

WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

Promoting mental health in the workplace is essential not only for employee well-being but also for organizational effectiveness, thus, several strategies must be employed to help the workers. The study investigated the role of workplace mental health strategies in reducing workers' absenteeism in Rivers State, Nigeria. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 64,691 civil servants in Rivers State with a sample size of 437 selected using the multi-stage sampling procedure. A purposive sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: "Workplace strategies in enhancing employee productivity questionnaire (WSEEPQ)" with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data were analyzed with the aid of Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS V-27) using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation (SD) as well as regression statistics set at 0.05 alpha level. The result of the study showed that, mental health strategies adopted contributed 83.8% of the variance in the employees' productivity ($R^2 = 0.838$, $r = 0.94$), and it contributed 79.6% of the variance in the employees' absenteeism ($R^2 = 0.796$, $r = 0.89$). More than three quarter (79.5% and 75.7%) of the respondents were absent for 6-10 days and 11 days in a month respectively sometimes. The reasons given were ill-health (85.1%), sick child (71.6%), poor salary (71.3%), family responsibility (70.8%), ownership of private business (69.2%), work-related stress (64.3%) and parental responsibility (61.00%). It was concluded that, the role of workplace mental health strategies in enhancing employee productivity in Rivers State is enormous as it can reduce absenteeism and boost workers' morale. It was recommended among others that, the government should adopt and implement mental health strategies for civil servants and make the adoption of such strategies a continuous activity.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Mental Health, Rivers State, Strategies, Workers.

Introduction

Promoting mental health in the workplace is essential not only for employee well-being but also for organizational effectiveness, thus, several strategies must be employed to help the workers. Such strategies could include to create a supportive work environment (Harvey et al., 2017), promote work-life balance, provision of mental health education and awareness (Corrigan et al., 2020), offering employee assistance program (Milot, 2018), encourage open communication and reduce stigma (Clement et al., 2015), provision of access to professional mental health services (Goetzel et al., 2018), training managers on mental health issues (Dimoff et al., 2016), and encourage employee participation and inclusion (Shore et al., 2011). Adopting these strategies can enhance mental health of managers.

However, Mental Health Foundation (2023) posited that, poor mental health can lead to increased absenteeism, higher employee turnover and low productivity. The Global Burden of Diseases released by Lancet in 2022 estimated that about 970 million people experienced a mental disorder in 2019. Mental health problems are predominantly seen as one of the ten leading causes of disease burden and disability globally.

Workplace mental health programs play a pivotal role in boosting employee job satisfaction by addressing psychological well-being, which is directly tied to how employees feel about their work and environment. When organizations implement mental health strategies such as counseling services, stress management training, and mindfulness programs, employees feel cared for and valued (Keyes, 2002). Furthermore, supportive mental health policies improve organizational climate and communication, both of which are essential for job satisfaction. Employees are more likely to be engaged and motivated when they work in psychologically safe environments where their concerns are heard and addressed. According to Hakanen and Schaufeli (2012), employees who perceive their mental health needs are being met at work experience greater job involvement and commitment. Research by Deloitte (2020) shows that 80% of employees consider mental health support a critical factor when evaluating job offers. Thus, mental health strategies can set a company apart as a desirable place to work.

Mental health problems among workers could lead to poor job performance and low productivity if nothing is done to alleviate the problem. Mental health has emerged as a critical issue in the workplace, influencing both employee well-being and organizational productivity. In today's fastpaced and highly competitive work environment, mental health has become a critical issue for organizations across the globe. The workplace, once considered solely a place of productivity, is now recognized as a significant determinant of employees' overall well-being, including their mental health. While work can offer a sense of purpose, structure, and social interaction, it can also be a source of stress, anxiety, and burnout if appropriate measures are not put in place to curb the occupational health challenges.

In Rivers State, civil servants are employees of different governmental parastatal. Although, the activities entrenched in each job description may differ, with the rising cost of living some may be more stressed looking for additional source of income alongside their work. This can affect their mental health. However, many workplaces, especially those with high-pressure environments, can inadvertently contribute to mental health challenges, leading to decreased productivity, absenteeism, and even long-term disability. With mental health disorders becoming increasingly prevalent, the discussion around workplace mental health is more relevant than ever, particularly the implementation of workplace mental health strategy.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of workplace mental health strategies on the level of workers' absenteeism?
2. What is the relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses stated to guide the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between absenteeism and workplace mental health strategies on the level of workers' absenteeism.
2. There is no significant relationship between productivity of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Rivers State. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted for this study in which the study variables are not under the control nor influence of the researcher. This study's population was estimated to be 64,691 civil servants in Rivers State. The sample size of 437 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula – $N/(1+N(e)^2)$. Where, n = sample size, N = population size, and e is the margin of error = 5% = 0.05. Adding 10% nonresponse rate, that is, $398 + 39 = 437$. A purposive sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: "Workplace strategies in enhancing employee productivity questionnaire (WSEEPQ)". The instrument consisted of five sections. Section A elicited response on demographic data of respondents such as age, gender, educational level and job specification handled on a multiple choice response format; Section B measured workplace mental health strategies with response options on a modified Likert scale of very high extent (4), high extent (3), low extent (2) and very low extent (1). The section C was given under the role of workplace mental health strategies in enhancing employee productivity also on a Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

To ensure validity of the instrument, the adapted questionnaire with the research objectives, research questions and hypotheses were presented to two experts in public health. The reliability of the instrument was ensured by pretesting the instrument and subjecting it to a reliability test using the Cronbach Alpha statistics. A reliability co-efficient of 0.87 was found for the instrument. The administration of the instrument was done by face-to-face delivery of the questionnaire to the respondents. The researcher on approaching the respondents, clearly explained the aim of the study and methods to be adopted to the respondents. Those who are willing were given the questionnaire for data collection which were retrieved immediately after completion. The completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, coded and analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS V-27) using percentage, mean and regression set at 0.05 alpha level. Some ethical issues were considered in cause of the study. First, ethical approval for this study will be obtained from the ethical committee of the Highstone Global University, Texas, USA. Both oral and written informed consent was obtained before including the respondents in the study.

Results

The results of the study are shown below:

Table 1: Linear Regression analysis on relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Remark
1	0.91	0.83	0.83	0.72	Very High relationship

Guide: 0.00-0.19 = very low, 0.20-0.39 = low, 0.40-0.59 = moderate, 0.60-0.79 = high and 0.80 above is very high relationship

Table 1 revealed the relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers. The result showed that there was a very high positive relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies ($r = 0.94$). The result further showed that mental health strategies adopted contributed 83.8% of the variance in the employees' productivity ($R^2 = 0.838$). Therefore, the relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies in Rivers State was very high.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing the extent to which mental health strategies influence employee productivity among human resource managers

SN	Items	X	SD	Remark
1	Good workplace mental health strategy increases workers' input	2.05	0.92	Low extent
2	There is a conducive workplace mental health that makes it difficult for workers to stay out of work	1.96	0.67	Low extent
3	Workplace mental health strategy affects the delivery of quality services	2.01	0.68	Low extent
4	Workplace mental health strategies enhances the effectiveness of workers	2.09	0.71	Low extent
5	Workplace mental health strategy boost worker's morale to work harder	2.20	0.69	Low extent
6	Extent of productivity of workers at the workplace	7.04	2.18	Low extent
Grand mean		2.89	0.97	High extent

Criterion mean = 2.50.

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation on the extent to which mental health strategies influence employee productivity. The result revealed that the grand mean of 2.89 ± 0.97 was greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating a high extent. Thus, the extent to which mental health strategies influence employee productivity among human resource managers was high.

Table 3: Linear Regression analysis on influence of workplace mental health strategies on the level of workers' absenteeism

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Remark
1	0.89	0.79	0.79	0.81	Very High relationship

Guide: 0.00-0.19 = very low, 0.20-0.39 = low, 0.40-0.59 = moderate, 0.60-0.79 = high and 0.80 above is very high relationship

Table 3 revealed the influence of workplace mental health strategies on the level of workers' absenteeism. The result showed that there was a very high positive relationship between mental health strategies and absenteeism ($r = 0.89$). The result further showed that mental health strategies adopted contributed 79.6% of the variance in the employees' absenteeism ($R^2 = 0.796$). Therefore, the influence of workplace mental health strategies on the level of workers' absenteeism in Rivers State was very high.

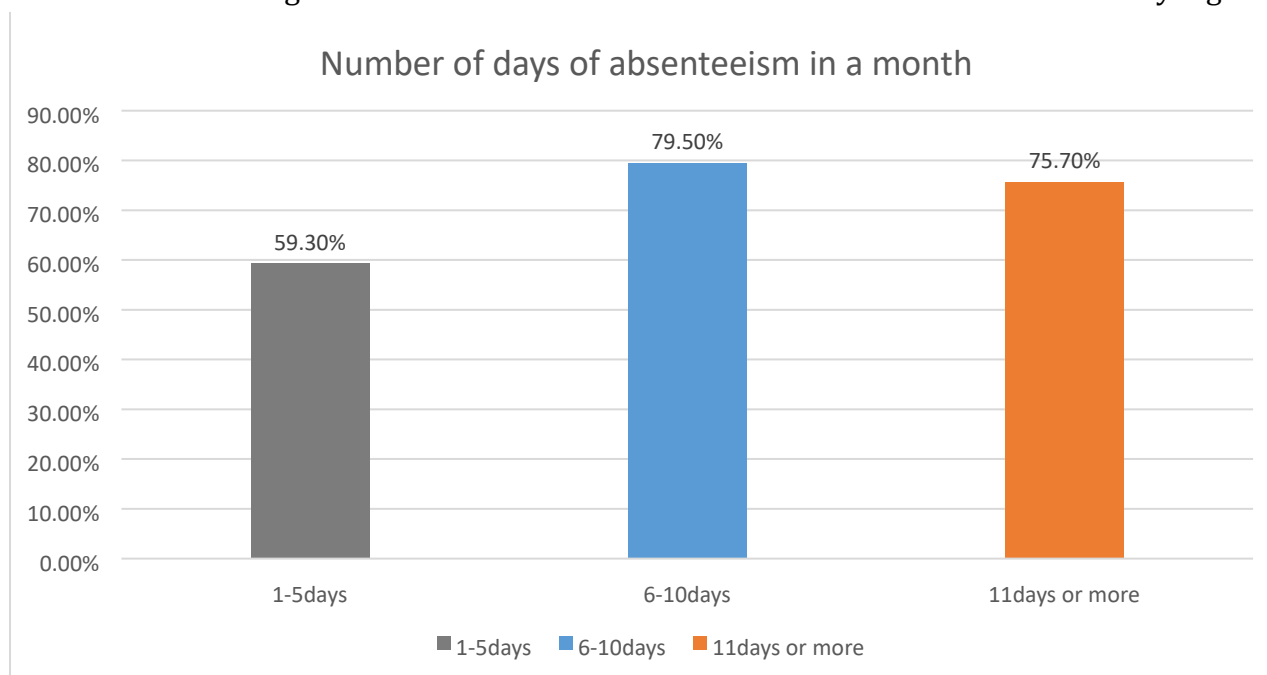


Fig 1: Bar chart showing absenteeism of employees

Fig 1 presents the bar chart showing the number of days employees were absent in a month. The result showed that more than three quarter (79.5% and 75.7%) of the respondents were absent 610 days and 11 days in a month respectively.

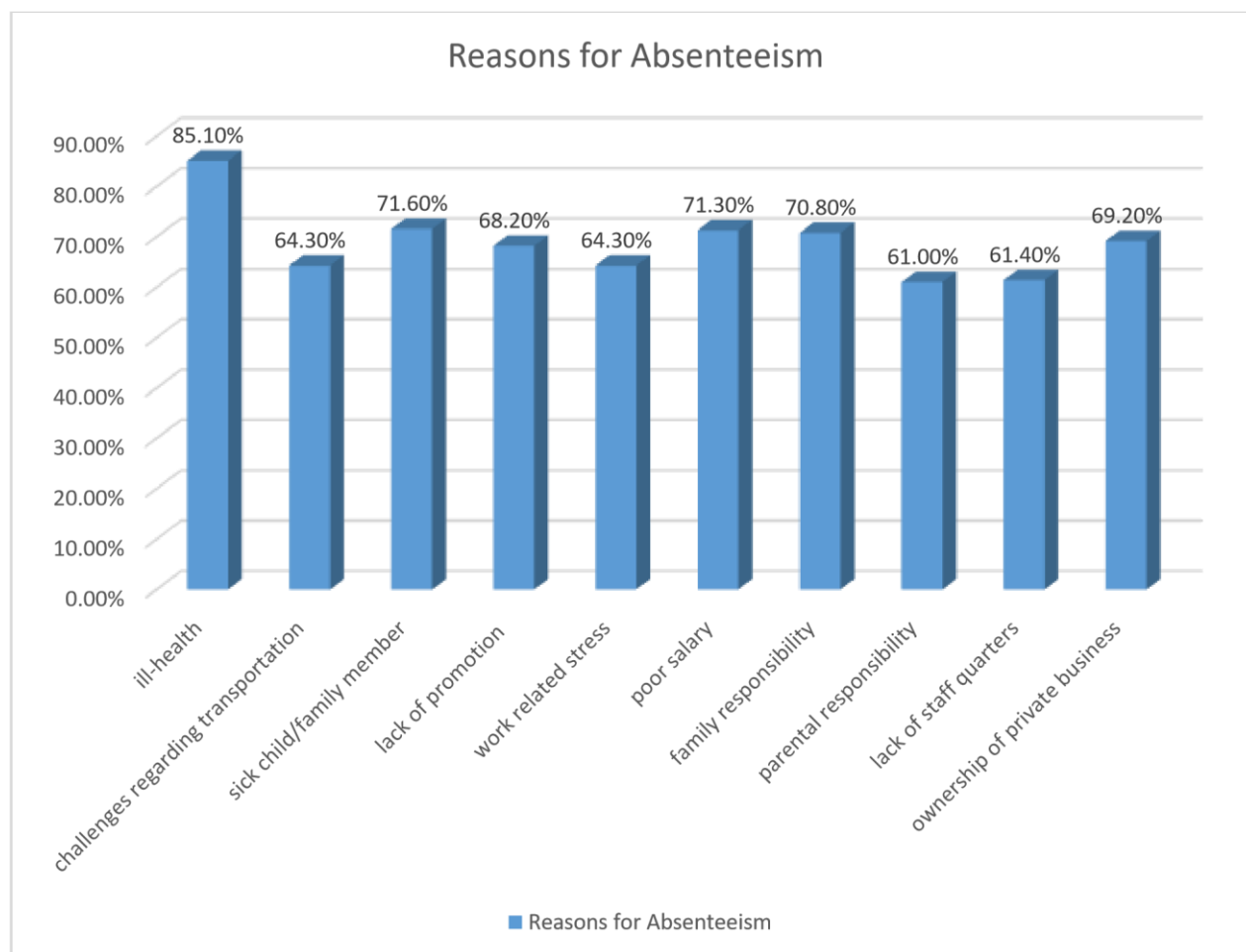


Fig 2: Bar chart showing reasons for absenteeism of employees

Fig 2 presented the bar chart showing the reasons of absenteeism of employees. The reasons given were ill-health (85.1%), sick child (71.6%), poor salary (71.3%), family responsibility (70.8%), ownership of private business (69.2%), work-related stress (64.3%) and parental responsibility (61.00%).

Table 4: Regression analysis on significant relationship between productivity of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	1124.99	1	1124.99	2146.19	0.00*	Rejected
	Residual	217.01	414	0.52			
	Total	1342.00	415				

***Significant, $p < 0.05$**

Table 4 presented the regression analysis on significant relationship between productivity of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between productivity of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers [$f(1,414) = 2146.19, p < 0.05$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship productivity of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers was rejected.

Table 5: Regression analysis on significant relationship between absenteeism of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	1067.76	1	1067.76	1611.95	0.00*	Rejected
	Residual	274.23	414	0.66			
	Total	1342.00	415				

***Significant, $p < 0.05$**

Table 5 presented the regression analysis on significant relationship between absenteeism of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between absenteeism of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers [$f(1,414) = 1611.95, p < 0.05$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship absenteeism of workers and mental health strategies adopted by human resource managers was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed below:

The result showed that there was a very high positive relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies ($r = 0.94$). The result further showed that mental health strategies adopted contributed 83.8% of the variance in the employees' productivity ($R^2 = 0.838$). The finding of this study is in line with that of Singh et al. (2024) whose study on mental health in the workplace showed that there was a positive relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies as such strategies can enhance the productivity of the workers. The finding of this study also gives credence to that of Dewi (2024) on mental health support strategies in the workplace which showed that there was a positive relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies as such strategies can enhance the productivity of the workers. The finding of this study is also in agreement with that of Randall (2023) study on mental health in the workplace which revealed that there was a positive relationship between employee productivity and mental health strategies as such strategies can enhance the productivity of the workers. This similarity found between the previous studies and the present one could be due to the homogeneity of the study focus.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of workplace mental health strategies in enhancing employee productivity in Rivers State is enormous as it can reduce absenteeism and boost workers' morale.

Recommendations

Based on the summary of the findings, the followings were recommended:

1. The government should adopt and implement mental health strategies for civil servants and make the adoption of such strategies a continuous activity.
2. Human resource managers should monitor the productivity of workers and ensure that mental health strategies are impactful to the productivity of the employees.
3. Civil servants should make conscious effort to increase their input in their various work by avoiding absenteeism.
4. The government should make provision for the mental health stability of workers by providing funds for recreation, relaxation centres for workers and mental health training of the employees to enhance their job satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, adopting mental health strategies such as psychological counselling, stress management training, work-life balance program and relaxation spaces in the workplace could enhance employee productivity as well as job satisfaction and reduce absenteeism from work due to mental health issues.

Recommendations

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