

THE PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined how managers can effectively manage their organization without stress. The paper x-rayed how stress can be prevented in the organization rather than managing it, because its management may or may not be successful. It is better to prevent its occurrence. Generally, it was observed that managers actually go through stressful conditions while managing the affairs of their organizations. The effects of stress they go through was found to be responsible for low productivity, lack of commitment to work, insubordination, industrial unrest, disloyalty, etc. Based on the above therefore, it is recommended that there should be an effective time management system, an efficient planning system, a good industrial relations harmony and provision of the necessary working materials. The above will promote a healthy work environment where workers will be happy doing their jobs, which in turn will stimulate a stress-free working condition and therefore increased productivity.

Introduction

As the general saying goes, 'prevention is better than cure'. This statement means it is better to prevent stress than allow it to damage the smooth flow of work in the organization.

It is an obvious fact that managers go through stress in the process of carrying out their daily activities in the office. This type of stress include the challenges of the job, meeting customers demands, coping with industrial unrest, competition from firms producing similar products, long meeting hours, overtime and community hostility etc. this is why managers get fatigued and run down after task performance. Selye (1974) opined that while the body under stress is better equipped to deal with a specific stress or, it becomes less able to respond to several different demands. Hence, quality of productivity and performance per se, get low following barrages of stressful experiences. This could be the reason. Hoagland (1977) see stress as something that has to do with the destabilization of the equilibrium of the body mechanism by external factors (stressors) and the restoration of this equilibrium (homeostasis) effected in stress responses.

The above implies that for managers to manage their organizations efficiently and effectively, they must be ready to avoid those things that causes stress and this is what this paper hopes to achieve.

To accomplish this task, the paper has therefore been sectionalize into six parts. Part one which is the introduction has already been discussed above. Part

two shall examine what stress is about. Part three shall look at the consequences of stress. Part four shall discuss the approaches to executive stress. Part five shall examine how stress can be prevented in the organization part six shall form the concluding part of the paper.

What is Stress?

Agulanna (1994) defined stress as being inextricably interwoven with life itself and it ceases a life itself stops.

Hoagland (1977) see stress as something that has to do with the destabilization of the equilibrium of the body mechanism by external factors (stressors) and the restoration of this equilibrium (Homeostasis) effected in stress responses.

McGrath (1970) opined that stress is a perceived substantial imbalance between demand and response capability under conditions where failure to meet demand has important (perceived) consequences. He said further that all living things are in a constant state of dynamic interactions with their environments within the interactions according to him, man tries to modify his environment while his environment actually modifies him and in the process, many experience a level of tension or stress.

Beehr and Newman (1978) see job stress as a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from normal functioning. This definition implies that job stress occurs as a result of the ways jobs are structured i.e. the extent to which the job stress occurs as a result of the ways jobs are structured i.e. the extent to which the job provides the worker the opportunity for fulfilling certain psychological needs on the job and from the actions of other people in the work situation.

Generally, the definition above simply that managers really go through stress in the cause of carrying out the affairs of their organizations as indicated by the various authorities.

Since it has now been established that stress have negative effects on managers, it is therefore vital to find solutions to it in order to prevent its occurrence than its management since its prevention is easier to handle than its management.

Consequences of Executive Stress

It is imperative to note that executive positions and their environments do not directly cause stress. Stress as a feeling is a consequences of personal attributes and dispositions as they affect the individual's reactions to personal life experience-threatening and pleasant, negative and positive ones Goldberg and Comstock (1976) posited that these life experience or event's depending on their frequencies and magnitudes enhance stress and subsequent illness in those

experiencing them. Bruno (1993), sees executives as having similar traits as high level ambition, commitment to work and hard drive for success which matches with behaviour characterization of Friedman and Rosenham (1959; 1954) in medical and stress as Type A personality. This type A is characterized by extreme competitiveness, strong devotion to duty and profession, impatience, time urgency in almost everything including eating, listening and other personal habits, a hurried pace of life and extreme desire to achieve. People in this group are clinically susceptible and prone to heart diseases (Glass, 1977) and sudden death (Kamarck and Jennings, 1991). Thus, Type A characteristics interact with executive roles and functions in the environment.

Another noteworthy assertion is that one cannot say that exposure to stress causes disorders in persons. It is equally difficult to determine the does or levels of stress capable of causing what amount of disorder or personal discomfort. It is clear that exposure to overly high and prolonged levels of distress is bound to affect the physiology and biochemistry of the body, hence the immune system, blood pressure flow and cardiovascular rhythms (Nweze, 1994).

Approaches to Executive Stress Depletion of Body's Energy

Stress makes enormous demand on human physical energy resources which the body mobilizes to wade through the imposed demands of the events or situation. Complex tasks performance demands much energy utilization. This explains why one is fatigued and run down after task performance. Selye (2002), opined that while the body under stress is better equipped to deal with a specific stress or, it becomes less able to respond to several different demands. Hence quality of productivity and performance per se, get low following barrages of stressful experiences. There exist the danger of proneness to injuries and accidents. The frequency of mistakes and impaired judgment are consequences of stress.

Over-Action and Depletion of Immune System

Uncontrolled and prolonged stress is known for activation of body system: increase of blood pressure, over secretion of body fluids that leads to their eventual depletion (Hubert, 1994). The consequences tend towards degenerative diseases conditions- chronic hypertension, heart disease, stroke, liver and kidney failure and sudden death in both young and old executives. Other associated diseases are psychosomatic complaints as migraine headaches, lower back and muscle pains, tension headaches, body aches and pain manifested as physical complaints; gastrointestinal disorders as diarrhea, constipation, peptic ulcer and colitis. The immune system depletion renders the individual to a high risk of attract of simple illness. In severe cases, Cohen and Williamson (1991), Hubert (1994), indicates that development of thyroid malfunctioning can lead to diseases condition as cancer and rheumatoid arthritis.

The Development of Burn-Out Behaviours

Unrelieved stress, which goes on day after day, month and year lead to burn-out. The condition is debilitating behaviour it has the power to weaken, even devastate, otherwise healthy energetic and competent individuals. Cohen (1978), suggests that the immediate experiences of stress is for one to do something to reduce its effect. They include use of sleeping drugs, excessive smoking and drinking as means of coping. Others are detachment and avoidance behaviour especially of significant to others, being cynical and justifying and rationalizing his behaviour with the popular phrase “after all I am doing what I can do for you people”. Burn-out behaviours as negative models of coping with stress may not be the same with all executives.

How to Prevent Stress in the Organization

Since studies have shown that stress have a negative effect on the performance of managers which by extension may disrupt the free flow of work, it is significant to examine ways it can be prevented as follows:

1. Executive Time Management

The importance and relevance of time management cannot be overemphasized. The government engages in time management by budgeting at the beginning of the financial year what it hopes to accomplish within a period of time. The school system also plan for a new academic year and the specification of a time period it will be accomplished. Church organizations also plan their yearly activities with a time frame for attaining them. The introduction of mechanical method of doing work has also reduced the spent in doing the same work by manual labour.

Drucker (1986) however view time as being totally inelastic priceless, totally perishable, irreplaceable and incapable of being stored in a unique resource that represents the actual hinting factor in all organizations. He observed that in spite of this, “there are constant pressures towards unproductive and wasteful time use” on the part of managers and workers alike. He therefore proposed a three stage approach for more effective time utilization as follows:

- (i) The executive should first determine where his time goes by keeping a daily record of how he spends it.
- (ii) Next, he should try to systematically manage his time by:
 - (a) Identifying and eliminating “the things that are purely waste of time without results whatever”.
 - (b) Delegating those activities (on the executive’s time log) which “could be done by somebody else just as well, if not better”.
 - (c) Eliminating those activities by which he wastes other people’s time, such as unnecessary meetings.

- (d) Pruning time wasters that result from “lack of system or foresight”, overstaffing, malorganization and “malfunction in information”.
- (iii) Finally, he should try to consolidate the time that is normally under his control-his discretionary time-and apply them in large chunks, instead of in small disjointed bits, and devote them to his “big tasks that will really make a contribution”.

Drucker’s views on the effective utilization of time by executives, was based on a normal situation where the concern for work is given as serious attention. But this is not the case in Nigeria where precious corporation time is wasted in some public sector and work not taken seriously. In fact, government work is considered no man’s work. Besides, work generally is seen as punishment where only the employer stands to gain, consequently, employees tend to exhibit time wasting attitude by coming late to work, leaving the work environment without permission, attacking the employer as a greedy man who will not want to pay salaries and wages as it pleases them, etc.

However the following tips on better time management than can protect the manager from stress according to MacAalphine (1992) are as follows:

- 1) Set up a daily routing. Schedule definite times for routine matters such as meetings, going through the mail, communicating with colleagues, making telephone calls, regularly monitor your life of time.
- 2) Do the things which require maximum brain capacity when you are at your best. Attend to minor business when your brain cannot cope with anything but small things-keep a list/pile of these ready.
- 3) Fix deadlines for all jobs.
- 4) Do not postpone important matters that are unpleasant. They will block your brain; reduce your creativity and working capacity.
- 5) Analyze your interruptions (time-seaters). Take steps to avoid them, diminish their effect.
- 6) Fix definite times when you do not want to be disturbed as if you were having a meeting with yourself.
- 7) Do one thing at a time. Just keep an overview of the next jobs. It helps to remove the files, etc of other work from sight when working on one job, to help concentrate the mind on the job in hand.
- 8) Avoid taking work home unless you are certain you will do something about it. It is better to enjoy your leisure time.
- 9) Set a task of the day each and try to finish at least this task before you go home.
- 10) Arrange your breaks at times when you cannot work effectively, e.g. when key people are not available, material is not ready etc.

Effective Planning System

Planning can be defined as the process by which managers set objectives, access the future, and then design a line of action to follow so as to achieve the set goal and objectives of the organization.

Planning implies that managers think through their goals and action in advance and that their actions are based on some method, plan, or logic rather than on a lunch. Plans give the organization its objectives and set up the best procedures for reaching them.

According to Nwachukwu (1988), planning is particularly very important in a developing country such as ours, where resources are relatively scarce.

The aforementioned implied that for any organization to be successful, the manager must plan effectively how he is going to achieve the organization's goals based on the available resources. The manager's inability to plan well can pose a threat to achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. This is why Nwachukwu said that most Nigerian Managers don't plant. He said further that this lack of planning can lead to frustration and then stress.

To prevent this stress as a result of lack of proper planning, managers can gain the following benefits from a good plan.

- 1) Planning encourages systematic thinking ahead by management
- 2) It leads to a better coordination of company's efforts.
- 3) It leads to the development of performance standards for control.
- 4) It causes the company to sharpen its guiding objectives and policies.
- 5) It results in better preparedness for sudden development.
- 6) It brings about a more vivid sense in the participating executives of their interacting responsibilities.

Maintenance of Industrial Peace

To maintain industrial peace, managers must promote goods industrial relations since it is only in an atmosphere of industrial peace that productivity can take place. Industrial unrest can disrupt productivity and disorganize the manager's plans from achieving organizational goals and objectives.

Industrial relations therefore can be defined as how the employers (manager) deal with his employees collectively and how employees deal collectively with the employers Okoh (1998). It can also be seen as the relationship between management and trade unions or staff associations. Sonubi (1980) defines Industrial Relations as the study of behaviour in employment relations.

Many managers think that they make the rules and call the shots. They think many workers will accept a subservient role because it is in their interest to do so and when employees react to domineering stance, they are surprised and hurt, arguing that the workers are biting the hands that fed them. Managers also extols the virtue of teamwork, where each worker strives hard and pulls his

weight to the best of his ability, while each accepts his place and functions and follows the leadership of the appointed managers.

The real situation is that management and workers are both interested in the prosperity and growth of the organization and its future security, as long as both parties feels that they are sharing the benefits equally. In many other cases both interests do not coincide; and the basis of industrial relations is that both sides will be using their bargaining power to advance and protect their own interests, Armstrong (1982).

The implications of the above, is that managers should try and avoid industrial stress by ensuring that they maintain a good industrial relations with their employees since a happy worker is a productive worker. It is therefore only in an atmosphere of industrial peace that workers will be productive. While the manager will be less stressful.

Ensuring the Smooth Flow of Work

The inability of firms to meet up with production and by extension customer's orders or demand indicates that work is not flowing in the organization. This situation can be frustrating to the manager, which again lead to stress.

Therefore, for production to flow without hindrance, management must ensure that the following are achieved or put in place.

- 1) Staff must be well motivated through reward systems, so that they can put in their best to ensure that production is not disrupted.
- 2) Machines that will make the process of doing work faster should be installed so that customers order could easily be met.
- 3) There should also be steady supply of raw materials and power so that production will not be disrupted as this can lead to frustration.
- 4) Modern working materials should be provided for workers so that they can enjoy doing their work and by extension boost their productivity. The above factors are likely to promote the smooth flow of work in the organization and protect the manager from stress.

Staff Indiscipline

The behaviour of worker in an organization can lead to indiscipline and therefore stress on the part of the manager.

This indiscipline include perpetual lateness to work, insubordination, stealing, fighting, disloyalty, disclosure of company's secrets, poor attitude to work, sleeping on duty, failure to observed safety rules, drunkenness, etc.

This inability of a manager to control the offences identified above can lead to indiscipline in the organization and consequently disrupt productivity.

Since the principles of delegation and accountability states that a manager will be held responsible for the failure of a given task and not the subordinate who failed to perform the task. It therefore follows that the manager

will be held responsible for the indiscipline of his staff for failing to perform a given task.

A manager who finds himself in this type of situation where he cannot control his staff as a result of indiscipline will likely get frustrated and therefore suffer from stress.

This is why managers must apply disciplinary actions where staff are found wanting. This will promote the smooth flow of work and protect the manager from stress.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that managers actually go through stress in the process of carrying out their job.

Stress was seen to be something that has to do with destabilization of the equilibrium of the body mechanism by external factors (stressors) and the restoration of this equilibrium (homeostasis) effected in stress responses. Managers should therefore create a stress-free working environment where workers will be happy doing their job without any form of intimidation or oppression.

Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned, it is therefore recommended that managers could avoid or prevent stress in their organizations by an effective time managements, effective planning system, maintenance of a good industrial relations, ensuring the smooth flow of work and good staff discipline.

The recommendations advanced above, will check the stressful situations worker's find themselves in the work environment since it is easier to prevent stress than allowing it to occur.

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