

Duty Related Stress and Work Productivity Among University Lecturers in Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The main thrust of this study was to determine how duty related stress influences work productivity among University lecturers in Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of this study, one hypothesis was formulated. Ex-post facto research design was adopted in selecting a sample of nine hundred and fifty-two teachers was randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through the simple random sampling technique. A well validated questionnaire with a split-half reliability estimate of 0.84 was the major source for data collection. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was adopted to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that duty content and workload significantly relate to work productivity among University lecturers.

Key words: Duty related stress, Work productivity, University lecturers.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Literature Review

Stress in the workplace is a growing concern in the current state of the economy, where employees increasingly face conditions of overwork, job insecurity, low levels of job satisfaction, and lack of autonomy. Workplace stress has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of employees, as well as a negative impact on workplace productivity and profits. There are measures that individuals and organizations can take to alleviate the negative impact of stress, or to stop it from arising in the first place. However, employees first need to learn to recognize the signs that indicate they are feeling stressed out, and employers need to be aware of the effects that stress has on their employees' health as well as on company profits. This report is a call to employers to take action on stress levels in the workplace.

Simply stated, stress is what we feel when we have to respond to a demand on our energy. Stress is a natural part of life, and occurs whenever there are significant changes in our lives, whether positive or negative. It is generally believed that some stress is okay (sometimes referred to as "challenge" or "positive" stress) but when stress occurs in amounts that individuals cannot cope with, both mental and physical changes may occur (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2000).

We are all different in the events that we perceive as stressors and the coping abilities at our disposal. However, there are a number of situations which are generally identified as being stressful, and include financial worries, work overload, unemployment, relationships, parenting, balancing work and family, caregiving, health problems, losses, Christmas, competitiveness, peer pressure, exams, and not having enough time (Canadian Mental Health Association).

Stress is a normal, adaptive response to stressors in our environment. Our bodies are designed with a set of automatic responses to deal with stress. This system is very effective for the short term "fight or flight" responses we need when faced with immediate danger. The problem is that, physiologically, our bodies have the same reaction to all types of stressors. Experiencing

stress for long periods of time, such as lower level but constant stressors at work, activates this system. For many people, every day stressors keep this response activated, so that it does not have a chance to “turn off.” This reaction is called the “Generalized Stress Response” and consists of the following physiological responses: increased blood pressure, increased metabolism, (e.g., faster heartbeat, faster respiration), decrease in protein synthesis, intestinal movement (digestion), immune and allergic response systems, increased cholesterol and fatty acids in blood for energy production systems, localized inflammation (redness, swelling, heat and pain), faster blood clotting, increased production of blood sugar for energy, increased stomach acids.

People react to stress in different ways. Some coping much better than others and suffering fewer of the harmful effects of stress. Just as stress differs as a function of the individual, it also differs as a function of one's type of occupation. Some occupations are, of course, inherently more stressful than others. All of the stress-strain-health relationships have an obvious impact on the organization and industry. Both physical and mental illness renders the employee unfit for work, and combine both to lessen the satisfaction obtained from work and reduce job performance and productivity levels. There are various ways that stress symptoms or outcomes are reflected in the workplace. Evidence from a growing body of research suggests that certain individuals, in a variety of occupations, are increasingly exposed to unacceptable levels of job-related stress (Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Occupational stress is any discomfort which is felt and perceived at a personal level and triggered by instances, events or situations that are too intense and frequent in nature so as to exceed a person's coping capabilities and resources to handle them adequately (Malta, 2004).

One believes that stress is a complex phenomenon because it is not tangible so it cannot be overtly touched. According to Bowling and Havey (2001:369), stress occurs with the interaction between an individual and the environment, which produces emotional strain affecting a person's physical and mental condition. Stress is caused by stressors, which are events that create a state of disequilibrium within an individual. These authors also stated that the cost of too much stress on individual, organizations, and society is high. Many employees may suffer from anxiety disorders or stress-related illnesses. In terms of days lost on the job, it is estimated that each affected employee loses about 16 working days a year because of stress, anxiety or depression.

According to Richie and Martin (2014:175), for years stress was described and defined in terms of external, usually physical, forces acting on an individual. Later it was suggested that the individual's perception of, and response to, stimuli or events was a very important factor in determining how that individual might react, and whether or not an event will be considered stressful.

Work stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, and needs. It is recognized world-wide as a major challenge to individual mental and physical health, and organizational health. Stressed workers are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. And their organizations are less likely to succeed in a competitive market. By some estimates work-related stress costs the national economy a staggering amount in sick pay, lost productivity, health care and litigation costs (Palmer et al. 2004).

Work stress can come from a variety of sources and affect people in different ways. Although the link between psychosocial aspects of the job and the health and well-being of workers has been well documented (Dollard and Metzger 2014), limited work has been done on the effects of distinct stressors on job performance. As well, various protective factors can prevent or reduce the effects of work stress, and little research has been done toward understanding these mitigating individual and organizational factors.

Duty related stress is a complicated psychological construct which must be first conceptualized by its parent construct known as stress. Stress has been defined as the change in one's physical or mental state in response to situations (stressors) that pose challenge or threat (Krantz et al., 1985; Zimbardo et al., 2003). At times we are faced with challenging situations that will require a significant amount of physical and/or mental effort. Most parents can recall situations when they were called upon to rescue their child from getting hit by a car—stress was the driving force stimulating their most primitive “fight or flight” response. Stress can help people achieve their goals and propel them through challenging situations. On the other hand, stress can also become burdensome causing one to experience significant emotional distress and physical illness.

In its basic form stress is divided into two categories: eustress and distress. Eustress is also known as positive or good stress. “Eu” comes from the Greek root word for “good” (Seyle, 2010). Because stress is inherently a reaction, the associated stressor has been cognitively appraised as positive or challenging. The following are some examples of eustress: birth of a newborn, winning a competition, marriage, purchasing a new home, job promotion, making new friends, reaching cultural milestones such as menarche or age specific ceremonies signifying a transition into manhood/womanhood, and the force that stimulates us to productively work through challenging situations and tasks.

Distress, however, is the stress reactions to those stressors appraised as being negative. When most people think of stress, they are thinking about those times when they are under unpleasant pressure to perform, when a catastrophic event occurs, or

when they are dealing with the everyday stressors that create general frustration. The point of discussing these two types of stress is to demonstrate that stress can help us meet our goals and stimulate positive productivity; however, given a certain amount of intensity and duration of arousal, stress can (and will) become crippling and lead to emotional turmoil, burnout, and physical illness.

In general, individuals will have a cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and physical response to both eustress and distress. These responses are directly related to the individual's capacity to cope with the presented stressor. In an individual's cognitive appraisal (how we interpret), a stressor is directly related to the individual's resources for coping with the stress, the characteristics of the stressor, and the characteristics of the individual (physiological, cultural, and psychological) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The interaction between the individual characteristics with the resources and the stress characteristics will influence how the individual responds on a cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological level. When individuals do not have the capacity to adapt to the stressors, the effects can create chronic emotional, psychological, and physical complications—some lethal (Zimbardo et al., 2003).

Lazarus (2000) states “stress comes from any situation or circumstance that requires behavioral adjustment. Any change, either good or bad, is stressful, and whether it's a positive or negative change, the physiological response is the same.” The sensation and perception of stress requires the use of our body's energy and defensive resources.

These resources become depleted as the duration of stress increases. The *three* levels of stress are acute stress, episodic stress, and chronic stress (Lazarus, 2000). Each level of stress has associated emotional and physiological symptoms. Acute stress occurs when new demands, pressures, and expectations are placed on an individual and these demands place their arousal levels above their threshold of adaptability. These demands can be in the form of receiving unrealistic work demands, unexpected meetings that thwart attempts to get work completed, and other situations that might cause frustration but generally last a short period of time. Symptoms of acute stress include emotional disturbance such as increased anxiety, worry, frustration, and hostility. Physical symptoms of acute stress can include fatigue, increased blood pressure (temporarily), rapid heart rate, dizziness, headaches, jaw pain, back pain, inability to concentrate, and confusion. With acute stress there is a clear onset and offset of symptoms (Zimbardo et al., 2003).

Episodic stress includes the criteria for acute stress; however, the stress is experienced more frequently and consistently—in multiple episodes. The person who experiences episodic stress will tend to exhibit aggressiveness, low tolerance, impatience, and a sense of time urgency. Along with the symptoms listed in the acute stress section, those persons experiencing episodic stress are at risk for heart disease, chest pain, asthma, hypertension, and persistent headaches (Lazarus, 2000).

Job stress was considered to be a rising concern in many organizations in Africa. High levels of stress resulted in low productivity, increased absenteeism and staff turnover and an assortment of other employee problems including alcoholism, drug abuse, hypertension and a host of cardiovascular problems. Another reason for concern over job stress was stress-related worker's compensation claims that rose dramatically.

In Nigeria today, the world of work is constantly changing as a result of different challenges emanating from the political, legal as well as the technological environments of business and these explains why the nature of work is changing at the speed of the whirlwind (Oginni, 2011). Work itself is a natural phenomenon which is fundamental to human existence and survival, in a nutshell, the environment in which man works is a major factor to be considered in man's reaction to work for existence and survival as some environments are conducive while some are not conducive. The author also found that the work environment of bankers in Nigeria has not been stressful as may be expected. He however, exempted few areas such as involvement in decision making, differences in opinion with supervisors and management interruption of work schedules and concluded that the environment of the bankers in Nigeria is perceived as relatively conducive (Ehigie, 2002).

Majority of scholars that had contributed to the study of stress were of the opinion that job stress was as a result of the interaction of workers and the condition of work although views differs about the causes and effect however, it was established that stress is a function of personal characteristics and working conditions (Jones and Bright, 2001). The differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping style are the most important factors in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress or not. In other words, what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to someone else. In the same vein, some employers assume that stressful working conditions are the necessary ingredients organisations must use to turn on pressure on workers and set asides health concern to remain productive and profitable in today's economy although studies associated with this mind set and belief projected negative effect such as absenteeism, tardiness, intention to quit etc which cannot be productive or profitable in today's economy. The implication is that job stress poses threat to the health of workers and in the long run the productivity of the organisations as well as the survival of the organisations and considering the fact that banking environment is exposed to many work features as well as contact with different categories of people cumulate to inherent danger that can be

considered as stressors. Hence, the study into the place of job stress in the labour turnover with reference to the banking sector of the economy.

Workplace stress is a growing concern among employers. Indeed, 83% of the firms participating in Buffett Taylor's 2014 National Wellness Survey cited stress as a major health risk (Bouw 2002). Another survey found that business and labour leaders perceived increased levels of workplace stress in their organizations during the late 1990s (Canadian Labour and Business Centre 2000). However, while virtually all reviews of workplace stress research call for more interventions at the organizational level, there is little discussion of why this does not happen. Certainly, sufficient evidence has accumulated so far to make the stress-health-productivity causal chain a high priority for action-oriented research supported by employers (Jones and Bright, 2001). The differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping style are the most important factors in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress or not. In other words, what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to someone else. In the same vein, some employers assume that stressful working conditions are the necessary ingredients organisations must use to turn on pressure on workers and set asides health concern to remain productive and profitable in today's economy although studies associated with this mind set and belief projected negative effect such as absenteeism, tardiness, intention to quit etc which cannot be productive or profitable in today's economy. The implication is that job stress poses threat to the health of workers and in the long run the productivity of the organisations as well as the survival of the organisations and considering the fact that banking environment is exposed to many work features as well as contact with different categories of people cumulate to inherent danger that can be considered as stressors. Hence, the study into duty related stress and job productivity among secondary school teachers in Cross River State.

Job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress. The differing viewpoints suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. Differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping skills can be very important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress. In other words, what is stressful for one person may not be a problem for someone else. This viewpoint underlies prevention strategies that focus on workers and ways to help them cope with demanding job conditions.

Stress, by definition, is the interaction between an individual and the demands and burdens presented by the external environment. Stress occurs due to a demand that exceeds the individuals coping ability, disrupting their psychological equilibrium. Hence, in the workplace environment stress arises when the employee perceives a situation to be too strenuous to handle, and is threatening to their well being. There are many external stressors that contribute to an employee's ability to adapt to the demands of the environment. For instance, our technologically inclined society can provide a source of workplace stress seeing that some individuals may not have the capacity and the resources to advance their skills (Thomas 2006).

Dewe (2012) found that excessive workload diminishes opportunities to escape and relax, and has negative effects on family and social life. Schultz et al (2010) found that work overload was associated with a variety of negative health outcomes. Marmot et al (2011) found that those employees with low control in their work were four times more likely to die of a heart attack than those with high autonomy

Robbins (2001) carried a study to assess the level of Occupational stress among employees of different departments of Wall's Ice Cream Factory, Unilever Pakistan Limited and effects of stress on employee performance. Sample Consists of N=65 employees having different levels of jobs. Random sampling technique is used for the selection of departments. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is carried out to assess job stress in different departments of the organization. The departments are Human Resource department, electrical and Instrument department, stores, engineering department and production department. There is no significant difference among 5 departments on stress level. It was hypothesized that high level of stress has adverse effects on the employee's performance. Correlation analysis is carried out to examine the relationship between job stress and job performance. The results did not support the hypothesis. The results indicated no significant relationship between level of stress and performance of the employee. The results are significant only on the workload factor that contributes to stress. The P-value on workload factor in shows a negative relationship with performance.

The result of the correlation analysis is also carried out to examine the relationship between education and performance of the employees as the performance rating done by the HR executive is based on educational level of the employees. There is strong positive correlation between education received by the employee and job performance of the employee.

Workload is the main source of stress for employees of this organization. Being a multinational company its production rate is very high so the results are significant on this factor. The results revealed that workload had a negative relationship with performance of the employees. The results are consistent with a 5-year study of 1, 100 factory workers in China that increased

pressure on the job led to significant increases in the workers' blood pressure and cholesterol levels (Siegrist, 2012). Production of this organization is demanding that's why stress due to work under load is absent.

Despite the efforts by various authorities above, there is still a gap that is left unfilled that bothered this study. This includes how *duty content and workload* relate to work productivity among University lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria hence, the necessity of this study.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was essentially an Ex-post facto. The target population involved in this study consisted of all teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria. The accessible, population which the researchers believes typified and reasonably represented the target population, consisted of all teachers in secondary schools in Cross River State; one of the 36 states in Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was adopted.

The research instrument, which was the questionnaire, comprised twenty (20) items, all of the Likert-type 4-point scale. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement for each statement.

In terms of validity three experts in educational measurement, research and evaluation, affirmed, that the entire instrument was suitable for measuring what it purported to measure. Using the split-half reliability method, the reliability index of the instrument was found to be 0.84. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire from the sampled institutions. Through a very rigorous approach, and with the assistance of some persons, all the 952 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, and they were all properly completed, thus giving 100% return rate.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1

Duty content does not significantly relate to teachers' job productivity. The independent variable in this hypothesis was duty content; while the dependent variable was teachers' job productivity. Pearson product Movement Correlation analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1

Table 1

Pearson product movement correlation analysis of the relationship between duty content and teachers' job productivity (N=952)

| Variables | X | SD | $\sum X$ | $\sum X^2$ | $\sum Y$ | $\sum Y^2$ | $\sum XY$ | r-value |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------|
| duty content (x) | 16.06 | 2.19 | 18945 | 17634 | | | 826792 | 0.55* |
| Teachers' job productivity (y) | 18.13 | 1.17 | 27399 | 36546 | | | | |

* Significant at .05 level, critical r = .062, df = 950

The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.55 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 950 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that duty content has a significant relationship with teachers' job productivity.

Hypothesis two

Workload does not significantly relate to teachers' job productivity. The independent variable involved in this hypothesis is workload; while the dependent variable is teachers' job productivity. Pearson product movement Correlation analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Pearson product movement correlation analysis of the relationship between workload and teachers' job productivity (N=952)

| Variables | X | SD | $\sum X$ | $\sum X^2$ | $\sum Y$ | $\sum Y^2$ | $\sum XY$ | r-value |
|----------------------------|-------|------|----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------|
| Workload | 16.13 | 2.19 | 18878 | 27595 | | | | |
| Teachers' job productivity | 18.13 | 1.17 | 27399 | 36546 | | | 816687 | 0.54* |

* Significant at .05 level, critical $r = .062$, $df = 950$

The result in Table 2 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.54 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 950 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that workload has a significant relationship with teachers' job productivity.

4. CONCLUSION

The result of the analysis revealed that duty content and workload significantly relate with teachers' job productivity. The findings are in line with view of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (2014) that stated that Job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress. The differing viewpoints suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. Differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping skills can be very important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress. Stress occurs due to a demand that exceeds the individuals coping ability, disrupting their psychological equilibrium. Hence, in the workplace environment stress arises when the employee perceives a situation to be too strenuous to handle, and is threatening to their well being. There are many external stressors that contribute to an employee's ability to adapt to the demands of the environment. For instance, our technologically inclined society can provide a source of workplace stress seeing that some individuals may not have the capacity and the resources to advance their skills (Thomas 2006).

Siegrist (2012) also noted that workload is the main source of stress for employees of this organization. Being a multinational company its production rate is very high so the results are significant on this factor. The results revealed that workload had a negative relationship with performance of the employees. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that government should assist in providing schools with more staff to improve upon the present teaching/learning situation. This will go a long way to helping the teachers in reducing their workload.

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