

STRESS MANAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN FOOD FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine the impact of stress management on employee performance in food firms in Port Harcourt. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study found a positive significant relationship between flexible work hour and commitment, effectiveness and job satisfaction. The study also found a significant relationship between training and commitment, effectiveness and job satisfaction. The study revealed a significant relationship between relaxation and commitment, effectiveness and job satisfaction. The study finally revealed that organizational culture significantly moderate stress management strategies and employee performance. In conclusion therefore, based on the objectives and the findings of this study; Stress management strategies were found to have greater influence on the performance of employees in the fast food firms. Flexibility in work hour is cost-effective and efficient way which also helps in savings on overheads cost and reduces the expenses, gain competitiveness and also improve employee performance. The study finally recommended that the management of the organization under study 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.

INTRODUCTION

The current turbulent environment in which some workers conduct their work requires that organizations examine their practices. Working at the fast food companies is an inherently stressful profession with long working hours, heavy workloads, difficult customers and conflicting demands. The physical and psychology demands of workers at fast food companies

Stress Management Strategies

Stress management interventions arose in the 1960s with the growth of the community mental health and crisis intervention movements, disenchantment with medical model approaches to mental health and dissatisfaction with traditional psychiatry, the development of behavioural and cognitive-behavioural therapies, the growing acceptance of psychological problems within the community, and the urgency of self-help approaches to psychological well being. It is difficult to find an adequate definition of stress management that is sufficiently inclusive to incorporate all the stress management strategies and interventions that currently occur in the literature under this nomenclature and to be sufficiently exclusive so as to differentiate these interventions from other types of psychological treatments. In its broadest definition, stress management interventions are designed to assist people to cope with stressors and with the negative emotions, physiological arousal and/or health consequences that arise from these stressors by changing their cognitive and emotional responses to the trigger events. To

distinguish stress management from many psychological interventions, a number of caveats must be invoked. Firstly, stress management is generally applied to adequately functioning individuals who may be facing difficult circumstances in their occupational or social settings. Secondly, the focus of stress management is educational rather than psychotherapeutic. Programs are generally derived from the principles of learning theory, and aim to change some aspect of behaviour or thinking related to a particular environment or circumstance; thirdly, the duration is shorter rather than longer, usually with a fixed number of sessions; fourthly, the service is more often delivered to groups than individuals; fifthly, the deliverer of stress management interventions does not generally form a therapeutic relationship with participants. Rather, s/he acts as a facilitator/educator, encouraging group members to establish their own goals, and to self-administer and self-monitor progress. There is rarely long-term follow-up once the program has been completed (Auerbach & Gramling 1998).

Employee Performance

Aguinis (2009) described that “the definition of performance does not include the results of an employee’s behavior, but only the behaviours themselves. Performance is about behaviour or what employees do, not about what employees produce or the outcomes of their work”. Perceived employee performance represents the general belief of the employee about his behavior and contributions in the success of organization. Employee performance may be taken in the perspective of three factors which makes possible to perform better than others, determinants of performance may be such as “declarative knowledge”, “procedural knowledge” and “motivation” (McCloy et al., 1994).

Dimensions of Employee Performance

Performance is a multicomponent concept and on the fundamental level one can distinguish the process aspect of performance, that is, behavioral engagements from an expected outcome (Borman, & Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell et al., 1993; Roe, 1999). The behavior over here denotes the action people exhibit to accomplish a work, whereas the outcome aspect states about the consequence of individual’s job behavior (Campbell, 1990). Apparently, in a workplace, the behavioral engagement and expected outcome are related to each other (Borman, & Motowidlo, 1993), but the comprehensive overlap between both the constructs are not evident yet, as the expected outcome is influenced by factors such as motivation and cognitive abilities than the behavioral aspect. 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, 1999). Therefore, the primary antecedents of task performance are the ability to do the job and prior experience. In an organizational context, task performance is a contractual understanding between a manager and a subordinate to accomplish an assigned task. Entrusted task performance is broken into two

segments: technical-administrative task performance and leadership task performance. The expected job performance comprising of planning, organizing, and administering the day-to-day work through one's technical ability, business judgment and so on are called as technical-administrative task performance. Leadership task performance is labeled through setting strategic goals, upholding the necessary performance standards, motivating and directing subordinates to accomplish the job through encouragement, recognition, and constructive criticisms (Borman, & Brush, 1993; Tripathy, 2014). Borman, and Motowidlo (1997) defined job performance in the context of task performance as "effectiveness with which job occupants execute their assigned tasks, that realizes the fulfillment of organization's vision while rewarding organization and individual proportionately." Werner (1994) has synthesized the earlier propositions of task performance through relating it to organizational formal reward stating as "the demonstrated skill and behavior that influences the direct production of goods or service, or any kind of activities that provides indirect supports to organization's core technical processes." An individual's ability to acclimatize and provide necessary support to the job profile in a dynamic work situation is referred to as adaptive performance (Hesketh, & Neal, 1999). Earlier studies have found that once the employees derive a certain amount of perfection in their assigned tasks, they try to adapt their attitude and behavior to the varied requirements of their job roles (Huang et al., 2014; Pulakos et al., 2000). An effective adaptive performance necessitates employees' ability to efficiently deal with volatile work circumstances (Baard, Rench, & Kozlowski, 2014), for example, technological transformations, changes in one's core job assignment, restructuring of organization and so on. Evolutions of various new occupations as an offshoot of technological innovation need employees to engage in fresh learning and get oneself adaptable with changes in an efficient manner (Griffin, Parker, & Mason, 2010; Hollenbeck, LePine, & Ilgen, 1996). The employees are also expected to adjust their interpersonal behavior in such changed circumstances to work successfully with a wide range of peers and subordinates. In the context of wholesome work performance, Griffin, Neal, and Parker (2007) cited that job proficiency may aid for task performance, but adaptability and proactiveness to one's job role is important to address uncertain business environments.

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among others posing challenges in service delivery (Adetayo, Ajani & Olabisi, 2014). This highlights ineffectiveness of the stress management strategies to curb labour turnover and therefore enhance employees' commitment. It is in the light of these problems that this research seeks to bring to the fore the implication of occupational stress on the overall performance of institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives and the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made that stress management strategies were found to have greater influence on the performance of employees in the fast food firms. Flexibility in work hour is cost-effective and efficient way which also helps in savings on overheads cost and reduces the expenses, gain competitiveness and also improve employee performance; the research also concluded that flexible working hours increases the employee productivity and allow him to do proper scheduling to move with official and personal life. Training programs not only develops employees but also help an organization to make best use of their human resources in favour of gaining competitive advantage.

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