

**WORK RELATED STRESS OF WORKERS IN MINISTRY OF
ESTABLISHMENTS, SECRETARIAT, IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study investigated the work related stress of workers of Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. It adopted the descriptive type of survey research design. One hundred and sixty six (166) employees of the ministry, 70 males and 69 females, out of this, there are 51 single, 108 married, 117 young (25-45 years) and 49 old (45 years and above) were sampled. The instrument used in the study was Work Related Reaction Inventory adapted by the researcher. Data collected were analysed using the student t-test to test the hypotheses. The three hypotheses formulated for testing were confirmed, at 0.05 level of significance that; there is no significant difference in the stress level of male and female, single and married, young and old workers of the Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, Ibadan. It was concluded that, gender, marital status and age had no significant difference in the stress response of workers in the Ministry of Establishment, Secretariat, Ibadan.-It was thus recommended that the ministry's management should encourage the employees to take adequate mental and physical relaxation to control blood pressure (BP) and abnormal breathing, meditation is also encouraged and employees should have formal employees communications programme where employees are regularly given information on coping with stress, that is, management and employees talk openly with each other and employees are also free to talk with one another.

Keywords: Stress, workers, ministry of establishments, secretariat

Introduction

Stress in the work place is a growing concern in the current state of the economy in which employees increasingly face conditions of overwork, job-insecurity, low levels of job satisfaction, and lack of autonomy.

Work place stress has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of employees, as well as a negative impact on workplace productivity and profits.

There are measures that individuals and organisations can take to alleviate the negative impact of stress or to stop it from arising in the first place. However, employees first need to learn to recognize the signs that indicate they are feeling stressed out, and employers need to be aware of the effects that stress has on their employees' health as well as on organization profit.

Stress is an ineffective and unhealthy reaction to change. It is a force which affects human beings physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. (Akinboye, 2002).

Stress is what we feel when we have to respond to a demand on our energy. It is a natural part of life and occurs whenever there are significant changes in our lives, whether positive or negative. It is generally believed that some stress is okay (sometimes referred to as "challenge" or "positive" stress) but when stress occurs in amounts that individuals cannot cope with, both mental and physical changes may occur (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2008).

Melissa (2004, p.7) observes that "a mild degree of stress and tension can sometimes be beneficial, feeling mildly stressed when carrying out a project or assignment often compels us to do a good job and to work energetically". It is only when stress is overwhelming or poorly managed that its negative effects appear. Stress is a situation which happens when individuals recognize that the conditions or strains facing them may be more than their endurance. The term 'job stress' can be defined as a group of external harmful factors in the work environment, which may be psychological, physical or social. Greenberg and Baron, (2007); Arnold and Feldman, (2000)

Rizwan, Waseem and Bukhari (2014); Kotteeswari and Sharief (2014); Kazmi et al. (2008). Classified job stress into two, eustress or positive stress which is beneficial in case we may feel challenged, but the reasons of stress will be opportunities that are meaningful to us, they help in providing us with energy in achieving our goals. Distress on the other hand is a condition which happens when an individual perceives a loss, risk or when a situation badly affects an individual. Kolt, G. (2003)

Stress-generating life events may be found in the nature of career that people engage in. Specifically, a visit to the Ministry of Establishment prior to the development of this research identified the following as the basic responsibilities carried out by the staff of Ministry of Establishment, Secretariat, Oyo State:

- Recruitment and training of new staff
- Advancement and upgrading of staff without a cadre. For example, from level 8 to 9 for a higher qualified candidate.
- Conversion of staff from one cadre to another. For example, a staff who joined as a clerical officer can be converted to executive officer.
- Discipline of a variety of pooled officers e.g. store officers, typists, general executives etc.
- handling issues bordering industrial and labour relations e.g. settling issues/disputes arising between two labour unions. For instance, Animal Health Officers under Ministry of Health, claiming that they are both “health workers”, it is the Ministry of Establishment that place them in the correct place following the Industrial Labour Act.
- Management Planning Services; like organizing seminars, symposium and public service forum.
- Posting students of higher learning on industrial training
- Placement of staff between civil service union (level 1-6) and Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (Level 7 and above)
- Handles study leave and leave of absence for staff.
- Provides government with information on staff strength, staff disposition, etc
- Pays the pensions and gratuities of retired staff.

The aforementioned responsibilities are performed by the staff of Ministry of Establishment. Among all the ministries in the Government secretariat, Oyo State, Ministry of Establishment provides control roles in the recruitment and training of all government workers. In other ministries, aside from their normal schedule, they don't do any other job but reverse is the case in Ministry of Establishment. For instance, a “store officer” in the Ministry of Agriculture has responsibility to his ministry alone, whereas, the promotion, leave of absence and pension

of staff members of all other ministries are handled in the Ministry of Establishment. Therefore, combination of responsibilities of other ministries create stress for staff in Ministry of Establishments.

It can be seen that stress is a social malady that is difficult to manage and that various occupational settings require different skills, talents, attitudes and interest. Ministry of Establishment workers are not left out from this. Other inherent factors necessitating stress may include office politics, communicating gap, working environment and interpersonal tension. These require proper diagnosis, assessment and treatment to boost efficiency.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

- 1) There will be no significant difference in the stress response of male and female workers of Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, Ibadan.
- 2) There will be no significant difference in the stress response of married and single workers of Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, and Ibadan.
- 3) There will be no significant difference in the stress response of young (25-45 years) and old (45-60 years) workers of Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, Ibadan.

Statement of the Problem

Stress is the greatest assault on human psychological, health, cognitive, emotional and behavioural integrity known in the 21st Century. When people hear about HIV/AIDs, cancer, asthma and tuberculosis, they shudder and panic about the devastating effects of such diseases. However, they do not react with such panic when they hear the word "stress" probably because they have become so used to it. Stress impairs human immune system, memory, emotional intelligence, creativity, innovation, work performance, organizational productivity, health and also produces hypertension with myriads of psychosomatic ailments.

Workers need to be more aware of the disabling capability of uncontrolled stress in their lives and work places, hence, the need for this study.

Significance of the Study

The study intends to find out job stressors which the employees of Ministry of Establishment, Oyo State are exposed to in the course of their job, the impact of the stressors on them and the coping mechanism. The study would be of importance because it would serve as the basis which workers in other ministries in the secretariat will know the stress involved in their own duties and to plan ahead in the adjustment process.

Above all, health is wealth. The study would enable people to be aware of stress and coping techniques before it affects their health.

Literature Review

Several studies have been carried out as regards "stress and stress management". Notable among such researchers were: Akinboye and Iwuchukwu (2002) in a study on patterns of stress among bankers at different career stages. It was found that there was significant job stress patterns ($F=22.42$, $df=3/198$, $p<.01$).

Riaz M. (2015) in her study on Social Support and Stress among Married Women School Teachers in Gujrat city, Pakistan. Multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support and perceived stress scale were used on a sample of 110 married women school teachers, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis of data. Results of the study indicated that the level of social support was high among married women school teachers while the level of perceived stress was low. Moreover, there was highly negative correlation between social support and the level of stress among married women school teachers

Afolabi and Taiwo (2001) examined the effects of role stress and marital status, drug use and absence behaviour among bank cashiers in Ibadan. There were 80 males and females in the sample (36 men and 44 women were married).

It was hypothesized from the analysis of variance (ANOVA) that even though, stress has no significant effect on drug use, however, married cashiers used drug more than single cashiers. More so, there was no significant difference between the level of drug use among highly stressed married and less stressed single cashiers. However, married subjects and those working under stress have high rate of absenteeism.

The problem of job stress has become so ubiquitous and so severe that it is now described by the United Nations as a “global epidemic”. No occupation is spared the stress problem. The studies indicated that:

- Disabling stress has doubled over the last six years
- A 14-year study of more than 12,500 men in Sweden concluded that men with little control over their work were 1.83 times more likely to develop heart diseases, Men who also had low levels of support in their work were 2.62 times more likely to develop heart disease.
- Depression has doubled with generation since the 1920s.
- Over 72% of workers experience frequent conditions that greatly increase health care costs.
- The hallmark of a 20-year study conducted by the University of London concluded that unmanaged reactions to stress caused more dangerous risk factors for cancer and health disease than easier cigarette smoking or high cholesterol foods; and
- A recent study observed that employee perception of the psychological climate at work influenced job involvement, work motivation and involve performance.

Stages of Stress

Selye (1976) developed the sequence of stress, also known as GAS syndrome (General Adaptation Syndrome). The GAS has three stages, namely: (a) The Alarm stage (b) The Resistance stage (c) The Exhaustion stage.

- a) **The Alarm Stage:** This involves some version of the fight or flight syndrome. Stressors prompt the sympathetic branch of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) which stimulates the medulla (inner part) of the adrenal gland. The Adrenal gland in turn secretes catecholamines, especially adrenaline and noradrenaline, which circulate in the blood stream activating various organs including the liver, the kidneys, the heart and the lungs. The results are increased blood pressure, enhanced muscles tension, increased blood sugar and other physical changes needed to cope with stressors.
- b) **The Resistance Stage:** If the stressor persists, the resistance stage of GAS begins. Here, obvious signs of the initial alarm

reaction diminish as the body settles into resist the stressor on a long term basis. The drain on adaptive energy is slower during the resistance stage than it was during the alarm reaction, but the body is working very hard as a second stress response pattern (involving the pituitary adrenocortical) PAC system comes into play.

- c) **The Exhaustion Stage:** Due to continued campaign of biochemical resistance that surely uses up that body's reserves of adaptive energy until the capacity to resist is gone, the body enters the exhaustion stage. In extreme cases, such as prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures, the result is death. More commonly, the exhaustion stage brings signs of physical wear and tear, especially in organ systems that were weak in the first place or heavily involved in the resistance process. For example, if adrenaline and cortisol which help fight stressors during the resistance stage remain at high levels for an extended time, they can damage the heart and blood vessels, suppress the functioning of the body's disease fighting immune system; and thus, promote illness ranging from heart disease, high blood pressure, arthritis colds and flu.

Symptoms of Stress

| Physical | Psychosocial | Behavioural |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Headaches | Anxiety | Overeating or loss of appetite |
| Grinding teeth | Irritability | Impatience |
| Clenched jaws | Sadness | Quickness to argue |
| Chest pain | Defensiveness | Procrastination, increased use of alcohol/drugs |
| Shortness of breath | Anger | Increased smoking |
| Pounding heart | Mood swings | Withdrawal or isolation from others |
| High blood pressure | Hypersensitivity | Neglect of responsibility |
| Muscle aches | Apathy | Poor job performance |
| Indigenous | Depression | Poor personal hygiene |
| Constipation or Diarrhea | Slowed thinking or racing thoughts | Change in religious practices |
| Increased perspiration | Feelings of helplessness, | Changes in close family relationships |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|--|
| | hopelessness, or of being trapped | |
| Fatigue | | |
| Insomnia | | |

Effects of Stress

Illnesses that have been linked with long-term exposure to stress include:

Coronary heart disease (angina, stroke and heart attacks): Research has shown that individuals who suffer from stress are much more likely to experience both fatal and nonfatal heart attacks.

Hypertension (high blood pressure): There is an undeniable link between the stress hormone cortisol, and the incidence of high blood pressure.

Some forms of cancer: Being constantly stressed has the effect of lowering defenses that may help fight off the initial ingress of cancer.

Rheumatoid arthritis: Although stress does not appear to cause rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis, being under stress can exacerbate these illnesses.

Diabetes mellitus: This disorder may be inherited, but there is also strong evidence linking with stress.

Irritable bowel syndrome: It has been shown that stress or anxiety is to blame in a lot of cases.

Depression: It is widely accepted that depression is linked with stress. The usual symptoms are upset sleep patterns, fatigue, increased consumption of alcohol, muscle aches and pains, poor self-esteem or lack of self-worth, among a variety of others.

Anxiety: Amongst the symptoms of anxiety is usually an over-concern with the onset and worsening of this condition.

Strokes (proven link with high blood pressure): There is strong evidence that people under stress are more likely to have a stroke than their non-stressed out counterparts.

Stomach and duodenal ulcers and the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*: There has been irrefutable evidence linking the onset of peptic ulcers with the bacterium. *Helicobacter pylori*, which is present in the gastrointestinal system of the large majority of people with peptic ulcer disease.

Indigestion and heartburn: When we are anxious or stressed out, we produce too much acid in our stomach, which irritates the lining of the stomach and can lead to the development of ulcers.

Chronic fatigue syndrome ME: (myalgic encephalomyelitis). This disease is characterized by feelings of extreme fatigue, depression and a general disappointment with life, which can last for several months or years.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised sixteen ministries in Oyo State secretariat, including: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Establishments etc.

Random sampling technique was used. Out of all the ministries in the Oyo State Secretariat, Ministry of Establishment was sampled based on the fact that it plays control roles for other ministries. The sample consisted of 166 respondents (70 males and 96 females) i.e. employees of the Ministry of Establishment, Secretariat, Ibadan. Below is the Ministry's staff disposition.

| Grade level | Staff | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 01-06 | No of Junior Staff | 34 | 21 | 55 |
| 07-12 | No of senior staff | 29 | 62 | 91 |
| 13 and above | No of management staff | 7 | 13 | 20 |
| Total | | 70 | 96 | 166 |

The research instrument employed for the study was the questionnaire, named "Work Related Reaction Inventory" (WRRRI) developed by the researcher. Using Akinboye (2002) "Coping with stress in life and workplace" as a guide.

Section A of the instrument captures the demographic information of the respondents, section B consisted of nine questions rated on a 5-point scale of 1= Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 Occasionally, 4 Frequently, 5 = Always. The first nine questions measures the causes of stress, section C consisted thirteen questions which measures the effects of stress, while section D was a sixteen item scale adopted for employees of Ministry of Establishment to minimize their stress. Thirty eight questions were administered altogether. Sections B, C and D).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument used for the study, the instrument was pre-tested for its reliability. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha method: $\alpha=0.05$.

The analysis of data was done using the student t-test to test the hypotheses.

Result of the findings

The result of data analysis for the first hypothesis which stated that "there is no significant difference in the stress response of male and female workers of the Ministry of properly Establishment, Secretariat, Ibadan is presented below.

Stress response of male and female workers

Ho₁: Summary of T-Test table

| Groups | N | X | S.D | Obs. T | Tabulated t | Df | P | Statistical Decision |
|--------|----|--------|-------|--------|-------------|------------|-------|----------------------|
| Male | 70 | 107.03 | 11.95 | 1.33 | 1.960 | 614 N-2 | 0.005 | N.S |
| Female | 96 | 104.04 | 15.79 | | | | | |

The calculated T is < the table value, the result implies that there is no significance difference between response to stress of male and female workers of the Ministry, therefore, the hypothesis is retained.

Ho₂: The second hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in stress response of single and married workers is presented below:

Stress response of single and married workers

| Groups | N | X | S.D | Obs. T | Tabulated t | Df | P | Statistical Decision |
|--------|----|--------|-------|--------|-------------|-----|------|----------------------|
| Single | 51 | 106.20 | 15.47 | .395 | 1.960 | 157 | 0.05 | N.S |
| Female | 96 | 104.04 | 15.79 | | | | | |

The calculated t is less than the table value i.e. $0.395 < 1.960$. The result implies that there is no significant difference in the stress response of single and married workers of the Ministry. Therefore, the hypothesis is retained.

Ho₃: The third hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in stress response of young and old workers is presented below:

Stress response of young and old workers

| Groups | N | X | S.D | Obs. T | Tabulated t | Df | P | Statistical Decision |
|--------------|-----|--------|-------|--------|-------------|------------|------|----------------------|
| Young worker | 117 | 105.15 | 14.81 | - .204 | 1.960 | N-2 164 | 0.05 | N.S |
| Female | 96 | 104.04 | 15.79 | | | | | |

The calculated t is < the table value. This result implies that there is no significant difference in the stress response of young and old workers. Therefore, the hypothesis is retained.

Discussion and Conclusion

The result of the first hypothesis which states that “there is no significant difference in the stress response of male and female workers of the Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, Ibadan was retained. The result of this finding may be due to the fact that in the ministries, gender is not always given much consideration as both male and female

workers are given the same closing time, and same remuneration based on their positions.

Moreover, people respond to stressful events differently (either male or female). For instance angry personalities, people who are less emotionally stable or have high anxiety levels tend to express specific events as more stressful than others. More so, Type A personalities (either male or female) with certain personality trait experience considerable stress. The above mentioned points may be the reason for retaining the first hypothesis.

However, the result of this finding is in line with the studies of Atoba (2004), Linday (2000) and Veroom (2003), who concluded in their findings that stress pattern does not differ in relation to gender in organizations. The second hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the stress response of single and married workers of the Ministry of Establishment was also retained. Though, one would expect married workers to respond more to stressful conditions because of the task involved in their jobs coupled with the task at the home front. The unmarried workers also perform some tasks that could be stressful apart from their jobs and these make them respond to stress the way their married counterparts do. The result of this hypothesis was backed up by Afolabi and Taiwo (2001) who found out that stress and marital status have no significant relationship in stress response among bankers and cashiers. .

The third hypothesis which stress states that there is no significant difference in the stress response of young (25-45 years) and old (>45 years) workers of the Ministry of Establishment was also retained. The result of this hypothesis may be due to the fact that no one is immune to stress, whether young or old, male or female, single or married.

We should therefore accept the fact of life that a stress-free life is impossible. More so, the way we respond to and manage stressful events differ. There may be some older people that manage stress better than the younger ones and vice-versa.

The result is supported with the findings of Atoba (2004) who concluded that there was no significant difference in pattern of stress of young and old workers of University Press, Plc, Ibadan.

Conclusion

It is concluded that gender, marital status and age have no significant difference in the workers' stress response as far as workers in the Ministry of Establishments, Secretariat, Ibadan are concerned.

People respond to stress differently depending on different factors e.g. personality traits (Type A personality), genetic factors, immune regulated diseases, early nurturing and the length and quality of stressors.

Here are some suggestions or doses of stress relief at work.

- Seek out someone in the human resources department or a sympathetic person and communicate concerns about job stress
- Establish or reinforce a network of friends at work and at home
- Learn to focus on positive outcomes
- If the job is unendurable, plan and execute a career change. Send out resumes or work on transfer
- Be sure to schedule daily pleasant activities and physical exercise during free time.

Though, stress in organisations is a common occurrence that cannot be avoided, however, it is within the province of management to create conditions within the organisation so that stress levels are kept to a minimum and do not result in negative attitude, sickness or even death of employees. With intelligence, sensitivity and human concern, this is certainly attainable.

Conclusively, the best general approach for treating stress can be found in the elegant passage by Reinhold Neibuhr, "Grant me the courage to change the things I can change, the serenity to accept the things I can't change and the wisdom to know the difference".

The process of learning to control stress is life-long, and will not only contribute to better health, but a greater ability to succeed in one's own agenda.

Recommendations

Some general methods to deal with and reduce organisational stress are hereby recommended using Brody (1991), Cangem and Khan (1997) as guide.

First, management should take significant action to reduce organisational stress. This may include adequate mental and physical relaxation to control blood pressure (BP), abnormal breathing and meditation is also encouraged. The organisation should also make sure that employee have current and clear job descriptions.

Second, employees should have formal employees communication programme where employees are regularly given information on coping with stress, that is, management and employees talk openly with each other and employees are also free to talk with one another.

Also, each employee's work place should not be crowded and employees can put up personal items in their work areas. Management should also appreciate humor in the workplace. Each employee should be encouraged to laugh at himself/herself. Laughter, according to Williams (1993), is still the best medicine. Employees should be encouraged to have a sense of humour. More so, employees should be recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

Organisations should not set unrealistic goals and deadlines. They should know their employees' limitations and employees should not always aim for perfection and should also learn to respectfully say "No" to excessive demands on their time and life.

Moreover, employees should learn to stay cool under pressure with the proper proportion of work rest, play, social recreation and religion. By this, it implies that employees should take time off work. DO NOT ACCUMULATE YOUR LEAVE. During the leave, they should have a good rest. A trip out of the city to a quieter environment is recommended.

Finally, employee should accept the fact of life that a stress free life is impossible. They must prevent and manage it. Motivation is what gets people started, but it is habit that keeps them going. It is better to try and fail rather than not try at all. Years may wrinkle a person's skin, but loss of interest in stress wrinkles their health and soul, and may cause early death.

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