

Job stress and employees' productivity in telecommunication sector of Nigeria (A study of Globacom, MTN, Airtel and Etisalat)

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Abstract

Stress is a common element that individuals face in their daily activities at home, school and workplace. This study examines job stress and its effect on employees' productivity. Five components of job stress: poor working condition, bullying/harassment, increased workload, hostile working environment and downsizing were analyzed using descriptive data analysis, correlation and regression analysis using SPSS version 22. 120 questionnaires were distributed to the staff of MTN, Globacom, Airtel and Etisalat of which 110 were successfully filled and returned. The finding showed that there is negative relationship between job stress and employees productivity. The research recommends that employers of labour should make all efforts to ensuring that the workplace is stress-free. It also recommends that occupational psychologist and stress management experts be employed to provide advice and therapy to stressed employees to prevent adverse effects on productivity.

Keywords: Job stress, Employees' productivity, Poor working condition, Bullying/Harassment, Increased workload, Hostile working environment and Downsizing

1. Introduction

Firstly, let's debunk one myth: stress is not necessarily a bad thing. Without this brilliant ability to feel stress, humankind would not have survived. The challenge is when our body goes into a state of stress in inappropriate situations. When blood flow is going only to the most important muscles needed to fight or flee, brain function is minimized. This can lead to an inability to 'think straight'; a state that is a great hindrance in both our work and home lives (Stress Management Society, 2016). This view agrees with Segal, Smith, Segal and Robinson (2016) [4] explained that Stress within your comfort zone can help you perform under pressure, motivate you to do your best, even keep you safe when danger looms. But when stress becomes overwhelming, it can lower your immune system and damage your health, mood, relationships, and quality of life. In other words, Stress is a known phenomenon that affects us all at some certain points in our lives. Knowing how to identify when one is under stress, what are the causes (triggers) and various ways of coping with stress can effectively increase ones physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, if not it could damage our lives, family and workplace productivity and performance. Olagunju (2010) [15] defined stress as a chronic complex emotional state with apprehension and is characteristic of various nervous and mental disorders. In essence, stress is a manifest response to an individual to defiling basic needs of life in an environment of competing needs (Bewell, 2014) [14]. Lahey (2003) [16] defined stress as any event or circumstance that strains or exceeds a person's ability to cope. Work-related stress is the negative reaction that occurs when demands at work exceed your ability to cope (Merkett, 2014) [3]. It is basically a mismatch between the individual capabilities and organizational demand (Pediwal, 2011; Jayashree, 2010, Mubasher *et al*, 2013) [8, 11].

Job productivity can be viewed as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish the task assigned to him/her successfully, subject to the normal constraints of reasonable utilization of the available resources (Dar *et al*, 2011) [7]. In any organization tasks are performed with the help of resources; material, machine, money and most importantly men. All other resources except for human beings as employees are non-living. Employees make use of these resources to generate output without them other resources will be useless, dormant and will not produce anything. Therefore human resource is the greatest asset any organization can have and should be given the highest priority.

Job stress and workplace health have become issues of great concern over the last decade, both internationally and nationally. Given the value of work in this society, the amount of time spent at work and the current changes that are affecting the nature of work, it is not surprising that work stress appears to be increasing (Szymanski, 1999) [5].

Nigeria telecommunication sector is one of the biggest sectors of the economy dominated by four big multinational companies; MTN, Globacom Limited, Airtel and Etisalat, employing thousands of people occupying different positions across different fields (sales, customer relations, technical, marketing, human resource, administration just to mention a few). Like other sectors their employees are not exempted from job stress inherent in their routine jobs; poor condition of service, bullying and harassment, work overload, downsizing and harsh working environment just to mention a few.

This research shed more light on some of the major causes of job stress in the organization, the negative effect of job stress on employee's job performance and, certain policies that can be formulated to manage stress in the organization. Finally, it is the opinion of the researchers that it will serve as a springboard for further research.

2. Concept of Stress

According to Amadi (2007) ^[29] in defining stress two schools of thought have emerged. While one group describes it term of the cause (event or experience), the other say it is the emotional response due to an event called stressor (effect)

Lahey (2003) in defining stress as a cause notes that it is any event or circumstance that strains or exceeds a person's ability to cope. Similarly, Santrocks (2000) ^[19] defined stress as the response of individuals to the circumstance and event called stressors, that threatens them and tax their abilities. Whitebourne (2000) ^[21] also defined stress as the unpleasant emotional reactions and responses an individual makes when he perceives an event to be threatening. Robbins (1999) ^[28] a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraints, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.

Robber and Reber (2001) ^[20] while defining stress in term of effect say that stress is a state of psychological tension produced by some form of forces or pressure imposed on a person. Danga (1991) ^[22] stress is a generalized, non-specific response of the body to the physical and psychological demand made on it. Ngoka (2000) ^[18] describes stress as the response people make to environmental and internal demands which individuals have to adjust. McGrate (1976) ^[17] argued that stress comes when an environmental situation is perceived to be posing a demand which proves that the person's potential and resources to cope are insufficient.

According to National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (2014) ^[27], Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the workers. A similar view is shared by Greiner (1998). Job stress occurs when one's job demands are incompatible or mismatched with the mental regulation processes, such as information processing, planning, and movement execution.

Kotteeswari and Sharief (2014) ^[9] Job stress is a chronic disease caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and overall well-being of his body and mind. It negatively related to performance. In other words, higher the stress, lower the performance. Job stress has become a major challenge for the organizations due to its immense occurrence. The employees work behavior is greatly affected due to stress. It is understood that employees are the most important assets for the organizations due to their major role in running the organization effectively and successfully and cannot be treated like machines. The employees who experienced less stress are more cooperative and serve as assets for an organization but when the organization ignored its employees stress and needs, then the results are increased absenteeism, cost, low productivity, low motivation and usually legal financial damages which eventually affect the employee work behavior and leads him/her towards the counter-productive work behavior (Aftab and Javeed, 2012) ^[10]

3. Causes of Job Stress

Ekundayo (2014) ^[25] while discussing the sources and types of Stress at work stated that the causes of stress are not only numerous but they are complex and inextricably interwoven. The causes of stress can be either due to remote or immediate

factors or they can also be externally induced or as a result of forces operating within the individual. Endogenous forces operate within the individual and are made up of such factors like personality traits, psychological features such as attitude, emotional disposition, inferiority or superiority complex, introversion or extroversion etc. Exogenous include socio-political, cultural, religious, economic, organizational structure, climate and career development policy.

Merkett (2014) ^[3] identify several causes of job stress among employees; poor working conditions such as noise or bad lighting, long working hours, difficult relationships with colleagues, having too much or too little to do, lack of control in your working environment, not feeling valued for the work you do, bullying at work, being under pressure to meet deadlines. He further argued that an employee may feel stressed if he is in the wrong job for his skills, abilities and expectations. Sometimes there's no single cause of work-related stress. It can be caused by a build-up of small things over time or a mix of factors in your work and personal life.

Mubasher *et al* (2013) ^[13] also identified five causes of job stress; lack of financial rewards, inflexibility in work hours, personal issues, low control over the work environment and management system (bureaucratic). Kotteeswari *et al* (2014) ^[9] Workplace stress derives from many sources. It can be a demanding boss, annoying co-workers, rebellious students, angry customers, hazardous conditions, long commutes and a never-ending workload. Your work performance is also affected by stressors such as family relationships, finances and a lack of sleep stemming from fears and anxieties about the future.

Ibem *et al* (2011) ^[26] identified a checklist of the different work characteristics and associated stressors; personal characteristics related sources, relationship related sources, work nature and time-related source, organizational policy and position related sources and situation/ environmentally related sources of stress and others. Meneze (2005) ^[12] described Misfit with the organization, no part in decision making, were reported main causes of stress as well no control over work environment, personality traits, lack of relaxation along with ambiguous rules affect employees performance.

4. Employees Productivity

Simply put, productivity is efficiency in production: how much output is obtained from a given set of inputs. As such, it is typically expressed as an output-input ratio. Single-factor productivity measures reflect units of output produced per unit of a particular input. Labor productivity is the most common measure of this type, though occasionally capital or even materials productivity measures are used (Syverson, 2011) ^[24]. Krugman, (1994) ^[6] defined productivity as a ratio between the output volume and the volume of inputs. In other words, it measures how efficiently production inputs, such as labour and capital, are being used in an economy to produce a given level of output. Rolloos (1997) ^[30] defined the productivity as that which people can produce with the least effort. Productivity is a ratio to measure how well an organization (or individual, industry, country) converts input resources (labor, materials, machines etc.) into goods and services.

Employee productivity (sometimes referred to as workforce productivity) is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers (Rouse, 2014) ^[1]. Meneze (2005) ^[12] defined employee productivity as the employee’s ability to produce work or goods and services according to the expected standards set by the employers, or beyond the expected standards.

Empirical Studies

Dar *et al* (2011) ^[7] studied the impact of stress on employees job performance in the business sector of Pakistan study. 143 employees of different universities, multinational companies and banks with at least 5 years working experience in them were used. Random sampling technique was used to select them. Relevant data were collected using structured questionnaire. The chi-square test and t-test were used to test the hypothesis. The findings showed that job stress results in subjective effects such as unclear role/errands, feeling undervalued, workplace bullying/victimization, fear of joblessness, work-home interface, economic instability among our target population and exposure to the traumatic incidents at work.

Kotteeswari *et al* (2014) ^[9] examined job stress and its impact on employees’ performance a study with reference to employees working in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry in India concluded that there is an inverse relationship between job stress and employees’ job performance and if any organization must maximize their returns on investment empowering their employees to work in a stress free environment is sacrosanct. Mubasher *et al* (2013) ^[13] also examined the causes and effects of job stress on employees productivity in the Public health sector of Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K). Data of 210 respondents were analyzed using Pearsons correlation and simple linear regression. The result showed that among public health sector employees Lack of financial rewards, Inflexibility in work hours, Personal issues, Low control over the work environment and Bureaucratic management system have a negative correlation with employees’ productivity. While the lack of financial reward was responsible for the majority of jobs stress among workers.

Chovwen (2013) ^[23] examined the influence of joint and independent predictions of emotional intelligence, perceived leadership style and job characteristics on occupational stress among bank workers in South East, Nigeria. 210 male and female bankers were selected for the study. Five hypotheses were tested with two fully and three partially confirmed. Emotional intelligence, perceived leadership style and job characteristics significantly and jointly predicted stress, in addition, those with high emotional intelligence reported lower stress experience compared with those with a low level of emotional intelligence. This lies in the identification of the factors that are central to a person controlling his/her stress and suggesting strategies to promote the stress reduction process. She suggested that employers can help employees change their perceptions of stress, provide them with strategies to help them cope and improving their confidence in their ability to do so.

Bewell *et al* (2014) ^[14] analyzed work-induced stress and its influence on organizational effectiveness and productivity

among Nigerian Television Authority and Nigerian Immigration Service workers observed that there is a strong linkage between job stress, work productivity and work effectiveness and are relatively inseparable. They recommended that various organizations in Nigeria employ the services of trained psychologists and personnel to help provide coaching, counseling and necessary coping skills to employees to help maximize productivity.

5. Research Methodology

The dependent variable is the employees' productivity. The independent variables are poor working condition, bullying/harassment, increased workload, hostile working environment and downsizing. The main purpose of this work is to identify and understand some of the factors attributed to job stress and the relationship between job stress and employees productivity. To achieve the aim of the research 120 questionnaires were shared to the staff of these companies (MTN, Globacom, Airtel and Etisalat). We also used telephone interview to derive relevant information from staff in the far distance. 110 questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire used Five likert (0=Highly Disagreed, 1=Disagreed, 2=Indifferent, 3=Agreed, 4=Highly Agreed) scale. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 22. Descriptive data analysis, Pearson correlation and Regression were to test the impact of all the variables on employees' productivity. For this study, the questionnaire is divided into 2 sections demographics and job stress & its impact on employee productivity.

The following alternate hypotheses will be tested to

- H₁₁:** There is a negative relationship between poor condition of service and employees productivity
- H₁₂:** Bullying/harassment has a negative effect on employees productivity.
- H₁₃:** There exist a negative relationship between increased workload and employees productivity.
- H₁₄:** Hostile working environment has a negative effect on employees productivity.
- H₁₅:** There is a negative relationship between downsizing and employees productivity.

6. The Profile of the Respondent

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	81	73.6	73.6
Female	29	26.4	100
	110	100	

The majority of the respondents are male 73.8 % as against female 26.4 %. We can conclude that Telecommunication sector is a male dominated sector.

Table 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Single	62	56.4	56.4
Married	48	43.6	100
	110	100	

The majority of the respondents are single 56.4% as against 43.6 % married.

Table 3: Age of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
20-30 years	50	45.5	45.5
31-40 years	35	31.8	77.3
41-50 years	23	20.9	98.2
50-above	2	1.8	100
	110	100	

Age grade 20-30 years forms the majority of the respondents and accounted for 45.5% Followed closely by age group 31-40 years 31.8 %. We can also conclude that the majority of people working in the telecommunication sector are young people. This is in line with the work of Ojeleye (2016)^[31] and Mumini (2013). 41-50 years is 20.9% and 50-above years 1.8%.

Table 4: The Employment Type

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Permanent	68	61.8	61.8
Contract	42	38.2	100
	110	100	

Table 6: Bully/Harassment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	10	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Disagree	10	9.1	9.1	18.2
	Indifference	10	9.1	9.1	27.3
	Agree	40	36.4	36.4	63.6
	strongly agree	40	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	

The Table above it is clear that the respondents concur that harassment/bully is a cause of stress and the existence of it goes a long way to affect their productivity negatively. 36.4% strongly agree, 36.4% also agree while 9.1% each strongly disagree, disagree and indifferent.

Table 7: Work overload

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	20	18.2	18.2	18.2
	Agree	40	36.4	36.4	54.5
	strongly agree	50	45.5	45.5	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	

The table above clearly shows that the respondents agree that there is an inverse relationship between work overload and their productivity; the ability to get things done efficiently.

Table 9: Downsizing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Indifferent	20	18.2	18.2	27.3
	Agree	40	36.4	36.4	63.6
	strongly agree	40	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	

From the table above 36.4%, each strongly agree and agree that downsizing by their companies usually have negative effect on their productivity while 9.1 % were indifferent and

Contract employment accounts for 38.2% while the majority of the respondents 61.8% are permanently employed by these telecommunication companies

7. General Findings of the Hypotheses

Table 5: Poor condition of service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	30	27.3	27.3	27.3
	Indifferent	20	18.2	18.2	45.5
	Agree	30	27.3	27.3	72.7
	strongly agree	30	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	

The table above showed that 27.3 % strongly agree, 27.3% agree while 27.3% strongly and 18.2% are indifferent. We can conclude that there is negative relationship between poor condition of service and employees productivity even though it is not very significant.

45.5% strongly agree, 36.4% agree while only 18.2% disagree. None strongly disagree and indifferent.

Table 8: Hostile working environment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	10	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Agree	70	63.6	63.6	72.7
	strongly agree	30	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	

In the above table, 27.3% strongly agree, the majority of the respondent 63.6% agree that productivity is negatively affected by hostile working environment while 9.1 % strongly disagree.

18.2 % disagree that downsizing has negative effect on their productivity

Table 10: Correlation Analysis

		Poor condition of service	Bully/Harassment	Work overload	Hostile working environment	Downsizing	Employees productivity
Poor condition of service	Pearson Correlation	1	.440**	.686**	.451**	.330**	-.178
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.063
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110
Bully / Harassment	Pearson Correlation	.440**	1	.476**	.550**	.226*	-.741**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.018	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110
Work overload	Pearson Correlation	.686**	.476**	1	.643**	.704**	-.303**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110
Hostile working environment	Pearson Correlation	.451**	.550**	.643**	1	.639**	-.482**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110
Downsizing	Pearson Correlation	.330**	.226*	.704**	.639**	1	-.352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.018	.000	.000		.000
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110
Employees productivity	Pearson Correlation	-.178	-.741**	-.303**	-.482**	-.352**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.063	.000	.001	.000	.000	
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table: 10 showed that the dependent variable employees' productivity is correlated with the independent variables; poor condition of service, bullying/harassment, work overload, hostile working environment and downsizing. The results showed that there exist a significant negative relationship between four of the independent variables: bullying/harassment (-741), work overload (-303), hostile working environment (-482), downsizing (-352) at 1% and one insignificant inverse relationship poor condition of service (-178). In other words, there exist a significant negative

relationship between the contributor or causes of job stress and employees productivity meaning that an increase in job stress will lead to a decrease in employees productivity. Based on the analyses of the data from the table: 5 to table: 10 we can conclude that poor condition of service, bullying/harassment, hostile working environment, work overload and downsizing have an inverse or negative relationship with employees productivity. Therefore, we accept all the alternate hypotheses.

Regression Analysis

Table 11: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	-.813 ^a	.661	.644	.649

a. Predictors: (Constant), downsizing, bully/harassment, poor condition of service, hostile working environment, work overload

Table 12: Anova^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	85.277	5	17.055	40.484	.000 ^b
	Residual	43.814	104	.421		
	Total	129.091	109			

a. Dependent Variable: employees productivity

b. Predictors: (Constant), downsizing, bully/harassment, poor condition of service, hostile working environment, work overload.

The value of R (-.813) in the table: 11 shows a negative relationship between by downsizing, bully/harassment, poor condition of service, hostile working environment, work overload on employees productivity. The value of R² is 0.644 (64.4%) meaning that the variables in the equation jointly explained 64.4% of the variation in the equation while the remaining 35.6% is explained by variables not included in the equation. In other words, the R-square value of 0.644 expresses the percentage effect of stress dimension on employees' productivity jointly explained by downsizing, bully/harassment, poor condition of service, hostile working environment, work overload on employees productivity.

Table: 12 explains the significant overall correctness and strength of the model. In table 12 the F value is 40.484 with significant of 1% which showed that there is a high and significant linkage between job stress and employees productivity in the model.

7. Discussion of Findings

The following findings are discussed below;

- (a) The majority of the employees of the four major telecommunication companies agreed that poor condition of services has a negative effect on their productivity.
- (b) The respondents also concur that bullying and harassment by superiors have adverse effect on their ability to get things done efficiently.
- (c) They also agreed that work overload has an adverse effect on their productivity.
- (d) The majority of the respondent agreed that hostile working environment has an inverse effect on their productivity.
- (e) Finally downsizing by the employers of labour have a negative effect on employees productivity.

8. Recommendation and Conclusion

The study recommends the following

- (a) Employers of labour should make all efforts to ensuring that the workplace is stress-free.
- (b) All forms of bullying, sexual and non-sexual harassment should be discouraged and relevant channels and media by which occurrence can be reported be ensured.
- (c) Occupational psychologist and stress management experts should be employed to provide advice and therapy to stressed employees to prevent adverse effects on productivity.
- (d) Organizations should ensure that prompt information and compensation in the event of downsizing be provided to employees.
- (e) Motivation both monetary and non-monetary is key to boosting the morale of the employees.

The study concludes that job stress has negative effects on employees productivity and employers should motivate, provide a conducive environment, employed the service of occupational psychologist and stress management experts to prevent and manage job stress.

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