

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Stress Management Measures Adopted by the Staff of Wake Forest University, North Carolina

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ABSTRACT

This study was to assess the organisational measures put in place by the workers and management of Wake Forest University to manage stress. The research design for this study is a survey research design. The area of this study is Wake Forest University. The population of the study consists of all the staff of Wake Forest University. The respondents in the study consisted of 1208 teaching staff and 830 non-teaching staff. These were obtained through a proportionate stratified sampling technique, which was used in selecting respondents because it enhances effective representation of the samples from each segment on reaction to the problem. The sample of 212 respondents was derived the popular sampling techniques called "sample fraction" which borders on a sizeable number of population of the study. The researcher will develop one instrument tagged "Work Stress and Organizational Performance Questionnaire" (WSOPQ). The instrument was face and contents validated, which was done by the researcher's supervisor. One expert from test, measurement, and evaluation also helped in validating the instrument. A Crombach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument (WSOPQ), using 20 respondents who did not form part of the main study were selected and the instrument administered to them. Data collected from the respondents was subjected to a reliability test, and it produced a reliability coefficient of 0.72 to 0.85. The study concluded that stress has become an integral part of the academic scholars and lecture. Academic scholars have increased the level of stress among the lectures in Wake Forest University. An optimal level of stress can be a source of positive motivation to succeed. Work stress changes one's physical or mental state in response to a workplace that pose an appraised challenge or threat. Identifying the signs of stress, this is due to the rise of globalisation and competitors from various institutions of which Wake Forest University is not excluded. Therefore, the causes of work stress include perceived loss of job, and security, sitting for long periods of time or heavy lifting, lack of safety, complexity of repetitiveness and lack of autonomy in the job. In addition, work stress is caused by job in satisfaction, job overload, lack of equipment to carry out the job and organizational climate. One of the recommendations made was that government should focus on how to minimize work stress so that academic scholars and lecture can improve their performances in Wake Forest University.

KEYWORDS: Stress Management Measures, Staff, Wake Forest University and North Carolina

Introduction

According to Danna and Griffin (2002), stressful working conditions are associated with increased absenteeism, tiredness, and the intention of employees to quit their jobs. Organizations must manage human resources as one of the most critical elements to achieve organisational performance. Work stress could negatively impact the organization's performance. According to Fako (2010), employees with work stress will withdraw from the stressor by creating problems for the organization, such as showing performance inefficiency, wasting operational resources, and causing work constraints for other employees. Meanwhile, Luthans (2005) asserted that the impact of work stress could threaten and disrupt employees by causing irritability, emotional instability, non-cooperative behavior, and sleeping difficulties. Topper (2007) stated that stress is a person's psychological and physiological response to the perception of demand and challenge. This implies that stress is not internal but a result of a response to external threats. Stress refers to the exertion of pressure and the attendant reactions to demand (McEwen, 2007). Like many countries in the world, the Nigerian working environment is characterised by stress. This is due to the rise of globalisation and competition from various work institutions. The social structure of the external environment and the demands of the workplace make it pertinent for employees to possess effective coping strategies, without which performance could be hampered (Oyewumi, Oyewumi, Iyiola, and Ojo, 2015).

Stress in organisations is associated with the rise of globalization. Varca (1999) defines stress by relating it to the environment. This definition portrays a stressful environment as a gap between environmental demands and the personal resources to meet those demands. Since the movement of work from the family to large-scale organisations after the industrial revolution, work has largely been characterised by stress. Work stress can also cause problems for the workers themselves, their families, and the surrounding communities (Varca, 1999). Findings from researchers have shown that work stress is increasingly becoming a source of concern among organisations and employees around the globe (Gyllensten and Palmer, 2005; Khurshi, Butt, and Malik, 2011). This is because it has a way of affecting not just the performance of the worker but also the worker's health, well-being, and morale. Thus, it is necessary for researchers and scholars to investigate this concept of stress, its causes, and how it can be reduced or removed. With their suggestions and contributions when applied by the organisation, the concept of stress will be well managed.

Statement of problem

Work stress has been a prevalent problem in modern life. Work stress is a major issue affecting organisational performance. Workload has had a negative impact on organisational performance in a variety of ways, including absenteeism, tiredness, inefficient performance, wasting operational resources, and causing work constraints in the organization. Work stress has a negative effect on the productivity level of the organization. As Colbert (2008) explains, not all stress is harmful and a certain amount of stress is a normal part of life. However, when an individual experiences high levels of ongoing stress, the excessive release of stress hormones can cause damage to cells, organs, and tissues. Organizations have resorted to looking for solutions to the issues and threats posed by work stress in Wake Forest University. Occupational stress describes physical, mental, and emotional wear and tear brought about by

discordance between the requirements of the job and the capabilities, resources, and needs of the employee to cope with job demands (Akinboye, 2002).

Objective of the Study

1. To examine the individual and organisational measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University to manage stress.
2. To examine the effectiveness or otherwise of the measure put in place to manage stress by Wake Forest University.

Research Question

1. What are the individual and organisational measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University to manage stress?
2. What is the effectiveness of the measures put in place to manage stress by Wake Forest University?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the extent of stress management in Wake Forest University.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of effectiveness in stress management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Work Stress

Work is a universal concept; it confers different meanings for different people and individuals around the world (Best, 1992). Work, in any interpretation, involves the exertion of physical and mental energy toward the performance of an activity (Ushie, 2002). He went on to say that work is meant to fulfil two purposes. First are the individual's needs; second are the organisational needs. In order to satisfy the individual's needs, the worker must first satisfy the needs of the organization. This is because he gets paid by the organization. Stress arises when the demands of the organisation are too high for the individual to fulfil at a particular point in a given time. Work stress refers to the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Work stress is a type of stress associated with the workplace that can be occasional or chronic, although most cases fall under the second type mentioned (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, and Boudreau, 2000). It is also important to note that occupational stress can be positive or negative (Kung & Chan, 2014).

It happens when demands exceed abilities, whereas job-related strains are reactions or outcomes of stress (Amigun & Von, 2010; Kitole, Idua, & Matata, 2019). Work stress is a chronic disease caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and or overall well-being of the body and mind. In chronic cases, a psychiatric consultation is usually required to validate the reason and degree of work-related stress. Work

stress in the workplace can have many origins or come from one single event. It can have an impact on both employees and employers alike. It is generally believed that some stress is okay (sometimes referred to as "challenge" or "positive stress"), but when stress occurs in amounts that you cannot handle, both mental and physical changes may occur. Fried (2008) stated that work stress is the response of employees to job demands and pressures that are not in line with their knowledge, interests, skills, and abilities and affects their capacity to cope. Christo and Pienaar (2006) similarly argued that these causes of work stress include perceived loss of job and security, sitting for long periods of time or heavy lifting, lack of safety, complexity of repetitiveness, and lack of autonomy in the job. In addition, work stress is caused by job dissatisfaction, job overload, lack of equipment to carry out the job and organisational climate.

Concept of Organisational Measures

In the workplace, employee-environment fit should be the primary focus. If it's a good match, the employee is likely to be relaxed. A poor fit increases tension and stress. As managers and companies, we need to examine our employees and the environments we create for them. We need to make sure we are providing an office that fits our employees' definition of "not stressful," not just what we think that looks like. There are a few broad ideas or measures that can be used by organisations to control work stress, but make sure you adopt them for your workforce. Put these ideas into action, and remember, the best strategies start with leadership (Ryba, 2019). There are a number of ways in which the risk of work stress can be controlled in an organization.

- ***Recognize your employees.*** Employees love being praised for a job well done, and recognising their success results in a serious boost in engagement. Each employee has a different personality, so be mindful when considering how and when to recognise them. Some employees appreciate a call-out during a meeting or praise in a company-wide email, while more reserved types might prefer a card on their desk or a thank you in person. However, you choose to recognise them, your employees will appreciate that you are aware of their success and want to share it with others. This makes them happier and more comfortable, which in turn lowers stress levels.
- ***Encourage workplace wellness.*** Exercise and healthy living are two of your best weapons against workplace stress. Exercise takes employees' minds off the stress of their job so they can focus on the task at hand. It also improves moods by increasing the production of endorphins, the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters. Encourage employees to go on a walk during their lunch break. Subsidize gym memberships; bring a yoga instructor into the office once a month; and hold a steps contest among teams for those who own fitness trackers. Offer healthy snacks in the office.
- ***Create quiet time.*** Stress cannot be completely avoided, but you can help alleviate it when it arrives. Ensure your employees have a place where they can take a break. Recent research shows that more than 80 percent of disengaged and hostile employees preferred the opportunity to have stress-relief breaks, such as naps, massages, or required breaks. A small room, a lounge space at the end of the hall, or even an outdoor bench can be a perfect place to find refuge from the chaos of the daily grind. Think about longer, retreat-style vacations, which can serve the same purpose.
- ***Allow for flexible hours and remote working.*** You hired your employees because you have confidence in their ability to do their jobs well and in a timely manner—so let them prove

it. Your office should not feel like a cell, but rather a place that facilitates getting a job done. Let your employees know that their job is defined by the quality and timeliness of their work, not when they punch the clock. Allow your employees to work remotely, and give them flexibility for start and end times. This freedom is great for office morale, and the policy shows employees that you trust them enough not to babysit.

- **Encourage social activity:** Employees spend a lot of time together, and the more comfortable they are, the less stressed they will feel. As coworkers get to know each other, expectations and communication barriers are broken down, greasing the wheels for easier future interactions.

Workplace stress is a problem for both employees and the organization as a whole. With this, organizations are desperately in need of measures to control stress so as to help their workers most. A lot of organisations have certain measures in place to combat work stress. Cooper, Liukkonen & Cartwright (1996), suggested that organizations should see that the long working hours of employees are reduced and proper time management should be put in place. When workers are made to work for too long, stress sets in, and this may lead to low productivity. They also placed emphasis on proper time management so as to achieve the goals at the right time interval. Cartwright & Cooper (1997) went further to emphasize the role of technology and proper communication in stress management. They stressed that if the organization can make use of technology as well as give proper training to this, it will help in reducing stress on workers. With the coming of globalization, technology has spread over the world, which in turn makes life easier.

Organizations that adopt this technology will make work easier for their workers. This is because work that could have been done for hours can be done in minutes if the right machines are in place. With this, stress is managed. They further stated that the organization should make provisions for a good and reliable communication network where the workers can easily communicate their feelings to the management. In addition, when the workers are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making, it allows them to air their views as well as give suggestions on how the organization can grow. Olson (2002) posited that a good work environment can help in managing stress. Kim and DeDear (2011) agreed with him and further stated that an organization with too much noise and a very high temperature can stress the workers. Organisations that want to get the best of their workers by reducing stress must ensure that the workers are working in good working conditions as well.

Concept of Stress Management

According to Bhasin (2020), "many coping behaviors are consciously selected, whereas others, known as defense mechanisms, are largely unconscious." He explained further that he differentiated coping mechanisms from defense mechanisms. Moos and Bilings (2002) intimated that there are three types of coping behaviours which are often distinguished by researchers;

- Efforts to change the situation
- Efforts to alter one's cognition about the situation, and
- Efforts to alter the unpleasant emotional consequences of stress.

According to Bhasin (2020), effort to cope by changing the situation typically involves problem solving. The person tries to remove the stress or, plan ways of resolving the situation or seeks advice or assistance from others in trying to change the situation. It is worthy of note that people with high propensity to problem solving orientation tend to exhibit less stress than others. Another stage of coping according to Jenatabadi, (2015) is by changing one's cognition or appraisal of the situation. This often involves reframing an event or the stress or mentally, so as to make it seem less threatening. For example, a person who is anxious about facing a crowd may say to herself that it is an opportunity to show her beauty. The third way people cope with stressful situation according to Jenatabadi, (2015) is by trying to relieve anxiety by the use of alcohol and drugs to try to escape emotional distress. This behaviour is said to be very common. However, some people try the use of other form of distractions, like music and dancing. Aguinis (2009) maintained that stress management depends on the source of stress. One's ability to cope with stress depends to a great extent on the genetic constitution of the person involved; the social environment the person is in; the societal influence that infringe on the person, and on the emotional balance of the person.

Methodology

The research design for this study is a survey research design. The area of this study is Wake Forest University in North Carolina, United States of America. The population of the study consists of all the staff of Wake Forest University. The respondents in the study consisted of 1208 teaching staff and 830 non-teaching staff. These were obtained through a proportionate stratified sampling technique, which was used in selecting respondents because it enhances effective representation of the samples from each segment on reaction to the problem. The sample of 212 respondents was derived the popular sampling techniques called "sample fraction" which borders on a sizeable number of population of the study. Hence, the formula and the sample size of 212 respondents are relevant for this study. The researcher will develop one instrument tagged "Work Stress and Organizational Performance Questionnaire " (WSOPQ). The instrument was face and contents validated, which was done by the researcher's supervisor. One expert from test, measurement, and evaluation also helped in validating the instrument. A Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument (WSOPQ), using 20 respondents who did not form part of the main study were selected and the instrument administered to them. Data collected from the respondents was subjected to a reliability test, and it produced a reliability coefficient of 0.72 to 0.85.

Results and Discussions

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by Age

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Less than 30 years	51	24.06*
31 years and above	161	75.94**
Total	212	100

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the distribution of the respondents by age. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that "31 years and above" (75.94%)

were rated the highest percentage, while “Less than 30 years” (24.06%) were rated the least percentage of the distribution of the respondents by age.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by Educational Qualification

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
First Degree and lower	176	83.02**
Higher Degree	36	16.98*
Total	212	100

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the distribution of the respondents by educational qualification. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that “first degree and lower” (83.02%) were rated the highest percentage, while “higher degree” (16.98%) were rated the least percentage of the distribution of the respondents by educational qualification.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents by years of working experience

YEARS OF WORKING EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1-5 years of working experience	47	22.17*
10 years of working experience	52	24.53
11 years and above of working experience	113	53.30**
Total	212	100

The above table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the distribution of the respondents by years of working experience. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that “11 years and above of working experience” (53.30%) were rated the highest percentage, while “1-5 years of working experience” (22.17%) were rated the least percentage of the distribution of the respondents by years of working experience.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis one

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the extent of stress management in Wake Forest University. In order to answer the hypothesis, simple regression analysis was performed on the data (see table 4)

TABLE 4: Simple Regression Analysis of the Influence of the Individual and Organisational Measures Adopted on the Extent of Stress Management in Wake Forest University

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.97a	0.94	0.94	0.44	0.94

***Significant at 0.05 level; df= 210; N= 212; critical R-value = 0.139**

The above table 4 shows that the calculated R-value (0.97) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 210 degrees of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.94 predicts 94% of the influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the

extent of stress management in Wake Forest University. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the extent of stress management in Wake Forest University.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference in the level of effectiveness in stress management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University.

Table 5: Independent t-test analysis of the difference in the level of effectiveness in management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University

Measures	N	X	SD	t	Sig.
Individual	181	16.0663	1.39683	15.051	.000
Management	31	11.9677	1.42557		

The above table 5 presents the calculated t-value as (15.051) and P-value of .000. The P-value of (.000) being compared with the alpha level of .05 was found less and so proved that the corresponding calculated t-value (15.051) was significant. This result therefore means that there is significant difference in the level of effectiveness in stress management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University.

Discussion of findings

The results of the data analyses in table 4 which sought to find out the influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the extent of stress management in Wake Forest University was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.97) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 210 degrees of freedom. The result implies that, there is significant influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the extent of stress management in Wake Forest University. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of Ryba, (2019) who stated that they are few broad ideas or measures that can be used by organizations to control work stress, but make sure you adopt them to your workforce. Put these ideas into action; and remember, the best strategies start with leadership's. There are a number of ways by which the risk of work stress can be controlled in an organization are recognize your employees; encourage workplace wellness; create quiet time; allow for flexible hours and remote working and encourage social activity. The result of the analysis caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

The results of the data analyses in table 5 which sought to find the significant difference in the level of effectiveness in stress management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University were significant due to the fact that the P-value of (.000) being compared with the alpha level of .05 was found less and so proved that the corresponding calculated t-value (15.051) was significant. The result therefore implies that there is significant difference in the level of effectiveness in stress management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University. The result was therefore in agreement with the research findings of Seldon and Sowa (2004), argues that organisational performance is a multifaceted phenomenon and a hard construct to measure in organisations. This is because

the level of performance in various organisations differs depending on the job descriptions. A high level of performance in one organisation may be seen as a low level performance in another. The result of the analysis caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

Conclusion

This study concluded that stress has become an integral part of the academic scholars and lecture. Academic scholars have increased the level of stress among the lecture in Wake Forest University. An optimal level of stress can be a source of positive motivation to succeed. Work stress changes one's physical or mental state in response to a workplace that pose an appraised challenge or threat. Identifying the signs of stress, this is due to the rise of globalisation and competitors from various institutions of which Wake Forest University is not excluded. Therefore, the causes of work stress include perceived loss of job, and security, sitting for long periods of time or heavy lifting, lack of safety, complexity of repetitiveness and lack of autonomy in the job. In addition, work stress is caused by job in satisfaction, job overload, lack of equipment to carry out the job and organizational climate. The result also proved that there is significant difference in the level of effectiveness in stress management measures put in place by workers and management of Wake Forest University. Finally, there is significant influence of the individual and organisational measures adopted on the extent of stress management in Wake Forest University.

Recommendations

1. School management should focus on how to minimize work stress so that the teaching and non-teaching staff can improve upon their performances in Wake Forest University.
2. The management should provide a conducive working environment for their staff because it can lead to high level of productivity, and growth of the organisational performance.

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