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The Effects of Stress on Employee Performance: The Case of African Methodist Episcopal Zion Hospital in the Offinso North District of Ghana

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Abstract:

The study sought to identify the conditions and factors that generate acute stress among the workers in the public service with particular emphasis on workers at A.M.E Zion Hospital in the Offinso North District and the extent to which it impacts on effective service delivery and performance.

The in-depth semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain data. To this end, a case study methodology design was used. In all, 25 health workers were interviewed at the hospital facility, 5 at the Ante Natal Center, 6 at Reproductive child health clinic and 14 at Labour ward. Workers (nurses) were chosen for the study according to their convenience to the researcher. Qualitative data analysis was employed in order to make meaning out of the information collected.

The study found out that the stress related factors among the workers were the workload, role ambiguity, role insufficiency, work family relations, adverse working conditions, career development, time pressure, individual factors. Organizational adjustment, changing global scene and working under two perceived supervisors.

The physiological stress related effects also included the feeling of anxiousness, irritation and depression. Whiles being irritated, their working relations with both clients and colleagues begin to change negatively especially towards innocent clients; also, excessive sweating which is a sign of stress and fatigue makes the workers uncomfortable to continue working and subsequently loses interest to work and sometimes have trouble concentrating. These factors have affected the workers in several ways including reduced productivity, low employee morale to work and poor working relations. The proposed recommendations include electronic folder management system, an enhanced staff strength with proper motivation of the staff.

Keywords: Stress, Employee performance, occupational, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Hospital, Offinso North

1. Introduction

In this contemporary highly competitive world, living without depression is quite difficult (Rawal & Mathre 2018). Internationalization of trade in a world that ever keeps revolving implies depression associated with work has become part and parcel of everyday life, postulating that managing stress instead of eradicating it, could denote a virtually feasible objective (European Agency for Safety and Health, 2002). A number of pedagogic issues are inevitable when dealing scientifically with depression, especially in an area of study, like as in contemporary research. Many classical research works concerned with occupational stress tackle issues of organizations (Karasek et al., 1981) employ questionnaires and personal reports, as well as demonstrate their plan of enhancing organizational milieu and situations.

According to Divakar (2015, p.79), pressure can be viewed as legitimate by an individual, and it can make the individual alert, boost their morale, and even aid learning among them. This thoroughly is contingent upon the resources accessibility and personal attitudinal concerns. Nonetheless, as these sorts of pressures become unbearable, stress occurs.

It is a bit disturbing that pressure at the work environment can scarcely be eschewed as a result of the exigencies from present work organizations. Stress can be detrimental to a worker's health as well as the organizational productivity. For Rozanski et al (2005), in present times, many epidemiological researches have emphasized the essence of stress as a major cardiovascular risk factor mentioning that individual psychophysiological reactions to stress-causing-factors could become a focus of diagnosis, medical interventions, and avoidance mechanisms. According to Michie (2002) both demands and pressures causing stress, and structural and social apparatus to deal with stress should be attributed to the work place. Work-related stress is undoubtedly a modern day circumstance which is common in the human community and has a toll on areas of life and career groups (SSQ Financial Group, 2013).

Stress is defined by people in diverse professions in diverse ways (Everly, 1990). Stress is defined as a flexible situation through which an individual is approached with opportunity, hindrance or demand related to what he desires and for which the result is perceived to be both uncertain and essential (Robbins, 2004).

In Blankson (2014), customer satisfaction is of considerable concern to every organization. Every organization looks to set up and sustain productive relationships with customers by winning their trust and dignity. In so doing, organizations usually strive to satiate targets for availability of goods or services to customers as well as security of its human resources. When workers' productivity suffers as a result of stress, output suffers, making it difficult to meet customer expectations. Stress is a situation of cognitive pressure for specific individuals who are confronted with environmental and social well-being challenges, which results in the development of many diseases. Agolla et al (2009) have long identified stress symptoms as dearth of energy, taking over the counter medication, acute blood pressure, feeling depressed, and increase in appetite, trouble concentrating, restlessness, tensions and anxiety among others.

Stress can result in high staff turnover, an increase in sickness, absence, and early retirement, increased stress in those who remain at work, decreased work performance and productivity, an increase in accidents, and decreased client satisfaction, particularly in the public sector of the labor market (Michie, 2002). Personal difficulties, work overload, the physical working environment, working conditions, and disagreements among coworkers and superiors are all sources of stress in the workplace. Many employees suffer from stress, which can lead to dissatisfaction and acute impairments in health and performance.

The primary stressors are almost certainly uncontrolled, unexpected, and some are unknown (Nekzada & Tekeste 2013). Stress has major effects for an organization's performance and production. Increased staff turnover, employee absenteeism, and lower productivity are some of the negative consequences that stress has on a business. Stress has a financial impact on enterprises as well; for example, illness absence is the most concise and simply computed expense. (Source: CIPD, 2008, p. 5). The study therefore seeks to identify the conditions and factors that generate acute stress among the workers in the public service with particular emphasis on workers at A.M.E Zion Hospital in the Offinso North District and the extent to which it impacts on effective service delivery and performance. The study further examines the stress management strategies in dealing with stress among workers at A.M.E Zion Hospital.

Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following questions and offer recommendations:

- What factors contribute to stress among workers at A.M.E Zion Hospital?
- How does stress negatively affect employee performance at A.M.E Zion Hospital?

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Area

The Offinso North District, with Akumadan as its capital, is located between longitudes 10 60o West and 10 45o East, as well as longitudes 70 20o North and 60 50o South. Its total land area is approximately seven hundred and forty-one (741) kilometers square. It shares its borders with the Municipal Assembly of Techiman to the north, Sunyani Municipal to the west, and Ejura Sekyeredumasi District and Offinso Municipal to the south (Ghana District. Com, 2021).

The remaining are Nkoranza South District in the Northeastern part of Offinso North, that of Wenchi District to the in the northwest, and to the south west by Tano North and South districts. The Offinso North district is traversed by the south -north Trans -West African highway, hence making the district the key gateway into the Ashanti Region from the northern part of the country. Most of the districts that share boundaries with Offinso North are located in the Bono East and Ahafo Region (Ghana District. Com, 2021).

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Report, the total population of Offinso North was 56,881 with an annual growth rate of 3.4 percent, with 50.2 percent being females and 49.8 percent being men. (Ghana District Commission, 2021).

2.2. Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive research approach. The intention was to tap into the knowledge of the health workers on the effects of stress on their daily routine at the hospital. To this end, a case study methodology design was used. Wolcott (1990) spoke out that case study is a form of research design which allows detailed investigations of individuals, groups, institutions or other social units hence, individual health workers at the ante natal, reproductive child health and labour ward were the unit of analysis for the study.

2.3. Population

The population for this study consisted of all health workers at the Ante Natal Center, Reproductive child health clinic and the labour ward at the A.M.E Zion Hospital in the Offinso North District employed by government and the health facility.

2.4. Sample Size

In all, 25 health workers were interviewed at the hospital facility, 5 at the Ante Natal Center, 6 at Reproductive child health clinic and 14 at Labour ward. Workers (nurses) were chosen for the study according to their convenience to the researcher. The study sought to identify the stress related factor or conditions affecting them in the course of delivering their services, its effects on their performance and the management practices adopted to deal with this by the workers or the health facility.

No.	Department	Sample
1	Ante Natal Centre	5
2.	Labour Ward	14
3	Reproductive Child Health Clinic	6

Table 1: Sample Size at A.M.E Zion Hospital

2.5. Sampling Procedure

The selection of respondents was done using the convenience sampling technique to select health workers at the A.M.E Zion based on that rotational nature of their work and also to ensure that the researcher gets easy access to the respondents with ease due to the busy nature of their work. Therefore, all health workers who were readily available to the researcher were selected for the research.

2.6. Data Collection Techniques and Analysis

The in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to allow for enough probing while also serving as a method for cross-checking information. During the interview process, an in-depth semi-structured interview guide is employed through a framework of significant themes and offered questions that warrant attention Kvale (1996). In light of this, the semi-structured interview approach allowed respondents at various points in time to provide additional information based on their understanding of the research questions presented, thereby the impacts of stress on their performance and the management measures used to cope with them.

Qualitative data analysis was used. This includes gathering data from various sources, data reduction (organizing and structuring qualitative data), data presentation (summarizing and exhibiting the structure identified in qualitative data), and data verification (finding alternate explanations and interpretations of qualitative data). This was done in order to make sense of the information gathered.

3. Results and Discussion

Managing employees to bring the best out of them cannot be overemphasized in contemporary times considering the competitive nature and stressful nature of our working environment. The results of this study are therefore discussed below.

3.1. Socio Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Frequency (N=10)	Percentage (%)
Male	10	40
Female	15	60
Age	Frequency (N=10)	Percentage (%)
15-24	1	4
25-34	19	76
35-44	5	20
45-54	0	0
55 and above	0	0
Level of education	Frequency (N=10)	Percentage (%)
Certificate	3	12
Diploma	17	68
Graduate	5	20
Marital status	Frequency (N=10)	Percentage (%)
Married	10	40
Single	15	60

Table 2: Socio Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2022

The table 2 above shows the socio demographic characteristics and on the gender distribution of the respondents, males accounts for (10) 40% and (15) 60% for females. In terms of their age distribution, age category 15-24 were (1) 10% and 25-34 were (19) 76% whiles 35 -44 were (5) 20%. With their level of education, the lowest level among them

which is certificate was (3) 12%, diploma (17) 68% and first degree also (5) 20%. Considering their marital status, (10) 40% were married whiles (15) 60% were unmarried.

3.2. Factors That Causes Stress among Employees

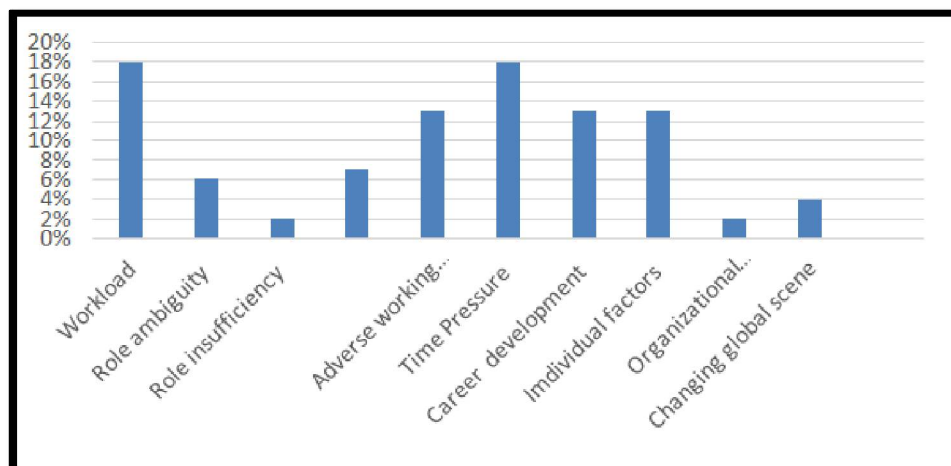


Figure 1: Stress Related Factors
Source: Authors Field Survey, 2022

The study revealed several stress factors among health workers at the A.M.E.Zion hospital as seen from figure 1 above that workload accounted for 18% of stress among workers, 6% for role ambiguity, 2% for role insufficiency, 7% for work family relations, 13% for adverse working conditions, another 13% for career development, 18% for time pressure, 13% for individual factors. 2% for organizational adjustment, 4% for changing global scene and 4% for working under two perceived supervisors.

3.3. Effects of Stress on Employees

3.3.1. Psychological Effects of Stress on Employees

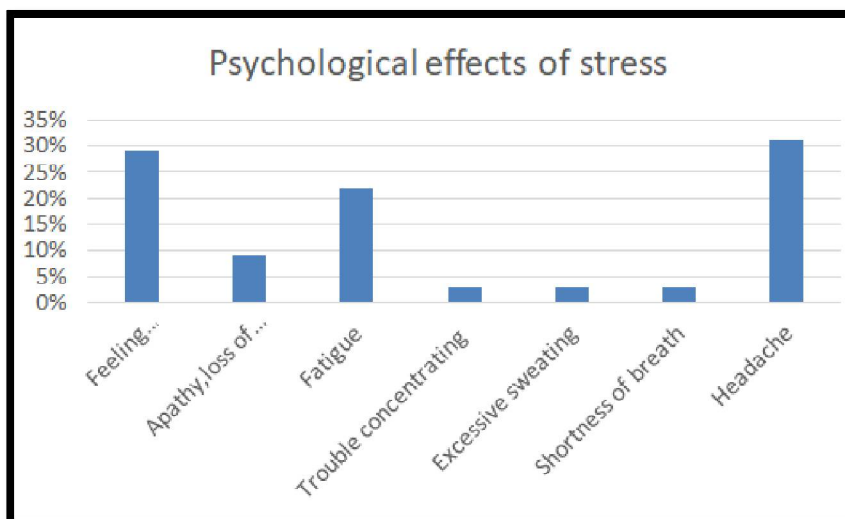


Figure 2: Psychological Effects of Stress
Source: Authors Field Survey, 2022

The figure 2 above revealed that among the psychological effects of stress on employees, feeling anxious, irritable or depressed accounted for 29 % of such effects among employees, apathy and loss of interest in work also accounted for 9% of the effects, 22% for fatigue, 3% for trouble concentrating, another 3% for excessive sweating, 3% for shortness of breath and 31% for headache.

3.3.2. Effects of Stress on Performance

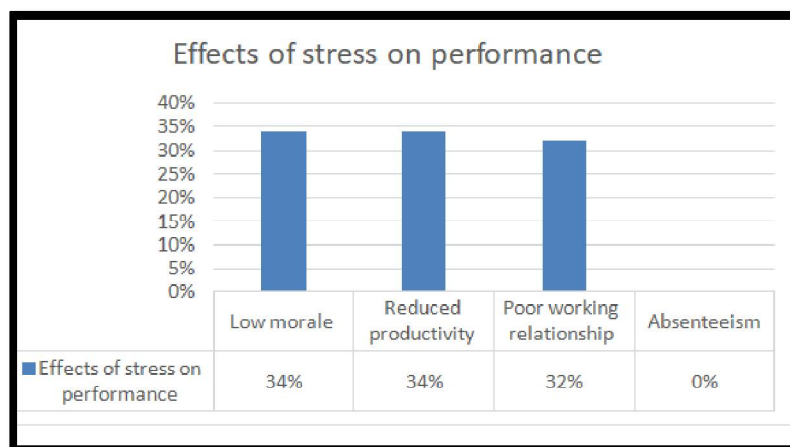


Figure 3: Effects of Stress on Performance
Source: Authors Field Survey, 2022

As observed from figure 3 above, the effects of stress were very visible on employees. Low morale of the employees within the working environment accounted for 34% of the effects of stress on performance, reduction in their level of productivity accounted for another 34% of the effects on performance and poor working relations with colleague employees and clients also accounted for another 32% of the total effects.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that among the stress factors, workload constituted the most pressing factor where health workers were given more roles to perform than they could actually contain hence producing stress in the course of working and this findings is consistent with the studies in academic literature that excessive work greatly influence work pressure (Wilkes et al. 1998).

Time pressure also happened to be the next stress related factor and we draw a linkage here with the workload in the sense that with the shift nature of their work and the number of people they are supposed to attend to and having the problem of inadequate staff at hand, leaving work undone was no option hence workers are forced to finish up their work before the next shift thereby exerting pressure on themselves as they are forced to make judgments on what to do and what not to do. Adverse working conditions, career development and individual or personal factors which followed as the third successive factors also occurred as given by respondents that the necessary supplies and equipment's needed to function effectively were mostly lacking hence the demand to readjust to the situation makes the work stressful and also the three shift system of morning afternoon and night especially the night system was a cause for anxiety and stress supporting the study of Orth-Gomer (1986) who concluded that as three shifts are employed to create a whole-day production, greater anxiety in individuals may be inevitable. Whiles their quest to upgrade themselves to meet changing demands of their work like education etc combined with their normal routine work exerted pressure on them coupled with personal problems like finances. Changing global scene for example the onset of Covid19 and the need to adopt different measures at the work place to ensure their safety as they come into contact and the thought of contracting the diseases brought much stress to them. All these factors above, together are classified as job related, organizational related and individual related.

The study also revealed that stress affects the workers physiologically, subsequently influencing their performance negatively. The study unveiled that the most serious physiological effect was the headache among employees accounting for 31% of the total effect, feeling of anxiousness, irritation and depression thus also accounting for 29% of all the physiological factors affecting and whiles being irritated, their working relations with both clients and colleagues begin to change negatively especially towards innocent clients, then followed by fatigue another serious sign of stress which makes them uncomfortable to continue working. Sometimes, they also have trouble concentrating as exemplified in various studies which depicts that stressed out workers cannot meet anticipations of their organizations, as a result of psychological, physical and business exhaustions (Khattak et al., 2011). Service firm workers are exposed to serious levels of work stress, accounting for the poor performance of workers at the workplace (Ismail & Hong, 2011).

Finally, the major effects of stress among the health workers as revealed by the findings of the study included reduced productivity, low employee morale to work and poor working relations. The performance of workers (human) who are the most valuable asset in an organization are enhanced in the absence of stress. This particular outcome confirms the work of various academic writers that stress has impacts on the workers' efficiency and the two are equally connected to each other, there is a death of human being with stress (Salami et al., 2010). Obscurity of responsibility, job connections, occupation safety, and absence of work independence, work home interface, recompense and assistances, absence of organizational sustenance are the chief foundations of producing work stress. As a result of these bases of stress, worker assignation to work declines and eventually it deleteriously upsets the efficiency of workers (Coetzee and Devilliers, 2010).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study sought to identify the conditions and factors that generate acute stress among the workers in the public service with particular emphasis on workers at A.M.E Zion Hospital in the Offinso North District and the extent to which it impacts on effective service delivery and performance. The study found out that the stress related factors among the workers were workload accounting, stress among workers, role ambiguity, role insufficiency, work family relations, adverse working conditions, career development, time pressure, individual factors, organizational adjustment, and changing global scene working under two perceived supervisors.

The physiological stress related effects also included the feeling of anxiousness, irritation and depression. Likewise, their working relations with both clients and colleagues begin to change negatively. These factors affected the workers in several ways including reduction in productivity and low employee morale to work. To effectively manage the stress associated with work as healthcare workers especially in this Covid19 season, the first recommendation has to do with electronic management of their work especially with the delivery of folder to patients to make life and work comfortable for them.

Secondly, an enhanced staff strength. Human resource which is the most valuable asset in any organization is very much important. In this context, the workers were understaffed hence the heavy workload on each of them. The need for more workers is a very good measure to eradicate the labour deficit they are experiencing. Thirdly, motivation of staff. This is a very important human resource strategy to enhance workers performance, for example, getting the workers their supplies and equipment on time and enhancing their safety in this Covid19 season and with good supervision where management and supervisors cannot just assume for the workers but a situation of working hand in hand with the workers to understand them, develop suitable strategies do deal with inefficiencies and ineffectiveness to boost the performance of workers.

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