EMPLOYEE STRESS: A SCOPING REVIEW

ALAGAH, Adekemi Drusilia
Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT
This study examined employee stress with a view of proffering viable solution to stress situations. An in-depth review of literature was conducted to examine previous research findings with the aim of making contributions on how to minimize employees' stress. Workplace stressors can be physical or psychosocial. It culminates to several disturbing scenarios such as; non-availability of work materials, tools or equipment, noise, unconducive work environment such as poor lighting, poor office space, bullying or harassment etc. and excessive workloads, ambiguous performance expectations, less control over job-related decisions, fewer opportunities for growth and advancement, conflicting work demands etc. It was therefore recommended that; employees are expected to keep a to-do-list of all their activities in an attempt to identify and track high stressors and to know how to adequately respond to them. Also, employees are advised to seek and get help from trusted colleagues, superiors, friends, and family in a bid to handle stressful situations. Nevertheless, employees are encouraged to develop a healthy lifestyle by eating right and engaging in any form of physical exercise that would help ease stress, take out time to relax, and recharge. Lastly, employees should work within their job description, and only exhibit organizational citizenship behaviour when it is absolutely necessary.

KEYWORDS: *Employee Stress, Job-Demand-Control-Support Model, and Social Support.*

INTRODUCTION

Having a job to do should be a thing of joy as it gives the job-holder a means of livelihood and boosts the individual's mental health and well-being, nevertheless, some people are stressed out in their workplaces despite the rewards they receive. The reason for this trend in today's workplaces stem from shifting social and business restrictions, changing and uncertain business environment, fulfilling diversity and inclusion responsibilities, talent shortage, and harmonizing current business operations with future strategic thinking. This has led to huge losses in revenue and eventual winding-up of some organizations for those that cannot move with the trend. However, other organizations that are still in business, do almost everything to remain so, including laying-off employees who are perceived as not making valuable contributions to the survival of the organization. This invariably demonstrates that fewer employees are performing the job(s) of a larger percentage of employees who ought to be gainfully employed, thereby leaving these few workers susceptible to health hazards. Workplace stressors can be physical or psychosocial. It culminates to several disturbing scenarios such as; non-availability of work materials, tools or equipment, noise, unconducive work environment such as poor lighting, poor office space, etc. and excessive workloads, ambiguous performance expectations, less control over job-related decisions, fewer opportunities for growth and advancement, bullying or harassment, conflicting work demands etc. Stressful working conditions have been known to contribute to the medical challenges of employees. Griffin and Clarke (2010) recorded that employee stress or stressful working conditions have a high tendency of causing problems that had resulted in huge discomfort for employees. They noted that some of such problems include; sleep disturbances, anxiety, headache, high blood pressure, short temper or fuse, weakened immune system, and other related heart diseases. Beehr (2014), and Griffin and Clarke (2010) pointed out some symptoms of stress that negatively affect organizational performance. These symptoms include; escaping from tasks and responsibilities,

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presenteeism, absenteeism, arriving late, leaving early, memory loss, deterioration in work performance, more work-related accidents, more error-prone work-outcome, improper eating habits, arguing, anxiety, depression, procrastination, getting irritated, sleeplessness, and so on.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Studies such as this are traditionally supported with an undergirded model. The aim of this is to provide a basis for which the study could be given an explanation as well as a foundation. This study, therefore, adopts the Job Demand-control- support model, to serve as an undergirded theory for employee stress. **The Job-demand-control-support model** attempts to theoretically explain how the characteristics of a job could influence the psychological wellbeing of employees. Thus, it tries to ascertain the extent to which skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback could influence employee's psychological wellbeing through identifying these situations and employee's personal characteristics that will be of utmost importance in times of stress (Bakker et al., 2005). It is imperative to note that the job-demand-control-support model was introduced by an American sociologist, Robert Karasek. This model was presented in a study where he attempted to assess stress and stress factors within a work environment or an organization (Bakker & Demeroati, 2007). Karasek and Theorell (1992) noted that demand and control in this sense represents "height of strain" and decision latitude", respectively. Height of strain (demands) connotes certain work requirements such as effort and difficulty, work rate, time and pressure, availability, and so on, which presents themselves as psychological stressors, while; decision latitude (control) connotes the extent to which employees are free to "control and organize" their work in general based on their level of competence and decision-making authority. Hausser et al. (2010), and Karasek and Theorell (1992) pointed out that the height of strain (demands) covers high and low job demands, while decision latitude (control) covers active and passive job control. In other words, the model connotes how various factors such as excess workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, in relation to job demands can result to employee stress. Nevertheless, Karasek and Theorell, (1990) concludes that employees can handle these stressors by employing job skills that gives them the required leverages such as developing a cordial relationship between colleagues and superiors, gaining autonomy and control on the job.

CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE STRESS

Employee stress can be defined as damaging responses that can arise when the demands of a job is inappropriate with the abilities, resources and expectations of the job-holder. Employee stress comes as a response to certain stimuli. For instance, job stress could be stimulated by job-related factors such as excessive workload, fewer opportunities for development and growth, poor salary scale, delayed salaries, conflicting work demands, ambiguous performance expectations, lack of social support, lack of autonomy and control and so on. Moylan et al. (2013) and Houdmont et al. (2019) submitted that several factors lead to employee stress. These factors are dimensionalized into job concerning factors, organizational factors, individual factors, and extra-organizational factors. Moylan et al. (2013) noted that job concerning factors, includes; lack of confidentiality, crowding, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, and monotonous nature of the job. Organizational factors include; peer pressure (Hernandez et al. 2014), lack of employee participation in decision-making, strict rules and regulations, management excessive control over employees, goal ambiguity and conflict, poor salary structure, pay discrimination, lack of opportunity for promotion, more centralized and formal organizational structure, and ineffective communication system, and so on. Individual factors may include; expectations from peers, family, superiors, and subordinates, inherent personality traits such as aggressiveness, impatience, and being rigid. Extra-organizational factors such as; technological change, inflation, social responsibilities, and rigid social changes, and so on.

Stress has always been perceived in the negative. Although, this negative component or element of stress is known as "distress". However, stress has its positive outcomes. The positive connotation of stress is enstress. Human beings requires some measure of stress. In this vein, stress has positive outcomes as it brings out the best in individuals and helps them discover newer and smarter ways to get things done (Beehr, 2014; Griffin & Clarke, 2010; Houdmont et al., 2019). Nevertheless, negative outcomes of stress could result in heart disease (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Similarly, deteriorating health has been fingered as one of the several symptoms of employee stress. Stults-Kolehmainen and Sinha (2014), Lee et al. (2013), Marcellino et al. (2014), and Boulton and O'connell (2017) have suggested several factors that could pass for symptoms of employee stress. These factors include; deteriorating work conditions, improper eating habits, absenteeism, sleeplessness,

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excessive smoking and drinking, loss of memory, error-prone disposition, escaping from work/duties and/or responsibilities, over-reacting, anxiety, arguing, and accident-prone disposition. Others may include, arriving late and leaving early, and largely deteriorating health conditions, depressed mode, fatigue, headaches, loss of sex drive, treble concentrating, irritability, stomach problems, muscle tension, social withdrawal, loss of interest in work, and excessive use of alcohol and drugs.

MANAGING EMPLOYEE STRESS

Although, several researchers (e.g. Moylan et al., 2013; Marcellino et al., 2014; de Terte & Stephens, 2014) have suggested ways to adequately manage stress. It is believed that employee stress takes a negative toll on the individual health of employees as well as their performance outcome on the job. Hence the need to address issues of stress as it obviously comes with harmful consequences. In the light of these, employee stress can be managed using individual and organizational strategies. For organizational level strategies, employee stress could be tackled by appreciating employees upon task completion, meeting and exceeding targets, encouraging decentralization, encourage employee participation in decision making, creating a just and safe working environment, feedback on task performance, encouraging heightened organizational communication, promote job enrichment and job rotation, induce employee independence, creating and enhancing effective hiring orientation and procedure, creating and maintaining an equitable distribution of incentives and other monetary benefits, establishing realistic, specific, and stimulating organizational goals, and encouraging timely feedback from employees, providing recreational centers.

On the other hand, Moylan et al. (2013), de Terte and Stephens (2014), Todt et al. (2018) also suggested several strategic options to manage employee stress on an individual level. These strategies may include; encouraging a healthy lifestyle, having plenty of water and controllable eating habits, take advantage of employee counseling in terms of career and personal development, taking regular sleep, creating a to-do list to manage time and schedules adequately, taking a walk during breaks, engage in watching comic videos and listening to similar audios, develop emotional intelligence, while being self-aware, self-controlled, self-confidence, and self-reliant. Individual employees are also encouraged to engage in regular physical exercise, avoid connection with negative people, and build social support.

Interestingly, Kohlbacher et al. (2011) have pointed out that employee stress tends to have a negative relationship with performance. They mostly submitted that employee performance is tied to employee stress. This submission implies that higher employee stress is likely to result in lower employee performance and lower employee stress could most likely result in higher employee performance. Although, experience has shown that even a little bit of stress on employees tends to inhibit the performance of employees across the board. This could pass a reality test because even relatively slight or considerably trivial stress on employees could hugely distract an employee (Todt et al., 2018). In a similar perspective, Marcellino et al. (2014) noted that employees who are under some form of stress are more likely to lose focus creative ability, and innovativeness, as they don't tend to think straight. They further stated that such employees are likely to concentrate on repulsive behaviours and negative emotions rather than concentrating on work. This demonstrates the propensity of a negative outcome on their performance level. Based on the different arguments on the composition of stressors and stress stimuli, as well as the outcome of a distress situation. It is pertinent to note that stress can spoil or increase employee performance depending on the skill composition or skill set of the employees that are directly involved in the stress situations. This shows that organizations that create and maintain an open system that encourages constant communication are likely to develop an environment in which employees are less likely to be or feed distress; this allows employees to put in their best in terms of skills and abilities in performing their task and responsibilities, thereby inducing higher possibility of having a work outcome that is in line with the plans and objectives of the organization.

The works reviewed above demonstrates that issues that surround employee personal demands have to be extensively addressed to influence some level of control, and induce social support towards reducing job stress on the employee (Garcia-Herrero et al., 2016). This means that employees will feel satisfied with their personal demands thereby putting in their best to tackle operational challenges that come with their jobs because they may most like feel motivated to do so (Giauque et al., 2013). Tay and Diener (2011) emphasize the need for organizations to achieve promoting the well-being of employees by attempting to address their personal demands as that would invariably address issues of emotional, family, and job demands of the employees.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

S/N	Details of Study		Findings
i.	Author(s)/Year	Houdmont et al. (2019)	They found that the construct validity of a single-item measure of global job stressfulness appears to pivot around the referents of job demands and affect drawn from general experiences, as low stress jobs reported; "not at all stressful", mildly stressful, moderately stressful", while high stress jobs reported; "very stressful and extremely stressful".
	Country	United Kingdom	
	Topic	What does a single-item measure of job stressfulness assess?	
	Methodology	Sampling, interview, qualitative and quantitative approach.	
ii.	Author(s)/Year	Burman & Goswanis (2018)	Work stress not only affects the physical and psychological state, but also had an adverse effect on family and social life of the employee. Again, some of the major work stressors and coping strategies are what could be learnt and taught if organizations organizes workshops to create awareness about the impact of stress.
	Country	India	
	Topic	A Systematic literature review of work stress.	
	Methodology	Systematic literature Review	
iii.	Author(s)/Year	Panigrahi (2016)	Stress is an important factor as it helps in the achievement of stated objectives, but could have harmful effect if it surpasses a certain limit. At this point, stress could be highly harmful to the body, mind and reflected on the behavior of those who are involve with the stressors. This will have an adverse effect on organizational productivity and overall performance.
	Country	India	
	Topic	Managing stress of workplace	
	Methodology	Systematic literature review	
iv.	Author(s)/Year	Katic et al. (2019)	The findings indicate that risks arising from certain working styles and their relations to stress needs to be addressed if the organization intends to monitor, evaluate and manage stressors and stressful situations to enable employee perform better on all fronts.
	Country	Slovania	
	Topic	The impact of stress of life, working, and management styles: How to make an organization healthier?	
	Methodology	Four divisional-questionnaire, qualitative approach	
v.	Author(s)/Year	Begum (2012)	Work-related dimensions (work hour and work place) have significant effect on sales people work-stress.
	Country	Indonesia	
	Topic	Effect of work-related dimensions on work-stress.	
	Methodology	Linear Regression and Pearson Moment C.orrelation.	
vi.	Author(s)/Year	Al-Mashaan (2001).	It was revealed that job stress and job satisfaction are closely relation to neuroticism, type a behavior, and locus of control and it exist among Kuwaiti personnel.
	Country	Kuwait	
	Topic	Job stress and job satisfaction and their relation to neuroticism, type a behavior, and locus of control among Kuwaiti personnel	
	Methodology	Quantitative method and Spearman's Rank Order C.orrelation Coefficient.	
vii.	Author(s)/Year	Cooper et al. (2001).	It was noted that organizational stress can be managed to achieve great outcome for both organization and the employee.
	Country	UK	
	Topic	Organizational stress: A review and critique of theory, research, and applications.	
	Methodology	Systematic literature review	

Source: Webometrics

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CONCLUSION

Employee stress is fast becoming a huge individual and work-life threatening factor with a negative effect on organizational performance and outcome as stressed individuals easily develop harmful behaviours such as withdrawal or sabotage just to cope with work-related stress. Workplace stressors can be physical or psychosocial. It culminates to several disturbing scenarios such as; non-availability of work materials, tools or equipment, noise, unconducive work environment such as poor lighting, poor office space, bullying or harassment etc. and excessive workloads, ambiguous performance expectations, less control over job-related decisions, fewer opportunities for growth and advancement, conflicting work demands etc. Hence, employees are expected to keep a to-do-list of all their activities in an attempt to identify and tract high stressors and how to adequately respond to them. Again, employees are advised to seek and get help from trusted colleagues, superiors, friends, and family in a bid to stressful situations. Nevertheless, employees are encouraged to develop a healthy lifestyle by eating right and engaging in any form of physical exercise that would help ease the stress, and taking time to relax, and recharge. Lastly, employees should work within their job description, and only exhibit organizational citizenship behaviour when it is absolutely necessary.

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