STRESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED 5 FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract: This work examined the effect of stress and employee performance in selected tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. This study is necessary because of the high rate of stress among academic staff in various universities. The study aimed to determine the effect of role ambiguity, workload pressure on employee performance. Relevant theoretical and empirical works of literature were examined. Person environment (PE) fit theory was used in backing up the study. A statistical formula devised by Patern (1995) was employed to determine the sample size to be 351. Data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Hypotheses formulated were tested using Multiple Regression Analysis. The result of the Pearson correlation analysis shows that workload pressure and role ambiguity had a significant negative influence on employee performance. The study concludes that workload pressure had a negative effect on employee performance of selected 5 federal Universities in South East Nigeria. The study recommended that selected 5 federal Universities in South East Nigeria will reduce stress through an effective stress management strategy that will reduce workload pressure to improve the performance of their employees. To reduce role ambiguity management should clarify tasks assigned and responsibility then clearly spell out criteria for evaluation.

Keywords: Role Ambiguity, Workload Pressure, Federal Universities, Employee Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

It is an acknowledged fact that we live in a stressful age. In the process of struggling to live, people become confronted with barriers and streams of life's demands. Job is one of the most important parts of our daily lives which causes a great deal of stress (Anazodo, Onyeizuibe & Uchenna, 2012). The influence of job stress on organizational and employees' performance has continued to gain increased recognition with the advancement of technology, globalization of work, demographic trends, constantly changing work roles expectations, and increasing work demands (Beehr&Glazcr, 2005).

Job stress refers to a state of negative feelings or reactions resulting from perceived undesirable work conditions that pose a threat to the individual (Jamal, 2007). All forms of work and organizational procedures are a potential cause of stress simply because other people's needs and wishes "impinge on one another's (Alabi, Murlala&Lawal, 2012). Stress is one of the burning issues that organizations have to deal with so that employees can comfortably produce quality work (Warraich, Ahmed, Ahmad & Khoso, 2014). Around three billion people globally are employed, and nearly all of them face the incessant and challenging problem of stress in their organizations (Warraich, et al 2014). Every individual, regardless of race or cultural background, social and occupational status, and even children, experiences stress in many ways (Amina &Bako. 2014). Stress is a universal element that employees around the globe are currently experiencing as a matter of routine (Harif, 2004).

Work stress is the most common silent killer of employees, especially in times of depression. Stress is an unpleasant condition or position at the workplace which negatively influences an individual's overall well-being and performance (Ejaz, Muhammad & Muhammad, 2014).
Stress can be said to be an involuntary response to a dangerous situation or events that frighten, irritates, confuse, endanger or excite us and place demands on the body (Kaufman, 2011). There are many types of stressors like noise and dim light at the workplace, high job demands, role overload, role ambiguity, lack of sleep, and time pressure; these variables can lead to high stress.


Chen and Silvenhorne (2003) labeled "job stress as a work-related psychological pressure that affects a worker's ability to respond and grip the specific situation at workplace skillfully". Many previous studies investigated that the escalation in workload and long work hours as providing the basis for occupational stress among academicians (Bradley & Eachus, 1995). Over 40% of lecturers in Australia described their job as very stressful, this, in turn, reduced their effectiveness and efficiency by impairing concentration, causing sleeplessness, increasing the risk of illness, increasing back problems, accidents, and lost time. Several studies are now suggesting that job-related stress is as great a threat to health as smoking or not exercising.

In higher institutions, lecturers perform enormous responsibilities in addition to lecturing. Lecturers have to administer students' continuous assessment, attend conferences, seminars, and workshops, carry out researches, compute students' results, published in recognized journals, engaging themselves in community services as well as trying to balance their work-life and home life as well. (Alabi, 2012).

**Statement of The Problem**

Job stress is a chronic disease caused by conditions in the workplace that adversely affect an individual's performance and overall well-being of his body and mind. Stress can adversely affect employee performance. However, if these conditions are allowed to go unchecked and the body disturbed further, the performance ultimately declines and the person's health degenerates.

The performance of academic staff seems to be affected by stress-related factors such as inadequate role specification, and if roles are not specified the organizational structure will be affected; that tends to leave an employee in the dark not knowing where to go. Finally, there also exists the problem of lecturers having the perception that they are unable to cope with the amount of work allocated to them. For organizations to achieve more they have to integrate their problems with that of employees. Organization can map out facets to help employees concentrate on their job to achieve more, and work overload may have a direct influence on them, the ability of lecturers to relate to their students as supposed, lecturers organizing skills, and lecturers' course knowledge relevant at workplace respectively should be sound.

**Objectives of the Study**

On a broad view, the main objective of the study is to ascertain the extent to which job stress affects employees' performance in selected 5 federal Universities in South East.

Specifically, the study is aimed at:

1) Explore how role ambiguity affects employee performance in selected 5 federal Universities in South East, Nigeria.
2) Investigate the extent to which workload pressure affects employee performance in selected 5 federal Universities in South East, Nigeria.

**Hypotheses**

**H1:** Role ambiguity does not have a significant positive effect on employee performance in selected 5 federal Universities in South East, Nigeria.

**H2:** Work-load pressure does not have a significant positive effect on employee performance in selected 5 federal Universities in South East, Nigeria.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Stress

Stress is a complex human problem that has drawn the attention of people from the dawn of history. Stress has been defined in various ways (Alabi, Vluiala & Lawal, 2012). Originally, it was conceived of as pressure from the environment, then as strain within an individual. "The generally accepted definition is the interaction between the situation and the individual" Stress is the body's general response to environmental situations which can lead to changes in physical, emotional, behavioral, or mental state. Stress is any influence that disturbs the natural equilibrium of the body which includes physical injury, deprivation, diseases, and emotional disturbances. (Anikewuyo, 2006) when he defined stress as the resultant effect of a person being pushed beyond the limit of his or her natural capacity, even after the cause is removed, the person may not return to his/her previous stale.

Hasebur (2013) defines stress as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological, and behavioral deviation for organizational participants. Kar (2002) views stress as an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being. More precisely. (Richlin & Hoe 2003) posit stress to be a physical and mental response to everyday demands, particularly those associated with change.

Job Stress

Job-related stress is an uncommon feeling experienced by an individual who is required to change the desired behavior as a result of opportunities, constraints, or demands related to important work objectives (HayFord & Amos. 2014). Job stress refers to a state of negative feelings or reactions resulting from perceived undesirable work conditions that pose a threat to an employee (Jamal, 2007). Canadian center for occupational health and safety (2000) defined workplace stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that can result from conflicts between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. The epidemic of workplace stress can be seen as a result of continuous change occurring in the ‘workplace over the past 20 to 30 years (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2005).

Hoel, Zapf & Cooper (2002) explained that the change occurring in the workplace is as a result of globalization, privatization, process re-engineering, mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances, joint venture and the like. The research went further to explain that in the 1980s, as a result of the emphasis being laid on the need for continuous improvement of businesses, the much-needed transformation was achieved but not without a negative effect. Employees began to slow on their performances, which led to the concept of "burnout" within organizations. Occupational burnout is a condition where an employee's coping resources have been consumed my work and life's demands, to the point of poor job performance and exhaustion (Schultz. & Werner, 2003).

Role Ambiguity

Most times, employees have to work in interdependent teams and in an uncertain work environment (Srikanth & Jomon, 2013). Organizations provide a breeding ground for employees to work in interdependent teams (Ganesh & Gupta, 2010). However, employees may get confused when trying to ascertain the expectations about their duties, and the demands put on them as a result of unclear expectations. Role ambiguity refers to unclear or confusing expectations about job duties and demands put upon an employee by different people, colleagues, customers, level of authority, social expectations, and job-related factors. (Hayford & Amos 2014).

Coetzee & Rothmann (2007) introduced the concept of change in their definition; by defining Role Ambiguity as relating to the amount of stress experienced by an individual due to vague specifications or constant change regarding the performance expectations, duties, responsibility, and Constraints that define the individual's job.

Work Load Pressure

Work overload refers to the amount of stress experienced by individuals due to the perception that they are unable to cope or be productive with the amount of work allocated to them(Coetzee & Villiers, 2010). If
organizations or management does not appreciate their employers for their hard work or contribution towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives. This may create stress and most likely creates intention to leave (Stamper & Johlke, 2003). When employees are faced with excessive pressure on their job, it results in the following: job demands cannot be met, relaxation turns into exhaustion, sense of satisfaction replaced with feelings of stress, motivation sheds away, and workers start losing interest in their work and hence performance chart shows a negative trend.

Babak & Niaz, (2010) good performers are often loaded with additional responsibilities due to their competence; at a certain point, the weight and demands of the task render them incapable of performing their jobs adequately. (Hay ford & Amos 2014) the attitude of employees differs towards workload; some may comfortably cope with it at the workplace, while others may find it difficult to cope with it at the workplace.

Theoretical Framework

The theory underlying this study is the Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) theory developed by French and Caplan in 1972. The basic tenet of P-E Fit theory has been that stress arises from a misfit between an individual and his or her environment. Stress can occur if there is a mismatch between the demands placed on an individual and his or her abilities to meet those demands. A mismatch between demands and abilities induces coping and defense mechanisms which in turn influence objective and subjective representations of the environment (Edwards. Caplan& Harrison, (1998). A mismatch between the objective reality of the work environment and an individual's subjective perceptions of the work environment also can result in stress. It is to this end that French and his colleague presented two clear definitions:

First, between objective reality and subjective perceptions, and secondly, between environmental variables (E) and person variables (P). Given the simple 2x2 configuration of P x H interaction, lack of fit can challenge worker's health.

Relating the theory to this work, one can easily deduce that there is a mismatch between the demands placed on lecturers and their abilities to respond likewise. Lecturers are often weighed down by the demands of their job which include academic and administrative workload.

Empirical Review

Several studies have been carried out on the relationship between job stress and performance of employees, some of these studies include:

Nduekeje, et al in (2013). The study aims at investigating the relationship between job stress and performance among hospital nurses in Iran. The research method used was a descriptive survey design. The participants of the study were 491 nurses in hospitals which were randomly selected from all nurses. 100 copies of the questionnaire were analyzed. Pearson coefficient correlation and regression analysis were used. The result of the study showed that a negative correlation exists between job stress and the performance of employees in hospitals tested in Iran..

Dim et al, (2014) surveyed the relationship between time management with job stress and role ambiguity in material and procurement management of National Iranian South Oil Company. 250 personnel were selected using stratified random sampling, 228 completed and returned the questionnaire. Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used to analyze the data. The result indicated that there is a significant relationship between time management and job stress, between time management and job performance and that there is a significant relationship between job stress and job performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive survey design was adopted. The purpose is to collect detailed and factual data describing an existing phenomenon.
Area of the Study

This study covers selected five federal Universities in South East Nigeria, one University representing one state; the University of Nigeria Nsukka, Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture,Umudike, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Alex Ekruweme Federal University, Ndufu Alike Ikwo.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is the teaching staff of selected 5 federal Universities in South-East Nigeria.

TABLE 1: Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>INSTITUTIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TEACHING STAFF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>University of Nigeria, Nsukka</td>
<td>1,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>NnamdiAzikiwe University. Awka</td>
<td>1,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Federal University of Technology, Owerri</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike Ikwo</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2020–Personnel Unit

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study is 351 academic staff. It will be derived from the population of 3984 academic staff of selected five federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The statistical formula devised by Partem (1995) was employed to determine the sample size. The formula states thus

\[ n = \frac{NZ^2 \times 0.25}{d^2 \times (N-1) + (Z^2 \times 0.25)} \]

Where:
- \( n \) = the sample required and which is statistically representative
- \( N \) = The target population
- \( d \) = confidence level (0.05)
- \( Z \) = number of standard deviation units of the sampling distribution corresponding to the desired confidence level given as 1.96

In substituting, it goes thus:

\[ n = \frac{(0.05)^2 \times (3984-1) + (1.96^2 \times 0.25)}{3084 \times (3.8416 \times 0.25)} \]

\[ n = \frac{(0.05)^2 \times 3983 + (3.8416 \times 0.25)}{15304.9344 \times 0.25} \]

\[ n = \frac{9.9575 + 0.9604}{10.9179} \]

\[ n = \frac{10.9179}{350.45508752} \approx 351 \]

Therefore = 351

The study used the technique above, which spans across selected five federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The targeted participants of the study are academic staff whose rank ranges from Assistant Lecturer to rank of Professor.
Sources of data

For this research, the researcher made use of primary data, which includes questionnaire, and personal interviews. Also, secondary data was employed because a lot of contributions were borrowed from the internet, books, newspapers, etc.

Method of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, Pearson’s product-moment correlation was adopted. Pearson correlation was used to examine the extent or nature of the relationship that exists between: (a) Role ambiguity and lecturer-student relations (b) work overload and lecturers’ course knowledge.

The study also employed Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) method to determine the effect of stress on employee performance. The regression model is represented as:

\[ Y = a + B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2 + B_3 X_3 + B_n X_n + e \]

Where:
- \( Y \) is Employee Performance (EP)
- \( a \) is Constant Term
- \( B \) are Beta Coefficients
- \( X_1 \) is Role Ambiguity (RA)
- \( X_2 \) is Work Load Pressure (WLP)
- \( e \) is Error Term

Test of Hypotheses

Here, the two hypotheses formulated were tested using t-statistics and the significance value of the individual variables in the regression result. The essence of this is to ascertain how significant is the effect of individual independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The summary of the result is presented in the table below.

Table 1, T-Statistics and Probability Value from the Regression Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Role Ambiguity</td>
<td>8.632</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workload Pressure</td>
<td>2.870</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2.674</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors Compilation from the Regression Result

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho: role ambiguity has no significant effect on employee performance.
Hi: role ambiguity has a significant effect on employee performance.

In testing this hypothesis, the t-statistics and probability value was used. Role ambiguity has at-statistics of -2.674 and a probability value of 0.036 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which state that role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on employee performance.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Ho: Workload pressure does not exert a significant influence on employee performance.
Hi: Workload pressure exerts a significant effect on employee performance.
Workload pressure has at-statistics of -3.014 and a probability value of 0.003 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which state that Work load pressure exerts a significant negative effect on employee performance.

Discussion of Findings

This work examined the effect of stress on employee performance in selected 5 federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The hypotheses formulated were tested using multiple regression analysis. At the end of the analysis, the following was discovered.

The result of the Pearson correlation analysis shows that role ambiguity has a negative correlation with employee performance. This finding is consistent with that of Affum-Osei, Agyekum, Addo, and Asante (2014) whose study showed that there was a negative correlation between job stress and performance.

The study found that role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on employee performance. This study tallies with the findings of Mark (2012) that working under pressure had an effect on performance. It also agrees with the conclusion of Hira and Anam (2012) that organizational structure should be specified so that employees will know their task and face it Similarly, Warraich, Ahmed, Ahmad & Khoso (2014) found that role ambiguity is the prime reasons of causing stress in employees, and this stress reduces their performance.

The study reveals that workload pressure has a significant influence on employee performance. This finding disagrees with the findings of Aasia, Hadia, and Sabita (2014) there is substantial evidence that workload pressure can provoke stress. Lack of direction can prove stressful, especially for people who are low in their tolerance for such, van Dick, & Thompson, (2011) indicates that workload pressure is detrimental to employee performance. Workload pressure should increase anxiety and dissatisfaction with one's job and ultimately lead to diminished performance.

Fried, Ben-David, Tiegs, Avital, (2009) found that workload pressure influenced supervisor-rated performance and that those employees that work with high levels of pressure were associated with lower levels of performance and effectiveness. Fisher (2001) found that Workload pressure was negatively related to managerial performance in strategic planning and decision-making areas.

Tubre and Collins (2000) established a negative relationship between workload pressure and performance among individuals whose roles were characterized by a high level of task interdependence compared to individuals whose work was performed independently.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This work examined the effect of job stress on employee performance of selected 5 federal universities in southeast. The data generated were subjected to statistical analysis. The result of the correlation shows that Role ambiguity and workload pressure have a significant negative correlation with employee performance. The result of the hypotheses shows that:

1. Workload pressure has significant negative influence on employee performance.
2. Role ambiguity has a significant negative influence on employee performance.

Conclusion

This covers the effect of job stress on employee performance in selected 5 federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The responses of the employees of these tertiary institutions were subjected to statistical analysis. The study found that work overload has a significant negative effect on employee performance. While role ambiguity has a significant negative influence on employee performance. Due to these sources of stress, employee engagement to work decreases, and ultimately it negatively affects the performance of employees.
It is understandable that in every organization certain percentage of the working population suffers from job-related stress but stress should not be taken as individual problem. If University management considers stress as an individual problem and not management problem, then they have to face loss due to turnover, the total cost of work-related accidents, and low-quality work. Therefore, organizations should handle stress positively to increase employee performance. Based on the empirical analysis, the study, therefore, concludes that Job stress has a significant negative effect on employee performance in selected 5 federal universities studied in South-East Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, these recommendations were made.

1. Selected 5 federal Universities in South East used in the study should put in effective stress management strategy that will reduce workload pressure to improve the performance of their employees.
2. Management of selected 5 federal universities used should establish a policy that will favour their employees to avoid turnover, this can relieve the employees from the seeking of a job elsewhere

REFERENCES

11. Dick & Thompson (2011)

**APPENDIX 1**

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DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet0.

SAVE OUTFILE='D:\Data Stress.sav'
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Descriptives

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<td>Workload Pressure</td>
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PERFORMANCE, ROLE AMBIGUITY
WORKLOAD PRESSURE
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Correlations

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<tr>
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<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
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</table>

. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

REGRESSION
/MISSING LISTWISE
/STATISTICS COEFF OUTS R ANOVA TOL CHANGE ZPP
/Criteria=PIN(.05) POUT(.10)
/NOORIGIN
/DEPENDENT EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE
/METHOD=ENTER ROLE AMBIGUITY, WORKLOAD PRESSURE,
/RESIDUALS DURBIN.