WORK STRESS AND EMPLOYEES’ PERFORMANCE AMONGST STAFF OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA: THE MODERATING ROLE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Tarurhor Mitaire Emmanuel, PhD.*

Abstract
The study examined the effect of career development against work stress and employees performance among the staff of Delta State University, Abraka. A descriptive research design, using stratified random sampling techniques was employed. Two hundred and eighty thousand (280) questionnaires were distributed to generate the relevant data for this study. This sample was arrived through the application of Taro Yamane formula on the total population of nine hundred and thirty (930) staff which had spent at least ten years on the job. In addition, structural equation model was adopted and STATA 13.0 for the analysis. The results show a negative relationship between employees’ performance and work stress when proxied by job demand and a positive relationship when work stress is proxied by workload. However, there is a negative relationship between the moderating variable of career development and employees’ performance; and also a negative statistically significant relationship at 1% of level significance with work stress (measured by job demand). The study concludes that the impact of career development has not been felt fully by the employees in the Delta State University. It however recommends that university management should consider career development for its staff as priority to reduce stress.

Keywords: Work stress, Job demand, Work load, Career development, Employee performance.

Introduction

Human beings cannot avoid stress because it is part of our life. Hence the only alternative is for the individual to understand themselves and reduce stressful jobs since its total absence is death (Selye, 1973). In fact, every human beings are born into the world to inherit the punishment for the sins of Adam and Eve as stated in Gen. 3:19a, “In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground”(KJV). The result of the curse on human being is to struggle in life before immediate needs can be provided for the family, which serves as the foundational causes of stress to mankind. Ola (1971) in his book titled the gods are not to blame supported this notion when he wrote that “the struggle of man begins at birth”.

It has been established that every individual needs some degree of stress to function normally (Luthan; 1989). In this regard, stress has both negative and positive impact on employees’ performance. In fact, stress is not entirely bad; it is the duty of organizational management to identify the point at which “stress responses” would begin to impact negatively on the employees’ performance. The stress response varies from felt pressure, anxiety and tension to stress hormone output (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). The negative impact of job stress on employees’ performance is of great concern to

* Department of Business Administration, Delta State University, Abraka, tarurhor@gmail.com or tarurhor@delsu.edu.ng
stakeholders of an organization. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the management of an organization to deal with job stress in order for the employee to be healthier and more productive (Certo, 2003). As stated by Selye (1973) “complete freedom from stress is death. Contrary to public opinion, we must not- and indeed cannot-avoid stress, but we can meet it efficiently and enjoy it by learning more about its mechanism and adjusting our philosophy of life accordingly”.

The cost of dealing with job stress varies from one organization to another. Costs incurred that are associated with controlling stress of employee have direct effect on the organizational profit. For instance, Midgley (1996) stated that the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that the total inefficiencies arising from occupational cost due to stressor might cause about 10 percent of a country’s Gross National Product (GNP). In the same vein, it costs businesses in Europe over $200 billion per year to pay salaries for sick days, hospitalized & out-patient staff and costs associated with decrease in production which are the aftermath of stress (Rajeshwara & Aktharsha, 2017).

Despite the ill effect of stress on both the individual and the organization, many individuals still failed to learn from others mishap and still undergo stressful jobs. This study is of the view that most employees are constrained to be involved in stressful job because they cannot adapt to the new techniques introduced by their organization to reduce stress. In fact, researchers have shown that some organizations have provided measures to reduce stress on their employees. For instance, most Nigerian Universities including Delta state University, Abraka, have introduced software for compilation of results to reduce the mental stress involved in such job. It is surprising that lecturers still prefer to compute results manually by spending more hours on the job, which will normally cause stress that could lead to ill-health of such staff. In the same vein, some universities have introduced break period for staff to reduce stress while some others are yet to key- in to such measures to reduce stress.

The effect of managing stress on employee productivity has attracted researchers in the field of Psychology, Human Resources and Management (Selye, 1974.,Karasek, 1979.,Kavanagh, 1981). Furthermore, efforts have been made by several studies to establish whether there are relationship between work stress and employee performance in both developed and developing countries (Ali, Raheem, Naraz & Imamuddin, 2014; Olusegen, Oluwasayo & Oluwayin, 2014; Sun & Chio, 2014 and Omolera 2014). This study is unique and significant because of the introduction of a moderating variable for career development on the relationship between work stress and employee performance in Nigeria Universities.

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

The study adopts McGregor’s Theory X. McGregor(1987) propounded Theory X based on the assumptions of employees’ attitude to work. He demonstrated that an average person is lazy and do not like work. Then the productivity of an employee depends on the leadership style of the managers. He concluded that organization with a well established appropriate leadership style would force such employee to be more productive, especially if career development are provided and job demand & workload...
are specified for each staff. It is well known fact that staff of most government parastatals in which the university belongs, are not willing to work. Workers perception to government owned organization, is an opportunity to share from the national cake without working. This may be the reason why ‘ghost workers’ are commonly found in government establishment than the private sector. Therefore if management is weak, it will impact negatively on the organization, therefore employee should be coerced to do their job.

**Job Stress**

Stress is derived from a latin word “stringer” which means “to draw tight” (Hans, 2011, Bashir & Ramay, 2010). As depreciation is the wear and tear of a non- current asset (also called fixed Assets), stress is the wear and tear of our bodies (Holzemer, 2011). Holzemer (2011) emphasized that stress has both physical and emotional effects on human beings which can create either positive or negative feelings on results”. For instance, Jethro, Moses father in-law who can be described as one of the foremost stress management consultant advised Moses to reduce his stressful job of not working from morning to evening to avoid being worn out. “And Moses’ father in law said unto him, “The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou will surely wear away both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone” (Exodus 18: 17-18 KJV).

In fact the most current popular slogan of some employees is “we are under high stress at workplace”. This has necessitated why job stress becomes a global challenge and has made researchers to investigate its causes and proffer solution on how it can be managed.

**Job Performance**

Performance can classified as job performance, national or organizational performance (Campbell, 1990). Campbell (1990) clearly defined performance as something an individual does, which can be separated from general organizational performance. The essence of performance measurement is to determine whether the inputs introduced into the organization yields better results. In fact, Mathis and Jackson (2000) explained the term performance as “Comparing the cost of resources invested into a job and the results of quantity and quality received”. In this regard, when the outputs are more than the inputs or amount invested, it is favourable to the organization and or vice versa. Furthermore, if employee performance is low, there is the tendency that the productivity of the entire organization will automatically be very low. Managers should therefore organize trainings for employees in order to manage work stress to boost performance. Although, the actual variables used to measure performance are conflicting and difficult to ascertain because some researchers wrongly used the proxy of employee performance for organizational performance and vice-versa when conducting studies that involved performance (Hubbard, 2009).

**Career Development**

Experience had a lot of roles to play in career development. Nasutiou, Mariatin and Zahreni (2018) stated that “employee perception on a job changes with passing time”.
They established in their study that the numbers of years spent on a job by an employee influences his or her attitude toward such organization. These necessitated why most organization made it compulsory that newly employed staff must undergo training on the job in respective of their qualification.

Werther and Davis (1996) defined career development as “the increase in one’s personality to achieve an intended career”. While Durbin (2002) sees career development as “an employee activity which help them plan their future career in a certain company so that both the employee and the company can benefit equally”. In fact, from the definition of Durbin (2002), it is clear that career development impacts on employee performance.

**FIG 1: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK OF STRESS.**

**Work Job Stress and Employee Performance Relationship.**

The relationship between work stress and employee performance can best be described using the modified product life cycle approach. Stress at the initial level is a “challenge stressor” which motivates the employee to be more productive and enhances performance because goals are achieved timely and efficiently. However, Bloona (2007) asserted that stress cannot continually be sustained to impact positively on employee’s performance; it can only be maintained to an extent and after which, it would reverse negatively on employee’s performance (Hindrance stressors).

Previous empirical studies were carried out on the impact of work stress on employee performance in both developed and developing economies. Payne, Bettman, & Johnson (1988) stated that when people are faced with time pressure and information overhead, they would be compelled to adopt very effective strategies for making decisions. The study emphasized that workload demands which is associated with time pressure, triggers people to take the best decision at workplace. They concluded that stressors like time pressure and information overhead contribute positively to employee performance. In the same vein, Asamani, Amertil and Chebere (2015) found that a moderate workload assigned to employee as job schedule would increase employee’s performance. They concluded that high workload would impacts negatively on employee performance;
therefore management should maintain a moderate workload on employees to avoid work stress.

Ibtisam, Lucy and Anwar (2015) carried out a study in County Government of Kilifi to determine whether a relationship existed between employee performance and the four stressors of work stress proxied by job demand, time pressure, salaries and job security. They found that a strong positive correlation between Job demand, time pressure and employee performance respectively. However, they concluded that time pressure is the most “job stressor” among the variables used in the study.

Bokti and Talib (2009) established that job stress leads to low level of satisfaction which would result to low morale, accident at work; reduces productivity and encourages absenteeism from work. In the same vein, Sabir and Helge (2003) stated that stress has negative impacts on performance of workers which directly affects the organizational performance and productivity. They concluded that the negative effect of employee performance in the study were associated with employee relations, absenteeism and morale.

Kavanagh (1981) found out that work stress affects individual and group decision making process to make effective judgments which would impact positively on performance. He concluded that a negative relationship between work stress and military personnel performance. In the same manner, Ahsan, Abdullah, Fie and Alam (2009) found a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and job stress in their study of universities staff in Malaysia. They concluded that universities staff should be motivated through constant appraisal programmes and appreciation to reduce job stress.

Also, Santiago (2003) studied the negative effects of internal stress on police force performance. The study found a positive relationship between internal stress and performance of the staff of police force and command used in the study. In the same vein, Ouyang (2009) found that job stress influences job performance positively in the study of banking service personnel in Taiwan.

Musyoka, Ogutu and Awino (2012) studied the impact of stress on corporate performance on 32 corporate companies listed in the Warobi security exchange. They found out that there is a positive relationship between job stress and corporate performance. Furthermore, Ashfaq and Muhammad (2013) carried out a study to determine whether a relationship existed between job stress and job performance on the employees of the banks in Pakistan. The study found a negative correlation between job stress and job performance of the banks employees. They concluded that stress reduces employees’ performance to carry out jobs efficiently and effectively. In the same vein, Sun and Chiou (2014) using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to analyze the relationship between occupational stress and workers performance found that a negative relationship exists between the two main variables used in the study. In fact the coping strategy variable introduced into the multiple regression model formulated by Sun and Chiou (2014) served as a mediating variable. Also, Omolara (2014) found that work
related stress has a negative impact on employee commitment of the staff of Olabi, Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria. Similarly, Bamidele, Ogunleye and Olatunji (2014) found a positive relationship between job stress and job performance on the study of 300 employees of Nigeria Security and Civil Defenses Corps. Shahid, Latif, Sohail and Ashraf (2015) established that the effect of stress on employee has deprived employees from performing their duties effectively in the organization where they work. They concluded that each bank staff lost about 16 working days yearly because of stress, depression or anxiety in their study.

Shah, Jaffari, Aziz, Ejaz, Ul-Haq I, Raza (2011) found out that employee work load has a direct relationship with employees performance. They concluded that moderate work load has a positive impact on employees performance. In a situation, where there is high or extremely low work load, it will lead to low performance. In the same vein, Yang (2004) established that work load had a significant impact on employees’ performance in the banking sector.

In all, it is obvious from the reviewed literature that complex workload or high job demand would cause procrastination by the employee and this automatically affects employee performance. This is because a direct relationship exists between time spent on the job and job stress. The following hypotheses are formulated:

- Job demand had no positive significant impact on employee’s performance.
- Work load does not contribute to employee’s performance.

**Career Development and Employee Performance Relationship**

Career development improves the effectiveness and performance of an employee in carrying out is primary assignment (Amstrong, 2001). It has been demonstrated that a well managed career development by organization will boost the morale of its employees to achieve their own career and impacts positively on his or her performance (Akmal, 2015 and Charity, 2015). Dewi and Utama (2016) also found a positive and significant relationship between career development and employee performance in their study. In the same vein, Gachunga and Wamoto (2012) asserted that activities involved in developing career like monitoring and coaching influences employees performance.

Napitupulu, Haryono, Riani, Sawitri and Harsono (2017), found out that Career development has an indirect impact on employee performance in their study of 250 civil servants in the Ministry of Finance in Indonesia. Furthermore, Oduma and Were (2014) carried out a study on the influence of career development on employee performance in public Universities. The results show that career development has positive impact on employee performance of the staff of Jomo Kanyatta University, Kenya. In fact stress can be reduced by proper career development (training, motivation e.t.c).

From the review literature, the following hypotheses is formulated:

- Career development does not impact positively on employees’ performance.

**Methods**

Positivists approach was adopted for this study since it has the capability of testing hypothesis derived from measurable variables in a population (Nyangahu and Bula,
The study used a descriptive research design; through stratified random sampling techniques. Samples of 280 employees were selected from both academic and senior non academic staff of Delta State University, Abraka. Total populations of 930 staff were used for this study. These were staff that had spent at least 10 years in the University on their job. Apply Taro Yamane formula, a total of 280 staff was arrived as the sample size. The study therefore administered totals of 280 copies of the questionnaires out of which 249 were useful for this study. The questionnaire comprises of 16 questions (Q1 to Q16) and all items in the questions distributed were rated in a 4 points likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). STATA 13.0 was used for the analysis.

The structural equation model (SEM) was adopted to examine the relationship between job stress and employee performance. It is the most suitable analysis tool because moderating variable can be handled efficiently by the use SEM (Sun & Chiou, 2014 and Tarurhor, 2017).

Model specification
The relationship between work stress variables (job demand & workload) and employee performance with the inclusion of career development as a mediating variable can be estimated using Baron and Kenny (1998) regression analysis approach as follows:

\[
\text{Emplperf} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Jobdem} + \beta_2 \text{Wkload} + \beta_3 \text{Caredev} + \epsilon \\
\text{Caredev} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Jobdem} + \beta_2 \text{Wkload} + \epsilon \\
\text{Emplperf} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Caredev} + \epsilon \\
\text{Emplperf} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Jobdem} + \beta_2 \text{Wkload} + \beta_3 \text{Caredev} + \epsilon 
\]

Where Emplperf = Employee performance.
Jobdem = Job demand
Wkload = Workload.
Caredev = Career development.

Discussion of Results
Correlation Analysis Results
The correlation analysis results show that there is no multi-collinearity in the model formulated. Applying the rule of thumb none of the values of relationship is up to -0.70 to 0.70. The highest figure as shown in table 1 is 0.4097, as evidence that the data can be reliably used for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1 CORRELATION ANALYSIS.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>emplperf  jobdem  wkload  caredev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.0237  1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0083  0.4097  1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.0187  -0.1235  0.0741  1.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s computation from STATA 13.0 (2018)
Structural Equation Model (SEM).
Table 2 presents the SEM diagram. The result indicates that job demand has a negative relationship of (- 0.25) on employee performance. The implication of this result suggest that pressure from management by fixing deadline on completion of assignments had not improved employee performance rather caused fear and anxiety which led to making serious mistakes. This findings is inconsistent with the works of Ibtisam et al,2015 which reported a positive relationship between job demand and employee performance. The result of the relationship between workload and employee performance reports a positive relationship of 0.0078 between the two variables. This finding is at variance with the study of Asamani, et al 2015 but is consistent with Shah et al 2011.In line with the study of Shah et al 2011, the result show that the workload of the staff of Delta State University are moderate and cannot cause stress on the employee. In this regard, the workload improves employees’ performance.

In fact career development being the moderating variable reports a negative and non significant relationship with employee performance. The expected ‘A priori’ is that career development ought to have positive impact on employee performance. This study is at variance with the works of Oduma and Were, 2014 and Dewi and Utama, 2016 reporting positive relationship. The implications of this result show that the management of Delta State University has not taken career development of staff as a major priority.

FIG 2: Path coefficients of the structural equation for hypothesis testing.

Source: Author’s computation from STATA 13.0 (2018)
In the same vein, the SEM results in Table 2 confirm the relationship established between the variables in the SEM diagram in Fig 2. It also indicates that the LR test result of the model is valid at 1 % level of significance, since the Chi-Square value is 20.18 with P-Value of 0.000.

**Table 2 SEM results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Coefficient.</th>
<th>P &gt;/Z /</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caredev</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobdem</td>
<td>-0.0979942</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wkload</td>
<td>0.0045194</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emplperf</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caredev</td>
<td>-2.459591</td>
<td>0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobdem</td>
<td>-0.2521865</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wkload</td>
<td>0.0078359</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LR test of model vs. saturated: chi 2 (7) = 20.18. Prob>chi2 =0.0000

**Source:** Author’s computation from STATA 13.0 (2018)

**Conclusion**

The study revealed a negative relationship between work stress (job demands) and employee performances while positive relationship between work stress (workload) and employee performances. These result supports “Theory X” that job demand motivates employee to be more productive. Employees are not often attracted to job openings in government owned organizations if deadlines are not fixed with sanction attached for defaulters. Job demand has encouraged staff from the study to put in their best and work precision to enable them to meet targets, although it had caused stress and indirectly impact negatively on employees’ performance.

Similarly, it was established that workload does not necessarily cause stress for the employee from the findings of the study. The implication of this finding is that some departments had a very low workload due to over staffing but presently experiencing moderate workload. The above statement is justified because despite that workloads of staff are currently increasing on a yearly basis due to death, retirement and retrenchment of staff without commensurate replacement by recruiting new staff to fill the vacant spaces, the result also reports a positive relationship.

In fact, the moderating variable of career development which ought to reduce work stress and improves employees’ performances had not been given more attention by the university management. This had reflected in the result showing a negative statistically significance relationship between career development (job demand) and employee performance at 1 % level of significance.

**Recommendations**

The study recommends that university management should consider career development of employee as a major priority to avert stressor for the staff. This can be achieved by organizing training programmes to enrich the staff knowledge and skills to reduce time
spent on a job. In addition, promotion criteria for academic staff should not only be based on articles published, but it should also include teaching and numbers of students’ projects or thesis supervised. This will encourage the staff to be more productive and available to carry out their primary assignments which in return impacts on employee’s performance.

References


