
CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT OF STRESS AMONGST HOTEL EMPLOYEES IN ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on causes and management of stress amongst hotel employees in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised employees of 6 selected hotels in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling was used to select 102 employees from the 6 selected hotels. A structured questionnaire served as instrument of primary data collection. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The demographics of respondents showed that majority of respondents were female (57.1%) and were ≤ 30 years of age (42.9%). The findings also revealed that majority of respondents are single (63.6%) and had tertiary school certificates (81.3%). Most respondents are front desk officers (34.6%) and had ≤ 5 years of hotel job experience. The employment status of respondents indicated that majority (80.4%) are full-time employees. The most perceived causes of stress among respondents are staff shortage in the department (4.93), underpaying (4.72), and undefined job descriptions and expectations (4.64). Low output (3.85) and absence from work (3.73) were the most perceived effect of stress on job performance. Reduction of working hours (4.27), annual leave with pay (4.14) and involvement of employees in decision-making (4.03) were perceived management strategies to reduce stress among hotel employees. The study recommends that regular performance reviews, options for career development, and a sense of autonomy should be utilized by employers to reduce employees' stress.

Keywords: Stress management, hotel employees, job performance, stress management strategies

INTRODUCTION

Stress is most commonly conceived as a state of discomfort, tension or emotional pain arising from situations faced by individuals which presents important demand that must be met, but for which their capacities and resources are inadequate (Gimba, 2006). Maisamari (2002) defined stress as a situation that places special psychological demands upon a person or anything that can unbalance their equilibrium. Maisamari (2002) further stated that stress can be conceived as a problematic situation for which the individual has no solution at all.

It arises when one's coping skills are inadequate to meet particular problems in life; and may come from different sources.

The service industry is a labour-intensive, and requires frequent interaction between employees and customers. Personnel's high burnout level is related to high level of work stress and harms job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance (Hsieh & Yen, 2005). The basis of service quality in hotel business depends on performance of the personnel that provide direct, face-to-face service to customers (Choi & Chu, 2001). Although this is noticed, long work hours, lack of work safety, unsteady and inflexible work schedules, role stress, heavy workload, excessive work requirement, low wages, personnel rotation, bad customer behaviours, and weak training programmes are among common problems in the hotel industry that put pressure on personnel (Rowley & Purcell, 2001; Pizam & Thornburg, 2000).

It is also indicated that, in hotel businesses, lack of support policies to help families, shortage of progress opportunities, and ignorance of personnel's ideas in decision-making process result in high levels of stress (Karatepe & Baddar, 2006). Moreover, personnel that provide face-to-face, direct service to customers can also have marital issues because of heavy workload (Karatepe & Uludağ, 2008). These problems indicate that hotel businesses are deprived of contemporary human resources management techniques (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007).

Generally, work stress has been a critical issues facing managers in the hospitality industry because it effects on performance of all levels of employees. As a result of the work stress, employees become exhausted and pessimistic which successively affects services provided to guests (Kim, 2008). Stress within the hospitality industry has been related to physiological symptoms including headaches, fatigue, blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes; and result in output reduction and increased healthcare costs for employers (Pulak, 2012).

Workplace demand on employees affect their personal, family and social. Tedious, uncertain or tiring hours, taking work home, high level of responsibility, job insecurity, and job relocation adversely affect family responsibilities and leisure activities. Stress is a complex phenomenon, but it is more present in the service sector such as the hospitality industry than in any other economic sector. The hospitality business is highly labour-intensive and has increasingly enormous demands (Sampson & Akyeampong, 2014).

Stress is also associated with depression and anxiety, and is the second commonest cause of occupational illness, causing loss of 13.5 million employees between 2007 and 2008 (Michie, 2002). Keith and James (2018) affirmed that stress destroys productivity if left uncontrolled. Thus, this research will attempts to identify sources of workplace stress and how stress in the hotel industry may be managed. To achieve this aim, the study examined:

- a) Perceived causes of stress of hotel employees in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara State.
- b) Perceived effects of stress on hotel employees' job performance in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara State.
- c) Strategies adopted to reduce stress among hotel employees in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress affects performance of employees at every level from senior executives to newly employed personnel (Ross, 1997). Work stress emanates from environmental and personal factors. Environmental factors include work schedule, safety at work, work pace, distance to and from work, transportation difficulties, number of customers and their qualities (Dessler, 2000). In organizations, difficulty, complexity, change, organizational and work structure and human relations within the work environment (Tutar, 2004), excessive noise, light, heat, level of responsibility, workload and amount of supervision are also factors that put stress on personnel (Balci, 2000).

The presence of a person with an excessive stress in the work environment negatively affects the security of other employees (Balci, 2000). Tutar (2000) states that executives' psychological and emotional states spread down to lower ranks and affects employees directly (Tutar, 2000). Stress at the workplace, just as in daily life, have positive and negative effects on individuals and organizations performance. In this sense, individuals in the organization need a reasonable amount of stress. As long as the stress is within manageable limits, it helps organizational activity, keeps individuals alert, develops skill to work efficiently, and adds a purpose to individuals' lives (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997).

Good stress can help a person complete a report on time or generate a quick problem-solving method (Ivancevich, 2003). A highly success-motivated person can be further motivated by tension at work, though others may be stressed out due to inability to deal with the same situation. This shows that personal differences matter when it comes to stress (Balci, 2000). Tennant (2001) states that workaholic personnel who are filled with a passion for success demand the workload themselves, and are to be held responsible more than executives for subsequent stress.

Globalization of work life is making competition even heavier, increasing ambiguities, pushing executives' chances for success, and thus causing stress. Industries like tourism in particular are more open to global competition. Personnel in these businesses, particularly senior executives, experience stress caused by excessive competitiveness and ambiguities (Eren, 2007). Cleveland et al. (2007) states that the necessity to work for long, irregular, unpredictable hours is the commonest cause of work stress for executives from various types of hotels.

Perceived sources of stress may depend on quality of work, the individual, and home/work interaction (Prosser et al., 1997). The effect of organizational stress sources on personnel can be more severe and intense than that of environmental factors. Differentiation and specialization in the organization, intensity of rules and regulations, individual's level in the organization's hierarchy, lack of explicit and clear policies, lowness of participation level, and complexity of organizational structure constitute sources of work stress (Güney, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara State. Ilorin-West is one of the sixteen local government areas that make up Kwara State, and has Wara as its headquarters. The local government is situated between latitude 8°30N and longitude 4°35E. It has an area of 105 km² and a population of 364,666 at the 2006 census. The local

government is divided into four quarters namely: Ajikobi, Alanamu, Magaji-Nigeria and Waraon/Egbejila. It has twelve geopolitical wards namely Adewole, Ajikobi, Alanamu, Badari, Baboko, Magaji-Nigeria, Ogidi, Oko- Erin, Oloje, Sarumi/Oju-Ekun, Ubandawaki and Wara/Osin/Egbejila (Mohammed, 2007). The local government area is predominantly Islamic, but has people of diverse cultures who have come together to live as in peace and harmony. Eid-Fitr, Eid-Kabir, MaoludNabiyy, Hijrah, and Durbar are major cultural festivals in the local government area. The nature of businesses that can be found in Ilorin-West includes farming, fishing, trading, cloth weaving and banking.

The population for this study consists employees of six selected hotels in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara State. 20 employees were randomly drawn from each of the selected six hotels in the study area to arrive at a sample size of 120. Structured questionnaire which served as instrument of primary data collection was administered on 120 employees. However, the final analyses of study was based on 107 questionnaire was retrieved. Descriptive statistics (frequency counts and mean) was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

| Demographic | Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 46 | 42.9 |
| | Female | 61 | 57.1 |
| Age Group | ≤30 | 46 | 42.9 |
| | 31-40 | 55 | 51.4 |
| | 41-50 | 4 | 3.7 |
| | ≥51 | 2 | 1.9 |
| Marital Status | Married | 39 | 36.4 |
| | Not married | 68 | 63.6 |
| Level Of Education | Primary | 2 | 1.9 |
| | Secondary | 18 | 16.8 |
| | Tertiary | 87 | 81.3 |
| | Front Office | 37 | 34.6 |
| Department | Housekeeping | 22 | 20.6 |
| | Purchase and Store | 9 | 8.4 |
| | Security | 7 | 6.5 |
| | Food and Beverages | 8 | 7.5 |
| | Marketing | 12 | 11.2 |
| | Human Resources | 12 | 11.2 |
| Service Year | ≤5 Years | 77 | 72 |
| | 6-10 Years | 27 | 25.2 |
| | 11-15 Years | 2 | 1.9 |
| | ≥16 Years | 1 | 0.9 |
| Employment Status | Full time | 86 | 80.4 |
| | Contract | 17 | 15.9 |
| | Part-time | 4 | 3.7 |

Source: Researchers' computation from field data (2023).

Table 1 shows the demographics of respondents. It was observed that 57.1% of respondents were female while 42.9% were male. 42.9% of respondents were ≤ 30 years of age, 51.4% were between 31-40 years of age, 3.7% were between 41-50 years of age and 1.9% were between 51 years and above. Table 1 also revealed that majority of respondents (63.6%)

are unmarried while 36.4% were married. It can equally be noted from the Table that 1.9% of respondents had primary school certificates, 16.8% had secondary school certificates and 81.3% had tertiary school certificates. Table 1 further showed that majority of respondents (34.6%) are front office employees, followed by housekeeping with 20.6% while marketing and human resources are the least with 11.2% each. 72.0% of respondents had worked with their hotel for ≤ 5 Years, followed by 6-10 Years with 25.2% while ≥ 16 Years is the least with 0.9%. The employment status of respondents indicated that majority (80.4%) are full-time employees while 3.7% are part-time employees.

Table 2: Perceived causes of stress in the hotel industry

| Variable | Mean |
|---|------|
| Staff shortage in the department | 4.93 |
| Underpay | 4.72 |
| Undefined job description and expectations | 4.64 |
| Overwork | 4.63 |
| Unfavourable working condition | 4.62 |
| Instructions from employers differ from each other | 4.49 |
| Tight schedule | 4.46 |
| Dealing with an ambiguous situation | 4.44 |
| Inadequate guidance from the supervision | 4.42 |
| Role clarity | 4.36 |
| Organizational policies | 4.34 |
| The high season demands too much work and no annual leave permitted | 3.68 |
| Threat from employer/customer | 3.63 |

Source: Researchers' computation from field data (2023).

Table 2 revealed perceived causes of stress. Staff shortage in the department recorded the highest mean of 4.93, followed by underpay and undefined job description and expectation with a mean of 4.72 and 4.64 respectively, while threat from employer/customer is the least with a mean of 3.63. This implies that hotel work is cumbersome. This finding is not in line with the report of Osadare and Omiwale (2020) that inadequate staffing was the second largest cause of workplace stress after lack of work-life balance in selected hotels in Ibadan metropolis. Sampson and Akyeampong (2014) states that hotel business is highly labour-intensive and has increasingly enormous work demand. Occupational stress can occur when employees have the feeling of being unfairly treated or sense a lack of recognition from peers or superiors.

Table 3: Perceived effect of stress on job performance

| Variables | Mean |
|--|------|
| Low output | 3.85 |
| Absent from work | 3.73 |
| Lack of concentration on work | 3.68 |
| Unable to express thoughts and ideas | 3.63 |
| Fatigue and ill health | 3.59 |
| Tense, anxious or nervous in carrying out duties | 3.52 |
| Attitudinal change towards customer | 3.34 |
| Delay in the performance of duties | 3.27 |
| Poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues | 3.14 |
| Inability to be creative | 3.09 |
| Inability to concentrate | 2.95 |

Source: Researchers' computation from field data (2023).

The effect of stress on job performance is revealed in Table 3. Low output and absenteeism score the highest mean of 3.85 and 3.73 respectively. This is followed by lack of concentration on work with a mean of 3.68 while poor interpersonal relationship with colleagues is the least with a mean of 3.14. Work-related stress is argued to harm productivity, worker turnover, and employee health and well-being. In addition, this effect has clear-cut direct costs to employers (Spielberger & Reheiser, 2005). The effect can however, be divided into two broad categories: effect on employee and effect on the organization (Leka et al., 2003). Similarly, Ross (2005) believes that stress produces undesirable, expensive, and debilitating consequences which affect both individuals and organizations.

Table 4: Management strategies to reduce employees' stress in the hotels

| Variables | Mean |
|--|-------------|
| Reduction of working hours | 4.27 |
| Annual leave with pay | 4.14 |
| Involvement of employees in decision making | 4.03 |
| Employees are informed of performances criteria and work behaviour | 3.97 |
| Provision of break time for the employee | 3.91 |
| Conducive working conditions | 3.87 |
| Compensation | 3.73 |
| Words of encouragement by the employer | 3.69 |
| Rewards for achieving targets | 3.42 |
| Employees are placed according to their abilities | 3.26 |

Table 4 showed management strategies adopted to reduce stress in the hotel industry. Reduction of working hours recorded the highest mean of 4.27, followed by annual leave with pay and involvement of employees in decision making with a mean of 4.14 and 4.03 while employees are placed according to their abilities scores the least mean of 3.26. Osadare and Omiwale (2020) ascertained that reduced workload and compensation for outstanding performance are stress management strategies employed in the hospitality industry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has confirmed that staff shortage, below-par pay and undefined job descriptions and expectations are major causes of stress among employees of hotels in Ilorin-West local government area of Kwara State. Also, low output, absenteeism and lack of concentration on work are major effects of stress on employee performance while the hotel management teams should reduce the working hours of employees and make provision for annual leave with pay as measures to reduce stress amongst employees. The study therefore recommends that employers should provide employees with the means to communicate issues that bother them. They should make regular performance reviews, give options for career development, and a sense of autonomy to employees. Hoteliers should make efforts to create enjoyable work environment in order to drive their productivity. Also, hotel employees should build positive relationships at workplace to ease stress and enhance job performance.

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