

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY AMONG NON-ACADEMIC STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR

OSHA, MARGARET IMOLONG.

Registry Department University of Calabar, Etagbor, Cross River State.

ABSTRACT

T*his study investigated the relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of Non Academic staff in the University of Calabar. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was sourced through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was four thousand six hundred and forty (4640) non academic staff of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The sample size of 352 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan determination table. The research instrument was validated through by experts as provided by supervisors vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring coefficients above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests*

Introduction:

The goal of education in developing countries like Nigeria is to equip students with new skills, tacit knowledge, cultures, attitudes, behaviors and innovative ways of solving day to day problems in life. Education is aimed at supplying the economy with human capital that can convert efficiently other resources into output of high value for quality life (UNESCO, 2010). To attain quality education for sustainable development, the staff academic and non academic who are directly or indirectly involved in instilling knowledge should be well motivated, healthy and satisfied with the job

were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The findings emanating from the tested hypotheses revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of Non Academic staff in the University of Calabar. The study recommends that management of the university of Calabar should create awareness to the employees to enable them be aware of utilization of stress management strategies available in the organization that can result in improved performance. The management should undertake sensitization campaigns to enlighten employees since some were not aware that counselling services were offered within the institution neither did they know that flexitime and leisure facilities existed as stress management strategy. Employees should be made aware of meditation as the easiest way of handling stress and also relaxation by encouraging team building which refreshes the body and mind hence improving performance.

Keywords: *Counselling, Leisure, Organizational Productivity, Stress Management and Work Environment.*

For excellent performance (KUPPET, 2015). Work-related stress refers to the negative adaptive reactions such as anxiety, anger, frustration or depression experienced by a teacher due to new, threatening or over demanding aspects of his/her work as a teacher which is beyond his/her abilities, resources, control or needs thus affecting his/her physical, emotional and/or behavioral health, performance and quality of life (Borg, 2010; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Kyriacou, 2001).

Research conducted in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand and Australia has identified several key causes of work stress commonly associated with academic and non academic staff. These include inadequate salary, work overload, time constraints, lack of promotion opportunities, lack of regular performance feedback, changing job roles, inadequate recognition, inadequate management and participation in management decision making,

inadequate resources and funding, inadequate policies and student indiscipline (Borg, 2010; Bowers et al., 2000; Kyriacou, 2001). Robbins et al. (2008) warns that negative effects of job stress impact negatively on employees leading to high cost of stress due to high turnover rates, increased absenteeism, low productivity and costly stress-related diseases. This consequently drains the resources and cause inefficiency in organizations hence the increasing widespread concern amongst policy makers, employers, employees and researchers over the high levels of stress in the world today.

In the developing countries like Nigeria, quality education goal have not yet been realized fully hence the need to address the challenges within their education systems such as staff stress in order to provide quality education to all for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2010). Locally, the increasing levels of unmanageable work stress amongst teachers in public institutions in Nigeria is compounded by the rapid expansion amid declining funds which has seen the schools experience challenges of poor physical facilities, overcrowding and staff disillusioned by several factors including inadequate and non-competitive salaries, poor working conditions, heavy workload, work-family conflict and institutional governance among others (TSC, 2013; Koech, 2014).

While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with employees' productivity and impact negatively on their physical and emotional health. The ability to deal with it can mean the difference between organizations' success and failure (Segal, Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2016). Stress significantly affects productivity and service delivery of workers (Ngari et al., 2013). Work stress is recognized world-wide as a major challenge of workers' health and the healthiness of their organizations. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market (Cox, Griffiths, & Leka, 2015).

Our Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria has gone through challenging times which had added to the stress levels of Academic and

non-academic staff and by extension productivity in these institutions. The introduction of performance contracting in the Public Service where employees are supposed to meet their targets has been a stressor to public servants who were accustomed to working independently and rarely shared information or coordinated across programs (Majeed, 2014). It is with this in mind that relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of non academic staff in the university Calabar.

Furthermore, this study will also be guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the relationship between counselling and Productivity of the University of Calabar?
- ii. What are the relationship between leisure and Productivity of the University of Calabar?
- iii. What are the relationship between working environment and Productivity of the University of Calabar?

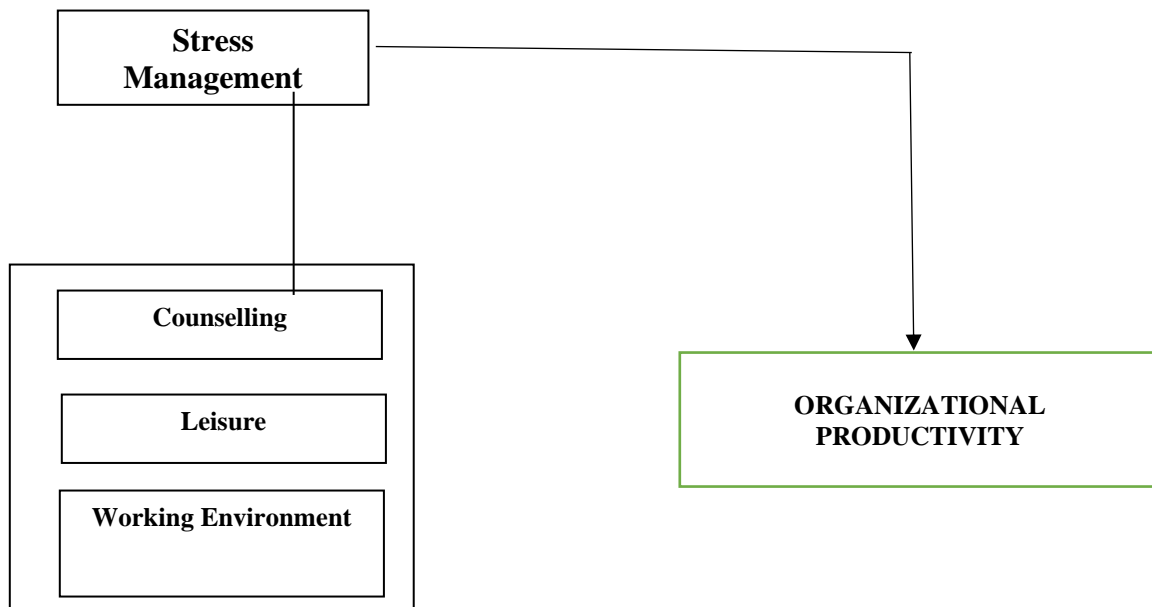


Fig.1 Conceptual Framework for the relationship stress management and organizational productivity.

Source: Desk Research (2020)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Psychological Stress: Lazarus Theory

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 (Lazarus 1993). In this theory, stress is regarded as a relational concept, i.e., stress is not defined as a specific kind of external stimulation or a specific pattern of physiological, behavioral, or subjective reactions. Instead, stress is viewed as a relationship ('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 & Folkman 1986, p. 63). This definition points to two processes as central mediators within the person-environment transaction: cognitive appraisal and coping. In this theory, work place stress is viewed as conflict between an individual and his perception of an acceptable workplace environment. If the workplace environment is not considered acceptable by the employees, there is a possibility of reduction in their commitments to the organizational goals and hence a reduction in productivity. The managers may consider redesigning of the work to ensure it meets employees' expectations of a conducive work environment.

Concept of Stress Management

Stress, which is considered to be one of the most critical problems of our age and affects the quality of life of living things, is the "war or runaway" reaction that an individual develops against a stimulus that threatens his/her adaptation to the environment (Civan et al., 2018). While stress, which is a concept derived from the Latin word "estricia," was used in the 17th century with the meanings of disaster, trouble, calamity, bother, and grief, in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was started to be used for psychological deteriorations in the individual, meaning "power, pressure,

and stress" (Tekiner & Tavas, 2016). According to many researchers and scientists, stress, which is considered to be the social and psychological plague of today, is evaluated as a condition that occurs with the individuals being forced physically and mentally and feeling under pressure and tension (Armağan & Kubak, 2013).

The presence of individuals in working life can help them in gaining a regular job, physical and mental activity, social interaction, positive personal judgment, trust and competition, social prestige, purchasing power, and static social structure (Nart & Batur, 2014). According to Ergül (2012), since the individual is affected by his/her relationships with the environment, individual differences, and psychological processes, these mental and physical desires of individuals may cause them to experience stress within the organization after a certain period of time. Organizational stress occurs due to the individual's reactions to the external environment, situations, or events. Likewise, Chen & Silverthorne (2008) defined job stress as psychological and physiological reactions caused by employees due to unfavorable conditions and circumstances in the workplace. According to Bilgili & Tekin (2019), mostly, intense competition environment, changes in the social and economic structure, and technological developments can also cause stress, which is the outcome of modern life. The fact that individuals face stress at every moment of their lives adversely affects both their work and daily lives. Therefore, managing stress has become increasingly important for both employees and organizations. According to Mirela & Mădălina-Adriana (2011), who define organizational stress as emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological reactions to harmful aspects of the job, work environment, and organizational climate, there are two types of organizational stress. (i) Eustress is positive stress, which improves the energy, creativity, and competitive spirit of individuals and which is used by individuals to achieve high performance. (ii) Distress is a type of stress that has adverse effects on individuals. It is observed in two forms as acute and chronic. Severe stress is negative stress that disrupts the creative thinking performance of individuals (Wang et al., 2019). Chronic stress is non-

specific systemic reactions, which occur with the prolonged exposure of the individual to various internal and external negative factors (Yao et al., 2019).

Dimensions of Stress Management Counselling

According to Global Survey of Health Promotion and Workplace Counseling Strategies by Buck Consultants (2007), 86% of companies in the United States support some kind of counseling program, but only about one in five employers outside United States provide counseling programs. The components of counseling programs differ from company to company and on geographical location. These programs have evolved over time and now include a host of different types of activities for employees. Additionally, most companies hire outside consultants to provide this benefit or use the internal resources of their health insurance companies.

According to the Chapman Institute (2014) there is enormous scientific evidence that unhealthy behavior and modifiable health risks significantly increase health-care costs in all working populations. For over 30 years, researchers have been studying the higher costs associated with such behaviors as smoking, obesity, lack of exercise, poor eating habits, not using seat belts, and excess stress, among other behaviors. The more unhealthy behaviors and risk factors people have, the exponentially higher their health-care costs will be (Chapman Institute, 2014). Unhealthy behaviors and modifiable health risks are *very* common in all working populations and are generating more costs as the population ages. Poor health and well-being at work leads to increased absenteeism and can have adverse effects on significant individual, organizational, economic and societal consequences (Boorman, 2009) Indeed, the exposure to work-related hazards varies across occupations and industries (Hassan *et al.*, 2009). Encouraging evidence indicates that there is a marked decrease in work-related injuries in industrialised countries, due to a general change in the nature of jobs. Nevertheless, policy makers and workers are increasingly concerned with improving the quality of jobs overall (Hassan

et al., 2009). Employees' overall well-being will be affected by factors such as physical security, the extent to which their position is socially valued and the extent to which they are given opportunities to use their skills in their job (Hassan *et al.*, 2009). However, job-specific well-being is not influenced only by these key job-features. Factors at the individual level, such as demographic variables or personality, will also have an effect on employees' wellbeing (Warr, 1999).

Leisure

American Council on Exercise (2000) contends that creating some leisure time in the course of the day allows employees to recharge themselves psychologically and emotionally which can lead to improved job performance. Consequently, an increased involvement in leisure activities and counseling programmes by organizations both in the private and public sectors, in a bid to promote employees' physical and mental health has been witnessed across the globe. According to Taylor (2008), the demand for man-made additional resources for recreation is greater now than before. Though there are many mushrooming of entertainment and sports clubs, many organizations have invested large sums of money to provide such facilities within the workplace. Besides being inherently beneficial to employees, such initiatives can make a significant contribution to reducing absenteeism and raising productivity (Cohen, 1999). Corporate leisure programs in the Western countries have a longer history and have been found in many cases to be related in a beneficial manner to such important opportunity costs as health care costs (Cohen, 1985; Conrad, 1988), employee satisfaction (Schauffler & Rodriguez, 1994), job performance (Wolfe et al., 1994), employee turnover (Shephard, 1992), and absenteeism (Bertera, 1990; Golaszewski & Yen, 1992).

Some companies have also enjoyed intangible benefits such as improved employee morale, health and productivity, employee attraction and retention, and improved image for the corporations (Connors, 1992). Stress in organizations is a growing concern among management

practitioners because of its dysfunctional effects on organizational effectiveness. According to the 1993 World Labour Report from the International Labour Organization, stress has become one of the most serious health issues of the twentieth century. In the USA, job stress has been estimated to cost industries around US\$200 billion annually, and in the United Kingdom, stress is thought to cost up to 10 per cent of the gross national product (Tang & Harumontree, 1992). There is research evidence that consistently links occupational stress with certain physical health symptoms and diseases. Heart disease, ulcers, some programs, which resulted in a return of US\$2.51 for every US\$1.00 of programs costs (Elias & Murphy, 1986).

Working Environment

Menezes and Kelliher (2011) define work environment as the working arrangement that allows employees to schedule their working hours respectively. Flexibility of the working is an employee benefit which aids in retaining skilled human capital. It meets the needs requirements of human capital which boost their efforts, reduce the job absenteeism, and ultimately enhance their job satisfaction according to the findings by Golden (2009). On the other hand, Umur (2010) studied the determinants of job satisfaction and motivations level as well as factors overcoming demotivation issues among educators.

The findings found that working environment was a positive motivational factor to the educators in the forms of productivity and job satisfaction. Bellamy and Watty (2003) on a study on Malaysian Tertiary Education Institutions, examined how working conditions affected job satisfaction among the academicians. They found out that flexible scheduling was the most important factor to retain academic staff besides the factor of autonomy. They further found out that with the provision of flexible work environment, the academicians are motivated to remain in the institutions. Froeschle and Sinkford (2009) on their part determined the influences of positive and negative aspects in the employee's environment on career satisfaction. The result reflected the flexible working schedule and

categorized it as a positive aspect contributing to the retention of the junior faculty in academic dentistry field. It concluded that most of the dental faculty members were willing to remain in the institutions with the provision of flexible scheduling practices.

Organizational Productivity

There are many rising trends in organizational productivity. However, this study sought to establish whether Stima Sacco Society Limited had embraced conflict management and the influence this has on organizational productivity. Armstrong (2006) defines performance in output terms as the achievement of objectives and how these objectives are achieved. High performance results from appropriate behavior, especially discretionary, and the effective use of the required knowledge, skills and competencies. Performance may be understood differently depending on the person involved in the assessment of the organizational productivity for instance performance can be understood differently from a person within the organization compared to one from outside (Lebens & Euske 2006). To define the concept of performance is necessary to know elements and characteristics to each area of responsibility. To report an organization's performance level, it is necessary to be able to quantify the results (Petkovic, 2008).

According to Gilbert and Ivancevich (2000), performance refers to the act of performing or carrying into execution or recognizable action, achievement or accomplishment in the undertaking of a duty. Cascio (2006) defines performance as working of individuals in an organization to be more effective. Zaman et al (2011) indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between performance and reward. The other approach in defining organizational productivity that has in the recent past gained popularity in numerous organizations is the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology by Kaplan & Norton (1992). In this method, performance of an organization is measured using four key perspectives financial, customer, internal processes, and Learning and

Growth/innovation. In the Kenyan scenario it has been generally adopted by sixty nine per cent of the companies in a survey by Kiragu (2005). According to Richard et al. (2009) organizational productivity encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes: financial performance, product market performance and shareholder return. Stima Sacco for instance is expected to increase its financial performance in terms of annual income from 2.6 billion in 2015 to Shs.31.8 billion in 2020. According to Armstrong, (2000) performance is a means of getting better results from the whole organization or teams or individuals within it by understanding and managing performance within an agreed frame work of planned goals, standards and competence requirements. Performance is the accumulated end results of all the organization's work processes and activities (Santos & Brito 2012). It is about how effectively an organization transforms inputs into outputs (Robbins, 2009) and comprises the actual output or results as measured against its intended outputs. Liptons (2003) proposes that performance is the ability of the firm to prevail. There is hardly a consensus about its definition, and this limits advances in research and understanding of the concept of performance (Santos & Brito, 2012). As the debate on what organization performance rages on, the approach on how to measure it has attracted even more scholarly attention (Liptons, 2003).

Relationship between Stress Management and Organizational Productivity

The psychological structure of employees is directly reflected in the work they do and their work lives. Therefore, stressful employees mean that the organization is stressful. All kinds of problems caused by stress reflect in business relations and business success by affecting the performance of the individual directly. The studies, examining the relationship between stress and performance in organizations, have accepted the existence of four approaches (Gümüştekin & Öztemiz, 2005). There is an inverse relationship between stress and performance, and it is assumed that performance will decrease as the stress level increases. According to this model, employees who want to reduce their stress can waste their time and

do unwanted behaviors (Çargan, 2018). According to this model, job performance will increase as job stress increases. The challenges, concerns, and competitive environment in the workplace are opportunities for the employee to put forward constructive actions and improve his/her performance. High-level stress means high competitiveness, thus, high performance (Yılmaz, 2006). The relationship between stress and performance is inverse u-shaped and consists of a combination of positive and negative relationship models in general. While stress that increases until a certain level improves performance, the ability to work efficiently decreases rapidly if stress exceeds the critical level (Akgündüz, 2006). Although there is a psychological agreement between the employee and the organization, there is no relationship between stress and performance. According to this model, employees know that they will receive a certain wage for their performance. The presence or absence of stress does not affect performance (Türkmen, 2015).

The stress level, at which individuals' performance is the best, is the optimal positive stress level. At the positive stress level, the individual's motivation, ability to fight time pressure, speed of making important decisions, and contribution to performance are faster and higher. In cases when individuals cannot cope with personal and environmental dangers, stress transforms into negative stress, and this increases the presence of individuals who need help, who experience difficulty in adapting to the environment, and who cannot transfer their energy to their work (Düğenci, 2018). Since the psychological structures of individuals in the workplace are directly reflected in the work they do, stressful individuals mean that the whole organization is stressful. All kinds of discomfort, psychological and mental problems experienced due to stress are directly reflected in employee performance, business relations, and business success (Gümüştekin & Öztemiz, 2005). The mental and physical condition affecting the productivity, activity, health, and work quality of employees is occupational stress, and this stress, which exceeds the optimum limit, may decrease the performance of the organization since it creates discomfort in employees (Jha & Bano, 2012). The exposure of individuals

to excessive stress in the work environment leads to both an increase in costs (an increase in business absences, health expenditures, and insurance expenditures) and a decrease in organizational performance, as well as in job satisfaction, by decreasing the amount of goods and services produced per unit time (Karagül, 2011). According to Sökmen (2005), the stress experienced also has consequences that are closely related to the organization, such as the individual's late arrival to work, increase in his/her absenteeism, and increase in the labor turnover rate, alienation of the employee to work and workplace, and decrease in performance.

The study postulates the following hypotheses to be tested:

- H₀₁:** There is no relationship between counselling and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.
- H₀₂:** There is no relationship between leisure and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.
- H₀₃:** There is no relationship between working environment and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was sourced through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was four thousand six hundred and forty (4640) non-academic staff of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The sample size of 352 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan determination table. The research instrument was validated through by experts as provided by supervisors vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring coefficients above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient is calculated using the SPSS 21.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical

referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable.

Table 1: Correlations for Stress Management and Organization Productivity

			Organizational Productivity	Counselling	Leisure	Working Environment
Spearman's rho	Organizational Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.803**	.882**	.936**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	323	323	323	323
	Counselling	Correlation Coefficient	.803**	1.000	.730**	.665**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	323	323	323	323
	Leisure	Correlation Coefficient	.882**	.730**	1.000	.819**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	323	323	323	323
	Working Environment	Correlation Coefficient	.936**	.665**	.819**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	323	323	323	323

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

Source: SPSS output version 23.0

H₀₁: There is no relationship between counselling and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

The correlation coefficient (rho) result in table 1 is used to answer the question 1. The correlation coefficient (rho) 0.803 indicate that there is a positive and moderate correlation between provision of counselling and Productivity. The interpretation of the foregoing result means that, as the

provision of counselling improved, the productivity improves also. The p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ shows that relationship between counselling and Productivity is significant. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between counselling and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between leisure and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

The correlation coefficient (rho) 0.882 for leisure and Productivity indicate that there is a positive and moderate correlation between availability of leisure facilities and Productivity. The means that leisure facilities leads to Productivity. The p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ shows that relationship between leisure and Productivity is significant. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between leisure and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

H₀₃: There is no relationship between working environment and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

The correlation coefficient (rho) 0.936 for working environment and Productivity indicate that there is a positive and strong correlation between working environment and Productivity. Therefore, the relationship between working environment and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar is positively strong. The P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ shows that relationship between working environment and Productivity is significant. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between working environment and Productivity of the Non Academic staff of the University of Calabar.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results from the test of hypotheses revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between stress management and organizational

productivity of non-academic staff of the University of Calabar. This finding corroborates the position of the earlier work Usoro, and Etule (2016), whose study showed that lecturers' workload and related stress significantly affect their effective teaching, publication and other self-development practices. The findings are relevant to this study as it highlighted possible effects of workload related stress on the lecturers. The methodology also adopted is relevant to this study in that the study population is University academic lecturers which are similar to the population that this research is considered. However, the point of difference is the lack of communication strategy on stress management which is of very crucial concern to the present research.

Idris (2014), revealed that given additional responsibilities to academic staff beyond lecturing and supervision of undergraduate and post-graduate students hindered effective job performance of academic staff. The methodology and findings of this study are relevant to the present research being undertaken to investigate the relationship between stress management and organizational productivity in the University. As noted, while Idris's (2014) research focused on the impact of the responsibilities on academic staff, the present research investigated the nature and relationship between the variables on non academic staff. Alabi, Murtala, and Lawal (2012) results indicated that the number of hours undertaken by lecturers in a week were factors that led to stress. Also, it was revealed that working under poor lecture conditions and the lack of rest could result in stress which affects job performance. The methodology and findings in this study are relevant to the current research stress management and working environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overwhelming stress has been found to be damaging to the general well-being of human beings. In the case of academic and non-academic staff of tertiary institutions, it affects their general output thereby limiting the quality of educational services being given to the students. In university of calabar, which is the study area of the study, there has been increasing

number of deaths as a result of extreme stress-related cases suffered by staff. This situation is further exacerbated by the inability of the university management to effectively utilize measures like counselling and good working environment to benefit from the gains of stress management.

It is imperative for the university management to step-up their concern for staff general well-being by incorporating stress management programs and communicating these programs through existing media and channels in the university. When this is done, it is hoped that the general output of the non academic staff of the University would be improve, thereby consolidating the position of university. This study concludes that stress management effectively enhances productivity of non-academic staff in the University of Calabar.

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested.

Management of the university of Calabar should create awareness to the employees to enable them be aware of utilization of stress management strategies available in the organization that can result in improved performance.

The management should undertake sensitization campaigns to enlighten employees since some were not aware that counselling services were offered within the institution neither did they know that flexitime and leisure facilities existed as stress management strategy. Employees should be made aware of meditation as the easiest way of handling stress and also relaxation by encouraging team building which refreshes the body and mind hence improving performance.

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