

Improving Mental Well-Being Among Civil Servants in Nigeria: A Review

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Abstract

Mental well-being is one of the integral aspects of man depending on how he is better able to handle his health to the best of his abilities. Factors involved in the poor mental wellbeing include: workplace culture, poor leadership styles, communication barriers, workload, autonomy, recognition and opportunities for career advancement. Challenges of mental health and wellbeing of civil servants include: Work related stress, Poor work-life balance, inadequate access to mental healthcare and Insecurity and instability. It was concluded that mental well-being of civil servants in Nigeria is very important because they are regarded as the engine room of the Nigerian economy. It was suggested that civil servants should understand their body system when to slow down in order to avoid breakdown as a result of stress.

Keywords: *Mental well-being, Civil servants, Shape Nigeria*

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Background to the Study

Mental well-being is one of the integral aspects of man depending on how he is better able to handle his health to the best of his abilities. Mental health challenges all account for nearly 15% of the burden of diseases worldwide which is a determinant of the lifespan of individuals living with different forms of disabilities which has resulted to mental health disorders (World Health Organization, 2020). It has been on record that the life expectancy of individuals found with severe mental health challenges is up to 10-20 years less than the general population that has proven that a lot still has to be done in order to improve the mental well-being of civil servants in Nigeria and moreover, only 2% has been realized for the expenditure on the health of civil servants that occurs globally which happen to be allocated to the mental health and well-being of all categories of persons (World Health Organization, 2021).

The key challenge here is the aspect of the absence of quality health services, skills and funding of the mental health programme particularly in low-income countries where quality health services are unavailable which is around 80% of all persons with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and burnout (GBD Result Tool, 2011). Stress at the workplace have solely contributed to the mental health problems in Nigeria with a lot of far-reaching consequences for employees and varying establishments (Adeosun, 2016). It is on record that empirical evidence has shown that Nigerian civil servant workers continually face unique stressors which includes economic instability, Job security and work demanding environments that has contributed to anxiety and burnouts (Adias, 2025). There have been recent surveys which indicated that 75% of Nigerian employees usually go through stress at work with 60% reporting continuous feelings of being overwhelmed by the absence of mental well-being of Nigerian civil servants (koleayo, 2021).

Nwankwo & Eze (2023) were of the view that Nigerian companies have lost estimates of 10 billion naira annually to absenteeism, presenteeism suffered simply as a result of stress related health complications because the Nigerian government of today have failed in their responsibilities in catering for the welfare of those in the civil service and this can also be as a result to the lack of incentives and this hasn't helped matters at all. In spite of the severity of those challenges mental health and well-ness seemed not to take positive measures in reducing the menace that is why it has continued to wreck stress on so many families and not only that, it has gone further in causing untimely deaths especially on those who have retired from active service and in a bid to this, cultural beliefs has more often associated with the mental health struggles accompanied by weaknesses or spiritual causes, discouraging employees from seeking assistance and this has led to ignorance on their part (Onyeizugbo, 2019).

Consequently, it was estimated that only 15% of Nigerian workers have access to employer – provided resources of mental health and this stigma has continued to perpetuate a cycle of silence whereas stress and something that has to do with psychological distress has gone unattended to until they escalated in severe crises in which a handful of Nigerian organizations have begun to implement human resource management strategies which is meant to address stress at workplace such as flexible work arrangements, counseling services and as well the inclusion of wellness programmes (Balogun, 2023). The major problem this paper has

critically focused on here is the issue of proper mental health policies and comprehensive workplaces which has left civil servants in Nigeria vulnerable to exploitation in a bid to recent global disruptions which include: the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recessions have all intensified work stresses among civil servants in Nigeria (Oyeniya & Fadeyi, 2023).

Healthcare workers for example have reported that as far as 16% burnout rates is due to the emotional exhaustion and inadequate staffing meanwhile, employees in Nigeria informal sector are those who have constituted weigh over 80% of the workforce have continued to lack access to structured mental health support and this even occurs within the formal sectors where disparity is in existence i.e. civil servants who work in urban areas also face stress from long commutes while those who work in rural settings grapple with the issue of Job security and the limited access to quality healthcare services (Ibrahim, Sawyerr, Opasola, Adiamo & Raimi, 2025).

Concept of mental well-being

Olah (2022) was of the opinion that the mental well-being of civil servants in Nigeria is very important because they are regarded as the engine room of the Nigerian economy for without the presence of civil servants, work performance and operations of the Nigerian government will not record positive outcomes. Mental well-being of civil servants have over the years not been in good conditions which is due to the absence of job satisfaction and fulfilment because government at all levels have not deemed it fit to look into the needs of Nigerian civil servants who work in various establishments in seeing to it that the standard of living and that of their families are improved that is why it has adversely affected their psychological health (Morgan & Farsides, 2009). Ucherwuhe (2024) was of the view that the work environment in which civil servants in Nigeria find themselves in the world today are important factors which influence performances of establishments, productivity and the entire health and well-being of everyone. The Nigerian civil service today is confronted with so many challenges as it involves bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, limited resources as well as political interference which has adverse effects on the mental wellbeing on individuals which is because of lack of quality healthcare facilities and services since the federal government of Nigeria have neglected the health sector (Jensen, 2019).

Other essential factors involved in the poor mental wellbeing include: workplace culture, poor leadership styles, communication barriers, workload, autonomy, recognition and opportunities for career advancement have all contributed to the poor health of civil servants in Nigeria that is the more reason why they can no longer give in their best (Jensen, 2019). It is highly impossible to avoid the losses caused by stress at the workplace in order to give better job performance for the healthy benefits of employees particularly in the banking sector and in a bid managing stress at the workplace has become very necessary in the aspect of business management particularly for those involved in resource management (Avey, et al., 2019). In Akwa Ibom state the civil service has undergone significant strides in order to have civil servants in good mental wellbeing and overall health since the creation of the state in the year 1987 and over the years it has passed through different challenges as it includes poor funding that hindered its abilities to deliver services efficiently (Ezeani, 2020).

Shape Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the developing countries in west Africa that is blessed with its natural resources responsible for shaping especially in the health sector but quite unfortunately what we see is that there is a serious neglect on the part of the federal government leading to brain drain that's why we see that most people leave the country for greener pastures which in turn has abandoned everything in a state of disarray (Binks, 2021). During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the year 2020, there has been rapid change and advancement of technology in which everything done was in virtual methods that has helped in so many ways including teaching of health education using internet facilities alongside Microsoft power point which was a way of changing the negative perceptions of individuals to positive ones and it also assisted in online teaching which involved zoom where everyone saw each other without physical contact due to social distancing (Barteit, 2020).

The economy of Nigeria seriously needs to be restructured in such a way that the common man can be able to attend to his medical bills and that of his family and more technologically innovative ideas need to be established as well as partnering with other nations for this to be well accomplished so that everyone will be in good health through proper nutrition for the benefit of all (Bastos, 2021). There is also a need to shape Nigeria in the area of sports participation because it will go a long way in creating job opportunities within the industry which will bring about unity and a great sense of belonging and the various sports activities include: Soccer, volley ball, handball, hockey, lawn tennis, table tennis, badminton, basketball, long distance race and swimming i.e. These games are to be played among both genders including those who are physically challenged in our society so that they don't feel discriminated against (Cecilio-Fernandes, 2020). Nigeria as a nation urgently needs to be properly shaped through the provision of health sensitization programmes on the eradication of cholera outbreak and the need to break away from bad habits as it regards the issue of open defecation and open dumping of refuse into undesignated areas that will cause pollution in our environment (Hofer, 2021).

Challenges of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Civil Servants

Nigerian civil servants are faced with numerous challenges which is due to the demands that is placed on it. The following challenges are:

1. **Work related stress:** This is where civil servants find themselves working under intense pressures just to meet up with both families demands and that of the work place i.e. when they take too many things at a time if no wisdom is applied as well as adequate rest breakdown occurs along the line and this makes it impossible for them to cope in situations like this (WHO, 2019). Work related stress has to do with a response that a person faces often times because of what is involved and, in most cases,, people are unable to overcome this challenge i.e. the ability to cope with life situations confronting them (WHO, 2019).
2. **Poor work-life balance:** This actually occurs when civil servants are unable to prioritize things that are necessary especially at the work place and in this instance they are faced with a situation whereby work ethics are not properly applied in which in some cases they end up going to work late most of the time in which an instance where certain

things to be done at work are carried over to the next day or they even carry some work not completed home and hereby have no quality time for their families, and this can also result in a situation whereby motivation among the civil servants in Nigeria happens to be lacking which is because there were no increase in their wages and in the midst of this there is increase in workload and it continues to wear them out (Izmir Tabip Odosi, 2021).

3. Inadequate access to mental healthcare: This is a situation when they are not able to gain access to quality healthcare facilities which can be as a result of financial challenges, lack accessibility to certified health practitioner and lack of health awareness is where these challenges are bound to occur (Centre for Disease Control, 2024).
4. Insecurity and instability: Another major challenge is the issue of insecurity and instability which is why the mental well-being of civil servants in Nigeria appears quite difficult to be resolved within us and this become intense when those in power fail in their responsibilities in trying to first of all resolve the challenges that poses insecurity and instability in our nation.

Ways of improving mental well-being among civil servants

There is an urgent need to looking into ways in improving the health of civil servants in order for them to enjoy better health and the following ways are:

1. It encourages the promotion of mental wellbeing and the creation of awareness campaigns of civil servants in Nigeria.
2. It encourages the provision of accessibility to mental health services of civil servants in Nigeria.
3. It assists in fostering supportive working environment in which civil servants can carry out their duties in good health.
4. It also assists health personnel and mental health experts in rendering stress management training for civil servants.

Conclusion

Mental well-being is one of the integral aspects of man depending on how he is better able to handle his health to the best of his abilities. Mental well-being of civil servants in Nigeria is very important because they are regarded as the engine room of the Nigerian economy for without the presence of civil servants, work performance and operations of the Nigerian government will not record positive outcomes.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions, the following suggestions were made;

1. Government should employ competent medical personnel who will render quality healthcare services to civil servants.
2. Health educators should organize workshops, symposiums, seminars and conferences for civil servants in order for them to be in a state of mental health and wellbeing.
3. Civil servants should understand their body system when to slow down in order to avoid breakdown as a result of stress.

4. All stakeholders have a responsibility of applying positive health education strategies for longevity of life.

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