



Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment of Police Officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigates the relationship between psychological variables and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 898 police officers serving in 21 police stations in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 317 police officers used for the study. A researcher-made instrument, titled "Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment Questionnaire for Police Officers" (PVSAQPO), was used for data collection. The face validation of the instrument was determined by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the internal consistency method, and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses were answered and tested using the Pearson product-moment correlation. Analysis of data revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem, emotional intelligence, social support and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were drawn and three relevant

recommendations made, among which is that the Nigeria Police Force should organise regular workshops and counselling sessions aimed at building and maintaining high self-esteem among officers.

Keywords: Psychological, variables, social, adjustment, police officer

Introduction

Police work is universally acknowledged as a high-stress occupation, characterised by frequent exposure to danger, high demands, role conflict, societal criticism, and public scrutiny. In Nigeria, these challenges are exacerbated by poor infrastructure, limited manpower, political interference, public mistrust, and exposure to violence, particularly in volatile regions. The Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State has witnessed intermittent unrest, communal conflicts, and rising insecurity, all of which place enormous psychological strain on police officers. The ability of officers to maintain effective interpersonal relationships, exhibit resilience under stress, and integrate socially is critical to both their professional effectiveness and psychological well-being.

The social adjustment of police officers refers to their capacity to integrate successfully into various social contexts, manage interpersonal relationships, conform to occupational norms, and adapt effectively to both professional and societal expectations. It entails the ability to communicate clearly, collaborate with others, resolve conflicts constructively, and maintain appropriate emotional responses in the course of performing law enforcement duties (Rienties et al., 2018). Socially adjusted officers are those who can interact meaningfully with colleagues, superiors, subordinates, and the general public while maintaining emotional stability, ethical standards, and a sense of belonging within the communities they serve. In a profession that is inherently stressful and socially interactive, successful social adjustment is crucial not only for an individual officer's psychological well-being but also for organisational efficiency and public safety outcomes. Officers with strong social adjustment skills may demonstrate greater self-regulation, tolerance, and responsiveness to public concerns, thereby fostering trust, cooperation, and legitimacy in police–community relationships.

Social adjustment can influence how officers deal with occupational stressors such as violence, trauma exposure, irregular schedules, and political interference, which are common features of policing in Nigeria. Officers who are socially maladjusted may experience alienation, interpersonal conflict, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction, which can impair their judgement and contribute to misconduct, absenteeism, or burnout. Conversely, socially well-adjusted officers may be more resilient, more accepting of constructive criticism, and more likely to uphold

professional conduct, even in high-pressure or ethically ambiguous situations (Ogunyemi & Bello, 2022). As policing continues to evolve in response to rising public expectations and socio-political complexities, social adjustment remains a key determinant of how well officers adapt, perform, and maintain the integrity of their role in society.

Social adjustment may be linked to certain psychological variables such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social support. Each of these can act as a buffer against stress or, conversely, exacerbate it, thereby influencing the quality of officers' social functioning.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall subjective assessment of their worth, competence, and value in the social and occupational domains of life. It encompasses beliefs about oneself (e.g., "I am competent," "I am worthy") as well as emotional states such as pride, shame, and confidence (Ukaegbu & Obikoya, 2017). In the context of police work, self-esteem is a critical psychological asset that influences how officers perceive their abilities, manage stress, and interact with others. Officers with high self-esteem may approach their duties with self-assurance, are more likely to demonstrate initiative, and may exercise authority with confidence and emotional control. They are also more resilient to occupational stressors such as public criticism, job-related dangers, and organisational pressures, and often maintain more positive and cooperative interpersonal relationships with both colleagues and the community. Conversely, low self-esteem can be detrimental to both individual functioning and organisational outcomes. Officers with poor self-esteem may struggle with chronic self-doubt, social inhibition, and fear of judgement, which can lead to emotional withdrawal, avoidance of responsibility, or aggression as a defence mechanism. Such individuals may find it difficult to work cooperatively, accept feedback, or integrate socially within their teams and communities.

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, and regulate their own emotions, as well as those of others, in different social contexts (Iruloh & Ukaegbu, 2017). In contemporary policing, especially within complex and emotionally demanding environments such as Nigeria, emotional intelligence is a vital asset. Officers with high emotional intelligence may demonstrate heightened empathy, effective communication, and sound emotional regulation, all of which are essential for managing conflict, maintaining public trust, and fostering collaborative relationships. Such officers may be better equipped to handle crises, respond compassionately to victims, and manage the psychological strain inherent in the profession. By contrast, officers with low emotional intelligence are more likely to experience emotional outbursts, interpersonal conflicts, poor judgement under stress, and strained relations with colleagues and the public.

Social support refers to the perceived availability and actual provision of emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance from others, including colleagues, superiors, family members, friends, and the broader community (Ukaegbu & Obikoya, 2017). In high-stress occupations such as policing, where officers are frequently exposed to traumatic events, high-stakes decision-making, and societal scrutiny, a strong support system is indispensable. Social support can serve as a psychological buffer, helping officers manage occupational stress, reduce feelings of loneliness, and enhance emotional resilience. Support from peers and superiors within the force can promote teamwork, boost morale, and reinforce a sense of solidarity, while support from family and friends can provide emotional grounding outside the work environment. Officers with high levels of perceived social support are more likely to exhibit effective stress management, positive coping behaviours, and successful social adjustment. Conversely, officers who perceive a lack of support may be at greater risk of emotional exhaustion, psychological withdrawal, job dissatisfaction, and social maladjustment. They may also be less likely to express vulnerability or seek help, compounding feelings of isolation and reducing their ability to function optimally in both professional and interpersonal domains.

Despite growing attention to occupational stress and mental health in the police force, there is limited empirical evidence on how these psychological variables relate to social adjustment, particularly within the Nigerian context. Orlu Senatorial District, with its unique security challenges and socio-cultural complexity, provides a suitable context for this investigation. This study therefore seeks to examine the relationship between psychological variables (self-esteem, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, locus of control, and social support) and the social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

Police officers occupy a vital position in society as they are responsible for enforcing laws, maintaining peace, protecting lives and property, and promoting public safety. However, in the discharge of their duties, they are regularly confronted with emotionally demanding situations, exposure to violence, long working hours, and encounters with traumatic events, all of which may pose significant challenges to their psychological well-being and social functioning. Social adjustment, which involves the ability to relate positively with others, respond appropriately to environmental demands, and maintain emotional balance, is essential for effective policing. In Orlu Senatorial District, there have been increasing concerns about the conduct and interpersonal behaviours of some officers. Reports of aggression, poor community engagement, strained relationships with colleagues and the public, and emotional instability point to problems of poor social adjustment.

Several psychological variables, such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social support, have been associated with positive social adjustment in various occupational settings. However, there is a lack of empirical research specifically addressing the relationship between these variables and the social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District. Given the district's history of civil unrest, heightened public expectations, and occasional breakdowns in police–citizen trust, it is imperative to examine the internal psychological resources that enable officers to adjust socially and function effectively.

The absence of evidence-based understanding of the psychological dynamics influencing social adjustment in this context creates a gap in the design of appropriate counselling interventions, stress management programmes, and personnel development policies. Without such understanding, efforts to enhance officers' performance, promote emotional wellness, and rebuild public confidence in the police force may continue to fall short. This study therefore investigates the relationship between psychological variables and the social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between psychological variables and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study determined:

- i. The relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers.
- ii. The relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers.
- iii. The relationship between social support and social adjustment of police officers.

Significance of the Study

The study would be of immense benefit to police officers, the Police Service Commission, the general public, guidance counsellors, and future researchers. First, it would reveal some of the psychological challenges faced by police personnel and how they can achieve social adjustment. Social adjustment will enhance officers' social interactions, promote psychological well-being, and enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in maintaining law and order, as well as protecting lives and property.

Furthermore, the study would highlight the need for the Police Service Commission to formulate policies and programmes that promote the psychosocial well-being of police officers in Nigeria. Attention to the psychosocial well-being of police personnel would improve their effectiveness and professionalism as law enforcement agents.

The study would also benefit the general public. The Nigeria Police Act assigns the force the duties of protecting life and property, detecting and preventing crime, apprehending offenders, preserving law and order, enforcing laws, and performing such other military functions within the country as may be required. Nigerian citizens are the direct beneficiaries of these duties, which can only be effectively discharged if police officers are socially adjusted.

For guidance counsellors, the study would contribute to professional competence by providing relevant, valid, and useful information about police officers' psychological challenges and social adjustment. It would also expose them to instruments for measuring these variables.

Finally, the study would make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on the psychological challenges and social adjustment of police officers. Future researchers in this field, or related areas, would be able to refer to this study, particularly in the area of empirical literature review.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers?
- ii. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers?
- iii. What is the relationship between social support and social adjustment of police officers?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study at 0.05 level of significance:

- i. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between social support and social adjustment of police officers.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura (1977)

Social Cognitive Theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory emphasises the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modelling in the development of behaviour. It proposes that human functioning is the result of a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between personal, behavioural, and environmental

influences. Central to this theory is the concept of reciprocal determinism, which asserts that individuals are both products and producers of their environments.

Social Cognitive Theory also highlights key psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their capability to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments. Bandura posited that self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, and act. The theory further incorporates the roles of cognitive processes, emotional reactions, and social influences in shaping human behaviour.

The relevance of Social Cognitive Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how psychological variables such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social support interact with environmental factors to influence social adjustment among police officers. In the context of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, their ability to manage stress, build interpersonal relationships, and respond to occupational challenges is not only shaped by external conditions but also by their internal beliefs and emotional competencies.

For instance, a police officer with high emotional intelligence is likely to demonstrate better social adjustment through effective communication, emotional regulation, and problem-solving strategies. Similarly, officers with strong social support networks and a positive locus of control may better navigate the demands of their profession. Social Cognitive Theory thus provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how these psychological variables collectively influence the social adjustment of police officers within their socio-environmental contexts.

The Ecology Model by Schlossberg (1981)

The Ecology Model was propounded by Nancy Schlossberg in 1981. The model posits that an individual's ability to adapt and function effectively in their environment is influenced by the dynamic interaction between personal characteristics, the nature of the transition they are experiencing, the environment, and the support systems available. The model is grounded in the belief that life transitions, whether anticipated or unexpected, can impact an individual's psychological wellbeing and social functioning.

Schlossberg identified four major factors, often referred to as the "4 S's": Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies. These factors help to determine how individuals respond to transitions. The situation involves the context or trigger for change; self includes personal and psychological resources such as self-esteem and emotional resilience; support covers the availability of external resources like family, friends, and colleagues; and strategies refer to the coping mechanisms individuals use to manage stress and change.

The relevance of the Ecology Model to this study lies in its explanation of how police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State adjust socially, particularly in a profession characterised by stress, unpredictability, and frequent transitions. The model offers a framework to understand how psychological variables such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, locus of control, and social support influence the officers' ability to adapt to their work environment and engage effectively with colleagues and community members. For instance, officers with high self-esteem and emotional intelligence are more likely to possess strong internal resources (Self), while those with robust support networks benefit from external resources (Support). The Ecology Model therefore provides valuable insight into the multi-dimensional nature of social adjustment among police officers, highlighting the crucial role of psychological and environmental interactions.

Empirical Studies

In their own study, Okoro and Akpan (2016) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and social competence among security personnel in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational design and involved 208 security officers selected through stratified random sampling. A self-esteem scale and a social competence questionnaire were used for data collection. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and social competence. The authors concluded that security personnel with higher self-esteem displayed better interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and social adaptability. It was recommended that training programmes for security operatives include components that enhance self-esteem to improve their overall social functioning.

Ukaegbu (2018) carried out a study to determine how emotional intelligence, social support, self-esteem and coping strategies predict academic adjustment of first-year undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2,064 year one undergraduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, admitted into the various departments/faculties of the institution in the 2015/2016 academic session. A sample of 382 was selected for the study using a simple random sampling technique. Five instruments were used for data collection, namely, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg in Salami, 2011), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Parley (1988), the Coping Strategies Inventory by Tobin (2001), the Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory (MEII) by Mangal and Mangal (2004), and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) by Baker and Siryk (1989). Simple and multiple regression statistics were used for data analysis at the 0.05 level of

significance. It was revealed that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic adjustment of first-year university undergraduates.

Adeoye and Oyekunle (2019) examined psychological predictors of social behaviour among law enforcement officers in Lagos State, with a particular focus on self-esteem. The study employed a descriptive survey design and sampled 250 officers using a multistage sampling technique. Standardised instruments measuring self-esteem and social adjustment were administered, and data were analysed using multiple regression analysis. Findings showed that self-esteem significantly predicted social adjustment among the officers. Those with high self-esteem were better able to regulate emotions, respond positively to social cues, and maintain cooperative relationships. The study recommended integrating psychological well-being initiatives, particularly those enhancing self-esteem, into law enforcement training.

A study by Salami (2015) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, including social adjustment, among police officers in Southwestern Nigeria. A correlational design was adopted with 230 officers selected through stratified sampling. Emotional intelligence and psychological adjustment questionnaires were administered. Data analysis using Pearson correlation showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment. The study concluded that emotionally intelligent officers were better at handling interpersonal demands and workplace challenges. It recommended emotional intelligence training as part of police development programmes.

Oke and Alade (2016) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and social adjustment among prison wardens in Ondo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used with a sample of 120 wardens selected via purposive sampling. Data were collected using standardised emotional intelligence and social adjustment scales. Pearson correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment. The authors suggested that the rigid and hierarchical structure of correctional institutions limited the expression and application of emotional skills. The study recommended organisational reforms that encourage emotional expression and interpersonal engagement.

Chima and Udeh (2017) investigated the relationship between perceived social support and social adjustment among police officers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, and 210 officers were selected through a stratified random sampling procedure. Standardised instruments measuring perceived social support and social adjustment were used. Data were analysed using Pearson's correlation statistic. Results indicated a significant positive relationship between social support and social adjustment. The study concluded that officers who reported higher levels of social

support showed better interpersonal functioning and emotional balance. It recommended that peer mentoring and structured support programmes be integrated into police welfare services.

Another study exploring the relationship between social support and social adjustment among paramilitary officers in Zamfara State, Nigeria, was conducted by Abubakar and Sulaiman (2018). Using a survey research design, a sample of 180 officers was selected through purposive sampling. Standardised questionnaires measuring perceived social support and social adjustment were administered. Analysis using Pearson correlation showed no significant relationship between the two variables. The study attributed the lack of association to the low quality and irregularity of social support within the organisational structure. The authors recommended improving the depth and consistency of emotional and institutional support mechanisms for paramilitary personnel. From the foregoing, therefore, the present researchers observed that past authors on adjustment were mainly foreigners whose research did not focus on how psychological variables impact on police officers' social adjustment. Moreover, past empirical studies reviewed on adjustment were not conducted within the locale of the present study; hence, the need to investigate the relationship between psychological variables and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design, which is appropriate for investigating the extent to which two or more variables are related without manipulating them. This design enables the researcher to determine patterns of association between variables in their natural setting. It was considered suitable for this study, as it allowed for the examination of the relationship between psychological variables and the social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all police officers serving in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. There were 898 serving officers in 21 police stations in the district (Imo State Police Command, Owerri, 2025).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to select a sample of 340 police officers. First, the population was divided into clusters corresponding to Local Government Areas (LGAs). Using the simple random sampling technique (cap and draw), 7 out of the 12 LGAs in the study area were selected. Finally, proportional random sampling was used to select 50% of officers from each of the sampled police

stations within the selected LGAs. The sample size of 340 was justified using Taro Yamane's formula for determining the minimum sample size in a study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A researcher-developed instrument titled *Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment Questionnaire for Police Officers* (PVSAQPO) was used for data collection. The instrument comprised two sections. Section A, focusing on psychological variables, contained 18 items—six each measuring self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social support. Section B contained 20 items designed to elicit responses on social adjustment. Items were rated on a four-point scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The face validity of the instrument was determined by two experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and one expert from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education (Measurement and Evaluation), Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo. The experts assessed the items for relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and language suitability. Their observations, suggestions, and corrections were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using the internal consistency method. It was administered to a sample of 30 police officers drawn from the target population but excluded from the main study. Data were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding an overall reliability coefficient of 0.72, indicating an acceptable level of reliability for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers established rapport with the respondents and clearly explained the purpose of the study to ensure accurate responses. A police officer in each selected station served as a research assistant and was properly briefed on how to administer the instrument. Data collection lasted two weeks. Of the 340 questionnaires administered, 317 were retrieved; the remaining 23 were either mutilated or not returned.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions and corresponding hypotheses were addressed and tested using Pearson product–moment correlation statistics. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Self- Esteem	317	.470	.000	Sig.
Social Adjustment				

Table 1 presents the result of a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis examining the relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment among 317 police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.470, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that as police officers' self-esteem increases, their level of social adjustment also tends to improve, although the relationship is not particularly strong. Moreover, the test of corresponding null hypothesis one reveals that the associated **p-value is .003**, which is **less than the significance level of 0.05**, suggesting that the relationship between the two variables is **statistically significant**. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Emotional Intelligence	317	.402	.000	Sig.
Social Adjustment				

Table 2 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation result examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among 317 police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.402, indicating a moderate positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment. This means that as the emotional intelligence of police officers increases, their ability to adjust socially also tends to improve, though the relationship is relatively weak. Furthermore, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis shows that the associated **p-value is .000**, which is **less than the 0.05 significance level**, confirming that the relationship between the two variables is **statistically significant**. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers is rejected. This implies

that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation between social support and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State

Variables	n	r-value	p-value	Remark
Social Support	317	.716	.003	Sig.
Social Adjustment				

Table 3 presents the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation result examining the relationship between social support and social adjustment among 317 police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.716, indicating a high positive relationship between the two variables. This means that as levels of social support increase, the social adjustment of police officers also tends to improve remarkably. In addition, the test of null hypothesis three indicates that the associated p-value is .003, which is less than the 0.05 significance level, confirming that the relationship between the two variables is **statistically significant**. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between social support and social adjustment of police officers is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between social support and social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of police officers suggests that officers who possess a higher sense of self-worth tend to adapt more effectively in social contexts. Social adjustment involves the ability to manage interpersonal relationships, cope with societal expectations, and perform socially relevant roles. Police officers with positive self-esteem are likely to feel more competent and confident in social interactions, which may enhance their ability to communicate, collaborate, and resolve conflicts within the force and in the wider community. The finding of this present study could be because self-esteem strengthens interpersonal confidence. Police officers who believe in their value and abilities are more likely to initiate and maintain positive social interactions, which is essential in a profession that demands constant engagement with both colleagues and the public. Another possible reason is that self-esteem fosters psychological resilience. High self-esteem provides emotional stability and buffers individuals against stress and criticism, thereby supporting adaptive behaviour in stressful or socially demanding situations.

This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies. For instance, Okoro and Akpan (2016) found a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and social competence among security personnel in Cross River State. Their study concluded that individuals with high self-esteem demonstrated better interpersonal skills and social adaptability. Similarly, Adeoye and Oyekunle (2019) reported that self-esteem significantly predicted social adjustment among law enforcement officers in Lagos State, as those with higher self-esteem were better able to manage emotions and maintain effective relationships. However, this present finding is contradicted by Olagunju and Bello (2017), who reported no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment among correctional officers in Ogun State. They suggested that the institutional structure and high-stress environment of correctional facilities may reduce the influence of self-esteem on social adjustment. In such settings, external factors like organisational constraints, lack of autonomy, and exposure to high-risk situations might diminish the positive effects of self-esteem on social functioning.

The finding that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of police officers suggests that those who are better at perceiving, understanding, managing, and expressing emotions tend to interact more effectively in social situations. Social adjustment, particularly in policing, involves the ability to maintain positive relationships, cope with stress, and adapt to dynamic environments. Police officers with high emotional intelligence are likely to be more empathetic, better at conflict resolution, and more capable of maintaining emotional control under pressure, which facilitates successful social functioning. The outcome of this present study could be due to the fact that emotional intelligence enhances interpersonal sensitivity. Police officers with well-developed emotional intelligence can interpret social cues accurately and respond in ways that are socially appropriate, thereby reducing misunderstandings and interpersonal tension. Another reason is that emotional intelligence supports stress regulation, enabling officers to manage the emotional demands of their job, such as exposure to trauma, aggression, or high-pressure decision-making, which contributes to healthier social adaptation.

This finding is supported by previous empirical studies. For example, Salami (2017) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among police officers in South-western Nigeria. The study found a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and social competence, indicating that officers with higher emotional intelligence adjusted better in social environments. However, a study by Oke and Alade (2016) among prison wardens in Ondo State contradicted this finding, reporting no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment. They suggested that institutional constraints such as authoritarian management styles and limited opportunities for emotional expression may weaken the influence of emotional intelligence in such environments. As a result, even emotionally intelligent officers may not be able to apply their emotional skills effectively due to systemic limitations.

The finding that there is a significant positive relationship between social support and social adjustment of police officers indicates that officers who receive emotional, informational, or practical assistance from colleagues, family, supervisors, and the community are more likely to function effectively in social contexts. Social support enhances feelings of belonging, reduces stress, and provides coping resources, which are essential for adapting to the demands of police work. In high-stress professions like policing, access to supportive relationships can make a crucial difference in how officers manage interpersonal challenges and maintain emotional well-being. This finding could be that social support provides psychological buffering against occupational stress, which enhances police officers' ability to handle complex social environments with greater stability and confidence. Another reason could be that consistent social support fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging, which is essential for interpersonal trust, teamwork, and cooperation, which are core components of social adjustment in a policing context.

This finding is supported by previous empirical studies. For example, Chima and Udeh (2017) conducted a study among police officers in Rivers State and found that perceived social support significantly enhanced officers' interpersonal adjustment and emotional regulation. However, a study by Abubakar and Sulaiman (2018) among paramilitary officers in Zamfara State revealed no significant relationship between social support and social adjustment. The researchers attributed this to the quality of the support provided, noting that while support was present, it was often inconsistent or superficial, failing to provide meaningful emotional or psychological benefits. This highlights the importance of not just the presence of support, but the depth and reliability of such support in determining its effectiveness.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and social support are all significantly and positively related to the social adjustment of police officers in Orlu Senatorial District of Imo State. This suggests that psychological factors play a critical role in influencing how well police officers adapt to social environments, interact with others, and manage the interpersonal demands of their profession.

From the findings and conclusion above, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Nigeria Police Force should organise regular workshops and counselling sessions aimed at building and maintaining high self-esteem among officers.
- ii. Emotional intelligence should be included as a core component of police training curricula.
- iii. Police institutions in Nigeria should enhance support networks by establishing peer-support groups, welfare schemes, and access to mental health services.

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APPENDIX

PSYCHOLOGICAL VARIABLES AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POLICE OFFICERS (PVSAQPO)

Instruction: Please, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the items by ticking () against any of the response options below.

- SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

Section A: Psychological Variables

S/N	Self-Esteem	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I feel confident in my ability to handle the responsibilities of my role as a police officer.				
2.	I am proud to wear my police uniform and represent the department.				
3.	I often feel that my hard work and efforts are recognized by my colleagues and superiors.				
4.	I feel capable of making important decisions in critical situations.				
5.	I believe I am respected by the general public in my role as a police officer.				
6.	I feel that my emotional and mental well-being is valued by my department.				
	Emotional Intelligence				
7.	I am aware of my emotions and how they affect my behaviour on the job.				
8.	I am able to remain calm and composed in high-pressure situations.				
9.	I can easily recognize when my colleagues are feeling upset.				
10.	I effectively manage my emotions in situations of conflict.				
11.	I am able to empathize with individuals who are experiencing distress.				
12.	I feel confident in my ability to navigate difficult interpersonal interactions with respect and understanding.				

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Social Support					
13.	I can count on my family to offer practical help when I need it.				
14.	I feel that I have someone to turn to for emotional support when I am feeling down.				
15.	I have a close friend who listens to me without judgment.				
16.	When I'm stressed, I know I can talk to someone who understands my situation.				
17.	I feel comfortable asking my colleagues for help when facing work-related challenges.				
18.	I can rely on my support network to help me make important decisions.				

Section B: Social Adjustment

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I can manage the stress from work without it affecting my social relationships.				
2.	I feel that I can relax and unwind socially without being judged for my profession.				
3.	I am able to engage in meaningful conversations about work with family and friends when necessary.				
4.	I can handle social situations where people are skeptical of police officers.				
5.	My job does not interfere with maintaining a fulfilling social life.				
6.	I engage in social activities or hobbies outside of my work without feeling overwhelmed.				
7.	I find it easy to socialize with people outside of work.				
8.	I do not allow my personal relationships don't suffer from the stresses of my job.				
9.	I am able to keep a healthy balance between my professional responsibilities and social life.				
10.	I am able to adapt to changes in team dynamics in workplace roles.				
11.	I am able to balance work demands with maintaining positive relationships at work.				



12.	I am able to maintain positive relationships with supervisors and leaders.				
13.	I am able to build positive relationships with my fellow officers.				
14.	I feel comfortable interacting with colleagues from different departments.				
15.	I can easily share my experiences at work with my family and friends.				
16.	I am able to maintain strong friendships despite the time demands of my job.				
17.	I feel that my interactions with the public help improve the relationship between the police and the community.				
18.	I find it easy to build rapport with community members during routine patrols.				
19.	I am able to interact positively with the community, even in high-tension situations.				
20.	I manage my work-life balance effectively to maintain my relationships.				