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STRESS MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of Nonacademic staff in the University of Calabar. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was sourced through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was four thousand six hundred and forty (4640) non-academic staff of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The sample size of 352 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan determination table. The research instrument was validated through by experts as provided by supervisors vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring coefficients above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The findings emanating from the tested hypotheses revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of non-academic staff in the University of Calabar. The study recommended that management of the university of Calabar 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. The management should undertake sensitization campaigns to enlighten employees since some were not aware that counselling services were offered within the institution neither did they know that flexitime and leisure facilities existed as stress management strategy. Employees should be made aware of meditation as the easiest way of handling stress and also relaxation by encouraging team building which refreshes the body and mind hence improving performance.

Keywords: Growth, Organizational Productivity, Quality of Service and Stress Management

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### INTRODUCTION

The goal of education in developing countries like Nigeria is to equip students with new skills, tacit knowledge, cultures, attitudes, behaviors and innovative ways of solving day to day problems in life. Education is aimed at supplying the economy with human capital that can convert efficiently other resources into output of high value for quality life (UNESCO, 2010). To attain quality education for sustainable development, the staff academic and non-academic who are directly or indirectly involved in instilling knowledge should be well motivated, healthy and satisfied with the job for excellent performance (KUPPET, 2015). Workrelated stress refers to the negative adaptive reactions such as anxiety, anger, frustration or depression experienced by a teacher due to new, threatening or over demanding aspects of his/her work as a teacher which is beyond his/her abilities, resources, control or needs thus affecting his/her physical, emotional and/or behavioral health, performance and quality of life (Borg, 2010; Cummings & Worley, 2008; Kyriacou, 2001).

Research conducted in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand and Australia has identified several key causes of work stress commonly associated with academic and non-academic staff. These include inadequate salary, work overload, time constraints, lack of promotion opportunities, lack of regular performance feedback, changing job roles, inadequate recognition, inadequate management and participation in management decision making, inadequate resources and funding, inadequate policies and student indiscipline (Borg, 2010; Bowers et al., 2000; Kyriacou, 2001). Robbins et al.( 2008) warns that negative effects of job stress impact negatively on employees leading to high cost of stress due to high turnover rates, increased absenteeism, low productivity and costly stressrelated diseases. This consequently drains the resources and cause inefficiency in organizations hence the increasing widespread concern amongst policy makers, employers, employees and

researchers over the high levels of stress in the world today.

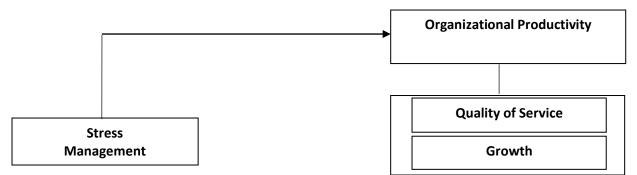
In the developing countries like Nigeria, quality education goal have not yet been realized fully hence the need to address the challenges within their education systems such as staff" stress in order to provide quality education to all for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2010). Locally, the increasing levels of unmanageable work stress amongst teachers in public institutions in Nigeria is compounded by the rapid expansion amid declining funds which has seen the schools experience challenges of poor physical facilities, overcrowding and staff disillusioned by several factors including inadequate and non-competitive salaries, poor working conditions, heavy workload, work-family conflict and institutional governance among others (TSC, 2013; Koech, 2014).

While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with employees' productivity and impact negatively on their physical and emotional health. The ability to deal with it can mean the difference between organizations' success and failure (Segal, Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2016). Stress significantly affects productivity and service delivery of workers (Ngari et al., 2013). Work stress is recognized world-wide as a major challenge of workers' health and the healthiness of their organizations. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market (Cox, Griffiths, & Leka, 2015).

Our Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria has gone through challenging times which had added to the stress levels of Academic and non-academic staff and by extension productivity in these institutions. The introduction of performance contracting in the Public Service where employees are supposed to meet their targets has been a stressor to public servants who were accustomed to working independently and rarely shared information or coordinated across programs (Majeed, 2014). It is with this in mind that relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of non-academic staff in the university Calabar.

Furthermore, this study will also be guided by the following research questions:

- What are the relationship between stress management and quality of service in the University of Calabar?
- What are the relationship between stress management and growth in the University of Calabar?



*Figure 1:* Conceptual Framework for the relationship stress management and organizational productivity *Source:* Desk Research (2021)

### LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Theoretical Foundation**

### Systemic Stress: Selye's Theory

According to Karanja, (2012) the popularity of the stress concept stems largely from the work of the endocrinologist Hans Selve. In a series of animal studies he observed that a variety of stimulus events (e.g., heat, cold, toxic agents) applied intensely and long enough are capable of producing common effects, meaning not specific to either stimulus event. (Besides these nonspecific changes in the body, each stimulus produces, of course, its specific effect, heat, for example, produces vasodilatation. and cold vasoconstriction.) According to Selye, these nonspecifically caused changes constitute the stereotypical, i.e., specific, response pattern of systemic stress. Selye (1976) defines this stress as `a state manifested by a syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes in a biologic system.' This stereotypical response pattern, called the `General Adaptation Syndrome' (GAS), proceeds in three stages.

 The alarm reaction comprises an initial shock phase and a subsequent counter shock phase. The shock phase exhibits autonomic excitability, an increased adrenaline discharge, and gastrointestinal ulcerations. The counter shock phase marks the initial operation of defensive processes and is characterized by increased adrenocortical activity.

- If noxious stimulation continues, the organism enters the stage of resistance. In this stage, the symptoms of the alarm reaction disappear, which seemingly indicates the organism's adaptation to the stressor. However, while resistance to the noxious stimulation increases, resistance to other kinds of stressors decreases at the same time.
- If the aversive stimulation persists, resistance gives way to the stage of exhaustion. The organism's capability of adapting to the stressor is exhausted, the symptoms of stage (a) reappear, but resistance is no longer possible. Irreversible tissue damages appear, and, if the stimulation persists, the organism dies. Although Selye, fails to take into account coping mechanisms as important mediators of the stress–outcome relationship, his theory serves to explain the detriments of stress of interventions are not made in time to rescue the stressed individuals.

This theory indirectly underpins the importance of stress management strategies to avoid employees reaching the irreversible stage when the stress is more advanced thereby impeding productivity of the organizations. With adequate intervention measures that are applied in time, employees" commitment may be restored and in turn organizational productivity.

### **Concept of Stress Management**

Folksman (1994) opines that stress management is the need of the hour, however hard we try to go beyond a stress situation; life seems to find new ways of stressing us out plaguing us with anxiety attacks. Moreover, be it anxiety, mind-body exhaustion or our erring attitudes, we tend to overlook the causes of stress, its effects and how to manage stress adequately. In such unsetting moments, we often forget that stressors, if not escapable, are fairly manageable and treatable. Stress management refers to interventions designed to reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace. These can have an individual focus, aimed at increasing an individual"s ability to cope with stressors. The goal of stress management is to help the individual to manage the stress of everyday life. According to Bruce (2003) stress management is a proven group of techniques for modifying stress, producing thoughts, relaxing away physical and emotional tension and learning how to make changes to our environment (or situation) whenever possible.

Effective stress management can help us to resolve conflicts with others assertively and confidently become better problem solvers in the face of life"s demands and to appreciate the helpfulness of exercise and recreation. Selve (2011) asserts that "It all seems ominous for individuals and organization. Life is demanding, fast paced and often unpredictable but we are more adaptable than most of us realize. Stress management is effective because it teaches people skills for reversing the "stress response". Through stress management, we learn where our real control lies and how to effectively. manage stress Newman (2009) postulates that a major component of stress management is cognitive restructuring or changing the way we think. Our beliefs are the lens through which we look at life. If the expectations we have for ourselves, others and the work do not match reality, we will experience cognitive dissonance. Stress management courses and programs also teach people about the role of exercise and diet in healthy live, how to confidently and assertively express our desires in stressful situations, ways to be better managers of our time and resources and finally making our work more meaningful and productive. Furthermore, learning about stress management is a vital step to preventing many health problems associated with it. Stress management deals with the reduction of stress and various stressors in our daily lives.

### **Stress Management in Organizations**

Of all stress influences, the psychological ones are the most subtle and difficult to deal with because most people refuse to accept emotional distress. People are more willing to admit to physical disorders but usually will deny psychological pain. To manage organizational stress effectively therefore requires proper identification of the available sources of stress, alongside a diagnosis of the symptoms of job stress. This will help managers in tackling stress-related matters from their roots.

Robbins (2005) pointed out that from the organization"s standpoint management may not be concerned, when employees experience low or, and moderate levels of stress. The reason as pointed out earlier in this study is that such levels of stress may he functional and lead. To higher employee performance. But high levels of stress, or even low levels sustained over long periods of time, can lead to reduced employee performance and, this requires action by management for improvement. While limited amount of stress many benefit an individual"s performance. We do not expect employees to see it that, way from the individuals stand point, even low levels of stress are likely to be perceived as undesirable. It is not likely, therefore for employees and management to have different

notions of what constitutes an acceptable level of stress on the job.

What management may consider as "a positive stimulus that keeps the adrenaline running" is very likely to be seen as "excessive pressure" by employees. Moorhead and Griffin (2005) noted that stress is widespread and so potentially disruptive in organizations. People and organizations should be concerned about how to manage it more effectively. There are many strategies that have been developed to help in management of stress in the workplace. Quick (1998) stated that some of the strategies for managing stress are for individuals and others are geared towards organization. Robbins recognized (2005) individual and organizational approaches to managing stress.

### **Organizational Productivity**

There are many rising trends in organizational productivity. However, this study sought to establish whether Stima Sacco Society Limited had embraced conflict management and the influence this has on organizational productivity. Armstrong (2006) defines performance in output terms as the achievement of objectives and how these objectives are achieved. High productivity results from appropriate behavior, especially discretionary, and the effective use of the required knowledge, skills and competencies. Productivity may be understood differently depending on the person involved in the assessment of the organizational productivity for instance productivity can be understood differently from a person within the organization compared to one from outside (Lebans& Euske2006). To define the concept of productivity is necessary to know elements and characteristics to each area of report responsibility. То an organization's productivity level, it is necessary to be able to quantify the results (Petkovic, 2008).

According to Gilbert and Ivancevich (2000), productivity refers to the act of performing or carrying into execution or recognizable action, achievement or accomplishment in the undertaking of a duty. Cascio (2006) defines productivity as working of individuals in an organization to be more effective. Zaman et al (2011) indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between productivity and reward. The other approach in defining organizational productivity that has in the recent past gained popularity in numerous organizations is the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology by Kaplan & Norton (1992). In this method, productivity of an organization is measured using four key perspectives financial, customer, internal processes, and Learning and Growth/innovation. In the Kenyan scenario it has been generally adopted by sixty nine per cent of the companies in a survey by Kiragu (2005).

According to Richard et al. (2009) organizational productivity encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes: financial performance, product market performance and shareholder return. Stima Sacco for instance is expected to increase its financial performance in terms of annual income from 2.6 billion in 2015 to Shs.31.8 billion in 2020. According to Armstrong, (2000) productivity is a means of getting better results from the whole organization or teams or individuals within it by understanding and managing productivity within an agreed frame work of planned goals, standards and competence requirements. Productivity is the accumulated end results of all the organization's work processes and activities (Santos & Brito 2012). It is about how effectively an organization transforms inputs into outputs (Robbins, 2009) and comprises the actual output or results as measured against its intended outputs. Liptons (2003) proposes that productivity is the ability of the firm to prevail. There is hardly a consensus about its definition, and this limits advances in research and understanding of the concept of productivity (Santos & Brito, 2012). As the debate on what organization productivity rages on, the approach on how to measure it has attracted even more scholarly attention (Liptons, 2003).

Organizational productivity is one of the most important constructs in management research Trade (2000). Continuous performance is the objective of any organization because only through this, can organizations grow and progress. Moreover knowing the determinants of organizational productivity is important especially in the context of the current economic crises because it enables the identification of those factors that should be treated with an increased interest in order to improve the productivity. Productivity measurement estimates the parameters under which programs, investments, and acquisitions are reaching the targeted results (Perez et al., 13 2007). This study adopted the definition according to Trade (2000), that most productivity measures could be grouped into six general categories effectiveness, profitability, cost, quality service delivery, timeliness, innovation and productivity. Therefore Organizational productivity is measured using the six parameters.

### **Measures of Organizational Productivity**

### **Quality Service Delivery**

Service delivery is a continuous, cyclic process for developing and delivering user focused services. It is further defined in four stages as user engagement, service design and development, service delivery and lastly assessment and positive change of service (Dachset al., 2004). Other scholars have propounded other definitions and according to Carrillat et al. (2007), service delivery is the physical access or reachability of services that meet a base standard. The later regularly requires detail as far as the components of service delivery, for example, essential equipment, medications and products, healthy workforce, and rules for treatment. Service delivery denotes the ability of the client to pay for the services where data can be collected by facility visits or by household interviews (Berghman et al., 2006). In this study, service delivery was defined as the willingness and readiness of a workforce to provide services in a dependable, accurate and responsive manner while utilizing the available resources.

The Servqual model was developed by Parasuraman *et al.,* (1988) to define service quality service delivery by means of the gap between the customers' perceptions and the expectations about

organization's service quality service delivery productivity. The model distinguishes five determinants of administration guality service delivery as effects, unwavering quality service delivery, responsiveness, confirmation and sympathy. lt is measured administration conveyance since it is a settled instrument that has been utilized as a part of different reviews and its psychometric properties have been examined by some of the studies (Asubonteng et al., 1996; Zhao et al., 2010). Consequently, service quality service delivery is composed of perceived quality service delivery and expected quality service delivery. While perceived quality service delivery can be defined as the customer's judgment about the general position and excellence of the administration they get, expected quality service delivery clarifies the assumptions about the administration they have gotten. Bakiet al. (2009) point out that on this scale, otherwise called the crevice examination, benefit quality service delivery is characterized as an estimation of the degree to which the offered benefit quality service delivery empowers to meet client desires. Assurance which is an aspect of service quality service delivery implies the employees' knowledge and courtesy levels and their ability to inspire trust and confidence (this dimension also includes competence, courtesy, credibility, and security.

### Growth

Growth is something for which most companies strive, regardless of their size. Small firms want to get big, big firms want to get bigger and bigger firms desire to be biggest. Indeed, companies have to grow at least a bit every year in order to accommodate the increased expenses that develop over time. With the passage of time, salaries increase and the costs of employment benefits rise as well. Even if no other company expenses rise, these two cost areas almost always increase over time. It is not always possible to pass along these increased costs to customers and clients in the form of higher prices. Consequently, growth must occur if the business wishes to keep up (Orogbu, Onyeizugbe and Alanza, 2015). Organizational growth has the potential to provide small businesses with a myriad of benefits, including things like greater efficiencies from economies of scale, increased power, a greater ability to withstand market fluctuations, an increased survival rate, greater profits, and increased prestige for organizational members.

There are various methods used to measure organizational growth. In addition to such qualitative notions of organizational growth, there are many more tangible parameters a company can select to measure its growth. The most meaningful yardstick is one that shows progress with respect to its stated goals. Number of employees: Some businesspeople boast of the number of employees in their companies or departments. However, the quantity of employees in the company does not produce a good vardstick to say the organization is growing. This is because quantity does not mean quality. It is the quantity of quality employee in an organization that determines the growth of that organization. This is because their contribution to growth of the organization is evidenced in their creative and innovative products. To hire quality employees, however, cost money. A better employee-based measure of growth is change in company or departmental revenue or profit generated per employee. This becomes a valuable measure of increasing (or decreasing) productivity, rather than a measure of labor and salary expense.

# Relationship between Stress Management and Organizational Productivity

The psychological structure of employees is directly reflected in the work they do and their work lives. Therefore, stressful employees mean that the organization is stressful. All kinds of problems caused by stress reflect in business relations and business success by affecting the productivity of the individual directly. The studies, examining the relationship between stress and productivity in organizations, have accepted the existence of four approaches (Gümüştekin & Öztemiz, 2005). There is an inverse relationship between stress and productivity, and it is assumed that productivity will decrease as the stress level increases. According to this model, employees who want to reduce their stress can waste their time and do unwanted behaviors (Çargan, 2018). According to this model, job productivity will increase as job stress decreases. The challenges, concerns, and competitive environment in the workplace are opportunities for the employee to put forward constructive actions and improve his/her productivity. **High-level** stress means high competitiveness, thus, high productivity (Yılmaz, 2006). The relationship between stress and productivity is inverse u-shaped and consists of a combination of positive and negative relationship models in general. While stress that increases until a certain level improves productivity, the ability to work efficiently decreases rapidly if stress exceeds the critical level (Akgündüz, 2006). Although there is a psychological agreement between the employee and the organization, there is no relationship between stress and productivity. According to this model, employees know that they will receive a certain wage for their productivity. The presence or absence of stress does not affect productivity (Türkmen, 2015).

The stress level, at which individuals' productivity is the best, is the optimal positive stress level. At the positive stress level, the individual's motivation, ability to fight time pressure, speed of making important decisions, and contribution to productivity are faster and higher. In cases when individuals cannot cope with personal and environmental dangers, stress transforms into negative stress, and this increases the presence of individuals who need help, who experience difficulty in adapting to the environment, and who cannot transfer their energy to their work (Düğenci, 2018). Since the psychological structures of individuals in the workplace are directly reflected in the work they do, stressful individuals mean that the whole organization is stressful. All kinds of discomfort, psychological and mental problems

experienced due to stress are directly reflected in employee productivity, business relations, and business success (Gümüştekin & Öztemiz, 2005). The mental and physical condition affecting the productivity, activity, health, and work quality of employees is occupational stress, and this stress, which exceeds the optimum limit, may decrease the productivity of the organization since it creates discomfort in employees (Jha & Bano, 2012). The exposure of individuals to excessive stress in the work environment leads to both an increase in costs increase in business absences, health (an expenditures, and insurance expenditures) and a decrease in organizational productivity, as well as in job satisfaction, by decreasing the amount of goods and services produced per unit time (Karagül, 2011). According to Sökmen (2005), the stress experienced also has consequences that are closely related to the organization, such as the individual's arrival to work, increase in his/her late absenteeism, and increase in the labor turnover rate, alienation of the employee to work and workplace, and decrease in productivity.

The study postulated the following hypotheses to be tested:

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between stress management and quality of service in the University of Calabar.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no relationship between stress management and growth in the University of Calabar.

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was sourced through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was four thousand six hundred and forty (4640) non-academic staff of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The sample size of 352 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan determination table. The research instrument was validated through by experts as provided by supervisors vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring coefficients above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### **Bivariate Analysis**

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient was calculated using the SPSS 21.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable. We commenced by first presenting a proof of existing relationships.

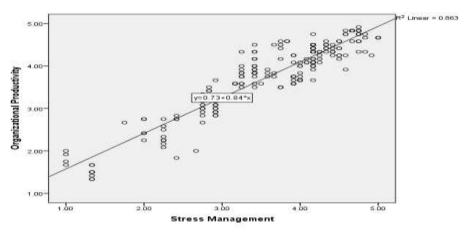


Figure 2: Scatter Plot Relationship between Stress Management and Organizational Productivity

The scatter plot graph shows at R<sup>2</sup> linear value of (0.863) depicting a strong relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that an increase in stress management practices simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of productivity

in the organization. The scatter diagram has provided vivid evaluation of the closeness of the relationship among the pairs of variables through the nature of their concentration.

			•		
			Stress	Quality of	
			Management	Service	Growth
Spearman's rho	Stress Management	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.942**	.683**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
		Ν	335	335	335
	Quality of Service	Correlation Coefficient	.942**	1.000	.528**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
		Ν	335	335	335
	Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.683**	.528**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
		Ν	335	335	335

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Source: SPSS output version 23.0

 H<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between stress management and quality of service in the University of Calabar.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a positive relationship between stress management and quality of service. The value 0.942 indicates a strong positive relationship at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation indicating also a strong relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between stress management and quality of service in the University of Calabar.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no relationship between stress management and growth in the University of Calabar.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a positive relationship between stress management and growth. The value 0.683 indicated a strong positive relationship at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represented a strong

correlation indicating also a strong relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between stress management and growth in the University of Calabar.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results from the test of hypotheses revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between stress management and organizational productivity of non-academic staff of the University of Calabar. This finding corroborated the position of the earlier work Usoro, and Etule (2016), whose study showed that lecturers' workload and related stress affect their effective significantly teaching, publication and other self-development practices. The findings were relevant to this study as it highlighted possible effects of workload related stress on the lecturers. The methodology also adopted was relevant to this study in that the study population was University academic lecturers which were similar to the population that this research is

considered. However, the point of difference is the lack of communication strategy on stress management which is of very crucial concern to the present research.

Idris (2014), revealed that given additional responsibilities to academic staff beyond lecturing and supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate students hindered effective iob productivity of academic staff. The methodology and findings of this study are relevant to the present research being undertaken to investigate the relationship between stress management and organizational productivity in the University. As noted, while Idris's (2014) research focused on the impact of the responsibilities on academic staff, the present research investigated the nature and relationship between the variables on nonacademic staff. Alabi, Murtala, and Lawal (2012) results indicated that the number of hours undertaken by lecturers in a week were factors that led to stress. Also, it was revealed that working under poor lecture conditions and the lack of rest could result in stress which affects job productivity. The methodology and findings in this study are relevant to the current research stress management and working environment.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overwhelming stress has been found to be damaging to the general well-being of human beings. In the case of academic and non-academic staff of tertiary institutions, it affects their general output thereby limiting the quality of educational services being given to the students. In university of calabar, which is the study area of the study, there has been increasing number of deaths as a result of extreme stress-related cases suffered by staff. This situation is further exacerbated by the inability of the university management to effectively utilize measures like counseling and good working environment to benefit from the gains of stress management.

It is imperative for the university management to step-up their concern for staff general well-being by incorporating stress management programs and communicating these programs through existing media and channels in the university. When this is done, it is hoped that the general output of the non-academic staff of the University would be improve, thereby consolidating the position of university. This study concluded that stress management effectively enhances productivity of non-academic staff in the University of Calabar.

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested.

Management of the university of Calabar 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 productivity.

The management should undertake sensitization campaigns to enlighten employees since some were not aware that counselling services were offered within the institution neither did they know that flexitime and leisure facilities existed as stress management strategy. Employees should be made aware of meditation as the easiest way of handling stress and also relaxation by encouraging team building which refreshes the body and mind hence improving productivity.

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