

**STRESS AND ITS EFFECTS ON EMPLOYEES
PRODUCTIVITY – A CASE STUDY OF GHANA PORTS AND
HABOURS AUTHORITY, TAKORADI**

By

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Executive Masters Of Business Administration and that, to the best to my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive global environment, employee productivity is an essential element of a company's success. Employee productivity can be significantly hindered by high levels of stress experienced in the work environment. Stress is a universal element and persons from nearly every walk of life have to face stress. Employers today are critically analyzing the stress management issues that contribute to lower job performance of employees. The main aim of the study was to evaluate stress and its effect on employees' productivity. The study was conducted at Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA), Takoradi. Descriptive survey was adopted as the research design. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting a sample size of 100 out of a population of 326. Questionnaires and interview was used as data collection instrument. From the results obtained, it was evident that there were many stress factors that the respondents endured, and the enquiry proved that stress had an effect on productivity. Majority of the respondents reported to work under pressure and that they feel uncared for by the organization. The fact that majority of respondents thought of leaving their job, and felt that the organization did not care about them was a reflection of huge dissatisfaction that undoubtedly lowered productivity.

It was recommended that Management must conduct an analysis of the organizational mood and climate by assessing the reasons why the employees think GPHA, Takoradi does not care about its employees and what they can do to change it. It was also suggested that an Employee Assistance Programme be introduced for early identification and intervention on problems so that productivity levels do not decrease

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Finally, I accept full responsibility for all shortcomings of this work.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Lord God Almighty and my family especially my wife, and my lovely children for their support and encouragement which enabled me to pursue this program to a successful end.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In today's world, stress has become a worldwide phenomenon, which occurs in various forms in every workplace. In today's work life, employees are generally working for longer hours, as the rising levels of responsibilities require them to exert themselves even more strenuously to meet rising expectations about work performance. Omolara (2008) described occupational stress as the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of their being unable to cope with the demands being made on them.

According to Swanepoel et al (1998) work related stress has been a topic that has received increasing attention, in the area of occupational health, over the last three decades. These authors were of the opinion that the world, especially the world of work and business, has become increasingly subject to fast changing forces like increased competition, the pressure of quality, innovation and an increase in the pace of doing business. The demands on employees grew equally dramatically and this created stress within employees. Apart from stress that arose from the work situation, other sources of stress could relate to personal factors such as relationships with others and use of free time.

Stress can therefore be described as the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of his or her inability to cope with the demands being made on him or her (Moorhead and Griffen, 1998). That is tension from extra-ordinary demands on an individual.

It is noted that, stress is not necessarily bad; it is an opportunity when it offers potential gain. But whatever its nature, it usually begins when individuals are placed in a work environment

that is incompatible with their work style and or temperament. It becomes aggravated when individuals find out that they have or can exercise little control over it.

“Many organizations in the world are witnessing an alarming increase of the negative effects of stress on employee’s productivity. Typical examples are organizations in America, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, East and Central Africa, West Africa and in other parts of the world. The American Academy of family Physicians reported that, about two-thirds of the visits to family physicians are the results of stress-related symptoms” (Henry and Evans 2008).

Michac (1997) specified causes of stress as follows: poor time management, unclear job descriptions, feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, inability to get things done, lack of communication, bad personal relationships, quality and complexity of tasks. In the same breadth, Dean (2002) viewed stress-related illnesses as the leading cause for low productivity levels in the workplace. Immense pressure at work has led to stress, which made it the number one factor causing illness. Michac (1997) outlined reasons for low productivity as follows; poor training in the company, machine break downs, non-established performance standards, lack of planning and motivation, change, poor atmosphere and environment, inadequate communication at many levels, non-identification with company goals.

In Ghana, several nationwide surveys have indicated that, about 58% of the workforce in organizations suffers from stress – related problems (The Weekly Mirror 2006). This means that stress can be a killer of many organizations in Ghana of which The Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi is no exception.

The Takoradi Ports and Harbours Authority was established in 1939 by the Colonial masters of the then Gold Coast. Its main purpose was to provide a convenient avenue for the export

of the country's main primary export commodities; cocoa, bauxite, manganese and Timber, as it was sited closer to regions where the bulk of these commodities were extracted. The harbour is managed by the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA). The authority is responsible for the administration of the port which involves the structural maintenance of the port, provision of stevedoring equipment and services to various shipping lines that call at the port, while providing shelter and security for goods arriving at the port either for import or export. That had been the traditional role of the GPHA within which job routines were carved out for employees and which quickly became comfort zones for employees as they settled in, until developments in trade and industry, shipping and international transport assumed a new and complex dynamics.

Over the past 20 years, the complexity of port administration has dramatically increased and a number of development account for this. On one front, the Post-Independence industrialization of Ghana meant an increased volume of freight calling at the harbour; the numerous multi-lateral international trade agreements and conventions successive governments signed also increased trade; the increased use of automation in shipping and forwarding which meant a computerization of its systems; a more knowledgeable, influential and demanding client base and the increasing number of stakeholder organizations such as Customs, the Shippers Council and the Environmental Protection Agency whose activities affect the GPHA meant a complex stakeholder management.

On another front, are the international affiliations of the authority, such that any changes in international convention and standards also demanded a change in the management strategies of the GPHA.

Another issue is the government's drive to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which introduced the free zones, some of which were meant to be sited within the harbour. There was also the issue of a strong competition among Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and La Cote D'Ivoire, each of them fighting to attract the landlocked countries to use their port; and the consequent government declaration of Ghana as the gateway to West Africa.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most organizations with the aim of attaining higher productivity end up saddling employees with overload of work in order to meet deadline and this might have psychological and physical effects on the employees which may result in something contrary to what these organizations want to achieve. Although organizations are paying more attention than in the past to the consequences of the trauma their employees go through when they place extraordinary demands on them, there is still more room for improvement. Again to generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining and to be able to fund the acquisition of modern equipment meant efficient service provision and optimal employment of resources.

Quite recently, the conflict in La Cote D'Ivoire which saw its borders closed to the rest of the world caused most of the freight meant for its land-locked neighbours redirected to Ghana increasing the freight load at the harbours by three-fold. This changed the GPHA, Takoradi from a passive service provider to a very proactive customer focused organization doing all it can, not only to provide services but to help attract investment to the country and help retain those already using the port.

For this reason there has been the need for a continuous change in management strategies and administration, and the demands on employees to perform have been increasing. This has brought a lot of pressure on the employees, who are expected to deliver a world class service

without the corresponding increase resources and training, yet those who fail to deliver are threatened with dismissal and other forms of punishment. With jobs very difficult to come by these days in Ghana, many employees are crumbling under this pressure. Cases of employee stress are therefore on the ascendancy.

It is in this view that this study is being conducted to identify the effects stress has on the productivity of employees of Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Ascertain the causes of stress in GPHA, Takoradi.
- ii. Find out whether stress has any effect on the productivity of employees in GPHA, Takoradi.
- iii. Find out how employees at GPHA, Takoradi handle stress.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the study:

- i. What are the causes of stress in GPHA, Takoradi?
- ii. Does stress have any effect on the productivity of employees in GPHA, Takoradi?
- iii. How do employees at GPHA, Takoradi handle stress?
- iv. What stress management strategies have been employed by GPHA to help employees to manage stress?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to find out the effects or impacts of stress on employees' productivity. The researcher believes that this study was very important and would go a long way to notifying all organizations, most especially those in the service sector on the need to

ensure the effective management of stress for their employees. The study will also add to existing store of knowledge. Thus, the findings will add to studies that have been done, so that people in other part of the country can also appreciate the problem. It will also provide suggestions on how to reduce the effects of stress on output. Again, it will be a source for further research and of relevance to stakeholders.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focused on Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi as one of the major ports of entry in Ghana so as to get an in depth and comprehensive understanding of what is happening at GPHA and make the research meaningful.

Drawbacks are an inevitable part of almost every venture individuals carry out and overcoming them prepares or fortifies one for other tasks ahead. Even though these challenges to some extent hampered the progress of the study, they also helped in putting researchers on their toes to work tirelessly around the clock in making the success of this study a reality.

In as much as lots of commitment and zeal was employed in conducting an intensive and thorough study, certain impediments were encountered

1.7 LIMITATIONS

This study was necessarily limited in scope due to series of resource limitations as well as practical research limitations and notable ones were:

- Time constraint, in the sense that time allocated for conducting this study was very short to allow for adequate data collection and this short time had to be divided between the main academic work which included preparation for face to face and examinations.
- The reluctance of respondents to answer the questionnaire during the data collection process which was critical in providing the needed inputs for the research work. This has been the problem in Ghana, where information flow could be tainted with excessive bureaucracy and suspicion and sometimes fears of victimization by superior officers. Some respondents did not cooperate with the researcher during the data collection period.
- Financial constraint was also a problem the researcher faced in undertaking the study. This is because the case study area was in Western Region while the researcher was in Eastern Region.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduced the study by giving the background information on the research problem, objectives, research questions and scope of the study. Chapter two dealt with the review of relevant literature on the research problems and concepts with specific reference to how it applies in organizations. Chapter three discussed the research methodology adopted for the study and relevant justifications. Chapter four presented the findings on the effects of stress on productivity in Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi. Chapter five also presented the conclusions drawn from the research findings and recommendations to enhance organizational effectiveness through management of stress.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the study will provide in-depth insight on the nature of stress and the impact thereof on productivity. Opinions from different authors will be utilized to provide a better theoretical understanding of the nature of stress, its causes, and then the impact it will have on productivity.

2.1 ORIGIN, TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITION OF STRESS

The term stress was first employed in a biological context by the endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1930s. He later broadened and popularized the concept to include inappropriate physiological response to any demand. In his usage stress refers to a condition and the

stressor to the stimulus causing it. It covers a wide range of phenomenon from mild irritation to drastic dysfunction that may cause severe health breakdown. (Wikipedia)

According to Robbins (2004), stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. From this definition one can say that stress is not necessarily bad, it also has a positive value when it offers potential gain.

Moorhead and Griffen (1998) also defined stress as a person's adaptive response to a stimulus that places physical and psychological demands on a person.

Similarly, Sherman, Bahlander and Snell (1996), also defined stress as any adjustive demand on an individual caused by physical, emotional or mental factors that requires coping behaviour.

Also Taylor Shelley (1995) describes stress as a negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological, cognitive and behavioural changes that are directed either toward altering the events or accommodating its effects.

Again, Bennett (1994) defines stress as a wide collection of physical and psychological symptoms that results from difficulties experienced by an individual while attempting to adopt to an environment. This means the potential for stress exists when an environmental situation presents a demand threatening to exceed a person's capabilities and resources.

From the above definitions and descriptions stress can best be seen as excessive demands that affect a person physically and psychologically. Thus the mental or physical condition that results from perceived threat or danger and the pressure to remove it.

2.2 NATURE OF STRESS

One believes that stress is a complex phenomenon because it is not tangible so it cannot be overtly touched. According to Bowing and Harvey (2001), stress occurs with the interaction between an individual and the environment, which produces emotional strain affecting a person's physical and mental condition. Stress is caused by stressors, which are events that create a state of disequilibrium within an individual. These authors also stated that the cost of too much stress on individuals, organizations, and society is high. Many employees may suffer from anxiety disorders or stress-related illnesses. In terms of days lost on the job, it is estimated that each affected employee loses about 16 working days a year because of stress, anxiety or depression.

According to Ritchie and Martin (1999), for years stress was described and defined in terms of external, usually physical, forces acting on an individual. Later it was suggested that the individual's perception of, and response to, stimuli or events was a very important factor in determining how that individual might react, and whether or not an event will be considered stressful. These authors further contended that most researchers acknowledged that both external and internal factors affect stress. They viewed stress as a response to external or internal processes, which reach levels that strain physical and psychological capacities beyond their limit.

According to Blumenthal (2003), for thousands of years, the bodies of cavemen/women were primed to deal with the harsh rigours of their environment. In the face of danger a rush of adrenaline would prepare cave dwellers to either fight or run for their lives. In the face of adversity, muscles and nerves were charged for sudden movement, heart rates would increase, blood would course through the veins with sugar released into the blood stream. The flight or fight response would ready them for action: powerful hormones epinephrine

and nor epinephrine, released by the adrenal glands, endowed humans with enhanced alertness, strength and energy. Thousands of years later humans live in the same bodies and possess the same human brains but in a world with completely different stressors and hassles. While few humans may face danger from wild animals and unsuccessful hunting, urban life is equally demanding. The urban environment is rife with stressors (such as pollution, noise, violence, traffic) that stimulate the nervous system into a flight or fight response but it is only in rare instances that an aggressive or vigorous physical response is appropriate.

Blumenthal (2003) viewed stress as anything that upsets people's ability to maintain critical variables (which can be social, psychological, spiritual or biological in nature) within acceptable limits. The experience of stress involves an event that is demanding or resources as well as the subjective feeling of distress experienced in its face. An event could be experienced as stressful if people appraised (evaluated) it as distressing. Whether an event is experienced as stressful depends on a person's psychosocial orientation with things like culture, spirituality, values, beliefs and past experiences influencing the appraisal. Events that are appraised as being overwhelming, threatening, unsatisfying or confliction are more likely to be experienced as stressful.

Blumenthal (2003) differentiated different effects of stress as follows:

- Subjective effects: stress leads to anxiety, depression, frustration, fatigue and low self-esteem.
- Behavioural effects: stress leads to accident proneness, substance abuse, impaired speech, restlessness and forgetfulness.

- Cognitive effects: stress affects our thought process, leading to a difficulty or fear of making decisions, forgetfulness, hypersensitivity, mental blocks and difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly. This may be intensified by substance abuse.
- Physiological responses: begin in the brain and spread to organs throughout the body. Catecholamine from the adrenaline medulla causes the kidneys to raise blood pressure and the liver to release sugar into the blood pressure and the liver to release sugar into the blood stream. The pituitary gland stimulates the release of corticosteroids, which helps to resist stress but, if in the system for a prolonged period of time, suppresses the immune system. These responses are adaptive for dealing with stress in the form of ‘fight or flight’ but this response is rarely useful in urban work, instead the accumulation of stress products in the body is immune-suppressive playing a part in degenerative processes and disease.
- Effects on health: prolonged exposure to stress has profound and detrimental effects on health. Among possible complications stress may exacerbate or play a role in causing ailments like asthma, amenorrhea, coronary heart disease, chest pains, diarrhea, dyspepsia, headaches, migraines, diabetes mellitus, ulcers and decreased libido. In a world where AIDS is frighteningly prevalent people need to be aware that stress is immuno-suppressive. HIV breaks down a person’s immune system, which leaves them vulnerable to potentially fatal infections and diseases.

2.3 STRESS PROCESS OR RESPONSE STAGES

According to Arnold, Robertson and Cooper (1993), stress response in three stages.

ALARM → RESISTANCE → EXHAUSTION

- i. Alarm is the first stage. When the threat or stressor is identified or realized, the body's stress response is a state of alarm. During this stage adrenaline will be produced in order to bring about the "fight-or-flight response". There is also some activation of the HPA axis, producing cortisol.
- ii. The Resistance stage is where the body has to decide to 'fight or flight'. The body will try to add resources to help it cope through maximum adaptation and hopefully, successful return to equilibrium for the individual. If however, the defense mechanism does not work, or fails to cope, it will lead to the third stage which is Exhaustion.
- iii. Exhaustion stage is the third and final stage. At this point, all of the body's resources are eventually depleted and the body is unable to maintain normal function. The initial autonomic nervous system symptoms may reappear (sweating, raised heart rate, etc). If stage three is extended, long term damage may result as the body, and the immune system is exhausted and the function is impaired resulting in decomposition. The result can manifest itself in obvious illnesses such as ulcers, depression, diabetes or even cardiovascular problems, along with other mental illnesses.

2.4 TYPES OF STRESS

According to Taylor Shelley (1995) states that, there are four major types of stress and she explains them as follows:

2.4.1 CHRONIC STRESS

She describes this type of stress as unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. Chronic stress is the type that wears the individual down day

after day and year after year with no visible escape. It grinds away at both emotional and health of the individual leading to breakdown and even death.

2.4.2 ACUTE STRESS

This type of stress is the most common and most recognizable form of stress. It is the kind of stress which the individual knows exactly why he is stressed; he was just in a car accident; the school nurse just called him, a bear just ambled onto his campsite. It can also be something scary but thrilling, such as a parachute jump. Normally, the body rest when these stressful events cease and life gets back to normal because the effects are short-term. Acute stress usually does not caused severe or permanent damage to the body.

2.4.3 TRAUMATIC STRESS

It is a severe stress reaction that results from a catastrophic event or intense experience such as a natural disaster, sexual assault, life-threatening accident, or participation in a combat. Here, after the initial shock and emotional fallout, many trauma victims gradually begin to recover. But for some people, the psychological and physical symptoms triggered by the trauma do not go away, the body does not return to equilibrium, and life does not return to normal. This condition is known as post trauma stress disorder. Common symptoms of this type of stress are flashbacks or nightmares about the trauma, avoidance of places and things associated with the trauma, hyper vigilance for signs of danger and irritability and tension.

2.4.4 EPISODIC ACUTE STRESS

She went further to explain episodic acute stress as where the individual experiencing this type of stress lives are very chaotic, out of control and they always seem to be facing

multiple stressful situation. They are always in a rush, always late, always taking on too many projects, handling too many demands. Those who are prone to this type of stress include “Type A” personality types. If an individual is prone to episodic acute stress, he may not know it or admit it. He may be wedded to a life style that promotes stress. Unfortunately, people with episodic acute stress may find it so habitual that they resist changing their lifestyles until they experience severe physical symptoms.

2.5 CAUSES OR SOURCES OF STRESS AT WORK

Repetti (1990), McGronogle and Kessler (1990), Pervin (1992), agree with Arnold, Robertson and Cooper (1993) in talking about the causes or sources of stress. Arnold, Robertson and Cooper (1993), identified five major causes of work stress as: factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organization, relationships at work, career development and organizational structure and climate.

2.5.1 FACTORS INTRINSIC TO THE JOB

They explained the factors intrinsic to the job to include:

i. POOR WORKING CONDITIONS

This talks about the physical surrounding of the job which include high level of noise, high or low lighting, fumes, heat, poor ventilation systems, smells and all the stimuli which bombard a worker’s senses and can affect his moods and overall mental state. Also, the physical design of the workplace comes under poor working condition. If an office is poorly designed, with personnel who require frequent contact spread throughout, it creates poor communication networks and develops in poor working relationships which can caused stress to employees.

ii. SHIFT WORK

This is where workers have jobs which require them to work in shifts, some of which involves working staggered hours, which affects a worker's blood temperature, metabolic rate, blood sugar levels, mental efficiency, sleep patterns, resulting in hypertension, mild diabetes and peptic ulcers.

iii. LONG HOURS

The long working hours required by many jobs appear to take a toll on employees' health and also making them suffer a high rate of stress. This means many individual workers and some medics who may have no sleep for thirty-six (36) hours or more may find that both their quality of work and they themselves suffer.

iv. RISK AND DANGER

A job which involves more risk and danger put employees in higher stress level. This is because when an employee is constantly aware of potential danger and he is prepared to react immediately, this results in rush, respiration changes and muscles tension which are all seen as potentially threatening o long-term health.

v. NEW TECHNOLOGY

The introduction of new technology into the work environment has required workers to adapt continually to new equipment, systems, and ways of working. Thus leading to a great source of pressure at work on the worker. For instance, a boss trained in the latest methods may be extra burden for an employee trained in the old ways and this may increase his stress level.

vi. WORK UNDER-LOAD

This describes the problem of employees not being sufficiently challenged by their jobs. Job under-load is associated with repetitive routine, boring and under-

stimulating work which causes a lot of stress for employees who find themselves in such situations. This means when employees are not given work which challenges their abilities and capabilities they suffer high level of stress.

vii. WORK OVERLOAD

This is where the employee has too much work to do because of imposition of datelines which often causes stress in employees.

2.5.2 ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION

When a person's role in an organization is clearly defined and understood, and expectations placed upon are clear stress can be kept to a minimum. However, this is not the case in many work sites. Arnold, Robertson and Cooper (1993) continued to explain Role in the organization to include:

i. ROLE AMBIGUITY

This arises when employees do not know what is expected of them at the workplace and how their work performances are evaluated. That is, employees do not know how and where they fit into the organization and they are not sure of any reward no matter how well they may perform. According to Johns (1996) there is substantial evidence that role ambiguity can provoke stress. Lack of direction can prove stressful, especially for people who are low in their tolerance for such ambiguity.

ii. ROLE CONFLICT

Employees experience a high rate of stress when two superiors are demanding conflicting things and when attending to one will mean they are disobeying the other superior. This makes employees confused and frustrated. For example, workers may

often feel themselves torn between two groups of who demand different types of behaviour or who believe the job entails different functions.

Luthans (2002) differentiates three major types of role conflict. One type is the conflict between the person and the role. For example, a production worker and a member of a union are appointed to head up a new production team. This new team leader may not really believe in keeping close control over the workers and it would go against this individual's personality to be hardnosed but that is what the head of production would expect. A second type of intra role conflict creates contradictory expectations about how a given role should be played. Finally, inter role conflict results from differing requirements of two or more roles that must be played at the same time. For example, work roles and non-work roles are often in such conflict.

Luthans (2002) is of the opinion that although all the roles that men and women bring into the organizations are relevant to their behavior, in the study of organizational behaviour the organizational role is the most important. Roles such as digital equipment operator, clerk team leader, sales person engineer, systems analyst, departmental head, vice president and chairperson of the board often carry conflicting demands and expectations. This author further stated that recent research evidence showed that such conflict could have a negative impact on performance and also be affected by cultural differences.

iii. RESPONSIBILITY

In an organization, there are basically two types of responsibility: Responsibility for people and responsibility for things such as budgets, equipment etc. Responsibility for people causes a lot of stress. Being responsible for people usually requires

spending more time interacting with them, attending meetings and attempting to meet their needs, resolving conflicts and disputes between them and making unpleasant interpersonal decisions.

2.5.3 RELATIONSHIP AT WORK

Dealing with bosses, peers and subordinates can dramatically affect the way an employee feels. People, high on the need for relationships, work best in stable work teams where they can get to know each other well. It might be stretching the measure too far to suggest that someone high on this factor would suffer stress if they were working with a large number of others in circumstances, which did not allow relationships to form, but it is probable that they will not work as well as they might.

On the contrary, when an employee experiences poor working relationship with superiors, colleagues and subordinates his stress level increases. This is because most employees spend so much time at the workplace and thereby poor working relationship can affect them adversely. It is more likely that they would avoid the problem of enforced intimacy by engaging in as few interactions as possible with others and by distancing themselves mentally, if not physically by various means. There are many people who do not like the idea that those relationships at work should be anything other than formal and strictly work related, even to the point of outside life not being discussed.

2.5.4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Organizations have become flatter, meaning that power and responsibility now radiates throughout the organization. The work force has become more diversified. Jobs and careers get scarcer. For the person who had been determined to rise through an organization, the challenge had recently become greater. Opportunities to learn new skills are now becoming

requirements. Career development causes a lot of stress to employees through their working lives. Staying the same is quickly becoming an inadequate approach to work. Lack of job security, fear of redundancy, obsolescence and numerous performance appraisals can cause pressure and strain. In addition the frustration of having reached one's career ceiling, or having been over promoted can result in stress.

2.5.5 ORGANISATION STRUCTURE AND CLIMATE

When employees do not have sense of belonging in the organization, they lack adequate opportunities to participate. These make them feel unimportant which could lead to strain and job-related stress.

However, Betts (1994) argued that the causes of work stress vary among individuals since they come from different backgrounds. That is to say, one form and level of stress may affect one person more than another. The two divisions are physical and psychological causes. He went further to state that, the physical causes include physical workload and physical environment – temperature, humidity, vibration etc. The psychological causes include mental workload and mental environment.

On the other hand, Robbins (2004) identified the following as causes of stress at work:

i. Economic Uncertainties

When the economy is contracting, people become increasingly anxious about their job security and this could lead to an increase on their stress level.

ii. Technological Uncertainties

Innovations can make an employee's skills and experience obsolete in a very short time. Computers, robotics, automation and similar forms of technological innovation are a threat to many employees and therefore could cause stress.

iii. Organisational Leadership

This represents the managerial style of the organizations senior executives. Many senior executives create a culture characterized by tension, fear and anxiety. They establish unrealistic pressures to perform in the short run, impose excessively tight controls and routinely dismiss employees who do not measure up to standard.

2.6 SYMPTOMS AND EFFECTS OF STRESS ON EMPLOYEES PRODUCTIVITY

Blackwell (1998) stated that stress shows itself in a number of ways. For instance an individual who is experiencing a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers and the like. These can be grouped under three general categories; Physiological, Psychological and Behavioural symptoms.

2.6.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS AND EFFECTS

These are the major consequences of stress. Then mental health of employees is threatened by high levels of stress and poor mental health. Unlike the Physical symptoms, Psychological symptoms could also cause employees work performance to deteriorate. Anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, aggressiveness, and boredom results in low employee performance, declines in self-esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate, trouble in making decision and job dissatisfaction. Also the psychological symptoms of stress can lead to burnout. Job burnout is a prolonged withdrawal from work which makes the sufferer devalue his work and sees it as a source of dissatisfaction.

2.6.2 BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS AND EFFECTS

The behavioural signs of stress include eating more or less, cigarette smoking, used of alcohol and drugs, rapid speech pattern nervous fidgeting which leads to absenteeism from work, hopping from job to job and causes performance to deteriorate.

2.6.3 PHYSIOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS AND EFFECTS

These are changes in the metabolism that accompany stressors. The symptoms include increased heart rate, blood pressure etc. With this, the wear and tear on the body becomes noticeable and problematic. The effects of this are back pains, migraine headaches, insomnia, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and even cancer which affect employees' productivity.

2.7 THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON THE ORGANISATION

Starting a new job would likely to be very stressful if the person felt inexperienced, unable to cope with workload, uncomfortable around their bosses or colleagues and unstimulated by their work. On the other hand, a person entering an area of work where they felt competent, supported by their colleagues and stimulated, would be more likely to experience the change as challenging than stressful.

According to Luthans (2002) besides the potential stressors that occurred outside the organization, there were also those that were associated with the organization. Although an organization is made up of groups of individuals, there are also more macro level dimensions, unique to an organization that contains potential stressors.

DCS gaumail (2003) is of the opinion that at the organizational level, research has found that work-related stresses may be responsible for organizational outcomes such as decline in performance, dissatisfaction, lack of motivation and commitment, and an increase in absenteeism and turnover.

Dessler (2000) alluded that there were two main sources of job stress; environmental and personal. According to this author a variety of external environmental factors could lead to job stress. These included work schedules, place of work, job security, route to and from work and the number and nature of clients. Even noise, including people talking and telephones ringing, contributed to stress. This author, however, noted that individuals reacted differently even if they were at the same job, because personal factors also influenced stress. The author also noted that stress is not necessarily dysfunctional; some people work well only when under a little stress and find they are more productive when a deadline approaches.

Dessler (2000) was of the opinion that for organizations job stress consequences included reductions in the quantity and quality of job performance, increased absenteeism and turnover, increased grievances and health care costs. A study of 46,000 employees concluded that stress and depression may cause employees to seek medical care for vague physical and psychological problems and can in fact lead to more serious health conditions. The health care costs of the high-stress workers were 46% higher than those of their less stressed co-workers.

According to Levin-Epstein (2002) stress on the job took its toll on nonprofits: lost time from work, deflated productivity, low staff morale, turnover and higher health care costs.

According to Anderson and Kyprianou (1994) in the United States of America, Britain and many other European countries, about half the deaths each year for both men and women, were due to cardiovascular diseases. The factors associated with high risk of heart diseases included cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and blood sugar levels and excess body weight. These authors further stated that a number of studies have indicated that

social and psychological factors may account for much of the risk and this has promoted research into factors in the work situation that may increase susceptibility to heart disease. Among the factors that have been shown to influence such susceptibility are dissatisfaction at work and occupational stress.

Anderson and Kryprianou (1994) further quoted Lazarus who defined stress referring to a broad class of problems differentiated from other problem areas because it deals with any demand which tax the system; a psychological system, social system or a physiological system, and the response of that system. The definition further argued that the reaction depended on how the person interpreted or appraised the significance of a harmful threatening or challenging event. These authors concluded that stress was thought to occur from a misfit between the individual and his or her environment: an imbalance in the context of an organism-environment transaction. They further stated that stress in itself was not abnormal; nobody lives wholly free from it. It was clear that far from all individuals who are exposed to do the same work, conditions develop abnormalities of either a physical or a psychological character. It is only when stress is irrational, unproductive and persistent that it may be a symptom of psychological and physical illnesses.

Favreau as quoted by Levin-Epstein (2002) said that stress-related problems should be talked at three levels: individual, organizational and social. On the individual level she noted that employees can become more responsible for their own well-being by recognizing unhealthy emotional and work patterns before they reach crisis proportions. At an organizational level, employees need to be aware of the workplace structures that may contribute to burn out and take a creative approach to instituting changes that can prevent and relieve stress. The social environment within which employees operate often contributes to the problem.

Levin-Epstein (2002) also noted the most common indicators of stress as feeling overwhelming and burn out. Emotional and physical exhaustion often accompany such feelings, he further emphasized that employers as implementers of stress-endangering policies and procedures, should help employees manage their stress especially if it affects job performance.

Carol and Walton (1997) propagated that the concept of job related stress has been acknowledged and described by many theorists (Maslash 1976; Cooper 1988; Cox 1991). Cox and Howarth (1990) as quoted by Carol and Walton (1997) viewed the concept of work related stress as one that offers an economy of explanation in relation to the complex perceptual and cognitive process that underpins people's interactions with their work environment and their attempts to cope with the demands of that environment. These authors further stated that people's ability to cope with stress is dependent upon their own perceptions of their abilities to cope and their coping in other aspects of their lives. Work related stress often comes about because of changes in the work place and how it is structured, often described as moving the goal posts, rather than the stress associated with a particular type of work.

Carol and Walton (1997) further defined work related stress as the psychological state that represents an imbalance or mismatch between people's perceptions of the demand on them and their ability to cope with these demands.

Bowin and Harvey (2001) summarized factors leading to stress in the work place as follows:

- Little control of the work environment;
- Lack of participation in decision-making;
- Uncontrolled changes in policy;

- Sudden reorganizations and unexpected changes in work schedules;
- Conflict with other people (subordinates, superiors, peers) and other departments;
- Lack of feedback;
- Not enough time to do expected duties; and
- Ambiguity in duties.

According to the DCS gaumail (2003) the new political dispensation of South Africa has dawned. Organizations exposed to the altered dynamics of their environment will have to make adoptions and changes so as to continue along the path of competitiveness, effectiveness and survival. The stressors of South African corporate environment demand the workings of a more integrated workforce, effective conflict handling, international competition, surviving time and group pressure and achieving greater economic growth.

DCS gaumail (2003) further emphasized that no individual or group can be taken out of cultural context. Ethnicity, political and economic conditions are important antecedent factors that could contribute to an individual's experience of stress. In South Africa, the apartheid legacy still has a negative effect on many of those groups who have been historically disadvantaged. Both systems and situations need to be considered when addressing the subject of stress.

According to Frost (2003) the frequency with which hardworking, valuable employees have negative experiences in the workplace or hear bad news that leaves their hopes dashed, their goals derailed, or their confidence undermined. The sources of the pain vary, but much of it comes from abusive managers, unreasonable company policies, disruptive coworkers or clients, or from poorly managed change. It is a by-product of organizational life that can have

serious negative effects on individuals and their organizations, unless it is identified and handled in healthy and constructive ways.

Frost (2003) is of the opinion that this kind of pain shows up in people's diminished sense of self worth and lost confidence and hope. It is destructive to performance and morale. The tangible consequences include lost profits resulting from things like diminished productivity or worse mass exodus.

Frost (2003) is also of the opinion that apart from quitting, which carries its own set of costs to the company, acts of revenge, sabotage, theft, vandalism, withdrawal behaviours, spreading gossip or generally acting cynical or mistrustful can all represent direct or indirect costs to the organization.

According to Thompson and Mc Hugh (1990) costs are examined socially in terms of rates of heart disease, mental disorder and social dysfunction and in workplace through effects on job satisfaction, performance and absenteeism rates, and more recently in the costs of compensation claims and health insurance.

These authors are also of the opinion that typologies of sources of stressors and the forms of pathological end-state to be encountered, account for much of the modern stress literature. This tends to emphasize the amount of productivity lost due to stress, its inevitability and the benefits for the enterprise of managing stress.

In conclusion, Frost (2003) believed that when organizational leaders recognize emotional pain when it occurs and act to intervene, potentially lethal situations in the workplace could be reversed.

2.8 THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON PRODUCTIVITY

Mathis and Jackson (2000) suggested that to measure organizational human resource productivity one has to consider unit labour cost, or the total labour cost per unit of output.

The authors further stated that an individual performance depends on three factors which are; ability to do the work, level of effort and support given to that person. The relationship of these factors, widely acknowledged in management literature, is that Performance (P) is the result of Ability (A) times Effort (E) times Support (S), that is: $(P=A \times E \times S)$. Performance is diminished if any of these factors are reduced or absent. They further emphasize that quality of production must also be considered as part of productivity because one alternative might be to produce more but a lower quality.

Simply put by Chase and Aquilano (1995), productivity is measured in terms of outputs per labour hour. However this measurement does not ensure that the firm will make money (for example when extra output is not sold but accumulates as inventory). To test whether productivity has increased, the following questions should be asked: 'has the action taken increased output or has it decreased inventory?' 'Has the action taken decreased operational expense?' This would then lead to a new definition which is: Productivity is all the actions that bring a company closer to its goals.

Mathis and Jackson (2000) defined productivity as a measure of the quantity and quality of work done considering the cost of the resource it took to do the work. Steers (1991) is of the opinion that it is useful from a managerial standpoint to consider several forms of counter-productive behaviour that are known to result from prolonged stress.

Thompson and Mc Hugh (1995) are of the opinion that when specifically regarding stress in the workplace, contemporary accounts of the stress 'process' often follow the notion of stress

as resulting from a misfit between an individual and their particular environment, where internal or external factors push the individuals adaptive capacities beyond his or her limit.

However, no two people react to the same job in the very same way, because personal factors also influence stress. For example, type A personalities; people who are workaholics and who feel driven to be always on time and meet deadlines, normally place themselves under greater stress than do others (Dessler 2000). This is further reiterated by Bowin and Harvey (2001) who emphasized that people cannot completely separate their work and personal lives, the way people react and handle stress at work is a complex issue.

According to Blumenthal (2003) an inverted U-type curve has been used to depict the effect stress has on performance. It can be shown that, as stress increases, so does the performance. However if stress continues to increase beyond an optimal point, performance will peak and start to decline. This shows that stress is necessary to enhance performance but once it reaches a level of acute discomfort, it is harmful and counterproductive.

Blumenthal (2003) went on to argue that excess stress is harmful, destructive and detrimental to human well-being and productivity. Stress can have an impact on an individual's well-being by causing dysfunction or disruption in multiple areas. This dysfunction extends into the organizational world and leads to decreased productivity.

According to Garrison and Bly (1997) corporations have become acutely aware of the problems caused by stress. The illnesses associated with stress are costly, and they can debilitate a valuable worker. When stress is not handled well, absenteeism, turnover, and medical compensation increase and productivity decreases. Garrison and Bly (1997) further stated that the workplace is special only because so much of our time is spent at work. To

achieve a peak of performance, stress should be managed effectively, with the negative effects of stress minimized.

Garrison and Bly (1997) viewed more prominent cases of stress in the workplace being the following:

Overload

Overload has two forms; an excessive amount of work and work for which an individual is ill prepared. One way of interpreting the challenge of increasing productivity is to understand that it means each individual will accomplish more than before. On an assembly line, the goal of increased productivity means that the total time to complete a product is reduced and overload is experienced in the form of the endless flow of work. French and Caplan in Anderson and Kyprianou (1994) differentiated between quantitative (too much) and qualitative (too difficult) overload. They suggested that both qualitative and quantitative overload may produce at least nine different symptoms of psychological and physical strain such as:

- Job dissatisfaction;
- Job tension;
- Lower self esteem;
- Feelings of being under threat;
- Embarrassment;
- High cholesterol levels;
- Increased heart rate;
- Skin complaints; and
- More smoking.

Time Pressure

Garrison and Bly (1997) suggested that, with the productivity demand comes the time pressure of getting the product completed or the service delivered in an ever-shorter time frame. These authors also stated that customers demand speed and quality and competitive organizations must deliver on both. As employees become more involved, they too will recognize the priority that time has in the workplace.

2.9 MANAGING STRESS

According to Robbins (2004), stress can be managed in two approaches; the individual and organizational approaches.

He said the individual approach include exercise. That is the employees can manage stress by walking, riding bicycles, attending aerobic classes, practicing yoga, jogging, swimming, playing tennis and swatting squash balls. Most runners and fitness addicts admit that, it is very hard to focus on job stress when one is trying to complete vigorous workout.

Again, he said individuals can manage stress through relaxation. This is because, when employees relax the response for stress will be reserved in the human mind-body system. Individuals can reduce tension through relaxation techniques such as meditation, hypnosis and biofeedback. The objective is to reach a state of deep relaxation in which the employee feels physically relaxed, somewhat detached from the immediate environment and detached from body sensations. Relaxation exercises reduce employee's heart rates, blood pressure and other physiological indicators of stress.

Another way to reduce stress individually is opening up. A healthy response to this moments or periods of personal crisis is to confide in others. Employees may not find it easy to discuss difficult personal traumas with others, but self disclosure can reduce the level of

stress and give them more positive outlook on life. Also honest entries on a regular basis in a diary may accomplish the same thing.

He also went further to explain the organization approach to stress management which include training programmes for employees, ensuring effective upward and downward communication in the organization, improvement in personnel policies such as (good welfare packages, incentives, pension schemes), good job design, improvement in the physical work environment, and also management should provide technical support to employees.

In the same view, Lucey (1994) said stress can be managed in an organization through increasing employees autonomy in their job, increase or decrease personal responsibility, allow more flexible working hours – by the used of flexi – time, job rotation and transfers, provide better working conditions, including social/fitness clubs etc, and institute a counseling service.

Also Claude and Cole (1992) suggested that in order to manage work stress effectively, management should consider doing the following:

- Provide work which allows some personal choice in the way it is carried out and the sequence in which it is carried out.
- Encourage employees participation in decisions which affect them
- Set clear goals and targets and provide adequate feedback on performance
- Induct new recruits thoroughly
- Provide training as an on-going updating process
- Provide consistent rewards for effective output
- Review performance gaps at the time of occurrence
- Provide opportunities for employees to try new duties and different tasks.

- Design job to have even work pressures
- Encourage group working procedures and friendly work relations
- Provide secure and fair personnel practices
- Ensure work environment is free of hazards

This implies that if these approaches and measures outlined above are carefully implemented it could go a long way to minimize the level of stress on employees.

From the beginning to the end of this chapter, we found the existence of work stress, its causes and effects. The evidence indicates that stress can be either a positive or a negative influence on employees' output. For many people, a low to moderate amount of stress enables them to perform their jobs better by increasing the work intensity, alertness and ability to react. However, a high level of stress, or even a moderate amount sustained over a long period, eventually takes its toll on employees and pressure tends to decrease general performance and job satisfaction.

2.10 SUMMARY

In summary the majority of authors in the review of literature reflected stress as posing a threat to productivity and also costing organizations immensely. However, some also acknowledge that some people work productively under pressure and that individuals react uniquely to similar stressors.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design used for the study, the various procedures and processes that was employed to collect and analyze the data. That is, the instruments used for the study and the method of analysis of the data.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is a descriptive research set out to assess stress and its effects on employees' productivity at GPHA, Takoradi. According to Pilot and Hurgler (1995), descriptive survey aims predominantly at observing, describing and documenting aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs rather than explaining them. The design has an advantage of producing good amount of responses from a wide range of people. At the same time, it provides a more accurate picture of events at a point in time. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) continued that one big advantage of the descriptive survey design is that it has the potential to provide us with a lot of information obtained from quite a large sample of individuals.

Creswell (2003) is however of the view that a descriptive study is more than just a collection of data. It involves measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data. According to Creswell (2002), a descriptive study identifies and defines the problem, selects tools for collecting data, describes, analyzes and interprets the data. In this direction the study seeks to examine the effect of stress on the employees' productivity, the causes of stress and the procedures available for the workers to manage stress in the organization.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

In the opinion of Agyedu, Donkor and Obeng (1999), population of a study refers to a complete set of individuals (subjects), objects or events having common observable

characteristics in which the researcher is interested. They further stressed that; population constitutes the target of a study and must be clearly defined and identified.

The target population for the study was the staff of the Marketing, Finance, Port Operations, Marine Engineering, and the Civil Engineering departments of GPHA, Takoradi.

3.3 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

It is noted that, analyses are best when conducted on samples that are still fresh (Sarantakos, 2005). Therefore, sampling was used to select a portion of the population to represent the entire population. He emphasizes the need for a researcher to select a sample from which he wishes to seek information, using appropriate sampling techniques.

The methods/techniques selected for the study was based on both probability and non-probability sampling. The two main methods that were employed in selecting sample from the population were purposive and simple random sampling techniques.

Purposive non-random sampling technique was used to select respondents from the Marketing, Finance, Port Operations, Marine Engineering, and the Civil Engineering departments of GPHA, Takoradi due to the fact that, they have requisite information about the issues involved in the study.

Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting 100 out of the total population of 326 employees.

3.4 SOURCES OF DATA

Data were obtained from both primary and secondary data sources using varied techniques.

3.4.1 Primary Data

Primary source of data were obtained through questionnaire and interviews. Various interrogation techniques were used to elicit primary data from interviewees. Questions that

were used in the research included closed and open-ended questions. The closed ended questions were intended to restrict respondents' answers; this provided an objective based for comparative analysis. To make analysis easier, the closed ended questions were provided with alternatives and clear instructions to interviewees. The open-ended questions were intended to give respondents the latitude of freedom to express their views in an unconstrained manner.

The questions were in two parts – Sections “A” and “B”. Section “A” dealt with personal data and section “B” dealt with questions for the study. To compliment the questionnaire, some employees were interviewed to find out whether they were experiencing stress and whether it had any negative effects on their productivity. This, the researcher did to seek verification on some of the answers provided in the questionnaire.

3.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data are information or data already collected by other researchers or institutions, usually for different purposes (Blumberg et al., 2008). Secondary data enable the researcher to place the study in the context of existing knowledge as well as broadens the researcher's understanding to the research topic (Blumberg et al., 2008). Secondary data sources were newspapers and manuals on the subject matter which gave the researcher information about the effects of stress on employees' productivity in GPHA, Takoradi. The internet as well as other relevant publications was also consulted.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The technique used in gathering data was based on questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Institute of Distance

Learning, KNUST, to seek permission from the Management of Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi to go ahead with the study.

The researcher distributed the questionnaires in person, after obtaining permission from top management, in one week to all respondents. Respondents were entreated to give candid and honest responses to every item on the questionnaires. Face-to-face interview provided the platform for the researcher to clarify any possible ambiguity and also created the opportunity to interact with the people.

After this, the collected data was analyzed using the proposed data analysis methods and the findings and recommendations were made.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was coded and entered using the Microsoft Excel. Since the study is quantitative in nature, the findings were presented in simple descriptive statistics involving some tables and bar charts. These were chosen because it made it possible to investigate the relationships of interest.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. This requires preparation of the data for analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Cresswell, 2003).

This chapter contains the analyzed data. Microsoft Excel was employed analyzing the data. The findings were presented in figures and tables. Specifically, out of the total number of 100 respondents selected for the study, only 80 employees completed the questionnaires, given a response rate of 80%.

4.1 BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

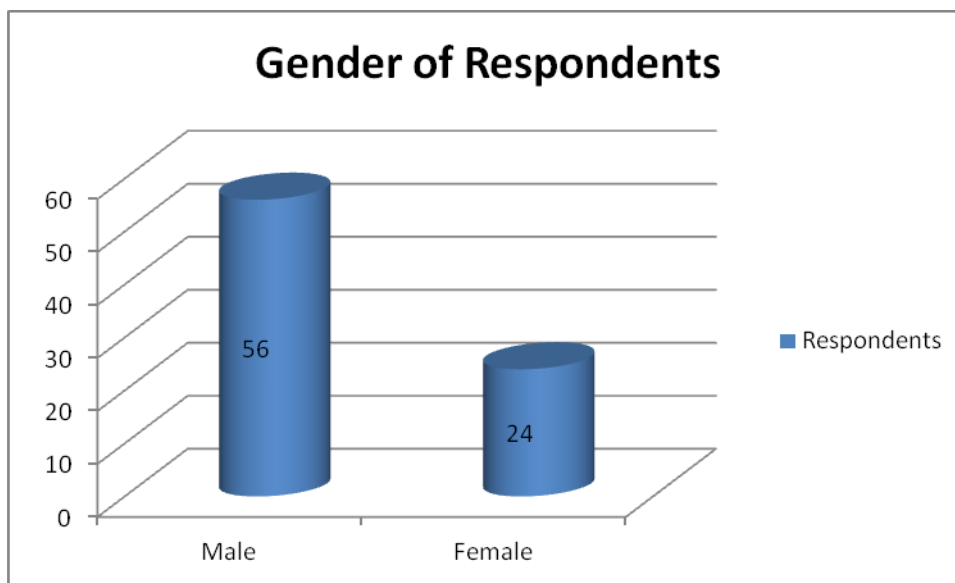


Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

From Figure 4.1 above, it can be seen that out of the 80 respondents, 70% were males and 30% were females. The data suggests that there was a vast difference between the number of males and females used for this research. This means male employees of the five departments of GPHA, Takoradi dominate females.

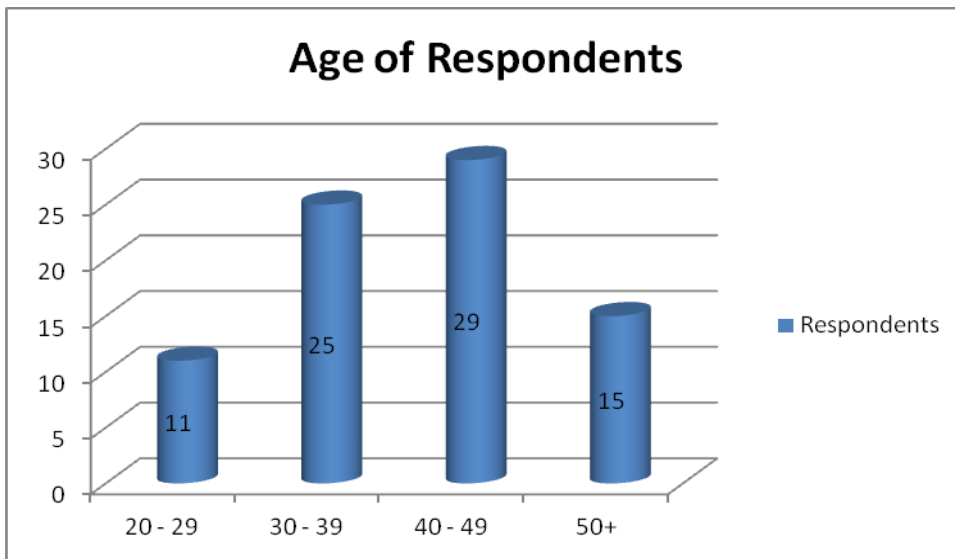


Figure 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Figure 4.2 indicates that, majority of the employees 36% were of the ages ranging from (40-49) years, whilst 31% out of the 50 respondents used for the research were ranging between the ages of (30-39) years. The figure also depicts the fact that 19% of the staff were above 50 years of age, whilst 14% were between the ages of (20-29) years. However, it was also found from the study that majority of the respondents were of the ages ranging between 30-49 years. The advantage here is that the port has majority of its workers within the active employment zone and with those within the retiring age forming the minority.

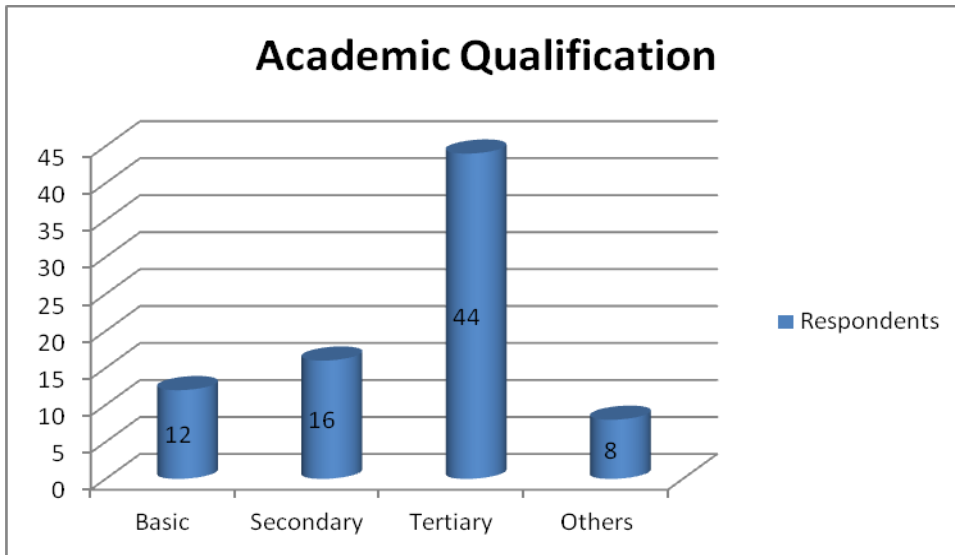


Figure 4.3: Academic Qualifications of Respondents

From Figure 4.3, it can be seen that 15% of the respondents were Basic Education Certificate Holders, 20% held Senior Secondary Certificate, 55% held Certificates from the Universities and Polytechnics and 10% stated Other Certificates from different tertiary institutions.

4.2 DETERMINING STRESS LEVELS AND EFFECT OF STRESS ON PRODUCTIVITY

Determining whether employees think that GPHA, Takoradi cares about its employees

Educational Level

Table 4.1: Determining whether GPHA, Takoradi cares

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	20	25
No	44	55
No response	16	20
Total	80	100

The majority of respondents 55% reported that they do not think that GPHA, Takoradi cares about them.

According to Frost (2003) the costs of employee’s frustration and anger can prove even more serious. When people believe that they have been treated unfairly (especially by their supervisors) they can turn on their organizations, attempting to even the score at the cost to the organization. Apart from quitting, which carries its own set of costs to the company, acts of revenge, sabotage, theft, vandalism, withdrawal behaviours (withholding effort), spreading gossip or generally acting cynical or mistrustful, can all present direct and indirect costs to the organization. Dissatisfaction with management leads to reduced loyalty, and once that loyalty has been destroyed; an employee is likely to commit an act of sabotage.

If 55% of the respondents think that GPHA, Takoradi does not care for their employees that calls for reason for concern, as dissatisfaction with management leads to reduced loyalty that could lead to acts of sabotage (Frost 2003).

Determining whether employees like working for GPHA

Table 4.2: Exploration of whether respondents like working for GPHA, Takoradi

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Always	18	22.5
Sometimes	50	62.5
Seldom	6	7.5
Not at all	6	7.5
Total	80	100.0

From Table 4.2 it is evident that 63% of the respondents reflect doubts on whether they like working for GPHA, Takoradi as they indicated that they “sometimes” like working for this organization. There could be a correlation between the response above on Table 4.1 and 4.2.

However 23% is confident about its need to work for GPHA, Takoradi as only 7% of respondents are totally unhappy.

Determining satisfaction with the working environment

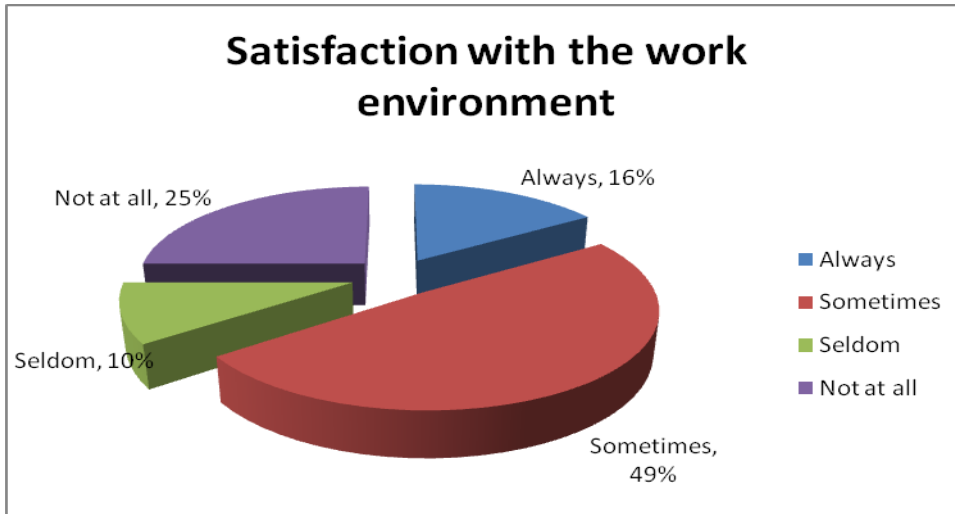


Figure 4.4 Satisfaction with the work environment

From Figure 4.4, respondents that confidently reported satisfaction with the working environment are relatively low (16%), and it was compared to those who reported not to like working for GPHA, Takoradi (7%), in Table 4.2 on the previous page. These two responses may be correlated; it could be the same respondents who reported not to like working for GPHA, Takoradi that are not satisfied with their working environment. However, negative emphasis on “sometimes not satisfied with the work environment” seems to be stronger (49%) as reflected by Figure 4.4.

According to Thomson and McHugh (1995) contemporary accounts of the stress “process” often follow the notion of stress as resulting from a misfit between an individual and their particular environment. Thus this gives an opportunity for the organization to explore this problem further.

Determining whether employees have control over their jobs

Table 4.3: Determining whether employees have control over their jobs

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	14	17.5
Sometimes	30	37.5
Seldom	19	23.75
Not at all	15	18.75
No responses	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Only 38% of the respondents report to sometimes have control over their jobs. However 19% report not to have control at all over their jobs and on the contrary 17% confirm to have control over their jobs. The interpretation can be made that lack of control over one's job may induce frustration and anxieties due to uncertainty, thus leading to distress.

Exploring work pressure

Table 4.4: Exploring work pressure

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	75
No	18	22.5
No response	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

The response rate of 75% of the respondents reporting to work under pressure may be a reflection on the organizational mood; that expectations on delivery are high. However 23% of the respondents reported not to be working under pressure.

Blumenthal (2003) is of the opinion that events that are appraised as overwhelming, threatening, unsatisfying, or conflicting are more likely to be experienced as stressful. Thus the organization has a challenge of helping the employees manage their work pressure better.

Determining whether employees have adequate information about their role at work

Table 4.5: Exploring role clarity

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	20	25
Sometimes	36	45
Seldom	17	21.25
Not at all	5	6.25
No response	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

According to Table 4.5, only 6% of respondents reported not having adequate information about their roles and the majority of the respondents (45%) report that they sometimes have adequate information about their jobs while 25% of the respondents are always clear about their roles. Thompson and McHugh (1995) propagated that where the demands of a role or roles are unclear and norms and standards of social comparison are lacking, people may experience role ambiguity. The interpretation can be made that if 25% of the respondents are always clear about their role at, it means that they won't be subjected to role ambiguity as a cause for their stress at work. At the same time if 45% of the respondents sometimes don't

“have adequate information about their role at work” they may be inclined to experience stress due to role ambiguity. However the 21% that is seldom clear about their role is in a more threatening position that could cause them to have role ambiguity and stress subsequently. About 70% of the respondents can conclusively be seen as being threatened by role ambiguity as a cause for stress.

Determine whether job expectations are in contradiction with each other

Table 4.6 Contradiction in job expectations

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	20	25
Sometimes	36	45
Seldom	17	21.25
Not at all	5	6.25
No response	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

In Table 4.6, 25% of the respondents reported that their roles are always in conflict with each other and 45% reported that sometimes their roles are in contradiction with each other. According to Thompson and McHugh (1995) role conflicts generally exist between differing expectation from the various parts of a person’s role set, for example those people expecting delivery; and inevitable with the level of pressure that most of us are exposed to in or out of work since a person cannot fulfill the demands of all their roles.

The interpretation can be made that if 25% of the respondents report that their “job expectations are always in contradiction with each other”, it could be concluded that they are

more prone to job stress. The 45% whose job expectation is sometimes in contradiction with each other may also be prone to stress due to pressure of delivery regardless of the contradiction in their work. However 21% reported to seldom have job expectations which are in contradiction with each other, and that is a good indication that they are most of the time comfortable about what is expected of them at work thus minimizing the possibility of stress that is caused by job expectations that are in contradiction with each other.

Nevertheless the majority of the respondents (70%) who reported to “always” and “sometimes” have job expectations that are in contradiction with each other are more likely to experience job stress.

Determine whether employees are asked to do more than their ability permits

Table 4.7: Assessing whether employees are asked to do more than their ability permits

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	27.5
No	52	65
No response	6	7.5
Total	80	100.0

In Table 4.7, the majority of the respondents (65%) report that they are not being asked to do more than their ability permits. It is comforting to note that the majority of respondents accept this responsibility regardless of the work pressure they have reported in Table 4.4. However 28% of the respondents think that they are being given more than their ability permits.

Determine whether employee skills are utilised to their satisfaction

Table 4.8: Skill utilization to employee’s satisfaction

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	23	28.75
No	49	61.25
No response	8	10
Total	80	100.0

In Table 4.8, 61% of the respondents reported that their skills are not utilized to their satisfaction. The interpretation can be made that this may be due to a combination of factors, when it is considered that this organization has a young male dominated workforce, the majority (55% in Figure 4.3) of who have tertiary qualification; may have ambitions of gaining work experience and climbing the corporate ladder.

According to Ritchie and Martin (1999) employees with a high need for interest and usefulness at work when put in jobs where instrumentality reigns, are likely to be alienated and stressed. Jobs without interest to them and with no obvious good and or useful elements or out comes will impinge heavily on such people. If unable to leave they will be disruptive, if intelligent and bored they will be apathetic and conscientious they will be depressed or absent on sick leave.

This variable becomes extremely important for a growing organization like GPHA, Takoradi if the majority reports that their skills are not fully utilized as it may lead to lowered productivity.

Determine whether employees participate in decision making

Table 4.9: Exploring whether employees participate in decision making

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
------------------	------------------	-----------------------

Yes	23	28.75
No	54	67.5
No response	3	3.75
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.9 reflects that 67% of the respondents report not to participate in decision making. Harvey (2001) is of the opinion that lack of participation in decision making is one of the factors leading to stress.

Determine whether employees get into conflict with each other

Table 4.10: An enquiry into whether employees get into conflict with each other

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	23	28.75
No	54	67.5
No response	3	3.75
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.10 gives a clear indication that the majority (67%) of respondents do not get into conflict with each other. However 29% confirm getting into conflict but their open ended responses reflect employee's positive regard for good collegial relations.

According to Ritchie and Martin (1999) people with the need for relationships work best in stable work teams where they can get to know others well.

Employee's locus of control

Table 4.11: Exploring locus of control

Does success in your job depend on	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A supportive superior	50	62.5
Hard work	57	71.25
Supportive subordinates	24	30
Luck / fate	0	0
The Creator	14	17.5
None of the above	3	3.75
All of the above	3	3.75

The respondents were given a multiple choice of questions and Table 4.11 reflects the total number of responses given to each question. 63% of the respondents are of the opinion that their success in their jobs depend on a supportive supervisor. 71% of the respondents reported that success in their jobs depended on hard work. According to Blumenthal (2003) a sense of power and control has been shown to contribute or reduce stress. People with intrinsic sense of control or personal responsibility (that is those who have a sense of being able to make changes in their environments) are generally less stressed than those who believe they have no control. This author also propagates the theory of personality types, maintaining that the type A person is hard driving, conscientious, aggressive, ambitious, competitive, shows an over commitment to productivity and is filled with a sense of time urgency and impatience, multitasks, has poor relationships and little concern for others. For respondents who believe that their success depends on hard work may be having a sense of power and control over their situation. Only 30% of the respondents on this question believe

that their success depends on supportive subordinates. However this becomes a good reflection of positive regard that supervisors have for their supervisees.

There was no response to the question of whether the respondents believed that “success on their jobs depended on fate or luck” and that may be a reflection that they believe their success is influenced by their own efforts. Only 18% of the respondents reported that their success depended on the Creator. That may also be a reflection that the respondents believe that their success was influenced by their own efforts.

According to Blumenthal (2003) whether an event is experienced as stressful depends on a person’s psychosocial orientation with things like culture, spirituality, values and beliefs.

Only 4% of the respondents believe that their success does not depend on hard work and focus, supportive supervisor, supportive subordinates, fate and Creator. 4% of the respondents also believed that success in their jobs depended on all the mentioned factors.

From the responses in Table 4.11 above, the interpretation can be made that 37% of the respondents have internal locus of control and they may be less susceptible to stress as they believe that they are in control of their circumstances.

Personality types of employees

Table 4.12: Enquiry into whether employees are competition driven

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Yes	64	80
No	11	13.75
No response	5	6.25
Total	80	100.0

According to Table 4.12 80% of the respondents reported that they are highly competitive. Thompson and McHugh (1995) also propagate the personality type theory; they are of the opinion that traits associated with type A behaviour includes achievement orientation, status insecurity, time urgency, competitiveness and aggression. Type A behaviour patterns have been labeled coronary prone behaviour due to the correlation with increased rates of coronary heart disease.

There are many factors that may have influenced the competitiveness of respondents as the majority of the respondents are young men who by virtue of their youth are competitive. The fact that the majority of the respondents (80%) reported to be competitive may be an indication that they are influenced by the active nature of the youth.

Table 4.13: Enquiry into whether employees are relaxed at work

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	31	38.75
No	41	51.25
No response	8	10
Total	80	100.0

In Table 4.13, 51% of the respondents reported that they are not relaxed people at work.

Anderson and Kyprianou (1994) differentiated between quantitative (too much) and qualitative (too difficult) overload. They suggested that both qualitative and quantitative overload may produce at least nine different symptoms of psychological and physical strain such as: Job dissatisfaction, job tension, lower self esteem, feelings of being under threat, embarrassment, high cholesterol levels, increased heart rate, skin complaints, more smoking.

The fact that 51% of the respondents are not relaxed at work may be an indication of the organizational mood of high volume delivery expected from employees. However 39% reported that they are relaxed at work.

The interpretation can be made that if the majority of the respondents reported not to be relaxed at work that could be linked to the fact that the majority (80%) is highly competitive. The majority of the respondents could be seen as the Type A personality. For example, type A personalities; people who are workaholics and who feel driven to be always on time and meet deadlines, normally place themselves under greater stress than do others (Dessler, 2000).

How employees deal with their problems

Table 4.14: When you have a problem at work what do you do

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Consult your supervisor	55	68.75
Seek professional help	3	3.75
Stay away from work	3	3.75
Discuss it with a colleague	36	45
Do you do all of the above	5	6.25
Do none of the above	3	3.75

Majority (69%) of the respondents in Table 4.14 above indicated supervisory involvement as an option for problem resolution at work. The interpretation could be that the majority of employees experience problems at work and they do not seek professional help but rely on supervisors. GPHA, Takoradi does not have a Wellness Programme and this could be one of

the factors why the employees do not access professional help as they have never received guidance to that effect.

The number of respondents that discuss their problems with their colleagues is still high at 45%. Only 6% of the respondents reported to take all the options in Table 4.14 when confronted with problems at work.

What employees do when they feel tense at work

Table 4.15: What employees do when they feel tense at work

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Take a smoke break	9	11.25
Workout with exercise	2	2.5
Take alcohol after work	20	25
Confront the problem	46	57.5
Take time out	13	16.25
Take it out on someone	3	3.75
Do none of the above	5	6.25

Table 4.15 reflects that respondents that take a smoke break when they are tense at work are in the minority, only 11%. That may be an indication that the majority of the employees are non-smokers and thus a good investment for the company.

Only 3% of the total respondents work out with exercise when they feel tense at work. This is not an indication of a healthy lifestyle which one associates with less stress.

The majority of the respondents in the multiple choice questions did not choose the option of alcohol utilization as a way of minimizing tension after work, thus it can be interpreted that

75% of the respondents do not use alcohol to release stress. That also adds good value to the organization. However 25% of the respondents use alcohol. The majority of the employees, 58% reported to confront the problem, and that is also good for problem resolution. Only 16% of the respondents take time out when they feel tense at work. This may be an indication that there is minimal absenteeism on the job.

Table 4.15 above reflects that the majority of the respondents do not take out their tension on someone when they feel tense at work. According to Blumenthal (2003) stress causes agitation, annoyance and aggression, which in turn lead to poor individual relations and conflict between employees. However that is not the case at GPHA, Takoradi. This table reflects that the majority of the respondents did not choose this multiple question. Only a few respondents 6% reported to do none of the above.

Exploring whether employees feel a sense of helplessness at work

Table 4.16: Do you feel a sense of helplessness at work

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	13	16.25
Sometimes	53	66.25
Seldom	3	3.75
Not at all	11	13.75
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.16 shows that respondents on this question indicated mixed responses with the majority (66%) indicating that they sometimes feel helpless at work. Feelings of helplessness induce depression and anxiety. According to Frost (2003) pain that is mishandled is likely to

lead to grief. People whose pain is left untreated will avoid future situations that resemble the pain-inducing incident. When people are hurting, when they are shocked by what happens to them or by what they hear about themselves from others, they become disconnected from hope and from a sense of belonging to a supportive community. They may subsequently enter a phase of denial followed by anger and depression the immediate reactions are likely to be confusion, disbelief and shaken confidence. People burdened by those feelings cannot easily attend to their normal day to day tasks and responsibilities.

Late coming

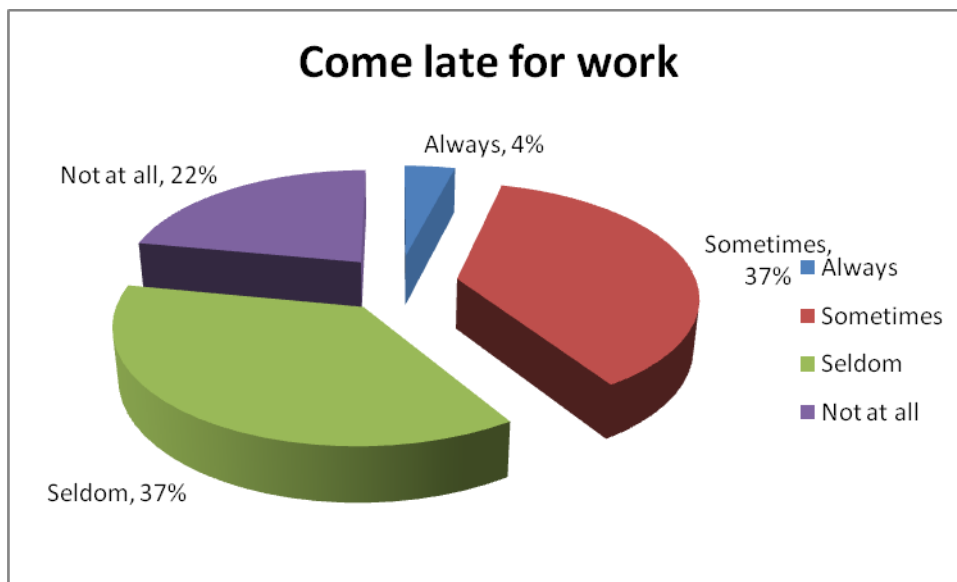


Figure 4.5: Come late for work

Figure 4.5 shows that late coming is a visible phenomenon at GPHA, Takoradi as 37% of the respondents sometimes come late for work and 4% always come late. However 37% seldom come late, while 22% report not to come late at all.

The interpretation may be that those who come late are quite sizable and might influence productivity negatively.

Absenteeism

Table 4.17: Stay away

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	62.5
No	17	21.25
No response	13	16.25
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.17 reflects that 63% of the respondents reported to stay away from work. According to Mathis and Jackson (2000) turnover and absenteeism represent convenient forms of withdraws from a highly stressful job. The interpretation could be that the employees stay away from work as way of withdrawing from a stressful job.

Exploring thoughts on leaving the job

Table 4.18: Inclination to leave the job

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	70	87.5
No	10	12.5
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.8 reflects that the majority (88%) of the respondents have thought of leaving the job. Only 12% are confident that they don't have thoughts of leaving the job. The interpretation is that the responses are a reflection of employee dissatisfaction with the organization. Frost (2003) propagated that emotional pain exists in every organization. This author is of the opinion that the sources of the pain vary but much of it comes from abusive managers, unreasonable company policies, disruptive co-workers or clients, or from poorly managed

change. The tangible consequences include lost profits resulting from diminished productivity or worse mass exodus.

Exploring supervisory support

Table 4.19: Does your supervisor attend to your work problems

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	26	32.5
Sometimes	30	37.5
Seldom	8	10
Not at all	6	7.5
No response	10	12.5
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.19 above reflects that 33% of the respondents reported that their supervisors always attend to their work problems. This may be correlated to Table 4.14, where 69% of the respondents in a multiple choice of questions chose that when they have a problem at work they consult their supervisor. This may be a reflection of good supervisor – supervisee relations, which one believes is a component of a healthy organization.

Exploring employee concentration problems

Table 4.20: Do you have concentration problems when performing your duties

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	2	2.5
Sometimes	19	23.75
Seldom	25	31.25

Not at all	32	42
No response	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.20 shows that 24% of the respondents reported that they sometimes experience concentration problems when performing duties, while 42% reported not to experience concentration problems at all. Only 3% of respondents reported to always have concentration problems while 31% reported that they seldom have concentration problems.

Blumenthal (2003) is of the opinion that stress affects our thought process leading to a difficulty or fear of making decisions, forgetfulness, hypersensitivity, mental blocks and difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly.

The interpretation could be made that if the majority (42%) of the respondents does not have concentration problems, it could be that stress has not affected their concentration.

Exploring employee performance feedback

Table 4.21: How was your performance feedback for the past four months

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	16	20
Good	10	12.5
Average	8	10
Poor	45	56.25
No response	1	1.25
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.21 shows that majority of the respondents (56%) reported that their performance feedback was poor in the previous four months when the study was conducted. On the contrary 20% of the respondents reported that their performance feedback was excellent, and 13% reported that it was good.

Ritchie and Martin (1999) believe that stress impairs performance. There may be a correlation between work pressure that has been mentioned in the previous paragraphs and the 56% poor performance of respondents.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations in respect of the objectives of the study.

5.1 FINDINGS

Major findings of the study are:

- There is evidence to the effect that the majority of employees reported to work under pressure and that they feel uncared for by the organization. Thus stress is a factor that the employees at GHPA, Takoradi endure.
- The majority of the employees have issues with the organization; ranging from perceived non-care by the organization to feelings of being underutilized.

- The majority of the employees think that GPHA, Takoradi does not care for its employees and they sometimes do not like working for the organization.
- The majority of the respondents range between the age 30 and 49, implying that the lowered positive regard against the organization might be age related.
- The fact that the majority of the employees indicate to “sometimes” like working for GPHA, Takoradi is reason to believe that those employees will endure stress.
- There must be a misfit between the employees and their working environment as there is a minority of the employees who indicated that they are not all happy with their working environment.
- The majority of the employees reported not to participate in decision making and that could be one of the factors leading to stress.
- The majority of the employees have seldom or no control over their jobs. When employee’s feel they do not have control over their jobs they may be stressed. As the majority of the employees have tertiary qualifications and are highly competitive it can be concluded that their specialized knowledge is stifled by the lack of control over their jobs and the frustration they endure may lead to distress.
- There seemed to be too much work pressure for the majority of the employees. One concluded that the employees at GPHA, Takoradi may experience both distress (strain) and eustress (healthy stress that leads to peak performance) which in certain instances inhibit productivity.
- The majority of the employees displayed Type A personality traits as they reported to be highly competitive, not relaxed at work and believed that their success depended

on hard work. Thus the majority of the employees could be seen as being more prone to stress which may in the long run hamper their health and productivity.

- The employees of GPHA, Takoradi are vulnerable to stress. Employees whose job expectations that in contradiction with each other and whose roles are ambiguous are bound to be frustrated and stressed. Furthermore those who feel that their skills are under-utilized will also endure frustration that leads to stress.
- Stress had an effect on productivity. The majority of employees reported that they sometimes felt helpless and a sizable number reported to have ailments that were symptomatic of stress thus the negative health had a bad effect on productivity.
- The majority of employees reported to have had poor performance feedback and that was also an indication that productivity had been affected by stress.
- The majority of employees sometimes stayed away from work and some reported late for duty. This is an indication that productivity was hampered by their absenteeism.
- The majority of employees who were young and highly competitive were in danger of burning out because of the work related frustrations they experienced.
- The majority of the employees had thoughts of leaving GPHA, Takoradi which could affect their commitment to productivity.
- There was evidence of good supervisor-subordinate relations. The majority of respondents reported that they do not use alcohol after work; there was very little interpersonal conflict, which could create a good mood for productivity.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to evaluate the effect of stress on productivity of the employees at GPHA, Takoradi. The results from this study showed that the negative factors that distressed

employees had a negative effect on productivity. The causes that were identified and analyzed in Chapter 4, included the ages of the respondents cross tabulated with gender, determining the stress levels of the respondents, and the effect of stress on productivity.

It is clear from the vast amount of factors identified, reported and quantified and through the literature review that the goal of the study was achieved. This also served to prove that stress had a negative effect on productivity at GPHA, Takoradi.

There had been many stress factors that the employees of GPHA, Takoradi endured, and the enquiry proved that the effect of stress affected productivity negatively. The fact that the majority of the employees thought of leaving their job at GPHA, Takoradi and felt that the organization did not care about them was a reflection of huge dissatisfaction that undoubtedly lowered productivity.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research, it is recommended that the following measures be put in place to help employees of GPHA, Takoradi manage and reduce stress on their work:

- The organization must conduct a needs assessment for an Employee Assistance Programme.
- Management must conduct an analysis of the organizational mood and climate by assessing the reasons why the employees think GPHA does not care about its employees and what can they do to change it.

- The supervisors and managers need to explore the causes of the dissatisfaction of employees within the working environment.
- Supervisors must assess the level of their subordinates knowledge and skills and whether they will be able to meet their deadlines. They must agree on a performance contract, so that they can give employees with job maturity and control over their jobs.
- GPHA, Takoradi must invest in a stress management strategy that will help increase productivity.
- Time management training should be given to employees on a continuous basis.
- Managers should invite employees, who think that they are being given jobs that are in contradiction with each other, and clarify their roles.
- Managers should facilitate an employee skill audit that will help to place employees that feel underutilized.
- Managers should revise their decision making strategy.
- Management should introduce stress management techniques at GPHA.
- An Employee Assistance Programme has to be introduced for early identification and intervention on problems so that productivity levels do not increase.

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APPENDIX
INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

KWAME NKURUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI.

Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAFF

This research is for academic purposes only. It is to evaluate stress and its effect on employees' productivity. Respondents are assured that any information given out will be accorded the necessary confidentiality. Thank you.

1. Gender (a) Male [] (b) Female []
2. Age a) 20-29 yrs [] b) 30-39 yrs []
c) 40-49 yrs [] d) 50 yrs and above []
3. Academic Qualification. a) Basic [] b) Secondary []
c) Tertiary [] d) Other specify.....

SECTION B

4. Do you think GPHA, Takoradi cares for its employees?
Yes [] No []
5. Do you like working for GPHA, Takoradi?
a) Always [] b) Sometimes []
c) Seldom [] d) Not at all []
6. Are you happy with you working environment?
a) Always [] b) Sometimes []
c) Seldom [] d) Not at all []

- a) Hard work and focus [] b) Supportive supervisor []
 c) Supportive subordinates [] d) Fate/ Luck []
 e) The Creator [] f) None of the above []
 g) All of the above []
16. Are you highly competitive at work (workaholic, always have an intense sense of urgency, highly driven to achieve goals)?
- a) Yes [] b) No []
17. Are you most of the time relaxed person at work?
- a) Yes [] b) No []
18. When you have a problem at work, do you:
- a) Consult your supervisor [] b) Seek professional help []
 c) Stay away from work [] d) Discuss it informally with a colleague []
 e) All of the above [] f) None of the above []
19. What do you do when you feel tense at work?
- a) Take a smoke break [] b) Take alcohol after work []
 c) Work out with exercise [] d) Confront the problem []
 e) Take time out [] f) Take it out on someone []
 g) None of the above []
20. Do you experience a feeling of helplessness at work?
- a) Always [] b) Sometimes []
 c) Seldom [] d) Not at all []
21. Do you come late for work?
- a) Always [] b) Sometimes []

