
WORKPLACE STRESS MANAGEMENT AND WORKER'S PERFORMANCE: THE NIGERIA WORK EXPERIENCE

STELLA KARIBO ORTUKA (PhD)

+234 8032651236

stellaortuka@gmail.com

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This research investigate the as cendentry rise in workplace stress and it effect on workers performance. The paper saw stress as a strain and those elements that aggravate emotion and the physical wellbeing of a worker such that he or she becomes unable and unstable to discharge a set duty. Workplace stress comes as a result of work load and nature of work. The researcher used descriptive design and secondary method of data collection to guide the study. X – Rayed through the lens of human capital theory, the study recommended the training and retraining of staff and the prioritization of staff welfare to cushion the effect of stress among others.

Keywords: Workplace, stress, performance, productivity and workload.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace stress is a global phenomenon and affects as many as one worker out of ten workers worldwide. Umukoro and Orishede (2008) citing International Labour Organization (ILO) posits that “work-induced stress costs Europe and the United States over \$120 billion a year. Similary a survey in France revealed that 64 nurses and 61 percent of teachers say that they are upset about the stressful environment in which they work. In United States, some 200 million working days are lost annually due to work-related problems”. Additionally, some 30 percent of workers in Britain are said to have mental-health problems, and 5 percent suffer from major depression (Awake, April 22, 2001: 29 cited in Umukoro & Orishede, 2008). In Nigeria, sequel to the upside down of economic policies and family ties, many workers had exerted themselves excessively in order to earn a living. This hence, affect productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work just as job victims experience lowered quality of work life and performance (Olusegun et al 2014). In order to find out the effect and relationship between workplace stress and workers performance as focal focus, the research raised the following research questions; what is stress, how does workplace stress relate with workers effectiveness and performance, what are the types of stress and, are there stress management strategies to enhance workers performance

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design. Secondary method of data collection was also used to gather relevant literature about stress management and workers performance in workplace.

Theoretical Framework

This research was anchored on human capital theory. This theory was first formulated by

Theodore Schultz in 1961, Becker 1963 and Mincer 1974 (Maringe 2015). Di Xu and Fletcher (2017) and Ross (2023) argued that individual workers have a set of skills or ability which they can improve or accumulate through training and education. Furthermore Robinson and Pope (2023) added that human beings can increase their productive capacity through greater education and skills training. Garricks (2009) writing in Rady-Chuku (2021) stated that people are worth investing in as a form of capital. Therefore, investing in people propels performance and the result achieved considered as a return on investment assessed in terms of cost and benefits. The human capital theory provides evidence which indicates that workplace stress management enhances workers performance. Human capital theory recognized workplace stress management strategy and workers performance as a basic necessity for higher productivity of a worker. Hence, workers performances are determined and directed through continuous training, education and skill acquisition for mastery and competence. By the juxtaposition of this theory, it is therefore necessary that organizations should identify, introduce and adopt a workplace stress management strategy.

Literature Review

The word stress in Latin is “stringere” and “strictus” and it means to “grip hold tight or tighten”. Stress has dysfunctional tendencies capable of disrupting organizations, restriction and limitedness which reflect individual psychosomatic status under physical pressure or mental demands. Stress occurs in various forms in every work place and is a common element in any kind of job (Daniel, 2020). Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with constraints or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be uncertain and important (Robbins and Sanghi, 2006). Stress is a discomfort and inconvenience arising from factors like unpleasant people and neighbours, restlessness of mind and body, pressure, poor interpersonal relationship and unrealistic goals. Stress is those elements that aggravate our emotion and physical well-being. Amah (2014) writing in Rady-Chuku (2021) added that stress is a distinctive force that tends to strain and deform our particular or general health condition.

Furthermore, stress constitutes threat capable of damaging a person (Banu, 2006). Given the poor labour management relationship in Nigeria, Ome-Egeonu and Samuel (2019) citing Girigiri (1998), Opined that some employers subject workers to dehumanizing work and economic condition and the state in support of the statuesque, dole out repressive laws and actions to suppress workers demand for fair pay and treatment. The abinitio of government workers (Nigeria Labour Congress) rift was in 1988 during the military regime of Gen Ibrahim Babingida immediately after the formation in 1978 during which the then government introduced the anti-people Structural Adjustment Program SAP that originated mass poverty in Nigeria Iyeshim (2023). Structural Adjustment Program and the Abacha 1994 regime saw the demeaning of Nigeria workers and the origination of harsh work policies. This was how industrial disharmony started. Relatedly, Kazmier (1974) considered industrial conflict engendered by economic survival as responsible for workplace stress. But with job very difficult to come by these days in Nigeria, many workers are crumbling under unhealthy pressure trying so as to meet up with responsibilities.

Types of Stress

Taylor (1995) writing in Daniel (2020) stated the underlisted as types of stress.

1. **Work stress:** The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. Work stress can lead to poor health and even injury. Work stress is the response people have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and ability and which challenge their ability to cope. Some of the factors that commonly cause work stress are; long hours heavy workload, changes within the organization, tight deadlines, changes to duties, job insecurity and lack of autonomy. Work stress is a health and safety issue that causes depression, anxiety and sleeping difficulties and some of the self-help strategies are avoidance of alcohol and tobacco and eating of healthy diet meal.
2. **Chronic stress:** This stress has to do with a consistent sense of feeling pressured, overwhelmed with unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable period of time such as relationship conflict and the stress of poverty. This is the kind of stress that wears the individual down with aches, pains, insomnia and unfocused thinking leading to breakdown and even death. The major solution is physical exercise.
3. **Acute stress:** Is a common stress and very short-lived. Acute stress is a mental health problem that results from traffic jams, crowds, and loud noise etc and last for about four weeks.
4. **Traumatic stress:** Traumatic stress is one that results from a catastrophic event or experience such as accident or natural disaster.

Stress Management and Workplace Productivity

Stress can be managed using the individual approach and organizational approach. The individual approach entails exercises such as walking, joggles, playing tennis and dancing and relaxation these makes it difficult for individual to focus on job stress. In a state of deep relaxation, the worker is physically relaxed and detached from the stress-causing situation. Relaxation and exercises reduce the workers heart rates, blood pressure and other indicators of stress. Another way to ease stress individually is by confiding to someone. This self-disclosure goes a long way to reduce stress and give a more positive outlook on life (Rardy-Chuku, 2021). Organizational approach to stress management according to Robbins is by elaborating and implementing training programs for employees, personnel policies improvement, free communication and welfare support for workers, decreasing responsibility, job rotation and transfer, flexible and free hours, social recreational amenities and counseling.

The implementation of the aforementioned will enhance productivity which is the efficient application of resource in producing goods and services. Productivity denotes the actual ratio of input to output of any work organization. Productivity is concerned with the process of achieving the ultimate goals of the organization in terms of processing the input to reflect the expected output of the system. The output and input ratio within a time with due consideration

for quality (Armstrong, 2004). Productivity is associated with workplace and given that productivity is important in every workplace therefore, having a fully trained staff is the yardstick.

Workplace stress adversely apprehends workers performance and employees working with much stress tend to withdraw from stressors. Sometimes, workers create inefficiency in form of poor performance, wastage of operational resources, obstacles among others to showcase the negative effects of stress. Additionally, when performance diminishes with stress, negative linear relationship set in of recent, there has been the need for a continuous change in management strategies and administration and the demands on workers to perform and this has put workers under pressure trying to deliver without the corresponding increase in resources and training, yet those who fail to deliver are threatened with dismissal and other forms of punishment.

Cases of workplace stress in Nigeria are on the ascendancy. Either internally or externally generated workplace stress and the quest for surviving Nigeria economic hardship is responsible for many sickness, social vices and untimely death, workers absenteeism and turnover, decreased level of tolerance and productivity and lost of workdays. Kenneth et al (2023) citing Greenberg and Baron (2019) mentioned some other negative effects of stress as reduced efficiency, decreased capacity to perform dampened initiative and reduced interest in working, increased rigidity of thought, lack of concern and lack of responsibility. According to study conducted by the American Institute of Stress in 2008, an estimated one million people miss work daily as a result of stress. For this institute, the annual tab for all those lost hours due to absenteeism: reduced productivity, turnover, medical, legal and insurance costs come to \$300 billion or \$7,500 per worker. Smith (2020) writing in Kenneth et al (2023) in addition, opined that the number of legal cases against employers related to employees experiencing workplace stress has been on the increase. Given that stress is anything that upsets people's ability to maintain their social, psychological, spiritual or biological status, Cooper and Palmer (2019) enumerated stress effects as:

1. Subjective effect; as stress that leads to anxiety depression, frustration, fatigue and low self-esteem.
2. Behavioural effects; as stress that lead to accident proneness, substance abuse, impaired speech, restlessness and forgetfulness.
3. Cognitive effects; stress that affect our thought process, a leading to difficulty or fear of making decisions, forgetfulness, hypersensitivity, mutual blocks and difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly.
4. Psychological responses; this begin in the brain and spread to other organs of the body.
5. Effects on health; other complications may exacerbate in the body are ailments like asthma, heart disease, chest pains, decreased libido among others.

Causes of Stress at Workplace

Copper and Palmer (2019) cited by Kenneth (2023) identified these causes of stress at work and stated thus:

Poor working condition: working condition include physical environment of the job, office design, level of noise, high or low lighting, fumes, heat, poor ventilation systems and all the stimuli which bombard a worker's senses and can affect his moods and mental well-being.

Shift work: this is where workers have jobs which require them to work in shifts, some of which involves working staggered hours. This situation affects worker's blood temperature, metabolic rate, blood sugar level, sleep patterns and hypertension.

Long hours: the long working hours required by many jobs appears to take a toll on employees' health and making them suffer a high rate of stress. This means many individual workers and some medics who may have no sleep for thirty six hours may find that both their quality of work and they themselves suffer.

Rise and danger: a job which involves more risk and danger put employees in higher stress level. This awareness always appeals to consciousness of the worker thereby causing him or her health challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Stress is a common hazard in workplace and an increasing problem in organization in Nigeria and the world in general. The ascendancy of workplace stress affects the physical and mental health and the general well-being of both individual and organizations. Workplace stress is a strain and the result is poor performance and low productivity. Other causes of low performance are poor training lack of planning and motivation and poor work conditions to alleviate these, the research was conducted to; find out the factors that are responsible for workplace stress, its effect on workers performance and the examination of workplace stress management strategies using human capital theory. Therefore, the study recommended workplace stress management strategies, positive stress management policies, the assessment of subordinate knowledge and ability to cope in deadlines, workers skill, training and retraining, medical care, allowances and workload reduction. Others are: Prompt payment of salaries, Suitable working environment, Training and retraining and development of workers, Regular promotion, Staff housing and medical allowances, Regular employment, Workers should be able to seek for leave.

References

- Amah, E. (2014). Corporate culture and organizational effectiveness. University of Ibadan Press.
- Cooper, C.L. & Palmer, S. (2019). Conquer your stress. Institute of personnel and development 4 (8), 10 – 18.
- Daniel, C.O. (2020). Effects of job stress on employees performance. *International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research* 6(2), 375 – 382.

- Dixu and Fletcher (2017). Value of alternative pathways in postsecondary education. Bridges, pathways and Transitions.
- Greenberg, J.S. (2019). Comprehensive stress management (16th Ed.) WCB/McGraw-Hill.
- Kenneth Amechi, I.; Chineme, B.O. (2023). The effects of works stress on employees performance in the commercial banking sector in Nigeria. *Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University, Natural Science Edition* 19 (11) 814–827.
- Maringe, F. (2015). Higher education market. International encyclopedia of the social & behavioural sciences (second edition).
- Mills, H. (2019). Stress in the workplace. Retrieved from www.mindtools.com/ressMTCDDownloads/.html.
- Olusegun, A.J.; Oluwasayo, A.J; Olawoyim, O. (2014). An overview of the effects of job stress on employees performance in Nigeria tertiary hospitals. *Ekonomika* 60 (4), 139 – 153.
- Ome-Egeonu & Samuel, K.P. (2019). Industrial conflicts and organizational commitment: the Nigeria work experience 2(1), 64 – 69.
- Rady-Chuku, C.A. (2021). Stress management and employees performance in selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State of Nigeria. An unpublished project submitted to the department of sociology, University of Port Harcourt.
- Robbins, S.P. (2004). Organization behaviour (11th Ed) Pearson prentice Hall.
- Robinson, C. & Pope, R. (2023). Diversity, Democracy and Social Justice in education. *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Fourth Edition).
- Ross, S. (2023). What is the human capital theory and how it is used? Investopedia.
- Samuel, K.P (2019). The effect of human resources under-utilization in Port Harcourt metropolis: A review of SIAT (Nig.) Ltd. *Journal of Contemporary issues* 2(1), 46-51.
- Smith, J.C. (2020). Stress management: A comprehensive handbook of techniques and strategies. Springer.
- Taylor, S. (1995). Managing people at work. Reed Educational and professional publishing Ltdf.
- Umukoro, N. and Orishede, F. (2008). Job related stress and the Nigerian worker. *Journal of Social and Policy Issues* 5(3), 25 – 31.