Impact of Stress Management on Employees' Performance in Nigerian University: A Study of Academic Staff Union, University of Ilorin)

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Abstract

Stress is a mental and physical condition which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and work quality. Victims of job stress record lower quality of performance. The harmful and costly consequences of stress demonstrated the need for strategies to limit stressors within the organization. Hence, it becomes important for organizations to adopt coping strategies in managing stress in order to avoid their employees searching for better opportunities. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of stress management on employees' performance with particular reference to academic staff of university of Ilorin, Nigeria. The population of the study is 1,517 and a sample size of 316 was selected using the Taro Yamane's formula. The study is descriptive survey design and regression analysis was used for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Findings of the study revealed that coping strategies enhance workers' productivity. The study concluded that stress management through coping strategies beara positive and significant influence on employees' performance. Therefore, the study recommends that the management of university of Ilorin should continue to use coping strategies to increase workers' productivity.

Keywords *Appraisal-focused, Coping strategies, Employees performance, Emotional-focused, Problem-focused, Stress management.*

Introduction

Nigeria as a developing country is evidently full of life threatening, harmful and chattering situations, which are stressful to peoples' existence and well-being, some of these are not limited to economic instabilityand recession, poor roads and highways, insecurity and religious intolerance, as well as armed robbery and political thuggery. The University lecturers as citizens of the country experience all these phenomena along the professional and personal concerns related to their jobs. These concerns include lack of basic facilities for lecturing, learning and research as well as community service (Shabana, Jyoti, Riyaj & Surendra, 2017).

Stress is a continuous feelings of worry about work, personal life that prevents an individual from relaxing. It is a physical force and mental pressure that makes an individual to become ill (Michie, 2002). It is one of the most fundamental problems spanning through human endeavour. Also, it is a

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another. It now follows that any stress management strategies to be adopted should be considered in relation to one's occupation.Thus, this research aims at examining the impact of stress management on employees' performance in Nigerian higher institutions with a special reference to university of Ilorin as a study. Hence, this study intends to provide answer to the question which pose that to what extent doesmanaging stress through coping strategies affect workers' productivity?

Literature Review

This section is focused on the review of literature. Hence it is segmented into three subsection, making up of conceptual clarification, theoretical review as well as empirical review.

Concept of Stress Management

Stress management is acollection of methods or ways which is channeled towards helping people deal with stress more effectively in life by considering some specific stressors and taking positive actions to reduce their effects (Newman& Newman, 2008).Stress management as described by Cohen and Lazarus (1979) is an effort made by an individual towards solving problem faced with demands that are highly relevant to his welfare but levying his adaptive resources. The adaptive resources include the coping methods which people adopt so as to cope with stress.

According to Okafor and Okafor (1998), stress management entails setting uproadblocks so that the progression to the illness or disease level does surface. Theyargued that if we could get rid or avoid all potentially distressing situations, the journey towards illness or disease would not begin. As stated by Greenberg and Dintiman (1992) not only it is impossible to get rid of or prevent all likely distressing experiences, but alsonot suitable. This is because, life would be exceptionallydull if we failed to embrace change that requires adaptation.

Stress management is aimed at finding out what the cause of stress is and learning ways to take control of some stress-triggering circumstances. Programs for stress management include doing exercises regularly and getting enough sleep, practicing relaxation techniques, fostering healthy friendships, and asking for professional help.

Stress management is important at the workplace. Stress management programs should help both the employees and the company, as personnel costs

phenomenon that has become a topic of discussion in management and organizations in Nigeria (Egberi & Olufolahan, 2021 and Ogah, 2020). This has stemmed from a number of genuine and clear reasons.The existences of stress and its adverse effect has also drawn the attention ofNigerian citizens and interest of professional bodies and educationists. Stress has been identified as a problem in many work places which leads to absenteeism, low morale and poor lecturingperformance among lecturers. However, managing stress is important to employees in order to improve performance. It entails setting up roadblocks so that the progression to the illness or disease level does not occur. It also refers to the interventions designed to reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace.

In Nigeria, part of what constitutes stress among the academic staff was a sudden increase in the establishment of Universities from Federal, State governmentsand private individuals as well as religious bodies. That as an admirable educational development and an essential part of individual and national development urged all the universities in general into setting new goals in order to justify its existence and compete favourably among their counterparts (Shabana, Jyoti, Riyaj & Surendra, 2017). It is the pursuant of this goal, that lead academic staff of universities to work assiduously resulting in stressespecially when are they are dissatisfied in the course of carrying out their duties. The truth of the matter is that in stress management, no one technique or strategy would be deemed to be successful for all individuals in all situations. Each individual has different ways of handling stress.Social support system is a system of stress management as well as all human relationships that have a lastingand positive impact on the individual's life.

Furthermore, the development of an organizational stress management programme involves four segmental stages, which intends to provide manageable and methodical ways of keeping the organization pressure level at optimum. An organization should contribute to enhance performance of raising awareness of stress problems, individual training to cope with stress, providing specialist skill (example dedicated stress-counseling service), and stress audit where sources of stress with the organization are identified and changes implemented to reduce this to acceptable levels.

Coping behavior is one of the ways to manage stress and it includes taking enough water, discussing with others to identify the causes of stress, improving one's diet, reduction of toxin intake, taking more exercise, and controlling things that are only controllable using relation method (MacArthur, 2014). Finally, it should be remembered that stressors do not pose equal amount of stress to all people. What may be stressful to one may be eustress to

r employees under stress are higher. Any program should first identify the ajor cause of stress. Then, clear and specific goals for the program are to be t so that the program is effective. The top management should also support e program. Before learning how to manage stress, employees have to know hich stressors affect them. For that purpose, companies can carry out health sk appraisals which are meant to check the employees' levels of stress. seful methods for identifying stressors and symptoms are self-report easures such as interviews and surveys, behavioral measures such as bservation and performance measures and physiological stress measures, cluding heart rate and blood pressure.Employees' individual needs should be onsidered when developing a stress management program. Employees can lso implement some strategies including relaxation techniques, editation,developing a good support system, practicing outside hobbies, arning to set targets, managing time and learning when to reject more tasks t work (Bruce, 2003).

oping Strategies

oping strategies are invest to one's own deliberate effort, to address personal nd interpersonal issues, in order to familiarize with,minimize or tolerate tress and conflicts. Furthermore, the term coping generally signifies reactive oping i.e. the responses that comes after the stressors. Though, this is ifferent from proactive coping, where a coping response neutralizes a future tressor. Effectiveness of any of these coping effort depends on the factors uch as: type of stress, employee, and the circumstances.Basically, there are wo ways of controlling coping responses. Firstly it can be partly controlled by ersonality or habitual traits, while secondly, it could be controlled by social nvironment, most especially, the nature of the stressful environment.These trategies are psychological patterns that individuals utilize to cater for houghts, feelings, and encountered during various stages of ill health and reatments (Homans, 2015).

oping strategies can be divided into the following according to Raharjo and Hamid, (2013):

Appraisal-focused strategies: these type of strategies occur when people nodify the way they think, for instance: when an individual deny or stay far way from the problem. In this situation, people change the way they reflect bout an issue by reconsidering their goals and values, such as by seeing situation as containing humor. Hence,"humor" used is taking as a positive oping method which may be beneficial coping with emotional and mental

health well-being. By having a humorous outlook on life, stressful experiences can managed

Emotion-focused strategies: this is a coping mechanism to reduce distress by minimizing, or preventing, the emotional constituents of a stressor. This strategies can be used via numbers of ways, such as: seeking social support, reappraising the stressor in a positive light, accepting responsibility, using avoidance and exercising self-control. The focus of this type of coping strategies is to convert the meaning of the stressor or shift attention away from it. Dodging emotional distress will sidetrack the negative feelings attributed to the stressor. Emotion-focused strategy is suitable uncontrolled stressors. For instance, a long term illness, death of loved one.

Problem-focused strategies: This type of strategy is adopted when people try to deal with the cause of their problem. This is done by obtaining information regarding the problem, at the same time learning new skills to cope with it. Hence, this strategy could be attributed to the kind of strategy that change or eliminate the source of stress.

In addition to the above, Cohen and Lazarus (1979) identified three categories of the problem-focused strategies which include; taking control, seeking information, and evaluating advantages and disadvantages. However, this strategies are only used when the situation becomes uncontrollable and unavoidable. Coping strategiesprovides benefit such as help to maintain job satisfaction, it also contributed to a sense of physical well-being and reduce hypertension and migraine headaches (Rahanjo & Hamid, 2013).

Concept of Employee Performance

Tasks are performed in all organizations with the aid of resources such as men, machine, materials and money. Among other resources, manpower is the only living and life generating resource. It combines other resources into use as input and transform them into output. However, the absent of manpower renders other non-living resources useless where nothing can be produced. It is worthy of note that man power highest priority among factors of production and plays a pivotal role in productivity.

In any case, inadequate attention to othernon-living factors of production may reduce profitability to a certain extent. But negating human resource is totally dangerous. Different jobs are executed in the organization by the employees depending on the nature of the establishment. They mainly perform tasks like production, storage, manufacturing, transportation, marketing, purchasing,

effectiveness and likewise in the study of Shabanal, Jyoti, Riyajand Surendra (2017). It was only the study of Joy (2020) where no finding was provided. Upon the close examination of the effect of stress management with difference variables in Nigeria, no study among the existing studies reviewed have attempted to study the effect of stress management on employees' performance in University of Ilorin with stress management strategies adopted by the current study. This forms a gap that this current intends to fill.

Theoretical Review

Selye's (1956) General Adaptation Syndrome of stress theory: this theory analysis an individual's response to long term stress which is segmented into three main stages: the initial alarm stage, the interim resistance stage and the exhaustion stage (Adim, Ibekwe, & Akintokunbo, 2018). If the stressor continues, the individual will move via each of the stages, and in some cases disease and even death can result.

During the alarm stage, the body responds to the stressor with a 'fight or flight' response in which the parasympathetic nervous system is activated and hormones (e.g. adrenalin and noradrenaline) are released from the adrenal medulla (Adim, Ibekwe, & Akintokunbo, 2018). But if it remains, the body thereafter goes into the resistance stage during which it may outwardly appear to be functioning as expected, however levels of blood glucose, cortisol (stimulated by adrenocorticotrophic hormones are known as ACTH) and adrenaline remain higher than normal and the individual's heart rate, blood pressure and breathing will be higher than normal. The individual may appear calm but they are physically and mentally at 'action stations' (currentnursing.com, 2014). At the final exhaustion stage, the ACTH releases further is inhibited by the hormones that it has already stimulated as well as the levels of ACTH circulating in the blood. At this stage, the body starts to almost exhausting its reserve energy as the body may not perform well again. By this, blood sugar levels drop and innate becomes vulnerable to disease and death. As Nicky Hayes (1994) put it, this final stagegenerates an instant and strong reaction to even mild sources of additional stress.

Since the General Adaption Syndrome (GAS) focused on bodies' physiological response to stress, and does not consider other factors that can influence an individual's response to stress, such as thoughts, perceptions or feelings as well as how these cognitive and psychological factors influence upon their experience of stress itself (Sa'idu, 2006).

Folkman & Lazarus' (1984) Cognitive Appraisal Theory of stress

Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria, by administering copies of questionnaire to 200 respondents from the selected banks in the state to elicit primary data. The results of linear regressionand Pearson productmomentcorrelation coefficient analysis suggested that work-life balance, work overload, and organizational change has significant influence on employee's performance.

Adim, Ibekwe, and Akintokunbo (2018) studied if relationship exist or not between Stress Management and Employee performance of Deposit Money Banks in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The authors administered copies of questionnaire to 188 employees of the seven selected banks out which 168 responses were found useful for the data analysis. The result of the statistical analysis through descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for testing the hypotheses revealed that stress management has a significant relationship with employee efficiency and effectiveness. Though, the authors failed to identify the strategies used in managing stress in both individual and organization. Hence, there is need for future studies that would identified strategies to manage stress in the same industry.

Shabana, Jyoti, Riyajand Surendra (2017) investigated the effect of Stress and Stress Management among Faculties of Private Technical Institutions in Meerut District. In the study, dependent variable was represented with employees' performance while the independent variable was represented with stress management. However, the finding suggested that most of the faculties experienced stress because of teaching task and relationship with students which include more workload ranging from, overtime, excessive number of students from different stream in one class, handling undisciplined students etc.

Gaps in Literature

Previous research efforts have investigated the effects of stress management on the performance of employees in Nigeria using different variables in different context. Noticeably, it appears that relationships exist between stress management and employees performance. For instance a survey Egberi and Olufolahan (2021) in healthcare firms found a significant relationship exists between employee stress managementand market share and earnings per share. A descriptive survey of Ogah (2020) equally found similar effect where work-life balance, work overload, and organizational change has significant influence on employee's performance. Equally, a survey of 168 bank employees (Adim, Ibekwe & Akintokunbo, 2018) revealed a significant relationship between stress management and employee efficiency and

as problem solving strategies were used to manage stress. The result from the table indicates that all the strategies (appraisal focus, emotional focus, and problem focus strategy) have significant effect on employees' rate of absenteeism since all their p-values (0.000, 0.019, and 0.000) were less than .05 level of significance. This implies that stress management strategies have significant effect on employee's absenteeism rate

Discussion of Findings

The result of the analysis revealed the position of the objective where the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which stated coping strategies such as appraisal focus, emotional focus, and problem focus accepted. It is also obvious from Table 1 that the r^2 which is the coefficient of determination is 0.701 and it suggests that all the coping strategies considered accounted for 70% of employees' rate of absenteeism. It was however concluded in the table1 that, since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance,then coping strategies which include appraisal focus, emotional focus, and problem focus have significant effect on employees rate of absenteeism. This finding agrees with that of Egberi and Olufolahan (2021); Ogah (2020); Adim, Ibekwe & Akintokunbo, (2018); Shabana, Jyoti, Riyaj & Surendra (2017) as evidenced in their findings above.

Conclusion

Since it was the objective of this study to determine how stress can be managed through coping strategies to achieve better performance of academic staff of university of Ilorin. It was concluded from the findings that coping strategies have a significant effect on employees' absenteeism. As noted above, how people adapt to certain circumstances is mainly shaped through the characteristics of an individual. However, there are more factors that influence the behavior of an individual. To conclude, this research contributed to the relationship between stress management and performance of academic staff o university of Ilorin.

Recommendations

With regard to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of this study, the effe of stress management on employees' performance has been established. Base on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the universi management should always help the academic staff of universities to redu stress posed by their work by the adoption and practices of modern stre

Unlike the GAS model of stress, the Cognitive Appraisal Theory of stress focuses on an individual's cognition of a stressor which informs their emotional response. It is 'a theory of emotion which implicates peoples personal interpretation of an event in determining their emotional reaction' (Psychcentral, 2014). The way in which an individual interprets the stressor is significant and according to Cohen and Lazarus(1979) we respond to a stressful event or situation by making a primary appraisal, during which we assess whether the event is harmful to us either physically or in terms of our esteem, core beliefs and our values or goals (Folkman, 1986). During the secondary appraisal (which can take place before, at the same time or after primary appraisal) we consider whether we have the resources to manage the stressor; the outcome of which affects our coping strategy.

Coping strategies can be understood as either: problem based, where the stressor is perceived as a challenge and we generate strategies to manage it or solutions to remove it, or emotional based; where the problem is considered to be a threat that cannot be resolved and various coping strategies such as avoidance, distancing and acceptance are employed (MacArthur, 2014).

According to the Cognitive Appraisal of Stress theory then, in response to a stressor we establish if there is a threat, employ coping strategies and then reassesses the threat which results in identification of emotional responses (Hayes, 1994). Stress is viewed in a more transactional sense, as a two way process in which individuals respond dynamically to their environment. Unlike the GAS model then, cognitive approaches are of paramount importance and it is a more fluid and responsive theory, recognizing the importance of the individual in each and every stress response.

On this basis, this study adopts cognitive appraisal theory of stress for the purpose of analyzing "the impact of stress management on employees' performance". This is because the cognitive appraisal of stressis viewed in a more transactional sense, as a two way process in which individuals respond dynamically to their environment, furthermore the cognitive approaches are of paramount importance and it is a more fluid and responsive theory, recognizing the importance of the individual in each and every stress response.

Methodology

This study employs descriptive survey research design, which is a systematic method of data collection that explores relationship between independent and dependent variables. The method was chosen because it helps to investigate

into the state of affairs of the research and no variable is manipulated. The population of this study focuses on the generality of academic staff of university of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria whose total number is 1,517as at February, 2021.Since the whole members of the population were too large to reach, the whole figure was subjected in to Taro Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula was employed in order to have a fair representation. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was use to select the respondents. The Yamane's formula is as follows:

$$\frac{n=1,517}{1+1,517(0.05)^2} = 316$$

In obtaining data from the respondents, primary method of data collection was used. The questionnaire was structured into two sections with part one eliciting information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, qualifications etc. where, part two reflect the objectives, research question and hypothesis of the study. Thereafter, the content of the questionnaire was validated using content validity. By this, the degree to which the content of the scale corresponds to the content of the attitude was evaluated. While the reliability or the internal consistency of the instrument was done through cronbach's alpha test. The data collectedwas analyzed using multiple regression via SPSS Version 22. To execute this, the model below was formulated.

$CS= \beta_0+\beta_1AFS+\beta_2EFS+\beta_3PFS$

Where:

CS= coping strategy (independent variable)

$B_1....\beta_3$= coefficient

B0= constant

AFS= appraisal -focused strategy

EFS= emotion- focused strategy

PFS= problem- focused strategy

Results and Discussion

Test of Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between stress management and staff rate of absenteeism.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.839[a]	.701	.697	2.467

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stress management

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2021

Table 1 presents a model summary where the correlation coefficient r is 0.839 which indicates that there exists a very strong positive linear relationship between rate of absenteeism (dependent variable i.e. the variable being predicted) and stress management (independent variable). It is also crystal clear from the Table1 that the r^2 which is the coefficient of determination is 0.701 approximately 70%. This implies that 70% of employee's rate of absenteeism can be explained by stress management.

Table 2: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.974	3	3.325	.546	.003[b]
	Residual	1899.381	312	6.088		
	Total	1909.354	315			

Dependent Variable: rate of absenteeism

Predictors: (Constant), Stress management

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2021

Table 2 presents ANOVA where F-statistic is indicated to be significant as P-value of 003 is less than .05 level of significance, thus the model is fit. As a result of this the null hypothesis that stress management has no significant effect on employees' rate of absenteeism is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.28	.771		4.25	.000
	Appraisal focus strategy	139	.184	.049	.758	.000
	Emotion focus strategy	.012	.167	.005	.070	.019
	Problem focus strategy	.088	.152	.040	.580	.000

a. Dependent Variable: employees rate of absenteeism

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2021

The table 3is a coefficient showing the effect of stress management on employees' rate of absenteeism where appraisal focus, emotional focus as well

management strategies, such as work-life balance, job redesign work from home interface etc.

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distribution, promotion of business, finance and accounting, human resource, research and public relations. Notably, interconnectedness exist in all these activities that must be performed to achieve the stated targets. These are to be performed by the employees properly so they can give their best output at the job. This will have great impact on the total production, sales, profit, progress and market position of the company in the market. However, people would be encourage to work sincerely when factors such as adequate skills, constant training, motivation, dedication, good welfare package, flexible management policies, fringe benefits, prompt salary and packages, regular promotion, good communication flow, are present. The importance of employees' performance must be understood by the management and sincere efforts must be put in that direction. The management of the company taking timely steps in that direction will be in position to develop and motivate the people to do so. Finally the company may take the lead the market and grab the opportunities available in the market (Brown, & Warren, 2015).

Empirical Review

Egberi and Olufolahan (2021) conducted ex-post facto research design to evaluate the relationships between employee stress management and performance of healthcare firms in Nigeria. The author measured employee stress with vacation and health disclosures, while organizational performance was measured by market share and earnings per sharethat were extracted from annual reports and accounts of the selected healthcare firms beginning from 2012 to 2019. Findings from the analysis showed that a significant relationship exists between employee stress managementdimensions and market share and earnings per share.

Joy (2020) adopted qualitative research approach to examine the relationship between stress managementand employee performance by reviewing the past studies. In doing this, the author analyzed literature review on the concept, theoretical framework and past empirical studies to build his conceptual framework and concluded that stress management generates a positive andsignificant influence on employee performance. The study however provided a good conceptual framework that would be good for empirical studies. Though failed to not only provide information on organization policy, findings from the study, but used qualitative methods to achieve the objectives of the study. Hence there is need for further studies to adopt quantitative approach for same and similar studies for good generalization.

Ogah (2020) adopted a descriptive research design to examine effect of stress management on employee performance of selected deposit money banks in