

Stress Management Techniques in Banking Sectors in Nigeria.

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Abstract: Stress is often termed as twentieth century syndrome born out of man's race toward modern progress and its ensuring complexities. At one point or the other, everybody suffers from stress. Stress has become a part of day-to-day living of every individual. On the one side, stress provides the means to express talents and energies, and pursue happiness; while on the other it can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological. This paper has been designed to study the stress management techniques of bank employees in Nigeria banking industry. An attempt has been made to find out the relationship between the female and male coping mechanisms during stress. The researcher makes use of gender and sections in determining his decisions. The descriptive statistical, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and ANOVA statistical technique in testing the relationship among variables. The result shows that male and female bank employees will not significantly cope with stress management techniques in Nigerian banking industry. It also shows that male and female bankers were found not to differ significantly on their stress management technique and that stress management is not gender sensitive or gender-centric. The researcher recommends that training, total computerization and others to enable bank employees' cope-up with the stress in the work places. Also the stress management techniques work best when they are used regularly, not just when the pressure is on knowing how to de-stress and doing it when things are relatively calm can help one get through challenging circumstance that may rise.

Keywords: Bank employees, Coping, Management techniques, Stress, Stress management.

I. Introduction

Stress is a burning issue in modern society. It is often termed as twentieth century syndrome born out of man's race towards progress and its ensuring complexities. At one point or the other everybody suffers from stress. While the college or University students may experience stress in meeting the academic demands, the people on the job and businessmen may suffer stress to reach office in time and to complete their projects on time. Even in household ladies may experience stress in managing the home affairs and may resort to look for house help/maids/servants. Stress condition can be real or perceived. However, the brain doesn't differentiate between real and imagined stress. It reacts the same way to both causes of stress by releasing stress hormones equal to the degrees of stress felt. Basically, stress is a person's reaction to events and it can be positive or negative depending upon how that person reacts. It could happen while watching a horror movie or when one is apprehensive of some imminent danger. It is the general wear and tear of the body machines that take place due to extra demands put on it either physically or mentally. One can define stress as the body's non-specific response to any demand made on it. Stress is not by definition synonymous with nervous tension or anxiety. There are basically two types of instinctive stress response: Fight or flight response and general adaption syndrome. Fight or flight response is the short-term response to any uncertain event causing sudden biological changes, such as high blood pressure, sweating etc. On the other hand, general adaption syndrome is the long-term effect of exposure to stress with causes of it. Long-term stressful situations can produce a lasting effect on people. The effect of stress is a deviation from the existing physical and psychological condition of human life. Stress is regarded as an inevitable consequence of employees' functionality. Occupational stress adversely affects the health and performance of the employees of any organisation.

Agulanna (2007) states that stress is inextricably interwoven with life and it ceases as soon as life itself stops. All living thing:- man, plants and animals are in a constant state of dynamic interaction with their environments. Within the interactions, man tries to modify his environment while his environment actually modifies him and in the process, man experiences a kind of tension or stress. He also adds that as the physical, psychological and behavioural reactions experienced by individuals in situations where they feel that their ability to cope may soon be overwhelmed most psychologists define stress as the physiological and psychological response to a condition that threatens or challenges a person and requires some form of adaptation or adjustment. Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it. It is a physiological reaction to either internal cognitive stimuli or external environmental stimuli (Omeje and Agu, 2011). Nelson

and Quick (2003) says that stress is an important topic in organizational behaviour, in part due to the increases in competitive pressures that take a toll on workers and managers alike. The occupational stress should not be considered as a problem of an organisation alone. In general, an economy and a society consist of many socio and economic institutions. These institutions are inter-related in nature. Hence, it should be understood that the stress of an individual worker in an organization not only affects the institution or organisation concerned but also other institutions and organisations of an economy as well. Furthermore, stress is a relative term and not every one may feel stress while working under the same type of circumstance. Thus, the reason for stress may differ from person to person. Stress is not therefore to be considered harmful. On the one side, stress provides the means to express talents and energies, and pursue happiness, while on the other it can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological. An optimum amount of stress can always act as an energizer or motivator and propel people to apply efforts and complete their work but a high level of stress can be a serious threat to the personality traits of the individual and can cause physiological and social problems. In most cases one is not clear about the reasons of stress even though one is experiencing it. Hans Selye, who introduced the concept "stress" for the first time in life sciences in 1936, has defined it as any external event or any internal drive which threatens to upset the organism equilibrium. In literature, stress has been used to refer to the highly energized psycho-physiological state when an organism is faced with a situation that threatens or places unusual physical or psychological demands in it (Pestonjee, 1999). With so many factors contribution to stress, it is difficult to define the concept of stress. However, many people have attempted to define the concept of stress. The first actual scientific investigation of stress is attributed to Hans Selye, 1956 who is considered by many to be the father of stress (Steve, 2002). Stress occurs when the perceived pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope (Lawless and Allan, 2004). Many international agencies such as the international labour organisation and the world health organisation are addressing issues surrounding workplace stress (Lehrer, 2005). Much work has been done about stress in various ways, such as retirement stress, job stress, causes of stress among employees, stress among businessmen etc but not much has been done in the area of finding the stress management techniques especially in the banking sector of Nigeria. This research therefore seeks to explore various stress management techniques employed by banks in the course of their day to day activities in the workplace.

II. Statement of problems

Stress nowadays has almost become an epidemic as just about every day men, women, children and even foetuses suffer from it. This study attempts to explore the factors relating to stress (whether work related or personal) and the various coping mechanisms used by the employees in the banking industry. There are numerous common causes of work related grievances including lack of free time, job environment problem, high workloads, low salary, unrealistic deadlines, job insecurity, lack of clarity of role, and a sense of feeling undervalued. However, role without sufficient levels of challenge, lack of clear policies and procedures and weakly managed organisational situation may also lead to stress. Whilst external causes of stress are more challenging for manager to proactively manage, an employee who receives support from his organization is more likely to limit how this impacts his work role. Although, the banking industry is important in different ways, it seems that there are invisible problems due to stress in this industry. A large number of researches exist on the topic that measures workplace stress but not much had checked the stress encountered by bank employees and ways to cope with it thus prompting this research.

III. Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this research are to determine good techniques employed by bank employees to manage workplace and other stresses.

Specifically, this research paper has the following objectives:

- To investigate the level of stress coping mechanism among bank employees in Nigerian banking industry.
- To determine factors (variables) causing occupational stress among male bank employees in Nigerian banking industry.
- To investigate various techniques used by bank employees in stress management in Nigerian banking industry.

IV. Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses serve as a guide to the researcher in carryout this study.

H₁: Male bankers will adopt a better coping mechanism than their female counterparts in Nigerian banking industry.

H₂: Male and Female bank employees will significantly cope with stress management technique in Nigerian banking industry.

H₃: Sections of bank employees will significantly determine their stress management techniques in Nigerian banking industry.

V. Scope of the study

This research focuses on stress management techniques in Nigeria banking industry. Emphasis is laid on the techniques employed by bank employees with a view to identifying the cause, effect, coping strategies and socio-economic implications of stress on bank employees in our society. It also revolves on the management techniques in coping with bank employees' stress and identification of differences and their objective as it relates to the coping techniques of bank employees in Nigeria banking sector. Because of unavailability of materials and personnel from various banks, the researcher use some selected personnel from First bank of Nigeria Plc and Access bank Plc for this study.

VI. The Seven (7) Best stress management techniques in Nigerian banking industry

- Acknowledge stress is good: Make stress your friend. Based on the body's natural "fight or flight" response that burst of energy will enhance your performance at right moment.
- Avoid stress sneezers: Stressed people sneeze stress germs indiscriminately and before you know it, you are infected too. Protect yourself by recognising stress in other and limiting your contact with them or if you have got the inclination, play stress doctor and teach how to better manage them.
- Learn from the best: When people around are losing their head, who keeps calm? What is their attitude? What language do they use? Are they trained and experienced? Figure it out from a far or sit them down for a chat. Learn from the best stress managers and copy what they do.
- Practice socially acceptable heavy breathing: You can trick your body into relaxing by using heavy breathing breathe in slowly for a count of 7 then breathe out for a count of 11. Repeat the 7 – 11 breathing until your heart rate slows down, your sweaty palms dry off and things start to feel more normal.
- Give stress thoughts the red light: It is possible to tangle yourself up in a stress knot all by yourself. "If this happens, then that might happen and then we are all up the creek" most of these things never happen, so why waste all that energy worrying needlessly?
- Know your trigger point and hot spots: presentations, interview, meetings, giving difficult feedback, tight deadlines... my heart rate is cranking up just writing these down. Make your own list of stress trigger points or hot spots.
- Burn the candle at one end: Lack of sleep, poor diet and no exercise wreaks havoc on our body and mind. Kind of obvious, but worth mentioning as it's often ignored as a stress management techniques. Listen to your mother and don't burn the candle at both ends.

VII. Theoretical framework

Samuel, et al (2009) investigates the relationship between bank distress, Job satisfaction, perceived stress and psychological well-being of employees and depositors in Nigeria's banking sector. The result shows that employees in healthy banks were more satisfied with their jobs than those in distressed bank; but the difference between their mean scores did not reach a significant level thus suggesting that employees in distressed banks equally enjoyed their jobs like their colleagues in healthy banks. They continues that depositors in healthy banks experienced higher level of stress than depositors in distressed banks; while employees in healthy bank experienced higher job satisfaction than those in distressed banks. They also add that employees in distressed banks did not experience higher stress level than those in healthy banks. Yahaya, et al (1996) examines stress and coping strategies among employees in selected banks in Nigeria. The result of a t-test statistical analysis revealed that male and female bankers were not significantly different in stress experience, but respondents of different marital status (single and divorced) were significantly different. They also found that male and female, and married and single respondents (bankers) were significantly different in their coping strategies. Pestonjee (1999) adds that optimum level at which stress is functional is different for different persons and is dependent on a variety of factors like the personality of an individual, self- esteem, educational background, authority to make decisions, control over various organisational and environmental variables and so on. Domenighetti, et al (2003) measures the prevalence of some factors which determine the stress and insecurity perceived by employees in the banking and other economic sectors and found existence of significantly worse health indicators with respect to those of employees working in their sectors. Chriayth (2006) studies the relationship between personality and stress resistance ability in employees and found out that there is existence of high degree of positive correlation between stress resistance and work related stress and in case of non-executive, there is a positive but negligible correlation between stress resistance and work relate stress.

Kumar (2006) investigate and compare the level of stress experienced by the employees of nationalization and non-nationalized banks. His reports shows that an existence of significant difference between them. Chandraiah, et al (2003) investigates the effect of occupational stress and job satisfaction among

managers of different age groups. The study reveals that there was positive relationship between higher levels of job stress and reduced job satisfaction among managers of different ages. They add that the age negatively correlated with occupational stress and positively correlated with job satisfaction. Tabatabae, et al (2011) examines general health, stress associated to the work and job satisfaction of hormozgan cement factory employees in Iran. They found out that general health and job satisfaction of employees were higher than average ($\alpha = 0/01$) but their job stress was lower than average ($\alpha = 0/01$). It also reveals improvement of job stress, thereby suggesting trainings and models for the improvement of employees stress. Akah (2013) studies stressors and job performance of health workers in the public sector of Calabar metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. The result shows that interpersonal conflict and poor skill acquisition did not significantly influence job performance while job insecurity, remuneration and non-participation in decision-making were found to significantly influence job performance of health workers in the public sector. Nandi, et al (2004) investigates jobless, unemployment, work stress, job satisfaction, and the persistence of posttraumatic stress disorder one year after the September 11 attacks. They found out that unemployment and exposure to adverse work conditions, particularly high levels of perceived work stress, may be important determinants of the persistence of posttraumatic stress after a disaster. They add that reemployment did not result in the rapid resolution of posttraumatic stress symptoms and that decreased work satisfaction was not associated with the persistence of PTSD. Jelastopulu, et al (2013) indicates that stress and work satisfaction are negatively related and that the hospital, the department, the participants worked in play a significant role in their work performance. They continue that supervisors' and doctors' support, respect and acceptance influenced the variables under study as well. Mansor, et al (2013) examines the impact of job stress on employee job satisfaction; a study on telecommunication sector of Pakistan. The study reveals that stress is negatively related to employee's job satisfaction because lower job satisfaction were found to experience more stress in the form of workload, role conflict and physical environment compared to those with higher job satisfaction. Akindutire, et al (2012) reveals that there was no significant difference in the causes of stress between the management staff of federal and state college of education. It also shows a significant relationship between all the identified stressors (self-induced stressors, organisational stressors, domestic stressors, macro-environment stressors and miscellaneous stressors) and stress. Wahab (2010) shows that most artisans experienced much stress at their work place than at home, and the stress had negative effects on their productivity at work, and the same time caused medical problems in their body systems. He continues that aerobic, bio-feedback, relaxation, laughter and social support are the commonest ways artisans use to manage stress while their common stressors are drinking, quarrelling, clubbing, flirting and smoking. Samadzadeh (2013) indicates that job satisfaction plays the most important factor followed by organisational stress, organisational intelligence and health care quality. He adds that some positive relationship between organisational performance and work stress, health care quality, organisational intelligence and job satisfaction.

VIII. Method of Data Analysis

The researcher used the descriptive statistical tool in presenting and analysing the data generated for this study. He also used the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and ANOVA statistical F-test by Fisher, 1929 in testing the relationship among variables. In order to decide whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis, a comparison was made between the F- calculated value of ANOVA and the F-critical value. So reject null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis, if F- calculated value is greater than or equal to F- critical value at $P < 0.05$ level of significance and vice versa.

IX. Results and Discussion of findings

<Insert Table 1>

The mean table above should that male marketers obtained the highest mean of 51.6 followed by their female counterpart with a mean of 49.3. Male accounts had a mean of 41.2 while female counterpart had a mean of 40.7. A mean of 37.9 was obtained by female customer services; male customer services obtained a mean of 37.0. Male cashier obtained a mean of 36.5 while the female counterpart followed with a mean of 32.7. Female money transfer obtained a mean of 31.0 followed by male money transfer with a mean of 30.1. Hence, high mean indicates high coping strategy. A mean below 33.7 indicates poor coping strategy.

<Insert Table 2>

From table above f- calculated value of 0.631 was found to be less than f- critical value of 3.7 at $p < .429$ indicating no significant outcome. Therefore, the hypothesis H_0 which states that male and female bank employees will not significantly cope with stress management techniques in Nigerian banking industry is accepted while H_1 which states that male and female bank employees will significantly cope with stress management technique Nigerian banking industry is rejected. In addition, f- calculated value of 49.5 was found to be greater than f- critical value of 3.7 at $p < .000$ indicating a significant outcome. Hence, the H_0 of the

hypothesis which states that sections of a banker will not significantly determine their stress management technique in Nigerian banking industry is rejected while H_1 which states that section of a banker will significantly influence his/her stress management technique in Nigerian banking industry is accepted. From the statistical analysis, those in marketing section had the highest stress management technique followed by those in the accounts section. The next were those in the customer services. Those in the cashier section were second to the last while money transfer section was the least.

X. Conclusion

Based on the statistical calculation above, male and female bankers were found not to differ significantly on their stress management technique. It can be concluded that stress management is not gender sensitive or gender-centric. This means that the problem of stress is both genders sensitive. Furthermore, section of a banker was found to have a significant influence on stress management technique among bank employees in Nigeria banking industry.

XI. Recommendations

- The banking industry is a very important aspect of the economy in particular and the world in general. It is however fraught with so much stress for workers and because of these stressors that affect the workers effects are needed at both the organisational and individual level to develop interventional strategies. At the organisational level there is needed to formulate preventive and remedial strategies to keep their employees away from the exposure of all types of stress. This would involve provision for planned breaks in between the normal working hours to reduce monotonous routine work.
- It can be that the cost of stress is not only direct but also it leads to much indirect costs. The management of stress is therefore very essential especially in banking industry. The most helpful method of dealing with stress is learning how to manage it. These skills when learned work best when used regularly and not just when the pressure is on. At the same time stress can only be managed if one is able to know factors that lead to the stress.
- The management of banks should from time to time on their own train their employees on some stress management mechanisms.
- The relaxation approaches include mind relaxation techniques and mediation and visual imagery. The third technique involves identification and controlling of negative feelings with realistic approach of perceiving life and replacing of negative and rigid thoughts with positive, flexible and realistic thoughts for behaving rationally and productively.
- At the individual level, the three pronged approach of behavioural/ practical techniques, relaxation strategies and cognitive/ thinking techniques. The behavioural approaches to stress management include exercise, and eating a balanced and healthy diet as well as scheduling time for leisure and pleasure. This strategy would also include managing time, setting priorities and limits, delegating responsibility and not procrastinating.

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Table 1: Description Statistics
Dependent Variable: Stress Coping Techniques

Gender Section	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
MALE CASHIER	36.5000	1.29099	4
ACCOUNTS	41.1667	3.60093	6
CUSTOMER SERVICE	37.0000	1.41421	2
MARKETING	51.6250	5.95069	8
MONEY TRANSFER	30.1250	3.44083	8
Total	40.0357	9.30743	28
FEMALE CASHIER	32.7000	3.43350	10
ACCOUNTS	40.7143	3.96967	14
CUSTOMER SERVICE	37.8571	3.13202	7
MARKETING	49.3182	6.75691	22
MONEY TRANSFER	31.0000	3.00000	9
Total	40.7419	8.66297	62
TOTAL CASHIER	33.7857	3.42342	14
ACCOUNTS	40.8500	3.77352	20
CUSTOMER SERVICE	37.6667	2.78388	9
MARKETING	49.9333	6.53338	30
MONEY TRANSFER	30.5882	3.14362	17
Total	40.5222	8.82187	90

Table 2: Test of Between – Subjects Effects
Dependent Variable: Stress Coping Techniques

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5123.285 ^a	9	569.254	25.256	.000
Intercept	91937.229	1	91937.229	4078.915	.000
Gender	14.229	1	14.229	.631	.429
Section	4463.714	4	1115.929	49.510	.000
Gender* Section	53.589	4	13.397	.594	.668
Error	1803.170	80	22.540		
Total	154711.000	90			
Corrected Total	6926.456	89			

a. R- Square = 0.740 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.710)

Table 3: Univariate Analysis of Variance Between – Subjects factors

	Value Label	N	
Gender	1.00	Male	28
	2.00	Female	62
Section	1.00	Cashier	14
	2.00	Accounts	20
	3.00	Customer Service	9
	4.00	Marketing	30
	5.00	Money Transfer	17