

## THE INFLUENCE OF WORKPLACE STRESS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA'S PUBLIC SECTOR

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### **Abstract**

*This study seeks to assess the impact of stress on employee's performance in public sector. Proceeding from conceptualization and theoretical framework for clearer understanding, the study tends to point out some factors related to stress that lead to frustration and demoralization of employees in public sector. The study is anchored with transactional stress model. This study is a qualitative research design which adopted secondary method of data collection. The findings indicate reveal employees experience various forms of stress physical, psychological, environmental, and emotional which negatively impact their performance. To mitigate workrelated conflicts, management should implement supportive policies and encourage strategies such as interpersonal relationships with managers and peers, fair salary structures, job security, favorable working conditions, and appropriate job designations. The study concludes that effective stress management can alleviate the negative factors affecting employees, thereby improving their performance. To minimize conflicts and enhance success in the public sector, supervisors must actively motivate their subordinates, as organizational success is closely tied to employee performance. It is recommended that management should identify and address workplace conflicts and their effects on employee productivity. Additionally, reducing excessive workloads can enhance employees' intellectual and social capacities, as work overload remains a significant concern in the public sector.*

**Keyword:** *Employees performance, Stress effect, Public sector*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stress has become a global issue that affects employees across various professions in different ways. In today's workplace, employees often work longer hours, facing increasing responsibilities that push them to meet growing performance expectations. Workplace stress remains a persistent challenge, particularly among public sector employees in Nigeria. This issue has garnered significant public and media attention due to its rising costs and negative impact on productivity. Although stress is a natural part of life, workplace stress does not remain confined to the office; it frequently spills over into personal life, affecting overall well-being. Employers, trade unions, and health and safety representatives are actively seeking guidance on identifying the causes of workplace stress and implementing preventive measures. The complexity of workplace stress necessitates a comprehensive study, including its definitions, direct impact on individual behavior, coping mechanisms, and its increasing negative effects on job performance. With the pressure to maximize productivity and remain competitive, employees are often required to multitask and adapt to rapidly changing technologies (Iqbal, Khan& Iqbal, 2012). Research by Mageswari (2014)

suggests that work and family conflicts contribute significantly to workplace stress. Additionally, Alikubhasi (2015) highlights how stress negatively impacts both employees and organizations. Selye (2006) defines stress as an individual's response to environmental factors that affect performance, which can lead to family disruptions and reduced productivity. Furthermore, Weiss (2015) conducted meta-analyses on employee turnover and attrition, establishing a direct link between workplace stress and staff retention. However, Ayaz, Alamgir & Khan (2018) argue that job satisfaction alone does not fully explain workplace stress. Bamba (2016) notes that several factors including employee involvement, job satisfaction, work environment, motivation, and job stress collectively influence employee performance (Weiss, 2012).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In pursuit of higher productivity, public sector organizations often burden employees with excessive workloads to meet tight deadlines. This can lead to psychological and physical strain, sometimes yielding results contrary to the organization's objectives. While many organizations now recognize the impact of excessive job demands on their employees, there is still room for improvement in addressing workplace stress. Public sector agencies strive to generate sufficient revenue and modernize their operations while maintaining service efficiency. However, previous studies indicate that work-related stress has become an increasing concern for both public and private institutions. Workplace stress affects not only employees but also organizations, contributing to absenteeism, workplace accidents, employee turnover, and poor decision-making. From a managerial perspective, low to moderate levels of stress may enhance performance. However, prolonged or excessive stress can reduce efficiency, making it essential for management to intervene. Conversely, employees often perceive even low levels of stress as undesirable. What employers may consider a positive motivator can be seen by employees as overwhelming pressure. Stress affects workers across various industries, manifesting in psychological, physical, environmental, and emotional ways.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The major objectives for the study aim is to assess the impact of workplace stress on employee performance in the Nigerian public sector. The following are the Specific objectives for the study:

1. Identify the causes of workplace stress in Nigeria's public sector.
2. Examine the effects of workplace stress on employee performance.
3. Explore coping mechanisms used by employees to manage workplace stress.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK Transactional Stress Model**

One of the most influential theories on stress is the Transactional Stress Model, developed by Lazarus (1966) and later expanded by Lazarus & Folkman (1984). This model defines psychological stress as a relationship between an individual and their environment, which is perceived as challenging or exceeding their coping resources. The model emphasizes cognitive appraisal, wherein individuals assess situations as irrelevant, benign-positive, or stressful. Stress appraisals can take the form of harm/loss, threat, or challenge. Secondary appraisal involves evaluating available coping strategies in response to stressors. This

dynamic process influences an individual's ability to adapt and reappraise stressors over time (Lazarus, 1991). Although this model is widely used in organizational stress research, some studies argue that focusing solely on individual processes does not provide a comprehensive understanding of workplace stress. Carver and Scheier's model further explains stress by incorporating an input function (perceived stressors), a reference value (individual goals and expectations), a comparator (evaluation of stress levels), and an output function (behavioral response).

### **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW STRESS**

Stress arises from various factors, commonly known as **stressors**. Workplace stress is a chronic condition that negatively impacts an individual's performance and well-being. Research suggests that high levels of workplace stress are directly correlated with reduced job performance (Singh & Jain, 2013). Workplace stress occurs when job demands exceed an individual's abilities, often leading to psychological or physical strain (Amigun & Von, 2010). Arnold & Feldman (2000) define stress as an individual's response to new or challenging workplace conditions. McGrath (1976) further argues that stress intensity depends on an individual's perception of their ability to manage environmental demands.

Research by Rose (2003) highlights that excessive working hour contribute significantly to employee stress, reducing motivation and performance. Management support plays a crucial role in alleviating workplace stress, while a lack of appreciation can lead to increased job dissatisfaction and employee turnover (Stamper & Johlke, 2003).

### **PUBLIC SECTOR & EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE**

The public sector encompasses government institutions that provide essential services such as education, law enforcement, healthcare, and infrastructure. Unlike private organizations, public sector institutions focus on service delivery rather than profit-making (Ani, 1994). Employee performance refers to how well an individual executes job tasks based on predefined standards (Manjunatha & Renukamunthi, 2017). Poor performance can stem from various factors, including excessive workload, insufficient motivation, or a lack of managerial support. Effective performance management involves identifying these root causes and implementing solutions to enhance productivity (Dhankar, 2015). According to Okojie (1995), worker performance is measured by the relationship between input (resources, labor, technology) and output (goods and services). High productivity entails maximizing output while minimizing resource expenditure.

### **IMPACT OF STRESS ON EMPOLYEES PERFORMANCE**

Blumenthal (2003) categorizes the impact of stress as follows:

- i. Subjective Effects: Anxiety, depression, frustration, fatigue, and low self-esteem.
- ii. Behavioral Effects: Increased accident proneness, substance abuse, impaired speech, forgetfulness, and restlessness.
- iii. Cognitive Effects: Reduced decision-making ability, hypersensitivity, mental blocks, and difficulty concentrating.
- iv. Physiological Responses: Stress-related biochemical changes, including elevated blood pressure, suppressed immune function, and increased risk of chronic illnesses.

v. Health Effects: Stress contributes to ailments such as migraines, digestive disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and reduced immune function, potentially exacerbating conditions like HIV/AIDS.

#### **METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

The study is a qualitative research design which made of secondary sources of data. The data was generated through systematic review of existing literatures such as journals, textbooks, internet, reports, lecture notes, seminar presentation, newspapers and the internet materials related to effects of stress on workers performance.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study findings showed that factors related to environmental, emotional, and psychological are some of the factors that lead to workers demoralization and it affect employee's performance in Nigeria public sector. In another dimension, work overload affected workers performance in the public sector in Nigeria while responsibilities allocated to the workers were beyond their capability and expectations and sometimes, they were not understaffed thus amount of work assigned to them was not much. They could manage all types of services required by clients within the shortest time possible. The study findings indicated when interrupted during working hours and their performance was low.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. Work overload is a big concern for all the workers in the Nigeria public sector which the government needs to takes action on it avoidance.
- ii. In other word some workers experienced pressure due to work overload and based on the finding of the study, it is imperative that the government to introduce constant appraisal programs and appreciation should be given to reinstate and motivate the workers. Other than the present one, some of the measures can be taken up by the work force and schedules in order to cope with the work overload include.
- iii. The management should try as much as possible to strike a balance between their office work and family responsibilities; none should be taken with levity

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