



## Management of Occupational Stress among the Personnel of Hotels in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract -** *This research work examined the causes and effects of occupational stress among the hotel personnel in Ibadan metropolis. Four hotels were purposively selected from the Ibadan South West local government area of Oyo State. A questionnaire was used to solicit information from the respondents. A total of one hundred and sixteen (116) respondents were sampled. Data collected were presented using tables and graphs and described using frequency counts and percentages. Findings showed that the most severe stressors include work being undervalued and underpaid, and staff shortage which results in overwork and tight schedule with 88% and 82% frequency count respectively. It was also deduced from the findings that non-properly managed stressors can be linked to poor employee well-being, lower productivity, and increased absence from work. In moderation, a certain level of stress has the potential to contribute to organizational effectiveness and can become counter-productive once excessive levels of unresolved stress begin to affect health and productivity. Based on the findings obtained from the study, it was observed that most of the hotel personnel were female, literate, single, young, and active. The study concludes that nearly half of all hotel employees suffer from moderate to severe stress, and among widely used management strategies by hotels in the study area are reduced workload, annual leave with pay, and compensation of outstanding performance. The study thus recommends that the managers can extend their support to the personnel to get rid of the job stress through the provision of medical and workplace wellness schemes. Hotel employers can also change organizational policies to give individuals more control over their work activities.*

**Keywords:** *Hotel Personnel, Occupational Stress, Management Strategies, Stressor, Wellness Scheme*

### 1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, employees are the backbone and lifeblood of every business and organisation, and employees must perform well to achieve the organizations' ultimate goal. Job stress is a frequent problem across occupations and its impacts are on job performance and productivity (Matterson, 2007). Olaniyi, (2013) affirmed that there are organisations that make serious efforts and devise effective strategies in keeping their employees satisfied and stress-free. Stress are often a reaction exhibited by people that need to face excessive pressures on account of varied demands placed on them (Werther, 2010). Khagendra and Gopal, (2013) opined that, although stress cannot be totally eliminated from the individual's life, it can be minimized and this will help in leading a healthy and successful life.

#### 1.1 Statement of the problem

Increasing demand for the individual in the workplace reaches out to the homes and social lives of employees. Tedious, uncertain or tiring hours, taking work home, high level of responsibility, job insecurity, and job relocation may adversely affect family responsibilities and leisure activities.

Occupational stress is a complex phenomenon, but it is more present in the service sector such as the hospitality industry than in any other economic sector. Being a service industry, the hospitality business is highly labour-intensive and has an increasingly enormous demand imposed upon it (Sampson & Akyeampong, 2014). Stress is included with depression and anxiety as the second most common cause of occupational illness in the statistics compiled by the United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive (HSE),

causing the loss of 13.5 million employees during the working days of year 2007/2008 (Michie, 2002). Keith and James, (2018) affirmed that stress destroys productivity if left uncontrolled. Thus, this research unveils various work-related stressors and their effect on personnel in the hotel industry.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Study

This research work aim to examine the causes and effects of occupational stress among the hotel personnel in Ibadan metropolis, other objectives are:

- i. to describe the socio-economic characteristics of hotel personnel in the study area;
- ii. to identify the types of stressor peculiar to hotel personnel in the study area;
- iii. to investigate the effects of unresolved stress among personnel of the hotel industry in Ibadan metropolis; and
- iv. to examine the stress management strategies used by the hotels in the study area.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Concept of stress

All the modern definitions of stress that are put forward by scholars, practitioners, and researchers purport that it can be defined as the personal experience of an individual that is caused by the increased pressure and excessive and inappropriate demands. Stress affects the ability of an individual to cope or it affects the perception of an individual about personal abilities that he or she possesses (Ricardo, Amy, and Rohit. 2007).

In medical terms, stress is described as, "a physical or psychological impetus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to sickness"(Kaiwart, 2012). Panzarino, (2008) implies that Stress is simply a natural occurrence, affecting individual from the outside world. Stress is defined by psychologists as the body's response to a change that requires a physical, mental, or emotional modification (Dyer, 2006). Stress is a feeling experienced when a person believes he is being over-burden much more than his capability and available resources

### Hotel and stress

Generally, in hospitality industry, work stress has been seen as one of the most critical issues facing managers, because it affects the performance of all levels of employees, including managers and hourly employees and researches within the recent past implies that within the hospitality and hotel industry, as a results of the work stress, employees can become exhausted and cynical which successively would affect the services that are provided to the purchasers (Kim, 2008)

Stress within the hospitality industry has been mutually related with employee physiological symptoms which include headaches, fatigue, indigestion, ulcers, blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes and thus may result in output reduction and increased health care costs for the hospitality employer. These existing characteristics of the hotel industry create stress for several employees (Pulak, 2012).

### Occupational/workplace stress

It is discovered in research that there is a negative correlation between the quality of services delivered to customers and work- related stress, that is, less stressed employees provide high quality service than their counterparts who are highly stressed (Varca, 2009). Occupational stress refers to the continual stress an employee experiences due to the responsibilities, conditions, environment, or other pressure of the workplace, (HR Glossary, 2020). Malta, M. (2014) defined occupational stress as any discomfort which is felt and perceived at a private level, activated by instances, events, or situations that are too strained and frequent to exceed an individual's coping abilities and resources to handle them adequately. There are different types of work-related stress, depending on the individual employee, their job description, the organization policy, culture, etc. The National Job Safety and Health Institution defined job stress as an annoying excitement which happens when there's no proportion between person's desire, job requirements, and person's ability, or worker's resources and wishes.

Work stress can shoot up when workers do not feel supported by superiors or colleagues or feel they have no control over work processes (Michie, 2006). However, in some cases, stress can be positive and positively affect the workplace by making employers to fully exploit capabilities of employees and by elevating the vigilance of the employee (Ricardo, Amy, and Rohit, 2007). Stress exists in every organization either big or small, if there is a certain level of stress then it can add potential advantages in the efficiency of the organisation. But, once the stress becomes extreme and its level rises then it becomes dangerous. In this situation, it will not only affect the performance of employees but it adds to the cost of organisation such as healthcare cost and increased turnover.

## 2.2 Effects of stress

**Physiological Effect:** Evident of stress shows internally as nervousness, tension, headaches, anger, irritability, and exhaustion and chronic stress which causes the body to secrete hormones such as cortisol, which tend to make our complexion blemished and cause wrinkles. Studies have shown that about tens of many Americans suffer from skin diseases that flare up only they are under pressure. Some of the skin problems are itching, profuse sweating, warts, hives, acne, and psoriasis. The link between heart attacks and stress, although easy to assume, has been harder to prove. It is however clear that individuals under stress engage in behaviors that can lead to heart disease such as eating fatty foods, smoking, or failing to exercise (Klenosky, 2012).

**Psychological Effect:** Depression and anxiety are two psychological outcomes of unchecked stress, which are as dangerous to our mental health and welfare as heart disease, high blood pressure, and strokes (Klenosky, 2012). Persistent or inveterate stress has the potential to place vulnerable individuals at a substantially increased risk of depression, anxiety, various other emotional difficulties noted Mayo Clinic psychiatrist (Daniel Hall-Flavin, 2008). Scientists have observed that changes in brain function, especially within the areas of the hypothalamus and therefore the pituitary, can possibly play a key role in stress-induced emotional problems. (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2008)

## 2.3 Study Area

Ibadan is the capital of Oyo state Nigeria with a population of 5 million (NPC 2006) it is the country's largest city by geographical area. Ibadan is located in southwestern Nigeria; the principal inhabitants of the city are the Yoruba as well as various communities from other parts of the country. There are eleven local governments in Ibadan metropolitan area. Five urban local government in the city and six semi urban local governments in the less city. Ibadan South-West, the study area for this research, is a local government area in Oyo state, Nigeria, its headquarter is at Oluyole Estate in Ibadan. Ibadan south west has the largest concentration of industries and companies in the whole of Oyo state (OYSG website, 2017).



Fig. 1: Map of Ibadan Metropolis showing the Local Government areas and land use classification

### **3. Methodology**

A descriptive survey research was used for this study. A quantitative analysis method was chosen to measure the effects of work stress among the hotel employees in Ibadan metropolis. Primary data was collected from randomly selected samples of personnel from four hotels in Ibadan South West local government area. Secondary information was derived from review of literatures. The target population for the study are all the hotel personnel in Ibadan metropolis. Personnel in four hotels in Ibadan South West Local Government area of Oyo State were selected as sample. This is because it is hard to gather all the information from the whole population as it is too large. The hotels selected for field survey are: Kakanfo Inn, Capital Inn, Travel House Budget Hotel and Best Western Plus

The instrument used was questionnaire which was divided into two sections: Section A and B. Section A comprised of socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, while section B includes questions designed based on objectives of the study. The total of one hundred and sixteen (116) structured questionnaires were distributed to personnel from the four hotels selected. This method employs the selection of respondents in each department of the hotels in which every staff have equal and independent chance of being selected

**Table 1. Distribution showing sampling procedure and sampling size**

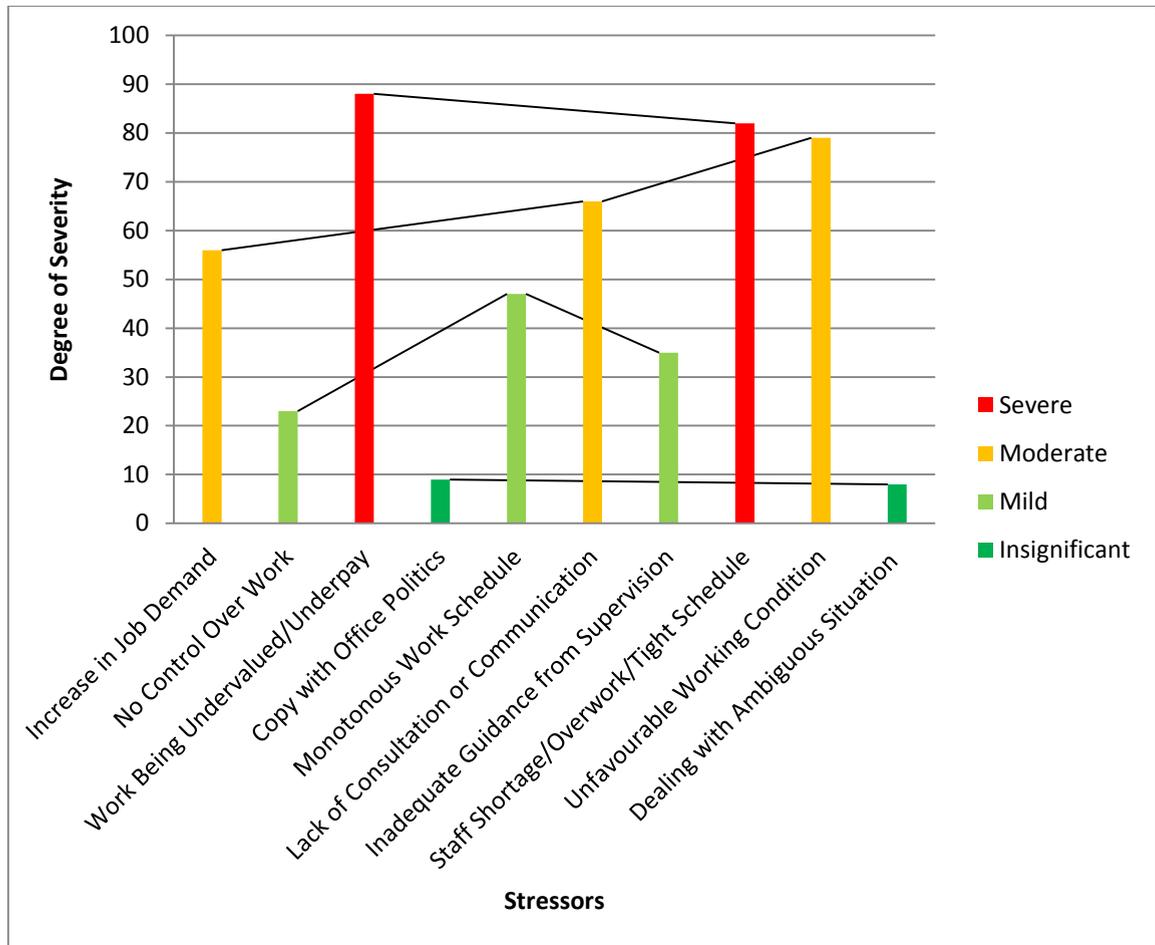
<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Questionnaire distributed</b>	<b>Questionnaire returned</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Kakanfo Inn	36	28	77.78
Best Western Plus	30	26	86.67
Capital Inn	25	24	96.00
Travel House Budget Hotel	25	22	88.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>86.21</b>

**Source:** field survey, 2017

### **4. Results and discussion**

#### *4.1. Sources of Stress in the Hotel and its Degree of Severity*

From Figure 3 below, the most severe stressor include work being undervalued and underpaid and staff shortage which result into overwork and tight schedule with 88% and 82% frequency count respectively. This implies that hotel works are cumbersome. This is consistent with the research of Sampson & Akyeampong, (2014) which stated that hotel business is highly labour-intensive and has an increasingly enormous demand imposed upon it. Increase in job demand, lack of consultation or communication and unfavourable working condition are seen as moderate stressor. However, with 23%, 47% and 35% respectively, stressors such as lack of control over work, monotonous work schedule and poor supervision are seen to be mild in effect.



**Fig. 2:** Distribution of the respondents based on source of stress and their degree of severity in the hotel

#### 4.2. Effects of unresolved stress

At 94%, figure 4 indicated that individual wellbeing is the most affected of all the elements that make up an organisation by unresolved stress. Closely followed by performance and productivity. These were negatively affected by unresolved stress at 89%. Staff to staff relationship is moderately affected at 69% by unresolved stress; while staff to customer relationship and organisational growth are mildly affected by unresolved stress at 49% and 44% respectively. Surprisingly, the employee would tend to protect the hotel's corporate image as it will be negatively affected by an insignificant 9% of the total respondent.

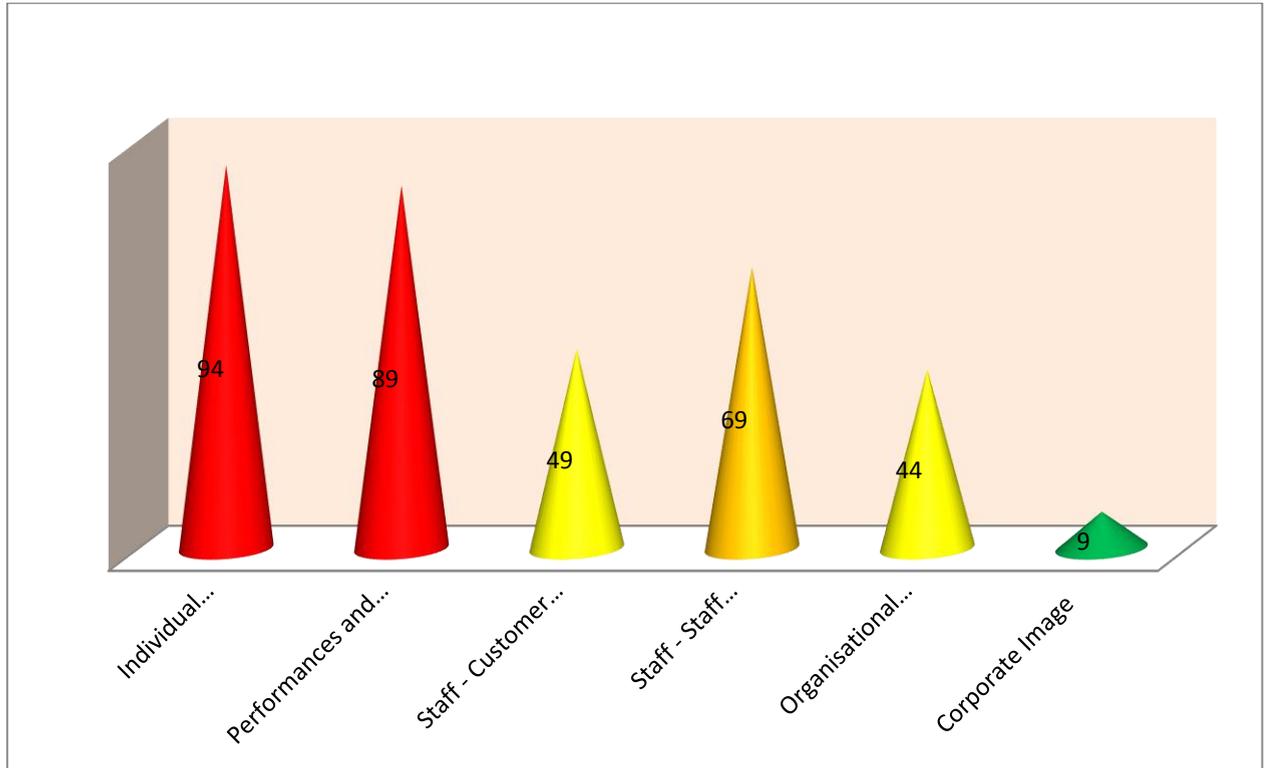


Fig 3. Distribution of respondents based on the effects of unresolved stress

#### 4.3. Strategies for reducing employee stress

Figure 5. shows that reduced workload and annual leave with bonus are the widely used strategies at 89% and 86% respectively; followed by compensation of outstanding performance at 81%, while conducive work environment and on the job training closely trail at 73% and 72% respectively. Encouragement of flow of employee to employers' relationship is also significant at 66%, while other strategies such as encouragement of feedback, provision of medical and women support and workplace wellness scheme are fairly effective at the minimal rate.

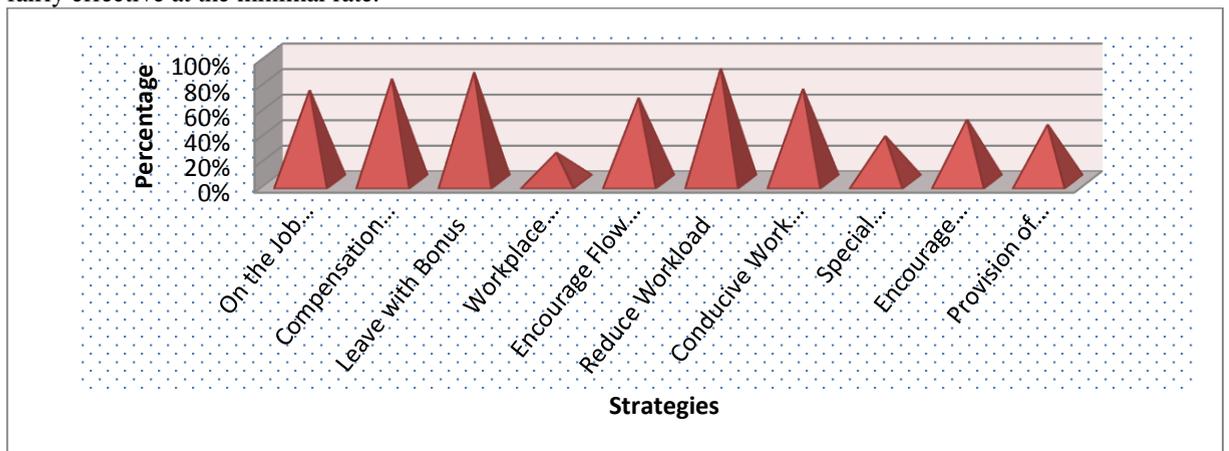


Fig 5: Distribution of respondents based on the strategies for reducing their stress

## **5. Discussion**

Occupational stress can occur when employees have the feeling of being unfairly paid or sense a lack of recognition from their peers or superiors. The causes of high-stress levels were explored in this research. Most of the employees regarded inadequate staffing as the biggest cause of stress in the workplace. This results in other stressors such as lack of control of work, an increase in job demand, overwork, and tight schedule on the part of the employee and underpay. Other causes of high degree are unfavourable working conditions, monotonous work schedules, and the employee being undervalued. Globally, few employers considered these to be the most pressing problem with only fifty percent of senior managers acknowledging this as a cause of stress in their hotels. However, in selected hotels in Ibadan, employers agreed that inadequate staffing was the second largest cause of workplace stress after a lack of work-life balance. The findings further revealed that unresolved stress has a negative impact on individual wellbeing which increases the absenteeism of highly stressed employees. It was deduced that unresolved stress has a negative impact on performance and productivity.

Feedbacks, the flow of communication, reduce workload, and compensation of outstanding performance are some of the stress management strategies jointly employed by the selected hotels. Some of the hotels also encourage a friendly environment at work, consistent on-the-job training to boost employees' technical skills, and other incentives to curtail the menace of work-related stress among their personnel. Workplace wellness and liaising with the medical service provider is another stress management strategy employed by some of the selected hotels as attested by their staff.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study investigated the causes of stress among the personnel of hotels in Ibadan South West local government area of Oyo State and the management strategies used by the hotel managers in the study area. Based on the findings obtained from the study, it can be concluded that most of the hotel personnel were female, literate, single, young, and active. The most severe stressors include work being undervalued and underpaid, staff shortage which results in overwork and tight schedule. An increase in job demand, lack of consultation or communication, and unfavourable working conditions are seen as moderate stressors. While stressors such as lack of control over work, monotonous work schedule, and poor supervision are seen to be mild in effect.

It was observed that reduced workload and annual leave with bonuses are the widely used strategies by the hotel managers in the study area. Compensation of outstanding performance, conducive work environment, on the job training, and flow of employee to employers' relationships are also significant strategies. Other strategies common to the hotels in the study area are the encouragement of feedback, provision of medical and workplace wellness scheme. Conclusively, individual wellbeing was the most affected of all the elements that make up an organisation by unresolved stress, closely followed by staff's performance and productivity. Staff to staff relationships and staff to customer relationships are moderately affected by unresolved stress.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the findings of this work, the researcher has the following recommendations for hotel owners, hotel managers, and their personnel:

Employers and managers can assist their staffs to avoid stress, and thus maintain business objectives, by providing workers with the means to communicate issues that bother them. Regular performance reviews, options for career development, and a sense of autonomy in their jobs enable staff members to enjoy their work. Acknowledge it when an employee is overburdened with ongoing projects, and then arranging for assistance for the worker is a simple, yet effective measure to stress-reduction. Making an effort to create an enjoyable work environment will positively affect employee productivity and the hotel business.

Stress is a major source of job burn-out and strained interactions with colleagues and supervisors. Hotel employees should build a positive relationship at the place of work.

When you are affected and strained because of a stressful environment or lifestyle, you would be easily distracted and prone to make costly and dangerous mistakes on the job. Therefore, hotel personnel should remain focused at all times and do away with any form of distraction.

The hotel employees can try to overcome their stress through some exercises, yoga, and meditation. The managers can extend their support to the personnel to get rid of the job stress: provision of medical and workplace wellness scheme will assist in achieving this.

Hotel employers can change organizational policies to give individuals more control over their work activities, develop a support system, shared goals and direction, Problem-solving innovation tolerated, decision making distributed, teamwork, respect and personal needs heard.

Organizations should reduce psychological strain, work overload, and role ambiguity through the adoption of job redesign techniques. Organizational support activities such as counselling and stress reduction workshops should also be increased.

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