

Job Stress and Journalists Productivity in the Workplace

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Abstract

This paper discusses various aspects of job stress and other stress related issues within the context of work situations in Nigeria. It examines the different types of stress and the myriads of factors that may cause stressful conditions in the Nigerian workplace. It also looks at the physiological, psychological and physical effects of job stress and proffers some preventive measures and coping strategies. The paper concludes that the growing incidences of job stress in Nigeria needs to be addressed, as its impact in the ambience of depressing socio-political and economic conditions can be nothing other than debilitating and destabilizing to the nation and its workforce. However, the study concluded that Employers of journalists should take the issue of stress management very seriously as many journalists experience different degrees of stress. Management of various organizations in which journalists serve should endeavour to organize seminars on stress management to enable them learn stress coping strategies.

Keywords: Job Stress, Journalists Productivity, Workplace



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INTRODUCTION

Every work environment, regardless of industry, faces the dilemma of workplace stress, but the degree to which it affects employees and organisations differs from one sector/occupation to another. Issues of terrorist attacks, reporting wars and other hostile events, have elucidated how dangerous the work environment of journalists can be even when they are far from war or conflict areas (Monteiro, Marques, Pinto, & Roberto, 2015). During the war in Iraq in 2003, Thomas, Murphy, & Dandeker (2007) reported that journalists experienced negative physical and emotional health outcomes as a result of work stress in war zones and conflict areas. In Japan, broadcast and newspaper journalists reported experiencing a traumatic event over the course of their career (Hatanaka, Koshiro, Fukuoka, Matsui, Ando, Inoue, & Itamura, 2007; Hatanaka, Yuki, Fukuoka, Matsui, Ando, Inoue, & Itamura, 2009) cited by Muala (2017). Again, after covering the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, many journalists reported experiencing symptoms of psychosomatic stress (Takahashi, Fukuoka, Ando, Matsui, Inoue, & Hatanaka, 2012) cited by Muala(2017).

Additionally, newspaper journalists who experienced a traumatic event reported undergoing negative psychological effects (e.g., feelings of helplessness, depression) (Hatanaka et al., 2009). Simpson and Handschuh (2003), stated that certain events experienced by photojournalists during the course of their work have been diagnosed by psychiatrists as trauma, with traffic accidents and murder as the most common incidents. Furthermore, job stress amongst journalists has a negative impact on their performance (Najder & Merez-Kot, 2014), thereby directly or indirectly affecting organisational performance and profitability. Journalists are also exposed to stressful job situations, such as in war zones, conflict areas, sensitive cases and disasters, including earthquakes and tornados, where they have to be on-site to effectively report on such cases (Takahashi, Fukuoka, Ando, Matsui, Inoue, & Hatanaka, 2012; Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh, 2003).

The prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among journalists is higher than among other occupations. Aoki, Malcolm, Yamaguchi, Thornicroft, & Henderson (2013) reported that journalists have positive personal attitudes towards mental illness but also have perceived workplace disincentives in disclosing mental health problems. Journalists who were killed in conflict areas and war zones mostly worked in the Middle East (report of Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 2014). These killing incidents are determined to be one of the job stressors amongst journalists. Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh (2003) determined that photojournalists reported being exposed to events that mental health professionals would deem traumatic, including such common assignments as automobile accidents, fires and murders. Regarding job demands, a report published by CPJ (2017) affirmed that covering news related to wars, natural disasters and the worldwide proliferation of insurgent and criminal groups pose an unprecedented threat to journalists. The report reiterated that threats could include killings by insurgents or kidnappings of journalists for ransom or political support. Technological developments, such as tracking and surveillance technologies, could also place journalists at risk. The report stressed that journalists, particularly Jordanian journalists, lack the resources and the means to deal with such challenges and risks.

The phenomenon called job stress has been studied in the world today but mainly in the health sector. Occupations in this sector are the most stressful because they involve treating and preserving human health. However, many other occupations deal with sensitive situations, such as an employee working in a dangerous place, or deal with high-risk jobs, such as journalists. However, Stress can be considered as an unpleasant emotional situation that we experience when requirements (work-related or not) cannot be counter-balanced with our ability to resolve them. Stress can be brought about by pressures at home and work. Employers of labour in Nigeria do not protect their workers from stress arising outside and within the work place (Adetayo, Ajani and Olabisi, 2014). It is a real problem that organizations as well as its workers have been facing for some time, considering that employers of labour are not adhering to the international labour organizations protocol which posit that employers of labour should initiate a stress management policy that will not only enhance the effectiveness and productivity of their organizations but will boost their morale at work and make them healthier (Bewell, Yakubu, Owotunse and Ojih, 2014). It is therefore with this background that this study was aimed to examine job stress and journalist productivity.

Literature Review

Defining Job Stress

Stress is not a new concept. Akeredolu and Adeogun (2001) citing Hans Selye (1976) defines stress as the state which results when any external action, situation or event places special physical and/or psychological demand on a person, to cause an adaptive response which varies from one individual to another. Hans Selye, an endocrinologist was regarded as the father of modern stress concept and devoted his entire life to the study of stress. He stumbled unto his study of stress by accident, in the course of his study of a new hormone. The process of his experiments was the injection of a strange chemical into rats and later found that three major effects were always the result:

1. Enlargement of the adrenal cortex,
2. Shrinking of the thymus, spleen, lymph nodes and lymphocytes in the blood, and
3. Bleeding deep ulcers in the lining of the stomach and the duodenum.

Following this discovery, Selye coined the word 'stress' to represent syndrome. According to Udoh (2001), stress has been described as any stimulus that interferes with the biological or psychological equilibrium of an organism. In other words, it is a stimulus, which strains both the physiological and psychological capacities of an organism. Simply put, it is a set of circumstances under which an individual cannot respond or perform adequately or can do so only at the cost of excessive wear and tear of his emotional and physical system. Considering the way stress is explained, one would think that it is a completely bad phenomenon. This is not so, as certain amount of stress is necessary for health and success in work. Stress can thus be positive and strengthening for a person (Udoh, 2001) citing Selye (1976). High achiever managers and top executive in spite of the seemingly positive nature of stress (which may have propelled them to achieve success), tend to be bombarded with higher than average amount of stress arising from job pressures. Job pressures can cause both physical and psychological disturbances of severe proportions. When stress is such that threatens an individual in some manner, the situation produces disturbances in behaviour and in such a person's inner experience. In general sense, stress is the pressure people feel in life due to their reaction to situation. However, individual differences account for a wide range of reactions to situations and, in turn, to stress. For example, a task viewed as challenging by one person may produce high level of anxiety or stress in another.

Causes of Job Stress

Stress reactions or symptoms are a function of certain factors operating within the external environment. The nature of the interaction between these factors within the external environment determines the extent of any subsequent stress, as well as its prevalence and consequences (Chen and Spector, 1992). These factors or antecedents of stress are also referred to as stressors. Luthans (1989) posits that these factors could be classified as extra-organizational stressors, organizational stressors, group stressors or individual stressors. Extra-organizational stressors are those factors which operate outside an organization that causes stress. They include factors such as societal changes, technological changes, family issues, relocation issues, economic and financial conditions, racial and class discrimination and residential and/or community conditions. Societal changes are the outcome of shifting societal values, norms, traditions and customs etc.

Technological changes are reflected in the rapid advances being witnessed in the area of information technology. These changes have resulted in the redundancy and lay-off of a large chunk of Nigeria's workforce. Family issues revolve around the family unit, which is held in a very high esteem in Nigeria (Ebie, 1983). Thus, a long term strained relationship, for example with one's spouse or children could act as a significant stressor for an employee, considering the influence the family unit has on one's personality development. Relocation issues can also act as significant stressors, considering the difficulties usually experienced in Nigeria when trying to relocate a family following a job promotion and transfer to a new location. The difficulties are mainly the problem of acute shortage of residential accommodation in the cities and the problem of getting school placements for the children, etc. Economic and financial conditions can also act as stressors especially when there is a downturn in the economy or a sudden financial crisis.

Akinnusi (1995) observes that due to the harsh economic climate in Nigeria, people are resorting to all types of jobs. Even those gainfully employed are compelled out of necessity to take up additional part-time jobs. The implication of these actions is that the time that should have been spent with the family or on recreational activities is sacrificed in the pursuit of wealth. Such actions could inevitably lead to stress build-up in the workplace. Racial and class

discrimination usually arises from biases and prejudices that certain people may have against others. Ahiazu (1981) observes that discrimination in the Nigerian workplace is based essentially on ethnic and other tribal considerations which could lead to withdrawal or aggressive tendencies being manifested. Poor and substandard residential and/or community conditions can also act as significant stressors. As Ebie (1983) points out, workers who reside in poor and substandard residential areas in Nigeria are more prone to theft, drug abuse and other crime-related activities which could be carried over to their places of work.

Organizational stressors are those factors which are directly associated with the organization that causes stress. Brief et al. (1981) posit that each organization usually comprises of groups and individuals as well as some other macro-level dimensions that are unique to such organization. These -macro-level dimensions are potential stressors, and as shown in Fig. 1 can be classified under organizational policies, structures, physical conditions or processes. Group stressors are those factors associated with group dynamics, that exert considerable influence on behaviour, and which could be potential sources of stress. We identify three of such group stressors, i.e. lack of group cohesiveness, lack of social support and intra-individual, interpersonal and inter-group conflict.

Lack of group cohesiveness, could be a potential source of stress, in that most workers, especially those at the lower levels of an organization operate more efficiently in cohesive and understanding groups (Beehr and Newman 1978). Thus, where a worker is unable to fraternize and relate closely with a particular chosen group of workers, as a result of the organization task design, or .due to the unreceptive attitude of some members therein, stress may build up. Lack of social support could also be a potential source of stress, as the level of social support given to a worker by other workers may influence his behaviour considerably. Beehr and Newman '(1978), assert that members of a cohesive group appear to be better off when they share their joys and tribulations together. Thus, where an individual is deprived of such socializing, he is likely to experience some degree of stress.

Intergroup conflict is usually associated with incompatible or hostile acts between intra-individual motives such as personal goals or motivational needs, between individuals in a group or between groups. Such conflicts could thus be a potential source of stress. Individual stressors are those factors associated with an individual that may cause stress. According to Luthans (1989), individual stressors may include conflict, ambiguity, personality dimensions and life and career changes. A conflict may arise when a worker gets involved in different roles in his family, community, church, club, professional association and workplace, etc which may be at variance with each other. Thus, the 'time demand' of one role may be incompatible with the 'time pressure' of another, thereby resulting in stress build up. Ambiguity may arise when a worker has inadequate or insufficient information or knowledge to enable him effectively perform his job. This could arise from poor communication, inadequate training or the deliberate distortion of information by other workers. Any of the foregoing situations could lead to stress build up. An unexpected or unanticipated change in the life or career of a worker could also cause stress.

The Effects of Job Stress

As we pointed out earlier, small amounts of stress may not be completely bad for employees as a means of enhancing their job performance. Some jobs such as those of journalists or company executives actually require considerable amounts of stress to spur them into action, and thus meet up with their tight/busy schedules and deadlines- However, in general terms, most jobs require only mild levels of stress or else performance would be adversely affected (Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1991 a). Thus, when stress levels rise sharply,

performance levels tend to drop considerably. According to Khan and Byosiere (1992), the effects of job stress usually manifest in the individual, physiologically, psychologically and behaviourally. The physiological effects of high levels of stress include changes in the heartbeat rate and respiration, headache, high blood pressure, heart attack and high levels of cholesterol, which could result in heart disease, ulcer, arthritis and cancer. Ganster and Schaubroeck (1991a), however note that not all heart diseases are directly linked to stress. They observe that some cases could be hereditary or due to some other physiological conditions. Khan and Byosiere (1992), assert that the psychological effects of high levels of stress may include anger, anxiety, apathy, depression, nervousness, irritability, resignation, tension and boredom, which could result in changes in the individual's mood, lowered self-esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate and take decisions, procrastination and job dissatisfaction. The behavioural aspects of the incidence of stress include sleeplessness, alcohol and drug abuse, increased smoking and loss of appetite, which could lead to changes in the individual's mood, inability to concentrate, loss of appetite, absenteeism, sudden noticeable loss or gain in weight and tardiness (Ebie, 1983; Khan and Byosiere, 1992).

Some Preventive Measures and Job Stress Coping Strategies

The need to identify the root cause or causes of job stress, and seek ways to prevent it or cope with it, as the case may be has received scholarly attention in the literature over the years (see Beehr and Newman, 1978; Brief et al., 1981; Chen and Spector, 1992 and Narayanan et al., 1999). Thus, various measures that seek to prevent the occurrence of job stress and strategies for coping with existing cases of stress have been advocated in the literature (see Ebie, 1983; Nweze, 1984; Asika and Ade-serrano, 1985 and Akinnusi, 1995).

The following preventive measures and coping strategies were proffered:

1. **Exercises:** Regular physical fitness exercises can be very useful in handling both existing cases of stress and potential ones. Such exercises may involve 20-30 minutes of walking, jogging, swimming, cycling and playing tennis etc, at least three times a week. Willis (1991), asserts that physical exercises help to 'burn off excess adrenaline in the system and in the long-run stimulate the production of natural morphine-like chemicals in the body, which induce a feeling of well-being and relieve nervous fatigue. Adrenaline is a substance produced by the adrenal glands in the human body which increases the body's heart rate and speed of reaction when one is excited, afraid or angry.
2. **Time Management.** Beehr and Newman (1978), contend that time pressure is a major cause of stress among middle and upper levels of management in most organizations. An empirically based study on stress among bank executives in Nigeria by Akinnusi (1995) supports this view. Beehr and Newman (1978), assert further, that stress arising from time pressure could be reduced if managers adopt the habit of drawing up a list of the things they intend to do each day. Thus, ensuring that they keep track of how their work is progressing on a daily basis. They may also need to prioritize their tasks and delegate minor assignments to subordinates. Also, they should consider taking lunch in the office at least once or twice a week to save time and catch up on paper work.
3. **Relaxation.** Appropriate breaks and rest periods in which workers engage in some form of relaxation, mental diversion or meditation may be necessary to prevent any incidence of stress in the workplace. Ebie (1983) posits that meditation reduces stress by slowing down the body's involuntary nervous system, and changing the activities of the brain to patterns associated with relaxation.

4. *Cognitive Therapy*. Ganster and Schaubroeck (1991) assert that cognitive therapy is a treatment programme that can handle stress-related problems. It seeks to encourage workers in an organization to adopt a positive attitude towards one another in order to create a conducive working environment.
5. *Behavioural Self-Control*. Workers should always strive to maintain some degree of self-control' and restraint, when handling explosive situations or sensitive matters, that could otherwise put them under undue pressure and stress. Thus, as Luthans (1989) points out, there is the need for workers to try and skillfully manage the antecedents of their own behaviour to avoid or prevent any incidence of stress in the workplace.
6. *Networking*. Networking is an informal but influential system of socializing, usually along religious, tribal and/or socio-cultural lines in which ideas, pleasantries and other matters of common interest are freely discussed (Ahiazu, 1981). The empathy and understanding shown between members of such social networks can reduce considerably any incidence of stress in the workplace.
7. *Creation of a Supportive Organizational Climate*. Highly formalized bureaucratic structures with various layers of management that are characteristic of today's large organizations have often resulted in an inflexible and impersonal corporate climate that invariably leads to stress build-up (Nweze, 1984). Such workplaces tend to contribute considerably to job stress. Thus, there is the need to cut down on the management layers.
8. *Enriching Job Designs*. Workers engaged in routinely structured jobs often tend to be unmotivated and dissatisfied with their job design (Nwaroh, 1991), Such workers are likely to experience job stress at some point in time, which could be effectively handled by enriching the design of their jobs. Thus, by improving the job content in terms of responsibility and opportunities for growth, and also improving the job characteristics in terms of skill variety, task identity and task significance, the worker will find his job more challenging and satisfying. Hopefully, such measures would avert any potential job stress that may emanate from this source in the workplace.
9. *Clarification of Organizational Roles*. Role conflict as we pointed out earlier, can induce stress, when the 'time demand' of one role is incompatible with the 'time pressure' of another. Thus, by resolving such conflicts through the clarification of different organizational roles, stress could be eliminated or at least minimized in the workplace.
10. *Career Planning and Development*. Many organizations tend to take career planning and development for granted. Employees are often left to their own fate on this very important issue. More often than not, employees try to work out their career plans and strategies independent of any management input or guidance. Thus, where an employee is uncertain or confused as to how to map out a realistic and enduring career plan, anxiety and frustration may set in, which could lead to the incidence of stress in the workplace.

Employee Productivity

The term productivity was applied for the first time by François Quesnay, the mathematician and economist who was an adherent of physiocracy school. He believes authority of any government is relied on increasing of productivity in the agriculture sector by proposing the economic table. Another French man in 1883 called Littere defined productivity as knowledge and technology of production. Fredrick Venislo, Taylor and Frank and Lillian Gilbert conducted studies about labor division, improving the methods and determining the standard time in order to enhance efficiency simultaneous with the beginning of scientific management movement period at the beginning of 1900 (Darvish, 2008).

Productivity is maximization of utilizing the resources, human force and schemes scientifically to decrease expenses and increase employees, managers and consumers' satisfaction. Other definitions consider human force productivity as appropriate maximized utilization of human force towards goals of the organization with the lowest time and minimum expense. According to the National Productivity Organization in Iran, productivity is an intellectual attitude towards work and life. This is similar to a culture that its purpose is to make activities more intelligent for a better and excellent life. Productivity is achieving maximum possible profit from the labor force, power, talent and human force skill, land, machine, money, equipments of time, place, etc to enhance welfare of the society so that increasing of it is considered by the clear-sighted in politics, management and economy as a necessity towards enhancement of humans' living standard and society (Darvish, 2008).

Nigerian Journalists and Job Stress

Journalism is about people. It is information disseminated to people. It is communication and also events of the day distilled into a few words, sounds or pictures processed by the mechanics of communication to satisfy human needs. Anaeto (2007) asserted that it is the collection, gathering, organization and presentation of information on events, issues etc to the public; thus keeping the public informed on issues in their environments. On the other hand, a journalist is one whose occupation is journalism. He engages in the collection, writing, editing and publishing of news or news articles, through the print or electronic media.

The importance of journalists in the developing countries cannot be over emphasized. The journalist play a vita role in creating or influencing the people's system of evaluation and behavioural patterns. In the task of nation building, he has contributed immensely. The journalists in the developing countries including Nigeria have contributed in no small way to the propagation of national consciousness, people's co-existence and development cooperation between the heterogeneous communities and sometimes conflicting interest groups. In Nigeria, the journalists have played important role in the process of change while the media remain the only means of obtaining the perspective of the world around and beyond Perhaps there is nowhere else had stress been so glaring, more diffused and better reinforced than in the media especially newspaper business. This example explains the chaotic situation:

Yinka Adebayo (not real name) is a roving reporter with a daily newspaper in Lagos. Like most of his colleagues on other beats, he works six days in a week and sometimes, no break throughout the week. His daily work schedule demands that he works on general beat, sourcing for news in the morning; retiring to the office in the afternoon. On many occasions, he covers more than one beat in a day and the news stories, he must file in for possible publication. Aside from these daily exercises, he needs to contend with the traffic situation in Lagos because he has no car. He gets to the office amidst various forms of distractions like noise from itinerant sales persons and preachers inside the bus, vehicular fumes etc. Having reached the newsroom preparatory to writing his stories, the chaotic situation creeps in to reinforce the young man's tension. The television set is blaring the hourly news; so also is the radio set placed few metres from his desk. He gets home late in the night to find out that the gate had been locked and upon repeated knocks, he entered to face a black-out. Yinka is not only fatigued but also frustrated. This young man is not alone in this predicament. His editor is also stressed. Each day, he examines a pile of manuscripts, edits, proofreads and sometimes re-writes stories to suit the house style of his newspaper. Often, he attends to visitors and the official and personal problems of his subordinates. At home, the wife and children complain of lack of attention due to his non-availability throughout the week and late arrival from work daily.

The stressors in the lives of journalists are legion, emanating from different sources namely: from organization or employer, from jobs, career, relationship with colleagues, family and friends and from an internal negative conceptions of ourselves. From the work place, one of the major stressors one may encounter is the amount of work assigned. It may sound interesting to note that either work overload or job underload will create stress while an overload job mounts unnecessary pressure on the individual thus bringing strains to bear on his or her functional part, an underload job will have similar effect in a different way. Dimkpa (1997) reporting Cranwell-Ward (1987) explains that overload “may result from too much work being allocated to you or attracting too much work to yourself.” Another major stressor from job-related issue is fear. The editor’s fear of making the wrong decision, which could be costly for the organization may constitute a major stressor so also the inability to take good decisions. Journalists have been known to work under strict deadlines and this could induce stress. Production of newspaper has deadline guiding its operation; there is time within which news stories must be submitted, so also the printing and the transportation of copies to the markets. If any of these specified times is omitted, it may lead to tension on the part of the operatives.

Stress can be career-induced when our values do not match the demands and circumstances of our progression. Some journalists whose expectations became misplaced in the course of their career may eventually be stressed. The resulting imbalance between their needs or aspirations and that of their career usually leads to stress. An individual can also develop stressors within himself and by himself. This means all that stress could be self-induced arising from setting unrealistic goals and standards and striving relentlessly to achieve them; when one is unable to manage himself in terms of how he manages his time and design his priorities.

Theoretical Framework

Two-Factor Theory (Motivator -Hygiene Theory)

Fredrick Hertzberg’s two-factor theory attempts to explain satisfaction and motivation in work place. This theory states that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are driven by different factors - motivator and hygiene factors – respectively. “The two-factor theory rejects the assumption that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are ends of the same continuum” (Lacy, 1993). According to Hertzberg, dissatisfaction is affected by hygiene factors, such as salary, security, and interpersonal relations. But satisfaction is affected by needs and motivators, such as recognition, achievement, and responsibility. However, two factor theory is relevant to this study in the knowledge that job satisfaction and motivation are two factors that enhances employee productivity in any organization regardless of the job stress. This however, stand to connot that journalist productivity is motivation base such as recognition, achievement and responsibility ownership. Stress in organization is inevitable. It can be experienced at any time. But what the case in journalism practice, motivation and satisfaction overrides stress of all sort.

Systems Theory

According to the systems theory, an enterprise is seen as a system, a set of objects with a given set of relationships between the objects and their attributes, connected or related to each other and to their environment in such a way as to form a whole or entirety. An organizational system is composed of people, money, materials, equipment, and data, all of which are combined in the accomplishment of some purpose. The subsystems typically are identified as divisions or departments whose activities aid the larger system in reaching its

goals (Peter K. et.al, 1995:10). Certain elements are common to all organizational systems. They are inputs (e.g., labor, equipment, and capital) and processes, that is, methods whereby inputs are converted into outputs (e.g., goods and services). Feedback is information about the outputs or processes and serves as an input to help determine whether changes are necessary to attain the goals (ibid). Management's role is to coordinate the input, process, and output factors and to analyze and respond to feedback. The systems approach emphasizes the relationship between the organization and its external environment. Environmental factors are outside the organization and beyond its control. However, they have an impact on its operations. Accordingly, management must monitor environmental trends and events and make changes deemed necessary to ensure the organization's success.

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to discuss various aspects of job stress and other stress related issues within the context of work situations in Nigeria. We examined the different effects of stress, and the myriad of factors that could cause stressful conditions in the Nigerian workplace. We also looked at the physiological, psychological and physical effects of job stress and proffered some preventive measures and coping strategies. We conclude that the growing incidence of job stress in Nigeria needs to be addressed, as its impact in the ambience of depressing socio-political and economic conditions can be nothing other than debilitating and destabilizing to the nation and its workforce.

Recommendations

1. Employers of journalists should take the issue of stress management very serious as many of the journalists experience different degrees of stress.
2. Management of various organizations from which journalists serve should endeavour to organize seminars on stress management to enable journalists learn stress coping strategies.
3. Individual journalists on their part should learn to exercise personal control over the demands of the work they have to deal with to avoid stress.
4. It is imperative for policy makers to establish legal framework that makes stress management issues mandatory for employees.

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