
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF WORK STRESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

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ABSTRACT

Work stress is a chronic disease caused by workplace conditions that impair an individual's performance and/or overall well-being of the body and mind. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of work stress and organizational performance in University of Rochester. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the staff in the University of Rochester. A sample of 212 respondents was drawn from five faculties in the university through a proportionate stratified sampling technique. The instrument titled "Work Stress and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (WSOPQ)" was used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was assessed by the supervisor and a statistical consultant with experience in test and measurement to confirm its relevance. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.85, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data collected for this study to appropriate statistical technique, such as simple regression analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha level. The study revealed and concluded that there is significant effect of stress on organisational performance in University of Rochester. And also that there is significant influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester. One of the recommendations made in this study was that the government should adopt a good work environment and focus on how to minimize work stress so that academic scholars and lecturers can improve their performances in the University of Rochester.

**KEYWORDS: Stress, Working Environment, Organizational Performance
and University of Rochester**

Introduction

Work stress has been of great concern to the management, employees, and other stakeholders of organizations. Work stress researchers agree that work stress is a serious problem in many organizations (Ornelas and Kleiner 2003). The cost of work stress is very high in many organizations. For instance, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that inefficiencies arising from occupational stress may cost up to 10 percent of a country's GNP. At a personal level, work stress might

lead to increased morbidity and mortality (Mark, Jonathan, and Gregory, 2003). According to Danna and Griffin (2002), stressful working conditions are associated with increased absenteeism, tiredness, and the intention of employees to quit their jobs. Organizations must manage human resources as one of the most critical elements to achieve organizational performance. Work stress could negatively impact the organization's performance. According to Fako (2010), employees with work stress will withdraw from the stressor by creating problems for the organization, such as showing performance inefficiency, wasting operational resources, and causing work constraints for other employees. Meanwhile, Luthans (2005) asserted that the impact of work stress could threaten and disrupt employees by causing irritability, emotional instability, non-cooperative behavior, and sleeping difficulties.

Statement of the Problem

Work stress has been a prevalent problem in modern life. Work stress is a major issue affecting organizational performance. Workload has had a negative impact on organizational performance in a variety of ways, including absenteeism, tiredness, inefficient performance, wasting operational resources, and causing work constraints in the organization. Work stress has a negative effect on the productivity level of the organization. As Colbert (2008) explains, not all stress is harmful, and a certain amount of stress is a normal part of life. However, when an individual experiences high levels of ongoing stress, the excessive release of stress hormones can cause damage to cells, organs, and tissues. However, organizations have resorted to glancing for solutions to the issues and threats posed by work stress in the University of Rochester. It is on this basis that this research was conducted to investigate work stress and organizational performance in University of Rochester.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include:

1. To identify the effects of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester.
2. To examine the working environment in University of Rochester.

Research Questions

The research will try to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the effects of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester?
2. What is the working environment in University of Rochester?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested:

HO₁: There is no significant effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester.

HO₂: There is no significant influence of unconducive working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester.

Theoretical Framework

Stress Management Theory

Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus and Folkman Theory of Stress and Coping (1984).

This study is anchored on the stress management theory of Lazarus (1966) and the Lazarus and Folkman theory of stress and coping (1984). Theories of stressful social environments and health often focus on work and employment. Stress management was developed and premised on the idea that stress is not a direct response to a stressor but rather one's resources and ability to cope mediate the stress response and are amenable to change, thus allowing stress to be controllable. Theories that focus on the specific relationship between external demands (stressors) and bodily processes (stress) can be grouped into two different categories: approaches to "systemic stress" based on physiology and psychology (Selye 1976) and approaches to "psychological stress" developed within the field of cognitive psychology (Lazarus 1966, Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Since its first presentation as a comprehensive theory (Lazarus 1966), the Lazarus stress theory has undergone several essential revisions (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). In the latest version, stress is regarded as a relational concept, i.e., stress is not defined as a specific kind of external stimulation nor a specific pattern of physiological, behavioral, or subjective reactions. Instead, stress is viewed as a relationship (a "transaction") between individuals and their environment. Psychological stress refers to a relationship with the environment that the person appraises as significant for his or her wellbeing and in which the demands tax or exceed available coping resources (Lazarus and Folkman 1986). This definition points to two processes as central mediators within the person–environment transaction: cognitive appraisal and coping.

According to Lazarus (1993), two concepts are central to any psychological stress theory: appraisal, i.e., individuals' evaluation of the significance of what is happening for their well-being, and coping, i.e., individuals' efforts in thought and action to manage specific demands. Research on the processes by which individuals cope with stressful situations has grown substantially over the past three decades (Zeidner and Endler 1996). Many trait-oriented approaches in this field have established two constructs central to an understanding of cognitive responses to stress: vigilance, that is, the orientation toward stressful aspects of an encounter, and cognitive avoidance, that is, averting attention from stress-related information (Krohne, 1993; Roth and Cohen 1986). Repression–sensitization (Byrne, 1964), monitoring–blunting (Miller, 1987), and attention–rejection (Mullen and Suls, 1982) are approaches that

correspond to these concepts. Stress occurs in any of these three contexts: when people experience a loss of resources, when resources are threatened, or when people invest their resources without subsequent gain. Several social and personal constructs have been proposed, such as social support (Schwarzer and Leppin 1991), sense of coherence (Antonovsky 1979), hardiness, self-efficacy (Bandura 1977), or optimism, which are concerned with the factors that create stress. For the last five decades, the term "stress" has enjoyed increasing popularity in the behavioral and health sciences. It was first used in physics in order to analyze the problem of how man-made structures must be designed to carry heavy loads and resist deformation by external focus. In this analysis, stress referred to external pressure or force applied to a structure, while strain denoted the resulting internal distortion of the object (for the term's history, cf. Hinkle 1974, Mason, 1975c). In the transition from physics to the behavioral sciences, the usage of the term "stress" has changed. In most approaches, it now designates bodily processes created by circumstances that place physical or psychological demands on an individual (Selye 1976). The external forces that impinge on the body are called stressors.

Literature Review

Work Stress

Work stress refers to a situation in which some characteristics of the work situation are thought to cause poor psychological or physical health, or to cause risk factors for poor health. Work stress arises when demands exceed abilities, and job-related strains are reactions or outcomes resulting from the experience of stress (Kitole, Idua, & Matata, 2019). Work stress is a chronic disease caused by workplace conditions that impair an individual's performance and/or overall well-being of the body and mind. In some cases, work stress can be disabling. In chronic cases, a psychiatric consultation is usually required to validate the reason and degree of work-related stress. Work stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on an employee and the amount of control that employee has over meeting these demands. In general, the combination of high demands in a job and a low degree of control over the situation can lead to work stress (CCOHS 2018). Work stress in the workplace can have many origins or come from one single event. It can have an impact on both employees and employers alike. It is generally believed that some stress is okay (sometimes referred to as "challenge" or "positive stress"), but when stress occurs in amounts that you cannot handle, both mental and physical changes may occur. Fried (2008) stated that work stress is the response of employees to job demands and pressures that are not in line with their knowledge, interests, skills, and abilities and affects their capacity to cope.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance has become a key concern in public administration practice (Amirkhanyan et al., 2014). Organizational performance refers to the actual output of a company measured against its intended output. Organizational performance deals with some specific areas of the outcomes in an organization

(Bhasin, 2020). Organizational performance involves analyzing a company's performance against its objectives and goals. Organizational performance comprises real results or outputs compared with intended outputs (Market Business News 2021). According to Richard, Devinney, Yip, and Johnson (2009), organizational performance encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes:

- Financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment, etc.)
- Product market performance (sales, market share, etc.)
- Shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.).

According to Cherrington (1989) and Adam (1994) in Jenatabadi, (2015), organizational performance is a concept of success or effectiveness of an organization and is an indication of the organizational manner in which it is performing effectively to achieve its objectives successfully. Organizational performance is heavily dependent on the quality of the employees' performance. He believed that in order to ensure high quality organizational performance, it was vital to have regular exposure of the staff of the company to new and up-to-date knowledge and skills, which would, in turn, help them keep up with the new changes happening in the market and, ultimately, enhance the quality of organizational performance.

Stress and Organizational Performance

The stress experienced by different occupation types and job roles has been discussed in many studies, with a number of different occupations being described as experiencing above average levels of stress, such as teachers (Brown & Uehara, 2008). Furthermore, role demands can be stressful when they are excessive (role overload) (Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor, & Millet, 2005). For instance, academic overload comes when teachers experience increased responsibilities. The daily interactions with students and co-workers and the incessant and fragmented demands of teaching often lead to overwhelming pressures and challenges, which may lead to stress (Brown & Uehara, 2008). Several studies have revealed that both role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with low satisfaction, absenteeism, low involvement, low expectancies, and task characteristics with low motivating potential and tension, which all affect the productivity and efficiency of the organization (Chang and Lu, 2007). Role ambiguity refers to the uncertainty, on the part of employees, about key requirements of their jobs and about how they are expected to behave in those jobs (Koustelios, Theodorakis, & Goulimaris, 2004).

Role conflict occurs when different groups or people with whom an individual must interact hold conflicting expectations about that individual's behaviour and can result from inconsistent information (Nwadiani, 2006). Research has shown that organizational change, such as downsizing and implementation of policies, can often lead to stress and increases in injury and illness (Morris, Hassard, & McCann, 2006). In a study conducted by Sharpley and co-workers on university staff, the most commonly reported sources of job stress were (in order of frequency): "lack of regular feedback about how well I am doing my job"; "lack of promotion

opportunities"; "uncertainty about how amalgamations will influence me"; "overwork"; "being expected to do too much in too little time"; "lack of necessary equipment and/or infrastructure support". Lack of participation by workers in decision-making, poor communication in the organization (Reskin, 2008), lack of family-friendly policies, poor social environment, and lack of support or help from co-workers and supervisors as well as at home are considered job stressors (Johnson et al., 2005). Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems (Reskin, 2008), as well as unrealistic deadlines and low levels of support from supervisors, are known to cause occupational stress. Selye (1974), cited in Manshor et al. (2003), suggested that learning to live with other people is one of the most stressful aspects of life. For teachers who move into unfamiliar cultures, acculturative stress can cause lower mental health (e.g., confusion, anxiety, depression) and feelings of alienation; those who feel marginalized can become highly stressed.

Working in a large, hierarchical, bureaucratic organization where employees have little control over their jobs can be very stressful. An autocratic management style often results in high turnover, high absenteeism, and low morale among subordinates. A lack of effective communication within an organization, excessive red tape, and seemingly endless paperwork were very stressful for internal auditors (Brown & Uehara, 2008). Stress is associated with impaired individual functioning in the workplace and is a major impediment to organizational success (Noblet, 2003). More recent estimates suggest that some 91.5 million working days are lost each year due to stress-related illness (Smith, 2000). Negative effects include reduced efficiency, decreased capacity to perform, dampened initiative and reduced interest in working, increased rigidity of thought, a lack of concern for the organization and colleagues, and a loss of responsibility (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). Moreover, stress is associated with a reduction in output, product quality, service or morale, increased wages or overtime payments, and organizational sabotage, all of which add costs to the organization.

Work Environment and Organizational Performance

Over the years, the conceptualization of work has changed. This is due to technological progress, globalization, demographic shifts, and the constant need to innovate and compete. Work is becoming more complex, more dependent on social skills and technological competence, and more time-pressured (Chan, Beckman, and Lawrence, 2007). Work has moved away from the home, as it was done in the pre-industrial era. It has moved to an environment where people from different backgrounds engage in work relations that lead to the attainment of stated goals (Ushie, 2002). The work environment is a place where work takes place. In order for the organization to record an increase in performance, the working environment has to be conducive for the workers. Employee performance can include the quantity, quality, and creativity of the work involved. Olson (2002) supported the notion that a good work environment should focus on work and impromptu meetings. He saw these two important activities as contributing to improved individual and team performance and job satisfaction. Gould (2009) studied how certain interior

environmental factors influence performance. According to his research, allowing workers to control the temperature and lighting conditions in which they work will enhance productivity, which will in turn lead to an increase in organizational performance. Employees with high levels of job satisfaction are more committed to the organization and more interested in delivering high-quality work.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design in examining work stress and organizational performance. The area of study was the University of Rochester. The population of the study consisted of all the staff in the University of Rochester. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample of 212 respondents from five faculties in the University of Rochester, which included the faculties of agriculture, arts, business administration, education, and science. A reliable and validated researcher-designed instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Work Stress and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (WSOPQ)." The validity of the instrument was assessed by the supervisor and a statistical consultant with experience in test and measurement to confirm its relevance. To ensure that the instrument "WSOPQ" was reliable, the instrument was administered to 20 staff who were not part of the study sample. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.85, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data collected for this study to appropriate statistical technique, such as simple regression analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha level.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester. In order to answer the hypothesis, simple regression analysis was performed on the data (see table 1).

TABLE 1: Simple Regression Analysis of the Effect of Stress on Organizational Performance in University of Rochester

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.93a	0.86	0.86	0.78	0.86

***Significant at 0.05 level; df= 210; N= 212; critical R-value = 0.139**

The above table 1 shows that the calculated R-value (0.93) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 210 degrees of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.86 predicts 86% of the effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester. In order to answer the hypothesis, simple regression analysis was performed on the data (see table 2).

TABLE 2: Simple Regression Analysis of the Influence of Unfavourable Working Environment on the Extent of Stress Encountered by Staff in University of Rochester

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.99a	0.97	0.97	0.36	0.97

***Significant at 0.05 level; df= 210; N= 212; critical R-value = 0.139**

The above table 2 shows that the calculated R-value (0.99) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 210 degrees of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.97 predicts 97% of the influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the data analyses in table 1 which sought to find out the effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.93) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 210 degrees of freedom. The result implies that there is significant effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester. The result, therefore, is in agreement with the research findings of Fried (2008), who stated that work stress is the response of employees to job demands and pressures that are not in line with their knowledge, interests, skills, and abilities and affects their capacity to cope. The result of the analysis caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

The results of the data analyses in table 2 which sought to find out the influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.99) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 210 degrees of freedom. The result implies that, there is significant influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester. The result, therefore, is in agreement with the research findings of Olson (2002), who supported the notion that a good work environment should focus on work and impromptu meetings. He saw these two important activities contributing to improved individual and team performance and job satisfaction. The result of the analysis caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

Conclusion

This study concluded that organizational performance has become a key concern in the University of Rochester, where stress has become an integral part of the academic scholars and lectures. Academic scholars have increased the level of stress among the lectures in the University of Rochester. An optimal level of stress can be a source of positive motivation to succeed. Work stress changes one's physical or mental state in response to a workplace that poses an appreciable challenge or threat. Hence, the study revealed that there is significant effect of stress on organizational performance in University of Rochester. And also that there is significant influence of unfavourable working environment on the extent of stress encountered by staff in University of Rochester.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should adopt a good work environment and focus on how to minimize work stress so that academic scholars and lecture can improve their performances in the University of Rochester.
2. Government should provide a conducive working environment because it can lead to high level of productivity, and growth of the organisational performance.

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