the Chi-square value of 1173.799, df = 21 and a sig or P-value of .00 which is less than the alpha value ( $\alpha=.05$ ). Since P-value=.00 is less than  $\alpha$  value=0.05, the result is significant, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that declining health in mid –life has significant perceived influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State

## V. DISCUSSION

The result from the findings of the study revealed that a marital crisis in mild-life has a significant negative influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State. It is evident from this finding that people find it difficult to concentrate when having marital crises in mid-life; people’s reasoning is heavily distorted in times of marital crises in mid-life; marital crises in mid-life gives people constant headache

that they find it difficult to cope; people feel disorganized in times of marital crises in mid-life that their behavior is heavily distorted; people feel in-secured in times of marital crises in mid-life that they behave abnormally; marital crises in midlife makes people to have an avoidant personality and marital crises in mid-life makes people to think inferior among colleagues. This finding corroborates with that of Adli, Haidari, Zarei and Sadeghifard (2013) who found that marital satisfaction has significant relationship with emotional adjustment and that marital crises negatively relate with emotional adjustment. The finding of this study also agrees with Anoop and Sasidharan (2015) who found that many aspects of mid-life crisis in the Indian context overlap with its counterpart observed anywhere as it relates else to marital crisis; certain unique themes clearly differentiates it from the rest but it has corresponding effect on marital crisis. The finding of this study as observed could be that marital crises particularly in mid-life among civil servants in Benue State is capable of distorting their normal maintenance of emotional stability and coping behavior.

The findings of the study also revealed that declining health in mid-life has a significant negative influence on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State. It is evident from the finding that, people often find it difficult to cope with the realities of life in times of health challenges during mid-life; declining health in mid-life makes people feel sad always and unable to cope; poor health in mid-life makes people to be discontented with life; people sometimes feel life is worthless because of their health challenges in mid-life; people tend to have increased anxiety in times of declining health in mid-life and people have increased fear in times of health challenges in mid-life. This finding corroborate with that of Carr, James, Ronald, Randolph, Sonnega and Wortman (2014) who found that emotional adjustment of adults was associated with elevated anxiety experienced during mid-life. The finding also agrees with that of Onrust, Cuijpers, Filip and Bohlmeijer (2011) who found that depressive symptomatology was best predicted by age, perceived non-supportiveness, physical disorders, and mastery during mid-life crises. This finding as observed implies that civil servants often tend to have personal adjustment problems when faced with health challenges particularly in mid-life

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that mid-life crisis can be very overwhelming, leaving civil servants to handle negative emotional state of mind and a realm of feelings they might not have had to deal with. This study established that mid-life crisis had negative significant perceived on emotional adjustment of civil servants in Benue State. Hence, counselling can be considered a good fit for civil servants experiencing mid-life crisis as it can help explore and provide answers to questions of how to live a meaningful life as well as focuses on fundamental values and maintain their emotional equilibrium.

## Counselling Implications

Counseling is very important in providing civil servants with factual information needed to make a pleasant transition from world of work into the world of less rigorous occupational schedules. Counselling is very important in helping maladjusted persons to re-modify their behaviours emotionally. Counselling can help workers turn a midlife crisis into an opportunity for growth and generativity. Counselling can offer advice for how to deal with a midlife crisis, help workers facing a mid-life crisis understand the roots of the crisis, gain control over their emotions, and take meaningful steps towards the goals that make life feel meaningful

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counselling should be given to middle aged couples by guidance counsellors to encourage them to develop patience, tolerance and understanding for each other which may in turn help to reduce marital crises.
2. Civil servants facing mid-life crises should be encouraged by guidance counsellors to establish a healthy work/life balance – putting aside time to relax and to do the things to enjoy. They should be encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle – exercise and eat well to improve well-being and moods. This can help them in maintaining emotional equilibrium whilst having declining health challenges in mid-life.
3. The Government of Benue State should ensure that salaries are paid to workers as at when due to avoid emotional adjustment problems particularly among middle aged civil servants.

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