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THE PREVALENCE AND MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IN A DISTRESSED ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This research is an insight into the prevalence and management of occupational stress among management employees in Zimbabwe. The study was prompted by the observation that the country's economy has been underperforming for over two decades and this under-performance has been exacerbated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Low capacity utilization, thinning profit margins have therefore been witnessed to date across almost all sectors of the economy hence making the country a fertile breeding ground for occupational stress. In such a distressed economic environment and in the absence of clearly defined and localized occupational stress management guidelines and manuals, one would wonder how this stress is being managed. The data for this research was

collected from 350 researcher administered questionnaires. These were administered to management employees across a broad spectrum of organizations in Zimbabwe. Cross tabulations were used to draw conclusions from the data. This research revealed that there were very high levels of occupational stress among management employees in the country and this stress was being poorly managed. More interestingly, the research also revealed that the Department of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), was making insignificant efforts to deal with occupational stress and yet this could be the underlying cause of a significant number of the OHS issues (e.g. workplace accidents) that the Department was currently grappling with. The study recommends that the country's National Social Security Authority (NASSA), through its Department of Occupational Health and Safety, urgently assists organizations in the country, to set up stress reduction committees, develop homegrown stress reduction programs and manuals at individual, group and organizational level to enable employees to prevent and cope with this ailment.

Key words: Distressed economic environment, Eustress, Managerial employees, Occupational stress, Stress management,

1. INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwean economy has been underperforming in the last decade with unemployment levels at over 90% (Munangagwa 2009). Low capacity utilization and thinning profit margins have been witnessed to date across almost all sectors of the economy. Today, the country still faces a number of economic challenges, including infrastructure and regulatory deficiencies, ongoing indigenization pressure, policy certainty but with uncertain consequences, a large external debt burden, and insufficient formal employment. In such a distressed economic environment, the causes of occupational stress such as long unsociable working hours, low pay and unproductive work tendencies obviously become rampant (Zimtrade Report, 2013).

Given this scenario, one would want to know, the extent to which occupational stress has manifested itself among the country's management employees and how it is also being managed at national, organizational and individual levels. This research therefore sought to provide an insight into the prevalence and management of occupational stress among management employees in the country, with a view to raising awareness of this problem so that more effort can be directed towards addressing it. This could be achieved by way of developing occupational stress management models, guidelines and manuals that could be first adopted by these captains of industry and then cascaded to their subordinates. The hypotheses for this study can therefore be expressed as follows;

H₀: There is a high level of occupational stress among management employees in Zimbabwe and that this stress is being poorly managed.

H₁: There is a low level of occupational stress among management employees in Zimbabwe and that this stress is being managed well.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Occupational Stress: Defined

Aptly expressed, occupational stress is the visible and/or invisible adverse condition that employees experience and display when discrepancies exist between work demands and the individual's ability to fulfill them. (Sarada & Ramkumar, 2015; Pines and Keenan, 2007; and Vermunt and Steensma, 2005) This definition implies that, all employees within organizations are vulnerable to occupational stress at some point in time. This is only logical, as it is impossible for there to be perpetual equilibrium between workplace demands and an individual's ability to cope with the same, every time. At this juncture, it is also pertinent to point out that, there is a difference between occupational stress and work pressure. As individuals, all employees experience work pressure almost on a daily basis and in fact, they need it to motivate themselves and enable them to perform at their level best and this is referred to as positive stress. (Sarada and Ramkumar,

2015; Ongori and Agolla, 2008). Sarada and Ramkumar, (2015) note that when employees experience too much pressure without an opportunity to recover that they start to experience occupational stress. Organisations around the world lose potential revenue as a result of occupational stress (Garapo and Chuma, 2016). It is thus imperative that stress be managed at national organizational and individual levels because of the negative impact it may have on economic growth due to loss of revenue by organisation.

2.2. Occupational Stress: Some Key Observations

Existing literature to date reveals several generic characteristics of occupational stress. Firstly, the literature concurs that occupational stress cannot be eliminated but can only be reduced through the application of appropriate stress management techniques (Greenberg 2006). Secondly, the literature has it that occupational stress can be a once-off, sudden occurrence but at times it exhibits characteristics of continuity and where the necessary conditions prevail (Greenberg 2006). Thirdly, stress has a negative correlation with work performance as it forces individuals to concentrate on the resultant repulsive feelings and emotions and not on the work itself. Therefore, the existence of occupational stress within organizations, is counterproductive, as in most cases, it negatively affects the health and productivity of the workforce, and hence leads to organizational mal-performance (Garapo and Chuma, 2016; Greenberg 2006). However, on a positive note, sometimes occupational stress is the reason for celebration to the effect that employees should seek for it at times. Eustress that is positive stress can have a positive effect on performance as a certain amount of stress is required for increased performance. (Sarada & Ramkumar 2015). Given that occupational stress, if not properly managed can be detrimental at both individual and organizational level, it becomes pertinent to determine its prevalence in any economy and understand its management in a bid to devise ways of effectively dealing with this ailment.

In view of the fact that stress can have negative effects on productivity if not properly managed, several writers have therefore called for its proper

management. Employers have a common law duty of care to their employees. (McDonald, 2009). Dewe (2001) believes that organizations should manage stress because (i) they have the social responsibility to provide a good quality of working life, (ii) excessive stress causes illness, (iii) stress can result in inability to cope with the demands of the job, which of course creates more stress and (iv) excessive stress can reduce employee effectiveness and therefore organizational performance. In view of this, managers need to be trained on how best they can handle their own stress and that of their subordinates.

2.3. The Causes and Symptoms of Occupational Stress

Women and men and in managerial levels share common work stressors but women also experience unique sources such as barriers to mentoring, networking and acquiring social capital. (Richardsen *et. al.* 2016) Most authors and existing theories on occupational stress have revealed that occupational stress can be caused by the work itself, the work environment, personality traits and other problems outside the workplace. These causes apply to both management and shop floor employees. Table 1 summarises the major possible causes of occupational stress as revealed by various authors such as Garapo and Chuma (2016), Liladne (2010), Chiang (2010), Gibbons and Gibbons (2002). The list of possible causes is however not exhaustive but the fact remains that, occupational stress leaves employees feeling unable to cope with work pressures with the result that organisational performance suffers.

Table 1: The possible causes of occupational stress.

Work Related	Personality	Work environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long unsociable working hours • Work overload and under load • Low pay • Poor work patterns • Employee disempowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable social relations • Quick to anger • Pessimistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirty and untidy • Crowded work area • Noisy and polluted • Run down • Poor ventilation •

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support e.g. information, resources and advice • Poor employee relationships in the organization • Role overload, role ambiguity and role incompatibility • Downsizing/privatization 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ill regulated
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(Sources: Gibbons and Gibbons (2002), Liladne (2010) Chiang (2010) etc.)

2.4. Measurement/Determination of Occupational Stress

As pointed out by Dimartino (2006) the study of occupational stress is still being hindered by lack of compact, comprehensive and standardized measurement tools. To date, a cocktail of occupational stress symptoms have been used to measure it. Some authors such as Cahill (2006) have used these symptoms to come up with Occupational Stress Indicators (OSIs). This approach was also adopted for this research. Authors such as Ongori (2008), have classified the occupational stress symptoms into three categories namely, physical, behavioural and psychological symptoms. The psychological symptoms relate to the emotional and cognitive challenges experienced by employees suffering from occupational stress. The physical are aches and pains like headaches, backache etc. The diagram below summarises the effects of stress on the body, mind, emotions and behaviour.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>BODY</i></p> <p>Headaches, frequent infections, muscular twitches, fatigue, skin irritations, breathlessness</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>MIND</i></p> <p>Worrying, muddled thinking, impaired judgment, nightmares, indecision, negativity, hasty decision</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>EMOTIONS</i></p> <p>Loss of confidence, more fussy, irritability, depression, apathy, alienation, apprehension</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>BEHAVIOUR</i></p> <p>Accident prone, loss of appetite, loss of sex drive, drinking more, insomnia, restlessness, smoking more</p>

Figure 1: Effects of stress.

As indicated earlier on, acute stress will cause an immediate reaction in the body and the body will return to normal when the threat or demand has passed. However, where stress is prolonged health problem may develop and the diagram below shows in detail the effects of stress on the body.

Body Part	Effect
Brain	Insomnia, headaches, irritability, anxiety and depression
Hair	Excessive hair loss and boldness
Muscles	Neck and shoulder pain, musculoskeletal aches, lower back pain
Digestive tract	Disease of the digestive tract including gastritis, stomach ulcers and irritable colon
Skin	Outbreak of skin problems such as eczema and psoriasis
Mouth	Oral ulcers and exercise dryness
Heart	Cardiovascular disease and hypertension
Lungs	Exacerbate asthmatic conditions
Reproductive organs	Menstrual disorders and recurrent vaginal infections in women and impotence and premature ejaculation in men

Figure 2: What stress can do to your body.

2.5. Coping Strategies/Management of Occupational Stress

2.5.1. Coping Strategies and Gender Differences

As discussed earlier on, stress is inevitable. It comes and goes into people's lives and can go away with employees if it is not properly handled. Employees cope with occupational stress in different ways. According to Skues and Kirby (1995), women were found to be more vulnerable to work stress and that men and women adopt different coping strategies. These

findings were confirmed by Taylor et al (2000) who ascertained that males and females behaved differently when coping with stress. The results of the study by Taylor et. al. showed that females had a propensity to display nurturing activities (tend-and-be-friend) designed to protect themselves and others in coping with stress. The females used social groups and males exhibited a flight-or-fight response to occupational stress.

Skues and Kirby (1995) found gender differences in both coping with occupational stress and the effectiveness of stress management intervention, indicating that women are more vulnerable to work stress

2.5.2. Occupational Stress Management and Coping Strategies

As highlighted earlier on, stress is inevitable and thus those affected must be able to cope when stressed. Efforts to reduce stress and strain are referred to as coping strategies. (Shin, Rosario, Morch and Chestunt: 1984) Existing literature reveals that occupational stress can be dealt with at individual, organizational and national levels (Jinsoo et. al. 2013, Ivancevich 1980, Deery 2008). According to The Public Employees Federation (PEF) (2006) stressed workers can work with worker representatives and management to address the problem of occupational stress. This article also highlights that it is important to document the problem so that the organization understands the extent of the problem and thus know how to deal with it. Surveys can be used so that the stressors are identified, following which interventions can be developed. Some of the strategies which may be used to help employees cope may include involving workers in job and workplace design, involving employees shift schedules, education and training. At national level of stress management an organization like the National Social Security Authority NSSA which responsible for occupational safety and health can take a leading role in stress management. Below is a summary of some of the major occupational stress coping strategies that may be employed:

Table 2: Summary of major occupational stress coping strategies.

Individual level	Organizational level	National level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management • Effective communication between co-workers • Relaxation, vacation and yoga nidra • Exercise • Clear career path and development • Laughter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication channels • Good workplace relations • Provision of social support to employees • Clear policies on sexual harassment and other forms of workplace violence • Good working conditions • Monitoring stress level among employees and • Stress educational awareness campaigns and counselling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscientising employees through workshops • Assist organizations to set up stress reduction committees, and to develop homegrown stress reduction programs and manuals at individual, group and organizational level • Ensuring good working environments for employees through appropriate legislation

(Sources: Jinsoo et. al. 2013, Deery 2008)

If stress is not properly dealt with it can lead to illnesses and death as the American Medical Association established that stress is the number one proxy killer. Thus, Individuals must be able to manage their stress and they can only do this if they get the necessary training. McDonald (2009) cited Linda Forbes who came up with ten commandments to deal with stress namely : “Thou shalt not be perfect, or even try to be.; Thou shalt not try to be all things to all people.; Thou shalt sometimes leave things undone that ought to be done.; Thou shalt not spread thy self too thinly.; Thou shalt learn to say ‘NO’.; Thou shalt schedule time for thyself and thy supportive network.; Thou shalt switch off and do nothing regularly.; Thou shalt be boring, untidy, inelegant and unattractive at times.; Thou shalt not even feel guilty.; Especially, thou shalt not be thine own worst enemy but be thine own best friend.”

These commandments confirm that individuals should be proactive when it comes to dealing with stress. In view of all this, the researchers wanted to establish the prevalence of occupational stress amongst managerial employees and coping strategies adopted by respondents, consciously or sub-consciously.

2.6. Research Conceptual Framework

Apparently, there is no research without a theoretical framework. This is the philosophy that guides the research. For this research, the schematic diagram in Figure 3 brings out the theoretical framework.

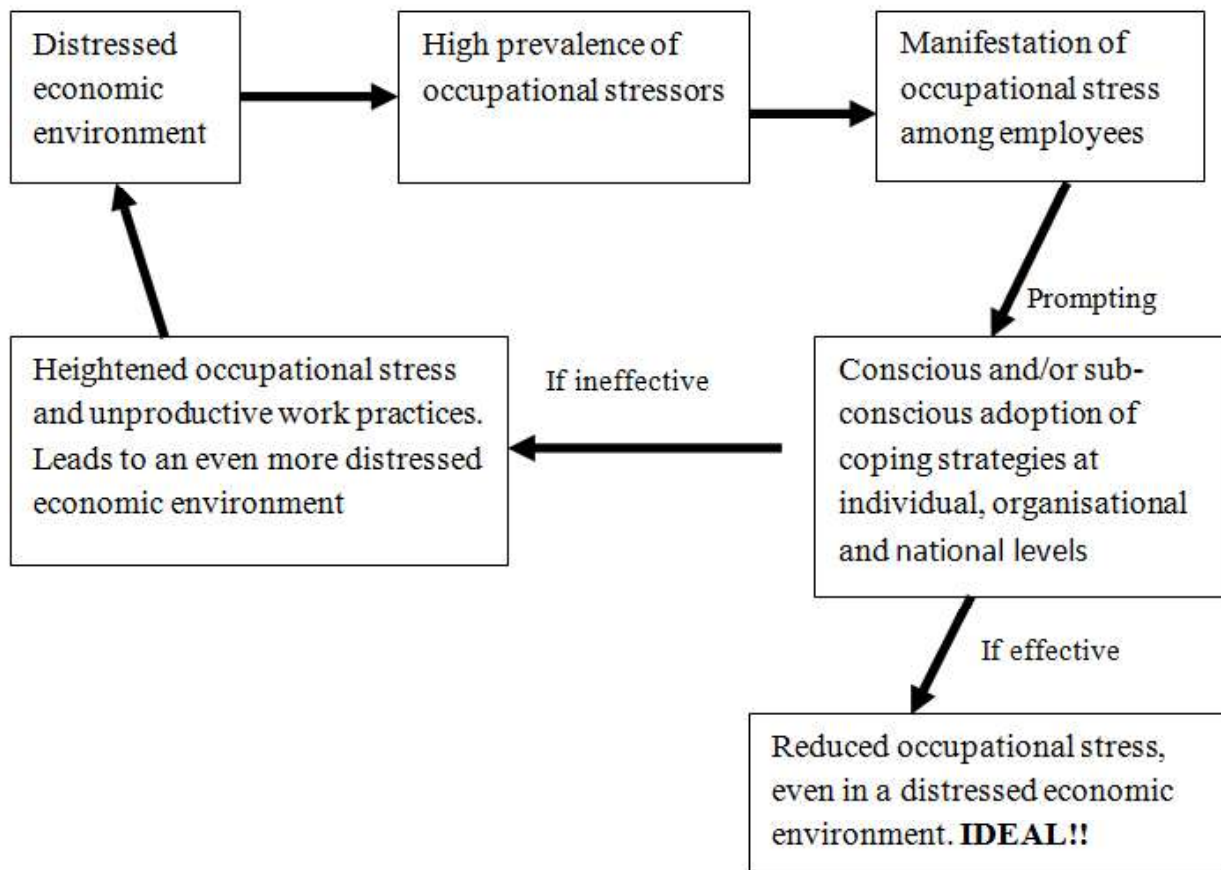


Figure 3: Research conceptual framework.

2.7. Overview of Existing Literature

This research appreciates the fact that there has been a lot of research on occupational stress. However, as pointed out by Dimartino (2006), the study of occupational stress is still hindered by the lack of compact, comprehensive and standardized measurement and coping tools. For career advancement, one may be required to work long hours and this can create more stress for managerial employees (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). A manager who is normally calm and collected can become agitated and

unreasonable under stress (Lipman 2016) and this can impact negatively on the subordinates who rely on the manager for guidance and support. If managers fail to deal with their stress they can affect their performance and the performance of subordinates thus impacting negatively on the performance of the organisation. This study aimed at establishing the levels of stress amongst managerial employees in view of the economic and other variables that are stressful in Zimbabwe and how the stress was being managed. The research is expected create awareness on the negative impact managers can have on performance of subordinates if they fail to manage their own stress.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a survey research design and the data collected was mainly quantitative in nature. However, because the data collected was mainly nominal, ordinal and to some extent of the interval type, the quantitative data analysis techniques applied were limited to frequency tables.

The target population for this research consisted of management employees of companies studying towards their Masters programs at selected universities in Zimbabwe. These were targeted in a bid to raise awareness of the gravity of the problem of occupational stress and hence prompt action to address the problem at individual and organizational level. The logic was that most masters programs offered by these institutions of higher learning targeted individuals with not less than 2 years managerial experience and from a broad spectrum of organisations. However, the conclusions drawn from this study, thus, lack external validity due to the presence of bias in the sampling procedure and the resultant sample. However, despite this limitation, the researchers still felt it necessary to measure occupational stress prevalence and management by these

respondents on the high likelihood that most managers in the country today, were studying towards some higher qualification, whether academic or professional.

The researchers opted to stratify these institutions of higher learning by ownership into private and public and then purposively selected the ones with the highest enrolment figures of master's students in each stratum to enhance validity.

The researchers sought permission from their lecturers and thereafter distributed the questionnaires to the respondents just before or soon after their lectures. The questionnaires were always immediately collected after completion. This method was quite fast and effective as both the lecturers and the participants were cooperative possibly because the area of investigation was also of interest to them.

The questionnaires consisted of mainly closed questions focusing on occupational stress symptoms, coping strategies and economic and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents to enable the application of the said quantitative data analysis techniques.

After collecting all the questionnaires, the researchers used only those questionnaires where respondents indicated that they were suffering from occupational stress, as there was a yes and no question to this item. This would help to establish how those respondents, who were aware of the fact that they were stressed were coping. The research was therefore, limited to negative occupational stress. This also gave the researchers a measure of the prevalence of occupational stress among the participants.

The range of symptoms and coping strategies on the questionnaire was not exhaustive to avoid engaging the respondents for too long as most students at this level are pressed for time. A pilot test using 20 questionnaires was conducted with lecturers and administrators at the Midlands State University to test the reliability of the research instrument.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Existing literature concurs that these play a significant role in the prevalence and management of occupational stress. However, for the cohort under study, significant variations were only noted in age, gender, marital and employment status. These were the variables cross tabulated with the stress variables. However, due to the bias in the nature of the sample, not all cross tabulations were significant and hence only the significant relationships will be highlighted and discussed in this paper. Table 3 summarises the socio-economic demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 3: The socio-demographic profile of respondents.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents suffering from occupational stress		Percent
Sex	Males	53
	Females	47
	Total	100
Age	18-24	2.12
	25-34	22.69
	35-44	59.57
	45 – 54	15.62
	55 – 64	0
	65+	0
	Total	100
Marital Status	Married	82.98
	Single	12.76
	Widowed	1.42
	Divorced	2.84
	Total	100

4.2. Prevalence of Occupational Stress among Respondents

Of the 350 questionnaires administered for the research, 140 respondents indicated that they were suffering from occupational stress. This is approximating to four stressed managers in every ten. The initial gender distribution was 149 females to 201 males implying that occupational stress was more prevalent among females confirming the findings by Skues and Kirby (1995).

4.3. The Occupational Stress Indicators

Sleep deprivation was the most common OSI with 47 and 44 males and females respectively which makes a total of 91 out of 140 respondents. Alcohol abuse and chain smoking were the least common amongst respondents with two and eight respondents respectively. The rest of the OSIs and their ranking in terms of extent of manifestation are shown in Table 4. The key inflection points are marked with asterisks and the readership is encouraged to draw as many conclusions as they can from the table for each of the OSIs.

Table 4: The Occupational Stress Indicators' prevalent in the respondents.

Occupational Stress indicator	Yes			No			Rank
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
Frequent headaches	24	40*	64	50	66	76	6
Frequent stomach upsets	27	20	47	46	47	93	9
Abuse of alcohol	10*	0	10	50	70	120	12
Chain smoking	8*	0	8	66	66	132	13
High Blood pressure	13	28*	41	61	38	99	11
Excessive worrying	43	45	88	31	21	52	2*

Dry throats	26	20	46	53	41	94	8
Sweaty palms	21	25	46	53	41	94	10
Forgetfulness	42	40	82	32	26	58	4
Lapses of concentration /presenteeism	37	49*	86	37	17	54	3*
Hostility towards co-workers	21	28*	49	53	38	91	7
Sleep deprivation	47*	44	91	27	22	49	1*
Feelings of hopelessness and depression	29	37*	66	45	29	74	5

The costs of such behaviours include increased absenteeism because of illness and reduced productivity, according to Cooper, Liukkonen, and Cartwright, (1996). Eight-two of our one hundred and forty managers mentioned that they tended to forget things, 86/140 mentioned lapses of concentration/presenteeism. If managers are forgetting things and have lapses in concentration, this will affect the subordinates as they get leadership, guidance and instructions from the managers who may tend to be forgetful. This will have a negative impact on the organization. Furthermore 49 managers mentioned hostility towards co-workers. This might be a small fraction of the total respondents who indicated that they were stressed but when one looks at the span of control and the fact that on average a manager will be responsible for not less than ten employees so at least 490 employees will be affected by hostility. This may impact on performance and in that case, the performance of 490 employees. This makes it pertinent to ensure that managers are trained to manage stress so that they do not export their stress to subordinates and impact on their performance which in turn impacts on overall organisation performance.

4.4. The Relative Contribution of Workplace Demands towards Stress Related Ailments

Given that the stress related ailments could be due to natural causes, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which work was contributing to their ailments. The results shown in Table 5, indicate that workplace demands were contributing significantly towards the stress related ailments with 65.7 % lying above the 50% mark. For all the 25-34 year olds, occupational stress was contributing more than 60% to their ailments.

Table 5: The contribution of workplace stress towards stress related ailments.

Percentage	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	Total
Frequency	15	9	8	16	25	12	17	30	8	0	140

The figures in the table substantiate the findings of the American Medical association which noted that stress was the basic cause of more than 60% of all human illnesses and disease. The data showed that 67 out of 140 respondents indicated that more than 60% of their illnesses were caused by stress with 25 indicating that stress caused more than 50% of their illnesses.

4.5. The Management of Occupational Stress among Respondents

Significant relationships and conclusions can be drawn on the occupational stress coping strategies resorted to by the respondents shown in Table 6. To aid these observations, cross tabulations of gender and occupational stress symptoms revealed that more females were affected by presenteeism ^{49/86}. More females also suffered from headaches ^{40/64}, depression ^{37/66}, high blood pressure ^{28/41} and were more hostile to co-workers. However, no females engaged in chain smoking and alcohol abuse as occupational stress coping strategies. Gender variations in the rest of the cross tabulations with occupational stress were insignificant.

In cross tabulations of gender and occupational stress coping strategies, the research revealed that more females engaged in physical exercise as a de-stressor but also unfortunately had higher numbers who worked over lunch. Interestingly, it was also noted that, of the 107 respondents who used network of friends and relatives to socialize, 58 of these were women. This supports Taylor et (2000)'s findings that females use the social groups (tend-and-befriend) more than men.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research revealed that there were very high levels of occupational stress (4 managers in every 10) among the respondents and this stress had manifested itself through a number of physical, behavioural and psychological symptoms and especially through sleep deprivation, excessive worrying and presenteeism. In similar studies carried out by Karatepe (2007) for Cyprus the figure was as low as 2 in every 10.

The high levels of occupational stress were being poorly managed (see table 6) by the respondents as most of them were resorting to occupational stress coping strategies which research has proved to be on the lower end of the scale in terms of their effectiveness to deal with the ailment. Coping strategies such as exercising, which are at the upper end of the table were being given little attention. This research therefore accepts the null hypothesis and rejects the alternate hypothesis.

Over and above this conclusion, this research also revealed that workplace demands were contributing more than 50% to the stress related ailments that respondents were suffering from and this was in sync with the study by Cooper et. al. (1996) which established that stress resulted in illness. This figure is too high and hence needs to be urgently abated.

There was also a high level of workaholic tendencies among the respondents as evidenced by the high number of respondents working over lunch and discussing work over lunch and tea breaks (refer to table 4). These tendencies need to be eliminated as research has shown that they also significantly contribute towards occupational stress.

Table 6: Occupational stress coping strategies.

Stress coping strategies	Yes			No		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Laugh at yourself and accept your imperfections	40	33 *	73	34	33	67 *
Have other activities to look forward to after work	62	62	124	12	4	16
Leave your work at work most of the time	35	34	69	39	32	71 *
Network of friends and relatives to socialize with	49	58	107	25	8	33
Have a positive mental attitude	57	62	109*	8	13	21
Prioritize your daily tasks	58	58	116	12	12	24
Work with a diary to record your activities	43	49	92	27	21	48
Seek advice from professional people like doctors	25	8	33	62	45	107 *
Believe that you have more power over stress	38	42	80	36	24	60
Exercise regularly	21	12	33	62	45	107 *
Avoid work over lunch and tea breaks	16	29	45	58	37	95
Self-reflection and meditation when stressed	30	25	55	44	41	85
Avoid discussing work over lunch and tea breaks	25	12	37	49	54	103 *
Eat adequately	54	49	103	16	21	37
Take time to relax	39	29	68	35	37	72 *
Take any drugs to relieve stress	17	4 *	21	57	62	119*

A snap survey of the respondents revealed that they were not giving occupational stress the prominence and attention it required, hence they were doing almost nothing to assist their subordinates to deal with this ailment. This attitude therefore relegated this problem to individual employees within their respective organisations. In the researchers' opinion, these managers should be trained in stress management so that they are able to deal with their own stress and that of their subordinates.

This research also revealed that, the country's National Social Security Agency (NASSA) had recognized the importance of organizational management systems in the creation of a healthy and safe working environment for employees. The organization had therefore employed an ergonomics officer to review the management systems employed by the various organizations in the country. However, while acknowledging this development, this research argues that, even if appropriate and seemingly effective management systems are put in place in all organisations, such systems are rendered ineffective in an economy which is characterized by low productivity, company closures and limited foreign direct investment. In such distressed economic environments, such as the one prevailing in Zimbabwe today, the prevalence of occupational stress will always be high as entrenched in the various occupational stress theories. On the basis of this argument, this research therefore calls on all employees and organizations in such distressed economies, to give occupational stress the prominence and attention it deserves in the endeavour to create a healthier and safer working environment for employees.

Following this advocacy, this research further recommends that the prevalence and management of occupational stress levels within such economies be continuously monitored alongside research on how best employees can survive or co-exist with occupational stress in such distressed economic environments. On this note, the country's NASSA should assist organizations in the country, to set up stress reduction committees, and to develop homegrown stress reduction programs and manuals at individual, group and organizational level to deal with this ailment. Once these are prepared, the government should then put in place, appropriate and enforceable legislation to enable NASSA to provide training on occupational stress and other related health and safety issues at organizational level. This legislation is long overdue, given that in today's contemporary world, it is a country's index of happiness of its people that is increasingly being used to measure its wellness. In this regard, a country whose employees are highly stressed would obviously perform dismally on this scale.

Finally, this research also recommends that, highly reliable and valid nationwide surveys be undertaken to get a better understanding of the scope and magnitude of occupational stress related issues in the country. This should be done in full appreciation of the fact that occupational stress has, is and will always exist and affect employees and their organizations and ultimately, any economy's productive capacity.

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