



Stress and Employee Performance: A Review of the Nexus

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Abstract

The issue of stress in the work place has gained scholarly attention over the years. Stress is inevitable in the workplace and our everyday life. Effectively and efficiently managing work related stress to ensure productivity is the crux of this study. The objective of the study is to examine the extent to which stress (workload, role conflict and role ambiguity) can affect employee performance in an organization. The study relied on scholarly publications to review the relationship between stress and employee performance. A conceptual approach was adopted in this study. Three research questions were developed to guide the study. The findings indicate that role ambiguity, workload, and role conflict have an effect on employee performance within an organisation. It is suggested that organisations should design tasks and jobs in a manner that promotes commitment, effectiveness, and efficiency, thereby enhancing the performance of their workforce. Furthermore, human resource management strategies, policies, and plans should incorporate flexible work schedules to facilitate employee commitment and performance, which will increase the survival of the organisation. By implication provides an insight to managers, governments, academicians and other stakeholders of the negative effect of stress and its on employee employee performance.

Keywords: employee performance, stress, role conflict, role ambiguity, workload.

1. Introduction

Employees are persons paid to perform certain activities in an organization. Employees who are the human resources involve a wide range of attributes, consisting resources, abilities, desires, energy, knowledge, emotions, and creativity, all of which contribute significantly to the organisation's accomplishments. An essential factor in determining organisational success is the presence of high-quality human resources, as they enable the organisation to effectively compete with other organisations. Without competent human resources, the company will be unable to accomplish its objectives (Dabuke et al., 2023).

The performance of employees according to Johari et al., (2018) is all about their capability to be resourceful with the organizational resources to attain the stated objectives. Dabuke et al., (2023) viewed employee performance to the degree of accomplishment or success achieved by an individual in completing a task within a specific timeframe, relative to pre-established benchmarks, objectives, or criteria that have been mutually determined.

To achieve that all organisations must put in the necessary platform in place to ensure its workforce meets up with set targets. Over the years, employee's performance has been hampered and organisation's are finding it difficult to achieve the desired results. Performance can be influenced by a variety of factors, including tension, organisational citizenship behaviour, commitment, and culture (Fitrio et al., 2020). Stress is known to have an adverse impact on the psychological, behavioural, and physiological well-being of humans (Musyoka et al., 2012). More so, among variables hindering EP, stress is the leading one that has negative repercussions (Yunita and Saputra, 2019). Stress, according to Daniel (2019), has an adverse effect on employee performance. Daniel (2019) further stressed that an employee facing a significant stress at the workplace will attempt to withdraw his services by absenteeism or job turnover and if leaving the job is not feasible. They may cause difficulties for the organization's management. Furthermore, Job stress is a pervasive occurrence that affects employees differently across different work settings. It presents a danger

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as a result of the physical, emotional, and mental ailments that develop as a result of extended exposure to emotionally taxing circumstances. This destructive process develops incrementally and progressively worsens as time passes (Iskamto et al., 2020).

The several reasons why an individual can be under a lot of stress according to Agulamna (2007) are employee stressors, home stressors, macro-environmental stressors, self-inflicted stressors amongst others. Employees facing stress will likely fail to meet the expectations of their organisation. According to Joy (2020) stress is inherent in every occupation and it can only be managed but it cannot be eliminated completely. It is therefore imperative for organisations to prioritise their employees stress management process. In light of this knowledge, the goal of this paper is to review how stress and its components affect employee performance.

Research Question

- i. What is the relationship between workload and employee performance?
- ii. What is the relationship between role conflict and employee performance?
- iii. What is the relationship between role ambiguity and employee performance?

2. Review of Literature

Employee performance

Employee Performance is a notion that is gaining popularity amongst academics of management sciences, as employee performance is crucial to both individuals and the companies (Bataineh, 2019). The performance of employees' is critical to any organisation to meet its targets. Employee performance refers to the capacity of a staff member within an organisation to fulfil the predetermined objectives and requirements in the designated time periods (Yusuf et al., 2014). Employee contributions incorporate factors such as productivity, attendance, and a positive attitude. Employee performance is directly correlated with the activities and tasks that employees successfully and proficiently accomplish (Abualoush et al., 2018). It also establishes the employee's contribution to the organisation. Both employees and the organization desire a significant performance in order for the organization to succeed and for the employees to grow. (Maden-Eyiusta and Alparsian, 2021).

According to Davis and Newstrom (2008), the influence of stress on work performance varies depends on its magnitude. In the absence of stress, job challenges are reduced, leading to a fall in performance. Conversely, raising stress tends to increase performance as it helps people redirect resources toward satisfying job needs. When a healthy stimulus drives people to face employment issues, stress stabilizes at a level appropriate with their performance capacities. At this point, extra stress is less likely to result in improved job performance.

Stress

The phenomena of stress has been expressed in many ways by different scholars. Workplace stress is a tense state that has an impact on a person's feelings, mental abilities, and physical health. Unstable emotions, unpleasant feelings, being alone, forgetfulness, excessive smoking, inability to relax, feeling tense, worried, and anxious, elevated blood pressure, and digestive issues seem to be associated with work-related stress (Iskamto, 2021). Stress is the reaction that people exhibit towards excessive pressure or other sorts of demand placed on them. It arises when people worry that they cannot cope with expectations.

Stress, in its dynamic nature, represents a state in which an individual is immersed in a complex interplay of opportunities, constraints, and demands intricately linked to their desires. This intricate web of elements creates a scenario where the outcome is both uncertain and holds considerable importance. In this context, stress becomes a dynamic force, shaping the individual's experience and response to the challenges and circumstances associated with their aspirations. The dynamic nature of stress reflects the fluidity and constant evolution of the individual's engagement with external factors, making it a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by varying degrees of pressure, expectation, and the inherent unpredictability of outcomes (Alkubaisi, 2015).

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The pressures inherent in professional life can potentially contribute to stress, particularly when they become excessive or persist over an extended period. In the realm of work, individuals often grapple with various demands such as tight deadlines, high workloads, challenging tasks, and expectations for optimal performance. When these pressures surpass manageable levels or endure over an extended duration, individuals may find themselves subjected to heightened stress levels. (Jayapraksh and Banu, 2024). Excessive or prolonged professional pressures can create a taxing environment, both mentally and emotionally. The constant juggling of responsibilities and the need to meet demanding expectations may lead to a sense of overwhelm. The individual's coping mechanisms may be tested, and the sustained strain could manifest physically, emotionally, or psychologically. Such prolonged stress not only affects the well-being of the individual but can also have implications for job satisfaction, productivity, and overall professional performance.

It is essential for individuals and organizations to recognize the potential impact of excessive or long-term professional pressures on the well-being of employees. Improving a healthy work-life balance, managing and reducing these demands, and creating a supportive work environment can all be important steps towards reducing the harmful effects of stress in the workplace. Stress will be measured based on workload, role conflict and role ambiguity.

Workload

Workload can be defined as the perceived relationship between an individual or group human operator and task demands. It is the volume of work that is expected to be performed by a person (Jacobs et al., 2013). Workload is also the relationship between the required resource to carry out a task and the resources that are available to the operator. It shows that resources are greater than availability (Wickens and Tsang, 2015). High and excessive workload can have a negative impact on employee performance (Pandey, 2020).

Role Conflict

According to Dodanwala et al., (2021) employees are predisposed to experience role conflict when confronted with the necessity to collaborate with two or more groups that operate in disparate ways and possess roles that are fundamentally incompatible. This phenomenon of role conflict materializes in situations where individuals find themselves assigned roles that clash with one another simultaneously. The presence of role conflict can have ramifications on employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance. It may lead to heightened stress, confusion, and a sense of being torn between competing demands. Recognizing and addressing role conflict is crucial for fostering a harmonious work environment, where employees can navigate their roles seamlessly and contribute effectively to the goals of different groups without undue conflict or strain. Strategies such as clear communication, role clarification, and organizational support can be instrumental in mitigating the impact of role conflict on employee experiences and outcomes (Panda, 2020)

Role conflict is a complex situation that arises when an employee is mandated to undertake tasks that impose incompatible demands, and fulfilling one set of expectations becomes challenging or impossible at the same time (Kahn et al., 1964). This scenario becomes apparent when employees find themselves torn between the expectations associated with different roles they are required to fulfill within the organization. The essence of role conflict lies in the inherent clash between the requirements of multiple roles, creating a predicament for the employee. As described by Robbins and Judge (2008), role conflict becomes evident when individuals perceive that dedicating themselves to the expectations of one role hinders their ability to effectively meet the demands of another role. This conflict is not solely rooted in the nature of the tasks themselves but rather in the simultaneous and conflicting demands imposed by distinct roles within the organizational framework.

Therefore, discovering that allegiance to one set of role expectations impedes the satisfactory fulfillment of another role introduces a challenging dynamic for employees. This internal conflict can lead to feelings of frustration, stress, and a sense of inadequacy as individuals grapple with the competing demands of their

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roles. Recognizing and managing role conflict is crucial for fostering a work environment where employees can navigate their responsibilities with clarity and coherence, ultimately contributing to their well-being and overall job satisfaction. Strategies such as role clarification, effective communication, and organizational support play pivotal roles in addressing and mitigating the impact of role conflict on employee experiences (Robbins & Sanghi, 2006).

Role Ambiguity

An employee experiencing role ambiguity is one in which they are confused about the standards, specifications, procedures, and techniques related to their employment. (Khattak et al., 2011). This state of ambiguity manifests as a dearth of clarity in understanding the essential activities required to achieve specific goals within the work context. As described by Kahn et al. (1964), role ambiguity emerges when there is a deficiency in clarity and knowledge regarding an employee's job position and requirements, resulting in a lack of clear guidelines and understanding.

In the context of role ambiguity, employees may find themselves navigating their responsibilities without a well-defined roadmap. The absence of explicit expectations and guidelines can create a sense of confusion, making it challenging for individuals to discern the necessary tasks and procedures for successful job performance. This lack of clarity extends to the broader understanding of the overall job position, contributing to uncertainty about the specific needs and expectations associated with the role (Anderson & Kyprianou, 2002).

The repercussions of role ambiguity are significant, as it leads to a state of uncertainty about job responsibilities and expectations. Employees experiencing role ambiguity may struggle with making informed decisions, setting priorities, and establishing a coherent work routine. This ambiguity can also affect job satisfaction and performance, as individuals grapple with the challenges of navigating their roles without clear guidance. Addressing role ambiguity involves implementing strategies such as communication of clear job expectations, providing comprehensive job descriptions, and fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable seeking clarification. By minimizing role ambiguity, organizations can enhance employee understanding, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in fulfilling their roles within the organizational framework (Ali & Rizwan, 2014)

Empirical Review

Jayapraksh and Vijaya Banu, (2024) conducted a study on stress management among employees in workplace. The study sampled 210 respondents from employees working in a cement manufacturing unit in Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu, and India. The study used mean, standard deviation to analyse the employees opinions on stress while correlations was used to examined the relationship between factors of stress and employees' stress in workplace. The study revealed that inadequate staffing (lack of support, uneven burden or performance in group), followed by Lack of supervisor support, feedback and not living up to their word, modest pay (or modest increases in pay). Lack of work/life balance (excessive duties and/or long hours). Fears about employment loss, too much change and Organizational culture, including lack of teamwork, tendency to avoid accountability and assign responsibility to others. In addition, Worku (2021) identified workload at Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority that negatively effects the performance of employees as it leads them to encounter excessive levels of stress. It was revealed from the study that the responsibility employees have, motivation, and customer relations were the key contributor to workplace stress and these effect their performance. The study also discovered organisational-related stress factors, such as the work equipment, overall organizational environment including the structure, bad physical working conditions, office politics, and the overall design that influence the relationship between employees and consumers, lead them under stress.

The impact of workplace stress and workload on banking employees' performance was studied by Johan and Satrya (2023), with a focus on the mediating function of job satisfaction. 207 traditional bank workers in Indonesia were included in the quantitative study, which employed structural equation modelling (SEM)

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to investigate the suggested hypotheses. The study's findings indicate that while job satisfaction has a favourable impact on employee performance, workload and job stress have a negative impact. Additionally, the study found that job satisfaction is significantly impacted by busyness and stress at work. Additionally, the data suggest that workplace stress and workload have a mediated effect on employee performance through job satisfaction.

Ayusari et al., (2023) evaluate the effect of work stress and workload on employee performance at Bank BRI South Bengkulu. The study sampled 80 employees using the census method and multiple regression was used to analyse the data using SPSS. The result showed work stress negatively affects employee performance. The results also revealed workload has a negative effect on employee performance. Similarly, Puspitawati and Atmaja (2021) found job stress to have a negative effect on employee performance and, job satisfaction, while job satisfaction has no effect on employee performance.

Rasheed et al., (2023) assessed the moderating effect of servant leadership between occupational stress and employee in-role and extra-role performance. The study is cross-sectional with a population of 286 responses from Pakistan's private and public sector. The study revealed stress drastically affects employees' performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. Moreover, the results showed there is an inverse relationship between stress and EP. This relationship is moderated with servant leadership behaviour.

Iskamto (2021) looked at stress and how it affects workers' productivity. The t-test is conducted in this quantitative investigation using SPSS version 26. The outcomes of the test demonstrated that employee performance is significantly and negatively impacted by work stress. Furthermore, Saleem et al. (2021) assess if a safety culture is necessary and whether work stress impairs employee performance during COVID-19. The study examined how safety culture and social exchange theory influenced the relationship between stress and worker performance. The study used an easy sampling strategy to sample 213 bank employees. Utilising the Hayes process macro, data was examined. The study's conclusions show that the COVID-19 short-term respiratory (STR) improves adaptive performance (AP) but negatively impacts task and contextual performance (CP). Similarly, the relationships between stress and performance are significantly moderated by the incidence of SC.

Sari et al., (2021) assessed the effect of job stress to employee performance. A case study of Indonesia's manufacturing sector. This is a quantitative study using 93 employees from different industrial organisations as the sample. SPSS version 20.0 is used in the study's data analysis. The results show that the work environment and job stress have a significant impact on employee performance, as indicated by the coefficient of determination ($R = 0.972$). The results of the study indicate that irregular work schedules and tense relationships with supervisors and coworkers are among the elements that lead to the emergence of job-related stress and, eventually, poor performance.

Similarly, Pandey (2020) evaluated the relationship between employee performance in banks and work-related stress. It is a survey research project. A Google Form survey was used to get 200 responses in total. With SPSS, correlation analyses were carried out. The study's findings demonstrated that the Eight major characteristics were shown to be associated with workplace stress in the study: the type of work, wage scale, job insecurity, poor communication, work overload, lack of motivation, lack of support from management, and insufficient performance evaluation and appraisal system. It was discovered that these elements significantly harmed workers' ability to do their jobs. Nevertheless, the study employed correlation in its findings because it is an impact study. For impact studies, regression analysis is the most effective approach. Tsalasah et al., (2019) examined the effect of work stress on the performance of employees psychological well-being and subjective well-being. The survey included 78 respondents from the PT. Insight Global Top Bali Area using the census approach. Using partial least squares, the relationship between the variables was examined. The analysis demonstrated the impact of job stress on worker performance, the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being, and the relationship between psychological well-being and worker performance.

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Manas (2018) investigated role ambiguity climate, affective management, and additional role performance as outcomes of team job demands. A global company's 706 employees were included in the study's sample. The study's conclusions offered empirical support for the theory that role ambiguity negatively affects performance outside of roles. The study also showed that the relationship between role ambiguity environment and extra-role performance is mediated by affective involvement. The study's findings point to a relationship between employee performance in a particular work setting and the role ambiguity climate.

Methodology

The study is a review paper that relied solely on scholarly publications concerning the relationship between stress and employee performance. All literature were searched through the web-based search engines. The findings of the examined literature were evaluated using contents analysis, which led to the conclusions and suggestions,

Findings and Discussion

A number of significant results that arose from a review of the literature on stress and employee performance helped to shape the study conclusion. The following are the major themes that were consistently seen in the literature under consideration:

Negative Relationship between Workload and Employees Performance: Numerous studies have consistently discovered a link between workload and employees performance. Inadequate staffing, lack of support, lack of work life balance, team work are leading factors to workload and technically results to negative employee performance. Moreso, organisational related stress factors such as work equipment, poor physical working condition and organisational politics led to stress and affect performance.

Effect of Role Conflict on Employee Performance: There exist negative relationship between role ambiguity and employee performance. This is attributed to inadequate functioning of employees within a work context. Similarly, employees who experience multiple role cannot carry out the role between family and work and thus decrease performance.

Negative Relationship between Role Ambiguity and Employee Performance: There is a clear indication that role arises when more demands have been taken. In addition to lack of clarity of job roles, requirements and expectations. These factors are negatively or positively related to employee performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the key results, the examination of the literature led to the general inference that stress has a significant relationship with employee performance. A well designed job description, staff knowledge to task, expectations and employee motivation will foster increase in employee performance. The following suggestions were provided to improve employee performance in the organisation:

- i. i. Managers must prioritise minimising role ambiguity and effectively communicate clear roles to employees in order to improve employee performance.
- ii. It is very advisable for managers and supervisors to engage in conversations regarding the allocation of time, completion dates, and duration of tasks with their subordinates in order to mitigate the impact of time constraints. This has the potential to improve employee performance.
- iii. It is imperative for organisations to develop a robust planning process and conduct precise estimations prior to allocating an appropriate degree of responsibility.

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