



EFFECTS OF STRESS ON COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS PERFORMANCE IN SHONGOM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF GOMBE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Job stress is a frequent problem among health workers as it has a negative impact on their job performance.

Objective: To determine the effect of job-related stress on community health worker's performance in the Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State Nigeria.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study design was employed among 202 Community Health Workers. A questionnaire was used to obtain information from the respondents; while the mean was used to show the level of stress among the health workers and logistic regression was used to predict the various stressors which affect health worker's performance.

Results: The results showed most of the respondents were females. The majority of the respondents 82.50% affirmed a high level of stress on their job performance. Furthermore,

the study showed that job-related stressors such as lack of time to do the job properly (AOR=2.941, 95% CI=1.034-8.370) and unclear job specification (AOR=2.051, 95% CI=0.717-5.871); organisational related stressors such as lack of information on the job (AOR=5.250, 95% CI=1.698-16.228) and lack of involvement in decision making in the workplace (AOR=3.753, 95% CI=1.399-10.067) and individually related stressors such as insufficient income to support self and family (AOR=1.871, 95% CI=0.761-4.598) and lack of job security (AOR=1.500, 95% CI=0.624-3.608) all had an effect on the respondents' job performance.

Conclusion: The study showed stress affects community health workers' job performance. Therefore stress reduction strategies should be implemented at primary health centres to reduce the stress on community health workers to improve their service delivery.

Keywords: Community health workers, stress, performance, job.





INTRODUCTION

Human resources are an integral aspect of every sector of human existence including the health sector. However, the effectiveness of these human resources in the workplace largely depends on their adequacy, quality, and right distribution.¹ “Job” which is a daily routine task worker to engage in it regularly as their source of livelihood causes a great deal of stress.² Stress refers to the strain from the conflict between our external environment and us, leading to emotional and physical pressure.³ Job stress and its impacts on performance is a frequent problem across occupations including the health sector.⁴

Health care workers particularly community health workers at various levels are increasingly recognized as an integral part of the health workforce needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵ According to Crigler *et al.*⁶, community health workers (CHWS) refer to those health workers who perform a set of essential health services and who receive standardised training outside the former nursing or medical curriculum and have a defined role within the community and the larger health system. However, to deliver efficient, effective and prompt health care services to the people, community health workers must be provided with a better working condition and an environment devoid of stress and other prevailing situation.⁷ For instance, in a study carried out in Ibadan metropolis to ascertain the effect of job stress on health, personal and work behaviour of nurses in public hospitals found that highly stressed nurses exhibited personal and work behavioural problems

like bullying, absenteeism, resignation or turnover.⁸ Furthermore, due to stress some of them engage in aggressive hostile or vindictive behaviour.⁸ The causes of stress in the workplace may be due to several factors such as poor working condition, excessive workload, shift work, long hours of work, role ambiguity, role conflicts, poor relationships with the boss, colleagues or subordinate officers, risk and anger among others.⁸

The manifestations of stress in the workplace might be in the form of a headache, sleep disturbances, difficulty in concentration, short temper, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction and low morale.⁸⁻¹⁰ Others include muscular tensions and ache, tightness in the chest, high blood pressure, heart problems, snapping and arguing with others, aggressive or hostile behaviour, blaming others or administration for tension, absenteeism and high staff on job turnover.⁸ The above manifestations can be observed in CHWs manning various health centres across the country mainly due to stress as a result of a shortage of manpower, which may have a negative effect on their work performance and general output.

The current study is taking a holistic view by assessing the effects of stress on community health workers' performance by grouping the stressors into job-related factors, organisational factors, and individual factors; to understand the various causes of stress and how it can be managed.

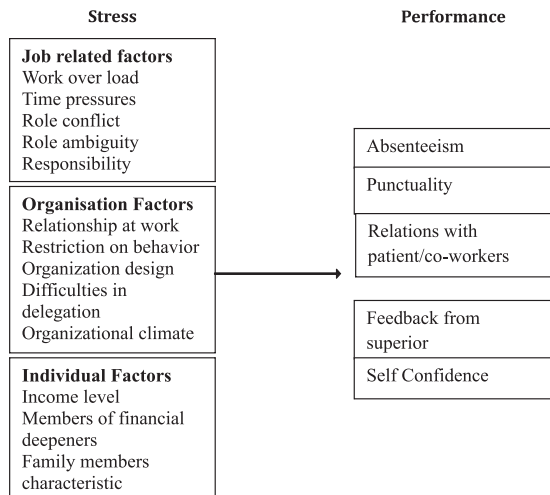


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the relationship between various stress related factors and job performance

Source: Adapted from Kamalakumati and Ambika¹¹

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used for the study to determine the effect of stress on community health workers' performance in the Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State.

The study was carried out in the Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State with its headquarters at Boh. For administrative purposes, Shongom Local Government Area was divided into ten (10) wards namely Boh, Lapan, Filiya, Lalaipido, Kulishin, Bangunji, Burak, Gundale, Gwandum, and Kushi. The population of the study consists of two hundred and two (202) community health workers in the ten (10) wards of Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State. These wards are Boh, Kulishin, Lalaipido,

Lapan, Bangunji, Burak, Filiya, Gundale, Gwandum, and Kushi. Various health care centres such as primary health centres, primary health clinics, and health posts are situated in different communities across the ten wards and are manned by the two hundred and two (202) community health workers. The total sampling technique which included the entire 202 community health workers in the local government was used for the study.

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the community health workers in the Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State. The questionnaire has five (5) sections namely A, B, C, D, and E. Section A elicited information on respondents socio-demographic characteristics, section B elicited information on job-related stress factors, section C elicited information on organisational related factors, section D elicited information on individual-related factors and section E explored respondents suggestions on stress management and coping mechanism. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents in their various health care centres and was retrieved on the same day of administration.

The collected data was entered into the computer and was thereafter analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 (IBM Corp., Chicago, USA). Simple percentage, frequency and mean ± standard deviation were used in presenting the data. Logistic regression was used to predict the various stress factors that affect work performance. Both the Crude Odds Ratio (COR) and the Adjusted Odds Ratio

(AOR) were presented to understand the effect of each stressor on job performance among the health workers. Besides, a 6 point scale was used to measure the level of performance graded as ≤ 3 as low stress and >3 as high stress. Furthermore, a 9 point scale was used to measure job-related stress on work performance graded as ≤ 4 as low stress and >4 as high stress. Similarly, a 9 point scale was also used to measure organizational related stress on work performance graded as ≤ 4 as low stress and >4 as high stress. Also, a 9 point scale was used to measure individually related stress on work performance graded as ≤ 4 as low stress and >4 as high stress. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Public and Community Health Novena University Ogume, Delta State. Also, the consent of the Primary Health Care Department of Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State was sought before carrying out the study.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

As shown in Table 1, more than half of the respondents 107(53.10%) were females, while 90(44.80%) were between the ages of 31-40 years and 133(65.70%) were OND/NCE holders.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency (N=202)	Percentage	P-Value
Sex			
Female	107	53.10	0.570
Male	95	46.90	
Age			
20-30	68	33.60	0.731
31-40	90	44.80	
41-50	38	18.90	
>50 years	6	2.80	
Educational status			
Certificate	54	26.60	0.483
OND/NCE	133	65.70	
HND/BSc	15	7.70	

Level of stress on performance indicators

According to Table 2, 113(79.0%) of the respondents affirmed that stress in terms of workload in the facility makes them absent from work, while 116(81.10%) affirmed that stress on the workplace affect their resumption of work the next day and 128(89.50%) affirmed that lack of proper feedback duties from their superior affects their performance at work.

Table 2: Performance Related Stress

Variables	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Does stress in terms of workload in the facility make you absent from work	159	78.71	43	21.29
Does stress on the workplace affect your resumption of work the next day	164	81.19	38	18.81
Does stress affect your relationship with patients	155	76.73	47	23.27
Does stress as a result of your relationship with your co-workers affect your work performance	153	75.74	49	24.26
Does the lack of proper feedback duties from your superior affect your performance at work	180	89.11	22	10.89
Does stress reduce your self-confidence thereby affecting your performance at work	162	80.19	40	19.81

According to Figure 2, 82.50% of the respondents affirmed a high level of stress on their job performance while 17.50% showed a low level of stress on their job performance.

Also, a mean score of 4.83 out of a total score of six showed a high level of stress on the job performance of the respondents.



Figure 2: Level of stress on job performance
Mean: 4.83 SD: 1.83 (0-3:Low Stress, 4-6: High stress)

Job-related stress on job performance

According to Table 3, the logistics regression of significant predictors of job-related stress on performance includes lack of time to the job properly (AOR=2.941, 95% CI=1.034-8.370) and unclear job specification (AOR=2.051, 95% CI=0.717-5.871). Furthermore, a mean score of 6.38 out of a total score of nine showed a high level of job-related stress on the job performance of the respondents.

Table 3: Predictors of job-related stress on performance

Job-related stress	F	%	df	Sig.	COR	AOR	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
Working long hours								
Yes	172	85.30	1	0.002	0.805	0.201	0.073	0.553
No	30	14.70						
Working evening, night & weekends								
Yes	171	84.60	1	0.000	0.415	0.131	0.048	0.357
No	31	15.40						
The frequent relocation of units at work								
Yes	147	72.70	1	0.013	0.664	0.321	0.131	0.786
No	55	27.30						
Lack of time to do the job properly								
Yes	124	61.50	1	0.043	2.065	2.941	1.034	8.370
No	78	38.50						
Exposure to unfavourable condition at work								
Yes	182	90.20	1	0.000	0.041	0.033	0.008	0.134
No	20	9.80						
Job has been hectic & highly demanding								
Yes	174	86.0	1	0.000	0.574	0.079	0.027	0.228
No	28	14.0						
Excessive job specialization & formalization								
Yes	160	79.0	1	0.000	0.340	0.155	0.061	0.397
No	42	21.0						
Unclear job specification								
Yes	138	68.50	1	0.181	2.482	2.051	0.717	5.871
No	64	31.50						
Unnecessary duplication of duties								
Yes	141	69.90	1	0.000	0.283	0.105	0.039	0.278
No	61	30.10						

*Mean: 6.38 SD: 1.89 (0-4: Low stress, 5-9: High stress) AOR: Adjusted Odds Ratio COR: Crude Odds Ratio

Logistics regression of significant predictors of organization related stress on performance includes supervisors not being helpful in the job description (AOR=6.187, 95% CI=1.756-21.802), Lack of information on the job (AOR=5.250, 95% CI=1.698-16.228), superiors not helping to get the job done (AOR=3.996, 95% CI=1.291-12.366) and Lack of involvement in decision making at the workplace (AOR=3.753, 95% CI=1.399-10.067). Besides, a mean score of 4.54 out of a total score of nine showed a slightly high level of organizational related stress on the job performance of the respondents (Table 4).

Organizational related stress on job performance

Table 4: Predictors of organizational related stress on job performance

Organizational related stress	F	%	df	Sig.	COR	AOR	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
Conflicting task or roles with colleagues								
Yes	148	73.40	1	0.000	0.087	0.102	0.039	0.267
No	54	26.60						
Lack of information on the job								
Yes	113	55.90	1	0.004	2.280	5.250	1.698	16.228
No	89	44.10						
Lack of feedback on job performance from superiors								
Yes	116	57.30	1	0.016	2.267	3.613	1.271	10.267
No	86	42.70						
Supervisors not being helpful in the job description								
Yes	121	60.10	1	0.005	2.283	6.187	1.756	21.802
No	81	39.90						
Superiors not helping to get the job done								
Yes	124	61.50	1	0.016	1.236	3.996	1.291	12.366
No	78	38.50						
Job allowance to choose own method & pace to get the job done								
Yes	81	40.0	1	0.088	1.176	2.140	0.894	5.127
No	121	59.40						
Can you decide when to take a break from your work								
Yes	72	35.70	1	0.065	1.653	2.281	0.951	5.468
No	130	64.30						
Lack of involvement in decision making at the workplace								
Yes	103	51.0	1	0.009	1.709	3.753	1.399	10.067
No	99	49.0						
Regular meetings to discuss job responsibilities								
Yes	116	57.30	1	0.239	0.540	1.733	0.694	4.327
No	86	42.70						

Mean: 4.54 SD: 2.96 (0-4: Low stress, 5-9: High stress) AOR: Adjusted Odds Ratio COR: Crude Odds Ratio

Individual related stress on job performance

As shown in Table 5, logistics regression of predictors of individually related stress on performance includes insufficient income to support self & family (AOR=1.871, 95% CI=0.761-4.598), Lack of job security (AOR=1.500, 95% CI=0.624-3.608), Lack of ability to develop skills & intellect in one's job (AOR=1.340, 95% CI=0.420-4.273) and Lack of career prospect in the workplace (AOR=1.075, 95% CI=0.367-3.150). Also, a mean score of 5.85 out of a total score of nine showed a slightly high level of organizational related stress on the job performance of the respondents.

Table 5: Predictors of individual-related stress on performance

Individual related stress	F	%	df	Sig.	COR	AOR	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
The job requires one to learn new skills								
Yes	184	90.90	1	0.835	0.653	1.182	0.245	5.697
No	18	9.10						
The job requires a high level of skills								
Yes	182	90.20	1	0.002	0.490	0.162	0.051	0.517
No	20	9.80						
The job requires a lot of physical efforts								
Yes	186	92.30	1	0.380	0.606	0.533	0.131	2.171
No	16	7.70						
Income sufficient enough to support self & family								
Yes	58	28.70	1	0.172	1.167	1.871	0.761	4.598
No	144	71.30						
Work interferences with family responsibilities or leisure time activities								
Yes	165	81.80	1	0.000	0.048	0.039	0.013	0.115
No	37	18.20						
The crisis from home affecting job responsibilities								
Yes	123	60.90	1	0.000	0.060	0.044	0.014	0.140
No	79	30.10						
Having a career prospect in the work place								
Yes	160	79.0	1	0.895	0.376	1.075	0.367	3.150
No	42	21.0						
Ability to develop skills & intellect								
Yes	162	80.40	1	0.620	2.318	1.340	0.420	4.273
No	40	19.60						
Job security good								
Yes	104	51.70	1	0.365	0.177	1.500	0.624	3.608
No	98	48.30						

Mean: 5.85 SD: 1.68 (0-4: Low stress, 5-9: High stress) AOR: Adjusted Odds Ratio COR: Crude Odds Ratio

Stress management and coping mechanism

According to Table 6, the stress management strategies and coping mechanism highlighted by the respondents include; reduction of workload 30(10.50%), division of labour in the workplace 23(8.0%), avoiding conflict in the workplace 17(5.90%), allowing staff a one hour break during work 15(5.20%) and provision of recreational facilities 15(5.20%) respectively.

Table 6: Stress management and coping mechanism as highlighted by the respondents

A coping mechanism for stress	Frequency	Percentage
By absenting myself from work deliberately	10	2.40
Reduce workload	42	10.50
Avoid conflict at the workplace	24	5.90
Training of staff on the job	18	4.50
Allow staff one hour break	21	5.20
Provision of recreational facilities	21	5.20
Improving relationship among staffs	11	2.80
Employ more staff	20	4.90
Division of labour among colleagues	32	8.0
Careful planning & understanding of work	13	3.10
Seeking help from senior colleagues when necessary	8	2.10
Staffs should be encouraged financially	18	4.50
Monitoring & Evaluation at the workplace	8	2.10
The responsibilities should be on the government and they should add more workers	4	1.0
Through the use of adequate manpower	15	3.80
Provision of modern facilities and equipment	6	1.40
Through adequate supervision	8	2.10
Provision of recreational facilities for staff	6	1.40
Clear job description	13	3.10
Timely payment of salaries	10	2.40
Staff welfare (motivation)	4	1.0
Staffs should be treated equally with justice and fairness	7	1.70
Good working relationship among staff	6	1.40
Work plan	1	0.30

Analysed with multiple responses

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the study more than half of the CHWs were females as compared with 46.90% who were males. The finding of this study is similar to the study conducted in the Northern region of Thailand and in Cross-River State Nigeria which had more females than males.¹²⁻¹³ This the finding is not surprising as females constitute most of the CHWs and nursing profession in Nigeria.

Job stress among CHWs is becoming a common occurrence in most primary health care centres in Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that the majority of the CHWs experienced a high level of stress which would likely have a negative impact on their job performance. This observed high level of stress could be attributed to the shortage of

manpower in most of the primary health care centres in the Shongom Local Government Area. For instance, some of the health centres, health clinics, and health posts across the ten wards in the local government area are manned by few health workers which might not be adequate when compared with the population of the coverage area. This finding is also in line with the study in Cross-River State Nigeria.¹³

Job-related stress that affected job performance included lack of time to do the job properly, unclear job specification, frequent relocation of units at work, working long hours among others. These factors could adversely affect job satisfaction and lead to stress in the workplace. The finding is similar to previous studies.^{11,13} Organisational related stress that affected job performance was lack of information on the job, superiors not helping to get the job done, lack of involvement in decision making at the workplace. This finding is also similar to previous findings.¹¹⁻¹³ Most organisations prefer the top-down approach in the operations of their organisations, leading to a lack of involvement in the decision making of all stakeholders working in that organisation. This could lead to stress and results in increased levels of absenteeism and decrease staff turnover, poor concentration, and low interest in the job.

However, it has been shown that participation in decision making increases communication among workers, improves interpersonal relations within working units, and increases job satisfaction.¹⁴ Therefore, the leadership of the local



government health department and head of the various health facilities within the local government should strive to ensure participation of all staff in key decision making to ensure job satisfaction and reduce the level of stress among health workers.

Stress affects both the health system and individual health workers¹⁵. Individually related stress with insufficient income to support the family, lack of job security, lack of ability to develop skills and intellect in one's job, lack of career prospects in the workplace. This finding is also similar to previous studies.^{2,7,11-13} Insufficient income and lack of job security are factors that could cause stress for CHWs and affect them personally by causing a high level of anxiety, low self-esteem and low self-confidence, inability to concentrate, difficulty in thinking rationally, chest pain, stomach problems, and relationship problems.¹⁵

Stress has been identified as an impediment to growth and optimal performances of health care workers.¹⁶ Therefore, adequate measures must be put in place to mitigate the effect of stress to ensure optimal efficiency in the output of health workers. According to the study management strategies and coping mechanisms highlighted by the respondents include reduction of workload, a division of labour in the workplace, avoid conflict in the workplace among others. This finding is similar to the study in Cross-River State Nigeria.¹³

CONCLUSION

The study showed that the level of stress among the community health workers was

high with various factors contributing to the stress level, which in the long term if not mitigated would have an adverse effect on their job performance in their health centres. Therefore, we recommended that implementing stress reduction strategies that take into consideration the job, organisational and individual-related sources of stress will no doubt reduce the stress of community health workers at the source; which will go a long way to positively improve service delivery.

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Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

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