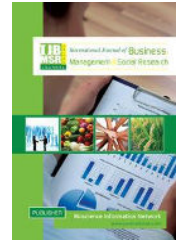




Published with Open Access at **Journal BiNET**  
Vol. 06, Issue 02: 375-382  
**International  
Journal of Business, Management and Social Research**  
Journal Home: [www.journalbinet.com/ijbmsr-journal.html](http://www.journalbinet.com/ijbmsr-journal.html)



## Effects of job stress on employee's performance

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Article Received: 11.03.2019; Revised: 20.05.2019 and Published online: 14 June 2019.

### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of job stress on employee performance, including nature of stress, types of stress, and work stress that eventually influence employee performance and effectiveness. Despite huge investments in employee performance, organisations in Nigeria have not realized the causes of job stress. Few studies have been conducted to address the problem. The main objective of this research is to find out the effect job stress has on the performance of employees. Job stress can affect employee performance by when stress is not handled well, absenteeism, turnover and medical compensation increase and productivity decreases. To achieve a peak of performance, stress should be managed effectively, with the negative effects of stress minimized. The fact that the majority of the employees thought of leaving their job and felt that the organization did not care about them was a reflection of huge dissatisfaction that undoubtedly lowered performance. The organization must conduct a needs assessment for an Employee Assistance Programme. An Employee Assistance Programme has to be introduced for early identification and intervention on problems so that performance levels will increase.*

**Key Words:** Job stress, Employee and Performance

**Cite Article:** Cross Ogohi Daniel (2019). Effects of job stress on employee's performance. International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research, 06(02), 375-382.

**Crossref:** <https://doi.org/10.18801/ijbmsr.060219.40>



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### **I. Introduction**

In today's world, stress has become a worldwide phenomenon, which occurs in various forms in every workplace. In today's work life, employees are generally working for longer hours, as the rising levels of responsibilities require them to exert themselves even more strenuously to meet rising expectations about work performance. Stress is a Common element in any kind of job and persons have to face it in almost every aspect of life. Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. According to [Robbins and Sanghi \(2006\)](#) "A dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraints, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important." Stress is an increasing problem in organizations and often cause adverse effects on performance. According to [Swanepoel et al. \(1998\)](#) work related stress has been a topic that has received increasing attention, in the area of occupational health, over the last

three decades. These authors were of the opinion that the world, especially the world of work and business, has become increasingly subjected to fast changing forces like increased competition, the pressure of quality, innovation and an increase in the pace of doing business. The demands on employees grew equally dramatically and this created stress within employees. Apart from stress that arose from the work situation, other sources of stress could relate to personal factors such as relationships with others and use of free time.

Stress can therefore be described as the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of his or her inability to cope with the demands being made on him or her (Moorhead et al. 1998). That is, tension from extra-ordinary demands on an individual. It is noted that, stress is not necessarily bad; it is an opportunity when it offers potential gain. But whatever its nature, it usually begins when individuals are placed in a work environment that is incompatible with their work style and or temperament. It becomes aggravated when individuals find out that they have or can exercise little control over it. "Michac (1997) specified causes of stress as follows: poor time management, unclear job descriptions, feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, inability to get things done, lack of communication, bad personal relationships, quality and complexity of tasks. In the same breadth, Dean (2002) viewed stress-related illnesses as the leading cause for low productivity levels in the workplace. Immense pressure at work has led to stress, which made it the number one factor causing illness.

An employee spend almost one third of his life on work, and sometimes he has to face a lot of stress during his/her job. The nature of the job has gone through extreme changes over the last decade and it is still changing rapidly. Stress in a workplace has touched almost all professions, starting from executive levels to co-workers who are directly engaged in the production. The result of the job stress ultimately affects the physical as well as mental health. Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. It is a condition in which any human is confronted with an opportunity or demand related to what they desire and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. There are number of studies and surveys have been conducted by the researchers throughout the world for suggesting improved techniques to manage stress. Some of the reasons of work stress may be: Interpersonal causes, role demand, task demand, structure of the organization, style of leadership, organizational work culture etc. Interpersonal causes are due to interpersonal relationship at work place, when employees found unsupportive environment or any personal remark from others at work place.

According to ILO (1986) "It is recognized world-wide as a major challenge to individual mental and physical health, and organizational health." Although stress includes both good and bad aspects but it is not necessarily bad. Robbins and Sanghi (2006) also contributed "stress is typically discussed in a negative context; it also has a positive value. It is an opportunity when offers a potential gain." According to Michac (1997) "One of the affected outcomes of stress is on job performance. "So it needs to be studied. Stress is a condition of strain that has a direct Bearing on emotions, thought process and physical conditions of a person.

Michac (1997) specified causes of stress as follows: poor time management, unclear job descriptions, feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, inability to get things done, lack of communication, bad personal relationships, quality and complexity of tasks. In the same breadth, Dean (2002) viewed stress-related illnesses as the leading cause for low performance levels in the workplace. Immense pressure at work has led to stress, which made it the number one factor causing illness. Michac (1997) outlined reasons for low performance as follows; poor training in the company, machine break downs, non-established performance standards, lack of planning and motivation, change, poor atmosphere and environment, inadequate communication at many levels, non-identification with company goals.

## II. Statement of the problem

Most organizations attain high performance by saddling employees with overload of work in order to meet deadline and this has psychological and physical effects on the employees which sometimes results to something contrary to what these organizations want to achieve. Even though organizations are paying more attention now to employees compared to the past, the consequences of the trauma their

employees go through cannot be over emphasized because they still place extra-ordinary demands on them to deliver. To meet the objective and to generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining and to be able to fund the acquisition of modern equipment to meet efficient service provision and optimal employment of resources, there has been the need for a continuous change in management strategies and administration, and the demands on employees to perform have been increasing. This has brought a lot of pressure on the employees who are expected to deliver a world class service without the corresponding increase resources and training, yet those who fail to deliver are threatened with dismissal and other forms of punishment. With jobs very difficult to come by these days in Nigeria, many employees are crumbling under this pressure. Cases of employee stress are therefore on the ascendancy.

### III. Objectives of the problem

The main objective of this research will be to study the effects of job stress on employee's performance. However, the research has the following specific objective which is to:

- i. To find out the effect job stress has on the performance of employees.

### IV. Literature review

#### a. Conceptual framework on job stress

The term stress was first employed in a biological context by the endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1930s. He later broadened and popularized the concept to include inappropriate physiological response to any demand. In his usage stress refers to a condition and the stressor to the stimulus causing it. It covers a wide range of phenomenon from mild irritation to drastic dysfunction that may cause severe health breakdown. According to [Robbins \(2004\)](#), stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. From this definition one can say that stress is not necessarily bad, it also has a positive value when it offers potential gain. [Moorhead et al. \(1998\)](#) also defined stress as a person's adaptive response to a stimulus that places physical and psychological demands on a person.

In addition, [Taylor \(1995\)](#) describes stress as a negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological, cognitive and behavioural changes that are directed either toward altering the events or accommodating its effects. Again, [Bennett \(1994\)](#) defines stress as a wide collection of physical and psychological symptoms that results from difficulties experienced by an individual while attempting to adapt to an environment. This means the potential for stress exists when an environmental situation presents a demand threatening to exceed a person's capabilities and resources. From the above definitions and descriptions stress can best be seen as excessive demands that affect a person physically and psychologically. Thus the mental or physical condition that results from perceived threat or danger and the pressure to remove it.

Stress is a part of the normal fabrics of human existence. Every individual regardless of race or cultural background, social and occupational status and even children experience stress in many ways. It is an inevitable part of challenges that prompt mastery of new skills and behaviour pattern. However, when stress becomes excessive, difficulties occur and the sufferer experiences disrupted emotional, cognitive and physiological functioning. Stress may be acute or chronic in nature. Chronic stress is associated with the development of physical illness including such leading causes of death. The cost of stress in terms of human suffering, social and occupational impairment and mental illness is enormous. Stress is a common experience. People may feel stress when they are very busy, have important deadlines to meet, or have too little time to finish all of their tasks. Often some people may be particularly vulnerable to stress in situations involving the threat of failure or personal humiliation.

Work-place stress has received a great deal of attention in social psychological research ([Cooper et al. 2001](#)). Significant research findings have documented that prolonged stress has negative effects on individual health as well as on employees' attitudes towards the organization ([Cropanzano et al. 2003](#)). [Gershon \(2000\)](#) concur that working under continuously stressful conditions leads to the dissatisfaction and exhaustion of police officers. The stressful conditions that law enforcement officers are exposed can affect both their work-related and their physiological wellbeing. Recognizing the factors contributing to stress is highly relevant. The outcomes of job stress exceeds productivity and quality of employees

performance, its' psychological influence inverts into a bad lifestyle habits like smoking, over eating, drinking alcohol and lead to serious chronic diseases like hypertension and heart diseases (Owolabi et al. 2012). Employees constant exposure to stress, if not handled effectively, can be destructive both for them in terms of the quality of their work and their physical and mental state and for the organization where they work.

### **b. Nature of stress**

One believes that stress is a complex phenomenon because it is not tangible so it cannot be overtly touched. According to Bowing et al. (2001), stress occurs with the interaction between an individual and the environment, which produces emotional strain affecting a person's physical and mental condition. Stress is caused by stressors, which are events that create a state of disequilibrium within an individual. These authors also stated that the cost of too much stress on individuals, organizations, and society is high. Many employees may suffer from anxiety disorders or stress-related illnesses. In terms of days lost on the job, it is estimated that each affected employee loses about 16 working days a year because of stress, anxiety or depression.

According to Ritchie et al. (2009), for years stress was described and defined in terms of external, usually physical, forces acting on an individual. Later it was suggested that the individual's perception of and response to, stimuli or events was a very important factor in determining how that individual might react, and whether or not an event will be considered stressful. These authors further contended that most researchers acknowledged that both external and internal factors affect stress. They viewed stress as a response to external or internal processes, which reach levels that strain physical and psychological capacities beyond their limit.

According to Blumenthal (2003), for thousands of years, the bodies of cavemen/women were primed to deal with the harsh rigors of their environment. In the face of danger a rush of adrenaline would prepare cave dwellers to either fight or run for their lives. In the face of adversity, muscles and nerves were charged for sudden movement, heart rates would increase, and blood would course through the veins with sugar released into the blood stream. The flight or fight response would ready them for action: powerful hormones epinephrine and nor epinephrine, released by the adrenal glands, endowed humans with enhanced alertness, strength and energy. Thousands of years later humans live in the same bodies and possess the same human brains but in a world with completely different stressors and hassles. While few humans may face danger from wild animals and unsuccessful hunting, urban life is equally demanding. The urban environment is rife with stressors (such as pollution, noise, violence, traffic) that stimulate the nervous system into a flight or fight response but it is only in rare instances that an aggressive or vigorous physical response is appropriate.

### **c. Types of stress**

Taylor (1995) and other authors states that, there are five major types of stress and she explains them as follows:

#### **Work stress**

From the Second World War, stress has become an interesting topic for researchers. Organizations are finally recognized the fact that because of job stress, lots of human potentials are being disappeared. Almost the employees say that they are under high stress at workplace. Hence, work stress is one of biggest problem in the global world. Stress is an unexpected reaction people have to treat their investigate pressures. Stress can has a positive influence on employees only with a certain amount at which an employee can handle, however, mostly it exceeds the tolerable limits and has a negative effect on employees. According to Anderson (2002), family conflicts are also roots which create stress of employees (Anderson et al, 2002). Stress has been viewed as an environmental stimulus to an individual; it defined stress as an individual's reaction to environmental forces that had effects on individual performance. Because job stress can threats individual performance and family functional, it is quite dangerous.

Job stress can make a difference between the ability of families to provide material security and demands on families. Even with executives and managers, stress is an experience in the work life of every employee. Work stress by accident made organizational performance go down. Besides, work stress not only has impact on company and employee job performance but also can shape dire influences

when related to health care. Therefore the importance of work stress is emphasized nowadays by employers to manage and reduce through practical guidelines in public sector but not in private one.

### **Chronic stress**

She describes this type of stress as unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. Chronic stress is the type that wears the individual down day after day and year after year with no visible escape. It grinds away at both emotional and health of the individual leading to breakdown and even death.

### **Acute stress**

This type of stress is the most common and most recognizable form of stress. It is the kind of stress which the individual knows exactly why he is stressed; he was just in a car accident; the school nurse just called him, a bear just ambled onto his campsite. It can also be something scary but thrilling, such as a parachute jump. Normally, the body rest when these stressful events cease and life gets back to normal because the effects are short-term. Acute stress usually does not caused severe or permanent damage to the body.

### **Traumatic stress**

It is a severe stress reaction that results from a catastrophic event or intense experience such as a natural disaster, sexual assault, life-threatening accident, or participation in a combat. Here, after the initial shock and emotional fallout, many trauma victims gradually begin to recover. But for some people, the psychological and physical symptoms triggered by the trauma do not go away, the body does not return to equilibrium, and life does not return to normal. This condition is known as post trauma stress disorder. Common symptoms of this type of stress are flashbacks or nightmares about the trauma, avoidance of places and things associated with the trauma, hyper vigilance for signs of danger and irritability and tension.

### **Episodic acute stress**

She went further to explain episodic acute stress as where the individual experiencing this type of stress lives are very chaotic, out of control and they always seem to be facing multiple stressful situation. They are always in a rush, always late, always taking on too many projects, handling too many demands. Those who are prone to this type of stress include "Type A" personality types. If an individual is prone to episodic acute stress, he may not know it or admit it. He may be wedded to a life style that promotes stress. Unfortunately, people with episodic acute stress may find it so habitual that they resist changing their lifestyles until they experience severe physical symptoms.

#### **d. The effects of job stress on employee performance**

The most important apprehensions in the study of work stress are the adverse impact on employees performance. Employees suffering with stress at work place, try to withdraw themselves from stressors in terms of high turnover and absenteeism from work. If leaving the job is not easily possible for employees, they may create problems for the management i.e. inefficiency in performance, wastage of operational resources, creating obstacles for subordinates and so on. This may result in worst situation for the organization. The factors associated with the poor performance or negative result in employees physical and psychological wellbeing at work is also causes for stress. Enduring stressful situation at work create a negative impact not only on employees performance but also hinders the overall performance at organizational level. It is very complex relationship of work stress and performance and for that organization need to take strategic decisions.

According to few of the researches the productivity is considered to be at the peak with moderate level of work stress, but as it goes beyond that certain level, the productivity starts decreasing with increasing rate. It also has been found that the performance of employees remain poor at very low level of stress as well as at very high level of stress, because at low level of stress employees may not be sufficiently energized and may not be whole-heartedly dedicated to their job, resulting in low productivity. And at the peak of stress, employees want to get out of that stressful situation, result in no concentration on work.

To analyse and understand the relationship of job stress and job performance, we can conclude that when performance diminishes with stress, negative linear relationship is there. If increasing stress

improving the job performance, a positive linear relationship may be found. If stress initially improves productivity, and then it diminishes when feelings of distress prevail on the employee, then a curvilinear or unshaped relationship is found. Work stress positively affects up to a tolerable level and when it exceeds this level, it creates a negative impact on employee performance.

#### **e. Theoretical framework**

In this section a theoretical framework for the job stress behaviour is developed based on the objectives and previous literature survey in this area was Psychological and Sociological.

##### **a. Psychological theories**

The predominant paradigm for understanding the causes of occupational injury and illness is the medical model (Johnston and Quinlan, 1993). With its emphasis on individuals rather than groups, on treatment rather than prevention, and on technological intervention rather than environmental change, the medical model has been very influential in controlling both the way in which occupational injuries and illnesses have been defined and the means by which they are managed. The major criticism of the medical model has been its focus on treating sick or injured workers rather than on producing healthy working environments. The outcome of this approach was to perpetuate the notion that workplace injuries are accidents which were not preventable and to locate the blame for the injury in the individual worker or in the hazardous nature of the work. The disciplines of industrial, occupational and health psychology have not lived up to their early promise.

##### **b. Sociological theories**

The most radical departure from the medical model has been the approach of industrial sociologists who have brought the social organization of work as the primary determinant of occupational injury, illness, and stress into sharp focus. The medical model's notion of health and illness is rejected as reductionist, individualistic and interventionist, in which subjects are considered as unique cases, independent of cultural, social, political, and economic structures and processes. Industrial sociologists argue that power structures, the institutionalized conflicts of interest between safety and performance, the social division of labor, the labour process, industrial relations and politics are the root causes of occupational illness and stress.

##### **c. Empirical review**

In a study carried out by Warraich et al. (2014), on "Impact of Stress on Job Performance: An Empirical study of the Employees of Private Sector Universities of Karachi, Pakistan", the study was designed to determine the effect of stress on job performance of employees. It was based on empirical research conducted on 133 employees of private sector's Universities in Karachi that are providing education in the disciplines of Business Administration, Engineering, Medicine, Textile and Fashion. Pertinent data was collected through questionnaires based on close-ended questions. Multiple Linear Regression technique was used to test the hypothesis.

However, the results obtained from the data revealed that workload and role conflict, and inadequate monetary reward are the prime reasons of causing stress in employees, and this stress reduces their efficiency. Thus it was recommended that employer should minimize stress by lowering the work load, abate the role conflict, pay adequate salary and provide training and counseling to employees in order to improve their job performance and job satisfaction.

Warraich et al. (2014) found that workload, role conflict, and inadequate monetary reward are the prime reasons of causing stress in employees that leads to reduced employee efficiency. The outcome of this study implies that a negative relationship exists between job stress and lecturer's performance in Nigeria and that university lecturers in Nigeria should identify the job stress factors and try to manage their emotional competencies by working in a conducive atmosphere, this would deal with the problem of stress and boost their performance.

The implication of this study is that, there is a significant relationship between management role, relationship with others, workload pressure, homework interface, role ambiguity and performance pressure on Nigerian lecturers. The study also suggested that there is a significant negative relationship

between job stress and job satisfaction among university lecturers in Nigeria. Tahir (2011) investigated the effectiveness of teaching stress on academic performance of college teachers in Pakistan, the study sample out 106 college teachers of public and private sector selected through stratified sampling technique. The test of regression analysis t-test, one way ANOVA and two ways ANOVA were applied. The study revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic variables have positive effect on academic performance of college teachers. The study also showed that significant difference was found between academic performance of teachers of public and private colleges. In relation to the study carried out by Tahir (2011), it indicates that intrinsic and extrinsic variable have positive effect on the academic performances of Nigerian university lecturers.

## V. Conclusion

The aim of the research was to investigate the effects of job stress on employee performance. The results from this research showed that the negative factors that distressed employees had a negative effect on performance. It is clear from the vast amount of factors identified, reported and quantified and through the literature review that the goal of the study was achieved. This also served to prove that stress had a negative effect on performance of employees.

There had been many stress factors that the employees endured, and the enquiry proved that the effect of stress affected performance negatively. The fact that the majority of the employees thought of leaving their job and felt that the organization did not care about them was a reflection of huge dissatisfaction that undoubtedly lowered performance.

## VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the research, it is recommended that the following measures be put in place to help employees reduce stress on their work:

1. Management must conduct an analysis of the organizational mood and climate by assessing the reasons why the employees think the organisation does not care about its employees and what can they do to change it to explore the causes of the dissatisfaction of employees within the working environment.
2. Supervisors must assess the level of their subordinates knowledge and skills and whether they will be able to meet their deadlines. They must agree on a performance contract, so that they can give employees with job maturity and control over their jobs.
3. Managers should invite employees, who think that they are being given jobs that are in contradiction with each other, and clarify their roles.
4. Managers should facilitate an employee skill audit that will help to place employees that feel underutilized.
5. An Employee Assistance Programme has to be introduced for early identification and intervention on problems so that performance levels will increase.
6. Organizations can also use few more interventions for stress management namely regular counseling sessions, time management and behavioural training, employee wellness program and sessions like art of living etc.

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#### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE?

##### **MLA**

Daniel C. O. "Effects of job stress on employee's performance." International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research 06(02) (2019): 375-382.

##### **APA**

Daniel, C. O. (2019). Effects of job stress on employee's performance. International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research, 06(02), 375-382.

##### **Chicago**

Daniel, C. O. "Effects of job stress on employee's performance." International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research 06(02) (2019): 375-382.

##### **Harvard**

Daniel, C. O. 2019. Effects of job stress on employee's performance. International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research, 06(02), pp. 375-382.

##### **Vancouver**

Daniel, CO. Effects of job stress on employee's performance. International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research. 2019 June 06(02): 375-382.