



Exercise therapy as an antidote to work stress: Appraisals of the staff of federal college of agriculture, Ishiagu; Ebonyi state

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Abstract

Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. This demand may be physical, psychological or physiological. This study adopted a survey method. Systematic random sampling technique was adopted. The population of the study comprises selected staff across the departments of the College comprising academic and non-academic staff. Within twenty-one (21) departments, thirteen (13) staff was randomly selected. This gives a total sample size of two hundred and seventy-three (273) staff. Two hundred and sixty (260) being valid. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentage was used to describe the data. The findings of the study indicated significant inactiveness, sedentary life style among staff. This is due to inadequate and non-functional recreational facilities in the College for Staff use. Staff residential quarters were not adequate to accommodate the large staff population. Since the recreation facilities were located in the College premises, travelling back to the College or staying over for recreation is quite difficult after the day's job. This paper recommended the following: maintaining good health through sustainable daily feeding regime, recreation through relaxation, networking by making good friends and adequate exercise. This will help in keeping the body in good shape and thus reduce stress.

Keywords: exercise therapy, antidote, work stress, appraisals

Introduction

Stress can be defined as the way you feel when you are under abnormal pressure. All sorts of situation can cause stress. Excessive or prolonged stress can lead to illness and physical and emotional exhaustion. The effect of stress can accumulate quietly over time and then surface without warning. Personalities characterized by impertinence, aggressive and competitive, are not the only ones who are vulnerable to stress related catastrophes. Those with seemingly severe personalities may also be at risk (Eliot, 1998) ^[4].

World Health Organization (WHO) (2010) reported that globally, an estimate of 57% adults aged 18 and above were not active and are affected by one form of stress or the other (male 37% and women 20%). Stress and physical inactivity has been rated as the fourth leading cause of mortality. Andrew (2004) ^[2] observed that stress is one of the common problems that plague human beings in our contemporary society. No one is free from stress since life involves continuous response to internal stress. He further observed that people today live in stressful conditions occasioned by the changing circumstance of life and societal changes that relate to technological innovation, national economy downturn, cultural environment, environmental pollution, unemployment, fulfillment of life ambitions and so on. Stress is a silent killer. Stress can have life-threatening consequences. Indeed it has been linked to some of the leading causes of death.

Selye (1983) ^[10] an endocrinologist and one of the pioneer of modern stress concept stumbled on his work on stress by accident when he was trying to discover a new hormone. From the study, he opined that stress is a state in which a chain of glandular and hormonal reactions take place to help the body adapt itself to changing circumstances and conditions in its physical and

emotional environment. These reactions are not necessarily destructive. They prepare the body to withstand extreme weather change, keep it up to accomplish difficult and sometimes apparently impossible tasks, help to resist physical and emotional shock and heal wounds.

Akeredolu and Adeogun (2011) ^[1] are of the view that stress is an elusive term to define as its perception varies from one individual to another. They however concluded that stress is a state where there is imbalance between perceived demands and perceived ability to meet the demand.

In everyday language, it could be said that stress is the rate of wear and tear in the human machinery that accompanies any vital activity and, in a sense, parallels the intensity of life. It is increased during nervous tension, physical injury, infections, muscular work or any other strenuous activity. It is connected with a nonspecific defense mechanism which increases resistance to stressful or stressor agents (Cole, 2005) ^[3]. Wilmore and Costill (1994) ^[12] have shown that stress can suppress the immune system, perhaps opening the door to a number of infectious diseases. "Stress does not make you sick" says Virologist Ronald Glaser. "But it does increase the risk of being sick because of what it does to the immune system.

Felten (1998) submitted that mild or moderate stress is a good thing, because it warns of impending actions. It therefore motivates people to take appropriate action. Nobody can escape stress because to eliminate it completely would mean to destroy life itself (Cole, 2005) ^[3]. Life without stress will be so dull and meaningless. Some people "love their stress" because it makes them strong. Stress comes in many forms. Too much input can be stressful, while too little can also be stressful (Andrew, 2004) ^[2].

With this preview, this paper seeks to undertake an appraisal of exercise therapy as an antidote to work stress among staff of the Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu; Ebonyi State.

Research Methodology

Study Area

The project work was conducted at the Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu during the 2017 academic session. The area lies within latitude 05°56'N and longitude 07°41'E in the derived savanna zone of Southeastern Nigeria. The area has a tropical wet and dry climate with a mean temperature and rainfall of 30°C and 1539mm respectively (FDALR, 1985)^[5].

Research Design

The study adopted a survey design. According to Glasow (2005)^[7], and Isaac and Michael (1997)^[8] survey research is used: “to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context”.

Similarly, Kraemer (1991)^[9] identified three distinguishing characteristics of survey research: First, survey research is used to quantitatively describe specific aspects of a given population. These aspects often involve examining the relationships among variables. Second, the data required for survey research are collected from people and are, therefore, subjective. Finally, survey research uses a selected portion of the population from which the findings can later be generalized back to the population. In survey research, independent and dependent variables are used to define the scope of study, but cannot be explicitly controlled by the researcher.

A systematic random sampling technique was adopted. This study fits into the above sampling techniques because it gathered opinion through questionnaires from staff of the College across different pre-determined departments. Questionnaires administered were retrieved a week after completion by the respondents. Frequency counts and percentage were used for data analysis.

Population and Sample of the study

The population of the study comprises selected staff across the departments of the College comprising academic and non - academic staff. Within twenty-one (21) departments, thirteen (13) staff was randomly selected. This gives a total sample size of two hundred and seventy-three (273) staff. Two hundred and sixty (260) are valid.

Results and Discussion

Results

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows that two hundred and sixty (260) respondent were sampled for the study. 121 (46.53%) were females, while 139 (53.47%) were males, married were 193 (74.23%) while single were 67 (25.72%). The age range between 25 - 45years was 53.27% while 45 – 65 years were 46.53%. Years of experience between 10-15yrs were 58.46% while 15 -20yrs were 41.54%.

Table 1: Showing Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	121	46.53
Male	139	53.47
260		100
Marital status		
Single	67	25.77
Married	193	74.23
	260	100
Age		
25- 45	138	53.07
45- 65	122	46.93
	260	100
Year of experience		
10-15	152	58.46
15-20	108	41.54
	260	100

Table 2 shows the following stress related health challenges: General Body weakness (GBW) had the highest percentage (39.23%), followed by obesity with (22.31%), aging had 13.85%. Backache (Back pain) records 20% while High Blood Pressure (HBP) recorded the least with 4.62%.

Table 2: Stress related health challenges

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percent age
1.	Obesity	58	22.31
2.	High Blood Pressure (HBP)	12	4.62
3.	General Body weakness (GBW)	102	39.23
4.	Aging	36	13.85
5.	Back ache	52	20.00
	Total	260	100

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents (42.31%) preferred sports and games, 19.23% of respondents preferred dancing/music as their recreational programmes, outdoor recreation and social recreation both had 15.38% while drama had 7.69%.

Table 3: Recreational Programme Preferred to reduced stress

S/N	Types of Sport Programme	Responses	Percentage
1.	Sports and games	110	42.31
2.	Dancing/Music	50	19.23
3.	Drama	20	7.69
4.	Outdoor Recreation	40	15.38
5.	Gardening/Recreation/Club	40	15.38
	Total	260	100

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the staff of the College have problems associated with obesity, general body weakness, back pain, aging and high blood pressure as reflected in the percentage and frequency analysis. The occurrence of these health-related problems are traceable to lack of enough recreational activities by the staff of Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu. To give credence to this assertion, Gatchell *et al.*, (1991)^[6] explained that the three ways to protect the individual against stress include maintaining good physical health, relaxing and making friends. To reduce the effects of

stress on habits, adequate rest and exercise help keep the body in shape, especially in time of great stress.

Conclusion

Stress is something that everybody experiences throughout life. It is important that the body is prepared to meet stress and cope with it. Habitual participation in exercises (sports, games, music, dancing *et cetera*) prepares the individual to combat stress. This is because exercise is a Potential Physical Stressor (PPS). Constant physical exercise is necessary for the improvement of health of staff of the College in order to improve their productivity.

Benefits of constant physical exercises are numerous: its helps to check the incidents of coronary heart diseases caused by obesity, improves back ailment, prevent aging and improves general body weakness. With improved physical fitness, there is a reduction in absenteeism from work, reduced visit to clinics/hospitals and also reduction in drugs dependence and others associated benefits.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

There should be provision for recreational facilities and the facilities should accommodate diverse recreational interest of the staff especially in sport and games.

Staff of the College should be given opportunity to engage in some forms of exercise therapy so as to reduce stress, improve health condition and enhance productivity.

Policy for residential apartment within the campus should be put in place such that constructed buildings are allocated to staff. This will bring the staff closer to the recreational facilities. By this, the motivation for participation in sports and games can be enhanced.

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