

Stress Management And Employee Productivity: An Examination of the Nigerian Work Environment

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Abstract:- This study theoretically examined the relationship between stress management and employee productivity in Nigeria work organization context. The study adopted stress management as predictor variable with role ambiguity stress, role overload stress and role conflict stress as its measure while employee productivity was utilized as the criterion variable with its measures covering task performance and contextual performance. Findings from the study revealed that stress is natural to man. But when it becomes too much, it creates harmful effect on the body and leads poor productivity performance. However, we also found that due to the dangers of excessive stress, effective stress management will not only help organizations achieve sustained productivity but also will help the organization reduce voluntary turnover intensions induced by stressful work arrangement. Thus, the study concludes that stress management is a powerful recipe for sustainable employee productivity growth in the face of changing work demands. Therefore we recommend as follows: i)that managers of work organizations in Nigeria should ensure that employees are provided the much needed instructions, guidelines and policies that clearly defines their work role with no contradictions and confusion to warrant ambiguity in job execution; ii) that managers of work organizations in Nigeria should reduce the incidences of work overload by assigning responsibilities in relation to the worker's energy level i.e. taking into cognizance their physiological and cognitive limitations.

Keywords: *Stress management, Role Ambiguity, Role Overload, Role Conflict, Employee Productivity, Task Performance, Contextual Performance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations, according to a number of academics and business leaders from around the world, are social entities whose success or failure is determined by their ability to make the best use of limited assets such as human capital, raw materials, machines, and money. Human resources have risen to prominence as the most significant component in recent years. Because of the growing recognition of the numerous performance-enhancing aspects that go into making an organisation successful, human resource management has become more important to organisations that are deemed effective or successful. Employees continue to be the organization's lifeblood, as Reddy and Reddy (2010) assert, claiming that human resources are the organization's most trustworthy and

reliable asset, capable of making meaningful and significant contributions in the pursuit of organisational goals. Because they are the engines that propel production processes to produce goods or services for clients and potential customers, the human component of organisational resources is critical (Jamshidi, 2011). According to Wobodo and Nwaeke (2019), the critical role they play in the overall functioning of the organisation cannot be overstated. They went on to explain that workers may make or ruin a corporation depending on how well they are handled and utilised. When employees are taken for granted, the organization's goals and objectives are jeopardised.

Employee productivity has become an essential requirement for the organization's workforce as a result of companies being goal-oriented by nature and aiming to achieve objectives such as the survival of goodwill, profitability, and increasing market share, among others. This is due to the fact that employee productivity ultimately determines whether an organization's overall goals are met. Employees who do not perform well are the root of a company's poor performance. For example, the efficiency of a corporate or public organisation relies greatly on how well its human resources are utilised, according to Nwachukwu (2010). He believes that for a company to succeed, it must enlist the assistance of its employees. In addition to other factors such as rewards, salaries, and promotions, studies have shown that stress management is a long-term way to improve and maintain employee productivity. This is a reflection of the modern work world, where people have to work longer hours because they have more responsibilities and are expected to do a better job (Bamba, 2016). According to Ashfaq and Muhammed (2013), stress is an undesirable feedback that individuals or things experience when under a great deal of strain or when additional demands are placed on them.

There are a variety of reasons why someone may be under a lot of stress. Agulanna (2007) classified stress sources as follows: self-inflicted stressors; employee stressors; home stresses; macro-environmental stresses; and other stresses. Some of the self-inflicted pressures are world perception, a phoney complex, the desire to achieve, loneliness, and business engrossment. Some of the organisational stressors that employees face are over-promotion, under-promotion, tokenism, organisational structure and climate, work-under-load, responsibility for others, unfair performance appraisal, lack of participation in decision-making, poor working conditions, technical problems, discrimination, sexual harassment, and threatened

male colleague syndrome. Child rearing, water scarcity, fertility issues (including infertility), infertility and infertility, divorce and marital separation, children's health, child death, child behaviour), dependents in the house, and interference in family matters are all sources of stress at home (such as the death of a spouse). Nigerian geopolitical issues such as infrastructure and the economy, as well as societal expectations and cultural aspects such as corruption, are examples of micro-environmental stresses. According to Robbert and Tim (2000), stress can manifest physically or emotionally. There are physical signs of stress, such as insomnia, headaches, hives, and rashes, as well as mental ones, such as libido loss, over emotion, and aggressive behaviour, among others.

Effective stress management is critical to increasing employee productivity, particularly in today's unpredictable work environment due to frequent changes in the logic of how businesses operate. The absence of stress management can cause major problems for a company from a variety of perspectives, because stressed-out employees are more of a threat to the company's well-being than a threat to their original competitive advantage. When faced with high levels of stress, employees may engage in counterproductive behaviours such as tardiness, absenteeism, lack of attention to detail, negative behaviour, and poor service delivery. As a result of lower commitment caused by stress, staff behaviours such as malingering, intentional or unintentional turnover, a lack of interest, ineffectiveness, and low morale may develop (Oludeyi, 2015). Weak behavioural tendencies are harmful to achieving organisational goals and must be addressed quickly through effective stress management in order to prevent early entropy in the organisation. This is

especially true if poor behavioural tendencies cause dependable employees to leave the organisation, resulting in the loss of human assets. There is evidence to support Okereke and Daniel's (2010) theory that employees may become less inspired as a result of inflexible task arrangements and experience low well-being.

According to Oparanma and Zeb-Obipi (2012), because change is a constant in the life cycle of any organisation, managers should strive to make the process as enjoyable and exciting as possible. This means that if changes in role sets are viewed as opportunities rather than problems, they will be easier to deal with. While Ahmad, Shaiful and Nik (2014) argue that in order to survive in today's competitive business environment, organisations must embrace fair employment practises in order to recruit and retain employees with a variety of skills, such as stress management. Numerous attempts have been made in this setting to improve employee productivity by utilising various predictor factors. However, as far as we are aware, no theoretical work relating stress management to employee productivity in Nigeria's economic environment exists. Bamba's (2016) empirical work, which looked at the relationship between stress management and job performance in the Mali industrial sector, and Kumar and Madhu's (2012) study, which looked at the factors responsible for stress at work in India's chemical industry, are just a few examples of studies in this direction. In light of this identified theoretical gap, this study investigates the relationship between stress management and employee productivity in a Nigerian work setting in the country of Nigeria.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

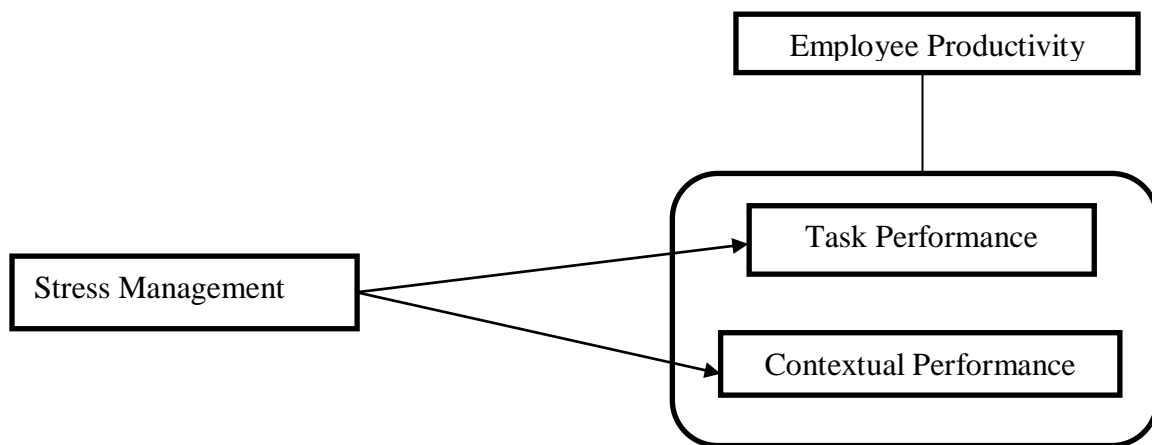


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Stress Management and Employee Productivity

This represents a graphical explanation of the relationship between stress management and employee productivity. The framework captures stress management as the study predictor variable. On the other hand, employee productivity served as the criterion variable with its

measures covering (task performance and contextual performance).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

This research uses the firm's Resource Base View Theory to describe the theoretical underpinning relating stress management and employee productivity. This idea was adopted since it based its premise on the fact that organisational resources are crucial. Barr and Arikian (2001) define resources as the tangible and intangible assets that businesses utilise to put their plans into action and accomplish their goals. In order to generate, manufacture, and distribute goods and services to its clients, a company's resources contain all of these sorts of assets in some form or another (Barney, 1991). Human capital remains the most valued of these assets. As a consequence, according to the notion, an organisation acquires a competitive edge over its competitors by successfully utilising its internal resources, such as its personnel (Kraaijenbrink, Spender & Groen, 2010).

According to Barney, a firm's competitive edge is defined by its resources (1991). It is critical to understand whether a resource is valuable if it is unique or irreplaceable. This means that in order to maximise all of the potential inherent in its people resources and retain a lasting competitive edge, an organisation must guarantee that their wellbeing receives enough attention. This validates Wright, Dunford, and Snell's (2001) belief that resource base theory has substantially assisted the growth of human resource management.

B. Concept of Stress Management

Stress has been identified as one of the phenomena inherent in today's ever-changing work environment. According to Bamba (2016), stress is related to people's unfavourable reactions to strong pressures or other sorts of demands placed on them. Similarly, Ashfaq and Mohammed (2013) believe that it is an unwanted response that individuals have to severe burdens or other sorts of demands placed on them. Furthermore, Kreitner and Kinicki (2005) demonstrate that stress is an adaptive response aspect related to an individual's emotional process as a result of any external action, circumstance, or event that places demands on a psychological or physical reaction. In our opinion, stress is any unwanted strain on an individual that has the potential to impair his or her bodily and mental health over time. Many academics and practitioners have voiced concerns about the harmful nature of stress when it exceeds a certain threshold. For example, Jack Barchas, a neurochemist at Stanford University, believes that "a certain level of stress is a beneficial and joyful thing that contributes to productivity in the human race." Similarly, Selye (1978; quoted in Kinyita & Hannah, 2015) contends that not all levels of stress are deleterious. He went on to distinguish "Eustress" (good stress) from "distress" (bad stress). Stress is considered a good stress because it instils in individuals a persevering attitude to rise above or conquer problems that they may face in order to be successful in life. However, distress is considered a bad stress since it leads to poor performance.

This is to state that as humans, we all feel some amount of stress as we go about our everyday activities, which is also beneficial to our mental and physical health, but stress becomes destructive and dysfunctional when it becomes out of control. Stress may be caused by a variety of sources, both inside and outside of the company. For example, Gangster and Loghan (2005) state that a variety of crucial characteristics, including work environment, management support, and work load, may be utilised to determine how stressful a job is and its impact on employee physical and mental health. While Anderson (2002) proposes work-family problems as a forerunner of stress among organisational personnel. As a result, in today's industry, given the importance of human capital, the perceived harmful consequences of stress on employee well-being necessitates stress management on the part of management. This is because, according to Adim et al. (2018), the harmful and costly consequences of stress necessitate strategies to limit stressors within the organisation; particularly, businesses that fail to adopt stress management and mitigation strategies risk losing employees to competitors. Thus, stress management entails tactics for reducing stress, generating thoughts, releasing bodily and emotional tension, and knowing how to make adjustments to our surroundings (or circumstance) wherever feasible (Bruce, 2003). According to Baridam (2006), it encompasses a variety of approaches and psychotherapies targeted at managing an individual's level of stress, particularly chronic stress, with the goal of enhancing daily functioning.

C. Employee Productivity

Employee productivity is critical for every organization's success and profitability in today fast-paced climate (Chien, 2004). Employee productivity, according to Nwachukwu (2009), is defined as the amount to which an organization's resources are pooled and efficiently used to achieve a certain purpose. According to Onuoha (2014), employee productivity is defined as the effective use of people and material resources to achieve an organization's goals. More specifically, Nwinee (2005) defines productivity as the prudent utilisation of factor input to generate commodities and services. Based on these criteria, we can see that staff productivity is a critical component of company success. This is due to the fact that no organisation can flourish without unwavering employee devotion, which is frequently represented in productivity output. As a result, employee productivity necessitates the individual's whole self-investment in his role expectations. This is why businesses pay millions of naira each year on staff recruiting, training, and development in order to enhance and sustain output per worker. An employee's output is defined as the amount and quality of goods and services supplied to his organisation within a certain time period (Nwinee, 2006). It is also regarded as the complete effort expended by the employee on behalf of his organisation in order to achieve predetermined goals.

Productivity and output are two indispensable parts of organisational existence in the sense that without increasing and maintained production from personnel, the organisation risks poor overall performance and, if not managed or

corrected, may lead to the organization's extinction. Again, because productivity is linked to how effectively and efficiently an organisation turns its input resources into desirable products and services, most academics find it challenging to define all of the factors that comprise organisational outputs when it comes to assessment. In practise, while gathering data from workers, managers, clients, customers, and suppliers affiliated with the firm, individuals frequently rely on emotional and intuitive techniques. On the other hand, Lambert (2005) argues that employee productivity is seldom examined directly and is instead deduced from changes in employees' attitudes and behaviours such as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, and job satisfaction.

D. Task performance

Employee productivity is vital for the success of every organisation and profitability in this dynamic environment (Chien, 2004). According to Nwachukwu (2009), employee productivity is defined as the extent to which an organization's resources are brought together and effectively utilised for the attainment of a set goal. Onuoha (2014) viewed employee productivity as the effective maximisation of human and material resources towards the realisation of an organization's set objectives. More so, Nwinee (2005) views productivity as the judicious use of the factor input to produce goods and services. Based on these definitions, we can see that employee productivity is an important element of corporate attainment. This is because no organisation succeeds without gaining unabated employee commitment, which is usually reflected in their productivity output. Therefore, employee productivity demands the individual's complete self-investment in his role expectations. This is why companies continuously invest millions of naira every year on recruitment, training and development of employees to improve and sustain output per worker. The output of an employee is considered as the quantity and quality of goods and services delivered by that employee to his organisation over a given period of time (Nwinee, 2006). This type of employee performance covers the central purpose for which the employee was engaged by the organization. It is that aspect of an employee's work activities that contributes to the official operations of the organisation and is more likely to be described by the formal job role. According to Koopmans et al. (2011), task performance reflects the core job responsibilities of an employee. This is why it is also called or regarded as "in-role prescribed behavior" and is reflected in specific work outcomes and deliverables as well as their quality and quantity. Similarly, Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994) assert that it refers to those required outcomes and behaviours that directly serve the goals of the organization. It involves accomplishing the goals set forth by the employer, making persuasive sales presentations, and varying from job to job even within the same organisation. The successful completion of tasks has a positive impact on both individual and organisational performance (Behrman & Perreault, 1982). Accordingly, Borman and Motowidlo (1997) argue that this contribution can be direct (i.e., the application of a part of organisational technology), or indirect (i.e., providing materials or services needed to perform organisational processes). Therefore, task performance is connected with the transformation of raw

materials into finished products and services, which are basic to the organization's strategic business domain. In consonance with this observation, it may be safe to say that workers who demonstrate task oriented behaviour are capable of achieving desired performance levels that are outlined by their organisation or manager. In this circumstance, employees regard their work as a series of sequenced and prioritised tasks total effort contributed by the employee to his organisation towards the realisation of set objectives.

Productivity and output are two indispensable elements of organisational life in that without increased and sustained output on the part of the employees, the organisation risks poor performance in general and, if not controlled or corrected, may lead to the extinction of that organization. Again, because productivity is connected with the extent an organisation effectively and efficiently converts its input resources to create desirable goods and services, most researchers find it difficult to identify all the elements that constitute organisational outputs when it comes to measurement. In effect, people most often resort to emotional and intuitive methods when data is collected from employees, supervisors, clients, customers, and suppliers associated with the organization. On the other hand, Lambert (2005) opines that employee productivity is rarely measured directly but inferred from changes in employees' attitude and behaviour such as organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction.

E. Contextual Performance

No manager can easily achieve in today's company management logic by relying just on staff task performance without using the benefits of supplementary role behaviour. This is because such behaviour is related with employees' unwavering devotion. When an employee's performance exceeds his task-related performance standard, contextual performance takes control. It is not a coercive inclination; rather, it flows freely and may manifest as extracurricular activities such as coaching coworkers, developing social networks inside a business, and going the additional mile for the organisation. This is why Koopmans et al. (2011) classify it as an extra-role discretionary activity. Zhang (2011) states that it encompasses anything that workers choose to undertake on their own choice at any time and that is often not included in their stipulated contractual responsibilities. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) relate it to the behavioural patterns that contribute to the organization's social and psychological foundations. As a result, it is a pure volitional role behaviour that is not specified in the worker's job description but is a critical component of the worker's performance criteria.

Today's organisations see this sort of behavioural inclination as critical to their success and efficiency, particularly because it stems from workers' good job attitudes, loyalty, and devotion (Berbe & Rofcanin, 2012). It is comparable to corporate citizenship behaviour. Again, examples of this type of performance behaviour include volunteering for additional work, adhering strictly to organisational rules and procedures even when they are

inconvenient for the individual, lending a helping hand and cooperating with colleagues, and a variety of other discretionary behaviours that result in effective worker performance. The relevance of contextual performance is predicated on the compelling argument that job performance should encompass not only behaviour that contributes to the organization's technical core, referred to here as task performance, but also behaviour that contributes to organisational performance by shaping the organization's social and psychological environment, referred to here as organisational citizenship behaviour. According to research, more experienced managers place a higher premium on contextual performance than less experienced managers (Befort & Hatstrup, 2003).

IV. SOURCES OF STRESS AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

A. Role Ambiguity

The inherent pressure of a work is frequently, if not always, the primary source of strain. This is because an employee who does not understand how to manage his or her time effectively would experience irritation. When job stress is not adequately handled, it has a detrimental effect on both the workers and the organisation as a whole (Larson, 2004; Malik, 2011). Additionally, when an individual is unsure of the numerous demands placed on them by their profession, they are certain to feel role ambiguity stress. Ambiguity can occur as a result of the role player's or role occupant's inability to obtain required information. As a result, the employee becomes uncertain about their superior's reaction to task completion or failure (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985). Ambiguity has been shown to be associated with poor task performance and job-related behaviour (Jackson & Schuler, 2010). That is, a large degree of uncertainty in activities will result in a considerable loss in job attachment, even more so if the employee fails to adhere to industry norms and ethical guidelines when performing his duties (Ruyter et al., 2001; Koustelios & Theodorakis, 2004; Tang & Chang, 2010). Additionally, Chang and Chang (2008) discovered that position uncertainty reduces employee performance, satisfaction, and commitment.

B. Role Overload

Retaining personnel and keeping their productivity at a suitable level are critical challenges in organisational management. Role overload, on the other hand, has been highlighted as one of the fastest-growing issues in modern organisations, resulting in a variety of performance consequences for employees. According to Ashfaq et al. (2013), role overload stress is defined as the degree to which employees feel overwhelmed mentally and physically as a result of being under time pressure to complete a task. They went on to say that role overload is the primary cause of work discontent, and that job dissatisfaction motivates employees to willingly abandon their jobs. Role overload stress has been demonstrated to be a negative predictor of employee productivity in previous research (Ram et al., 2011). In the Nigerian Customs Service, Manasseh (2013) investigated the impact of organisational role conflict and job satisfaction on employee performance. Officers with

little role conflict performed better than those with high role conflict, according to the findings of the study.

C. Role Conflict

According to Luthans (1997), an employee is guaranteed to face conflict if he or she is subjected to a slew of overpowering pressures at the same time and tries to act on just one of them. This shows that if a worker or professional is unable to balance the two responsibilities that are thrust upon him, conflict will always arise. Overload stress has an impact on employee health as well as the manner tasks are completed and the thoughts employees have about themselves and their employment. It has been discovered to have a substantial detrimental relationship with performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000). This arises because the activity process deviates from the organization's established standard of conduct (Ruyter et al., 2001). The most common source of role conflict stress is when two distinct directives are received at the same time. One command's implementation will result in the failure of the other command. Because it has a negative influence on human behaviour, such as the formation of work conflicts, the number of displaced personnel, and lower job satisfaction, role conflict can diminish auditor performance (Fahmi & Nadirsyah, 2019). According to previous research, contradictory role expectations have detrimental consequences for a person's behaviour, such as decreased productivity (Viator, 2001). Role conflict, according to Harijantoeto (2013), has a detrimental influence on individual behaviour, including the rise of work stress, higher work turnover, lower job satisfaction, and organisational commitment.

V. DISCUSSION

Low staff productivity will have a multiplier impact on the success of any company, whether it is a manufacturer or a service provider. According to conventional wisdom, a happy and engaged employee is regarded to be more successful and productive in the performance of their tasks than a stressed person who is weak and lacking in energy and other resources. Furthermore, various studies have confirmed the potential value of stress management in the pursuit for increased staff productivity in firms. This is because stress is linked to a mental and physical state that impacts an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health, and job quality, according to Adim et al. (2018). Sincero (2012) also pointed out that when an employee is overworked, it creates weariness and burnout, which has an impact on the individual's health and, as a result, his or her productive output. This is why Amah (2016) claims that employee productivity rises or falls depending on whether they are motivated or demoralised by their work environment. As a result, the importance of stress management cannot be overstated. Under fact, Befort and Hatstrup (2003) suggest that, in these situations, managers place a greater emphasis on behaviours that foster social connectivity and a healthy work environment.

Job stress, if not managed appropriately, has been shown to have a negative influence on employee productivity, workplace insecurity, and poor motivation, all of which can harm the national economy by reducing

efficiency, health care costs, and legal concerns (Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2004). It has been stated that stress affects employees in a non-uniform manner, i.e., workers respond to stress in diverse ways (Dollard & Metzger, 1999). This means that some people may use it against their family if they have a disagreement, while others will give back to the organisation by improving their performance or resigning. Unmanaged job stress can create a chasm between a worker's professional life and his personal life, affecting productivity (McCubbin & Figley, 1983). As a result, business leaders must think positively about job-related stress management, because a stressful work environment can lead to employee health issues, low productivity, high absenteeism, and high turnover (Lawrence, 1995). In their research, Ugwu and Ugwu (2017) discovered that job title and experience were important determinants of task-based and contextual performance. Jena (2015) discovered that employment duration and job level are important factors determining job performance among shift employees in India.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Summarily, this study conceptually examined the relationship between stress management and employee productivity. In doing this, the study critically evaluated existing chunks of literature relating to the variables being investigated. Consequently, the study found that available empirically and conceptual review papers confirm that stress is natural to man. But when it becomes too much, it becomes harmful to the body and leads to poor productivity performance. However, they also found that, based on the dangers of excessive stress, effective stress management will not only be achieved but sustained. Thus, the study concludes that stress management is a powerful recipe for sustainable employee productivity growth in the face of changing work demands. Therefore, we suggest as follows:

- Managers of work organisations in Nigeria should ensure that employees receive the necessary instructions, guidelines, and policies that clearly define their work roles, with no contradictions or ambiguity to warrant ambiguity in job execution.
- Managers of work organisations in Nigeria should reduce the incidences of work overload by assigning responsibilities in relation to the worker's energy level, i.e., taking into cognizance their physiological and cognitive limitations.
- Managers and supervisors of work organisations in Nigeria should endeavour to direct and supervise their subjects in accordance with established rules, as this helps in reducing role conflict tendencies on the job and, at the same time, enhances smooth social relationships and effective task performance.

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