







STRESS MITIGATION AND STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WOMEN IN NIGERIA ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract:

Stress can strain both personal and professional relationships. Addressing the causes of stress, along with coping strategies and behavioral changes, may provide relief. Social and employer interventions can help reduce stress and improve well-being. This study examined workplace stress-reduction strategies for women. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used, employing surveys and purposive sampling to gather data. A total of 150 Nigerians, representing each geopolitical zone and Abuja, were randomly selected from the country's 200 million population. Data was collected quantitatively through a confirmed structured questionnaire, with samples obtained via email. Traditional statistical methods were applied, using a four-point Likert scale for analysis. The majority of participants (52.4%) were aged 26–35, 69.5% were single, and 70.9% had a higher education. The sample was predominantly from the northern region (59.0%), with 23.8% of respondents holding employer roles, 47.6% freelancers, and 67.6% working in private firms. Strategies for minimizing job stress included avoiding stressful situations, sleeping, talking with coworkers, seeking professional help, and meditation. However, some strategies were less effective in preventing burnout. Most participants reported relaxing with family and enjoying their work, which helped lower stress levels. Women specifically relieved job stress by resting, taking breaks, listening to music, using social media, watching movies, talking with others, and eating. Stress-related infections such as immunosuppressive, bacterial, and fungal infections require treatment.

Keywords:

stress, women, workplace, mitigation, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress at work is a widespread problem that affects many individuals who are actively employed. It can negatively influence both a person's physical and mental health, as well as their work performance. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), work stress is defined as "the detrimental physical and emotional reactions that arise when the requirements of the job do not meet the talents, resources, or demands of the worker." This stress may be triggered by a wide range of circumstances, such as an overwhelming workload, stringent time constraints, lack of control or autonomy, insufficient support or resources, and conflicts with coworkers or superiors. Additionally, personal issues, such as financial worries or challenges in one's personal life, can also contribute to work-related stress.

The consequences of workplace stress can be significant. It is linked to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, as well as physical symptoms like headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. Moreover, stress can adversely affect job performance, leading to errors, accidents, and decreased productivity (American Psychological Association, 2020).

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Workers are less likely to experience job-related stress when the demands and pressures of their roles align better with their knowledge and skills. The likelihood of experiencing work-related stress is inversely proportional to the level of support received from colleagues or supervisors. Employees who have a greater degree of control over their work and actively participate in decision-making processes related to their roles are also less likely to experience stress (Jackson et al., 2010; Kahn and Schneider, 2014).

Both the nature of the job itself and the conditions under which it is performed are significant contributors to occupational stress. The "content of work" refers to the psychological risks associated with working conditions and the workplace environment. One of the earliest elements investigated was how the workload affected employees' health. Stress is associated with both the quantity of work (the amount of tasks to complete) and the quality of work (the complexity of tasks). Factors contributing to job stress include:

Job Content: Monotonous, under-stimulating, or meaningless tasks; lack of variety; unpleasant or aversive tasks.

Workload and Work Tempo: Having too much or too little to do; working under time constraints; strict and inflexible working hours; unpredictable schedules; poorly designed shift systems.

Participation and Control: Lack of involvement in decision-making; limited control over work methods, pace, working hours, and the work environment (ILO, 2016; Gelaye et al., 2014; Goh et al., 2015).

The long-term purpose of this study is to determine the psychological impacts that job stress has on women, as well as to identify strategies that can be employed to

combat these psychological effects. This research aims to investigate the strategic mitigation of work-related stress among employed women in selected Nigerian institutions.

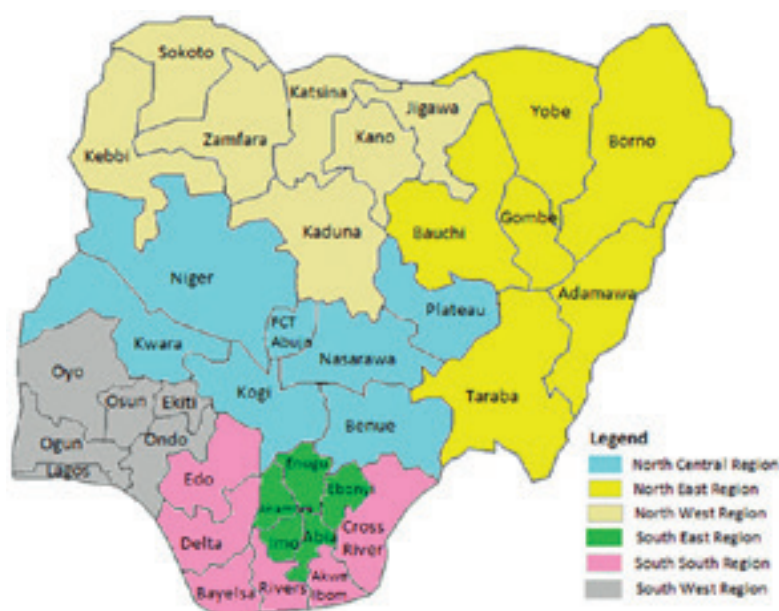
2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of 150 respondents were sampled randomly from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones: North Central (NC), North East (NE), North West (NW), South West (SW), South East (SE), and South South (SS), along with five respondents from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), out of a population size exceeding two hundred million.

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states grouped into 6 agro-ecological zones.

Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing states Volunteered and consented women of various age groups from variety of Nigerian organizations served as the study's population, using purposive sampling technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling method which depended on the ability of the researcher's judgment of suitability. To ensure the suitability and appropriateness of response gotten from the respondents. Electronic medium of data collection was used. The questionnaire link was delivered directly to respondents' email with an accompanying message describing the nature of the survey and the confidentiality of the questionnaire. The instrument used for collection of data is a structured questionnaire developed by the review of related literature for the study. The questionnaire was intended to elicit the objective opinions of the respondents on the mitigation of work-related stress on employed women in Nigeria Organizations.

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing states.



Source: Adopted from the Federal Government of Nigeria (2012).



The questionnaire consisted of four sections, A, B and C. Section A of the questionnaire elicits personal information of the respondents, while section B to C contains item questions in accordance to the specific purpose of the study and research questions developed from the study. Section B contains Ten (10) items designed to find out the general psychological effects of work stress. In section C, eight (8) items were used to determine the strategies employed to overcome work stress. Electronic medium of data collection was employed. The data obtained was analyzed statistically using 5 point Likert scale and The acceptance point for the mean (\bar{x}) of nominal values assigned was calculated as mean score index. 1: Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states grouped into 6 agro-ecological zones. Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing states Volunteered and consented women of various age groups from variety of Nigerian organizations served as the study's population, using purposive sampling technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling method which depended on the ability of the researcher's judgment of suitability. To ensure the suitability and appropriateness of response gotten from the respondents. Electronic medium of data collection was employed. The questionnaire link was delivered directly to respondents' email with an accompanying message describing the nature of the survey and the confidentiality of the questionnaire. The instrument used

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sociodemographic information of the respondents was depicted on Table 1. Majority are above 25 year old, single with first degree. Most of them are Hausa by tribe and are self-employed.

Table 1. Demographic information of employed women at the study area.

Demographic Details	Demographic Details	Demographic Details	Demographic Details
Age	15-25	47	44.8
	26-35	55	52.4
	36 above	3	2.9
Marital Status	Divorced	1	1.0
	Married	30	28.6
	Single	73	69.5
	Widowed	1	1.0
Educational Qualification	B.Sc.	74	70.5
	M.Sc.	13	12.4
	PhD	6	5.7
	Secondary school	12	11.4
Language	Edo	12	11.4
	Hausa	25	23.8
	Igbira	15	14.3
	Igbo	20	19.0
	Isoko	4	3.8
	Nupe	12	11.4
	Yoruba	17	16.2
Religion	Christianity	43	41.0
	Islam	62	59.0
Work Status	Employee	49	46.7
	Employer	6	5.7
	Self employed	50	47.6



Table 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents. Of the total respondents, 47 (44.8%) are aged between 15 and 25 years, while 55 (52.4%) fall between the ages of 26 and 35 years. Additionally, 3 (2.9%) respondents are aged 36 years and above. Therefore, the age group 26 to 35 years has the highest number of respondents within the overall age range.

The table also presents the marital status of the respondents. It shows that most respondents are married, with 30 (28.6%) indicating this status. The second-highest group consists of single respondents, also with 30 (28.6%). The least represented categories are divorced and widowed respondents, with just 1 (1.0%) each.

The educational qualifications of the respondents are clearly presented in Table 4.1. Among the respondents, 74 (11.5%) hold a B.Sc., 13 (12.4%) have an M.Sc. degree, 6 (5.7%) are Ph.D. holders, and 12 (11.4%) are secondary school graduates. This indicates that B.Sc. holders constitute the highest proportion of the respondents. Further, the table shows the distribution of respondents by language. Edo-speaking respondents number 12 (11.4%), Hausa-speaking respondents total 25 (23.8%), Igbira-speaking respondents are 15 (14.3%), Isoko-speaking respondents are 4 (3.8%), Nupe-speaking respondents total 12 (11.4%), and 17 (16.2%) respondents are from the Yoruba ethnic group. This indicates that Hausa speakers are the most prevalent among the respondents.

Table 1 further provides the religious distribution of the respondents. The data shows that most respondents are Muslims, comprising 62 (59.0%), while Christian respondents total 43 (41.0%).

Regarding work status, 49 (46.7%) respondents are employees, 6 (5.7%) are employers, and 50 (47.6%) indicated that they are self-employed. This aligns with the study by Houser (2017), which reported an even distribution of women as both employers and employees in developing countries.

Table 2 contains seven (7) items that seek to gather the respondents' opinions regarding the strategies employed to overcome work stress. Out of the seven items, four were accepted while three were rejected. The accepted items had mean scores greater than the nominal score of 2.50, while the rejected items had mean scores below 2.50. Additionally, the last question outside the table is an open-ended question, bringing the total number of items in this section to eight (8).

3.1. DISCUSSION

From the results of this research, all respondents in the sampled group reported occasionally experiencing stress at their workplace, confirming that female workers face stress in their work environments. Most respondents indicated that when they feel stressed, they often take some time off to relax. Although the majority of respondents confirmed that work stress does not affect their daily lives, they acknowledged that it impacts their mood and productivity. Additionally, a few respondents reported experiencing burnout due to work stress.

While most respondents agreed that they receive support from their colleagues, they noted that there is limited support from their superiors or leaders when they are stressed. These findings align with the earlier work of Lee and Ok (2020), which discovered that supervisor support was positively associated with lower levels of stress and burnout, as well as higher levels of job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions among frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

A majority of the respondents set limits on overtime work and have established a clear balance in their household workload with their partners. However, most confirmed that work stress strains their relationships with their spouses. This aligns with the study by Grotto, Habel, and Schmitt (2021), which found that work-family inter-

Table 2. Strategies employed to overcome work stress by Nigerian employed women.

Item	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Remark
When I feel stressed at work, I often ignore it	150	10	25	55	60	1.90	Rejected
When I feel stressed at work, I take time to relax	150	30	65	25	30	2.63	Accepted
When I feel stressed at work, I talk to my colleague about	150	75	35	20	20	3.10	Accepted
I often seek professional help on how to cope with workplace stress	150	10	15	35	90	1.63	Rejected
I exercise every day to help manage workplace stress	150	35	65	25	25	2.73	Accepted
I practice meditation to help me cope with workplace stress	150	25	40	45	40	2.33	Rejected
I set boundaries around my work schedule to avoid burnout	150	40	65	25	20	2.83	Accepted
When I feel stressed at work, I often ignore it	150	10	25	55	60	1.90	Rejected



ference was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and positively associated with the likelihood of divorce, providing further evidence of the impact of work stress on romantic relationships. This strain may manifest in communication issues, as many people prefer to rest and sleep after a stressful day at work.

The research confirmed that workplace stress results in physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, loss of concentration, irritability, short temper, and stomach aches. These findings support the work of Dorn, Åkerstedt, Westerlund, Magnusson, and Kecklund (2021), which identified that work stress is associated with various negative physical and psychological health outcomes, including headaches, fatigue, stomach aches, and anxiety.

A vast majority of the respondents attested that the stress they experienced at work was not related to their gender and was general in nature. This contrasts with the findings of Gyllensten and Palmer (2005), which indicated that women reported higher levels of stress than their male counterparts. Most respondents also stated that there was no gender differentiation at their workplace. While the majority affirmed that they did not experience any form of discrimination during their pregnancies, they reported instances of mild sexism. Furthermore, although a large majority confirmed that the stress they experienced at work was not gender-related, they noted that unfair discrimination and treatment, due to unspecified reasons, contributed to their work stress.

This research also found that a majority of workers relieve stress by taking time off from work. They reported coping with stress by talking to their spouses or other individuals. Additionally, many manage work-related stress by making time for activities they enjoy. Other methods women use to alleviate work stress include sleeping, taking breaks, listening to music, engaging on social media, watching movies, participating in discussions, and eating.

Consequently, numerous practical applications arise from the findings of this study. These insights can be used by employers to develop more effective stress management programs tailored to the specific needs and preferences of their employees.

social support systems, encouraging physical exercise, and providing flexible work options, it is possible to greatly decrease stress levels among employees, for the purpose of an academic perspective, these results emphasize the necessity for additional investigation on the cultural, educational, and gender-related aspects that impact stress management. Potential future research could explore the long-term effects of various stress management techniques on employee well-being and productivity, as well as the influence of organizational culture on the development of these methods.

Finally, the study offers a thorough analysis of the sociodemographic variables and stress management techniques among women who are employed in Nigerian institutions. The acquired insights are extremely significant since they provide a basis for creating more efficient and culturally appropriate therapies to reduce work-related stress.

4. CONCLUSION

This research offers valuable insights into how employed women in Nigerian institutions navigate the challenges of work-related stress. These women demonstrate resilience and adaptability by taking breaks, engaging in enjoyable activities, seeking social support, and incorporating simple yet effective stress-relief techniques into their daily routines. In addition to enriching the academic understanding of stress management, these findings provide practical recommendations for organizations aiming to promote the mental well-being and productivity of their employees.

5. LITERATURE

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