

Stress Management Strategies and Employee Performance: An Application of Correlational Research Design on Manufacturing Firms in Edo State, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: This study examined stress management strategies and employee performance in manufacturing firms in Edo State. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided this research. This study employed the correlational research design and covered all the manufacturing firms in Edo State but five of them were randomly picked for the study and their employees totaled into 1,663, which served as the study's population, out of which 301 employees were sampled using Taro Yamane's formula. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire. Out of the 301 copies administered, only 264 were found usable for further data analysis and both descriptive and Pearson's and Spearman's rank correlation statistics were employed to analyze the study's data and hypotheses. It was found out that employees in manufacturing firms receive maximum workplace social support and this helps them deal with stressful work situations; and they have high coping competence in handling stress. Also, it was revealed that time management was the most adopted stress management strategy among workers in manufacturing firms and they practice it to a high extent. In addition, it was discovered that mind-body strategy of time management is adopted by the employees, although, not to a very high extent when compared with their adoption of other stress management techniques. More so, the results of the tested hypotheses revealed that there exists a statistically significant correlation between all the stress management strategies outlined in the study and employees' performance in manufacturing firms. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that the management of manufacturing firms should sensitize their employees in understanding the benefits of mind-body interventions such as massage, yoga, etc. and how to make good use of them for reducing stress levels.

KEYWORDS: Stress Management, Employee Performance, Manufacturing Firms, Edo State, Mind-Body Interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is one of the most researched areas in the field of human resources management (Marlene and Carlos, 2017). It is an essential criterion which describes whether a staff performs his / her job well. A key characteristic of job performance is that it has to be goal relevant implying that it consists of staff's behavior, their outcomes, and all efforts they exert towards accomplishing set organizational, personal and professional objectives (Stephen and Harrison, 2012). As such, a staff's performance on a job is tied to both the internal and external factors that weigh on such worker. An example of such factors is occupational or job-related stress. It continues to be a cause of concern for both the employees and their employers because when individuals experience work-related stress, they often feel tensed and distressed which in turn have tremendous negative consequences on both the employees and the organization (McCarthy, Power & Greiner, 2010; Moen, Kelly & Lam, 2013; Odita, Ehiedu&Kifordu, 2020).

Globally, all workers endure stress in the job. It has varied meanings depending on the situation. Homewood (2015) defines stress as a mental and physical response to events that upset a person's stability. Yeboah-Kordee, Amponsah-Taiwah, Adu, and Ashie (2018) classified job-related stress as physical and psychological difficulties. Job, occupational, and work-related stress are all words for workplace stress. Job-related stress refers to working conditions that threaten a worker or employee (Yang, Kao & Cho, 2019). It's the response workers have when faced with work expectations and pressures that exceed their knowledge and talents (World Health Organization [W.H.O.], 2020).

According to Gibbons (2021), workplace pressures inhibit employee performance regardless of organisation type. Tight deadlines, insufficient time off, low morale, too much work, and bad tech innovation. Poor organisational culture (Odita, 2021);

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excessive job content and demands; role conflict and ambiguity; debauched management practise; uncomfortable working environment (physical and psychological); distress; terrible workplace relationships; etc (Better Health Channel, 2020). Heavy workload, excessive job demands, organisational change, career and job ambiguity, lack of recognition, and harassment are major workplace stressors. Tamunomiebi and Mezeh (2021) categorised workplace stressors as psychological, psychosocial, role overload, role limits, culture integration, and job demand.

Stress management is a set of strategies and programmes designed to assist people handle stress at work by identifying stressors and reducing their impact (Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine, as cited in Brown, 2021).

It's a "broad range of methods and psychotherapies focused at regulating a person's stress, usually to improve everyday function" (Wikipedia, 2021). Stress management consists of elements/components that must be used properly to operate efficiently at work.

Multidimensional stress management strategies. They include cognitive-behavioral, mind-body, and time-management practises (Turcotte& Sanders, 2014). Brown (2021) categorised stress-management strategies as action-oriented, emotional, and acceptance-oriented. 'Coping competence' (Moller, 2016) and 'social support' are further stress management characteristics (World Health Organization [W.H.O.], 2020). All these solutions show that workers may lessen or adapt to job stress. Thus, workplace stress can be handled and controlled, justifying the concept of "coping competence" (Gofen, 2014; Moller, 2016).

Schroder and Ollis (2012) defined coping competence as the ability to effectively manage with failure and unfavourable life situations, as shown by a lower chance of helplessness reactions and speedy recovery. Smith, Saklofske, Keefer, and Tremblay (2015) found that some coping skills reduce stress and enhance well-being, while others do the opposite.

Workplace social support is another stress-management variable. According to the World Health Organization (2020), stress is significantly worse when workers believe they have little or no assistance and limited influence over work operations. This shows that workers need social assistance to cope with job-related stress. Coworkers, customers, managers, subordinates, or family or friends can provide social support (Dawley, Andrews & Bucklew, 2008). Park (2012) noted that social support within an organisation can help mitigate the effects of job pressures.

Stress management must include time management. The amount of stress that employee faces depends on how well they manage their time. Daniel and Santeli (2020) argued that efficient time management at work boosts productivity and helps employees deal with stress, disagreements, and job demands. It's a set of skills or abilities that employees must master through practise and purpose. Turcotte and Sanders say it's the foundation of stress management (2014). This component focuses on how employees integrate physical and mental routines to alleviate job stress. Yoga relaxation is an example.

In his study, Park (2012) found that social support reduces work stress and improves outcomes. According to Park, this reduces their production and may cause a microeconomic deficit (Onuorah & Odita, 2013). Beavan and Ehrlich (2013) stated that social support is a critical occupational resource to increase performance. Physical activity improves an employee's health and job performance, according to Turcotte and Sanders (2014). Daniel and Santeli (2020) identified a link between good time management and industrial workers' job performance.

It is already a known fact that there is the possibility for a worker to encounter stress situations at their workplaces. It therefore becomes imperative to find out if there is a connection existing between the different dimensions of stress management highlighted in this background and human resource performance at the workplace.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The Nigerian manufacturing industry has experienced tremendous growth and changes over the past few years. At the same time, the industry is facing some issues like poor quality labour, workers' job stress and job-related behaviours (Giao, Vuong & Tushar, 2020). Work-related stress may be attributed to poor work organization, poor work design, poor management, unsatisfactory working conditions, inadequate coping mechanisms, mismanagement of time, and lack of workplace social support (World Health Organization, 2020). Some organizations in the developed nations have recognized the consequences of work-related stress on the workers and the organization at large. While these organizations are devising stress coping mechanisms and management strategies to curb the situation and are becoming more aware of the effects of work-related stress, the same cannot be said about the organizations in developing countries like Nigeria especially the manufacturing sector. Although, several empirical studies have been conducted in Nigeria on the relation between job-related stress and the performance of workers, very little or none have been done on how these workers cope with these situations or on how they can deal with the issues caused by these situations at the workplace. To the best of my knowledge, no documented evidence abound on the relationship between all the dimensions of stress management. However, this study seeks to investigate the

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dimension of workplace management strategies bothering on workplace social support, coping competencies, time management mind-body strategy and human resource performance in manufacturing firms in Edo State, Nigeria, hence, the need for this study. These strategies have not been adequately addressed by previous studies and the current study seeks to address the lacuna.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study was to examine the relationship between stress management strategies and employee's performance in manufacturing firms in Edo State, Nigeria. However, the specific objectives were to:

- (i) determine the correlation between workplace social support as a dimension of stress management and employee's performance;
- (ii) ascertain the relationship between coping competence and employee's performance;
- (iii) examine the relationship between time management techniques and employee's performance; and to
- (iv) reveal the extent to which mind-body techniques of stress management relates with employee's performance.

Research Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

- Ho₁: There is no statistically significant correlation between workplace social support and employee's performance in manufacturing firms.
- Ho₂: There is no statistically significant correlation between coping competence and employee's performance in manufacturing firms.
- Ho₃: There is no statistically significant correlation between time management strategies and employee's performance in manufacturing firms.
- Ho₄: There is no statistically significant correlation between mind-body strategy of stress management and employee's performance in manufacturing firms.

Definition of Stress

Stress can be termed as the reaction given by the physical body to the burdens placed on it. As such, the ability of such body to cope with the burdens placed on it will determine the amount of stress faced. Homewood (2015) viewed it as a mental and physical response to the incidents that upset an individual's stability in some ways. Cheung (2016) declared it to mean a state of anxiety that stems from a sincere or deceptive demand that necessitates a variation in behaviour. It has been tagged as one of the most severe workplace issue facing workers in every sphere of human endeavours (Yeboah-Kordee, Amponsah-Tawiah, Adu&Ashie, 2018). Thus, the stress that results from an individual's job or occupation can be referred to as "job stress".

Akanji (2015) defined job stress as a "complex psychological state of mystery". Also, Okeke, Chukwuemeka and Amobi (2017) described it as an environmental situation at the workplace whereby an employee is obligated to execute the tasks that threatens to surpass the employee's capability and resources for such execution. According to Okeke, Chukwuemeka and Amobi, stress has been a popular characteristic at the workplace experienced by many persons. It can be described as the response workers may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope (World Health Organization, 2020).

Stress Management

No matter the definition ascribed to stress and its sources at the workplace, it boils down to the fact that it can be avoided, handled or coped with. The practice of coping, handling or avoiding stress can be termed "stress management". Boss, Bryant and Mancini (2017) explained stress management to mean "the provision of psychologically conducive work environment that helps employees of an organization to cope with stress". The Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine (as cited in Brown, 2021) viewed stress management as the set of practices and programs structured with the aim of helping employees effectively handle stress at the workplace by identifying and evaluating particular stressors and taking apt actions in reducing their effects.

Stress management can also be described as a "wide spectrum of strategies and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, usually for the purpose of and for the motive of improving everyday function" (Wikipedia, 2021). Many organizations today have recognized the essence of stress management culture at the workplace. Most of them organize employee-assisted programs which include in-house counselling programs as one of their stress management tool. All these point to the fact that stress management consists of a series of programs / strategies which in this study are referred to as 'dimensions of stress management'.

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Dimensions of Stress Management

Stress at the workplace is not a decision, but how it is handled or coped with in an organization is a choice. Turcotte and Sanders (2014) suggested the following as elements of stress management: cognitive behavioral strategies, mind-body strategies, and time management strategies. More so, Brown (2021) grouped the strategies for stress management to include action-oriented, emotion-oriented, and acceptance-oriented. Other dimensions of stress management include 'coping competence' (Moller, 2016); and 'social support' (World Health Organization [W.H.O.], 2020). All these mentioned strategies affirm that there is room for workers facing stress at their workplace to be able to reduce it or adapt to such situation. Hence, the stress that workers experience on their jobs can be regulated and controlled, justifying the introduction of the workplace concept "coping competence" (Gofen, 2014).

Employee's Performance

Performance at the workplace is a multicomponent concept which can be linked with the behavioral engagements of employees. The behavior here denotes the action that employees exhibit to accomplish their works. Prasetya and Kato (2011) defined performance as the attained outcomes of actions with skills of employees who perform in some situation. As such, performance related to employees can be grouped into task performance, adaptive performance and contextual performance (Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

Performance in the form of task performance comprises of job explicit behaviors which includes fundamental job responsibilities assigned as a part of job description. Task performance requires more cognitive ability and is primarily facilitated through task knowledge (requisite technical knowledge or principles to ensure job performance and having an ability to handle multiple assignments), task skill (application of technical knowledge to accomplish task successfully without much supervision), and task habits (an innate ability to respond to assigned jobs that either facilitate or impede the performance) (Conway, as cited in Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Hence, the key precursors of task performance comprise the ability to do the job and prior experience.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Role Overload Theory

The role overload theory describes the situation at the workplace where workers observe their work demands to exceed their skills, time and energy (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman, 1970). Proponents of this theory has linked the issue of role overload to cause major costs on both the workers and the organization. For instance, role overload results in psychological strain, diminished work outcomes (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried and Cooper, 2008); and increased employee turnover (Jensen, Patel & Messersmith, 2013). Hence, psychological strain has been known to be the likely way through which role overload weakens an employee's job performance. The role overload theory therefore suggested that utilizing stress management strategies fittingly, the after effect of role overload (e.g. anxiety and depression) can be mitigated, and work outcomes boosted (Tang & Vandenberghe, 2021).

The Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) Model

The JDCS model was introduced because of the stress level experienced by workers as they manage both home and work tasks. It is a popular theory that can be used to explain how job features correlates with employees' psychological well-being (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). The model depicts how the workplace demands can result in stressful situations for employees, such as role uncertainty, heavy workload, and work-related strain. Thus, the merits attached to the use of JDCS Model is explaining stress management include the fact that it provides the avenue for interventions, and relationships. However, it is lamented that this model is not suitable for all individuals, as it only very useful for short-term plans, and workers with heavy workloads (Towler, (2020) Obi and Ehiedu, (2020), Odita and Ehiedu, (2015), Onuorah, Ehiedu and Okoh, (2021).

Hence, the study is hinged on a hybrid of "JDCS Model" and "PEF theory". These theories were adopted for this study because they can help us demonstrate how stress management strategies (workplace social support, coping competence, time management skills, and mind-body interventions) can influence the job performances of employees at the workplace. The general assumption here is that employing these Stress management strategies for controlling and regulating job demands and implementing them appropriately at the workplace would have a positive relationship with the job performance of workers in manufacturing firms.

Empirical Review

Empirical works on the different strategies of stress management specifically and generally, how they relate with the performance of workers would be reviewed chronologically.

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Chandra and Sudesh (2019), (Ehiedu, 2020) examined the effects of workplace stress management measures on employee efficiency in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India by distributing a structured questionnaire. Books, periodicals, reports, and the Internet provided secondary data. 240 employees were surveyed about stress management practises. On a 5-point Likert scale, dependent and intervening variables were rated. Analyses include frequency, percentage, mean score, ANOVA, and regression. Study respondents rated employee efficiency positively. Stress management interventions have been helpful in enhancing employee performance, and the organisation measures stress management programme value. This study focuses on stress management and employee performance in Edo State, Nigeria.

Abonyo (2020) studied stress management and Kenya Airways staff performance. Flexible work scheduling, workplace counselling, and workplace quality were stress management elements. Cross-sectional research design employed questionnaire to obtain data from sampled organization's personnel. Mean, standard deviation, regression, and correlation were used to evaluate data from 300 respondents. The study found that stress management affected employee performance. Flexible work schedules have a strong positive link with employee performance, workplace counselling has a negligible negative correlation, and workplace quality has a significant positive correlation. Flexible work schedule and workplace quality affect employee performance, but not workplace counselling (Ehiedu, Onuorah, & Owonye, 2022), Ehiedu, Odita, & Kifordu, 2010). (2020),. This study studied stress management practises and workforce performance in Edo State, Nigeria.

Altindag (2020), Ehiedu, Onuorah, and Owonye, (2022), Ehiedu, Odita, and Kifordu, (2020), Ehiedu and Brume-Ezewu, (2022), and Ehiedu (2020) studied stress management and work performance in organisations. It was exploratory. The study studied organisational stress causes and stress management and company performance. The results of 12 research publications were compiled. Authors' studies and findings were analysed. Stress management negatively affects job performance, according to the research. Harry, Ehiedu, Ehiedu, Ehiedu, and Okorie (2020) studied stress management and employee performance. The study examined the effects of stress (workload, role ambiguity, role conflict) on employee performance (commitment, effectiveness, and efficiency). Scholarly works were reviewed. Further, stress and stress management positively affect employee performance at work. Both research assessed employee stress and performance. This study focuses on Edo State, Nigeria industrial enterprises.

In the banking sector, Ehiedu and Imoagwu, (2022), Ogah (2020) surveyed stress management and employee performance in Osogbo, OsunState, Nigeria. All employees of Guaranty Trust Bank Plc, First Bank of Nigeria Plc, and Access bank were included in the descriptive survey. Lagos, Nigeria. Out of 225 people, only 200 were chosen using Taro Yamane's (1964) sample size calculation. Data analysis included linear regression and Pearson product moment correlation. Work-life balance, work overburden, and organisational change affect employee performance. Nigerian researchers conducted both studies. The present study addressed stress management and employee performance in manufacturing in Edo State, unlike Ehiedu, Onuorah, and Owonye's analysis of banking (2022). Ehiedu, Onuorah, and Mbagwu (2022) (2014).

Ehiedu, Imoagwu, and Obi, (2022) conducted an empirical study on mind-body interventions as stress reduction strategies and workers' performance (2022). Cozzolino, Girelli, Vivo, Limone, and Celia (2020), Agbogun, and Ehiedu (2022), Bayem, Ehiedu, Agbogun, and Onuorah (2022). The study employed a single session of "Brain Wave Modulation (BWM)" 306 workers were sampled for the quasi-experimental investigation (Ehiedu, 2022). A mixed-factor analysis of variance showed that the BMW was helpful in reducing perceived stress among employees, which positively improves their job performance, demonstrating a substantial association between mind-body methods and job performance at the workplace. This study examined mind-body interventions as stress reduction strategies and workers' performance, whereas the present study examined stress management strategies and employee's performance in manufacturing (Ehiedu, (2022), Obaro, Onuorah, Evesi and Ehiedu, (2022), Ehiedu, (2020), Ehiedu, (2021), Ehiedu and Okorie, (2022), Meteke, Ehiedu, Ndah, and Onuorah, (20 (2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted the correlational research design. According to Tan (2014), a correlational research design is one which seeks to ascertain relationships between two or more variables. The population of the study was all the full-time and contract employees of the fifty-two (52) manufacturing firms registered under the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (M.A.N.), Edo State Chapter as at 30th June 2021 and are registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). Due to the large size of the employees in these firms, only the employees of five of the registered manufacturing firms located in some major business locations in Edo State was used, which is 1,663. The breakdown of the population is displayed in Table 1:

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Table 1. Population of the Study

S/N	Manufacturing Firms in Edo State	Total No. of Workers
1.	Guinness Nigeria Plc., Oregbeni Estate, Ikpoba Hill, Benin City.	522
2.	Doma Industries Ltd., Ekehuan Road, Benin City	110
3.	PrescoPlc., Obaretin Estate, Benin City.	652
4.	Andy Industries Ltd., Benin-Sapele Road, Benin City.	99
5.	AgenLongspan Industries, Benin-Lagos Expressway, Ugbowo, Benin City.	280
	Total	1,663

Source: Human Resources Department of the Manufacturing Companies, 2021.

The researcher employed the Taro Yamane formula in arriving at the sample used for the study and is stated thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size; N = Population size; e = Estimated standard error at 0.05 level of significance. In this study, the researcher worked on 95% confidence level, that is 1.96 (Z) and estimated error (e) of 5%. With the above information, we proceeded to determine our sample size as follows:

$$n = \frac{1,663}{1 + 1,663(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 301$$

Thus, the sample size of the study is 301.

First, permission was sought by the researcher from the managers of all the sampled firms on the essence of the questionnaires to be distributed among the staff, after which copies were administered to the targeted respondents on a face-to-face basis by the researcher and each respondent was requested to complete the questionnaire while their responses were collected immediately.

The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. This is because of the descriptive nature of the data. However, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, *r*, (PPMCC) and Spearman rank correlation were employed to test the formulated hypotheses because it helps to determine the extent to which one independent variable is related to a dependent variable. The alpha level of significance for testing the hypotheses was set at $\alpha < 0.05$.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The administered questionnaire response rate was also covered by this section. With regards to the response rate, out of the 301 questionnaires distributed to the targeted respondents, 289 were retrieved. The returned questionnaires were subjected to careful checking and 25 copies were excluded and regarded as not suitable for statistical analyses because they do not meet the conditions and criteria of answering and filling the questionnaire, hence, the total number of usable returns was 264. None response was 12 and it was assumed that the non-respondents were either unwilling to cooperate or simply not interested in the survey.

Table 2. Summarized Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variable	\bar{X}	SD	N
Workplace Social Support	3.39	1.356	264
Coping Competence	3.56	1.250	264
Time Management	3.38	1.430	264
Mind-Body Strategies	2.74	1.488	264
Employee Performance	3.06	1.050	264

Table 3. Correlations among the Variables

	WSS	CC	TM	M-B	EP
WSS	1				

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CC	0.98177	1			
TM	0.978913	0.978764	1		
M-B	0.962689	0.943905	0.9431	1	
EP	0.981906	0.975075	0.960947	0.978944	1
Note: WSS: Workplace Social Support CC: Coping Competence TM: Time Management M-B: Mind-Body Strategies EP: Employee Performance					

HYPOTHESIS RESULTS

The summary results of the tested hypotheses are presented in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Decision Rule: If the p -calculated value is lesser than the p -critical value ($p < .05$), reject H_0 and accept the alternative.

Table 4. Spearman Rank's Correlation Results of Workplace Social Support and Employee Performance

Variables	N	DF		T	p -value	Remarks
Workplace Social Support	264	262	0.9933	139.161	.000	Significant
Employee Performance						

($\alpha < .05$)

Table 4 reveals the result of the Spearman's rank correlation analysis to find out whether there is a statistically significant correlation between workplace social support and employees' performance in manufacturing firms. From the table, it is seen that the correlation coefficient (ρ) is 0.993 with a p -value (Sig. level) of .000 is lesser than the alpha level of .05 ($p < .05$) indicating that a significant relationship exists between workplace social support and employees' performance; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that an increase or decrease in workplace social support in manufacturing firms would lead to a corresponding increase or decrease in the employees' performance.

Table 5. Spearman Rank's Correlation Results of Coping Competence and Employee Performance

Variables	N	DF		T	p -value	Remarks
Coping Competence	264	262	0.9935	141.446	.000	Significant
Employee Performance						

($\alpha < .05$)

Table 5 shows the result of the Spearman's rank correlation analysis to determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between coping competence and employees' performance in manufacturing firms. From the table, it is seen that the correlation coefficient (ρ) is 0.994 with a p -value (Sig. level) of .000 is lesser than the alpha level of .05 ($p < .05$) indicating that a significant relationship exists between the two variables; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a high level of coping competence would breed a high employee performance, and vice versa.

Table 6. Spearman Rank's Correlation Results of Time Management Strategies and Employee Performance

Variables	N	DF		T	p -value	Remarks
Time Management	264	262	0.9920	126.856	.000	Significant
Employee Performance						

($\alpha < .05$)

Table 6 displays the result of the Spearman's rank correlation analysis on the relationship between time management strategies and employees' performance. From the table, it is seen that the correlation coefficient (ρ) is 0.992 with a p -value (Sig. level) of .000 is lesser than the alpha level of .05 ($p < .05$) indicating that a significant relationship exists between the two variables; thus,

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the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a better adoption of time management strategies would correspondingly lead to better employee performance, and vice versa.

Table 7. Spearman Rank's Correlation Results of Mind-Body Strategies and Employee Performance

Variables	N	DF		T	p-value	Remarks
Mind-Body Strategies	264	262	0.9934	140.412	.000	Significant
Employee Performance						

($\alpha < .05$)

Table 7 shows the result of the Spearman's rank correlation analysis to find out whether there is a statistically significant correlation between mind-body strategy of stress management and employees' performance. From the table, it is seen that the correlation coefficient (rho) is 0.993 with a p-value (Sig. level) of .000 is lesser than the alpha level of .05 ($p < .05$) indicating that a significant relationship exists between the two variables; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a rise in the use of mind-body strategy of stress management would lead to a parallel rise in employees' performance, and vice versa.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The finding of this study revealed that employees in manufacturing firms receive maximum social support in their workplaces as they were positive towards the adoption of workplace support as a stress management strategy, and this makes it easier for them to cope with work-related stress. This can be tied to the point that if these workers are not shown support from their superiors and/or colleagues, their level of output may be hindered heavily. This finding supports the words of Yu, Ren, Wang, He, Wang, Jin and Yao (2014) when they reiterated that giving high level of social support to workers at the workplace grows to reduce job stress among them. Although, it negates the observation of a meta-analysis found on Psychology (2021) that suggested that giving workers high level of social support would result in some forms of workplace stressors such role ambiguity, role conflict and underutilization of skills.

Also, the findings of this indicate that the employees in manufacturing firms develop coping competence towards stressful workplace situations. This is probably due to the fact that these workers perceive their jobs as very stressful and in order to be able to cope with work situations, they develop coping behaviours and skills that help them best tackle work-related stress whenever they arise at their workplace. As such, this finding corroborates the statement of Ackerman (2021) who asserted that workers tend to exhibit positive coping skills especially in jobs that portrays high level of stress like in the manufacturing sector. This finding also supports that of Hayford and Amos (2014) that, as a way to deal with occupational stress, employees practice relaxation techniques to cope with, or prevent stress and anxiety.

More so, the finding of this study showed that time management strategy of stress management is employed by workers in manufacturing firms and a high extent. This is the stress management technique mostly adopted by these workers to deal with workplace stress as revealed in this study. This finding agrees with the statement of Turcotte and Sanders (2014) who opined employees mostly employs strategies for managing time like daily planners, to-do lists, etc. at their workplace as a positive way of handling workplace stressors and for sustaining an equilibrium between their home and work responsibilities. For instance, one of such time management strategies can include the use of planning tools to classify and organize activities to be done when it is time for them. It is also in line with the words of Harahsheh (2019) who noted that workers preferred the maximum use of time management tactics as they help them make good use of their time at the workplace as these tactics drastically diminishes the extent of workplace stress they suffer.

Furthermore, this study's finding disclosed that mind-body strategy of time management is adopted by the sampled employees, although, not to a very high extent when compared with their adoption of other stress management techniques. This may be due to the fact that most mind-body tactics mentioned in this study are not popularly practiced as ways to handle stress in this part of the country. This finding does not conform to that of Bennett and Dorjee (2016); Wang and Hagins (2016); Stillwell, Vermeeschand Scott (2017); Birtwell, Williams, van Marwijk, Armitage and Sheffield (2019) who revealed a high level of adoption of mind-body strategies for managing stress because of their efficacy in the reduction of stress especially among workers. It also does not corroborate the statement of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research's [MFMER] (2021) that because of their numerous benefits especially in reducing fatigue anger and frustration, among others, workers practice the mind-body strategies to a high extent.

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CONCLUSION

After a critical analysis of the data got from the survey carried out to examine the relationship between stress management strategies and employees' performance in manufacturing firms, it can be concluded that the level of adoption of various tactics for managing stress at the workplace such as getting adequate social support from supervisors and colleagues, developing coping skills and behaviours, use of time management techniques, and mind-body interventions, is impressive; although, the employees preferred the use of the other stress management strategies when compared with the use of mind-body interventions. Also, it can be concluded that all the stress management strategies outlined in this study significantly correlate with the employees' performance in manufacturing firms in Edo State, indicating that the adoption of these techniques helps the employees alleviate stress they face at their workplaces. This in turn, improves their task outcomes, raises their contextual mindset towards work situations, and reduces their counterproductive work behaviours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends the following:

- (1) The management of manufacturing firms should sensitize their employees in understanding the benefits of mind-body interventions such as massage, yoga, etc. and how to make good use of them for reducing stress levels.
- (2) Since it has been revealed that there exists a significant correlation between stress management strategies and employee performance, manufacturing firms should encourage their workers to adopt them more often as they have both short-term and long-term positive effects on both the employees and the organization.
- (3) The management of manufacturing firms should not focus only on reaping the benefits of improved performance from employees, but adequate emotional help and support should be recognized as a motivating measure for them to combat stressful work situations.

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